

Analysis of the SRG SSR radio program:

German-speaking Switzerland 2023 – Executive summary

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Objective of the study

The Swiss Act on Radio and Television (RTVA) and the license issued to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR) serve as a mandate for SRG SSR. The responsibilities assigned to SRG SSR include providing comprehensive, diverse and factual news coverage, fostering Swiss culture and promoting a dialogue among the different regions and language communities of Switzerland. This study examined how SRG SSR carried out its mission in **2023**. The analysis focused on **SRG's radio programming** in the **German-speaking regions of Switzerland**, including **regional journals**.

Results

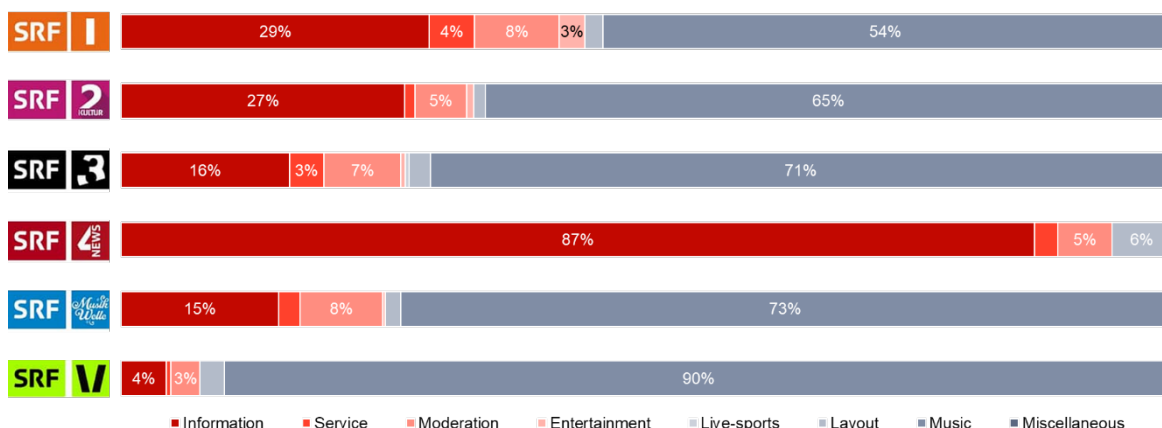
The **program performance** of the SRF stations remains at a **stable and high level** in 2023. On average, the SRF broadcasting family devotes 30% of its total broadcasting time to informative content. The information share has fallen slightly compared to 2020 (-3 percentage points) but is in line with the results of previous studies.

There are still clear differences between the radio stations analyzed regarding the information and music shares: While SRF 4 News focuses predominantly on information and does not play any music, SRF 1 devotes half of its broadcasting time to musical content. The other stations focus on music. SRF Virus offers its young audience primarily music (90%) and very little informative content (4%). The latter has been scaled back since 2020 (-5 percentage points). SRF 2 Kultur also reduced the proportion of information in favor of more music (-7 or +7 percentage points). The shifts at SRF 2 Kultur are presumably also due to the program changes implemented since 2021, and at SRF Virus due to reorientation since 2022.¹

¹ Cf. SRF (2021): Radio SRF 1 und SRF 2 Kultur: Umsetzung der Programmänderungen. Retrieved from: <https://www.srgd.ch/de/aktuelles/news/2021/03/30/radio-srf-1-und-srf-2-kultur-umsetzung-der-bereits-angekündigten-programmänderungen-ab-april-2021/> (20 May 2024), SRF (2022): Neustart Radio SRF Virus: Junge Schweizer Lebenswelt in Musik und Wort. Retrieved from: <https://medien.srf.ch/-/neustart-radio%C2%A0srf%C2%A0virus-junge-schweizer-lebenswelt-in-musik-und-wort> (20 May 2024).

Figure: Program structure and information performance 2023

Basis: Total airtime, random samples 2023, Mon.-Sun. 05.00-24.00



The SRG license explicitly requires SRG radio stations to report on the **subject areas** of politics, the economy, society, culture and sport. These «hard» topics are comprehensively covered by all stations and account for almost all the informative program content, averaging 95% to 97%. This means that, as in the previous waves of data, there is little room for «human interest / bad news» in the programs reviewed. Compared to the results from 2020, the share of «hard» topics tends to be lower (-2 percentage points), which could also be due to the changed state of events. For example, reporting in 2023 includes more «bad news», such as the devastating earthquake in south-eastern Turkey and north-western Syria in February, the historic flooding in northern Italy in May, the ongoing war in Ukraine and the escalating conflict in the Gaza Strip from October 2023.

The analyzed SRF stations cover a wide range of issues in their informative content - despite different focal points. The **variety of topics** has even increased slightly compared to 2020 at a high level (+6 percentage points), which means that the stations have slightly reduced the share of the two most dominant topics in favor of other topics. SRF 3 covers a particularly wide range of topics. The other stations have a somewhat stronger thematic focus in their informative content: SRF 4 News and SRF Musikwelle focus on political information, SRF 1 places a slight emphasis on societal aspects, and SRF 2 Kultur and SRF Virus cover predominantly cultural topics. SRF 3 has a balanced mix of topics.

The **diversity of opinion** within the news coverage of the SRF stations has also increased since 2020 (+11 percentage points). In 2023, different opinions or perspectives are presented in just over a quarter of all SRF stations' context-focused news coverage. Compared to 2020, SRF Musikwelle, SRF 3 (+17 percentage points each) and SRF 4 News (+16 percentage points) in particular are devoting more broadcasting time to exploring different opinions and perspectives. And SRF 1 and SRF 2 Kultur are also increasing the diversity of opinion in their informative content (+9 percentage points each). At SRF Virus however, the diversity of opinion is decreasing (-5 percentage points) and is at a comparatively low level (5%). At the same time, the **variety of actors** in the informative content has increased slightly. This is primarily due to the increased variety of topics: Additional groups of actors also become the focus of reporting. The **diversity of journalistic formats**, i.e. the range of journalistic formats used, fell slightly again in 2023 (-4 percentage points) after an increase in 2020.

One of the high-quality standards that SRG stations have to meet is journalistic professionalism. A typical indicator of this form of professionalism is **transparency of the**

sources that are used in the broadcasted information, meaning that the originator of a piece of information must be specified. The reporting of SRF stations was characterized by a very high level of source transparency: In almost 90% of the informative broadcasting time in 2023, the originators of information are either identified or even heard in sound bites. This means that transparency is slightly higher than in the 2020 study (+5 percentage points). SRF 4 News is the most transparent when it comes to sources, while SRF Virus is the least likely to disclose its sources. **Transparency of source access** has improved significantly compared to 2020. It is currently equally high for all SRF stations: The originator of a piece of information is identified in a good five out of six cases.

Under the license that took effect in 2019, SRG stations must endeavor to provide «an appropriate presentation and **representation of genders** in their programming». ² For this reason, this study examined whether male and female speakers were given equal amounts of broadcasting time. The study determined that male speakers continue to dominate SRF's programming (on average just under 60%). However, the share of male speakers has fallen slightly since 2020 (-3 percentage points). Men are most frequently heard on SRF 3, and least frequently on SRF Virus, where there has been a marked shift toward more female voices since 2020: In 2020, exclusively male voices were heard for three-quarters of the broadcasting time, in 2023 it was just under 50%.

The license continues to require that the reporting of SRG radio stations focus and elucidate on developments on three **geographic levels** (international, national and language-regional). SRF stations report most frequently on events abroad and cover developments of international relevance. The international focus is more pronounced in 2023 than in 2020 (+4 percentage points). This could be due to the state of events: 2023 was marked by global natural disasters and international conflicts.

Study methodology

The SRG SSR radio program analysis uses the communication science method of quantitative content analysis. The analysis focuses on the **performance indicators** defined by the broadcasting act and the license. They included the percentage of airtime devoted to information, thematic diversity, diversity of opinion, diversity of journalistic formats used as well as regional references.

The sample consists of programming aired on each of the six analyzed radio stations on seven selected days within the time frame of 05.00 and 24.00. The random samples were taken in the form of an artificial week.

² SRG Broadcasting License, Art. 3, para. 3

Table: Methodological key data of the SRG SSR radio program analysis 2023

Methodology	Quantitative content analysis
Analyzed stations	- SRF 1 - SRF 2 Kultur - SRF 3 - SRF 4 News - SRF Musikwelle - SRF Virus - incl. regional journals Aargau/Solothurn, Basel/Baselland, Bern/Freiburg/Wallis, Graubünden, Eastern Switzerland, Central Switzerland, Zurich/Schaffhausen
Random sample	An artificial week (Mon.-Sun.), from 05.00 to 24.00 each day Analyzed programming hours per station: 133 hours Additional regional journals Total: 32.5 hours Total analyzed programming hours: 830.5 hours Number of tracks analyzed on music sample date: 1'144 Tracks analyzed from the daytime program: 894