

Agenda Setting Newsletter



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Germans worried about unemployment

Media reporting on the job market has rapidly increased in Germany over the last four months and as a result the public has been worrying more about the rising unemployment. Media Tenor Research Institute compared media coverage of the job market in German opinion-leading media with the ZDF (German TV) Political Barometer Poll, conducted monthly since October 2004. Media Tenor analyzed all reports concerning unemployment in 36 German media between October 2004 and March 2005 and then compared the media coverage with the public opinion research.

According to the Federal Statistical Office, the unemployment rate in Germany has increased from 10.8% in December of 2004 to 12.6% in March of this year. The percentage of young unemployed people doubled in March 2005 compared with April 2004 and now stands at 7% of the total. The media picked up on this issue, increasing its news coverage rapidly. This example, as laid out in agenda setting theory, shows that the greater the media coverage of any given issue, the more people consider it to be important. According to ZDF's political barometer, up to 84% of all respondents worry about the current situation of the job market. This represents a 12% increase in comparison with January 2005.

Media Tenor also once again noticed a general preference for coverage of negative events in the media. For instance, in the Winter of 1997/98, during the run-up to the 1998 parliamentary elections, the media portrayed the economic situation in an extremely negative tone, although all early indicators pointed to greater economic growth in Germany.

