

EBU 50th Anniversary

*An exceptional Diffusion
for exceptional anniversaries!*

*Of the two numbers - 2000 and 50 -
it is of course the latter that is of
greater significance for the EBU,
because this coming year the
European Broadcasting Union will
be celebrating its 50th jubilee. The
fact that it coincides with the year
2000, which for many people is a
symbol of change of all types,
merely reinforces the impact of this
anniversary.*

*12 February 1950 - 12 February
2000: 50 years of a century in
which the world has, without a
shadow of a doubt, seen radical
changes in many different sectors -
television, radio, telecom-
munications, new technology,
satellites, the Internet, not to
mention the fall of empires, the
birth of a united Europe, huge steps
towards democracy, and so on and
so forth.*

*The ideal opportunity for Diffusion
to round up the progress and
development over the past 50 years
and to take a peek at the future of
broadcasting.*

*Patrick Jaquin
Editor-in-Chief*

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Albert Scharf
President, European Broadcasting Union

If a week is a long time in politics, as a British prime minister once said, 50 years is an eternity in broadcasting.

In February 1950, when the European Broadcasting Union was founded during cold and gusty weather in the “English Riviera” resort of Torquay, television did not even feature in the discussions. The number of European countries capable of producing their own television programmes could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Half a century later, the EBU’s members exchange 25,000 television news items every year through up to 30 digital satellite channels over the Eurovision network. They run multiple radio and television channels and, in many cases, are developing exciting new services on a new third medium: the Internet. They make programmes together and spend billions on the right to broadcast major sporting events.

Not everything has changed

In 1950, the 23 broadcasting organizations that founded the EBU (as a successor to the International Broadcasting Union, which had been discredited during the war) were interested primarily in technical

cooperation and international law. Although the technical element focused on the allocation and monitoring of wavelength use, both technical cooperation and legal issues remain very much on the EBU’s agenda.

The following sentences – from a frontpage report in *The Listener*, a now defunct BBC weekly, on the foundation of the EBU - are as true today as they were 50 years ago:

“Broadcasting services have to regulate their affairs with many different interests – performing right societies, gramophone record manufacturers, musicians’ unions, to mention but a few – and many of these are organized on an international basis and seek, quite naturally, through international action to create the conditions most favourable to themselves. It is only right, therefore, that broadcasting organizations should also take international action to look after their own interests and to create the conditions in which all legitimate claims, including those of broadcasting, can be most equitably settled.”

Nobody in the EBU, least of all anybody working in legal or European affairs, would disagree!

Summary

than ever...

A crowded market

But there is one fundamental change that has implications for the very essence of the EBU and its members - the emergence and rapid proliferation of commercial broadcasters.

In 1950, the organizations that formed the EBU were the only broadcasters in their respective countries.

Now they are part of a crowd. And if market forces combined with the extraordinary new technologies can offer a vast choice of programming provided by new broadcasters, why should viewers and listeners continue to pay licence fees for the old? What is the case for public service broadcasting and the EBU in the 21st century, in the third millennium?

The answer is simple; the need for broadcasting dedicated to serving the public – through quality programming, including news, to the widest possible audience – is even more pressing today than in the past.

While commercial broadcasters use programmes to make money for their shareholders – either by selling viewers to advertisers, or, in pay-TV, by dividing the population into haves and have-nots - only public service

broadcasters aim to serve the whole population regardless of social class or purchasing power.

The Amsterdam protocol, which came into force as binding European Union law on 1 May 1999, recognized that “the system of Public Broadcasting in the Member States is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism.”

Public service broadcasters respond to this need for media pluralism with their traditional range of independent programming of information, education, culture, and entertainment. And to support them through an all-European framework of mutual assistance is the main objective of the European Broadcasting Union.

United in this common mission – and with its strength enhanced and enriched since 1993 by the broadcasters of central and eastern Europe – I am confident that the EBU and its members will be even more important in the future than they have been in the past 50 years.

Millennium

Boris Bergant
EBU Vice-President, RTVSLO

The new

Never before has human history seen a century comparable in scope and speed of technical development with the one at the end of the 20th century. During the last few decades, we have not only been witnessing new and more threatening military conflicts, crises and tensions, but also an unimagined progress of science and technology, which could be regarded as a reason for optimism.

countries and societies, as well as on the international level.

New divisions

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the present British government under Mr Blair offered a revolutionary solution for overcoming the very sensitive break between the rich and the poor; besides a basic supply of public goods (among them also public broadcasting), it will provide the poorest families with access to the computer and the Internet for a merely symbolic, subsidized fee.

The fastest development is happening in information technology, in the spread of new electronic and mass media, in the field of inter-activity and convergence. With the globalization process, we are becoming better and closer connected and inter-dependent.

Yet, this undreamed expansion of the last few years opens up new dangers of divisions caused by progress and technology, new potential dissatisfaction within

New technologies applied in such a way ought to contribute to closing the gap of technical illiteracy and open up a way to those skills enabling us to access the biggest and broadest treasure of humankind floating through cyberspace.

The international community should follow the British example. Because, as undreamed of dimensions the technical progress has taken, as undreamed is the threat of a new gap between the developed and developing countries. The poorer

economies are unable to keep the pace of technical progress,

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which requires new investments in very short cycles. Instead of building bridges and bringing people closer together, technology is threatening a huge part of humankind with alienation. This must be prevented by all means.

Solidarity

The EBU is facing similar problems as well. Hence, the need to maintain solidarity represents a major precondition for its successful and efficient functioning on the threshold of the new millennium; the basic elements of the Union have to prevail over the more and more distinct route into an exclusively commercial activity, which is at the same time a precondition for the survival of the public service broadcasting model.

Public broadcasting will in future have to care even more about the specifics of its mission; rational operation and a maximum utilization of the new technical equipment are with regard to the ever growing competition most certainly very important aspects, but we shouldn't throw the baby out with the bath water.

A feeling of solidarity and shared responsibility for a balanced development of EBU members and European countries in general should not represent a kind of sacrifice or some higher form of social welfare, but a moral obligation and the only possible peaceful alternative and outlook.

European integration is not only in the interest of those countries, which

wish to join the train of progress and prosperity, but is also very much in the economic and political interest of the developed countries. Peace, coexistence and security on the continent cannot be ensured by new and more inventive barriers and one-sided rules of the game, but by opening new perspectives and offering solutions which are in harmony with the state of technology in Europe.

Turning the page

As its leadership changes and the EBU accepts new challenges, it will have to turn the page in its orientation and practice as well.

While competing and comparing with others and trying to establish in our own midst and in the common European environment house the best possible starting positions for our operation in the new millennium, we have to take a critical look at ourselves. We have to search for new organizational patterns and procedures, which will serve the specific interests of individual members and groups better and contribute to their complete integration. The motto holds true for the EBU that we need unity, as well as recognition of diversity, globalization, better representation and a more universal acknowledgement of the EBU.

Public service broadcasting and its international Union cannot just serve its purpose. It should support the

implementation of the public broadcasting programme and provision of quality. Public broadcasting must be distinct from operators of other more commercial services. With the advance of new technologies, the demand for these features is growing, becoming sharper and more comprehensive. Yet, we will only be able to run it only inter-actively and not down a one-way street.

Living in the age of cyberspace and a networked world, we tend to think that everything is different from the way it was before. Constant daily change must be affecting everything we do, we are and we value. But has it?

When the EBU was set up during a European broadcasting conference in Torquay in February 1950, forty-one delegates from 23 countries came together to create an organization of value to them. The Union's "most essential task" was defined as being "the defence of the interests of broadcasting in the technical and legal fields". The staff employed to carry out the work of the Union was mandated to "act as a centre of information on all matters affecting the interests of members". Early priorities were copyright, technical developments and the formation of a committee for cooperation on programming and programme exchange. Has anything really changed in 50 years?

The most apparent change is in the environment in which the EBU operates. Markets have grown and with that the number and strength of our competitors. Competition to traditional broadcasters is coming from a wide variety of sources,

commercial broadcasters, information technology companies and publishing houses. All are now anxious to try to grab our audience's attention and assets and gain a share in what they see as a lucrative business. Governments and regulators are under pressure to completely ignore the different nature of public service broadcasters and leave them to be swallowed up by competing, wholly commercial operators. EBU members, now more than ever, need to make clear how they are different, their value to the public, and to demonstrate their need for public funding. Working together they can benefit from the synergies existing between public service programme makers throughout the European broadcasting area. They can produce distinctive European programmes, which inform, entertain and educate their audiences.

EBU's core business of defending the interests of broadcasting in the technical and legal fields remains as

valid today as it was in 1950. In addition the Union has expanded its remit to offer new services to members, which are necessary in today's and tomorrow's environment.

Audiovisual standards

EBU members and the Permanent Services' engineers have been responsible for defining common standards for many of television's key technologies such as digital television programme production for both conventional quality and high definition television, satellite television broadcasting systems, digital radio systems, radio data systems. They also make major contributions in many other areas such as spectrum planning. Advocating and developing open standards will help ensure that in the future quality broadcasting will remain accessible to the wider public, and not just to sections of the population who can afford to pay a high price for it.

The legal experts at the EBU have from the start provided information to the members on crucial issues such as copyright. In the forthcoming GATS round the EBU will work to find the proper allies for its members and give voice to their concerns. As the European Union has grown so too has the volume of work which it

Retaining Past va

Jean Bernard Münch
Secretary General, EBU

generates for the EBU. This has necessitated the creation of an EBU office in Brussels close to the institutions located there, which is in a position to maintain continuous personal contact with EU decision-makers. The Legal Department and the Brussels Office work together monitoring all draft legislation and policy as well as advising members on matters affecting their business. The Communications Service ensures that proper tools are available to disseminate EBU messages effectively to opinion-leaders.

Sports rights

The acquisition of sports rights has been important for the EBU right from the start. However, when the EBU was set up, the cost of sports rights and the battle to acquire them certainly bore little resemblance to the situation today. EBU members came together for the first time to negotiate the rights to the 1954 World Cup. Television and radio have undoubtedly, since then, helped to popularize many sports. Perhaps we are, to some degree, victims of our own success. The fundamental aim of making sure that many millions of television viewers are able to share in the excitement of seeing a national team winning or losing, remains the same as it was in the 1950s. However, it is becoming more difficult to ensure

that this happens. Prices have escalated and the stakes are high as sports coverage can mean winning or losing audience share. The solidarity of members in holding together and negotiating for the good of all has been impressive in the past, and we hope that, in spite of market pressure, it will remain so in the future.

In August 1950, the very first television link from Britain to France took place. EBU's first programme exchange of any scale took place in 1953 on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. In the summer of 1954, a real series of programme exchanges, 18 programmes in total, was organized. Remarkably the tastes of the audience have not changed considerably since then! The highlight of that summer's television viewing was the World Cup.

Eurovision news

The Eurovision network has travelled a long way since then. A road that brought to viewers' homes the funeral of Pope Pius XII and man's first walk on the moon. The Eurovision news exchange provides members with up to the minute news pictures daily. In addition, EBU special operations sends equipment and specialists to the field so that members can report directly from world and sporting events. The digitization of the

network in 1998 has enlarged the capacity considerably and permits more extensive coverage, especially in crisis situations. The network's 100,000th transmission of 1999 took place in November, making it another record year. The thirst for more and more timely news grows, and EBU members have to deliver what their audience wants. The Union plans therefore, to develop further its services in this area to meet members' requirements.

Radio

Activities in the field of radio have grown too. The EBU coordinates coverage of major sports fixtures and events for its radio members. Euroradio broadcasts thousands of classical concerts and numerous other special events and youth programmes every year. Around 400 million people around the world, thanks to Euroradio, enjoy live broadcasts from the world's most prestigious opera houses and concert halls. In 1998 Euroclassic Noturno was set up. This six hour, classical music show is transmitted daily to 10 countries. Each country is responsible for the commentary in their language.

Especially over the past 10 years the EBU's membership has expanded taking in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In the spirit of

values and

solidarity which underlies all the activities of the Union, EBU legal experts have helped former communist countries to put in place new broadcasting legislation upon which public service broadcasting is based, thereby ensuring previously undreamed of media freedom. There is ongoing support in the form of expertise and financial incentives for members in disadvantaged regions. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, EBU supports the establishment of public service broadcasting. Since 1994, an EBU programme to train journalists and technicians has run successfully. Training of broadcast professionals from members remains a high priority for the Union.

New technology

Technology is a strong force of change in the broadcasting environment. Television and radio have been joined by another contender for viewers' and listeners' time and money- the Internet. EBU member broadcasters are being forced to reassess their role and the value which they bring to their audience. They are developing and building on their strengths as content providers in the knowledge that, if the time comes where there is complete convergence of delivery mechanisms, people will choose services that provide quality content at affordable prices. The EBU is evolving to continue supporting and

meeting the needs of its members as they embrace new technologies.

So is change affecting the EBU and its values?

As we have seen, many of the core values of members and of the EBU as an organization remain the same. The EBU continues to play a unique and important role in the business of its members. While retaining the important principle of solidarity in the defence of members' interests, it has changed and adapted to offer valuable services to members operating in a changed environment, and has all the tools to continue doing this in the future.

change

adapting to

Interview

Nicole Fontaine

President of the European Parliament

Patrick Jaquin: In your opinion, what is the role of public service broadcasting in Europe? Is the public service philosophy still relevant as we go into the 21st century?

Nicole Fontaine: When we speak of the information society, there is one thing we should always bear in mind: information is a vital element in supporting and developing democratic debate. It should also be a factor in improving people's quality of life. It is true that society and the economy are undergoing change, but it is also true that the core of our civilization remains the same. By that I mean respect for the fundamental rights of citizens and participation in public life. I am firmly persuaded that public service broadcasting, with the print media, will continue to be a pillar of our society. It will of course fulfil this role by cooperating with institutions and voluntary bodies concerned with respect for the principles of democracy and freedom.

PJ: In your opinion, is public service broadcasting in danger of becoming just another product?

NF: Public-service broadcasting is a value, not a product. We should avoid demonizing the world of commerce and finance, but there is a valid





distinction to be drawn between the value of markets and the market in values. Our society must continue to promote participation in a political process inspired by the principles of democracy and equality of opportunity. Public service broadcasting – as the protocol annexed to the Amsterdam Treaty states – is an important instrument which member states can use to achieve this objective. We shall be carefully monitoring the development of the audiovisual and multimedia market, and shall be concerned to safeguard the identity of public service broadcasting and its dissemination.

PJ: How do you see the role of listeners and viewers: are they just consumers of a great wave of sounds and images, or are they still citizens?

NF: Of course, technological progress in the audiovisual sector will continue to increase the volume of products available to the general public. The development, alongside the general-interest channels, of thematic and pay-TV, and also TV-via-Internet, will certainly lead to changes in the habits of viewers as consumers of “audiovisual leisure facilities”.

From this point of view, the audiovisual market will become – at least potentially – more pluralist, in fact

more like the market in printed material (books, magazines, etc.), but with two major differences: products will be delivered directly to households, and distribution costs will be very much reduced. This will potentially provide an outlet even for small businesses offering good quality products at affordable prices. Generally speaking, as citizens viewers will have greater freedom of choice and therefore greater responsibility than in the past. I feel I must emphasize the position of the European Parliament, which stresses the importance of taking social objectives, fair competition and the general interest into account when drawing up the relevant regulations. The Parliament is concerned to ensure that an overall balance is achieved through European regulation.

PJ: How can they influence developments at the Community level?

NF: Since the Amsterdam Treaty came into force, the European Union has been putting the individual citizen at the heart of its work – hence the efforts made by the EU institutions to take into account the growing importance of Europe in daily life. Where broadcasting systems are concerned, it is vital to remember that the application of the relevant directives is a matter for the member states. Consequently, individuals must work within the framework of national regulation in exercising and ensuring respect for their rights. The European Commission, as guardian of EU law, will of course have to take

into account all the factors brought to its attention, including those pointed out by individuals or consumer associations. The Parliament is also listening to what citizens have to say and will be responding to those who make approaches, whether individually or collectively by petitions. When the time comes, in the year 2002, we shall have to re-examine the application of the “Television without frontiers” directive, and the EU will have to draw the appropriate conclusions at that stage.

PJ: Is the impact of new technologies, such as the Internet, having (or will it have) consequences for “European” thinking about broadcasting?

NF: Undoubtedly. The convergence between telecommunications, the media and information technologies has already been the subject of an in-depth debate within the European Union, based on the Green Paper published in December 1997. As far back as 1997, the European Parliament insisted on the appropriateness of making a separation between the regulations applicable to electronic communications infrastructures and those relating to the content being transmitted (illegal or harmful), and stipulated that this rule should also be valid for international agreements. Of course, the European Parliament will continue to scrutinize the Commission’s proposals regarding the information society and the audiovisual sector.



Roof of the European Parliament, Strasbourg

PJ: The previous Parliament played an important role in drafting European legislation on broadcasting. What part do you see the current Parliament playing, not only in its legislative function but in relation to political matters for which the Commission has exclusive competence, for example the application of the principle of free competition to the funding of public service broadcasting?

NF: The European Parliament's role in relation to matters of competition consists mainly in its right to seek information from the Commission. Remember that the Commission continues to be the guarantor of the application of community law and the European treaties, including the Amsterdam Protocol on the public service broadcasting system. The Parliament's right to information is not just a means of achieving greater transparency; it is above all an instrument for promoting effective dialogue and cooperation between the European institutions.

PJ: What, in your opinion, is the best way of funding public service radio and television?

NF: There are several sides to this question. Theoretically, one could say that a public service provided by a publicly owned broadcasting organization should always be funded from public sources, by a licence fee or tax mechanism. In reality, national systems for funding public service broadcasting differ, and the Amsterdam Protocol takes this into account. It also allows for member states to delegate public service missions to either public or private operators. At community level, there is therefore already a precise legal framework in place, founded essentially on the criteria of proportionality and transparency. It makes the member states responsible for its concrete application at the national level.

PJ: The EBU is particularly concerned about the preparation of the future Charter of Fundamental Rights (freedom of expression, pluralism, respect for private property, the right to information, etc.). What are the European Parliament's objectives in this area?

NF: Once again, we must refer to the Treaties, and particularly article 6 of the Amsterdam Treaty. This states that the Union is founded on the principles of freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the member states. The Parliament has for a long time stressed this fundamental aspect of the community process by getting people to see economic and monetary integration in the broadest possible political perspective. The draft Charter of Fundamental Rights, launched at the European summit in Tampere, should in my opinion, confirm the rightness of this objective. In my opinion, we should be seeking to include in the Charter all the rights you mention, and others in respect of information. The fundamentals will be based on the Council of Europe's Convention of Human Rights, in particular article 10 concerning the pluralism of means of information.

Interview by Patrick Jaquin, in collaboration with the EBU's Brussels Office.

Before

Torquay

In the early 1920s, radio was spreading throughout Europe, raising complex international questions in various fields: legal, technical and practical. In this situation, an international “expert” was required – an organization to settle the problems.

1929: The International Broadcasting Union is established, with administrative headquarters in Geneva and technical office in Brussels. The Brussels office is essentially a measuring centre for user frequencies. The IBU organizes international conferences and acts as mediator in the event of disputes between members. In the late 1920s, the Bureau begins fostering exchanges of radio programmes.

May 1940: World War II threatens the existence of the IBU. The Brussels measuring centre is evacuated to Switzerland, but Germany has little difficulty in persuading the Swiss to return the equipment in January 1941. Among other things, the installations are used by the Wehrmacht to monitor allied radio activity.

Thirteen member countries stop cooperating with the IBU now that it is under German control. Its membership is effectively reduced to

the Axis powers and broadcasting organizations under their control in occupied territories. In addition to Belgian personnel, the Brussels office is staffed on an almost permanent basis by operators appointed by the occupying power – some of them in uniform. The IBU office in Geneva continues to function with a reduced staff.

This collaboration with the Nazis enables the IBU to survive the war, but leaves it compromised in the eyes of the victorious Allies, who feel they can no longer trust it.

Spring 1946: The representatives of the Soviet radio committee manage to obtain a majority of European countries in favour of founding an international association of radio operators. They aim to dissolve the IBU and take over its activities.

At the same time, preparations are made for an inter-governmental “European Broadcasting Confe-

rence” (EBC), to be held in Copenhagen in 1948. Its task is to draw up a detailed plan for allocating radio frequencies.

This project, later known as “the Copenhagen wavelength plan” in turn requires the involvement of an “expert” body responsible for implementing the decisions taken in Copenhagen. This function, undertaken by the IBU in the pre-war years, must now be transferred to a new organization.

The BBC adopts an attitude of “wait and see”, refusing to take part in the dissolution of the IBU and set up a new association which is likely to be dominated by the Soviet Union. The main reason for British scepticism is the new voting procedure enshrined in the articles of association, whereby each member has one vote in the General Assembly. This proposal is flawed: the USSR has announced that some of its member republics will be treated as independent states, which gives it eight votes. France has similar intentions for its North-African colonies, giving it four votes. Great Britain has only one.

27-28 June 1946: Without British participation, 26 members found the International Broadcasting Organization (IBO). Next day, at the General Assembly of the IBU, an



Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Cappendale. President of the IBU 1925/1935

attempt is made to dissolve this body, but the motion fails to obtain the required majority. However, 18 of the 28 existing members leave the IBU and become co-founders of the new IBO.

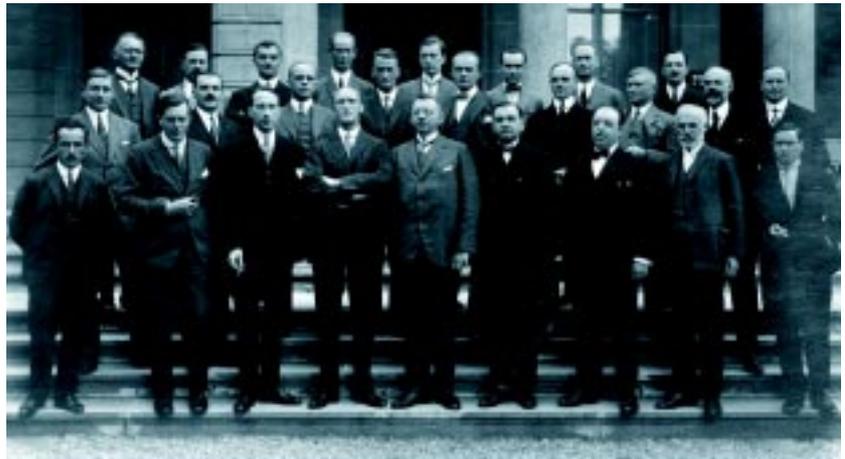
Late 1940s: Two international broadcasting organizations vie for the role of “expert” in the allocation of radio frequencies: the pre-existing IBU and the Soviet and French-dominated IBO. Neither organization was able to draw the support of Great Britain.

Talks are then organized, at which the BBC presents its point of view, while the two organizations try to find a way forward, but there is a visible deterioration in the atmosphere due to the Berlin crisis and growing tension between the western powers and the Warsaw Pact countries.

Although the Copenhagen conference is unable to decide to grant one of the two organizations expert status in the allocation of radio frequencies, the IBO has begun to rent the IBU technical centre and employ the centre’s staff under its control.

The BBC then offers to join the IBO if its articles are amended in such a way that only one broadcasting organization from each country belonging to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is entitled to vote. This will ensure a clear Western majority against a Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe.

August 1949: The different groups gather to negotiate at Stresa. A number of disputes break out, showing that it is not only the representatives of the IBU and the BBC who cannot or will not fall into line with the IBO (and vice-versa). Disagreements come to light within the IBO itself. France, the Netherlands, Italy and Belgium declare their intention to resign from the IBO and, at the end of the conference, the IBO President, Julien Kuypers, observes that: *“This meeting*



First European conference of radio engineers, IBU. Geneva, 1925.

at Stresa has not been in vain, if only because it has clearly revealed our respective positions and dissipated the illusions we have been nursing for some years in thinking that it would be possible, on certain conditions, to achieve unity in European broadcasting.”

Future “European broadcasting” is to exclude the countries of the Eastern bloc, the Levant and North Africa.

A consensus gradually emerges among the countries of Western Europe that the best way to resolve the IBO/IBU dilemma is to set up a completely new organization, despite a lingering mistrust of Great Britain. In the opinion of some, the BBC wants to dominate the new organization, and even move its headquarters to London!

31 October - 1 November 1949: delegates of Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Great Britain meet in Paris with representatives of the IBO and the IBU. The IBO is represented by its President, Julien Kuypers, Head of Administration Wallenborn and technician Anglès d’Auriac; the IBU has sent its President, Conus, accompanied by Messrs Bomholte and Jensen of Denmark, O’Brien of Ireland, and Hayta of Turkey. The various national broadcasting companies of Western Europe are prepared, in principle, to abandon the

IBO in favour of a “Western” broadcasting association, but a “mixed technical committee” must first settle certain points of detail.

One of the most important questions is whether the “rump” of the IBO is prepared to give up the equipment it is still renting in Brussels and the former IBU staff it has been employing. At this meeting in Paris, the question arises as to whether West Germany should be admitted to the new organization. At the suggestion of the Dutch delegation, it is decided to postpone discussion of this issue until after the establishment of the new body. It is thought undesirable that West Germany be one of the founder members.

13 February 1950: Torquay, in the south of England, is the setting for the constituent assembly of a new western-inspired European broadcasting association, now fifty years old.

To be continued...

1950

the EBU

Although Torquay, pearl of the “English Riviera”, was lashed by a storm on 13 February 1950, the elements were fortunately not violent enough to wreck the congenial atmosphere carefully cultivated by the BBC in a bid to ensure the success of the constituent assembly of the EBU.

Delegates from broadcasting organizations in 23 countries of the ITU-defined “European Broadcasting Area” were in good humour, and the comfort of the Imperial Hotel helped them overlook the fact that the pleasant weather normally to be expected in February in this British seaside resort was sorely lacking. And so the conference yielded the desired result: the “European Broadcasting Union” was set up by the broadcasters of a geographical area which embraced the continent of Europe – excluding the communist bloc, but including Yugoslavia – along with Turkey, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. The Federal Republic of Germany was not invited to the assembly.

Sir Ian Jacob of the BBC was the new organization’s first president and was to remain at the helm until he retired in 1960, with only a short gap between 1952 and 1954.

In its early years the EBU was dominated by the BBC, which had a considerable lead financially and technically as well as in terms of staff, and Sir Ian’s pleasant personality and rather aloof charm imbued the whole organization. The somewhat abrupt tone of the last years of IBU Assemblies was a thing of the past. Members were among friends, without the States of the eastern bloc, and the dazzling progress of television

increased their sense of being part of technology’s avant-garde.

And yet the Torquay Assembly did not discuss one single issue relating to television – still such an exotic sphere! – and the EBU’s work was essentially focused on radio.

In Torquay the EBU drew up its statutes. Participants quickly and easily agreed on the names “European Broadcasting Union” and “Union Européenne de Radiodiffusion” and on the use of English and French as working languages. Agreement was also reached on membership and voting rights: members were not States, but broadcasting organizations in ITU-member countries. The aim here was twofold: to prevent political intervention by governments, and to leave the ITU with the responsibility for deciding on membership for



Participants at the Torquay meeting

Germany and Austria. When, in 1951-52, the ITU admitted Germany as a member, the German broadcasting organization also became a member of the EBU.

The first difference of opinion concerned the headquarters. The attempt to centralize everything in Brussels failed and the EBU reverted to the old IBU model of administrative offices in Geneva and technical centre in Brussels.

The OIRT, for its part, continued to exist in parallel with the EBU, as the umbrella organization for the broadcasters in the socialist States of the European Broadcasting Area, and set up its headquarters in Prague.

One of the EBU's first actions was to publish, in May 1950, the first issue of the "EBU Documentation and Information Bulletin", a newsletter for member organizations which followed in the footsteps of the "IBU Bulletin". It was mimeographed until 1957, before being printed as two separate bimonthly "Reviews", one dealing with technical matters and the other with legal and general issues.

On 23 May 1950, the IBU was disbanded and its assets were transferred to the EBU.

At the EBU Administrative Council's second meeting, in Rapallo in May 1950, Marcel Bezençon presented for the first time his project for a system of television programme exchanges. "Nevertheless," Sir Ian Jacob suggested, "nobody should feel discouraged from taking any initiative which was thought in the interest of broadcasting provided that such activities did not lead to other tasks being neglected or to demands being made for extra staff or financial resources".

The Assembly was hesitant about the project.

Sir Ian Jacob also explained that "if you could exchange all the programmes you wanted straight from one place to the other, why would you require a programme committee to do

anything about it? And I suspected," he added, "with some justification, that some of the delegates ... wanted another annual jolly."

It is true that the participants clearly enjoyed the meetings of EBU working parties and committees. Apart from being an occasion for interesting travel, the specialist meetings offered an opportunity for delegates to get together informally, stimulated creativity and provided an outlet for their wealth of ideas.

However, no such working groups were set up for programme-planners, unlike those for lawyers, who had more or less completed the statutes, and technical experts. In fact the lawyers attached no importance whatsoever to the TV sector, and their vision of the EBU's role was deliberately limited to technical, administrative and legal matters.

So the mistrust regarding a group specializing in "programmes" was not based entirely on professional considerations.

The Calais experiment

Despite these obstacles, however, progress was being made, and the lawyers and administrators were caught unawares by the technicians and programme directors during the Calais experiment on 27 August 1950, when the first TV link was set up between France and Great Britain. For this transmission of "Calais en fête" there was no means of converting the different line standards – 405 lines of horizontal images in Britain, 819 in France – and BBC sent the necessary crew and equipment to France and transmitted pictures live from Calais to Britain using an improvised radio link. The pictures could be seen reasonably well in Britain, but not at all in France.

Proof had nevertheless been provided that it was possible to microwave TV pictures over the Channel. Therefore, if the problems of compatibility could be solved, why should the same not be done between several countries – or even all over Europe!



On 5 October 1950, Marcel Bezençon presented President Jacob with a more detailed plan for an EBU programme exchange system, so that the Administrative Council could examine it at its next session, in Ouchy-Lausanne.

Views were extremely divided regarding the chances of setting up a programme committee and organizing exchanges.

Marcel Bezençon and the Belgian Théo Fleischmann were in favour. Daumard of France and Marriott of the UK were in two minds, feeling that legal and technical questions were more urgent, but nevertheless wanting to be members of such a committee should it be set up. And in opposition there were a number of delegates who felt that bilateral and multilateral agreements were all that was needed to mount exchange operations.

Sir Ian Jacob then suggested that the supporters of the idea should draw up a concrete proposal, send it to the EBU Administrative Office which, if it approved, would submit the proposal to the Administrative Council for a final decision.

Circular

The Administrative Director, Léo Wallenborn, then sent a circular letter to all EBU members, referring to the TV programme exchange market and asking for their views on the creation of a permanent programme committee. The Bezençon proposal was appended to this letter.

The letter's recipients were



Torquay: Official dinner of 14 February 1950

since, for the first time, the new version of the convention referred to “recordings” without making a distinction between image and sound.

Behind closed doors, the experts examined the technical and legal problems of the programme exchange, while in public the name Eurovision appeared for the first time on 5 November 1951, coined by a British journalist, George Campey, in an article in the *Evening Standard* dealing with the future of television in Europe.

Eurovision

Easy to pronounce in all Europe’s languages, the word Eurovision was rapidly adopted and, over and above its purely technical meaning, conjured up the idea of a Europe united by a common vision.

And so the concept of Bezençon’s programme exchange was endowed with a name before the decision to set it up had even been made.

Once again, British and French technical and programme experts made the first move. In January 1951, Wladimir Porché of RTF wrote to Ian Jacob informing him that BBC and RTF had studied the possibility of a bilateral programme exchange, and proposing that the EBU examine without delay all the associated problems, notably copyright, and the legal and technical aspects.

In effect BBC and RTF were quite simply informing the EBU – politely but very clearly – that Britain and France could take up the challenge of mounting a programme exchange alone at any time, if the EBU did not take action in the near future.

The letter was sent to Sir Ian Jacob, but it was in fact Théo Fleischmann who received it because, following Churchill’s election victory, Sir Ian Jacob had been called to the British Ministry of Defence. Théo

Fleischmann, the senior of the two vice-presidents, replaced him as acting president.

Things speed up

Sir Ian Jacob’s professional scepticism had been a hindrance for the supporters of a programme committee but now, under Fleischmann, the EBU’s decision-making process speeded up considerably and the problems of the programme exchange featured prominently and in detail on the agenda for the May meeting of the Administrative Council.

The Franco-British initiative was acknowledged on the agenda but more importantly two days earlier, on 21 April, the first Paris-London programme link had proved a success. Thanks to an efficient line-standard converter, it was possible to see the same pictures on both sides of the Channel.

During that summer the British and French transmitted a whole week of common programmes, and a group headed by Bezençon began drawing up a model contract for participation in the international programme exchanges, especially in the TV sector. In October 1952, the Administrative Council congratulated the programme exchange study group on its work and urged it to continue.

But the Council’s discussion of the project was as sterile as it was exhaustive, and the EBU study group’s initiative still depended on the conduct of prior theoretical studies, whereas the exchange of programmes between Britain and France had been well and truly launched.

Shortly afterwards, the EBU General Assembly was called upon to elect a new president to replace Sir Ian Jacob. The former IBU President, Georges Conus, outstripped Théo Fleischmann, who more or less ceased all work for the EBU, and the overall direction of the study group was entrusted to Bezençon.

unenthusiastic to say the least! Léo Wallenborn received replies from only ten members who, although thinking the idea good, commented above all on the problems it raised – technical difficulties of course, but most of all legal problems (international copyright and performers’ claims). The Legal Committee immediately looked at these reservations, and came up with more: the rights of film producers and sports promoters and the right to privacy. In the Committee’s view, each of these legal issues needed to be settled individually in each country and with each country before a programme exchange could be seriously envisaged.

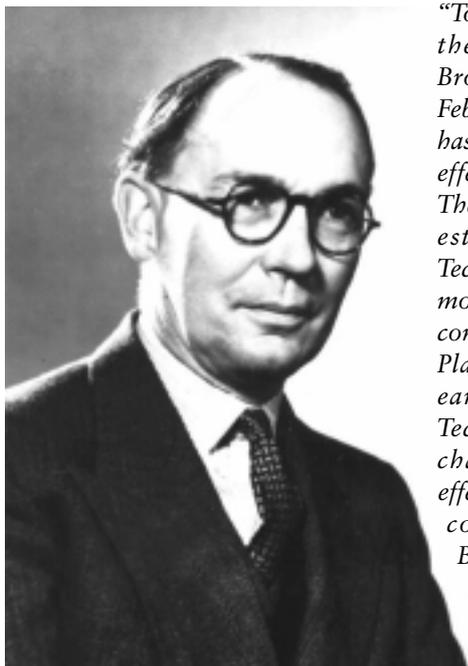
In May 1951, Marcel Bezençon again submitted his plan to the Administrative Council at its meeting in Geneva, which approved the creation of a study group.

This group, headed by Théo Fleischmann, was composed of representatives from BBC, RTF and RAI (broadcasting organizations already operating their own TV networks) plus a Scandinavian representative, since Norway, Sweden and Finland had shown considerable interest in the project. The study group met for the first time in Brussels in September 1951.

The revised version of the Berne Convention for the protection of literary and artistic works came into force in August of the same year, and at the same time provided a legal framework for the planned international programme exchange

Bulletin

15 May 1950. Sir Ian Jacob wrote ...



“Today is published the first issue of the Bulletin of the European Broadcasting Union. Founded in February 1950 at Torquay, the Union has rapidly become an organized and effective international body...

The Administrative Office has been established in Geneva, and the Technical Centre of the Union has a most active existence at Brussels. The coming into force of the Copenhagen Plan on March 15th provided very early in its career a test for the Technical Centre, and gave it the chance to demonstrate its effectiveness. Everything points to the conclusion that the European Broadcasting Union has a useful future before it, and that it is ready to play its part in furthering collaboration among Broad-

casting Organisations in the European Area end throughout the world.

As the first President of the Union I feel confident that our Members will support the Union by every means in their power, and will help it to be useful in all matters of interest to broadcasting. There are many international bodies in existence nowadays, but few which have to work in a field where friendly collaboration is more necessary if development is to proceed unchecked. I have no hesitation in affirming that this friendly collaboration will be the hallmark of the European Broadcasting Union not only in its domestic affairs but in its relations with other bodies.”

EBU Presidents

1950-1952	Sir Ian Jacob	BBC	United Kingdom
1952	Mr Théo Fleischmann	INR	Belgium
1953-1954	Mr Georges Conus	SSR	Switzerland
1955-1960	Sir Jan Jacob	BBC	United Kingdom
1961 -1964	Mr Olof Rydbeck	SR	Sweden
1965	Mr Marcello Rodino	RAI	Italy
1966-1970	Mr J.B. Broeksz	NOS	Netherlands
1971-1972	Mr Marcel Bezençon	SSR	Switzerland
1973-1978	Sir Charles Curran	BBC	United Kingdom
1979-1982	Mr Jean Autin	TDF	France
1983-	Mr Albert Scharf	ARD/BR	Germany

EBU - t



Grammont television set 1945
screen 22 cm - 441 lines

12 February 1950

The EBU – European Broadcasting Union – is founded in Torquay, United Kingdom.

23 countries are involved at this stage: Belgium, Luxembourg, the Vatican City, Morocco, Denmark, Monaco, Egypt, Finland, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Great Britain, Sweden, Greece, Switzerland, Ireland, Syria, Italy, Tunisia, Lebanon, Turkey, Yugoslavia.

Subscriptions amount to 447,000 Swiss francs.

27 August: first international television link between Calais, Dover and London.

The EBU has 23 active members and 4 associate members.

1951

Creation of TV programme exchange scholarship.

5 November: Georges Campey coins the name Eurovision (first published in the “Evening Standard”).

The EBU has 23 active members and 12 associates.

1952

7-14 July: Week of joint Franco-British television programmes. First two-way link.

The EBU has 24 active members and 11 associates.

1953

2 June: The coronation of Elizabeth II is broadcast live in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Twenty million people are estimated to have watched the broadcast.

The EBU has 25 active members and 12 associates.

1954

The Eurovision emblem is designed by Timothy O’Brien (BBC). The word “Eurovision” features for the first time in the EBU’s October bulletin.

6 June: Eurovision is officially inaugurated with a “Summer Season” of European television exchanges, known as the “Lille Experiment” from the location of the relay station.

6 June - 4 July: The season begins with live transmission of the Montreux Daffodil Festival. Forty-four television stations in 8 countries are connected by directional radio links over a distance of 6,400 km, with 80 relay stations. Four million television sets are tuned in and the programmes – in particular the football reports – are watched by between 60 and 65 million viewers. In all, 18 programmes are transmitted, for a total duration of 31 hours. The number and duration of breakdowns is minimal, especially given the precarious and provisional nature of the Hertzian networks.

The general public and press are agreed on the success of this experiment.

There are further reports from the Vatican, featuring Pope Pius XII in person, from the football World Cup in Switzerland, etc. During this

the 50s

season, live international transmissions are broadcast in 8 countries: Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The EBU has 25 active members and 13 associates.

1955

Inauguration of a new international centre for co-ordinating Eurovision exchanges on the premises of the Palace of Justice in Brussels.

The EBU has 26 active members and 11 associates.

1956

1 January: The EBU's Technical Centre is established in Brussels.

27 January: First EBU/OIRT (International Radio and Television Organization) coverage of the Winter Olympics at Cortina d'Ampezzo.

24 May: First broadcasting of the Eurovision Song Contest from the Kursaal Theatre in Lugano, relayed live by 10 countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland. Seven radio channels broadcast the

event live, while 13 broadcast recordings. The jury awards the prize to the Swiss contribution, "Refrain", with lyrics by Emile Gardaz and music by Géo Voumard. The singer is Lys Assia.

The EBU has 27 active members and 15 associates.

1957

An agreement on international repeats comes into force between the EBU and the three international performers' federations (musicians, actors and variety artists).

The EBU has 28 active members and 15 associates.

1958

January-February: First edition of the "EBU Review", published in two parts:

A – technical and B – general and legal information.

The Legal Committee examines the right to information in respect of the televising of sporting events.

October: First experiment in exchanging daily news programmes, involving five broadcasting organizations.

The EBU has 26 active members and 16 associates.

1959

The EBU has 26 active members and 18 associates.



Pathé Marconi radiogram 1950

1960

22 June: Signature in Strasbourg of the European Arrangement for the protection of television broadcasts. The EBU has 28 active members and 16 associates.

1961

29 May: Beginning of EVN (Eurovision News): a daily exchange of news broadcasts.

Study of new methods of recording television programmes on video electronic recording apparatus.

3-9 December: EBU international congress of broadcasters on radio and television programmes for schools. The EBU has 27 active members and 17 associates.

1962

1 January: Inauguration of the EBU's permanent sound network for EUROVISION. Beginning of regular daily exchanges of televised news material.

Eurovision moves to the villa "Mon Repos" in Geneva.

First EBU operation outside Europe: recorded coverage of the football World Cup in Chile.

EBU - t

December: First play in the “World Theatre” series: “Heart to Heart”, specially written for Eurovision by Terence Rattigan, transmitted by 14 national broadcasters in 9 languages.

The EBU has 27 active members and 26 associates.

1963

April: EBU Technical Seminar on the Planning and Organization of National Radio and Television Broadcasting Networks.

Publication of the first technical working group report on colour television.

The EBU has 28 active members and 29 associates.

1964

Transmission via Eurovision of the Tokyo Olympic Games.

The EBU has 28 active members and 40 associates.

1965

Constitution of a study group to examine ways of assisting broadcasters in developing countries.

May-June: First inter-continental transmissions between North America and Europe, exchanging news material.

2 September: Regular exchanges of news material between Eurovision and Intervision (OIRT).

Eurovision moves to 37-39 rue de Vermont. It now links 22 television services in 17 European countries.

The EBU has 28 active members and 40 associates.

1966

Creation of a “satellite” study group.

1 June: Beginning of daily conferences between television news editors on the sound network.

Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Portugal are linked up to Eurovision.

The EBU has 28 active members and 39 associates.

1967

The stationing of satellites in orbit over the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans makes it possible to transmit audio and visual signals around the globe.

Colour television comes into service in a number of countries.

25 June: “Our World” – first live world-wide broadcast, organized by the EBU (5 telecommunications satellites – 500 million viewers).

22 August: First Eurovision transmission of programmes produced in colour.

1 October: First Eurovision exchange of colour programmes involving PAL/SECAM code conversion.

The EBU has 28 active members and 43 associates.

1968

1 January: Second series of daily exchanges of evening news pictures (EVN 2).

“Emmy” award for the music of “Our World”, specially composed by Georges Delerue.

Coverage of the Mexico Olympic Games.

First Eurovision Song Contest in colour.

August: Live Eurovision broadcast from South America (the Pope in Colombia).

The EBU has 28 active members and 49 associates.

1969

21 July: Coverage of man’s first steps on the moon.

The EBU has 30 active members and 54 associates.

the 60s

EBU - t

1970

1 September: The EBU opens its New York office.

Eurovision brings together 27 television organizations in 22 countries in the European Broadcasting Area.

The EBU has 33 active and 54 associate members.

1971

17 June: Transmission of “Children of the World”, a programme presented by Danny Kaye. 45 countries follow this tour of the world relayed using 22 earth stations and four satellites.

The EBU has 33 active and 54 associate members.

1972

The EBU extraordinary General Assembly decides to increase the number of Council members from 11 to 15.

Regular transmission of Eurovision news items to members in Israel and Jordan.

The EBU has 33 active and 65 associate members.

1973

First international stereo transmissions.

First experimental news exchanges with the ASBU – the Arab States Broadcasting Union.

19 November: The EBU receives an International Emmy Award for important work in the television sector.

The EBU has 33 active and 66 associate members.

1974

17 March: Third daily news exchange introduced at midday.

Further modernization of the Eurovision network (television services in 23 countries).

5 - 8 November: EBU Symposium in Belgrade on Radio in the 1980s.

The EBU has 34 active and 64 associate members.

1975

February: The EBU takes part in the broadcasting by satellite symposium organized by the European Space Agency in Frascati.

6 June: The busiest day since the launch of Eurovision, with 62 transmissions on 80 topics for a total

duration of more than 18 hours at the origin.

Difficult negotiations with the organizers of the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Contracts are signed with the COJO and ORTO, and with OIRT to share the costs of production and transmission.

Live reports from the Apollo and Soyuz space missions.

The EBU takes part in Telecom 75 in Geneva.

The Legal Department is involved in drawing up the amendment of the European Agreement on the Protection of Television Broadcasts. Protection provided under the Agreement had also to be assured for television programmes from direct broadcasting satellites.

The EBU has 35 active, 3 supplementary active, and 63 associate members.

1976

March: Rencontre de Tenerife: Radio as a Means of Creation and Expression.

May: Meeting of Specialists of Radio Theatre, Bled.

June, 2nd Symposium on Radio in the 1980s, Ottawa.

International summer campaign on broadcasts for motorists.

Winter Olympics in Innsbruck.

Summer Olympics in Montreal.

the 70s

The EBU has 35 active, 3 supplementary active and 67 associate members.

1977

Satellite EVN (Eurovision News Exchange) introduced.

Preparations start for the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid and the Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. General Assembly decides that separate negotiations by individual members for the transmission rights for these Games would be regarded as incompatible with the spirit of solidarity.

February: the Eurovision network covers 16,450 km.

May: EBU/ESA Symposium on Direct Satellite Broadcasting, in Dublin.

September: meeting of the Bureaus of the OIRT and EBU Radio Programme Committees in Geneva.

October: 4th International Forum of Light Music in Radio, Munich.

October: EVN transmission via the Indian- and Atlantic-Ocean satellites.

The EBU has 35 active, 3 supplementary active and 69 associate members.

1978

New EBU headquarters inaugurated in Geneva.

31 March: New EBU logo.

World Football Championships, Argentina.

November: 1st Plenary Meeting of Heads of Radio Sports Departments in Geneva.

Introduction of the new plan for LF and MF broadcasting (ITU, Geneva 1975).

The EBU has 35 active, 4 supplementary active and 67 associate members.

1979

February: "The Seas Must Live", a one-hour Television Special for the European Broadcasting Union on behalf of the young people of Europe by Survival Anglia, London.

For the 25th anniversary of Eurovision, the EBU is awarded the 'Silver Mask' by the town of Campione d'Italia (Italy).

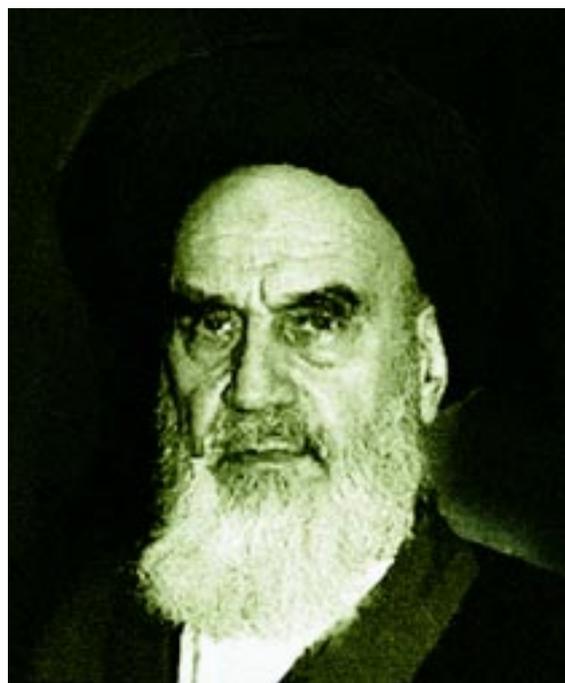
World Administrative Telecommunications Conference at the ITU in Geneva.

Foundation of the North American National Broadcasters Association (NANBA).

Zurich, an Inter-Union Consortium signs a contract with FIFA for the 1982 and 1986 World Football Cups.

March: Berlin, Prix Futura opens for the first time to radio.

The General Assembly calls for



Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

solidarity among EBU members in negotiations for the 1980 European Football Championships.

May: first European satellite transmission.

September: meeting of the Bureaus of the OIRT and EBU Radio Programme Committees in Bratislava.

The Eurovision Control centre (EVC) set up in the Palais de Justice in Brussels in 1956 is moved to new premises in the Cité de la Radio-Télévision also in Brussels

The EBU has 35 active, 4 supplementary active and 69 associate members.

1980

February/March: 3rd World Conference of Broadcasting Unions, Tokyo.

EBU special operations mounted to cover the US conventions and presidential elections and the inauguration of the new president.

The European Space Agency offers the EBU the opportunity of using a 12 GHz transponder for three years on L-SAT, scheduled to be launched in 1984.

Winter Olympic Games, Lake Placid. No "world programme" for Eurovision but a choice of three multilateral programmes. Summer Olympic Games, Moscow.

June: Monaco Radio Contest takes place for the first time in its new form under official EBU auspices.

The Radio Programme Committee sets up a new working party to promote all aspects of serious music.

First EBU-supported Festival of Contemporary Folk Music, Skagen, Denmark.

1st Eurotravel Conference on broadcasts for motorists, Geneva.

The EBU has 35 active, 4 supplementary active and 73 associate members.

1981

June: International Conference on Broadcasting and the Olympic Games, Baden-Baden.

Establishment of inter-union experts group on Olympic matters.

Negotiations begin for rights for the Los Angeles Olympic Games, 1984.

September: 1st Competition for the Composition of New Light Orchestral Music for Radio, Jersey.

The EBU has 35 active, 4 supplementary active and 73 associate members.

1982

27 April: Cannes; the EBU wins the first European TV Prize, awarded by nine European TV journals, for Frédéric Rossif's film "La mémoire d'un continent", on the theme of Eurovision.

The same day, the MIP-TV awards the Caméra d'Or to the EBU.

The EBU Broadcasting Fellowship scheme is implemented.

The Legal Committee examines principles common to broadcasting organizations with regard to direct satellite broadcasting and the acquisition of rights for DBS.

Interdisciplinary study to establish guidelines concerning cable distribution.

World Football Cup, Spain.

Contract signed with Eutelsat for the lease by the EBU of two transponders on the ECS satellite.

The EBU has 40 active and 70 associate members.

1983

12 September, New York: the EBU receives an International Emmy Award for its contribution to the creation of a world standard for digital television.

12 October, Genoa: the EBU is awarded the Cristoforo Colombo (Premio Internazionale delle comunicazioni) for its outstanding contribution, via Eurovision, to Europeans' knowledge of significant moments and events in the social and cultural spheres, its capacity to communicate to States and peoples the feeling of being part of a historic



community, and its role in the launch and operation of television and satellite distribution with a vision of a unified Europe.

Establishment of the Administrative Council's multidisciplinary study group on the future of public service broadcasting.

Adoption of the ESCORT system of classification for EBU radio and television programmes.

Unanimous EBU recommendation that the C-MAC Packet technical standard is the most realistic solution for the next 15 years of direct satellite TV broadcasting.

November, 1st Meeting of Experts on International (short-wave) Broadcasting.

First live EBU digital satellite transmission, of a concert of royal court music from Seoul, Korea. Creation of the Working Party on Radio News and Current Affairs.

The Radio Programme Committee recommends that the Premios Ondas be placed under EBU auspices and attends a demonstration of a 16-channel

direct satellite stereo broadcast. The EBU has 36 active and 69 associate members.

1984

Winter Olympic Games, Sarajevo.

Summer Olympic Games, Los Angeles.

US conventions (San Francisco and Dallas).

The EBU has 37 active and 67 associate members.

1987

1 March: the EBU's Washington bureau is opened.

16 September, New York: the EBU

and the SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) jointly receive a technical Emmy, awarded by the US National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, for their outstanding action in the sphere of digital television recording. The EBU and the SMPTE set the standards ensuring compatibility of digital video recorders.

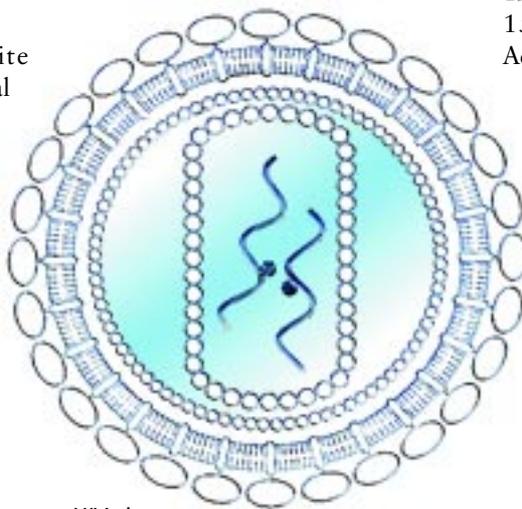
5 December: the Administrative Council decides to move the EBU Technical Centre to Geneva.

1989

1 September: official launch of the Euroradio system.

5 October: birth of Europa TV, launched by a consortium of five EBU members – ARD, NOS, RAI, RTE, RTP. Project ends 27 November 1989.

15 active members attend the Administrative Council meeting.



HIV virus

the 80s

EBU - t

1990

The EBU has 36 active members and 4 associate members.

1991

1 September: Inauguration of a permanent Moscow/Eurovision network link.

28 October: Work begins on a new EBU building in Geneva to house the Technical Centre (formerly in Brussels).

The EBU has 36 active members and 4 associates.

1992

1 and 29 May: the EBU/OIRT unification agreement is ratified by the OIRT and EBU authorities.

3 July: the EBU becomes the EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION.

The EBU has 47 active members and 38 associates.

1993

January: EBU/OIRT unification. The Board of Management increases from



Kosovar refugees

15 to 19 members, and the number of vice-presidents from 2 to 3.

11 June: The EBU benefits from paragraph 3 of article 85 of the Treaty of Rome, which allows the European Commission to grant derogations from the anti-cartel regulations when justified by the public interest.

July - September : Installation of the new EVC. Beginning of telex operations. Beginning of planning operations. Beginning of EVC operations.

2 December: Official inauguration of the new building, costing 20 million Swiss francs, built in 18 months.

3 December: New EBU logo (Michel Dufourd, TSR).

The EBU has 60 active members (18 from Eastern bloc countries)

1994

1 January: the EBU is represented in Belgium by the Monitoring and Measurement Centre, its secretariat to the European Communities, and a Technical Department engineer.

Marketing of the network as "Eurovision Network Services".

25 November: the EURORADIO satellite antenna goes into operation on the roof of the new EBU building.

The EBU has 63 active members and 52 associates.

the 90s

1995

12 October: The EBU is awarded a technical “Emmy” by the US National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for its work on the AES/EBU-series audio-digital interface.

The EBU’s turnover amounts to 673 million Swiss francs, 466 million of which is accounted for by sports programmes (purchase of rights and production costs) and 121 million by the Eurovision transmission network.

The EBU has 65 active members.

1996

5 July: An “EBU Award” is given for the first time to Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in Prague, for his remarkable contribution to audio-visual culture.

The EBU has 66 active members.

1997

Eurovision is received by 255 million households, potentially 640 million viewers.

On the television side, 13 satellite channels transmit almost 70,000 broadcasts per annum (including

25,000 news bulletins and 6,500 hours of sports and cultural programmes).

On the radio side, 2 satellite channels relay an average of 2,000 concerts and operas, 400 sports events and 120 major news events each year. Euroradio has a potential audience of 400 million people.

The EBU has 66 active members and 51 associates.

1998

6 January: From London, the EBU launches Euroclassic-Nocturno, a classical music radio service which broadcasters can incorporate into their channels during the night-time hours.

The broadcasts – of digital quality – are transmitted by satellite under the supervision of the Euroradio Control Centre in Geneva. The service is an immediate success, being taken up in Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway and Slovenia. Currently produced by the BBC, it consists solely of concerts recorded live by public-service radio broadcasters belonging to the EBU.

1999-2001 Financial Plan: small surpluses in all sectors; savings and improvements in productivity amount

to 22.5 million Swiss francs a year; tariff reductions for the Network; no increase in subscriptions; projected turnover of 1,010 million Swiss francs in the year 2000.

The EBU has 67 active members and 50 associates.

1999

12 February: The EBU launches an archives project for digital television.

19 September: The EBU launches the emergency RTK television station at Pristina in Kosovo.

20 October: The EBU and the Asia Satellite Telecommunications Company Limited (AsiaSat) announce the signing of two new lease agreements for full time and occasional use of C-band transponder capacity on AsiaSat 2.

The EBU has 69 active members and 49 associates.

RRTS

Eduard Mazi
Director General, Albanian Radio and Television Service

The last two years have seen major changes in the situation of radio and television in Albania. Private broadcasters with advanced technology and a highly professional approach have entered the market place alongside the old public broadcasting service – a legacy of the former communist regime, which must now change to reflect the new realities.

Reforms during the summer of 1999 were delayed somewhat by the war in Kosovo, but our new statutes are now in place, and since 1 September 1999 we have been implementing our new financial arrangements on an experimental basis. A body has also been set up to advise the Director General, and by December the administrative and programming structures will also have been reformed.

Under the new law, television and radio are to be organized separately. The central budget is allocated in accordance with the needs of each department, and each is responsible for planning its year's work and therefore its spending. These separate budgets are monitored by a department which keeps a check on income and expenditure, and the way in which each department manages

the resources allocated to it.

We have been experiencing many difficulties, especially in the television department, in planning and making programmes, because we were not really aware of how much a production costs. When we were funded by the State, we produced what the State wanted us to produce.

Another area of change has been in salaries. The Ministry of Finance used to fix them for each category of worker. Now a "salaries" budget is allocated to us according to the number of employees working for the institution, and we have to decide on salary levels for our staff. The state television service has a staff of 1,200: 47% of them technicians, 20% fulfilling administrative functions, and the remainder playing a creative role.

continued page 32



active member

Interview

Patrick Jaquin : When Mr Rexhep Meidani, President of the Albanian Republic, received the International Union of Journalists and the French-language press recently, he said that Albania wanted to integrate with Europe as much as possible. What role can the Albanian public broadcasting service play in furthering this desire for integration?

Eduard Mazi: The Albanian Radio and Television Service has a very important role to play in this, because in the past public radio and television broadcasting was the only means of communicating directly with people, and this is still true today. Until 1990, it was the way the Communist Party communicated with the people, and the Albanian Radio and Television Service was the source of information used.

Albanians continue to get their information from radio and television.

We are using this close rapport between the broadcasting service and its audience to create a new kind of relationship, and to achieve it we have been very open, for example in explaining the new laws. We are also

establishing excellent relationships with non-governmental organizations which are implementing programmes to change people's way of thinking. Our desire is that people should not just be passive recipients of information, but that they should also play an active part where information is concerned.

PJ: In Albania, is there a stream of thought which is hostile to public service broadcasting?

EM: No, public service broadcasting is not challenged by anyone, and even if all the private radio and television broadcasters joined together to form a single organization, they would still not have the technical capacity to provide the necessary information.

Only the national Radio and Television Service can meet the Albanians' need for information, and we are aware that they are very much interested in the political life of the country. As far as I am concerned, there is no question of disseminating information in the interests of one particular political party or another. All the political forces in the country want to see their political activities reflected accurately by the public Radio and Television Service. Moreover, the mission of our service is to tell people that they have a future.

We have therefore considerably broadened the scope of our activities in this field, even if it is still premature to talk of investigative television. It is too soon, and contrary to our tradition, and there is still the deadweight of old habits and relationships.

What is essential is to establish a new code of ethics between the new television broadcasters and their audience. The state radio and television service maintains a close relationship with its audience and tries to give an account of the political life of the country, while the private broadcasters tend to make capital out of social conflicts.

PJ: Is public service broadcasting the favoured link between a farmer in the most backward village and what is going on in Tirana?

EM: According to surveys conducted by two associations, Radio Tirana has the largest audience, even though there are now many private radio stations using more advanced technology than we can command. The same is true of television: our news programmes attract larger audiences than do private television channels, even though they screen films which we cannot afford to show.

Our great strength is that we cover 90% of the country, and we are also in the position of being able to control private radio and television broadcasters, because they have to use our technical installations to carry their signals.

All the private radio and television broadcasters can use this system to distribute their programmes, and that is advantageous for us because I want them to have access to the market for their programmes. That forces us to be competitive. The existence of a private sector gives me a great deal of food for thought.

RTSH



The new law concerns the audiovisual sector generally. The government is now responsible for the introduction of new technology, broadcasting for Albanians living abroad, and the symphony orchestra. The State also collects the licence fee payable by citizens who own a television or radio set (in 1999, only 20% of viewers paid the licence fee!).

We are therefore beginning the new millennium with clear objectives, and our employees all have a realistic idea of the work expected of them. On the basis of their work and productivity we shall decide who is to continue

working for us and who must leave the institution. The fact is that we have to reduce our staffing by roughly 30%, particularly in the technical areas of production and broadcasting. For the time being, we are maintaining a high staffing level because our technology is old fashioned – fifteen years out of date compared with the rest of the world – and we need a lot of technical staff to keep it functioning.

Support

We are the last active member to join the EBU this century. The government has said that it will pay the subscription, and the Ministry of Economic Development has been particularly active in supporting our candidacy. I would like to thank all those who have assisted us, in particular the German members of the EBU and its President, who have helped us to meet our obligations.

Two members of staff are responsible for our relationship with the EBU. I am confident that our membership will not only enable us to benefit from material support, but will result in exchanges that will help us to change our way of thinking. Half way through next year, I shall be requesting a meeting of specialists to study the problems of our radio and television service.

The content of television programmes

- 40 to 50% of broadcasts are produced by the RTSH.
- News broadcasts: 2 hours out of 17.
- Children's programmes: 1 hour per day.
- Political debates, interviews and round table discussions.
- Concerts, sponsored entertainment.
- Films account for between 35 and 40% of our programming. Most of the films are copied and sub-titled by RTSH. (As of 1 January 2000, this will be forbidden by law)
- Documentaries.

Invent, or

Bert De Graeve
Director General, VRT, Belgium

If public service broadcasting did not exist, then it would have to be invented and quickly. Fortunately, it was invented more than a half a century ago, and in western Europe, is the standard way of dealing with audiovisual communications.

There is a third option - differently interpreted in different countries - an option somewhere in between the official state-owned broadcaster and the purely commercial company, an option in which public financing is granted in exchange for the fulfilment of a public service commission. The origin of this arrangement lay just as much in the desire to reserve a limited number of (AM) frequencies for a socially justifiable purpose as in contemporary misgivings about the undesirable effects of the audiovisual media on social and political life.

The limited availability of frequencies has meanwhile been largely, if not completely, overcome: for television via cable and satellite, and for radio via FM and DAB. The finiteness of available frequencies will most probably continue to be an issue in future, amongst other things because

of the demand for all sorts of other communications usage, but whatever the case, there will still be more room for the coexistence of commercial and public broadcasters.

Be that as it may, there is still a widely shared opinion that there is an enduring need for a guarantee that the media will continue to provide a programme selection which meets the needs and satisfies the desires of every segment of the viewing and listening public. The need for a forum, in which diverse opinions and trends can be confronted with each other in a correct and collected manner also remains pressing in our fragile democracies.

Innovation and quality

If they are well-run, public service broadcasters should, with equal resources, be able to provide a greater guarantee of innovation and quality than commercial broadcasters, because public service broadcasters can devote all of their resources to programme-making and do not have to pay out any dividends to



re-invent?

shareholders. When we use marketing techniques to survey our audience and to maximize our reach, this is not because we see our audience as consumers but rather because we recognize them as the variegated spectrum of citizens upon which our pluralistic society is founded.

In coming years, technological evolution will undoubtedly bring about more fundamental changes in the function and the operation of the media. Generalized digitalization will substantially increase the integration and the complementarity of the diverse media.

More opportunities for interactivity and “use on demand” will transform consumers relationship with and usage of the media.

Vis-à-vis society

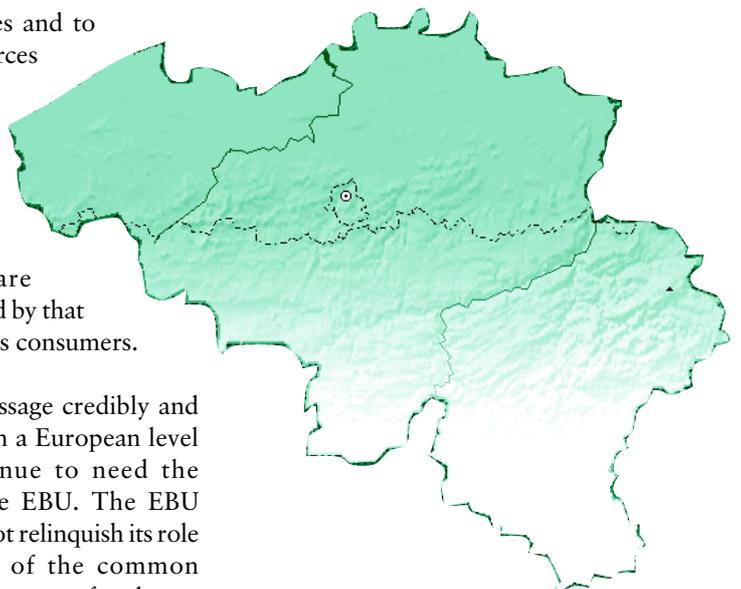
Amongst the purely commercial, mass market products, consumers will therefore find a greater ever selection of high-quality programmes, created in complete independence, free from the pressure to yield maximum profits, and answerable not to sponsors or to shareholders but to society as a whole. The only organization which can guarantee this and of which one can ask this is public service broadcasting.

It will however only be able to do this to the extent to which it is given the necessary leeway and the necessary resources to keep pace with the technological evolution.

Technological innovation often requires investments which are only profitable in the long-term. Globalization and increasing competition are pushing the price of some products and of many broadcasting rights (especially sports rights) through the roof. The population and its political leaders must remain ready and willing to grant public service broadcasters sufficient resources and to grant those resources directly instead of letting them be indirectly and inefficiently creamed off via advertising, the costs of which are ultimately also paid by that same population as consumers.

To spread this message credibly and forcefully - also on a European level - we shall continue to need the framework of the EBU. The EBU cannot and must not relinquish its role as the protector of the common interest and the promoter of exchange and economies of scale to any other organization.

If it had not been founded for this very purpose 50 years ago, then we would have to do it now.



Curtain

Ivo Mathé

*Chancellor to the President of the Czech Republic
Former Director General of Czech Television*

iron

In Europe (as well as in the entire world), the development of electronic media (excluding the Internet), can be considered as having been turbulent, if not revolutionary, during the last decade. Cable, satellite and terrestrial distribution of radio and television signals, both analogue and digital, increased the number of channels available (and will continue to do so), and offered mass access to the electronic, entertainment and telecommunications industry.

These developments concurred with the fall of Communism in Europe and affected the evolution of radio and television in these countries undergoing radical changes. Broadcasters were faced with increased difficulties, and the privatization of open frequencies and distribution companies. Those of us working in radio and television and confronted with this situation had only a short time (in comparison to democratic Europe) to make television the main window to civilization. The technological boom affected the rest of Europe after its state broadcasters had gradually, over many years, adopted a public service function and private stations had emerged. This wasn't the case for

every post-communist country where all of these changes took place over a short period of a few years.

Rapid growth

Today we can say that television and radio is - at least in central European countries - at the same level as Scandinavia, France, Belgium and The Netherlands when comparing audiences on the basis of the number of languages spoken and the number of inhabitants who speak them (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland and Slovenia). This applies to the quality and quantity of the programmes broadcast, the number of channels, the technology and the additional

services (teletext, stereo or multiple channel sound, hidden subtitles or Internet pages).

This shows television's extraordinary speed of development in the countries that were behind "the Iron Curtain" and only became members of the *EBU* in 1993. The price for speed - as well as for other aspects - is still to be paid.

In the Czech Republic, media legislation, in the European context, has existed since the creation of the former Czechoslovakia. The law that was adopted in 1991 - founded on British, French and German standards, and elaborated by the *EBU* - terminated direct government influence on broadcasting; recognized public service radio and television within a legal framework; and, on the other hand, permitted commercial broadcasting.

Non-governmental, independent, public *Czech Radio* and *Czech Television*, which are institutions comparable to their western European equivalents, started broadcasting on 1 January 1992. One station, which was financed by the federal government, stopped broadcasting that same year and its set of transmitting frequencies was given awarded to the private broadcaster: *TV Nova*.

A little before that, many licences for private national and regional radio stations and regional television stations were distributed. Certain regulatory bodies succumbed to the enthusiasm caused by the market (which was then supposed to solve everything).

Lack of strategy

The entire problem of broadcasting (not only the content, but, above all, the transparency of ownership) is out of control. Influence of the media (including the press), in a society which is media illiterate has become disturbing and is used to serve commercial and personnel interest, overshadowing the public interest.

The fact that licences are only awarded for a specific duration has been forgotten as is the number of national frequencies that are available (for instance, in the Czech Republic there can be only four frequencies for the broadcasting of national TV). The approach taken to the awarding and management of licences cannot be done as if one was working in the commercial sector.

For a long period of time, both public service broadcasters maintained certain standards, reliability, credibility and authority; but lately there has been a loss of principles and a lack of strategy. Despite a deep-set audiovisual culture in the Czech Republic, standards and everyday working practices are on the decline. Methods copied from industry, trade and banking are now being used in broadcasting.

The transition problems of the Czech Republic are now appearing in the media sector: the early enthusiasm for privatization; contempt for all public institutions; boundless trust in the power of the market; skilful use of legal loopholes, and the art of staying on the very edge of legality; non-respect of regulations; reckless lobbying, and, even suspicions of corruption.

The Czech Republic has not yet paid the price for its unfinished transformation. Its politicians and citizens probably thought that everything would happen without the slightest pain or renunciation.

Lately, the original dynamism of public service broadcasters seems to be waning, and they are also losing their long-term vision. The critical state of television broadcasting has recently provoked reaction. The practices of private broadcasters and television's falling quality is beginning to draw the attention of politicians. Important changes are being made to current broadcasting laws with the aim of making broadcasters work within a regulatory framework.

The EBU : foundation for growth

Czech Television and *Czech Radio* have managed, compared to others, not to lose sight of reality thanks to a firm footing in Geneva - the *EBU*.

Last year, the Czech Republic made great progress towards having an independent media (including public service broadcasters) and the standards adopted can be compared to the most advanced parliamentary democracies in Europe. Nevertheless, I am afraid that the owners of private, as well as public, service broadcasters have already managed to ruin what has been achieved so far. It is possible that this will have serious consequences because it is endangering the implementation of *EU* norms.

Though there are some obvious similarities with a number of western European standards, we can't ignore how unprepared our society is for a thorough modernization.

We have faced the same difficulties that advanced countries have encountered, but, unfortunately, we have not been able to find any satisfactory solutions.

The *EBU* remains one of the few institutions which offers a trustworthy, balanced and experienced viewpoint, and which provides various forms of support. It is very important that the new members from the former Iron Curtain countries do not lose the support that they have found in the *EBU*.

Prior to becoming Chancellor, Ivo Mathé was Director General of Czech Television from April 1992 - 1998 (appointed by Czech Television's Council). Production Manager and Producer of many television series, shows, co-production series, he was appointed Director of Czech Television in December 1991 after having re-structured the state-owned broadcaster Czechoslovak Television during 1990. Since 1990, Mr Mathé also teaches at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Arts, Prague.

Challenges

Marc Raboy

Professor, Department of Communications, University of Montreal

Broadcasting is a field of activity which deserves just as much attention as education or health care and which should be organized to take into account the public interest. This does not mean that everything to do with broadcasting should fall exclusively within the public sector, but it is as an overall system that the place of public service radio and television needs to be considered.

Against the present background of globalization, public service broadcasting has a more essential role to play than ever before.

The contemporary media scene is characterized by a rapid increase in services, an explosion of new technologies, the disappearance of national frontiers, and the merchandising of programme content. In this situation, where everything is increasingly dictated by market imperatives, public service radio and television is becoming an oasis, a constant, a guarantor of quality, and as everyone knows, it is besieged on every side, threatened and called into question. So what sort of future does it have?

The surveys regularly carried out by analysts all tend to emphasize the

obstacles in the way of public service broadcasting. But inasmuch as we can legitimize and revalue its mission, these obstacles begin to appear less daunting.¹

Where legitimacy is concerned, the inclusion in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty of a European Protocol in favour of public service broadcasting was an important point of principle.² Not only did this declaration demonstrate the power of politicians to resist commercial pressures, it was also the only concrete example to date of a cultural exception to the new rules of deregulation that are being applied by transnational authorities. It is no coincidence that this has occurred in the public service broadcasting sector.

The declaration adopted by the conference of ministers of the Council of Europe on media policy, held in Prague in December 1994, was another step in the same direction. In its declaration, the Council of Europe identified the safeguarding of well-funded public broadcasting institutions as essential to the health of the media in a democratic society.

A democratic space

The declaration then adopted includes a mission statement in nine

21st century

points, which broadly restates the European outlook on the objectives of public-service broadcasting. This outlook remains valid, apart from the slight changes that now need to be made if it is to meet the specific challenges we are facing today.³

The fact is that public service broadcasting is the only factor contradicting the received wisdom that the mass media are now destined to march to the beat of the market drum.

Apart from some noble local experiments of a marginal nature, there are no other media whose main vocation is to help build a democratic public space.

Formerly restricted to the internal territory of nation states, the notion of public space, like many others, is currently being repositioned in a global context. It is already possible to speak of a transnational, or global, public space, in which the public service media can and must play a role equivalent to the one they played during the glorious, but now superseded, period of national monopolies.

Transnational

In a system which is inevitably influenced by market forces, an important place should be reserved

for institutions which promote the cultural development on which the quality of public and democratic life depends. As an increasingly transnational political system emerges, we should even be thinking of establishing new cross-frontier media, founded on new transnational, or even global, bodies. Experiments such as TV5 and ARTE represent tentative steps in this direction. As the focus of political decision-making shifts from the national to the transnational sphere, there is a need for forums for democratic debate and cultural exchange which correspond to this new situation.

Consumers?

Some people will say that, in society as we have it today, this kind of talk is a pipe dream. But is the idea of public service media any more radical than that of a press free of authoritarian state control, or of orderly management of scarce frequencies, or the notion of deregulation of the air waves? The history of the media has in fact been shaped by two main currents: technological development, and the political will to steer the broadcasting system in accordance with a collective vision of the future of society. The present heralding of the demise of public service radio and television

stems more from neo-liberal ideology than from any objective reality. Having said this, its resurrection will not be accomplished unless the issue is placed high on the political agenda, and without massive support from the audiences that public service radio and television is supposed to be serving.

What should the mission of public service broadcasting be? By what means, with what type of content and with what resources should it aim to fulfil its mandate?

We need to make a clear distinction between public service and commercial broadcasting. What is the motivating force, what is the priority, on what should the emphasis be put when difficult choices have to be made? For example, what should be given special treatment when programming schedules are drawn up? Symbolically, how does one behave to demonstrate the conviction that one's audience consists of citizens rather than consumers?

These are difficult questions to answer in a context where public service broadcasters are in competition with their private sector rivals for commercial revenues. To free public service institutions from market pressures is therefore the

essential condition for them to be able to fulfil their mandate.

So where will the funding come from? All the studies so far conducted show that the licence fee remains the best way of ensuring funding which is adequate and relatively free of political constraints. However, in many specific national contexts, the licence fee is not enough. Either it has never been effectively established, or it is opposed by citizens already overburdened with taxes, or quite simply it does not yield sufficient funds to meet all the requirements of top-class programming.

An audacious proposal

This leads to the inevitable conclusion that only the taxing of the private sector will enable the public sector to flourish and fulfil its mission. This solution was suggested by, among others, the World Commission on Culture and Development, which in its 1995 report defined the air waves as belonging to the world's indivisible common heritage.⁴

If we recognise that the media system as a whole constitutes a public service, the taxing of commercial enterprises which profit from this sector is justified. This may seem an audacious proposal, but it is no more audacious than suggesting that businesses should contribute a proportion of their profits to the public purse for the benefit of all sorts of activities regarded as essential by society.

A *modus vivendi* would have to be negotiated, whereby market forces are allowed free play in part of the sector, in exchange for the reserving of substantial areas for public service broadcasting. Eliminating public service broadcasters as competitors for commercial revenues would make it possible to generate funds to ensure their survival out of the profits of the commercial interests involved. These funds would come mainly from the

distribution sectors, where operating costs are relatively stable and controllable, and profit margins are, to say the least, respectable.

Public service broadcasters could then concentrate on distinctive programming. They could rediscover their mission of being at the cutting edge where innovation and quality are concerned. A dynamic public service sector would have a beneficial influence on the system as a whole by demonstrating the very best of which broadcasting is capable and raising public expectations.

Public service broadcasting should also show leadership in developing the new non-commercial services made possible by new technology and the emergence of audiences not restricted to a particular national constituency. This implies a new, transnational mode of organization. Finally, we need to recognize that the future of public service radio and television is no longer being determined at the national level, but now depends on the on-going debate being conducted by organizations such as UNESCO, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is there that the fate of culture – and of the media which are its prime vehicles – is now being decided.

- 1 See for example, Andrew Graham and Gavyn Davies, *Broadcasting, Society and Policy in the Multimedia Age*, Luton (UK): John Libbey Media / University of Luton Press, 1997.
- 2 Council of the European Union, *Draft Treaty of Amsterdam. 'Protocol on the System of Public Broadcasting in the Member States'*, Brussels, August 1997.
- 3 According to the ministers' declaration, public service broadcasting should provide: a common landmark for the whole population, a broad forum for public debate, impartial journalistic coverage, pluralist, varied and innovative programming, programming which responds both to the general public interest and to the needs of minorities, a mirror to reflect the varied ideas and values of multiethnic and multicultural societies, the diversity of the national and European heritage, original works by independent producers, and a wide choice for listeners and viewers, taking into account that the commercial sector cannot offer certain types of broadcasts. Council of Europe, *The Media in a Democratic Society. Draft Resolutions and Draft Political Declaration*, 4th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, Prague, 7-8 December 1994. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1994.
- 4 UN/UNESCO, *World Commission on Culture and Development, Our Creative Diversity*. UNESCO, Paris, 1995.

Professor Marc Raboy is Director of the Communication Policy Research Laboratory of the Department of Communications at the University of Montreal. He has written many books about the media, including Un service public de radiotélévision pour le XXI^e siècle, published by UNESCO in the Études et documents sur la communication collection (no 111) in 1997.



G. Straschnov

1911-1999

When, on 12 February 2000, the EBU celebrates its 50th birthday, one man who was there at the very beginning, and who then stamped his own strong personal mark on the Union throughout its first quarter century or so, will, alas, have missed the anniversary by just a few months: Georges Straschnov, the Legal Director of the EBU from 1950 until his retirement in 1976, died in Geneva on 4 October 1999.

Born and raised in Prague, he was active in the French Resistance during the Second World War, before embarking on a unique career as a broadcasting lawyer. He began in the Legal Department of RTF/France in 1945 and, via the position of legal adviser of the International Broadcasting Union (IBU) from 1947 to 1950, “ended up” as the Head of the EBU’s Legal Department.

Back in 1950 it took a visionary to understand the desirability of, and the huge potential for, international cooperation in the field of broadcasting, and it took a man of strong will and determination to make that vision a reality. Georges Straschnov was that man.

Frequency coordination, a legal framework to allow easy exchanges of radio programmes, comparative

law and - first and foremost - copyright law, these were the major challenges of the early years. The advent of television brought with it entirely new tasks: the creation of a legal framework for the smooth functioning of Eurovision and, in this context, the acquisition of sports rights. From the very beginning, Georges Straschnov was the EBU’s sports rights negotiator.

Numerous were his publications on copyright and on neighbouring rights. Through active participation in the 1948 Brussels revision of the Berne Convention, and later in the 1967 Stockholm revision of the same Convention, he ensured that international copyright law by and large meets the legitimate interests of broadcasters. He achieved the same in the field of neighbouring rights when the Rome Convention was established in 1961. And he was well ahead of his time when he managed to convince the intellectual property world in the early 1970s of the necessity of an international instrument for the protection of programme-carrying signals transmitted by satellite. This led to the adoption of the 1974 Brussels Convention. The records of the diplomatic conference which adopted it list among the delegates a certain Mr Georges Straschnov.

Throughout his career as the legal adviser of the EBU, Georges Straschnov had a strong influence over countless Administrative Council and General Assembly decisions and played a decisive role in the Union’s history. His intellectual brilliance and professional strength did not always make him popular among his colleagues, but he had intimate friends with whom he shared his in-depth knowledge of Italian Renaissance painters and the life and work of Marcel Proust. Others respected his professional authority, without gaining access to his real personality.

He continued to live in Geneva after his retirement. Following the death of his wife (a former editor of the *EBU Review*), he spent the last few years of his life in virtual seclusion, although any loneliness he felt was certainly assuaged by his love of art and literature, of which, to the very end, he remained a great connoisseur.

Albert Sharf