

Analysis of the SRG SSR radio program:

French-speaking Switzerland 2024 – Executive summary

Anja Kunath, Dr. Sonja Glaab-Seuken, Lilly Blättner (YouGov Switzerland)

Objective of the study

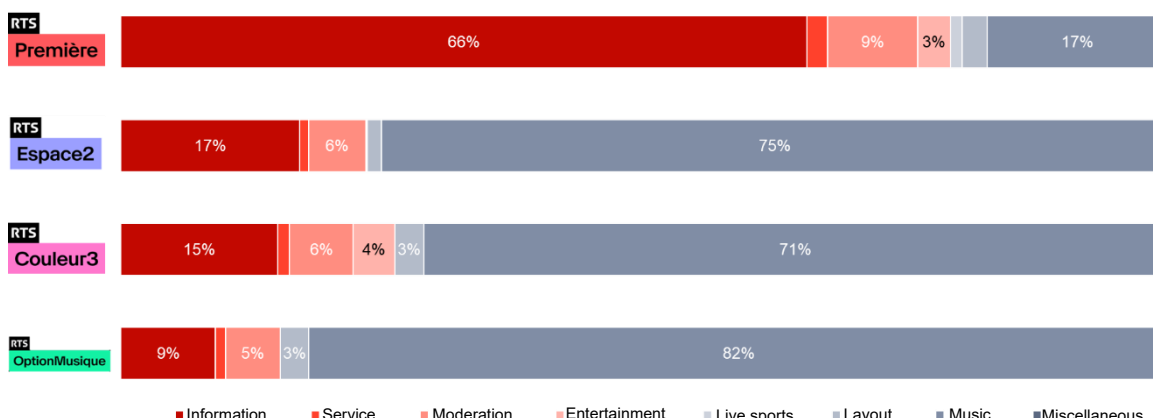
The Swiss Act on Radio and Television (RTVA) and the license issued to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR) serve as a mandate for SRG SSR. The responsibilities assigned to SRG SSR include providing comprehensive, diverse and factual news coverage, fostering Swiss culture and promoting a dialogue among the different regions and language communities of Switzerland. This study examined how SRG SSR carried out its mission in **2024**. The analysis focused on **SRG's radio programming** in the **French-speaking region of Switzerland**.

Results

The **program performance** of the RTS stations remains at a **stable and high level** in 2024. On average, the broadcasting family devotes 27% of its total broadcasting time to informative content; this share has remained unchanged since the last study from 2021. There are still clear differences between the radio stations analyzed regarding the information and music shares: Première, with an information share of around two-thirds, is the station with the most informative content, while Option Musique lives up to its name with a music share of over 80%. Music also dominates on Espace 2 and Couleur 3, accounting for around three-quarters of broadcasting time. The program structure of the individual stations has remained virtually unchanged since 2021 – only Option Musique broadcasts slightly more information (+2 percentage points).

Figure: Program structure and information performance 2024

Basis: Total airtime, random samples 2024, Mon.-Sun. 05.00-24.00



The SRG license explicitly requires RTS radio stations to report on the **subject areas** of politics, the economy, society, culture and sport. These «relevant» topics are comprehensively covered by all stations and account for almost all the informative program content, at 95% to 99%. This means that, as in the previous studies, there is little room for the «human interest/bad news» category in the reviewed programs. The share of «relevant» topics has remained stable at a high level compared to the results of 2021 (+1 percentage point).

Despite their different thematic focuses, the four RTS stations cover a broad spectrum of topics in their informative content. The **variety of topics** has remained constant overall compared to 2021 (+1 percentage point). However, there have been shifts at the individual station level: Option Musique features a smaller variety of topics (-10 percentage points), while Couleur 3 increased it (+12 percentage points). In 2024, Couleur 3 will thus offer the greatest diversity of topics (44%): Around one-third of broadcasting time is allocated to cultural topics and just under a quarter to each of politics and society. On Première, societal topics dominate, followed by culture. By contrast, Espace 2 devotes over half its informative content to cultural topics, thereby representing the smallest variety of topics in 2024 (24%).

The **diversity of opinion** presented on the four RTS channels remains almost unchanged compared to 2021: On average, 13% of the context-focused informative content features different opinions or perspectives. The highest share of such content is provided by Première (28%), which corresponds to an increase of 10 percentage points compared to 2021. Option Musique on the other hand offers little diversity of opinion at 5%. In terms of the **variety of actors**, there is a slight increase (+3 percentage points) compared to 2021 across all stations. Option Musique is the leading station here. The **diversity of journalistic formats** has also increased compared to 2021 (+8 percentage points). This development is particularly noticeable on Espace 2 (+12 percentage points) and Option Musique (+19 percentage points), both use a wider range of journalistic formats than in 2021.

One of the high-quality standards that SRG stations have to meet is journalistic professionalism. A characteristic indicator of this form of professionalism is **transparency of the sources that are used** in the broadcast information, meaning that the originator of a piece of information must be specified. The reporting of RTS stations was characterized by a very high level of source transparency: In almost 90% of the informative broadcasting time in 2024, the originators of information are either identified or even heard in sound

bites. This means that transparency is much higher than in 2021 (+14 percentage points). Première has the highest share of source citations and makes the origin of its information transparent for nearly all informative content. The **transparency of source access** within the RTS stations has also increased slightly (+4 percentage points). In an average of 93% of informative content, it is clear how the information was obtained.

Under the license that took effect in 2019, SRG stations must endeavor to provide «an appropriate presentation and **representation of genders** in their programming.»¹ For this reason, this study also examined whether male and female speakers were given equal amounts of broadcasting time. Male speakers slightly predominate in RTS programmes (on average 52%), which is somewhat less than in 2021 (-3 percentage points). Men are most frequently heard on Couleur 3, while the most balanced gender mix is found on Option Musique.

The license ultimately requires that the reporting of SRG radio stations focus and elucidate developments on three **geographic levels** (international, national and language-regional). RTS stations report most frequently on events abroad and cover developments of international relevance. While events abroad are given around the same amount of broadcasting time as in 2021 (+1 percentage point), the international coverage of topics has increased slightly (+8 percentage points). Events within Switzerland's language regions are covered to a lesser extent than three years ago (in total -6 percentage points, of which -5 percentage points in French-speaking Switzerland). At the level of individual stations, there are clear differences in terms of geographical attention: Couleur 3 and Option Musique have a clear focus on international issues. Both stations concentrate their reporting on events abroad and topics of international relevance. After a decline in 2021, Couleur 3 has expanded its international focus again at the expense of reporting on western Switzerland. Première and Espace 2 have a more balanced focus: Première reports equally on international, national and French-speaking Swiss events, while Espace 2 covers events in the Romandy and abroad in equal measure. Most of the content on these stations is also of international relevance (Première 64%, Espace 2 59%), with an increase at Première (+10 percentage points).

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, variety of topics, diversity of opinion, diversity of journalistic formats used as well as regional references.

The sample consists of programming aired on each of the four radio stations analyzed 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.

¹ SRG Broadcasting License, Art. 3, para. 3

Table: Methodological key data of the SRG SSR radio program analysis 2024

Methodology	Quantitative content analysis
Analyzed stations	- RTS Première - RTS Espace 2 - RTS Couleur 3 - RTS Option Musique
Random sample	An artificial week (Mon.-Sun.), from 05.00 to 24.00 each day Analyzed programming hours per station: 133 hours Total analyzed programming hours: 532 hours Number of tracks analyzed on music sample date: 699 Tracks analyzed from the daytime program: 526