

Minotaur Media Tracking - Point by Point Response to the Keith Bowers Report

“David Keighley says that Minotaur’s reports are independent and rigorous, and that the company has other clients apart from Lord Pearson.” p.7

The insinuation is that Minotaur may *not* actually have other clients. This is a fact which could have easily been checked and verified, with work undertaken for the Conservative Party, Migration Watch, the CPS and the Daily Telegraph. The sentence formulation means that even before the criticism of Minotaur’s work begins, doubt is already cast. Why not simply say *“David Keighley says that Minotaur’s reports are independent and rigorous. The company has other clients apart from Lord Pearson”*?

“It is beyond the scope of this advisory note to test in precise detail all the various information and calculations involved in producing the Minotaur report”. p.10

Is it beyond the scope because of time, funding, available staff or its remit? Much of the later criticism rests on the precise methodology employed by Minotaur, but there seems an inability to engage with this central facet of the work, because of issues which are purely logistical.

“This would not only take an enormous amount of time but would also involve needing to have widespread access to Minotaur’s statistics and modus operandi.”p.10

All Minotaur’s statistics are readily available in the reports produced for Global Britain. If Keith Bowers was missing any of these reports, they could have been easily provided had he asked for them. The same is true of any information from the Minotaur database which he might have found useful. Indeed, the query he requested on guest speakers during the Winter 2006 Minotaur Survey was undertaken and returned to him within 24 hours, at no cost to either him or to the BBC.

With regards to Minotaur’s *modus operandi*, Mr Bower was provided with a broad overview of Minotaur’s methodology, which he quotes extensively on pages 11 and 12.

Certain statistical processes are not reprinted in exhaustive detail in each report, to ensure readability and avoid repetition – this was, after all the 30th survey. Mr Bower says that he had consulted “all the previous Minotaur reports on *Today* and other BBC output” – as such, we believe that all elements of the Minotaur methodology are explained in detail within this continuum.

The notion that it would take an 'enormous amount of time' to test Minotaur's findings is puzzling. During a survey, by far the most time consuming element is listening to the full three hour programme each morning and completing the transcripts of relevant items.

During Mr Bowers's investigation, full monitor log sheets and transcripts were available for inspection, and audio recordings were also on hand. To listen to all the EU reports broadcast during the thirteen week survey back to back would take approximately five hours. And although additional time would be needed to work out the statistics, it is difficult to see, how this process could be considered time consuming. Although the study of 238 hours of programming might at first appear daunting, Minotaur would have been more than happy to assist Mr Bowers in his investigations, and finds it disappointing that we were not given this opportunity.

“The Minotaur reports tend to be linked to EU summits which happen at least twice a year. Monitoring periods since autumn 2003 have varied between nine and sixteen weeks. David Keighley says this variation is for logistical reasons. This may mean a slight discrepancy in like for like comparison but Minotaur is confident that the broad picture achieved is pretty much the same. On average the Minotaur reports cover around six months of Today output in any given year.” P.12

Mr Bowers fails to mention the 47 weeks continuous monitoring of the Today programme which took place between autumn 2002 and summer 2003. As far as we are aware, this remains the longest continuous monitoring exercise ever undertaken, anywhere in the world.

“To that end I genuinely feel that it's not realistic to expect a news programme to devote a set percentage of its output to any given subject over a series of three-month survey periods” Gavin Allen, Today Editor, p.13

Minotaur has never advocated a set quota for EU coverage within the Today programme. What we have been interested in is the change over time and why these changes occur. We appreciate that many different issues are competing for space, and consideration is given to the particular 'mix' of the programme and its balance between 'lighter' and more serious material. However, a cornerstone of Minotaur's methodology is that each edition is listened to in its entirety, which allows EU coverage to be analysed in its wider news context.

“So a selected snapshot of three months coverage may well suggest a limited number of stories on the Constitution. But another snapshot – take the past three months for instance – might suggest a different story.” Gavin Allen, Today Editor, p.13

This is a recurrent BBC argument: if only different survey period had been chosen, there would have been more extensive or detailed coverage; if a wider range of programmes had been monitored, then there would have been more balance in speaker numbers. These sorts of arguments are difficult to refute, because the data from outside the confines of a particular survey is not available, either from Minotaur, or from the BBC. But just as there may have been more stories elsewhere, there could easily have been fewer. Minotaur gathered information from almost a full year of the Today programme in 2002-2003 – which the report neglects to mention.

“It is also worth bearing in mind that the Minotaur reports do not examine how other parts of the BBC covered the EU in this particular monitoring period or indeed how other media reported on it.”

This statement appears to refer to the pilot project undertaken by Minotaur in June 2000, at which time Minotaur was in the process of developing and refining the analytical techniques and statistical instruments which it uses today as a matter of course. During this pilot report, the main focus was on certainly on the Today programme, however, the main report refers on many occasions to the daily log of the broadsheet press which was undertaken concurrently:

“On the following day, June 7, the broadsheets were teeming with stories about Europe, as outlined in the daily log:

“Another rich variety of EU-related stories in the national press: the head of the Post Office regulators arguing that he favoured a more open EU market in postal services (FT p8 7/6); Chris Patten acting to refocus EU foreign policy and to “assert Brussels’ authority over the EU’s foreign policy”(FT p12 7/6); an editorial calling for the ECB to be “unfashionably bold” in raising Euro-zone interest rates (FT p24 7/6); Euro-sceptic MPs in the Tory party planning to rebel against the official party line to fight the next general election of a “never” join the Euro platform (Independent p1 7/6); proposals to give MEPs a salary of £63,000 in return for a tighter expenses regime (Independent p18 7/6, Guardian p15 7/6, editorial Daily Express 7/6); the government accepting a new European race directive that reversed the burden of proof in discrimination cases (Daily Telegraph p2 7/6); a poll commissioned by the Tories showing that voters in Labour ministers’ seats were strongly opposed to the Euro (Times p14 7/6); John Major attacking “seditionary” calls by some Tories to quit the EU (Guardian p11 7/6); the new Lord Chief Justice predicting that European Convention on Human Rights “will probably strip the Home Secretary of his powers to rule that the very worst of murderers should never be freed” (Daily Mail p12 7/6); profile of Tony Blair caught in the middle of the Euro debate being conducted by “dinosaurs” (FT p10 7/6)”

Keith Bowers’s wording here is vague – he speaks of ‘reports’ in the plural, but a ‘monitoring period’ singular, and as such it is not clear whether he is speaking only about the June 2000 Minotaur survey.

To be clear, Minotaur often examines how EU stories are reported elsewhere in the BBC, in the national press, and online. Monitoring is regularly extended to include other BBC outlets when a significant EU story emerges. In winter 2006, for example, monitoring was extended to cover other BBC broadcast news outlets to assess coverage of Nigel Farage's election as UKIP leader for a 48 hour period, but the story was not covered in any other outlet. During major events, such as the general elections in 2001 and 2005, and the European elections in 1999 and 2004, a whole raft of programmes was monitored for much longer periods.

I am not in a position to compare in detail all the competing demands on Today's agenda over these years – both about the EU and other stories. However, it might be worth briefly considering some possible explanations for the variance in the volume of EU related material as highlighted by Minotaur. p.16

Keith Bowers goes on to list some of the possible explanations for increased amounts of coverage in previous Minotaur surveys. Minotaur concurs with many of his findings - since we were well aware of these significant EU events, and their implications for the wider airtime figures, and discussion of these factors appears in every individual report to date.

Minotaur has noted time and again that these figures are 'the bluntest of statistical instruments', and are fully aware of their limitations. If these figures were the only things produced then this would raise clear concerns. But in actual fact, the overall airtime proportions for the survey are regularly broken down into weekly totals, and figures for specific events which can then be compared with similar key events that have occurred in the course of previous surveys.

It is unfortunate that the time and resources were not made available to enable Mr Bowers corroborate the wealth of detailed statistical information Minotaur's has amassed over the past eight years.

Without any of his own statistical data, this section can only be, at best, supposition. Mr Bowers posits that the airtime figure of 8.2% may have been 'explained, at least in part, by additional interest in EU affairs because this was the time of the UK presidency'. But he is unable to produce any documentation to show precisely how many of the reports were directly related to the British presidency, or the 'additional interest' caused by it.

He also makes the point that since the 9/11 attacks in 2001 a significant part of the news agenda has been devoted to the 'war on terror' – yet the airtime figures presented in the table cover only the period *after* 2002 – when the Minotaur database was established and the first long-term monitoring projects began. Indeed, the Winter 2006 report notes that in response

to news that the Today programme had lost 451,000 listeners in the last year, and a quarter of a million in the last quarter alone, the BBC had suggested 'a lack of news' was to blame. It continues:

If this 'slow' news period continued through the third and fourth quarters – and empirical evidence would suggest that it did – it offers another possibility: the fall in listening figures is *itself* responsible for the shift in Today's priorities. EU coverage may have been reduced because editors and producers were selecting stories and issues which might help stem the tide of departing listeners - at the expense of those areas of the news considered complex, difficult, or unpopular with audiences. In the past, one of the programme's main EU correspondents has openly called EU politics 'dreary' on air, suggested that his audience might 'turn over and go back to sleep', and proposed a new collective noun: 'a *depression* of summits'. Such displays of ennui towards the European Union's political processes have become less common since the publication of the Wilson Report, but it could be that these attitudes survive and are simply being expressed less overtly - either by covering EU politics in a very superficial manner, or ignoring them altogether.

There may be other ways of looking at this figure. For example, another way of expressing the 3.3 minutes airtime figure could be to say that it is roughly the equivalent of one short item a day. That may be regarded by some as giving a misleading impression. However it could also be argued that expressing these totals as percentages may also be misleading. It is the case that there can be more than one way of presenting the raw data of the number of Today's items about the EU. p.19

Each report contains a full and detailed breakdown on the total number of Today's programme items that contain an EU-dimension. These are then divided further, into specific numbers of bulletin items, newspaper reviews, and 'features'. The Minotaur report for Winter 2006 reads:

Between 11 September and 16 December 2006, Today broadcast 138 EU-related items. There were 34 bulletins items, 12 mentions in the programme's newspaper review section, and 92 'features', with a combined duration of 275 minutes. In addition, there were 21 marginal or passing mentions of the EU.

Minotaur fails to understand why 'a rough equivalent' would need to be used here at all, when the exact figures are presented so clearly in the report. It is simply another, more limited way, of expressing the figures. Whatever the terms used, the ultimate question remains: why was there only the equivalent of 'one short item per day' on the programme in Winter 2006, when in June 2006, there had been the equivalent of '3.7 short items' per day?

In 2006 the Today programme ran a listener vote at Christmas time as to which law listeners wanted to see repealed – The European Communities Act came fourth with 29.7% of the vote. p.20

This is factually incorrect. In the Today Christmas Repeal the European Communities Act was the *second* most popular choice amongst listeners, as the section reprinted from the Today website shows:

The winning law that you want repealed is:

The Hunting Act with 52.8%

Dangerous Dogs Act: 1.6%
Serious Organised Crime and Police Act : 6.2%
Human Rights Act: 6.1%
European Communities Act: 29.7%
The Act of Settlement: 3.6%

(http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/vote/2006vote/vote_index.shtml)

The results of the poll were also discussed at length some length in the New Years Day edition of the programme, on New Year's Day. It is unclear as to why Mr Bowers made this error. Either he assumed the list of runners up was printed in descending order, or he was given access to the BBC's internal records which were inaccurate. Either way, this demonstrates a careless approach to checking and verifying figures.

The issue in this case is whether there was an appropriate level of coverage on the Today programme of European structural issues so as to achieve due impartiality in the Today coverage of Europe - bearing in mind that the structure of Europe is a politically controversial issue. Minotaur's figure is 0.7, though it is hard to verify the calculations behind it. p.21

Once again, Mr Bower made no attempt to verify Minotaur's calculations behind this figure. Had a request been made, Mr Bowers could have easily been provided with details of those reports had been counted as being concerning the structure and future direction of the EU as an institution, and those which were concerned with its day to day business, including its legislation and directives. Obviously, attempting to categorise certain reports can at times be problematic, and there are always grey areas. But once he was in receipt of these figures, Minotaur would have been happy to discuss any of the individual reports in detail, and explain why particular decisions had been taken.

European Union news was often presented in sections of Today with the fewest listeners – between 6am and 7am, suggesting an editorial mindset that the EU affairs

were of secondary importance . . . The Today programme says that the 6am to 7am slot is very important and it does not regard it as a dumping ground for unpopular items. Indeed, it is seen as an important briefing hour.

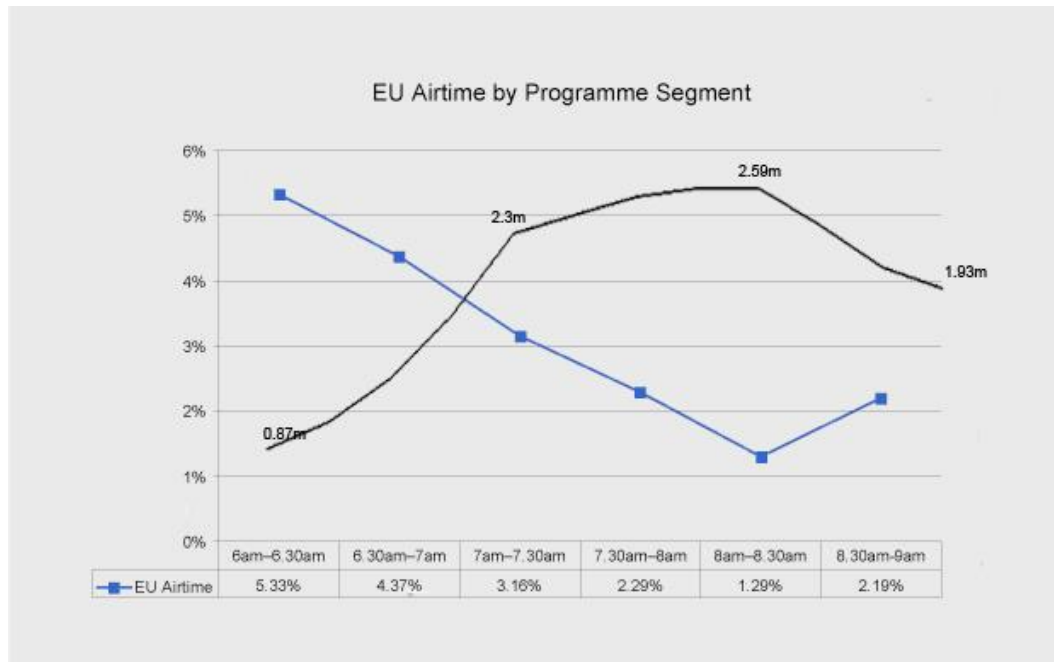
That the first hour of the weekday programme has the fewest listeners is incontrovertible - however important the programme makers believe this slot to be. The propensity to position EU items outside 'peak time' has other implications, particularly for those accessing the programme online:

Since May 2006, the first hour of the programme has been split into two half hour segments of audio, known collectively as 'Today's briefing hour'. Unlike in the rest of the programme, the individual items in this sequence are not listed, meaning that visitors cannot see the content. As a result, they would not have been aware of many EU-related features.

Minotaur's broad quantitative assessment that EU-related items were often presented in the 6am to 7am slot appears to be correct, though there are also many examples when they featured elsewhere in the programme. P.22

The graph by Minotaur published as part of the Winter 2006 survey shows the amount of airtime per available half hour segment, as a proportion of the total available airtime in that segment over the whole 14 weeks. The figures take into account that there are differing amounts of actual airtime available in each slot, and that the programme is only two hours long on Saturdays.

The original Minotaur graph appears below, with an overlay showing broad listening patterns for Today, as referred to by Mr Bowers in his report.



His assertion that there were 'many examples when [EU reports] featured elsewhere in the programme' is irrelevant. Minotaur at no stage made the point that there were *no* EU items broadcast in 'peak time' – just that there were fewer as an overall proportion of available airtime.

Today is a busy programme with limited space and the placing of items in the running order is a complex business with many variables from day to day. The placing of items such the Bulgarian and Romanian accession to the EU is a matter of editorial choice on the day. Items on this subject have appeared in peak time on Today. On the day Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1 January 2007 there were three items about the accession between 7am and 8.30am. p.23

Once again, rather than focusing on the period that was actually monitored, the suggestion here is that coverage was much more thorough outside of the survey period, in reports that Minotaur did not have the chance to assess and critique.

Had Minotaur been monitoring on New Year's Day, then the point would have been made that the Christmas and New Year period is atypical for Today, with fewer hard news stories on the agenda. In addition, there are also presumably fewer listeners on the 1 January than on a usual Monday morning.

Certainly when Minotaur has previously monitored the programme on New Years Day, there have been significant anomalies: In its New Year's Day programme in 2002, for example,

Today devoted 86 minutes to coverage of the introduction of euro notes and coins in *just a single edition* of the programme; 22 out of 33 feature reports on that day had focused on the euro launch, with a generous proportion of the newspaper reviews and bulletins also given over to this issue. This equates to almost a third of the EU airtime broadcast during the whole 14 weeks of the Today programme between September and December 2006 *in just one single edition*. In these terms, the three reports given over to Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU were hardly significant.

Minotaur believed the coverage of the Turkish issue was patchy and unsatisfactory . . . An alternative perspective on this output could be that the coverage of Turkey at this time fulfilled the call by the Wilson Report for more EU-related items to be discussed outside the Westminster prism. p.24

The Wilson Report said that ‘the dominance of Westminster politics, both in the structure of BBC News and in the allocation of air-time, leads to distorted reporting of the EU.’ However, it did not suggest that Westminster politics should be removed from the equation completely – if this was to occur, then a similar imbalance is created in favour of non-Westminster perspectives.

It can be difficult to pick one’s way through the language that is used about the EU. For example, both europhile and eurosceptic can mean different things to different people and the use of these labels can in failing to capture the nuance of different perspectives be misleading . . . The table lists people according to either their structural views about the EU or their views on day to day legislation This may create a misleading impression when these individual components are put together to create a headline figure. p.27

As with the broad airtime percentages, the speaker proportions are an attempt to distil a wide variety of contributions by guest speakers to the EU debate. Certainly, Minotaur has always been fully aware of the limitations – within the table presented, a single sound-bite contribution counts for as much as full scale interview. Similarly, a guest speaking against one particular piece of EU legislation counts for as much as a fifteen minute interview with the foreign secretary or his shadow. This point has been made repeatedly.

But Minotaur realises that when its research is used in practice, these headline figures are sometimes taken in isolation, to critique the Today programme’s editorial policy. They operate as an easy-to-digest indicator of deeper editorial imbalances, which can only really be explained in their full subtlety by the reports in their entirety.

The pro-EU column for example raises questions. For example, ten appearances by EU commissioners or other spokesmen are placed in this column. These guests usually appeared to talk about some aspect of policy they were responsible for. Not everyone might agree that this automatically means that using them as interviewees equated to conveying a pro-EU line. p.27

Minotaur would certainly accept that contributions made by both pro and anti EU speakers are often subtle, and are not always clear expositions of the wider philosophical debates surrounding the EU's direction. On some occasion the programme balanced EU representatives with sceptical guest speakers, but elsewhere the sceptical perspective only emerged by way of devil's advocate questioning. The ten speakers referred to by Mr Bowers discussed a variety of policy areas, and full details of their contributions are outlined in detail at the end of this summary. They included Benito Ferrero-Waldner calling for an EU-wide migration policy, two interviews with Peter Mandelson talking about world trade, and a 'pre-buttal' by EU vice president Siim Kallas of the refusal by EU auditors to sign off the accounts for the twelfth year in a row.

As the table demonstrates, there is nothing 'automatic' about the categorisation of EU speakers – indeed during the Winter 2006 survey one EU representative spoke against the EU, and one offered a neutral perspective.

In addition, two Liberal Democrat appearances were placed in the pro-Euro (sic) column. Both were made by Baroness Ludford MEP, who twice spoke about the same issue - rendition flights. This would seem to be another case in which not everyone would agree with Minotaur's classification. Baroness Ludford was not speaking about the structural future of the EU or espousing federalism but addressing a specific area of policy. She was also not necessarily speaking primarily in favour of any EU legislation. p.27

Baroness Ludford's spoke specifically about 'the reputation of Europe' in her contribution, and implied that the EU had a role to play over and above national government. The parts which led to her categorisation as being pro-EU are highlighted in bold.

We want those governments themselves to use their full powers and their full access to the information to really put everything into the public domain, and to clean the house properly, ***we think that would be good for those governments, and good for the reputation of Europe.*** There are of course national parliamentary and judicial inquiries going on in some countries, notably in Italy, Germany and Spain, and it may well be that in those countries more comes out. ***But we think that the EU overall – if it aspires to uphold human rights, which it says it does, democracy and the rule of law – needs to be a good and firm partner to the United States in helping guide us all back to moral and legal legitimacy.***

For this reason, she was classified as being pro-EU in her outlook on this particular matter.

Mr Bowers has chosen to concentrate solely on the classification of pro-EU speakers, but it must be noted the exact same issues arise when classifying those who speak *against* the EU or its actions.

This table also does not reveal the precise context and lengths of each interview, and whether the interviewees were challenged. p.27

The table is only a broad headcount of speakers. Minotaur regularly conducts additional investigations into how speakers are treated in interviews, how many words are spoken, and how much space each contributor is given. Furthermore, close attention is paid to each interview sequence in line-by-line analysis of the full transcripts. Unfortunately this is not considered in any detail by Mr Bowers.

Individual pro-EU speakers were given more space to present their arguments than the eurosceptic and neutral speakers. In terms of the number of words spoken by guests, the ratio was closer to 3 to 1 in favour of pro-EU speakers. In the full report Minotaur gives more details about its word count. It says that of the 31 contributions which were over 300 words in length, 22 were from pro-EU guests, whereas only five were from sceptical contributors. In considering this point Trustees will be aware that there is no requirement upon the BBC to judge impartiality by calculating the length of contributions. p.28

Mr Bowers includes material quoted by Minotaur, regarding the Independent Panel chaired by Sir Quentin Thomas, which looked at the BBC's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Loughborough's research investigated 'talk time' and 'actors' within news broadcasts, and looked at how this relates to 'news presence'. They pointed out that 'the granting of access to the news is widely recognised in the secondary literature as an indicator of both the perceived news value and credibility of sources'.

Mr Bowers suggested that Minotaur was not equitable in the selection of this particular quotation:

However, the full picture provided by Loughborough appears to be more even-handed than Minotaur suggests. After the quote used by Minotaur the Loughborough report continues:

Parity in talk time or actor appearances do not, however, necessarily indicate impartiality.... Actors may be treated differently by journalists during interviews. Some may be exposed to more rigorous questioning than others. p.29

Minotaur omitted this section of the Loughborough quote because, unlike the point being made regarding 'talk time', this section did not appear to add anything particularly new or original to issues which had been addressed in previous surveys. As far back as 2002, in its

investigation of the Today programme during the period of Copenhagen Summit, Minotaur made precisely the same point:

Certainly, it is not inherently beneficial for a guest to be allocated more airtime: if an interview is conducted in a particularly robust or combative manner then the extra space may at times be detrimental rather than beneficial.

Minotaur's line-by-line analyses also regularly consider how particular guests are treated, in terms of tone of voice, interruptions, line of questioning. In the Minotaur survey undertaken in the Summer 2006, particular concerns were raised over an interview with the Conservative shadow foreign secretary, William Hague, who was interrupted twenty times over the course of a five and a quarter minute interview. The Minotaur report noted:

Broad headcounts do not provide information on the duration of each interview or give an indication of the way the discussion was conducted.

Minotaur subsequently analysed all 38 interviews with politicians – (domestic MPs, MEPs, representatives of the EU institutions, and politicians from member states) which took place during the survey period, and assessed how many times each speaker had been interrupted. From this a chart was made of who had been interrupted most and least, and which particular presenters were most likely to interrupt a guest. This investigation, including detailed methodology, is reprinted at the end of this document.

A similar inquiry was also undertaken previously as part of the fieldwork for the CPS paper *BBC Bias? Two Short Case Studies*, by David Keighley and Kathy Gyngell, (April 2005) which considered treatment of the main political interviewees on the Today programme during the Labour and Conservative Party conferences.

David Keighley of Minotaur bases much of his analysis on the transcripts of interviews and other material, though he says he does listen to some output on occasion where necessary. p.29

Any issues concerning the tone of voice or number of interruptions are flagged clearly in the transcripts themselves, and noted in the proprietary database. Researcher Andrew Jubb, who spoke to Mr Bowers before he compiled his report, has personally monitored over 2500 hours of the Today programme, and has listened to every edition. He has also transcribed every report with an EU dimension.

The number of pro-withdrawal appearances is a much easier figure to verify and there is no apparent reason to doubt that only four withdrawal speakers appeared on the programme in this monitoring period. However, it is less easy to check the comparisons with the pre-Wilson period. Minotaur's full report includes a table which refers to two periods before the Wilson report and only one of them covers Today

**alone. The other survey was also devoted to PM, the 10 o'clock news and Newsnight.
p.31**

The statement indicates the limitations of Mr Bowers approach. To say there is 'no reason to doubt that only four withdrawal speakers appeared on the programme' shows that no real attempt was made to verify the detailed work undertaken by Minotaur. Furthermore, it illustrates that either the BBC keeps no record of guest appearances with which to assess balance over time, or that Mr Bowers was not allowed access to these.

All of Minotaur's previous surveys are readily available, and it is therefore difficult to understand why it was 'less easy to check' comparisons with the pre-Wilson period. A simple email inquiry would have revealed that separate records are kept for each individual programme during periods of 'multi-programme' monitoring.

The figure for the pre-Wilson survey shows that, when contributors to the Today programme are assessed in isolation, the proportion for the Today programme alone fell slightly, from 5.7% to 5.4%. But similarly, when the Today programme's speaker totals were isolated from the post-Wilson report which featured multiple programmes, the proportion also dropped, from 3.7% to 3.4%. As such, the original assertion remains, there was a smaller proportion of pro-withdrawal speakers appearing *after* the Wilson Report than there were before it, even when Today is taken in isolation.

As mentioned in the previous section it was expected that the EU summit would be a relatively quiet affair. As Mark Mardell said on the BBC website on 13 December:

One seasoned, laconic, diplomat observed: "I can't see any fireworks, it's not a crisis or last-ditch summit

At the end of the summit Mark Mardell appeared to confirm on the BBC website that there had not been any fireworks but he did predict that there could well be some in the future.

Minotaur undertook an internet search on the Saturday following the summit found that the outcomes of the summit were viewed as significant and newsworthy by other media outlets. There were in excess of 450 individual news articles from across the world, focusing on the declarations made on enlargement and the Constitution. But the Today programme remained almost silent on the matter, broadcasting no substantive reports on the summit or the outcomes reached. This statistic was provided in the full Minotaur survey, but is not mentioned by Mr Bowers in his report.

Today's absence of coverage at the time of the summit does give rise to another possible interpretation of Minotaur's overall data. In previous cases when Minotaur has reported a higher proportion of EU-related items on Today this has apparently co-

incided with more substantial coverage of the immediate run-up to the summit and the summit itself. p.35

Minotaur would certainly concur that the levels of EU coverage during each summit period are intimately linked, not least because the summit period is included in the overall airtime percentages for the monitoring interval as a whole.

Other issues raised by the report include a low level of location reports from around the EU and Mark Mardell, the Europe Editor appointed to beef up EU coverage appearing in the programme only three times. The full report says that there were only 11 reporter packages (involving reporters going out on location) on EU issues, suggesting a low level of commitment to EU reporting. . . Making radio packages can be an expensive and time-consuming business. Once again it can be misleading to consider any EU-related material in isolation. Another way of interpreting Minotaur's data is to say that there was nearly one EU-related package a week in this period on Today. p.36

The focus on Mark Mardell related directly to the Mark Thompson's article in the Mail on Sunday, in which he announced the Corporation had responded to criticisms 'by appointing Mark Mardell in the new role of Europe Editor'. But Mark Mardell appeared on Today, the BBC's flagship news and current affairs programme, less than once a month during the fourteen-week survey.

Additional Notes

Details of the ten EU representatives who were categorised as pro-EU in the table of guest contributors.

29th September 2006

Today carried an interview with Benito Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner for external relations. He called explicitly for an EU-wide migration policy and a common integration policy:

I think the most important thing would certainly to be a common migration policy that also could be completed (*sic*) by a common integration policy, because only then we can really send out clear messages to all the third countries, that indeed there are common rules and these will also be implemented.

This was a clear call for an extension in the powers of the European Union. It is difficult to see how else this speaker might have been categorised.

12th October, 2006

The Business News featured an interview with Philip Todd, from the European Commission who was speaking in favour of a ban by the Commission on a small dairy in Lancashire due to a contravention of hygiene regulations – a ban which the Food Standards Agency opposed. He said:

The Commission's view is that they have not followed up with the company concerned by an inspection to check that the improvements that they have asked for.

This was followed by an interview with a representative of the dairy, who spoke against the EU ruling, and was categorised as 'against specific EU legislation/action' in the totals. It is clear that there were two opposing views presented here, even though the terms of the debate were perhaps a relatively minor matter.

23rd October, 2006

A package on EU accounts featured a short contribution from an unnamed EU auditor who was discussing a £170m EU Energy scheme. He said in a very brief contribution that the figure referred to 'the added value that Europe could bring'. Later in the same report, David

Bostock from the European Court of Auditors was critical of the EU, suggesting that 'the Commission view of the world, which says all the problem lies with the member states is really rather misleading'. (Mr Bostock was categorised as an EU representative speaking *against* the EU's actions)

24th October, 2006

A package featured an interview with Nigel Farage of UKIP and Siim Kallas vice-president of the EU Commission. He offered a rebuttal of Mr Farage's criticisms, and argued that the tax payer would not lose money – a statement which was challenged by the interviewer, Tim Franks. Mr Franks suggested this was 'bad news' for the Commission, but Mr Kallas disagreed, 'The main bulk of errors are not having enough supported documentation, wrongly filled forms but not the losses, not the losses, not objectives not achieved.'

Within the context of this interview, Mr Farage was attacking the EU's financial record and Mr Kallas was defending it. Both speakers were categorised as such.

16th November 2006

The programme introduced 'MEP Sajjad Karim, chairman of the European Parliament's Friends of Pakistan group', to give the his perspective on a death sentence case taking place in Pakistan. The programme omitted to mention that Mr Karim was actually a Liberal Democrat MEP, and as such he was categorised as an EU speaker, when he ought to have been included along with his domestic political colleagues.

17th November 2006

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson was interviewed at length on the issue of Indian economic growth and climate change. He spoke of the contribution the EU could make to environmentally-friendly economic growth:

Does it invest in the sorts of . . . the technological cooperation and joint ventures with those of us in Europe – because we have so much to contribute to enable India to sustain its growth, but to do so in a climate-friendly way. Now, these are real policy choices.

20th November, 2006

Anthony Gooch of the European Commission office in London spoke about moves by the Commission to ban on the trade of all cat and dog fur.

The members of the European Parliament, they issued a resolution back in 2003, we've had representations from national governments increasing in the last couple of years, so we've got to the point where certainly we don't legislate lightly, and we feel that really this is the moment at which we have to take action.

Although this was an apparently un-contentious policy issue, the sceptical perspective here would be that it ought to be a policy legislated upon by individual nation states rather than the EU as a whole. This was mentioned in the introduction to the interview, but was not explored through the input of any sceptical or anti-EU guest.

24th November

In a package on a forthcoming Russia-EU summit, correspondent Jonny Dymond included a soundbite from the EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. When questioned as to why human rights seemed so low on the EU's list of priorities, Mr Solana provided the following defence:

Russia we criticise, and we have criticised Chechnya, we have criticised human rights, we have criticised everything that we think they do not meet the requirements. But this is not something that we have to be saying every day with drums and trumpets. We do it when we meet, we discuss it with the leaders.

27th November, 2006

The European Union's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Francesc Vendrell, was interviewed by Tim Franks. His opinion was that, 'it would be highly desirable if member states who are already present in Afghanistan did whatever the commander of the NATO forces – in this case General Richards – demanded'. Mr Franks asked him if there were specific countries who 'shout the loudest about the need for a Common Foreign and Security Policy in the EU, but when it comes to showing solidarity with other NATO members, perhaps they're a little lacking'. Mr Vendrell countered that Mr Franks had to, 'distinguish between solidarity with other NATO countries and solidarity within the EU.

7th December, 2006

Peter Mandelson was interviewed in the Business News section, explaining that the EU would pursue its own bilateral deals to free up trade with emerging nations, together with a review of anti-dumping measures to 'defend the EU against unfair imports'. When questioned whether the bilateral talks would bypass the WTO, Mr Mandelson replied, 'No, the whole point of a bilateral agreement, if it is going to be successful in adding to the sum total of world trade, and not simply diverting trade.' He added that he had, 'welded together quite a united and

progressive position for Europe' and said his job was to 'create a sense of solidarity and consensus amongst the member states'.

Additional Notes II

Investigation of interruptions during the Today programme's political interview sequences, June 2006

Broad headcounts do not provide information on the duration of each interview or give an indication of the way the discussion was conducted. The comparison of the William Hague and Geoff Hoon interviews raised a number of concerns, and, in order to see if this was simply an anomaly, or if the problem was more widespread, it was decided that all political interviews conducted during the survey period should be individually timed, and the number of interruptions tallied.

Interruptions

In order to gain an understanding of how these individual speakers were treated in their interviews, an analysis was undertaken to explore the number of interruptions in each interview sequence. Of course, there are a host of variables at play in an exercise such as this: the programme employs a range of presenters each with a different style; a particular interviewee may persistently avoid answering a question or need to be reined in for speaking tangentially; interruptions may be more frequent if an interview is conducted over the telephone or from a radio car, as the visual and body language cues associated with typical conversation are obscured. But in spite of these contributory factors, some apparent trends emerged.

All interviews with politicians (domestic MPs, MEPs, representatives of the EU institutions, and politicians from member states) were timed and the number of interruptions counted, in order to determine the interruptions per minute (IPM) for every interview. Any occasion on which an interviewer began to speak before the guest had finished was recorded and entered into a table. Any interjection which did not break or attempt to break the flow of speech were discounted – for example, when a presenter began to speak, but did not form a whole word before allowing the guest to continue, or when presenters murmured their assent to a particular point. The methodology also ignored interruptions undertaken to bring an interview to a close, although this circumstance did not occur in any of the sampled interviews.

Interviews where no interruption was actually possible – generally when a guest was asked only a single question on the EU, or when mention of the EU was not followed up by the presenter – were excluded from the list. As such, the table below also serves as a record of all the *substantive* political interviews broadcast during the survey period.

Today Political Interviews - Interruption Analysis						
Date	Contributor	Party/Title	Duration	Interruptions	IPM	Interviewer
27-Feb	Benita Ferrero Waldner	External Affairs Commissioner	5 min 29 sec	4	0.72	Edward Stourton
01-Mar	Valery Giscard D'Estaing	Former French president	6 min 44 sec	2	0.30	Carolyn Quinn
03-Mar	Lord Drayson	Labour Party	4 min 27 sec	3	0.67	Sarah Montague
06-Mar	Lord Patten	Chancellor of Oxford University	2 min 23 sec	0	0	Greg Wood
06-Mar	Lord Heseltine	Conservative Party	2 min 37 sec	0	0	Edward Stourton
09-Mar	Charlie McCreevy	European Commission	1 min 49 sec	0	0	John Moylan
09-Mar	Andris Piebalgs	European Commission	3 min 20 sec	0	0	Sarah Montague
16-Mar	Hans Peter Martin	Austrian MEP	2 min 41sec	0	0	James Naughtie
21-Mar	Guy Verhofstadt	Belgian Prime Minister	5 min 57 sec	0	0	Carolyn Quinn
25-Mar	Nigel Farage	UK Independence Party	2 min 05 sec	4	1.92	John Humphrys
25-Mar	Wolfgang Schuessel	Austrian Chancellor	4 min 50 sec	1	0.20	Carolyn Quinn
04-Apr	Andris Piebalgs	European Commission	2 min 24 sec	0	0	Carolyn Quinn
06-Apr	Peter Mandelson	European Commission	4 min 26 sec	3	0.67	Sarah Montague
07-Apr	Jimmy Hood	Labour Party	2 min 24 sec	2	0.83	Sarah Montague
07-Apr	Michael Gove	Conservative Party	2 min 20 sec	0	0	Sarah Montague
08-Apr	Nigel Farage	UK Independence Party	2 min 16 sec	1	0.44	James Naughtie
10-Apr	Chris Davies	Liberal Democrat	2 min 43 sec	0	0	John Humphrys
13-Apr	Chris Davies	Liberal Democrat	2 min 33 sec	0	0	Sarah Montague
19-Apr	Jack Straw	Labour Party	3 min 19 sec	1	0.32	Edward Stourton
26-Apr	Philip Davies	Conservative Party	2 min 28 sec	0	0	Sarah Montague
28-Apr	Peter Mandelson	European Commission	5 min 01 sec	5	1	John Humphrys
10-May	Marc Otte	European Commission	3 min 45 sec	1	0.27	Sarah Montague
10-May	Douglas Alexander	Labour Party	1 min 04 sec	4	3.74	James Naughtie
10-May	Urma Spaet	Estonian Foreign Minister	2 min 41 sec	1	0.37	Sarah Montague
10-May	David Heathcoat Amory	Conservative Party	2 min 20sec	2	0.86	Sarah Montague
16-May	Geoffrey Van Orden	Conservative MEP	2 min 31sec	0	0	Edward Stourton
23-May	Baroness Nicholson	Liberal Democrat MEP	2 min 15 sec	1	0.44	Carolyn Quinn
30-May	Malcolm Harbour	Conservative MEP	2 min 58 sec	0	0	Greg Wood
05-Jun	Gordon Brown	Labour Party	2 min 42 sec	2	0.74	John Humphrys
07-Jun	William Hague	Conservative Party	5 min 15 sec	20	3.80	James Naughtie
12-Jun	Gisela Stuart	Labour Party	2 min 45 sec	0	0	Greg Wood
13-Jun	Eluned Morgan	Labour MEP	2 min 27sec	4	1.63	James Naughtie
13-Jun	Vittorio Prodi	Italian MEP	2 min 26 sec	1	0.41	James Naughtie
14-Jun	Geoff Hoon	Labour Party	5 min 39 sec	4	0.70	James Naughtie
15-Jun	Roger Knapman	UK Independence Party	2 min 54 sec	3	1.03	James Naughtie
16-Jun	Andrej Bajuk	Slovenian Finance Minister	3 min 31 sec	0	0	Rebecca Marston
16-Jun	Margaret Beckett	Labour Party	4 min 31 sec	1	0.22	John Humphrys
17-Jun	Simon Coveney	Irish MEP	2 min 16 sec	2	0.88	Edward Stourton

The next table shows the five most interrupted interviewees, each of whom received over one interruption per minute of interview time.

Date	Contributor	Party	Duration	Interruptions	IPM	Interviewer
07-Jun	William Hague	Conservative Party	5 min 15 sec	20	3.80	James Naughtie
10-May	Douglas Alexander	Labour Party	1 min 4 sec	4	3.74	James Naughtie
25-Mar	Nigel Farage	UK Independence Party	2 min 05 sec	4	1.92	John Humphrys
13-Jun	Eluned Morgan	Labour MEP	2 min 27sec	4	1.63	James Naughtie
15-Jun	Roger Knapman	UK Independence Party	2 min 54 sec	3	1.03	James Naughtie

William Hague's interview appeared to be the toughest, with a twenty interruptions taking place during of his five and a quarter minute discussion. Transport minister Douglas Alexander experienced a similar rate of interruption, but the section of his interview concentrating on the EU was the shortest of all interviews qualifying for inclusion in this table, and the rest of his interview – which concentrated on proposals for a new national system of road charging – showed that this segment was actually atypical. The appearance of two UKIP speakers in the top five (out of only three interviews during the survey period) suggests that representatives of the party were treated comparatively harshly.

The table below shows the five speakers who were interrupted the least. (As there were fifteen speakers who were not interrupted at all, this table represents those who spoke for longest without interruption).

Date	Contributor	Party	Duration	Interruptions	IPM	Interviewer
21-Mar	Guy Verhofstadt	Belgian Prime Minister	5 min 57 sec	0	0	Carolyn Quinn
16-Jun	Andrej Bajuk	Slovenian Finance Minister	3 min 31 sec	0	0	Rebecca Marston
09-Mar	Andris Piebalgs	European Commission	3 min 20 sec	0	0	Sarah Montague
30-May	Malcolm Harbour	Conservative MEP	2 min 58 sec	0	0	Greg Wood
12-Jun	Gisela Stuart	Labour Party	2 min 45 sec	0	0	Greg Wood

All the speakers in this table – including the Conservative MEP Malcolm Harbour, who discussed a compromise deal on cross border trade he had negotiated in the European Parliament – were speaking in favour of the EU or an element of its legislation.

To investigate how a particular presenting style might influence the number of interruptions occurring in a particular sequence, data relating to each presenter was isolated, and the results are presented in the table below.

Presenter	Interviews	Interruptions	IPM
James Naughtie	8	37	4.6
John Humphrys	5	12	2.4
Edward Stourton	4	5	1.3
Sarah Montague	10	12	1.2
Carolyn Quinn	5	4	0.8
Greg Wood	3	0	0
John Moylan	1	0	0

The data indicates that the three regular male presenters were most likely to interrupt a guest, the two regular female presenters interrupted less frequently, and the two business news presenters did not interrupt guests at all. While the overall sample size was relatively small – 36 interviews with a duration of just over 2 hours of airtime – this exercise perhaps give some indication of which presenters might be considered the ‘toughest’.