



## Summary of Research Undertaken in Bulgaria, November 2010

By Media Research International  
Grand Rapids, MI

MRI conducted impact research in Bulgaria on behalf of Studio 865, Sofia, and 3XM, Amersfoort, Netherlands during the month of November 2010. The research consisted of four elements.

First was a random sample survey of households in Plovdiv, Burgas, and Varna, Bulgaria. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and approximately 2,600 interviews were completed. This work was designed to evaluate the response of the general public to the television efforts of Studio 865. Although it is possible that people in other parts of Bulgaria might have responded to these questions differently, and thus we cannot claim that these respondents were representative of the entire Bulgarian population, the size and collection of the sample provides over 95% certainty (+/- 3%) that the results achieved were indicative of the general knowledge of, and reaction to, Studio 865's television programs.

The second element of the research involved the use of focus groups in several Bulgarian communities scattered around the country. The participants in these focus groups were recruited by Protestant pastors in their communities. Although a few of the participants were not Protestant Christians, most were, and they were to represent the response to specific television program content by the wider Christian community of Bulgaria, regardless of whether they had ever seen the program before.

The third element consisted of telephone surveys of people who had seen the television program and had either communicated with the station in the past or who, in response to a televised appeal, texted their mobile number in for a call-back interview to be conducted. This part of the research was to provide information on the response of past and current viewers to the program.

The fourth element in the research was conducted via the Internet. Since Studio 865's programs were available on its website, a link was added asking visitors to complete a series of questions about their use of, and response to, the program available via the web.

Over 90% of the residents of Bulgaria have a television. It is the single most-owned communications device in the country. Nearly 70% of the residents of the three cities surveyed also had access to a satellite dish, with virtually the same percentage also having access to a computer. This means that Studio 865's programs are readily available to a large majority of Bulgarians through multiple connections. In addition, over 80% of the survey respondents said they used their television on a daily basis, with nearly 60% using cable, and over 50% using their computer, daily as well. Nearly all the respondents

who had computers had broadband access, making delivery of television programs via the Internet quite easy.

Few Bulgarians surveyed, however, indicated that religious programs were among their favorites. Nearly 78% of the respondents indicated that news programs were among their favorites, but only 6.1% indicated that religious programs were in that category.

Favorite television networks used were bTV (80%) and Nova TV (50+%). 20-25% of respondents also reported BNT 1, Pro BG and Diema TV as channels they watched.

There were three religious programs available to people. Channel BNT 3 carried “Society and Faith, and just over 10% of those surveyed had watched it. Those who had seen it said that it had helped strengthen their faith and that they had learned more about the Orthodox tradition. Nova TV carried “Iconostas.” 6.8% of those surveyed had seen it. Of these, over one-third said that the program had helped them learn new things about Christianity, while 8.5% said that their own ideas about faith had changed as a result of seeing this program. The third program was produced by Studio 865, and was carried on TB Europa. This program, “Christianity,” had been seen by 5.6% of those surveyed. Just under 60% of those who had seen the program judged it the best, or better than, other television programs that had seen. Almost one-third of the viewers said that it had affected the way they saw life and the Christian faith. Nearly 18% of those who had seen the program said it had changed their ideas about Christianity. Over 30% reported that it had made them more interested in reading the Bible and 20% said it had helped them understand the significance of worship more clearly. It had led nearly 17% of the viewers to visit a different church and nearly 12% to attend church or to attend it more regularly.

Further questions revealed that those who had seen the religious programs put more trust in “Christianity” than they did in the other two programs.

Among the focus group participants, evaluations of the quality of the programs tested was generally positive. People appreciated the use of guests on the program and generally thought that the questions put to the guests were well-phrased and helpful to them as viewers. The only significant concerns raised by some of the participants is that the female host of the program should be younger so as to attract younger viewers. There seemed to be general appreciation of the program for the attendees themselves, and an assumption that the program should be evangelistic (and thus aimed as others), with various advice given as to what they thought would attract non-Christians to the program. Interpreting their response to the program is thus somewhat difficult as many of the respondents seemed to be replying to a general question of whether or not the content would be attractive to those they assumed it should be for, rather than giving their own evaluations of the value of the program for themselves. Since most of the participants were Christians themselves, they tended to see the program as aimed at others with an evangelistic intent.

Small numbers of participants participated in the telephone call-in and Internet-based elements of the research. As should be expected from people who had chosen to attend to

the program, and then to correspond with the producers, or to volunteer to take the Internet-based survey, their evaluations of the content of the program were quite positive. They had learned new things, and changed some behaviors as a result of their activity with the program. Many had recommended it to others, and were willing to talk about it with friends and family. It clearly had made a positive contribution to their lives. What remained now was merely making the value of the program more widely known in Bulgaria so that the impact of the program could be increased merely by increasing the size of its audience.

Overall, the programs produced by Studio 865 are evaluated positively, both by those within the church itself, and by a good proportion of the general population. Any change introduced in the program, or the creation of additional programs, would thus happen from a solid base. Producing a program with appeal to the more popular television channels in Bulgaria, especially bTV, might provide a broader reach if such a program could be made to appeal to that larger audience, but that can always be an issue with commercial broadcasters.