

Analysis of programming of private radio stations with a performance mandate in Switzerland - 2024

Summary

The analysis of programming of private commercial radio broadcasters in 2024 took a total of 17 stations with a broadcasting licence and performance mandate into account. Since the start of 2020, licence-holders have been required to broadcast at least 30 minutes of relevant local/regional information in prime-time slots on weekdays. All stations – eight in German-speaking Switzerland, seven from the French-speaking region and both from Ticino – met these statutory requirement in 2024.

Key methodological data

The following stations' programming was analysed in 2024:

Canal 3, neo1, RadioFr. (d), Radio BeO, Radio Central, Radio Munot, Radio Südostschweiz, rro, RadioFr. (f), Radio Chablais, RFJ, Rhône FM, RJB Biel, RJB Jura, RTN, Radio 3i, Radio Ticino

Sampling period:

Based on an artificial one-week period (Mon-Sun) between 1 January and 31 December 2024

Dates sampled: Mon 2 September; Tue 16 January; Wed 13 March*; Thu 27 June; Fri 8 November; Sat 6 April**; Sun 20 October**

Broadcasting times analysed: 06.00 - 09.15; 11.30 - 13.30; 16.00 - 19.15 daily

Total hours of programming analysed: 1 011.5

*also the sample day for the music analysis (06.00 - 20.00)

**Sat/Sun are not relevant for the license; the summary only takes weekdays into account

During the 2024 study period, Publicom analysed the performance of **17 radio stations** of those private broadcasters with a license and fee-splitting rights. In the course of the reallocation of the licenses for private, commercial radio broadcasters for 2025 to 2034, eight previously licensed local stations without fee-splitting rights (Radio 1, Radio Basilisk, Radio Top, Radio Zürisee, Sunshine Radio, GRRIF, LFM and Radio Lac) did not have their licenses renewed in 2024. In July 2023, the French-language station of Canal 3 merged with RJB and has since been broadcasting a common programme in the Biel/Bienne coverage area (RJB Biel).

The analysis of the private commercial radio broadcasters in Switzerland examined content broadcast during prime time over an artificial one-week period (Mon-Sun) made up of randomly selected sampling days between January and December 2024. It investigated to what extent the broadcasters holding licenses fulfilled the statutory **minimum content requirements of 30 minutes** of relevant regional information on weekdays.

Programming patterns: High consistency, trend of increasing informational content

The operations of the licensed Swiss private radio stations are subject to a variety of economic and structural requirements. The linguistic and cultural context, relevant competitive situation, the broadcasters' programming philosophies and regulatory requirements influence the programming direction of a radio station. Overall, the private radio landscape in Switzerland remains highly varied, reflecting the cultural and political diversity of the country.

The results of the current analysis of programming for 2024 indicate some **differences** between the radio stations, but also demonstrate in part **commonalities**. Over time, in particular in comparison to the previous study in 2022, the programme structures are marked by a **high level of consistency**:

A common factor across all licensed private radio stations was the high proportion of **music** in their output. All prime time programmes on weekdays consist mostly of music, on average 60%, a decrease of 3% compared to 2022. The German-language station **Canal 3** in Biel had the largest proportion of music (72%) and **Radio 3i** the least (42%).

On average, the 17 radio stations with a broadcasting licence and fee-splitting rights investigated reserved only about **21%** of their prime-time programming for **informational content**. Compared to 2022, the proportion of informational content increased overall and in all language regions **by nearly 2%**. In 2024, licensed private radio stations broadcast an average 1 hour 47 minutes of information-related content on weekdays. The production of informational content varied between 27% for the French-language station **Rhône FM** and 12% for **Canal 3**. The informational content in French-speaking Switzerland (23%) was thus higher than in Italian-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland (20% and 19%, respectively).

The largest portion (93%) of the informational content concerned **relevant topics** in accordance with the licensing system, ranging from 87% (Radio 3i) to 97% (Radio Chablais). With regard to the **mix of topics**, 11 of the 17 radio stations **focused on politics**, to which nearly one third (31%) of the information volume was dedicated. A second topic of focus was **society** (24%). The degree to which sport and business matters were covered was more heterogeneous.

Geographical coverage: A stronger focus again on regional events

Programming differences resulted from the different audiences targeted by broadcasters or their **geographical focus areas**. On average, the 17 private radio stations with a broadcasting licence devoted 58% of the time they scheduled for information to events within their **coverage area**. The language regions show only minimal differences with regard to considering their own coverage areas. With two exceptions, all stations placed their informational focus on their own region, in that more than half of their informational activity was directed at regional events. However, the specific proportions varied

greatly. **Canal 3** (76%) broadcast information regarding events occurring in their own region most frequently. In contrast, this was only 25% for RJB Biel.¹

Compared to 2022, the proportions of events in the coverage area **increased by 2%** on average and, since the survey in 2020 when the quantitative minimum content requirements for regional information were in effect for the first time, there has been a 10% increase of regional events in the overall duration of informational content of the 17 stations investigated. Thus for nearly all stations, **regional reporting** has **increased** in the two-year comparison, especially at RFJ and RadioFr. (f) (each increasing by 11%), followed by Radio Südostschweiz, Radio 3i, Radio Chablais (each +10%) and RJB Jura (+9%). The only exceptions are RJB Biel (-31% since 2022), rro (-10%) and Radio Munot (-6%).

Apart from the regional focus, the 17 licensed stations devote an average of 16% of their informational production to international events and 15% to national events.

All 17 stations exceeded the quantitative minimum content requirements for regional information

In 2024, the 17 private, licensed radio broadcasters were obliged to deliver at least **30 minutes of relevant regional information** on weekdays during the defined 8.5 hours of prime time slots. In concrete terms, they have either to report on events within their coverage area, outline the effects of a supra-regional event on their coverage area, or establish a connection to the region within an item of content (with 10% of such content counted as contributing to the minimum content requirements).

In 2024, **all 17 private radio stations** with a broadcasting licence **fulfilled** the statutory requirement of providing their public with the mandatory minimum of 30 minutes of regional information daily during the defined 8.5-hour prime time slots. Four French-language stations (**Radio Chablais, Rhône FM, RFJ** and **RJB Jura**) and three German-language (**rro**, **RadioFr. (d)** and **Radio Central**) exceed this mark by more than double. On average, the 17 Swiss private radio stations with a performance mandate achieved **56 minutes of relevant regional information**.

¹ As the two coverage areas Biel/Bienne and Arc Jurassien are serviced by broadcasters with the same programme, this shows large effects on the geographical coverage of the Biel subsidiary.