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## Redefining Regional Public Radio in Spain: Challenges of the Public Radio of the Autonomous Regions (1982-2007)

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**RESUMEN:** Desde 1982, trece de las diecisiete Comunidades Autónomas de España han desarrollado sus propios servicios de radio y televisión. En aquel momento político y social, las emisoras de radio públicas autonómicas fueron justificadas con criterios y argumentos basados en la proximidad y la identidad cultural. Sin embargo, el actual ambiente social y mediático es radicalmente distinto a los factores dominantes en 1982. En el actual contexto de la consideración de los medios públicos en los distintos países europeos, este artículo analiza las condiciones actuales de las radios públicas regionales en España, un país en el que el conjunto de la radio pública controla más del 40% del total de las emisoras de radio: más de 2.500 emisoras de un total de 6.000. En este panorama, la radio pública regional podría ser una alternativa a la radio comercial y a la radio pública nacional si consiguiera emprender nuevos proyectos dirigidos a la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** radio pública, radio autonómica, medios públicos de radiodifusión, radio regional.

**ABSTRACT:** *Since 1982, thirteen of the seventeen Autonomous Regions of Spain have developed their own public radio and television channels. The autonomous public radio stations were justified with criteria and arguments based on proximity and cultural identity. However, the current social and media environments are quite different from those prevailing in 1982. In the context of a reconsideration of the public service concept throughout Europe, this paper analyzes the current conditions of regional public radio in Spain, where more than 40% of the total number of radio stations is controlled by the public radio sector: more than 2,500 out of a total of 6,000. In short, regional public radio in Spain might be an alternative to commercial radio and to national public radio, with the potential to undertake new projects in relation to society.*

**Key words:** *Public radio, public service broadcasting, regional radio.*

### 1. Introduction

At the end of the seventies, Spain approved a new Constitution and a new administration of its regions, referred to as the Autonomous Communities. The Basque Country and Catalonia outlined their plans to put into

practice the concept of public service through a public radio and television enterprise, independent of the monopoly of Radio Televisión Española (RTVE). A new stage in radio broadcasting began in Spain twenty-five years ago with the beginning of the Basque autonomous public radio service in November 1982.

The autonomous radio stations were justified by criteria and arguments related to their independence from the centralised programming of RTVE and their proximity to audiences, because of their role in fostering a community's sensibility and its social and cultural identity: these are some of the ideas associated with the social function of autonomous radio and promoted by the autonomous organizations, which are reflected in their principles and in the contents broadcast to the audience.

In addition to this declaration of principles by the autonomous radio and television stations, and in the context of a reconsideration of the public service concept throughout Europe, the governments of the Autonomous Communities of Spain are today still interested in maintaining their broadcasting institutions, set up over the course of the last twenty-five years.

Moreover, the Autonomous Communities have asserted their prerogative to manage broadcasting radio in the following fields: 1) the government and legislation of the broadcasting service in each region; 2) the concession of frequencies to private broadcasters in each Autonomous Community; 3) the direct management of the public broadcasting service through autonomous radio networks.

In the beginning, the first autonomous radio institutions tried to follow the inspiring principles of public service as reflected in the only existing public institution, RTVE, but adapted to the cultural, social and political circumstances of their respective regions. Nevertheless, today, in 2008, autonomous radio stations face different social, political and economic circumstances to those prevailing in Spain in the 1980s: the democratic system has been strengthened and the governments of the Autonomous Communities have taken on a wider range of responsibilities; and, at the same time, programmes and techniques have evolved over time. Technology has provided radio with means which were unimaginable just a few years ago. Regarding programme production and contents, radio work today is both easier and faster. Communications are immediate and possible from any geographical location; and the volume of information that arrives in radio station newsrooms is enormous.

In recent years, the number of radio stations in Spain has grown significantly. As a result, the "supply and demand" radio model is prevalent in different types of radio stations: talk-radio and music channels, private/commercial and public institutions.

The reasons for this growth of radio in Spain may be listed as follows:

- 1) The increase in the number of radio stations approved by the most recent National FM Radio Technical Plans (1997 and 2006), for both public and commercial radio stations<sup>1</sup>.
- 2) The number of the Autonomous Communities in Spain that have put radio stations on the air has increased steadily over the last decade.
- 3) Public service regional radio stations have reinforced their presence on the internet: news, entertainment and corporate communication can be found on their respective webs, enabling new services within their communications strategies.
- 4) Finally, the financing model for public service broadcasting in Spain has been strengthened through the dual income stream of public funds and commercial advertising. Despite calls from the Asociación Española de Radio Comercial (Spanish Commercial Radio Association) to prevent commercial funding of public radio networks, the public authorities in different Autonomous Communities in Spain continue to finance radio and television services and, at the same time, the use of revenue raised from commercial advertising sources is also allowed.

Public radio in Spain comprises the stations of Radio Nacional de España<sup>2</sup>, the radio stations of the Autonomous Communities and the local public

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish Government approved a new Technical Plan for frequency modulation stations (Real Decreto 964/2006, of September 1st, *Boletín Oficial del Estado* 223, September 18th, 2006). This Technical Plan provides for the establishment of 867 new private radio stations in Spain and it is estimated that 235 new stations will emerge in the autonomous public radio sector. The previous Technical Plan was published in 1989, and was extended in 1997. In addition to trying to update licensed ownership and the technical characteristics of existing stations up to that time, the 1989 Plan increased the number of stations. It added 336 more stations to the publicly owned Spanish National Radio; it created 143 new stations for autonomous public radio (it was the first plan to recognise stations that were to be directly managed by the Autonomous Communities, although the first autonomous station, the Basque Euskadi Irratia, was already on the air since 1982), and another 347 for commercial radio; at the same time it pioneered the concession of public stations to city councils. On the other hand, the 1997 extension of this Technical Plan granted a total of 350 new stations to commercial radio.

<sup>2</sup> Radio Televisión Española was constituted as the new “Corporación RTVE, S.A.” in September 2006. After a process of more than two years of study of a new model of public radio-television broadcasting, the new Corporation began operations at the beginning of 2007. In addition, RTVE applied a labour force adjustment plan that affected 4,150 employees (from a total staff of almost 10,000), a measure agreed by management and unions at RTVE in October 2006. Throughout its history, Radio Nacional de España has made local and regional broadcasts through the discontinued stations Radiocadena Española, Radio 4 and Radio 5. Currently, Radio 4 broadcasts in Catalonia as a regional radio station. Nowadays, Radio Nacional de España has a main programme production centre in Madrid, but it maintains a structure of regional production centres in all the Autonomous Communities. The Radio 1 and Radio 5 Todo Noticias broadcasts mainly draw on network programming, although there are regional spaces in the schedules, which are generally filled with news programmes.

radio stations run by city councils. The total number of radio stations (both public and commercial) in Spain in 2008 is over 6,100, including 2,300 illegal stations. The public radio sector controls 42.45% of the total number of radio stations (more than 2,600 stations). However, regional public radio stations comprise 10% of the total number of radio stations in Spain.

This paper analyzes the current conditions of regional public radio in Spain. National broadcasting (in both public and commercial radio) has increased in the last twenty-five years, leaving local radio with a greatly reduced number of local programmes. Regional public radio stations have rescued local broadcasting. In light of such developments, the main principles of public service broadcasting might be revised; regional public radio stations have applied the established policy of public service broadcasting: to inform, to educate and to entertain.

## 2. Challenges Faced by Regional Public Radio in Spain

Since 1982, the autonomous governments of the different regions in Spain have adopted the creation of regional public radio and television services as an instrument of self-government. Until 1982, the only television channel in Spain was Televisión Española (TVE), but private radio had been in operation since 1924. Both private and public radio (Radio Nacional de España: RNE) coexisted in the audiovisual context. By the end of 1982, and as a consequence of the new political and administrative status in Spain that emerged with the 1978 Constitution, the Basque Autonomous Government set up the Basque public radio and television services, despite opposition from the national government. In the same way, the regional government of Catalonia set up its own radio and television institution, the Catalan Radio and Television Corporation, in 1983. These developments split the monopoly held by the State TVE public channel and, as a result, weakened the centralised political and administrative government of public media. The basis for a new audiovisual media 'ecosystem' had been inaugurated.

The first of the regional public radio channels was called Euskadi Irratia, with full-time programming in the Basque language (*Euskera*); not long after that, in 1983, a second channel was set up in Spanish (Radio Euskadi). Autonomous institutions in other regions emerged soon thereafter: Catalonia (1983), Galicia (1984), Andalusia (1988), Valencia (1988), Madrid (1989) and Murcia (1990).

During the nineties, these autonomous institutions expanded their range of output through the establishment of several radio channels. Radio stations in other Autonomous Communities did not appear until 2001 or later: Cas-

tilla-La Mancha (2001); the Balearic Islands (2004); Aragón, Asturias and Extremadura (2005); and the Canary Islands (2008). At the moment, 13 of the 17 Autonomous Communities in Spain have radio stations:

**Figure 1. Public Radio Channels Managed by the Autonomous Administrations of the Regions in Spain (2008)**

Autonomous Regions	Autonomous Institution	Radio Channels	Programming
Andalucía	Radio y Televisión de Andalucía	Radio Andalucía Información (1998) Canal Sur Radio (1988) Canal Fiesta Radio Canal Flamenco Radio (Internet)	All News  Talk Music  Music
Aragón	Corporación Aragonesa de Radio y Televisión	Aragón Radio (2005) Aragón Radio 2 (Internet) (2008)	Talk Music and News
Asturias	Radio Televisión del Principado de Asturias-Radio del Principado de Asturias	Radio del Principado de Asturias-RPA (2006)	Talk
Balearic Islands	Ente Público de Radiotelevisión de las Islas Baleares	Ràdio de les Illes Balears (IB3 Ràdio) (2005)	Talk
Canary Islands	Radio Pública de Canarias	Canarias Radio (2008)	Talk (Sept. 2008)
Castilla-La Mancha	Ente Público de Radio-Televisión de Castilla-La Mancha	Radio Castilla-La Mancha (RCM) (2001)	Music and News
Catalonia	Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió	Catalunya Ràdio (1983) Catalunya Informació (1992) Catalunya Música (1987) ICatFM (2006)	Talk All News Music Music
Valencian Community	Radiotelevisión Valenciana	Ràdio Nou Ràdio Nou Música Si Ràdio	Talk Music Music
Basque Country	Euskal Irrati Telebista	Euskadi Irratia (1982) Radio Euskadi (1983) Radio Vitoria (1934/1984) Euskadi Gaztea (1990) EiTB Radio (2001)	Talk Talk Talk Music Music
Extremadura	Corporación Extremeña de Medios Audiovisuales (2005)	Canal Extremadura Radio (2005)	Music and News
Galicia	Compañía de Radio Televisión de Galicia	Radio Galega (1985) Radio Galega Musica (2004) Son Galicia Radio (Internet) (2004)	Talk Music
Madrid	Radiotelevisión Madrid	Onda Madrid (1989)	Talk
Murcia	Radiotelevisión de la Región de Murcia	Onda Regional de Murcia (1990)	Talk

The challenges currently faced by regional public radio relate to the growth of the public sector in Spain; the development of new multimedia services; and the need to preserve the constant values of public service. These challenges may be classified in three categories: administrative, technical, and social and professional.

2.1. *Administrative and Financial Challenges*

With regard to the number of radio stations, the relation between the public and commercial sectors is imbalanced. Like regional public radio, the number of national public stations and local (city-based) stations has increased in recent years; however, the number of private radio stations has remained the same for the last five years. There are 2,626 public radio stations and 1,281 private commercial radio stations. Moreover, according to the AERC, the Spanish Association of Commercial Radio, there were 2,279 illegal radio stations in Spain in 2008. In recent years, all kinds of illegal stations have spread widely throughout Spain, not only as independent local stations, but also within networks. Both commercial and public radio institutions are agreed that such illegal radio stations should disappear, and the AERC has called on the Spanish Government to ensure the closure of illegal radio stations.

**Figure 2. Number of Radio Stations (frequencies AM + FM) in Spain (2008). 1 Radio Station = 1 Frequency**

	NO. OF RADIO STATIONS AND %	
RADIO NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA	857	13.85%
REGIONAL PUBLIC STATIONS	605	9.78%
MUNICIPAL PUBLIC STATIONS	1,164	18.82%
TOTAL PUBLIC RADIO	2,626	42.45%
TOTAL COMMERCIAL RADIO	1,281	20.71%
TOTAL ILLEGAL STATIONS	2,279 <sup>3</sup>	36.84%
TOTAL RADIO STATIONS	6,186	100%

Source: Author's own tabulation based on data from [www.rtve.es](http://www.rtve.es), the website of the Ministry of Industry [www.mityc.es/Telecomunicaciones/Secciones/Espectro/Radio/](http://www.mityc.es/Telecomunicaciones/Secciones/Espectro/Radio/) (figures for municipal radio stations), and Asociación Española de Radio Comercial (for private radio and illegal radio).

<sup>3</sup> The figure of 2,300 was published in 2004. In recent years, the number of illegal stations may have risen to as high as 3,000.

The 2006 Technical Plan had not been completely put into practice by 2008. It is estimated that the governments of the Autonomous Communities will provide for the establishment of 867 new radio stations in the commercial radio sector and 235 new stations in the autonomous public radio sector. Thus, further growth in the number of regional public radio stations is expected as the 2006 Technical Plan is further implemented.

Likewise, an “unknown” number of radio stations will be assigned to the national public radio institution (Radio Nacional), because the Technical Plan does not set a limit on the number of new radio stations that Radio Nacional may put on the air. The text of the Law that rules the Technical Plan redirects to the website of the ministry of Industry, which should update and publish the list of the radio frequencies assigned to the public sector.

Given that the number of commercial radio stations is predicted to increase and that the distribution of frequencies among different operators is presumed to be appropriate, the closure of illegal stations and the implementation of the 2006 Technical Plan should bring about a reorganization of the radio sector.

Financing is another ongoing challenge<sup>4</sup>. Regional public media are bound to fulfil the agreements and commitments made with regional authorities. Such media are politically controlled by the Regional Parliaments and financed by the budget of each Autonomous Region or Community.

In general, autonomous broadcasting institutions are financed by advertising and significant contributions from the budget of the government of their Autonomous Community. This dual funding obliges them to deliver satisfactory results in both economic and social terms.

For example, the Basque regional public radio and television service (EiTB) and the Basque Government have signed an agreement for direct funding of radio and television services called the “Programme Contract”. The most recent public service contract, covering the period 2007–2010, was agreed to in 2007. The Basque Government has granted EiTB a total amount of 588.5 million of public funds for this four-year term.

<sup>4</sup> The European Commission opened in January 2008 a process of revision of the Communication on the application of State aid rules to public service broadcasting: [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state\\_aid/reform/comments\\_broadcasting/index.html](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state_aid/reform/comments_broadcasting/index.html)

**Figure 3. EITB Programme Contract (2007-2010)**

Year	Funds for operating costs (€ mill.)	Funds for real investments (€ mill.)
2007	118	10
2008	129	14
2009	144	11
2010	151	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>46.5</b>
<b>€ 588.5 mill.</b>		

Source: Basque Government. [http://www.interior.ejgv.euskadi.net/r46-714/es/contenidos/nota\\_prensa/EiTB\\_contrato\\_programa\\_2007\\_10/es\\_kultura/adjuntos/EITB20072010%20gatz%20blok.pdf](http://www.interior.ejgv.euskadi.net/r46-714/es/contenidos/nota_prensa/EiTB_contrato_programa_2007_10/es_kultura/adjuntos/EITB20072010%20gatz%20blok.pdf)

This contract focuses on the social function of the public broadcaster; and, at the same time, EITB undertakes to fulfil the following obligations:

- To offer digital broadcasting (the digital switchover of television in Spain is to happen in 2010).
- To start new digital communication channels on the Internet (a news channel; a second channel based on traditional radio and television programming; and other channels for children and young people).
- To put two new television channels on the air: one for people under 30 years old and in the Basque language; and another that is to be bilingual and targeting a general audience.
- To safeguard the objective(s) of public service broadcasting.
- To maintain quality programming broadcast on different platforms, and to guarantee access to information, education and quality entertainment.
- To use and promote the Basque language.
- To promote Basque audiovisual production.
- To improve management, financial control and staff training.

However, while the state-run public radio and television organization (RTVE) has introduced workforce cutbacks, the autonomous public stations in the regions of Spain have continued to grow in terms of both the number of employees and the supply of programming.

Meanwhile, given that they both receive public funding and compete for commercial advertising revenue, the Spanish Association of Commercial Radio (AERC) has criticized the double financing system for regional public radio stations. For this reason, private radio organizations have argued that public regional radio stations should not be permitted to broadcast commercials or to draw on advertising revenue, and have called for fair competition between the public and private sectors.



## 2.2. *Technical Challenges*

There have been significant developments in radio production and broadcasting technology over the last ten years. Radio stations have integrated digital technology so as to facilitate sound-editing and production processes. Radio studios have begun to use powerful cutting-edge computers and software that enable recording and sound-editing, and their ability to improve radio production has increased.

At the same time, the potential and tools of the internet have been implemented in newsrooms. The traditional broadcasting content is now part of the internet services provided by radio stations. In most cases, such content is presented as the main component of radio station websites, although further website development leads to diversification in other services. In other cases, the brand name product establishes the grounds for the development of other content. The programming of traditional broadcasting content was the primary product offered by radio networks on the internet, as part of an online product and brand-name promotion strategy. Later, this approach evolved through the creation of a wide range of contents and complementary services.

As a result, and thanks to the new technologies involved in production, public radio and television services may specialise their programming with different contents. Technology now offers a range of technical possibilities in relation to content production and programming, including an increase in the number of broadcasting platforms and channels: a single broadcaster has the ability to offer specialised programme contents to different listeners, but this potential depends on its capacity to undertake new projects. In fact, regional public radio services have improved their programming through new internet sites with multimedia entertainment and news contents.

Thus, the internet has become the basis for multimedia communication convergence. Regional public radio stations have acknowledged the importance of online activity, increasing their communication functions on the internet. For example, both the Basque public broadcasting service, EITB, and the Catalan public broadcasting service, CCMA (Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals, Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation), have revised their statutes to cover new multimedia services on the internet.

In general, the main commercial radio networks in Spain have extended their programming strategies, and promotional and business activities on the internet. At the same time, radio networks have increased the supply of contents and services traditionally provided through analogue broadcasting. Commercial radio has made a concerted effort to develop multimedia com-

munication strategies. Likewise, regional public radio should not ignore the opportunity afforded by new technologies to extend the communicative relationship with its listenership(s).

### 2.3. *Social and Professional Challenges*

Public regional radio plays an essential role in ensuring that radio programming provides listeners with better services of higher quality. Quality may be measured and interpreted by reference to both objective and subjective criteria<sup>5</sup>. Thus, an analysis of the characteristics of quality in the social context of the audience served by public service media may be worthwhile. For example, public radio broadcasters should reflect on the model of service offered to listeners. In general, the belief that public service radio and television must lead in the news information market because the audience implicitly recognises its authority is widespread. This is a matter of trust, a reflection of media commitment: the audience trusts public service radio as an institution, and trusts in the information it broadcasts and the services it provides (business, personal advice, useful information, education, entertainment). Hence, it is essential that public regional radio should respect the criteria of good journalism.

Regional public radio comprises 10% of the total number of stations in the Spanish market. Thanks to public financial support, regional public radio stations have been able to undertake new projects.

Regional public radio may also avail itself of the opportunity to increase the number of stations (the 2006 Technical Plan envisaged the creation of 200 new regional public radio stations) and, as a consequence, to set up different networks and new programming projects.

As a result, five Autonomous Communities (Extremadura, Aragón, Balearic Islands, Asturias and the Canary Islands) have set up regional radio stations in recent years; six regional institutions have promoted their third or fourth radio channel, both on the internet (Aragón Radio 2 in Aragón, Son Galicia Radio in Galicia) or through traditional programming (EiTB Irratia in the Basque Country, ICatFM in Catalonia, Si Radio in Valencia). All of

<sup>5</sup> Quality might also be the principal criterion of human, technical and financial resource management, and in the implementation of quality standards. For example, both in the Basque Country and in Catalonia, the public radio and television organizations have improved their management processes and strategies by using independent quality standards, such as EFQM.

these projects have a stake in news and current affairs and the provision of public service information.

In addition, culture and music are now among the contents that some of the new radio channels are promoting, including iCatFM in Catalonia and EiTB Irratia in the Basque Country.

In their mission statements and official statutes, all regional public service radio stations acknowledge the significance of their role in preserving and promoting local languages and cultural identity.

The concern to preserve and promote languages has been shown to be very real over the course of the past twenty-five years: bilingual communities have integrated the use of the local language in broadcasting generally (Euskadi Irratia in the Basque Country, Radio Galega in Galicia, Radio Nou in Valencia – also in Spanish – and all the Catalunya Ràdio radio stations in Catalonia) or on some programmes (for example, the regional public radio stations in the Balearic Islands, Asturias and Aragón). Moreover, autonomous radio reinforces a sense of identity and community belonging, offering the listener a series of select contents in the field of current affairs, which are also valued because they reflect proximity to the listenership.

Given that radio is close to the audience, interactivity and participation have been consistent features of radio station activity from the very beginning. What is more, such ‘listener associations’ have migrated to digital platforms as “communities” based at network and/or programme websites. Websites have reinforced the idea of identity and sense of belonging that such ‘listener associations’ used to promote, and they facilitate the exchange of ideas and commercial products between listeners and the network.

For example, in Vitoria, the capital of the Basque Country, the regional public radio station, Radio Vitoria, has broadcast the popular programme “Club de amigos” (“Friends’ Club”) since the 1960s, comprising public service contents such as employment listings, official announcements, personal congratulations and greetings, phone calls and music dedications, etc. The “Club de amigos” is now celebrating its fortieth anniversary and has started a new blog at <http://blog.EiTB.com/clubdeamigos/><sup>6</sup>.

In this context, not only is the promotion of audience participation required, but communication from listeners must also be responded to and evaluated, to verify and update listener response to the content provided by the

<sup>6</sup> The Radio Vitoria local station was set up in 1934. In 1954, it joined one of the most important commercial radio networks in Spain, Cadena SER. In 1981, its owner *Caja de Ahorros de Vitoria* sold the radio station to the Basque Government.

media and to respond to the suggestions made to the media by its users. Proximity to the audience, consultation with regard to opinions and other interests, and the provision of a range of contents require that media managers take note of and respond to questions and suggestions from the listenership. Such feedback should be regarded as an essential media practice and, in this regard, the institution of the figure of an ombudsperson may be desirable in the regional public service radio sector.

The further encouragement of audience participation in radio networks is one of the consequences of the use of the interactive processes established by digital media in recent years. In addition, brand-name organizations endeavour to foster a sense of identity or belonging among radio listeners and website users. Therefore, the audience is now regarded as including both the listenership of the traditional broadcast service and website users. Together, they comprise a single community of listeners and users of a given network, station or programme.

Although they have little in common, there is another kind of programme in which listener participation has been consistent over the years: the “call-in” show. In Spain, this type of programme emerged on commercial radio in the 1940s: people called to ask a question, to let off steam, to look for something they needed, or to find company. Such shows are still on the air, following renewed programme formats and techniques.

### 3. *Conclusions: Challenges for Regional Public Radio in Spain*

In the current radio and television context in Spain, regional public radio is a complementary option to commercial radio and national public radio. However, the full implementation of the radio frequency granting process started with the 2006 National Technical Plan by the Spanish Government and the governments of the Autonomous Communities is required. This unfinished process is a handicap in the development of private radio networks and in reaching a balance between the public and private sectors.

The ongoing provision of quality services to regional and local audiences (general or particular groups, or even personalized services because radio communication is personal) depends on regional public radio, in line with its commitment to inform, educate, entertain and accompany.

The established functions and objectives of radio broadcasting should be acknowledged as fixed values in public service. Most of the autonomous public radio stations are working on news programmes (for example, Catalunya Informació radio station in Catalonia, or Andalucía Información in Andalusia) and have also created new websites exclusively for news (for exam-

ple, [www.EiTB24.com](http://www.EiTB24.com), in the case of the Basque regional radio and television public service).

Therefore, radio should not lose its sensitivity to the needs of society. Because of their proximity to audiences, private cultural and social groups may play a role in regional public radio management boards, and give advice on specific social issue (democratic values, education, childhood and youth protection, cultural expression, etc.).

New technologies have made such work easier. The digitalization of radio production and broadcasting processes has transformed professional practices in recent years, and the new online radio platforms that emerged and developed on the internet are in a state of constant evolution. In line with commercial radio, regional public radio in Spain has undertaken the task of running websites and offering listeners the opportunity to interact through different electronic devices (mobile telephones, PDAs, etc.). New technology and the internet are effectively inseparable from media communication; this is especially true of audiovisual communication. Given the potential of the internet, public service radio might be a complementary alternative to entirely commercially run services. Moreover, its capacity to undertake new projects should respond to social requirements and projects.

On the other hand, regional public radio plays an essential role in preserving cultural heritage and history. Technology is fundamental to ensuring that today's radio will be listened to tomorrow, since it makes the task of managing archives and document reference sections easier. Because of its proximity to the audience, regional public radio is both a witness to the present and the guardian of regional tradition. Such stations should acquire the technology and economic resources required to digitise their audio libraries and to archive written and audio documents, which may act as the basis for the study of the history of radio and social history in the future. The audio archive of a radio station, no matter how small it is, should be taken care of and updated regularly. Radio services should recognize and respond to this need.

Given the constant challenge of creativity and innovation, traditional radio programming and services on the internet may be different to those provided by commercial radio; because radio communication is personal, the challenge is to make each programme as if it were a new programme, with new stories to tell, with public service information, and to endeavour to serve each and every one of its listeners. Autonomous radio shares its programming with the local community; and regional and local features are the mainstay of its approach.

What is more, the objective must be to offer an alternative to the services provided by other national radio networks (public or private) and to bro-

adcast specialised content in line with the aims of public service. Such an approach encompasses the ideas of proximity, service to the listenership, entertainment and accompaniment that were enacted by local and national broadcasting organizations until the mid-1980s. Radio network broadcasting strategies and schedules began to change at that time: the number of hours of national-coverage shows was increased gradually, and the number of hours of local radio programming was decreased. When public regional autonomous radio and television services emerged, they seized the opportunity to fill the space between national coverage and local radio. The local stations of Radio Nacional de España and the local stations of national private networks missed that opportunity when they reduced the hours dedicated to regional and local programming in their schedules.

It is time for further reflection and to research: now more than ever, political institutions, communication and technology companies, journalists and sound engineers, research centres, universities and professional training institutions are required to pool their resources and experiences, and to work together. Radio professionals must study all the available options in all fields in detail, and choose those that offer real solutions to real needs.

Public regional radio can maintain its social status and function if it adapts to the conditions and circumstances of society. The values of good journalism (truth, accuracy, responsibility, etc.), respect for human rights, ethics, culture and education should be recognised as indispensable to the mission of public service media. The programming of autonomous radio defers to the daily life of the society which it serves, and may reinforce this approach in its corporate communication and strategy. Regional public radio must be attentive to the continuous transformation of society, and strive to offer a faithful reflection of daily life by broadcasting the sound of its listeners' everyday lives, their concerns and problems, their successes and joys.

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