

**Summary:**

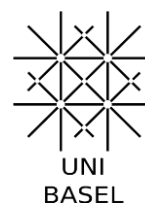
**Television Programming by Private Broadcasters with a  
Performance Mandate in Switzerland**

*Ongoing Program Research: Phase 7,  
2017 Final Report*

(Reporting period: 2016)

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**1 2017 Summary of the Analysis of Private Broadcasters with a Performance Mandate in Switzerland (Reporting Period: 2016) ..... 1**

**2 Introduction and Methodology ..... 1**

2.1 Researched Programming .....1

2.2 Sample Period (two samples).....1

2.3 Research Concept.....1

**3 Findings ..... 2**

3.1 Broadcast Analysis Results .....2

3.2 Report Analysis Results for Licensing Standards .....2

3.2.1 Diversity of Topics and Relevance ..... 2

3.2.2 Regional Focus..... 3

3.2.3 Currency ..... 3

3.2.4 Actors and Diversity of Opinion ..... 4

**4 Results of the Qualitative Analysis..... 4**

**5 Conclusion ..... 4**

**6 Publications ..... 4**

# **1 2017 Summary of the Analysis of Private Broadcasters with a Performance Mandate in Switzerland (Reporting Period: 2016)**

The 2017 Final Report and the present summary (which outlines the results of the Final Report) document the process and results of the sixth phase of the ongoing program research on television programming from private broadcasters with a performance mandate. This concludes the sixth year of research. This phase comprises data collected in the spring and autumn of 2016.

## **2 Introduction and Methodology**

### **2.1 Researched Programming**

Radio and television broadcast licenses were awarded in 2008 based on a restructured coverage area. These included thirteen television licenses for the various broadcast areas in the country. As the name “broadcaster with a performance mandate” implies, the licenses require broadcasters to fulfill certain (programming) mandates. These can be divided into four areas:

- *Currency*: One program must be broadcast that is updated daily.
- *Topics*: Information about politics, the economy, culture, society, and sports must be provided.
- *Diversity*: A plurality of topics, opinions, and interests must be reflected and a broad spectrum of people and groups must have an opportunity to speak.
- *Regional focus*: Information, actors, and opinions must pertain to the broadcast area and reflect the entire broadcast area.

A research team from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland began researching the fourteen television program services of the thirteen private broadcasters with performance mandates in 2009. The objective of the program analysis was to describe the programming with respect to the four mandate areas named above. The thirteen private broadcasters with performance mandates that were analyzed are: Léman Bleu, La Télé, Canal 9/Kanal 9, Canal Alpha, TeleBärn, TeleBilingue, TeleBasel, Tele M1, Tele 1, Tele Top, Tele Ostschweiz (TVO), TeleSüdostschweiz (TSO), and TeleTicino. TeleZürich has also been included since 2010 as a non-licensed regional program service.

### **2.2 Sample Period (two samples)**

The team collected two samples (spring and fall 2016) between 2:00 PM and 11:00 PM naturally occurring working calendar weeks (CW 11 and CW 40). These were recorded, archived, and analyzed. This modification of the sampling concept ensures that the results are no longer comparable with those of the previous year so that comparative interpretations must be foregone.

In each sample, the team investigated daily news, weather, economics, and sports broadcasts using a quantitative content analysis. Other daily updated, in-house or co-produced programming that may exist was described in detailed profiles using a qualitative content analysis. Based on the results of that qualitative content analysis during prior phases of this project, broadcasts that contain daily-updated information were identified. They were also researched in the quantitative content analysis starting from subsequent survey.

### **2.3 Research Concept**

The tool used for measuring the broadcasts that may have daily updated content is based on the tool that has been used in continuous analysis of SRG programming. In order to check whether the performance mandate has been fulfilled, however, the tool was supplemented and adapted to the field of diversity of opinion and actors. The measurement tool consists of three modules:

First, the format or genre of a broadcast under review is determined in a broadcast analysis. In this

process, production characteristics and broadcast rhythm are recorded in order to more precisely describe the formats. The broadcasts were categorized based on the same grid that is used in the SRG analysis. That way the structural-level data is comparable with the SRG programming.

The segment analysis divides broadcasts according to their thematic segments and records the topics that they address in detail. This maintains compatibility with the SRG study in terms of topic categorization based on the social relevance of the topical areas in order to ensure that the results on this level can be compared directly. Along with the topics, this step also measures, among other things, regional focus (on the municipal level), the actors who are given an opportunity to speak, and currency.

The segments on socially relevant topics from the fields of politics, economics, and society are then subjected to another opinion analysis in order to measure the diversity of the interests expressed and the actors' opinions.

In methodological terms, this is a quantitative, highly standardized set of content analysis tools based on a multi-dimensional, hierarchical codebook for broadcast, segment, and actor/opinion analyses.

The research tool for the profile analysis consists of a guideline that forms the basis for broadcast descriptions. Along with the production- and broadcast-related aspects, it records topics, currency, speaking actors, and regional focus. Both tools are documented in the final report.

Five bilingual students from the University of Basel executed the quantitative content analysis and the profile analysis. The coders received intensive training and performed extensive test coding. The coding was only started after the reliability values were adequately sampled out. The same team conducted the profile analysis in conjunction with a quantitative analysis.

## **3 Findings**

### **3.1 Broadcast Analysis Results**

One initial indicator of diverse programming that provides a population with regional information that is updated daily is the amount of time spent on current reporting in individual programs. On average, licensed broadcasters spend nearly three and a half hours each non-holiday week or 47 minutes per workday on daily updated news. That is 41 minutes more time per week and similar compared to the non-licensed broadcaster TeleZüri. But this average grows out of a wide distribution of the channels' transmitting capacity: While CanalAlpha provides less than two hours of daily updated regional news per week or some 24 minutes per workday, the other French-language channels Léman Bleu and La Télé spend around four hours weekly or between 46 and 55 minutes per day on broadcasts about current issues. The sole Italian-language offering from TeleTicino provided nine hours and 46 minutes per average workweek, which amounts to almost two hours per workday.

### **3.2 Report Analysis Results for Licensing Standards**

#### **3.2.1 Diversity of Topics and Relevance**

One way that the diversity of a television broadcaster's content can be determined is by looking at the topical diversity that the license explicitly requires, while the following analysis also factors in the relevance framework of the individual topical areas. The fields of politics, economics, culture, society, and sports, which are particularly relevant from a social perspective, may represent significant sections of the daily regional reporting by broadcasters with a performance mandate. Licensed broadcasters spend an average of about 22% of their daily broadcast time on political topics. Culture, other social topics, and sports each take up approximately 13% of broadcast time while economic topics, at roughly 10%, take up relatively little broadcast time.

Topics that the license does not explicitly require and that might sooner be associated with the private relevance framework from a normative analytical perspective almost universally occupy less editorial space: At just under 9%, service and advice topics alone take up similar broadcast time compared to economic reporting. Reports on crime, accidents, and disasters (5%) and on celebrities, people, and emotions (just under 7%) make up a relatively small portion of all licensed programming on average. A comparison with the non-licensed TeleZüri shows that this purely commercial regional broadcaster sometimes dedicates significantly larger amounts of time to the latter two of these topical areas that are not explicitly required while giving less weight to sports and society in particular.

However, a review of the programming by the individual broadcasters shows clear weighting differences for distinct topical areas: The political share fluctuates, taking up between 11% (TeleBielingue) and around 50% (Tele M1) of daily updated broadcast time, although such detailed results must be handled carefully, particularly when interpreting, because individual events can have a strong influence on the outcome of only two samples.

### **3.2.2 Regional Focus**

If we look first at the proportions of the segments, on average nearly 82% of all segments in licensed programming as a whole have a direct regional focus. Tele M1 in particular (just under 58% of all segments) but also TeleBärn (roughly two segments of every three) dedicate fewer segments than average to regional topics. Among programs with a relatively small degree of regional focus, Telebasel, Tele M1, and TeleBärn (23 to 25%) stand out with comparatively large proportions focusing on foreign matters. This puts them in the same range as non-licensed TeleZüri.

Where the proportion of time spent on foreign news is concerned, this point is qualified somewhat by the fact that the international news blocks broadcast by the two licensed AZ Medien programs are usually dominated by brief news reports. If we take this into account, the proportion of reporting time that TeleBärn and Tele M1 dedicate to news from abroad is 17% and below 10% respectively. Telebasel (nearly 23%) dedicates significantly larger proportions of time to foreign matters.

### **3.2.3 Currency**

The study also analyzes the explicit currency of the programming: for some 77% of all segments in all licensed programming it is potentially daily. Consequently, licensed programming is slightly less current on average than TeleZüri. However, all programs have a relatively large portion of segments with unclear currency, i.e., without any discernible occasion for their reporting: on average, nearly 11% of all licensed programming and nearly 17% on TeleZüri. If we look at the proportion of segments in daily broadcasts that are definitively not current to the day, then Canal Alpha (around 36%) and La Télé (nearly 33%) stand out for their non-current reporting.

Daily updated reporting is given a slightly smaller share of broadcast time: On average, 74% of daily updated licensed-programming broadcast time is taken up with potentially daily updated reporting. For TeleZüri, the portion of broadcast time is showing some differences compared to the number of reports: Almost 70% of the daily broadcasting time shows daily updated reporting. Most of the licensed broadcasters come close to the currency ratios of the non-licensed program or even exceed TeleZüri's 70% of their broadcast time.

If we look at the shares that can safely be regarded as not up-to-date, the values for many licensed programs are greater than the segment ratios. Exceptions are Canal Alpha, Telebasel, Tele M1, TeleTop und TSO. This means that there are apparently more long segments that are not updated daily. This can be explained by the sampling: Mandated potentially up-to-date broadcasts are included in the sample in full if the broadcasts have had just one day-to-day event in at least one preceding sample. So if, for example, a talk show was current for that date, thereafter it is always

part of the sample presented here, which may result in the inclusion of large proportions of non-current reporting.

### **3.2.4 Actors and Diversity of Opinion**

There is no mandate to analyze diversity of opinion in reporting in great detail: There is only one figure on the proportion of reporting on political, economic, and social topics in which none, one, or more than one and then opposing opinions of external speakers occur. Altogether, approximately one half of the reporting on licensed programming on these topics exhibits no cited opinions at all, indicating a strong orientation toward neutrality in Swiss regional television. Francophone programming in particular is rather opinionated: Opinions are cited in two of three segments on Canal 9. Opposing opinions are aired in 19% of the segments of TeleTop.

Rather big shares of cited actors belong to the socially relevant areas of politics, economy, society and culture. The areas of sports and private persons are given air time only if the programmings strategy of the channel has specific formats for them. Celebrities are hardly cited by any of the channels underinvestigation.

## **4 Results of the Qualitative Analysis**

In all, around 100 broadcasts were qualitatively researched for each edition. That is a lot more than in the previous year. The francophone broadcasts still have a large number of new broadcasts and Telebasel has completely changed its format. In addition, Tele M1, TeleBärn, and TeleZüri are harmonizing their programs.

When the broadcasts (primarily talk shows) from the first survey round are included in the qualitative analysis, an expanded portrait of the broadcast formats takes shape: There are more news stories, commentary, documentary reports, and magazine shows.

Overall, the broadcasts cover a broad range of topics and frequently have a regional focus. All measurable currency levels (daily, weekly, and non-daily) are present.

## **5 Conclusion**

The research shows that regional broadcasters with a performance mandate are in a (constant) state of transition even as the programming is slowly stabilizing: In individual cases, greater fee support leads to expansion and is beneficial for content development, or at least for maintaining broadcast operations. The content also appears to adhere more closely to the performance mandate and place greater emphasis on the required content.

## **6 Publications**

The Basel/Fribourg research group submitted an initial survey of the regional broadcasters with a performance mandate to Rüeegg Verlag in 2011. The results of the first four years of research were published in table form on the OFCOM website. The results of the first seven samples were also published as a book by Rüeegg Verlag in 2013.