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MANAGEMENT OF ON-AIR TIME IN THE CONTEXT OF PROGRAMS REQUIRED FROM PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

Abstract

In order to accomplish the mission of a public radio it is necessary to manage the broadcasting time adequately, taking into account the mission-related objectives, such as production of programs focusing on matters important for local communities. Public radio should be perceived by the audience as a reliable and trustworthy source of information. At the same time it should compete for young listeners and improve attractiveness of the program without excessive commercialization. Therefore, being a public station, Radio Rzeszów SA broadcasts a wide variety of programs focusing on information, opinions, culture, entertainment, education and sport, in compliance with its mission. Moreover, the schedule of programs is designed taking into account the criteria for the preferred programs, as defined by the National Broadcasting Council. The numerous mission-related tasks of a public broadcasting entity include programs for national and ethnic minorities. Polskie Radio Rzeszów produces and broadcasts the most refined genres of radio journalism, such as reportage and radio drama. In Rzeszów Radio these are programs for Ukrainian and Łemko minorities. The related achievements are presented in the article, which also discusses the findings of Radio Rzeszów monitoring conducted by the National Broadcasting Council as well as a survey commissioned by us.

Key words: Radio Rzeszów, public radio mission, preferred programs, radio monitoring, programs for national minorities, listener survey

Radio is a medium which directly impacts all aspects of public, political and cultural life, organizes their contents and narration, manages the way people jointly experience events. This function does not result from the programming format of the radio, but from the multitude of entities using this medium in the media sphere. In this respect public radio plays a specific role, since in accordance with normative concepts it should be perceived by the audience as a reliable and trustworthy source of information which also competes for listeners regardless of their age, profession and social status. This requires a number of undertakings aimed at improving attractiveness of the program which will make the contents more interest-

ing without excessive commercialization. Public radio occupies a different market position than formatted programs of commercial radio stations which perform ex-ante analysis of audiences' demand for specific types of programming in order to define the radio's strategies for many years. This allows for identifying the station fulfilling specific expectations of listeners. Yet there are also other distinctive features defining the so-called "type" of station, as commercial or public radio. Nevertheless in both types of radio stations the program is identical, and the differences are connected with three aspects:

- ownership – commercial stations are owned by private entities and public radio is a property of the State Treasury;
- territorial range of the station, which mainly impacts its profile; and
- nature of programming, which I am discussing in this article.

The purpose of this article is to describe the current standing of the radio station, without evaluations or critical analyses of the resulting conclusions. These would require further study. Yet, it is worthwhile to capture the existing situation and use it as a foundation for building the concept for radio management aimed at making adjustments to its mission and capacities.

In accordance with common belief, public radio stations receive subsidies from the state, or from subscription fees, and commercial stations are financed from their own revenues and by their owners. Another difference results from the "public mission" set forth for state-owned stations. Due to this, in public radio there is room for numerous nearly extinct forms of journalism, niche programs designed for, apparently, small audiences, as well as shows focusing on high culture. Commercial stations do not have such responsibility, yet they believe that some of their programs fulfil such mission.

Another distinguishing feature is the verbal content, which is much greater in public than in commercial radio, significantly impacting the quality of information and message. Communications which can be heard in commercial radio frequently present embarrassing and infantile level, similar to the verbal message of tabloids. Hence, many media experts point to the progressing tabloidization of radio, suggesting that public media are also affected by this trend. According to them Polish Radio 2 is the only one which continues as intelligent radio with classical music and warm voices of show hosts, and the remaining public radio stations are becoming more and more similar to commercial broadcasting entities. Frequently quoted examples of this phenomenon include the format of Polish Radio Three and Radio Bis. It could be assumed that the current recipe for radio is limited to the following items: electronic selector (the so-called D.J. Computer), show host without distinctive voice and personality as well as fixed and predictable daily rhythm, i.e. program which goes more or less like this: *song – song – time info – commercials, short news – weather forecast, sponsor's commercial – song – song – competition for listeners – song – song*, etc. This system, or more appropriately "programming rhythm", is a result of intuitive management of the radio, which adheres to listeners' daily be-

haviours regarding the radio as an accompanying medium; that as a consequence leads to choosing such rhythm of the program rather than striving for more ambitious schedule.

Opposing such pseudo-universal concept for the radio, public stations, in order to accomplish their mission, must create and broadcast thematic blocks targeted at carefully defined audiences, and scheduled at precisely selected time. Public radio must take into account the whole spectrum of needs related to the society's cultural growth, including the demand for high culture. Due to this it should receive support by means of subscription fee from the public domain.

This is confirmed by comparative market analyses for public and commercial radio stations. Programs on offer defined ex post in commercial radio stations are impacted by a number of factors, such as:

- various methods of motivating listeners, e.g. prizes for listening carefully, sms-based competitions – according to commercial stations' analysis this should contribute to the cultural growth of the public;
- designing various kinds of loyalty programs based on simple market associations, shaping tastes for the perception of culture in general, including high culture.

The concept of culture in various fields of knowledge is quite ambiguous. The concept can be encountered in sociology, ethnology, anthropology and many others. For the needs of this article I am going to adopt a simplified definition treating culture as the totality of man-made objects, tangible or intangible, fulfilling human spiritual and aesthetic needs. By using this highly generalized definition, and various criteria, it is possible to distinguish a few kinds of culture from the point of view of the audiences, possible consumers of works of a given type of culture; hence we can distinguish:

- popular culture aimed at mass audiences
- high culture designed for more narrow group of enthusiasts with higher expectations and more refined tastes.

High culture is created by the most talented and best educated artists of a given social group, and its works, unlike those of popular culture, are not addressed to everyone. High culture is also frequently recognized as elitist, as it is the most significant part of symbolic culture of a given society. It most frequently draws on resources of the national culture, as the foundation of traditions and accomplishments of the society. It is work of creative elites consisting of people who acquire competences for creating and perceiving arts by means of in-depth, specialized education. Potentially it is available to everyone. It should be presented by schools, theatres, art galleries, libraries, concert halls and most importantly by mass media. One of the obligations of the civil society in its democratic development is to ensure general access to culture as a whole, including high culture, as well as comprehensive information about such access.

High culture comprises various communications conveyed by means of various codes and media. Therefore, the audience is required to have broad cultural competences. Characteristic features of high culture include involvement in issues of general nature and aversion to mass culture. It is recognized as art which is a product of an artist. Recipients of high culture include people creating, storing and forwarding cultural models of major importance. To decide whether or not mass access to high culture is a positive phenomenon, it is necessary to start with explaining a few concepts: mass access, and high culture.

Mass access is a process which makes it possible for people to learn about various areas of arts, life and culture. The process affects large populations. It is a good idea to consider the question whether providing mass access to high culture is a positive phenomenon. It definitely is, particularly when the access is provided by mass media in broadly understood media sphere.¹ As a result people open up for it, and can benefit from national and global heritage. In addition to media, wide access to high culture is also provided by numerous organizations and associations which make it possible for people to learn about specific cultural assets.

High culture, its perception and knowledge do not only relate to our behaviours, but also to arts and tangible assets. In this context, providing mass access to high culture is a well-aimed endeavour. Due to this, public media should pay particular attention to it, and they should encourage the public to appreciate it, and to avoid its commercialization. Such tasks can only be fulfilled by regional public media, since these are the only entities which can contribute to developing various kinds of centres for cultural initiatives highlighting the region's high culture, at the regional as well as national level.

Polskie Radio Rzeszów S.A., as a public medium, broadcasts a wide variety of programs focusing on information, opinions, culture, entertainment, education and sport – in compliance with Art. 21 clause 1 of Broadcasting Act.² Rzeszów Radio, as a regional station, accomplishes tasks and remit of PSM by means of such operations as:

- production of nationwide programs, regional programs, and programs for reception abroad in the Polish language and in other languages as well as other programs meeting the democratic, social and cultural needs of local communities;
- production and broadcasting of thematic programs;
- support for the development of culture, science and education, and particular attention to accomplishments of Polish intellectuals and artists;
- promotion of sport;

¹ The book by H. Pietrzak, *Nowe podmioty w przestrzeni medialnej (New entities in media sphere)*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2012, discusses these dependencies and relations between “broadcaster” – „audience” and “information”.

² Broadcasting Act dated 29 December 1992, “Journal of Laws” 1993, No. 7, item 34, as amended.

- promotion of healthy life-styles, counteracting social pathologies, and strengthening family ties enabling citizens and their organisations to take part in public life by expressing diverse views and attitudes;
- respecting the needs of national and ethnic minorities and communities speaking regional languages;
- dissemination of knowledge of Polish language, promoting media related education.

Tasks executed in accordance with its mission constitute the main product of Rzeszów public radio station, and take the form of a 24-hour program complying with the above guidelines. The schedule of programs is designed periodically taking into account the criteria for the so-called “preferred programs” defined by National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT). These include:

- programs focusing on new technologies, in particular educational programs counteracting digital exclusion;
- educational programs for children and teenagers;
- programs focusing on culture, facilitating perception of works of culture, and art, music, painting, etc.;
- programs promoting amateur sport, particularly among children and teenagers;
- radio drama, features and documentary materials.

Basic requirements for radio as an accompanying medium include the necessity to retain adequate proportion between “spoken word” – “music” and “advertising”. KRRiT does not define these proportions in detail, besides advertising time, but traditionally adopted standard proportions have been confirmed by Radio monitoring and by radio audience research.³ “Spoken word” accounts for approx. 44% of program in Rzeszów Radio, “music” occupies approx. 50% and advertising accounts for 6% of the time.

Just like in most public radio stations, programs attracting largest number of our listeners (of all age groups) include those focusing on information and news. These account for approx. 15% of the time (approx. 1350 hours per year). Radio is expected by its listeners to present news and information in a reliable, trustworthy and prompt manner. And this is what listeners receive from the Radio on a daily basis.

The category of “information and news” in our radio comprises daily news, journals, press reviews, weather forecasts, traffic news, business news and all programs which aim at presenting facts, events, people and their opinions as well as forecasts. Information prepared by the team of journalists working at Polskie Radio Rzeszów

³ In recent years Rzeszów Radio was assessed by means of a survey for KRRiT in „Monitoring Report for Rzeszów Radio”, by the Social Change Unit, at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw, dated 11.03.2012, and by a commissioned appraisal contained in “Survey Report for Rzeszów Radio”, conducted by the Institute of Social and Marketing Research, Lublin, June 2013.

is always related to specific events and phenomena occurring in the Podkarpackie Province. These are supplemented with the most important news from Poland and abroad. News bulletins are on the air at fixed hours and attract the largest audiences. According to the surveys, the highest rates are achieved by our Radio every full hour and during short news at 6.30, 7.30, 8.30 and at 15.30, 16.30 and 17.30.

In 2013 each day approx. 30 brand new pieces of information were created in the form of text and audio material. Each news bulletin was supplemented with weather forecast for the whole region. In addition to general news, the broadcasting schedule of PRRz regularly comprises specialist bulletins. These include “traffic news”;⁴ economy bulletin, and sports news, information for skiers, sailors as well as cultural news.

Information is also presented by means of longer lasting audio materials (from 4 to 5 minutes) which discuss major events in the region related to political and social matters, to economy and culture. Such materials are presented in two information programs: the morning show entitled *Kalejdoskop* (Kaleidoscope) (from 6.00 to 9.00) and the afternoon program *Puls dnia* (Pulse of the Day) from 15.00 to 18.00 (this is the time of the highest listenership for our radio). Both programs are open for listeners who can present their comments and opinions on the air. Listeners greatly appreciate the opportunity of interactive contact, and as a result the programs are more diverse and dynamic. Many programs are broadcast live from locations of some events of importance for the region. These do not contain media-based facts, or pseudo-events created to achieve higher positioning of the information; these presentations are carefully prepared by journalists to provide supplementary clarification of a given issue. This category also includes information programs about non-profit operations of Public Benefit Institutions, in compliance with the regulation of KRRiT dated 29.04.2011. Accordingly, Rzeszów Radio once a week broadcasts a 30-minute long show entitled *Podkarpackie pozarządowe* (Podkarpackie NGO-s), presenting operations of non-profit organizations in the region. Each year, in the period from January to April our Radio promotes the idea of donating 1% of tax. During the campaign entitled *Podziel się podatkiem* (Share Your Tax), non-profit organizations from Podkarpackie have an opportunity to present their operations, and ask listeners' to donate 1% of their income tax.

Rzeszów Radio, as a public radio station, provides all entities carrying out election campaigns with the free-of-charge option for recording and disseminating information programs. In compliance with the regulation of KRRiT concerning radio programs presenting opinions of political parties related to current issues, the Radio once a week broadcasts a 45-minute long program entitled *Podkarpacki panel polityczny* (Podkarpackie Political Panel). During this live show, regional repre-

⁴ Additional news programs for drivers can be heard in periods of heavier traffic (statutory holidays, summer holidays, long weekends). This way we perform one of the functions of the radio as an accompanying medium.

sentatives of political parties having seats in the parliament can voice their opinions on current events.

Trade unions and employers' unions may present their opinions in the program entitled *Głosem związków* (Voice of the Unions) (on the air each Tuesday, duration of approx. 12 minutes). These are important not only because they inform the public about relevant issues, but most importantly they match the criteria for preferred programs related to civil education.

Over 10% of Rzeszów Radio program comprises broadly understood opinion journalism which presents in-depth discussions of various issues and opinions of diverse groups, individuals and institutions. Leading in this category in Polskie Radio Rzeszów is the feature program entitled *Między nami* (Between Us), on the air from Monday to Friday, from 9.00 to 12.00. This is an interactive program focusing on two leading topics discussed by guests and listeners. Other genres of journalism which can be heard here include: features, surveys, columns, reviews and commentaries. During summer holidays *Między nami* (Between Us) is slightly shorter, and can be heard from 17.05 to 18.00. A bit more entertaining feature programs include *LUS – czyli lekkie uzupełnienie soboty* (LUS – or Light Supplement for Saturday) (from 9.00 to 11.00) and *Babskie gadanie* (Female Talk) (Sunday, from 10.00 to 12.00). On Mondays from 22.00 to 24.00 Polskie Radio Rzeszów broadcasts a specialty show entitled *Dyskusyjny klub radiowy* (Radio Discussion Club). The range of topics discussed here is extremely diverse: from history and culture to philosophy, religion and even sport. The show is addressed to those listeners who want to improve their knowledge of man, world, and culture, and listen to spoken word.

During summer holidays, throughout the week from 9.00 to 12.00 our Radio broadcasts a special program entitled *Biwak z Polskim Radiem Rzeszów* (*Camping with Polish Radio Rzeszów*). The show is very popular with and greatly appreciated by our listeners. The show presents a number of thematic series promoting Podkarpacie and its cultural assets. Materials contributed by our journalists focus on heritage sites and tourist attractions of the region. Various guests appearing in the program include collectors, people with interesting personalities and talents.

The broadcasting schedule regularly includes feature programs focusing on economy and social matters (*Innowator / Innovator*, *Kresowe krajobrazy / Landscapes of the Borderland*, *Podkarpackie krajobrazy / Landscapes of Podkarpacie*), and religion (*W ogrodzie wiary / In the Garden of Faith*).

Statutory tasks defined for public broadcasting entities include programs for national and ethnic minorities. Accordingly, in Rzeszów Radio these are programs for Ukrainian and Łemko minorities. Program in Ukrainian, entitled *Skrynia*, is on the air each Thursday from 19.10 to 20.00, and four times a week we broadcast 30-minute long „News for Ukrainians” prepared by Polish Radio External Service. Additionally, we broadcast programs related to anniversaries, statutory holidays, jubilees, and other special occasions such as: Watra, Festival on the Oślawa, Festi-

val of Łemko Culture. Programs for minorities constitute approx. 2% of the on-air time (approx. 190 hours) per year.

In every given year nearly 1/3 of the program comprises shows promoting broadly understood high culture. The category includes popular educational shows designed to present knowledge of various areas and phenomena in arts, humanities (literature, linguistics), sciences, natural studies and economics. The types of shows of this category include preferred formats, such as: radio drama, radio novel, prose reading, poetry reading, feature, or various dramatized forms for children and teenagers. Other shows in this category represent opinion journalism, and present discussions and comments related to cultural phenomena. Polskie Radio Rzeszów, as a regional medium, provides most comprehensive information about events, cultural and artistic phenomena taking place locally. Such information does not only come in the form of short announcements (*Weekend kulturalnie* / Weekend with Culture), but is also discussed in more detail during the Friday show entitled *Okolice kultury* (Surroundings of Culture) (17.00–19.00). Daily schedule of our radio contains book instalments, and from January this year we started broadcasting a drama series entitled *Drabina do nieba* (Ladder to Heaven), which is a fictionalized history of Rzeszów from 1912 to contemporary times.

Another form of shows focusing on high culture is represented by *Usługi dla czytających* (Services for Readers), which includes reviews and discussions promoting newly published works of literature. On the other hand *Radiowy kinematograf* (Radio Cinematograph) covers topics related to the cinema, by presenting interesting movies and current program of movie theatres, interviews with film directors, actors and composers of film scores. Polskie Radio Rzeszów produces and broadcasts the most refined genres of radio journalism, such as feature and radio drama. Regular items in our schedule include the Sunday show entitled *Spotkanie z reportażem* (Feature in view) and *Studio dokumentu* (Documentary Studio). Radio feature is an audio story of an event, place, and most importantly of people. This is an audio version of non-fiction. Rzeszów Radio also produces radio drama based on original scenarios drawing on the realities of Podkarpacie. These are broadcast occasionally, due to high costs of their production.

Music, playing a specific role in a public radio station, is divided into specialty shows focusing on various genres, from classical music (*Crescendo, Klasyka nocą* / *Classics at Night*), jazz (*Cały ten zgiełk* / *All That Jazz*), rock (*Rock radio, Rocknoc* / *Rock-night*), blues (*Blues Attack*), pop (*MuzoGaleria* / *MusicGallery, Dźwiękosfera* / *Sound Zone, Klekotanie dinozaura* / *Dinosaur Chatter*), world music (*Etnofonia* / *Ethnophonics*), poetry in songs (*Mikroklimat* / *Microclimate*) and folk music (*Na ludową nutę* / *Folk-style Notes, Plebiscyt kapel ludowych* / *Folk Band Poll*). Each Friday our concert studio hosts small concerts which can be heard live on the radio and via the Internet. These concerts are designed to promote young artists, mainly from Podkarpacie, and they are also an excellent opportunity for enjoy performances of well-known bands (*Czerwone Gitary, Closterkeller, K. Kiljański*). Our

regular programming is supplemented with special shows focusing on various cultural events, such as *Noc Muzeów* (Museums at Night), *Festiwal Maskarada* (Masquerade Festival), or *Studio Festiwalu w Łańcucie* (Łańcut Festival Studio).

Public radio stations are not only expected to inform and affect listeners, but most importantly to educate the public and integrate the community around common values and goals.

Our leading program in this category is *Radiolatorium* (Radiolatory), a nearly 60-minute long show on the air each Saturday – it explains, in an accessible way, various phenomena related to physics, chemistry, astronomy, technology and computer sciences. Polskie Radio Rzeszów regularly presents series of programs focusing on history: *Wojny, kampanie, militaria* (Wars, Campaigns, Militaria), which talks about the most important battles, phenomena and military personalities of the 20th century connected with Podkarpacie as well as *Historia duża i mała* (History – Large and Small) – containing information about current research and discoveries related to history. The schedule of Rzeszów Radio abounds in short educational programs providing advice, for instance related to: language accuracy (*Po polsku czy po polskiemu / In Polish or in the Polish*), health and beauty (*Szczypta zdrowia, szczypta piękna / A Grain of Health, a Grain of Beauty*, *POZ – czyli porozmawiajmy o zdrowiu / LTH – Let's Talk about Health*), gardening, floristics (*Zaglądamy kwiatkom w płatki / A Peek under Flowers' Petals*), business and economy (*Podkarpackie nieruchomości / Podkarpacie Real Estate*), regional culinary art (*Biwakowe obserwatorium gastronomiczne / Camp-site Cooking Observatory*). Chairman of KRRiT highly appreciated the summertime series entitled *Szlak Sikorskiego* (Sikor-ski's Route), honouring the General on the 70th anniversary of his death; the series was broadcast live from various locations, including Gibraltar.

Taking into account rapid developments in new technologies we make sure our listeners have access to educational programs designed to prevent digital exclusion. Coinciding with digitization of terrestrial television in Podkarpacie we produced special educational programs explaining various related issues (especially for older people). We are planning to launch a one-hour long educational show for children, which will be on the air on Sundays and will be specially designed for our youngest listeners. Programs which are mainly designed to provide education account for approx. 6% of our programming – that annually amounts to approx. 500 hours.

The total of 3–4% of Polskie Radio Rzeszów programming focuses on sport events of regional, national and global significance. These shows contain various forms of journalism (information, report, live broadcast, and feature). In addition to daily sports news aired at 7.05, 8.05, 15.05, 19.05, and 21.05, Saturday afternoons belong to a sport block entitled *Sportowe takty* (Sport Time) (17.00–20.00). The program mainly contains reports from games played by Podkarpacie volleyball, basketball and handball teams as well as information from regional football pitches, as well as speedway competitions and hockey games. The Sunday show entitled *Sportowe echa* (Sport-Reverb) (20.00–21.00) summarizes major sports events of the

weekend. It also contains feature materials, for instance presenting opinions held by sports people, coaches, activists and fans. Both programs promote healthy life styles and amateur sport as an enjoyable pastime, particularly for children and teenagers, and as a way to improve fitness of the public. These programs frequently feature reports and accounts related to sport accomplishments of people with disabilities.

Depending on circumstances live coverage from games may also be aired at other times, besides the weekend sport blocks. Polskie Radio Rzeszów co-organizes Krzysztof Stachowicz Football Tournament for teenagers; the name of the event honours the memory of a sport journalist who used to work in our radio. Tourism, recreation and healthy life-styles are in focus of the summertime program entitled *Biwak z Polskim Radiem Rzeszów* (Camping with Polskie Radio Rzeszów).

Radio, as the so-called „accompanying medium”, is designed not only to inform and educate but also to entertain and accompany listeners during sport activities, trips or walks. Entertainment accounts for approx. 29% of the program (i.e. approx. 2.500 hours per year). Majority of that time is filled with music; in accordance with the regulation set forth by KRRiT public radio stations are obliged to promote young artists performing songs in Polish. Polish music is promoted during the show entitled *Gramy po polsku* (We Play in Polish); on the other hand *Podkarpacka scena przebojów* (Podkarpacie Hot Song Scene) is designed to promote local musicians for whom regional radio is frequently the only way to find new audiences. Older listeners can enjoy hit songs of their youth while listening to chart-type show called *Dino top*. Top Thirty of Polskie Radio Rzeszów is designed for younger fans of our radio.

Cabaret shows also fit in this category; these include shows entitled *Klub Dobrego Wojaka Szwejka* (Good Soldier Svejk's Club), the satirical program *Strefa kabaret* (Cabaret Zone) (Saturday 15.00–16.00) and *Kabaret w Dobrym tonie* (Fine-Tuned Cabaret). Games and competitions for listeners are an ever-present element of entertainment in Rzeszów Radio schedule (*W dobrym tonie* / Fine-Tuned, *Niedziela będzie dla Was* / Sunday will be Ours). Of notice is also a special show designed for university students, entitled *Godziny rektorskie* (Time-Off) – aired each Thursday after 22.00. In addition to good music and competitions it offers valuable information and advice, useful not only for “kids”.

An analysis of Polskie Radio Rzeszów programming allows a conclusion that it meets all the criteria and requirements defined for public media. It accomplishes the mission in all its aspects, and provides comprehensive support for Polish artists and their work.

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