



**ORF**

# 5

Quality dimensions and 18 performance categories frame, how the ORF fulfills its public service mandate.

<b>Individual Value</b>	Accountability Responsibility Entertainment Education and Science Service	<b>Austrian Value</b>	Identity Added Value Federalism
<b>Societal Value</b>	Diversity Orientation Integration Responsiveness Culture	<b>International Value</b>	European Integration Global Perspective
		<b>Corporate Value</b>	Innovation Transparency Competence

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# Reality Check: Media Quality

Klaus Unterberger &  
Konrad Mitschka  
ORF Public Value

Everybody claims it. With enticing announcements, advertising messages and promises. Everyone seems to deliver quality. But who can you trust? Is it possible to define media quality, despite the multitude of different tastes? Do we have verifiable criteria to document, evaluate and control media quality objectively?

ORF's Quality Assurance System is proof that it is possible not only to invoke media quality, but to control it consistently. Numerous elements document, evaluate and check media production in TV, radio and online. Through audience and expert reflection, scientific analysis, representative surveys, and insights into the practice of daily journalistic work. This makes ORF's Quality Assurance System, and experts agree on this, a benchmark for Europe.

The focus is on fulfilling the public service mandate, defined in the ORF Act. As a "broadcaster of society" ORF addresses its audience not exclusively as media consumers, but as citizens, and thus has political significance relevant for democracy. Media users should be able to rely on the information they receive. This is why the distinctive media quality of Public Service Media is more than a marketing slogan but has to create Public Value – for audiences, citizens, for society and democracy.

In this booklet we document the extensive and multi-faceted approach the ORF has implemented to check its media production.

You can find all these articles and complementary information about ORF, facts&figures, videos and relevant expertise about media quality on our Public Value website: [zukunft.ORF.at](http://zukunft.ORF.at)

## Quality Control at a glance:

The annual ORF's Quality Assurance System consists of the following elements:

1 Public Value Report	3 Audience Panels
1 Programme Structure Analysis of ORF radio programmes	1 Representative Survey
1 Programme Structure Analysis of ORF TV programmes	1 Quality Profile
1 Expert Panel	1 Audience Council Study
	1 Public Value Study

# Public Value as a benchmark for Public Service Media

Interview:  
Ingrid Deltenre

Quality media and quality journalism are currently under considerable pressure: due to political influence of governments, restrictive austerity measures and the ongoing digital transformation, among other things. How do you assess the current

situation when it comes to the most important social and democratically relevant challenges related to media quality?

*In Central European democracies such as Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France, and also in Scandinavia or the UK, the main threat to quality media stems from themselves. Because they often believe they have to compete with superficial online and other free media in terms of speed, dramatization and personalization. That's wrong! They must remember their fundamental values: Credibility, integrity, competence, and independence. These values make up their accountability – and this is the relevant currency – especially today in times of fake news. For only if users receive credible and relevant information will they be willing to pay for it, regardless of the distribution channel through which they use the content.*

Can Public Service Media quality be defined and evaluated at all? If so, which demands, or quality criteria are important for this?

*The quality of public – as well as other – media can be measured by asking their audience. On the one hand, this is about assessing the credibility of a medium. On the other hand, it is about evaluating its relevance to important socio-political issues. In other words: Is the voice of the Public Service Media in question heard, and do people believe what this media says ... and shows. Public Service Media are always required to be distinguishable and distinctive from commercial media.*

How could one recognize the “distinctive quality” of Public Service Media?

*A general distinction between public and private commercial media is difficult, because there are also many private commercial media that meet the same quality standards as public media, especially in the print sector. But for Public Service Media it is a must that they have a “Public Value” – a benefit for the public. For commercial media, on the other hand, even if they are characterized by very high quality, the benefit for society is not an imperative.*

Why is quality assurance important for Public Service Media?

*Without quality assurance, Public Service Media has no right to exist. Because only the highest possible quality – and their relevance to the topics – make them indispensable to the society they serve. Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are current challenges for all media.*

Does this result in new quality criteria? Does this require a European, international perspective and dimension (especially for Public Service Media)?

*Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are not the goal, but a means to an end. In relation to Public Service Media, this means: How do we have to adapt so that we make the best possible use of the technical possibilities and of artificial intelligence to be able to satisfy the needs of our audience even better – for relevant and credible information, regardless of the distribution channel. It is worth looking beyond the country's borders, because one can learn from other Public Service Media.*

You have extensive experience and competence in questions of Public Service Media quality. How do you assess the ORF Quality Assurance System in international comparison?

*ORF's radio and television production enjoy a very good reputation among their audience – more precisely: their audiences. That is not by chance. It is due to a constant striving to keep improving its own quality. This requires a comprehensive Quality Assurance System. The ORF's Quality Assurance System is one of the best in Europe in the field of public broadcasters. ORF has every right to be proud of this.*

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Ingrid Deltenre ...

... is an internationally recognized media expert, she was director of Publisuisse and Swiss Television. From 2010 to 2017, she was Director General of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU).

# Creating Trust

Sabine Funk  
ORF-Markt &  
Medienforschung

“Someone has done serious consideration”. With these words, a participant in an ORF audience discussion explained why he had chosen a particular ORF programme as a positive example of qualitative reporting. Audience discussions are one of the many measures that ORF regularly carries out for quality assurance. ORF users discuss the strengths and weaknesses of ORF’s programs with the program makers – and what the young person singled out as his personal criterion for good reporting also sums up an essential goal of this quality assurance: the audience can trust that ORF’s programmes are well-founded, serious and reliable, in the best sense of Public Service Media.

In order to ensure the quality and credibility of ORF reporting, ORF has – in addition to the ORF Act as a basis – imposed numerous guidelines and regulations on itself, starting with the editorial statutes, the ORF programme guidelines, the ORF Code of Conduct and extending to equality plans and youth protection measures. How and whether the implementation of these reporting requirements succeeds is checked within the framework of a comprehensive Quality Assurance System. This is prescribed in the ORF Act, whereby the concrete design is developed by the ORF and must be approved by the ORF Foundation Council.

Every form of quality assurance in the media sector faces the particular challenge that the nature of reports, broadcasts or programmes cannot be clearly predicted before production, but is shaped by social processes and interactions – for example, in the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, between editor and the persons portrayed in the contribution, between presenter and show guests or between camera team and director. Neither the initial situation nor the result of the production process can be completely controlled. Therefore, it would fall short to define media quality exclusively according to predefined parameters.

The quality of a programme or a contribution is always defined by the subjective experience of its users – i. e., what they perceive as good, what they like to use, what they are satisfied with, also in contrast to other offers. For ORF, it is therefore of central importance to understand the users as part of this quality process, because only if the content offered reaches them, is used and understood by them, can the quality claim become effective. The ORF Quality Assurance System takes into account the users’ view of media products by integrating a broad spectrum of empirical audience research, and it ensures that the range of factors influencing the quality experience of media content, such as different needs, usage situations or previous knowledge, is taken into account.

The ORF Quality Assurance System is carried out in an annual cycle, organized internally at ORF by the Public Value and Market and Media Research departments and implemented mainly in cooperation with external market

research institutes. The programme structure analyses of television and radio, prescribed by the ORF law represent quantitative descriptions of the programme shares of the ORF television and radio programme. The content-analytical, quantifying approach with evaluation categories that have remained stable over the years enables continuous observation of the proportions between the programme pillars – such as information, entertainment, culture, and sport. The aim of this measure is to ensure the balance of the content offered on ORF television and ORF radio.

The Public Value Report as a further descriptive element of quality assurance looks – beyond this pure quantification – in more detail at the content and design of these programme pillars and documents the performance fulfilment of ORF’s core public service mandate on the basis of qualitative criteria: These are divided into several quality dimensions and performance categories, derived from the ORF Act, the ORF programme guidelines, the ORF guidelines as well as current requirements in society and media development.

The other measures of the Quality Assurance System are audience-centered. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are chosen to give the best possible scope to the diversity of requirements on the user side. In the ORF overall survey, for example, the satisfaction of Austrians with ORF and its programme and content offerings are determined overall by means of a representative survey. In a similar way to the Programme Structure Analysis, the continuity in the questions over many years makes it possible to recognize changes in the evaluation of the ORF with the entirety of its offerings. With the evaluation of the ORF Quality Profiles, the focus is placed on certain ORF content or specific subject areas and discussed in more detail with the users.

The Quality Profiles are a kind of target that the editorial teams impose on themselves. They consist of general assigned values and specific characteristics that relate to the concrete, respectively different conditions and requirements of working practice in the individual programme areas. Within the framework of the evaluation, this internal ORF target image is checked for coherence with the audience by means of a survey, i. e., whether it is classified as relevant and fulfilled by the users. The respondents can go into detail in their evaluations and justify them in detail.

In the Audience Panels already mentioned at the beginning, selected audience groups are invited to enter dialogue with those responsible for the programmes in structured group discussions and to present their criticism, demands and expectations of the ORF programmes. Since 2011, a total of around 1,500 participants from the audience have been able to enter direct exchange with programme and station managers. This allows the audience to experience the general conditions under which ORF programmes are created, and ORF managers in turn receive input for the further development of their programmes and content. In addition, an annual expert discussion takes place, which deepens the dialogue between ORF programme managers and experts in the respective thematic area. In this way, the experience and assessment of experts and scientists is given a broader scope.

Finally, selected questions are addressed in the ORF annual studies. In the ORF Audience Council Study, the Audience Council, which according to the

ORF Act can commission an annual representative survey of participants to determine the interests of listeners and viewers, focuses on a selected area of ORF offerings. Most recently, the audience's requirements for fictional and non-fiction entertainment programmes on ORF were examined more closely and recommendations for the programme work were derived from this.

In addition, the ORF commissions an annual Public Value Study, which refers to a special aspect of its scope of services and functional mandate and is intended to enable an in-depth evaluation, which, in addition to quality control, also provides a future-oriented and practical basis for the programme work. One example, from 2022, was in the topic area of "entertainment in Public Service Media". The quality assurance measures listed provide a great deal of information and indications regarding the acceptance of the existing ORF offerings and programming. These results and findings are passed on internally to the programme managers and creators, discussed – and thus flow into the ongoing programme production and further development of the content.

In addition to this internal communication process, results are also evaluated from the outside: according to the ORF law, the ORF Foundation Council has to appoint an independent, expert person to evaluate the results of all components of the Quality Assurance System. For the period 2020 to 2024, this task has been entrusted to Ingrid Deltenre, the former Director of Swiss Television, and former Director-General of the European Broadcasting Union. She submits an expert opinion by June of the following year on whether the ORF has met the defined quality criteria and fulfilled the requirements of the Quality Assurance Act based on the reports from the Quality Assurance System. So far, the ORF has always been able to meet these requirements.

Just as quality is not an end, nor is the assurance of quality – therefore the Quality Assurance System itself is also subject to constant critical scrutiny. Among other things, inputs from the evaluator as well as findings from regular workshops with all ORF departments and market and social research institutes involved in the process are incorporated into the further development. The broad structure of the Quality Assurance System offers the possibility of responding to social change and changes in media use through adaptations, to ensure that people can trust the ORF offerings even in times of change and new challenges – because "Someone has done serious consideration".

# Public Value Report

Konrad Mitschka  
ORF Public Value

One of the key distinguishing features of Public Service Media from commercial media is defined by its orientation toward the common good, its Public Value. PSM does not achieve commercial revenues, but remits supporting the democratic, social, and cultural cohesion of society. For the concept's originator, Mark Moore, Public Value is linked to the nature of public institutions generating Public Value. Moore described the Public Value concept in 1995 with the help of four essential questions:

- How much do citizens trust an institution?
- How does an institution improve society?
- How is the value of the service assessed?
- How efficient is the institution?

The BBC transformed the concept during the 9th Royal Charter in 2004. The ORF followed 2007, establishing the "Public Value Competence Center", focusing on all challenges affecting the Public Service mission. Since then, ORF has documented the fulfillment of its core mission annually in the Public Value Report, addressing the regulatory authority, parliament, the science community, and other relevant stakeholders. It is published in print and online and available at [zukunft.ORF.at](http://zukunft.ORF.at).

The multiple award-winning Public Value Report is – according to ORF's Public Value structure – divided into five quality dimensions and 18 performance categories, which are derived from the regulations valid for ORF media production. For example, the mandate of objectivity ("ORF shall ensure the objective selection and communication of information in the form of news ...") results in the performance category "trust". The performance category "diversity" results from the diversity requirement mentioned several times in the law and programme guidelines ("diversity of the interests of the entire audience"; "respect for diversity of opinion"). The performance category "added value" results from



various regulations on stimulating the creative industries (“As a commissioner and frequent first publisher of artistic works and scientific findings, ORF shall make a contribution to cultural events.”) etc.

The report summarizes the 18 performance categories in five dimensions. These express the “individual value” – i. e., the benefit of ORF for the individual citizen – as well as its value for society, for Austria, for European integration and – in the sense of Austrian broadcasting subscribers or households as clients – the “corporate value”. The overall dimensions and categories are:

- Individual Value (trust, service, responsibility, entertainment, science&education)
- Social Value (orientation, diversity, proximity to citizens, inclusion, culture)
- Nation (Austrian) Value (identity, federalism, value creation)
- International Value (European integration, global perspective)
- Corporate Value (transparency, innovation, competence)

All categories focus on the distinctiveness of media content, quality and impact of programs. The report documents ORF’s performance as comprehensively as possible, both quantitatively and qualitatively. For example, the number of broadcasting hours of factual TV, the number of radio news items and the number of stories on ORF.at are published annually in the performance category “Trust”. The category “Responsibility” presents ORF’s performance on accessibility with the help of figures. In the category “science&education”, as in other categories, the number of contributions or programmes on a certain keyword is published, the category “value creation” documents, for example, competitions, public events, concerts which, among other things, are organized by ORF to stimulate intellectual and economic value creation in Austria. In addition to figures and a selection of other data, e. g., awards won by ORF staff, award-winning films and series, training courses designed to strengthen the competence of ORF staff, ORF also documents the fulfilment of its mandate in qualitative terms. To this end, the Public Value Competence Centre invites representatives from ORF departments every year who have created high-quality productions, to explain motives and backgrounds of their work. These ORF employees, mostly editors, often managers, explain their under-

standing of Public Service quality to provide the recipients with information on editorial enhancement. The selection of authors reads like a Who’s Who of award-winning media work: Armin Wolf, Martin Thür, Dieter Bornemann, Zoran Dobric and Hanno Settele are among them, as are Sabine Weber, Elisabeth Scharang, Barbara Battisti or Christa Hofmann and many more.

But the Public Value Report also repeatedly publishes external voices commenting on Public Service Media quality. The scientific community is represented by various experts, like Matthias Karmasin, Larissa Krainer, Thomas Steinmaurer and Corinna Wenzel from Austria as well as Graham Murdock, Gabriele Siegert, Werner Weidenfeld, Mark Eisenegger, Christian Fuchs and Kurt Imhof and many others from international research institutions. Numerous media experts and journalists, such as Anna Maria Wallner (“Die Presse”), Armin Thurnher (“Falter”), Hubert Huber from the “Kurier” or Amy Goodman (“Democracy Now!”) have contributed to the understanding of Public Service Media quality, as have prominent representatives of Austrian civil society, such as Cornelius Obonya, Michael Landau or Martin Schenk. The list of authors who provide their normative or evaluative contribution to public service quality grows each year, reflecting the fact that questions of media quality are of increasing importance in a market subject to disruptive change. Ultimately, each contribution provides its own answer to the question of who in particular benefits from Public Service Media, how trust in Public Service Media can be ensured, how efficiently ORF acts, and finally: what are the values supporting the democratic, social and cultural cohesion of society in various media-related ways – thus ensuring that the discourse on public service quality helps to create the Public Value of tomorrow.



2014/15

2015/16

2016/17

2017/18

2018/19

2019/20

2020/21

2021/22 (1)

2021/22 (2)

2021/22 (3)

2022/23 (1)

2022/23 (2)

# Programme Structure Analysis of ORF tele- vision programmes

Ass.Prof.<sup>in</sup> Dr.<sup>in</sup>  
Cornelia Brantner  
Universität Karlstad

The Programme Structure Analysis of ORF's television programmes, which is undertaken annually as part of ORF's Quality Assurance System, has been carried out by the Vienna-based Institute for Knowledge Communication and Applied Research (IWAF) since 2015. Together with Jürgen Pfeffer, Professor of

Computational Social Science & Big Data at the Technical University of Munich, I am responsible for the supervision and management of the project. In the process, the entire ORF programming is categorized according to the four categories of Information, Entertainment, Culture and Sport laid down in the core public service mandate pursuant to Section 4 (2) of the ORF Act. In fulfilment of its public service programming mandate, ORF has to offer an overall programme encompassing all four categories and orientate itself towards the diversity of interests of all users and to take these into account in a balanced manner. The respective shares of the overall programme – this includes the four channels ORF 1, ORF 2, ORF III and ORF SPORT+ – must be in an appropriate ratio to each other.

In order to ensure the programme mandate, ORF is legally obliged to carry out an annual Programme Structure Analysis. IWAF was awarded the corresponding contract in 2015 based on a public tender. The categorization of the entire ORF television offering, briefly explained below, is carried out using a category system developed at the Institute of Journalism and Communication Studies and corresponds to the expert opinion by Haas, Brantner and Herczeg from 2013.

A team of coders assigns programme categories to individual ORF programmes. These detailed categories range from 100 "News" to 421 "Culture Magazine", 515 "Children's Film", to 996 "Animation Series". The coding is done in a Filemaker database. This contains meta-information for all individual programmes broadcast on all four channels in the corresponding year, such as channel, date, start/end time, duration, and title of the programme. The ORF's own coding of the detailed categories, as well as ORF Teleplan and the ORF websites provide the coders with information about the respective programme content. If there is any ambiguity, the programmes are inspected. The codebook developed for the content analysis provides instructions and numerous anchor examples that facilitate the assignment to the correct detailed category.

In principle, the programmes are classified according to the focus of the respective programme format. To meet scientific quality standards and to

guarantee the validity and reliability of the coding, the coders are trained accordingly, which ends with an intercoder reliability test. This should guarantee the validity and reliability of the coding. Furthermore, within the framework of project supervision, the classifications made are randomly checked during and after completion of the coding. These programme categories are then each grouped into one of the four broad categories mentioned. Assigning just one category can be limiting, as several of the detailed categories could be assigned to more than one. This is because there are overlaps between Entertainment and Information, between Information and Culture or between Entertainment and Culture – for example, in hybrid formats or the daily coverage of cultural or sports topics in news programmes.

However, the division of the programme categories into the four broad categories of Information, Entertainment, Culture and Sport is basically done by deciding which of the four categories is the focus in the detailed category. For example, according to the code book, the categories "173 National Folk Culture/Lore" and "225 Folk Group Programmes" are assigned to the broad category of culture, since programmes classified in these categories correspond to a contemporary concept of culture.

The final evaluation is carried out for all four channels – individually and together – for the entire reporting year. The percentage share of the respective categories in the overall programming is reported in seconds. The results serve as proof of the fulfilment of the programme mandate and are included in the ORF annual report.



# Programme Structure Analysis of ORF radio programmes

Mag.<sup>a</sup> Edith Rehberger  
APA-DeFacto

According to § 4 of the Federal Act on Austrian Broadcasting, the core public service mandate of the ORF is to offer a comprehensive “overall programme of information, culture, entertainment and sport for all”. In doing so, the ORF, with

all its offerings on radio, television and online, is responsible for more than 400 hours of programming per day and, according to its core mandate, must consider the diverse interests of listeners and viewers in a balanced manner.

The ORF Act also regulates the safeguarding of this programme mandate and provides for different methods and analysis procedures for this purpose. Among other things, it is required by law to carry out a Programme Structure Analysis for its television and radio programmes. APA-DeFacto Datenbank & Contentmanagement GmbH has been involved in this quality assurance process as an independent institute for years.

APA-DeFacto is a wholly owned subsidiary of APA – Austria Presse Agentur and the Austrian market leader in the field of media intelligence. It offers its clients a comprehensive monitoring and analysis portfolio and acts in accordance with the APA statutes in an independent, fact-based, reliable and balanced manner. Since 2018, APA-DeFacto has prepared an annual content analysis of the broadcasting programme of all ORF radio stations for ORF.

From the very beginning, the media analysis team of APA-DeFacto – under the project management of Michael Grosz, MSc and the scientific supervision of Associate Professor DDr. Julia Wippersberg – has been conducting this research, thus ensuring long-term comparability and continuity in the analysis. Methodologically, APA-DeFacto works according to the social science method of semantic content analysis. Formal, quantitative aspects (e. g., number and duration of individual contributions) are combined with content-related, qualitative aspects (coding of content-related categories). This methodology represents an internationally established analysis technique for the intersubjective evaluation and measurement of the information content of media content. In doing so, the perceived and published reality is always depicted, and the view of the recipients is taken.

The operationalization of the analysis parameters is carried out based on a detailed codebook. This represents a comprehensive set of rules for the object of investigation and contains information on the period under investigation, on the relevant broadcasters, on the definition of the different coding levels as well as on all categories, topics, and other special features. The nationwide

stations Ö1, Ö3 and FM4 as well as the nine regional radio stations Radio Burgenland, Radio Carinthia, Radio Lower Austria, Radio Upper Austria, Radio Salzburg, Radio Styria, Radio Tyrol, Radio Vorarlberg and Radio Vienna as well as Radio Ö1 International, which is broadcast via short wave, are included in the analysis.

The analysis period covers a “typical” calendar week in September of each year. When selecting the study week, care is taken to ensure that it is as free as possible from programme-influencing events and thus as “typical” as possible for the radio programme of the individual stations. During the study week, all stations relevant to the study are recorded around the clock – this corresponds to 10,080 minutes per station – on APA-internal servers multiple times and in a fail-safe manner. In a first step, the coding is done at the “contribution level”. Each channel is processed individually and the 7×24 broadcast hours are “cut” into individual thematic units or contributions. For the coding, a distinction is made between words, i. e., any spoken part of the programme including any form of news, and music. Each word element is subsequently assigned a detailed thematic category, which in turn are clustered into the following eight super-categories:

- Information
- Culture
- Religion/Ethics
- Science/Education
- Service/Transport/Weather
- Sport
- Family/Society
- Entertainment

All forms of advertising (commercial advertising, charity appeals, self-promotion, signatures/jingles) are coded but not included in the overall evaluation. The procedure for music contributions is similar. Here, too, detailed categories are coded, which are then aggregated into six super-categories for the reporting:

- Alternative
- Serious music
- Oldies/Evergreens
- Pop
- Easy listening/Schlager
- Folk music/World music

A special feature in the field of music coding is a tool developed by APA-DeFacto specifically for Programme Structure Analysis for the automated pre-categorization of music already played in the past. This constantly growing music archive ensures the comparability of titles and associated genres both across channels and across years. In addition to the analysis at “contribution level”, where word and music shares are considered separately, an additional content analysis will be carried out for all ORF radio stations starting in 2022. By coding at the level of “programmes” or broadcasting areas, the word and

music components will be included in the coding. Depending on the focus of the “programme”, coding takes place according to:

- Information
- Culture
- Entertainment
- Sport

Before the coding starts, the recorded data material is prepared. In the process, the programme is checked for completeness and correctness for each channel. If necessary, back-up material is used to ensure that the entire broadcasting time for each channel is represented completely and accurately. For this purpose, APA-DeFacto has a production tool that directly accesses the APA database and thus enables data collection and coding in one step. This tool also already enables initial technical quality assurance and ensures seamless data quality. For the analysis, a team of several coders with many years of experience is used, each of whom is responsible for processing one or two channels. Both the interests and the background knowledge of the coders are considered. A certain number of colleagues involved in the project ensures reliability on the one hand, and an intersubjective exchange of information in the sense of the “more eyes principle” on the other. In addition to comprehensive project training, the coding process is continuously monitored by the project management and regular feedback meetings are held.

In addition, regular intercoder reliability tests are used to ensure quality standards. The control of the coded data, which already takes place during the coding process as well as afterwards, is a methodological standard of APA-DeFacto and the central pillar of institutionalized quality management. Here, the entire data material is checked again for validity and reliability. The results of the radio Programme Structure Analysis are presented in the analysis at “contribution level” for all ORF radio stations individually, in tabular form. They are separated according to word as well as music content for the specified categories. In addition, from 2022 onwards, the data for the analysis at “programme level” will also be aggregated for all radio stations according to the four categories anchored in the ORF law: Information, Culture, Entertainment, and Sport.

All this data is published every year in the ORF annual report. The radio Programme Structure Analysis is a particularly important instrument for ensuring the balance of the ORF radio offerings and thus ultimately also proof of the fulfilment of the public service mandate.

# Expert Panels

Konrad Mitschka  
ORF Public Value

How does ORF know what Public Service Media quality should look like? How can he identify challenges caused by the dynamic transformation of media? How will he be aware of demands and expectations?

Expert panels within the framework of ORF Quality Assurance System provide an answer to these questions. The focus lies on external expertise: What are the perspectives of the science community? What do media experts demand? What do ORF's stakeholders expect? To find out, ORF organizes a series of “Expert Panels”. These are moderated workshops to increase the dialogue between programme representatives and experts in the relevant field. The expertise and opinions of experts involved in the respective topic are thus given broader scope.

Every year, the program genre of information, culture/religion, sports, entertainment and science/education/service are on the basis of the requirements of ORF's core mission and ORF's programming guidelines and reviewed by means of external reflection. The “Expert Panels” are organized by ORF's Public Value Competence Center, in cooperation with the relevant ORF editorial departments. This ensures that participants are chosen based on research and editorial expertise, available publications, and relevant competence. In order to take into account the heterogeneity of the external perspective, various new scientists and experts are invited. Responsible senior editors from the editorial offices take part in the discussion. Following an analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of the media content, the focus is on the expectations of the experts. Criticism and expectations inevitably result in a demanding reflection on media quality, which, due to the length of the discussions, often last several hours and are conducted in specific working groups. The central point of reference in the experts' discussions is ORF's fulfillment of its public service mission.

The Public Value quality dimensions and performance categories are used for this purpose. To incorporate the changes due to digital transformation, young people are invited, which should enable current and often provocative objections and demands to be considered.

Complementary, in 2022, a “Future Dialogue – Generation Z” was held specifically for this purpose with young people from all over Austria. Members of the ORF management and journalists of the specific program departments participated to establish a respectful atmosphere of direct contact. In the last third of the discussions, the expectations of the experts have been addressed in order to take a look at future quality media production. The aim of these stakeholder events is to develop a future oriented profile of requirements that will help ORF meet expected challenges.

From ORF's point of view, previous experience of the “Expert Panels” has shown that they represent a competent reflection of ORF's media production, enabling quality control of existing services and at the same time orientation

for the future. Since broadcasting managers and editors from the respective programme areas are also invited to these talks, a direct, discursive exchange between media practice and media criticism is created.

Since the start of these workshop ORF managers and journalists had the opportunity to contact over a hundred experts from various disciplines. Religion was just as much a topic as, for example, culture, sports, or entertainment. Young media users were able to raise their voices just as much as those responsible for various civil society institutions. Leading scientists, successful Austrian creatives and representatives of the younger generation were all able to make their voices heard in these discussions. ORF will continue to pursue this path of cooperation, of workshops focusing on quality, to secure its role as a relevant medium supporting citizenship, society and democracy, making sure, that ORF is capable to fulfill its obligations, its public service remit in the future.

**Public Value Discourse**

The ORF DialogForum is a public panel debate inviting scientists, media experts and ORF journalists to discuss current challenges.

Live on RadioKulturhaus, livestream on [zukunft.ORF.at](http://zukunft.ORF.at) and on television on ORF III.

## Expert panels/guests

Name	Family name	Institution
Heinrich	Ambrosch	Satel Fernseh- und Filmproduktion GesmbH/Wien
Carla Amina	Baghajati	Schulamt der Islamischen Glaubensgemeinschaft
Keya	Baier	ÖH Salzburg
Cornelius	Ballin	Universal Music Austria
Gerald	Bast	Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien
Norbert	Bauer	Solidarwerkstatt Österreich
Ewald	Bauer	Sportministerium
Thomas	Bauer	Universität Wien
Rosina	Baumgartner	Katholischer Familienverband
Maren	Beaufort	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
Andreas	Beck	Schauspielhaus Wien
Ulrike	Beimpold	SchauspielerIn
Harald	Blümel	Hilfswerk Österreich
Matthias	Bogner	Österreichischer Behindertensportverband
Alexandra	Bosek	Bundesschulsprecherin
Louis	Bosshart	Universität Freiburg
Ulrich	Brand	Universität Wien
Kurt	Brazda	Regisseur
Michael	Bünker	Bischof
Verena	Burk	Universität Tübingen
Reinhard	Christl	Public Value-Beirat
Jan	Clausen	Factory92
Rosa	Diketmüller	Universität Wien
Minas	Dimitriou	Universität Salzburg
Petja	Dimitrova	IG BILDENDE KUNST
Rudolf	Dolezal	DORO Filmproduktion
Johannes	Domsich	Universität für Angewandte Kunst Wien
Wolfgang	Duchkowsch	Universität Wien
Nicolae	Dura	Rumänisch-Orthodoxe Kirche
Tobias	Eberwein	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
Sinah	Edhofer	Autorin
Walter	Egle	Show Factory
Sabine	Fauland	Museumsbund Österreich
Friedrich	Faulhammer	Donau-Universität Krems
Herbert	Fechter	Impresario

Bernhard	Fetz	Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
Franz	Fiedler	FH St. Pölten
Heinz	Fischer	FH-Joanneum Graz
Wolfgang	Fischer	Wiener Stadthalle
Eva	Fischer	sound:frame
Jörg	Flecker	Universität Wien
Kati	Förster	Universität Zürich
Klaudia	Frieben	Österreichischer Frauenring
Gabriele	Fröschl	Mediathek
Rainer	Fuchs	mumok
Bernhard	Fügenschuh	Universität Innsbruck
Florian	Gebhardt	Gebhardt Productions
Lea	Ghedina	ÖH
Philip	Ginthör	Sony Music Entertainment
Josef	Glöbl	Universität für Bodenkultur Wien
Julia	Goldmann	Universität Salzburg
Nicole	Gonser	FH Wien
Florian	Gosch	ÖOC
Peter	Grabner	FH-Campus Wien
Christian	Gratzer	VCÖ
Jürgen	Grimm	Universität Wien
Andrea	Grisold	WU Wien
Beate	Großegger	Institut für Jugendkulturforschung
Werner	Gruber	Physiker
Kenan	Güngör	think difference
Karin	Gutiérrez-Lobos	Universität Wien
Rebecca	Gutkas	Österreichische Landjugend
Sabine	Haag	Kunsthistorisches Museums
Angelika	Hager	Journalistin, Autorin
Margit	Hahn	IG Autorinnen Autoren
Lena	Hallwirth	IST Austria
Sonja	Hammerschmid	Veterinärmedizinische Universität Wien
Charlotte	Hartwig	Konzerthaus
Sigrid	Hauser	SchauspielerIn
Fritz	Hausjell	Universität Wien
Thomas	Heher	Wien macht Kultur
Markus	Hinterhäuser	Wiener Festwochen
Georg	Hoanzl	Agentur
Hans Gerald	Hödl	Institut für Religionswissenschaft

Peter	Hofbauer	Metropol Theater
Susanne	Hofer	Österreichische Gewerkschaftsjugend
Schlomo	Hofmeister	Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien
Sebastian	Höglinger	Diagonale
Karin	Holzer	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv
Magdalena M.	Holztrattner	Katholische Sozialakademie Österreich
Roman	Horak	Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien
Beate	Huber	FH der WKW
Hans	Hurch	Viennale
Holger	Ihle	Universität Düsseldorf
Philipp	Ikrath	Institut für Jugendkulturforschung
Alexander	Kahr	Bits & Notes
Ferdinand	Kaineder	Ordensgemeinschaften Österreich
Matthias	Karmasin	Universität Klagenfurt
Christian	Kircher	Bundestheater-Holding
Barbara	Klein	Kosmos Theater
Nikolaus	Koller	FH Wien
Lionel	Koller	TikToker
Mirko	Kolundzic	Orthodoxe Bischofskonferenz in Österreich
Ulrich	Körtner	Institut für Systematische Theologie und Religionswissenschaft
Sascha	Kostelecky	Donauinselfest/Wien
Peter	Kostelka	Seniorenrat
Larissa	Krainer	Universität Klagenfurt
Stefan	Kranewitter	FWF
Daniela	Kraus	Presseclub Concordia
Danny	Krausz	Filmakademie Wien
Marion	Kronberger	Berufsverband Österreichischer Psycholog:innen
Martin	Ladstätter	Obmann vom BIZEPS
Christoph	Ladstätter	Volksoper Wien
Angelica	Ladurner	Komödienspiele Porcia
Regina	Lampl	TikTokerin
Grigorios	Larentzakis	Universität Graz
Julian	Le Play	Musiker
Helmut	Lehner	Herstellungsleiter
Wolfgang	Lenhardt	ZAMG
Helmut	Leopold	AIT

Dietmar	Lienbacher	Sony Music Austria
Konrad	Liessmann	Universität Wien
Reinhardt	Lischka	FH St. Pölten
Michael	Litschka	FH St. Pölten
Christine	Lohmeier	Universität Salzburg
Fred	Luks	WU Wien
Ronald	Maier	Universität Wien
Christine	Mannhalter	FWF
Ranko	Markovic	Konservatorium Wien
Barbi	Marković	BVÖ – Büchereiverband Österreichs
Eva Maria	Marold	Theaterschauspielerin
Thomas	Maurer	Kabarettist
Klaus	Meier	Universität Eichstätt
Peter	Mennel	ÖOC
Florian	Menz	Universität Wien
Hans-Peter	Metzler	Bregenzener Festspiele
Rubina	Möhring	Reporter ohne Grenzen
Catalina	Molina	Filmregisseurin
Karin	Moser	Universität Wien
Katharina	Mückstein	Filmregisseurin
Rudolf	Müllner	Universität Wien
Brigitte	Naderer	Universität Wien
Matthias	Naske	Wiener Konzerthaus
Marlies	Neumüller	Caritas Österreich
Jörg-Uwe	Nieland	Universität Duisburg
Wilhelm	Novak	VCÖ
Florian	Oberhuber	SORA
Elisabeth	Oberzaucher	Universität Wien
Cornelius	Obonya	Schauspieler
Sebastian	Obrecht	ARBÖ
Günther	Ogris	SORA
Claudia	Paganini	Universität Innsbruck
Fritz	Panzer	Club der komischen Künste
Wolfgang	Pauser	brains
Daria	Pezzoli-Olgjati	Universität Zürich
Karl-Peter	Pfeiffer	FH Joanneum
Dieter	Pochlatko	Epo-Film
Theresa	Pointner	ImPulsTanz
Regina	Polak	Universität Wien
Michael	Prüller	Erzdiözese Wien
Aleksandar	Prvulović	Jugendportal
Elisabeth	Puchhammer-Stöckl	MedUni Wien
Karin	Pühringer	Universität Salzburg

Martin	Ramusch	ip I media
Gisela	Reiter	FH Wien
Günther	Rhomberg	Bregenzener Festspiele
Anita	Rieder	MedUni Wien
Michael	Roither	FH Eisenstadt
Sieglinde	Rosenberger	Universität Wien
Rainer	Rößlhuber	BSO
Gerhard	Ruiss	IG Autorinnen und Autoren
Stefan	Ruzowitzky	Filmregisseur
Victoria	Salcher	Produzentin
Katharine	Sarikakis	Universität Wien
Gerold	Sattlecker	Universität Salzburg
Petra	Schaper-Rinkel	Universität Graz
Martin	Schenk	Diakonie
Peter	Schernhuber	Diagonale
Florian	Scheuba	Kabarettist
Ingrid	Schicker	Universität Salzburg
Philipp	Schild	funk
Peter	Schipka	Österreichische Bischofskonferenz
Harald	Schitnig	Wirtschaftsforscher
Andreas	Schmied	Regisseur
Christa	Schnabl	Universität Wien
Rudi	Schöllner	Kabarettist
Klaus	Schönbach	Universität Wien
Bianca	Schönberger	ZARA
Thomas	Schröder	Universität Innsbruck
Judith	Schwarz-Jungmann	MAK
Josef	Seethaler	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften
Zekirija	Sejdini	Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich
Hans-Peter	Siebenhaar	Handelsblatt
Gabriele	Siegert	Universität Zürich
Philip	Sinner	Universität Salzburg
Priester	Slaviša Božić	Serbisch-Orthodoxe Diözese
Julia	Sobieszek	Künstleragentur Sobieszek
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Georg	Spitaler	Ballesterer
Rainer	Sprenger	VKI

Kristina	Sprenger	Schauspielerin
Anna	Steiger	TU Wien
Thomas	Steinmaurer	Universität Salzburg
Anna	Taupe-Lehner	PH Salzburg
Roland	Teichmann	Direktor
Martina	Thiele	Universität Salzburg
Josef	Trappel	Universität Salzburg
Gerlinde	Tuscher	FFG
Patricio	Unter	UN-Jugenddelegierter
Andreas	Vitásek	Schauspieler
Oliver	Vitouch	Universität Klagenfurt
Peter	Vitouch	Universität Wien
Karl	Vocelka	Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung
Christian	Vranek	Culture Creates Values
Claudia	Walkensteiner-Preschl	Filmakademie
Germain	Weber	Universität Wien
Werner	Weidenfeld	LMU München
Gerhard	Weissgrab	Österreichische Buddhistische Religionsgesellschaft
Franz	Welz	Universität Innsbruck
Franzin	Weyssi	GPA
Bernhard	Wiesinger	ÖAMTC
Monika	Wild	ÖRK
Andreas	Wildberger	FFG
Wolfgang	Winkler	Ars Electronica
Claudia	Wohlgemann	Plan C Filmproduktion
Karin	Wolf	Institut für Kulturkonzepte
Paul	Wuthe	Bischofskonferenz
Vinzenz	Wyss	Zürcher Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften in Winterthur
Natascha	Zeitler-Bank	Universität Innsbruck
Gabriele	Zgubic-Engleder	AK Wien
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Mischa	Zickler	Fernsehproduzent
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# Audience Panels

Mag.ª Daniela Heininger  
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The ORF Audience Panels take place three times a year and are a qualitative, non-representative survey of satisfaction and quality perception of ORF offerings. The goal of the Audience Panels is to evaluate the audience's perception of

and satisfaction with ORF's offerings and to facilitate a dialogue with those responsible for programming. In contrast to quantitative methods, the participants are given the opportunity to express their personal, individual wishes and suggestions, and to present their strengths and weaknesses, which are discussed in the group.

In terms of content, the audience interviews focus on user satisfaction with ORF's offerings in one of the following programme pillars: Information (including science, education, service, life support), Entertainment, Culture & Religion and Sports – in each case by media genre, such as TV, radio, online and TELETEXT. Users of ORF services who have a corresponding focus of interest are invited to participate. People between the ages of 18 and 70 are recruited. They should be interested in the programme pillar under investigation or in the topic (Culture & Religion, Information, Entertainment, and Sports) or in the media genre sought (TV, radio, online, teletext), and are chosen according to age, gender, education, media use and use of ORF offerings. The users of ORF's offerings can exchange their views in a preliminary discussion and then get in touch with the people responsible for the programme and give feedback on strengths and weaknesses. The dialogue with the programme managers often provides interesting insights for the participants, who can obtain exciting background information, learn about planned projects or find out about the legal requirements to which ORF is subject.

During the last three years, we at SENSOR MARKTFORSCHUNG have conducted the Audience Panels. These are always divided into two phases. The first part comprises the group work in small groups. The second part is the exchange with ORF programme managers – there the results of the group work are presented and discussed. An ORF presenter guides us through the evening. In the small group, the participants can get to know each other, exchange ideas, and work out the strengths and weaknesses of ORF offerings. During the pandemic, the preliminary groups as well as the discussion with the programme managers took place online. If it was possible, also in person or directly in an ORF regional studio. Experience shows that the audience discussions are generally very popular with the participants. After those talks, we received very positive feedback in the follow-up survey. The audience discussions allow an interesting exchange with the ORF programme managers, one can give the programme managers personal feedback, one can ask questions and one also has the opportunity to express open wishes. The participants were pleased that criticism and suggestions were received positively and always very appreciatively by the programme managers.

From the respondents' point of view, ORF offers its viewers/listeners a wide range of comprehensive and balanced reports and formats on the topics of Information, Education, Culture and Entertainment. During the audience interviews, however, every respondent has the opportunity to express individual wishes and suggestions. In the process, recurring themes and wishes of the interviewees also emerged. For example, in almost all the audience interviews on ORF's TVthek service, respondents mentioned that they would like to see longer access times for content from ORF TVthek (the ORF media library). In addition, many would like to see simpler search functions or suggestions for programs based on viewing habits. In the area of TV, it was frequently emphasized in the audience discussions that it is very important to the users of ORF offerings that the Austrian language is maintained and preserved – therefore, ORF's own productions with actors from Austria are particularly appreciated. It was also suggested that more programs for children and young people should be broadcast using Austrian language. Especially in the areas of entertainment and culture, but also in sports, the reference to Austria and an Austrian nuance are very important to the users of ORF offerings. ORF's regional studios and regional radio stations are often associated with many emotional aspects and proximity to the country and its people. People identify with the region and like to receive regional contributions, formats, and news. The contributions reflect the habitats, needs and emotions of the users and are thus identity-forming. During the pandemic and afterwards, there was a lot of praise from the participants that the ORF focused on cabaret from Austria and thus contributed to distraction and diversion in difficult times. ORF information about the coronavirus, reports and documentaries on the subject were experienced by most as reliable, credible, and very serious.

Compared to other sources of information, people trust ORF to provide well-checked content. One does not have to be afraid of "fake news". In the audience discussions, it was suggested that ORF should increasingly address young people with contributions and thus build a closer bond. Young presenters are important for this, but also a modern online presence and a clear presence on social media. In conversations with the public, ORF TELETEXT is experienced as familiar, somewhat "retro" in design, but likeable. People who regularly use ORF emphasize the versatility of its contributions and appreciate the possibility of obtaining information quickly. All in all, ORF's audience interviews are not only a good opportunity for users of ORF's services to get into personal contact with programme managers – they also offer programme managers a direct exchange with users and their wishes and concerns.

# Representative Survey

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The representative survey is an annual measurement of audience satisfaction with ORF and its programming and content. The study provides an overall picture of what people in Austria think of ORF. Thus, the overall study makes it possible to observe satisfaction over time and, by looking at the big picture, provides a framework for other, more in-depth studies.

But how do you measure satisfaction with “the ORF”? There is no such thing as “the” satisfaction with “the” ORF that can be expressed in a number. The range of services is too diverse for that. Instead, the question must be approached step by step and numerous different levels of satisfaction surveyed. For this reason, the study distinguishes between genres and topics and differentiates between media consumption in general and the use of ORF offerings and, finally, satisfaction with them. The genres of interest are television, radio, teletext and the Internet, and more recently also social media, although here the use of the genre is first surveyed in general. Only in the second step is it asked to what extent the ORF offerings are specifically used per genre. It is obvious that the preferred genre depends on the content. One person likes to watch feature films on television for entertainment but listens to the news on the radio; another prefers to listen to music on the radio and catch up on the latest events via the Internet on his or her cell phone while on the move. Or even more specifically, someone who wants to follow a soccer match in detail may prefer moving images, while someone who is only interested in the result will be satisfied with a look at teletext. What makes the overall survey so special is that it asks about topic interests in the various media genres to take account of precisely such preferences.

Which topics basically interest the audience is asked based on four broad topic categories, namely Sports, Entertainment, Culture and Information. Of course, this is not always entirely separable – it is up to the respondents to assign their music consumption to either entertainment or culture, for example. Now it can be determined how much the audience is interested in sports coverage on TV, or sports on TELETEXT, sports on the radio, and so on.

Of particular interest to ORF, however, is the level of satisfaction with ORF's offerings, again broken down by genre and subject area. It is well known that media usage differs between generations. For this reason, the analyses of the representative survey also repeatedly show these differences by age group. It may come as no surprise that the younger generation is less interested in information on television than the 50-plus generation, but this is not purely due to the genre of television. In the case of sports, the youngest are more interested in television than their elders.

To ensure that the time sequence is not influenced by seasonal fluctuations, the survey is always carried during the same time where possible, usually between the beginning of May and mid-June. The schedule may vary slightly so that no planned major events such as a soccer World Cup fall into the survey period, which could influence subject interests. Unplanned events such as crises cannot, of course, be considered here. Fluctuations in the timing are therefore not unusual in times of multiple crises, as we are currently experiencing. The pandemic can be interpreted here as having made a deep impression. Occasionally, questions must be adjusted to take account of developments in communications technology. For example, social media was introduced as a separate genre in 2022.

The survey was conducted “face-to-face” for many years; in 2020, measures against the coronavirus pandemic necessitated a change of method. Method changes are normally introduced gradually in studies with a time sequence, to smooth out method effects. This was not possible in the pandemic, so more care was taken to ensure that a well-considered mix of methods, and careful sampling, provided the best possible continuity of the time sequence.

Since 2020, the survey has been conducted as a mixed-mode survey with telephone and online interviews. The mix of methods should guarantee smooth implementation. As before, the survey is representative of the resident population aged 15 and older. The sample size of  $n=1,000$  allows for a precision that makes even minor fluctuations interpretable in the time sequence. In each survey wave, it is also possible to look at subgroups such as generations. This guarantees a certain degree of detail when looking at the big picture.

# Quality Profile

Dr. Florian Oberhuber  
SORA Institute for Social  
Research and Consulting

Since many years Public Service Media are under more and more pressure. Already in the 80ties Margaret Thatcher had sought to abolish the license fee. As communications scholar Christoph Neuberger argues, the constant critical questioning of the legitimacy of its public funding is part of the essence of public broadcasting: “As a broadcasting service committed to society, it must face and react on public criticism, register the claims made there, take up suggestions and legitimize itself by demonstrating its performance.”

As will be shown below, the “Quality Profiles” created by ORF in 2011 can be understood as a form of productive institutionalization of a quality discourse and as a control instrument. For all ORF media and programme areas, they disclose general and genre-specific mission values and thus make quality accessible to systematic evaluation and discussion.

For around three decades, there has been a systematic discussion in the Europe about quality in public broadcasting and the role of the audience in this context. Audience acceptance and target group adequacy, according to the established thesis, form a part of quality. Quality can only be effective and socially relevant if the content offered is received, understood, and processed by the recipients. Quality in public broadcasting is therefore impossible without the audience. The audience must therefore be taken seriously not only in its role as a user, but also as a stakeholder, and must be included in efforts to achieve quality.

At ORF, quality assurance is legally and institutionally anchored as a system for ensuring the fulfillment of the core mission and, in addition to Programme Structure Analysis and continuous, qualitative, and representative surveys, includes ORF Quality Profiles instrument developed in 2011.

The ORF Quality Profiles define a catalogue of general mission values as well as genre-specific characteristics that relate to the different conditions and requirements of working practice in the individual programme categories. It concludes specifies criteria for each program category from specific sources: The ORF-Act, ORF's editorial guidelines, social media guidelines, program statute, and its code of conduct. The aim is to create a set of quality criteria explicitly embedded in the editorial media production. For ORF these Quality Profiles are a substantial part of an ongoing quality management and thus as a continuous process that includes regular evaluation using audience research methods, as well as optimization measures for the programmes.

In fact “Quality Profiles” create the basis for a Reality Check on PSM media, making sure that obligations and regulations, public service remits and quality criteria are taken care of in program production.

Since the fall of 2011, the SORA Institute has been conducting empirical evaluation studies on the quality. For this purpose, the respective quality profile is operationalized both as a standardized set of questions and as part

of an interview guide, and the audience is asked in focus groups as well as in semi-standardized interviews across Austria about the importance of the quality dimensions and their fulfillment by ORF's programs.

This open and dialogical approach allows a detailed insight into the audience's understanding and awareness of quality. The results are very promising for the inclusion of users in the quality discourse and validate the result also found in other studies, according to which the audience supports not only individual performance expectations but also the legitimacy of broader social demands on public broadcasting. In addition to this function for the social discourse on quality, the Quality Profiles also fulfill a control function in ORF's internal quality management, by systematically collecting the perceptions and demands of the audience and thus making them accessible for internal reflection, in order to close any gaps between the theory, expectations, confessions and reality.

Eleven evaluation studies of ORF's Quality Profiles have now been carried out, and it can be said that the audience survey broadly supports the concept of public service quality formulated by ORF in its Quality Profiles. This includes, for example, diverse and comprehensible programming for all segments of the population, a strong focus on Austria or serious information and consistent quality journalism in terms of research and editorial work.

## Audience as a stakeholder

Due to massive disruptions in media economy and media perception PSM no longer can't expect to be accepted as given for granted.

The “Böckenförde theorem”, according to which the liberal state lives on preconditions that it cannot guarantee itself, can also be applied to public broadcasting. One of these prerequisites is the willingness of a society – or of the relevant stakeholders – to engage in a discourse oriented toward the common good, with key concepts such as quality and Public Value. It is precisely this space of democratic understanding that has come under pressure since the establishment of the Quality Profiles, due to political and social polarization processes. It is based on the basic democratic trust of all participants in each other's goodwill. Where this basic trust gives way to a perception of other members of society as enemies, discourse comes to a standstill, because the arguments and facts of the other side are basically no longer recognized. The discussion about public service gives way to a power struggle for control over the media and the public. Erosion processes in the democratic sphere are empirically evident, among other things, in the numerous comparative rankings on democracy, which attest that Austria has taken significant steps backward in recent years, for example, regarding a lack of transparency in government action, and the influence of financially powerful groups on legislation, corruption and media freedom. Regarding political culture, major representative studies such as the Austrian Democracy Monitor conducted by SORA researcher Martina Zandonella reveal a massive loss of trust. In the Democracy Monitor 2022, for example, satisfaction with the political system fell to just 34 % – a drop of 30 percentage points compared with the start of the survey in 2018.

Behind this is the experience of devaluation and exclusion in the bottom third of society, and in the middle third the impression that privileged groups use the political system for their own interests. This loss of trust goes beyond political institutions. Jakob-Moritz Eberl, for example, uses data from the Austrian Coronavirus Panel to show that parts of the population have also withdrawn their trust in the scientific community and scientific knowledge. For example, about a quarter of the population is of the opinion (September 2021) that one should rely more on common sense and less on scientific studies. The media are also affected by a general criticism of whitewashing, and in the Democracy Monitor 2022, a majority of 59 percent agree with the statement that “politics and the media are in cahoots.”

This change in the social framework also challenges the safeguarding of Public Service Media quality. For, as Neuberger notes, the “substantial clarification of public service expectations” is the indispensable basis for any operational quality management. In other words, “business as usual” is a dangerous strategy. On the contrary, the broader and more open the debate about the legitimacy of public broadcasting is, the more likely it is to be countered by an imminent erosion of its legitimacy. The traditional mass media are losing trust because they are not open enough or responsive enough to society, as communications scholar Otried Jarren put it, and he would like to see a broad debate on the future of public broadcasting in Germany. After all, Public Service Media need corresponding guiding principles. And these can only emerge from social discourse.

In view of the polarized political elites, the public and citizens are important allies against the undermining of Public Service Broadcasting. In reaction ORF has to open up and promote spaces for discourse, interaction and participation wherever possible.

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From Quality Profile to  
Quality Check

To ensure that the insights gained in ORF's Quality Assurance System are implemented in its daily media production, ORF has developed an additional element to ensure that reflections and objections as well as changes in expectations are incorporated into future programming. The ORF “Quality Check” is a series of workshops with each of ORF's main programme-producing departments. Journalists and editors are confronted with the latest results of the ongoing ORF quality assurance process – in particular the evaluation of the respective quality profile. The goal is to discuss the ongoing media production in a participatory process, to conduct a critical self-reflection and to derive concrete conclusions and, if necessary, objectives for future quality media production based on a strengths/weaknesses analysis. In the process, external experts and colleagues from other ORF media departments participate in order to include critical reflection and in-depth analysis of particular aspects and current challenges.

# Public Value Study

Laura Hörner  
ORF Public Value

Annual Public Value Studies are an important component of ORF's Quality Assurance System because they address problems and challenges that are still unresolved for Public Service Media. The studies provide a glimpse into the future of public service broadcasting, explore untapped potential, and are thus intended to facilitate a sophisticated quality media discourse. Based on scientific analyses, the researchers make recommendations for action – both to the public broadcasters, who use the studies as a practical basis for their programming work, and to legislators and regulatory authorities.

In recent years in particular, Public Value Studies have often been interdisciplinary and international in scope. Cooperation with other European public broadcasters and the European umbrella organization of Public Service Media (EBU) has proven its worth, as questions such as those concerning digital transformation (“Digital Transformation: From Broadcaster to Quality Network,” 2020), increasing news avoidance (“Information Deprivation & News-Avoiding,” 2019) or trust in Public Service Media (“Values and Trust,” 2021) concern not only ORF but also other public broadcasters.

The first study commissioned by ORF was entitled “Why migrants currently make little or no use of ORF programming in the areas of television, radio and online – and what innovations and measures can be used to appeal to them more” (2007). During the study, Fritz Hausjell (University of Vienna), a journalism and communications scientist, was able to show that migrants do not feel that they are a “natural part” of Austrian society in most media. For this reason, they would often turn to media from their countries of origin or specific media offerings for migrants. The interviewees were working on developing some formats where they would feel addressed if they were to exist on ORF. The participants interviewed for the study also highlighted a lack of representation of migrants among ORF staff. Hausjell suggested that the ORF should not only focus more on migration in its content, but also show clear signs of openness to migrant job applicants. If the editorial offices become more diverse, this will also apply to the content.

The quantitative study “The Economic Effects of ORF Television” (2012) by Mathias Firgo (WIFO), Oliver Fritz (WIFO) and Gerhard Streicher (Joanneum Research) was able to show that ORF makes a significant contribution to macroeconomic and regional value creation through its activities as a major business enterprise. ORF's current expenditures and investments multiply the value-added activities of other sectors of the Austrian economy. Among other things, this showed that each euro of gross value added generated in ORF's television operations in the form of wages, salaries and depreciation and amortization contributed a total of EUR 3.20 to the overall gross value added in the economy at that time. For every person employed in ORF television, there are a total of five employees in other areas of the Austrian economy. Overall,



ORF generated around EUR 1.8 billion in total economic production value in 2012. The results underpin the contribution of public television to Austria's economic performance.

After the 2012 study dealt with the economic significance of ORF, Katharine Sarikakis (University of Vienna) addressed the question of ORF television's contribution to the intellectual value creation of Austrian society in their study (2013). She defined three areas through which ORF contributes to this intellectual value creation: In its preservation of cultural diversity and identity, and in its innovative creativity. Based on scientific literature and empirical case studies, the author noted the status quo and addressed some specific recommendations for action to the company and legislators. Intellectual value creation in culture is most effectively realized, they said, by making everyday culture as much a subject of programmes as high culture. According to the recommendation, the ORF's work in this area should be accessible on all significant platforms (TV, radio, online) to reach all social classes and generation groups and to consolidate the relevance of the ORF in the long term. The scientists consider the support of the state and the regulatory authorities to be indispensable in achieving these goals. For the area of identity, it is central for ORF to consider the fact of demographic change as well as the growing cultural diversity of Austrian society when producing its content. In addition, the author recommends a programme focus on European topics and making ORF's own reputation visible within the European public institutions and the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Finally, it is relevant to continue to fulfill its own integrative function, for example by including people with special needs. In the area of social innovation, the authors suggested producing entertainment programs that give audiences critical access to their own social world. Here the author emphasizes the important role of legislation and regulatory authorities, which should provide ORF with additional resources to develop such formats, especially for young people.

A study from 2016 deals with young people and their living environment. The Public Value Competence Center was concerned at the time that people kept talking about "young people" without really knowing who they were. The study "Generation What? – The Online Experiment" set out to change this. As part of a large-scale online survey, the study aimed to clarify, among other things: How do young people see and define themselves? The online survey contained a total of 149 questions, in which around one million young people from 35 countries took part. In addition to a comprehensive data set of information on the self-image of Europe's youth, a European public sphere was created through the project. Public Service Media provided the platforms and subjected the responses to the open online survey to scientific evaluation in cooperation with social science institutes. Even if the results are not representative of all young Europeans, i. e., cannot be generalized, they do paint a comprehensive picture of young people living in Europe.

The study "Digital Transformation: From Broadcaster to Quality Network" (2020) is particularly relevant for reaching young people. In his article "From Public Service Broadcasting to Digital Platform: The Role of Artificial Intelligence," Reinhard Christl looks at the significance of the use of artificial intel-

ligence (AI) for PSM. Although there was a great deal of scepticism about the use of AI for a long time, this is increasingly giving way to the realization that artificial intelligence – if used correctly – holds more opportunities than risks. The author believes that AI will radically change the media industry, precisely because the technologies are becoming increasingly available and cheaper. That's why it's crucial to develop a strategy for dealing with it. Christl sees artificial intelligence as a valuable tool that can support editorial teams in their work. Traditional journalistic values and quality standards must be combined with the new digital possibilities – in this way, public broadcasting can not only present a competitive alternative to platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, Disney or Amazon, but "a more transparent, intelligent and quality alternative to them".

In the same study, Uwe Hasebrink, Jan-Hinrik Schmidt and Stephan Dreyer of the Hans Bredow Institute also wrote a paper entitled "Algorithmic Recommendations of Public Service Media Providers". Among other things, they discuss processes by which PSM providers communicate the content they produce and acquire to an audience. This includes, among other things, the perception of content, the arousal of interest and convenient use. While these mediation structures were long characterized by linear use – at a specific time, on a specific channel – an increasing change in usage behavior is becoming apparent because of an ongoing digital transformation. The guiding paradigm is now rather to make audiovisual content available ideally at any time and place. This development has led to algorithmic recommendation systems gaining relevance. On the basis of comprehensive databases and with the help of artificial intelligence, very specific, i. e., personalized recommendations can thus be made today. In addition to concerns about the centralization and monopolization of many areas of the digital public sphere, the question of the social consequences of these algorithmic recommendations is also raised time and again. In addressing the consequences of these systems for public broadcasters, the authors conclude that their use makes sense in principle and can be justified, but that it would depend on the specific design. For example, Hasebrink, Schmidt and Dreyer argue that diversity, as a central good of democratic broadcasting systems, must also be a primary criterion for the discoverability of content. They also argue that public media providers must establish best practice standards, especially regarding the explicability and verifiability of the systems, and especially in contrast to the often-impenetrable algorithms of private providers. This is the only way to gain the trust and acceptance of users. Of course, the use of these algorithms in the digital world is particularly relevant if this online area can also be used accordingly.

In 2023 the Public Value Study focuses on "Entertainment in the digital age", analyzing current challenges for PSM's entertainment production.

All Public Value Studies are published and available on [zukunft.orf.at](http://www.zukunft.orf.at).

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# Audience Council Study

According to the ORF Act, the Audience Council, one of the two supervising boards of ORF commissions an annual representative survey to determine the interests of listeners and viewers. Most recently the Audience Council Study focused on requirements for fictional and non-fiction entertainment programmes on ORF.

## 2022

“Audience Requirements and Expectations for the Topics Europe, Security and Economy in ORF Reporting”.

## 2017

“Audience requirements and expectations on the topic of ‘digital transformation’”

## 2021

“Requirements and expectations for fictional entertainment on ORF television”

## 2016

“Audience requirements and expectations for ORF’s domestic political reporting”

## 2020

“Requirements and expectations for non-fictional entertainment on ORF television”

## 2015

“Audience requirements and expectations for foreign reporting on ORF”

## 2019

“Audience requirements and expectations for ORF’s diversity of opinion and topics”

## 2014

“Audience requirements and expectations for regional reporting on ORF”

## 2018

“Trust in ORF Information. Audience expectations and demands around objectivity, balance and diversity of opinion”

## 2013

“Requirements of ORF’s children’s programming from the perspective of children and parents”

# Complementary elements

DialogForum and Stakeholder Dialogue

Quality control is crucial to achieve accountability to make sure, that PSM fulfills its obligations in an appropriate way. However, facing severe criticism followed by the massive disruptions of digital transformation, it is from utmost importance to address these issues to a public. Public funding must be legitimized publicly. Media quality no longer can be defined in an ivory tower of politicians and experts or exclusively by PSM themselves. To include the public in the ongoing debate about media quality, ORF Public Value has – complementary to its Quality Assurance System – created a variety of initiatives to address and include the public.

The “ORF – DialogForum,” is a well-established Public Value-live event as well as a TV-program (LIVE-stream and broadcast on ORF III). Numerous guests from Austria and Europe discuss socially relevant issues of media quality, most recently with the question of how media – especially ORF – reacts to the pandemic, climate crisis, and corruption scandals, and what expectations “Generation Z” has of ORF. “Between Fear and Awakening” dealt with the social consequences of the war in Ukraine. In “Together but where to?” the guests developed visions for the future of social cohesion. “New, Digital and ...?” featured media experts from Germany and Austria on the question of how Public Service Media can take advantage of the digital transformation. Several of these TV programs are available on the ORF’s VoD platform, TVThek and the Public Value website [zukunft.ORF.at](http://zukunft.ORF.at).

In order to improve its relation to its stakeholder ORF Public Value organizes several workshops: In the “Future Dialogue – next generation”, young people from all over Austria discussed what they expect from ORF in the future. Especially in a time of digital transformation and changing media use, involving young expertise is proving to be particularly important for ORF. Promoting the participation of young people and collecting criticism and expectations were the primary goals of the event. Five small groups discussed the topics of information, entertainment and sports, culture and education, service and community in sessions lasting several hours. The findings and demands of the participants (more diversity, greater presence on social media channels, authentic portrayal of living environments, active participation and inclusion of young people in ORF (participation council), promoting media competence through their own offerings, more discussion sessions with young people, promotion of local artists, cooperation of ORF with educational institutions, legal service for young people, etc.) are to be understood as suggestions for future media production. They have been presented by the young people to ORF management. A similar stakeholder-workshop will be organized to support the start of the new ORF online channel for children.

# PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE

Konrad Mitschka  
ORF Public Value

The definition was given right at the beginning: “Public Value: The qualifying distinguishing feature in the evaluation of media programs is the additional public benefit that programs provide, even if, and perhaps even because, they rely on large reach or identified target groups for the sake of economic rationality,” This is how communications scientist Prof. Dr. Thomas Bauer (University of Vienna) explains the term “Public Value” in TEXTE 1. In the following edition, TEXTE 2, Priv.DoZ.DDr. Julia Wippersberg (University of Vienna) defines the difference between commercial and public media: “Public providers have (in contrast to private broadcasting corporations) by their programme mandate the obligation and the task to generate Public Values”. The historian Univ.-Prof.Dr. Karl Vocelka (University of Vienna) is even more explicit in TEXTE 3: “Public broadcasting is not only necessary as a counterweight against the dumbing down of the population by private broadcasters, but is also indispensable as a socio-political steering body for the basic lines of orientation of this state towards its own identity and consciousness.”

Since its inception, the publication series “PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE” has been committed to the discourse of public service quality. More than 250 authors have participated in this discourse, not only describing general distinctive features, but also repeatedly discussing specific topics. Dr. Beate Großegger (Institute for Youth Culture Research), for example, discussed the topic of youth: “From the point of view of youth research, public broadcasting has a different mandate: On the one hand, it should serve both the information and entertainment needs of young media users in as sophisticated a manner as possible. On the other hand, public broadcasting should also contribute to correcting the common wishful thinking and distorted images of today’s youth by providing adult audiences with information offerings that show youth at least approximately as it really is – namely youth in all its diversity and breadth”. Dr. Brigitte Naderer (University of Munich) writes in her contribution on, among other things, advertising in public media: “Advertising is necessary to cover the production costs of media providers. But the placement of this advertising content plays a role especially in the consciously perceived media enjoyment of the viewer. Public television stands for this uninterrupted media enjoyment and thus sides with its audience.”

ORF Public Value has published its own issues on the programme pillars of sports, science, and entertainment. DI Dr. Helmut Leopold (AIT), for example, establishes the training of “digital literacy” “as a fundamental core task for Public Service Media institutions” and Dr. Georg Spitaler (University of Vienna) says on the subject of sports: “Critical journalism instead of alleged “national interest” also concerns sports, especially in times when the public sphere appears to be endangered by the obsequious reporting of paid PR and journalistically unreliable social media”. Prof. Dr. Gabriele Siegert (University

of Zurich) sums up public entertainment in this way: “At the same time, the entertainment production of public providers is also facing current challenges, driven by technological and economic imperatives, firstly in a changing media industry, secondly in changing content and thirdly in changing media use. In view of these developments, a debate on quality must be intensified. However, while quality criteria in journalism have been discussed intensively for a long time, the debate about quality in entertainment is more limited. Nevertheless, starting points for quality entertainment can also be found here, such as legality, transparency, content, design, comprehensibility, harmlessness, professionalism, innovation, acceptance, and diversity, as well as the contribution to identity construction, which is especially important for small states.”

Other special issues have dealt with the task of Public Service Media in relation to elections, the Eurovision Song Contest and, most recently, the coronavirus. Again and again, the contributions pointed out the special nature of the tasks, especially about information. Dr. Beate Winkler (Bureau of European Policy Advisers of the European Commission), for example, puts it this way: “Public broadcasting – and not the private providers – has the task of ensuring that the plurality of our society is reflected in the programming and that the journalistic contributions are based on the common system of values.” Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ulrich Körtner (University of Vienna) stated: “From the point of view of democracy, information comes first. This must remain the case if public broadcasting is to continue to have a right to exist. Without comprehensive information, the participation of citizens in a democratic society and its political decision-making is not possible.” And Univ.-Prof. Dr. Peter Vitouch (University of Vienna) interpreted Public Service Media psychologically: “Public Service Media serve as mountain guides in the rugged, rocky terrain of fear management. As a counterpart to the tabloids, which make recipients fearful, immobile, and helpless with their undifferentiated horror news.” There were also repeated references to the importance of Public Service Media on the Internet, although – or precisely because – ORF is subject to strict restrictions here, which for years made self-evident attitudes such as “online first” or permanent publications of self-produced content impossible for others. According to Prof. Dr. Bernd Holznagel’s (University of Münster) contribution, another core element would be “the ability of public broadcasting to effectively stand up for its values and objectives on the Internet as well. It must be able to use the new technical possibilities of addressing users to fulfill its mission of integration and counteract polarization tendencies on the net.”

PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE has not only offered Austrian or German-speaking authors the opportunity to publish their analysis on Public Service Media. In fact, contributions have come from the USA, Canada and from all EU countries. One special issue of the series focused on Greece and the closure of the public broadcaster ERT, another on the struggle for independence of the Slovenian public broadcaster. Most recently, contributions from the international RIPE conference were published, which addressed the future of Public Service Media in the digital age in Vienna in 2022. This latest issue – PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE 26 – made clear that the demand to strengthen Public Service Media facing the power of commercial media and global players is being raised internationally.

The PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE currently includes 272 authors, forming a unique collection of opinions, attitudes and viewpoints on Public Service Media quality, all available on [zukunft.orf.at](http://zukunft.orf.at).

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# Looking across the border: Quality Assurance in ARD/rbb



## Public Value in a book

Edited by Klaus Unterberger and Konrad Mitschka in the facultas Verlag, “Public Open Space – Zur Zukunft öffentlich-rechtlicher Medien” contains 55 contributions from Austrian and international scholars on the future of media and on public value.

Andrea Mocellin &  
Mario Beilhack  
rbb

The digitization of the media and the accompanying drastic changes in the production of media content, its distribution and, above all, its use have led to a change in the programming strategy at Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb) as of 2019. Linear, classic media offerings on radio and television have been reduced in favour of the expansion of non-linear, time-flexible use of our public service content on platforms such as the ARD audio library and mediathek (media library), as well as on the so-called third-party platforms of commercial providers. For the quality management of rbb – and presumably also of all other ARD state public broadcasters – this systemic change means a major challenge in questions of controlling and evaluating the quality of public service content. Although the programming mandate imposed by the legislature has changed only slightly so far, it has been decisively sharpened in questions of programming quality with the new State Media Treaty. The new amended State Media Treaty, which is in the process of ratification by the state parliaments, provides for greater involvement of the supervisory bodies in fulfilling the programming mandate in terms of quality. What this new type of supervision will look like is currently in the making and will certainly have a certain dynamic effect on the development of public programming at ARD and ZDF. At the same time, an almost unmanageable amount of content produced for different platforms and channels has emerged for users who are difficult or impossible to reach with traditional linear offerings. This is especially true for younger target groups.

The differentiation of media offerings takes full effect here. Younger people (under 50) prefer the time-flexible offerings and the sheer limitless variety of entertainment and information options offered by the web or apps on their devices. From the point of view of traditional media, a veritable “Marianas Trench” has opened up here. In addition, a lot of time-flexible content has only a very short lifespan and is therefore ephemeral. The classic quantitative and qualitative methods of measuring reach and success no longer lead anywhere here; a vast amount of very different usage data for the digital offerings must first be understood and correctly prioritized for a quantitative and qualitative localization. It was clear to us that quality management would have to break new

ground here and that so-called “programme dialogues,” which we successfully conducted on a regular semi-annual to annual basis for traditional offerings, no longer seemed to be effective for non-linear offerings.

However, the experience gained from these quality processes was helpful in developing a new quality procedure for the non-linear content. In order to address the volatility of these non-linear offerings and their speed of development, and also to arrive at a “faster” and effective evaluation, we introduced the so-called “digital portfolio matrix” at rbb, which in principle evaluates all non-linear programme offerings according to qualitative and quantitative criteria. “Evaluate” here is not to be understood as a final quality judgment, but as a kind of “appraisal” in the sense of “review” procedures. The goal here, as in the classic programme dialogues, is to give the programme-creating departments and editorial teams valuable pointers for the qualitative and quantitative success of their formats. We retained the tried-and-tested method mix of qualitative and quantitative evaluation but sharpened it by prioritizing the selection of evaluation criteria. A few qualitative evaluation criteria and the definition of “KPIs” for the quantitative evaluation are intended to provide a quick and orientation-giving “picture” for all programme-creating departments, a kind of “traffic light system” visually signaling in colour which offerings are performing satisfactorily or very well, or where there is a need for action for optimization. It is important that we have involved all relevant stakeholders in the development of the new procedure to create the greatest possible transparency and comprehensibility in the evaluation.

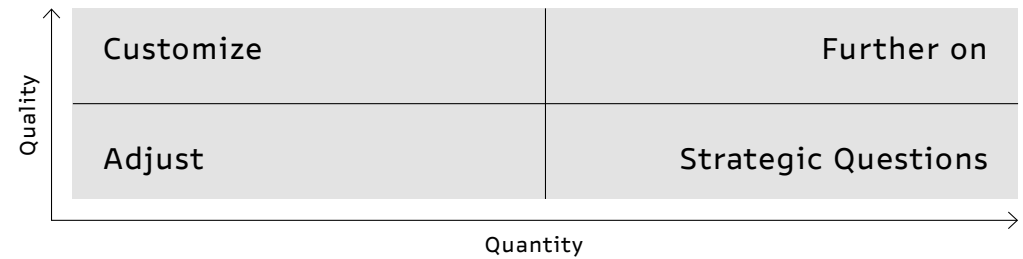
### CB Information – Podcasts

	PROGRAMME VISION								IMAGE				QUANTITATIVE SUCCESS						
	Perspectives of the East	Regionally even closer	Competent minds	Hotspot Berlin	Relevance for Target Group	Trustworthy	Many-voiced (diverse/pluralistic)	High journalistic quality	Potentially a brand (of rbb)	One step ahead	Uncomfortable / brave	Funny / cheeky	Non-conformist / edgy	Strong in character	Benchmarks	Performance assessment (even without goal)	Comparative recommendation	Recommendation	Voting
rbb Social Kanal 1	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
rbb Social Kanal 2	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
rbb Social Kanal 3	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
rbb Social Kanal 4	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Graphic 1: the rbb digital portfolio matrix – Example for the evaluation of the information offer

The selection of quality criteria and the definition of KPIs must be recognized as “currency” by all programme-managing departments; only then can the “portfolio matrix” work and help with changes or adjustments in the bid strategy. It is important to note that quality control via the “digital portfolio matrix” cannot and does not intend to make programme decisions; it merely provides an objectified basis for doing so.

### rbb in total



Graphic 2: the rbb digital portfolio matrix with recommendations for action

Since qualitative evaluation takes more time than quantitative evaluation, which existing formats or channels are evaluated is determined with the departments managing the programmes. New developments or new channels are always fully evaluated. Not every individual format is examined, but all those that have a longer runtime or from which knowledge could be gained for new formats within the same editorial team (e. g., podcast series of six episodes or more) are. After half a year, they are then subjected to a review. Not all qualitative criteria have to be met by every format, but the ones that are central to public service quality and Public Value do. The regional criteria that are the focus of a state broadcaster are also important here.

Based on this insight, the qualitative portfolio matrix is increasingly being used at rbb in the development of classic linear formats. The editorial team considers in each case which of the content-related criteria it wants to fulfill in addition to the obligatory public service criteria (programme mandate and core values). In this respect, it is a flexible model that can be used to control the range of offers within the portfolio.

Overall, it can be said that digitization has given quality management an important role in qualitative programme management. The qualitative distinctiveness of public service content is of central importance in the digital age with its multitude of channels and platforms and must not be lost behind the premise of the necessary target group orientation. In fact, this distinction is also a guarantee of success precisely when it can be clearly perceived and found in high quality for these target groups.

# Quality Assurance ZDF

Stefan Müller  
ZDF

Quality has many perspectives. In the case of a public broadcaster, one is the perspective of the client, i. e., the democratically elected state parliaments, which formulate social demands as a framework for the programme to be produced.

On the other hand, there is the one of the broadcaster and, in the true sense of the word, its journalists, editors and producers, who follow their professional demands. Then there are those of the users, who in turn evaluate the programme offered according to their personal expectations. And finally, that of the current, rapidly changing market, which sets its own standards for production value, addressing target groups and dramaturgy on the various playout platforms.

Quality assurance is complex and can succeed today only if it is conceived in multiple perspectives, if it remains open to adjustments, and if it nevertheless manages to operate with a uniform, comprehensible and recognized set of instruments and clear goals. At ZDF, the ZDF COMPASS was developed as a central management tool for this purpose, incorporating the dimensions of use, quality, impact, and acceptance. I would like to outline some aspects of this in the following. Society formulates an essential quality criterion in the form of the mission assigned to public broadcasting. In Germany ZDF is supposed to provide all citizens with an offer that informs, educates, advises, entertains in an appropriate manner, and conveys culture to them. The fulfillment of this mission constitutes a specific public service quality in contrast to the market-driven media offerings of private companies.

Whether the implementation in the programme succeeds, however, is subject to the judgment of the viewers to a considerable extent. Mission fulfillment that is not recognized comes to nothing. An effect that is perceived by users as personal added value must be verified by surveys and studies, and the results must be fed back into the editorial work. Credibility is the *conditio sine qua non* of public broadcasting. It is the basis for its role in democracy, not only to inform people about all important events and developments, but to do so independently of the political leadership and other powerful people in the country. The professional ethics of our journalists should not be taken for granted in the reception of this. Criticism from small but vocal segments of the population and some media outlets that exploit this to their advantage is audible. That's why it's important to make journalistic quality and reliability more visible through maximum transparency, communication, and education, and to continually rebuild and maintain trust in dialogue with viewers. The ÖRR cannot enforce media competence in the population, but it can be a partner for social educational institutions in their efforts to increase it.

Another overarching quality feature is, for example, the strengthening of community in democracy. The programme is intended to create empathy and understanding among citizens for their fellow human beings. Whether this succeeds can be deduced from surveys on whether the diversity of opinions is reflected in the programme; and by evaluations on whether social diversity is also reflected in the people who produce the programme.

Maximum accessibility to programming through unrestricted access is part of this, as is the rooting of public broadcasters in society through cooperation with other civil society institutions and dialogue with its users. To this end, ZDF is establishing a national audience panel that will enable regular and spontaneous exchanges between programme makers and the public. A necessary and increasingly important feature in the organization of public service work is a culture of error. The rapid development and adaptation times of the digital age make this essential. Through permanent (re)steering, programme work can be adapted to market standards, innovations and user habits and expectations. Here, automated measurement systems as well as target agreements and reviews in the editorial offices can help to establish regular course corrections among the programme makers.

A review system of this kind, integrating all playout channels and quality criteria at the format level, is also currently being developed at ZDF. Quality already begins in the development of new formats. Here at ZDF, we have established the possibility for editorial staff to enter into dialogue with the respective target group at an early stage. The content expectations of potential users and the dramaturgical and formal conception of a format, including possible programme titles, can thus be tested and adapted at an early stage. At ZDF, for example, the new development of the documentary series "Die Spur", produced for the Mediathek, was accompanied by an elaborate dialogue format between editors and people from the target group. Similarly, the new formats on the ZDFkultur YouTube channel "Unbubble" were tested and evaluated online by users at various stages of development.

Quality can only develop effectively if it is found and used. Reaching as many people in the population as possible is necessary for this. This can only succeed if a suitable offer is made to all groups. This includes comprehensibly conveyed information in news and documentaries for all age groups, but also entertaining genres and formats that are particularly suited to conveying valuable content. The treatment of important social developments as feature films or series, such as the topic of the environment in the eco-thriller series "Der Schwarm," and investigation combined with satire and show in "ZDF Magazin Royale" are examples from ZDF programming. An expansion of genre diversity in the area of fiction and factual entertainment should also be mentioned in this context.

The media world with its complex diversity of offerings, distribution and use, combined with the specific social mandate, requires a complex response on the part of the ÖRR in the form of an evaluation and control system for quality assurance. Looking at the market is no longer sufficient; the viewers and their evaluation of the ÖRR are moving to the centre of attention. The challenge is to apply the appropriate instruments depending on the company, channel, or format objective and to combine them in a communicating system for overall control.



# Quality Assurance in the SRG

Julien Winkelmann  
SRG

The journalistic quality of the Swiss Public Service Broadcaster, SRG results from the sum of defined, definable, and indefinable elements.

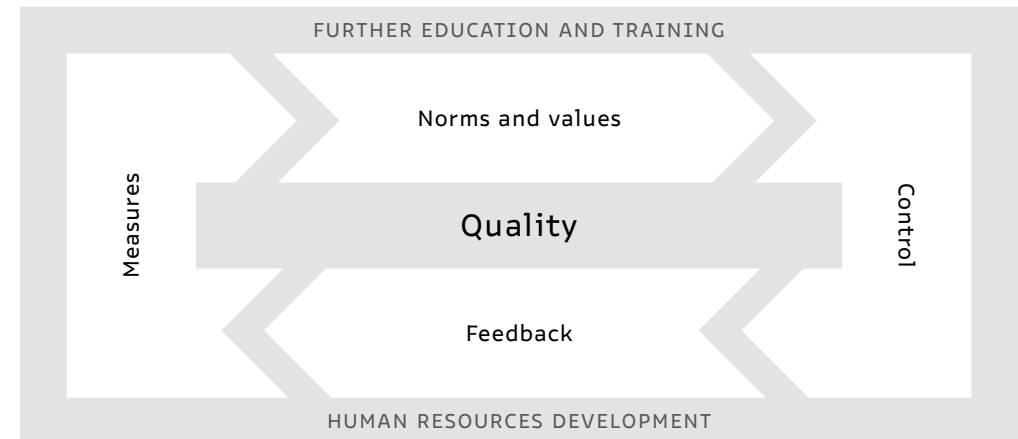
**Defined elements:** Relevance, professionalism, independence, diversity, and accessibility are the qualitative and ethical criteria specified for the SRG in accordance with Article 4 of the license. They are binding. All SRG content must meet these requirements.

**Definable elements:** The SRG is obliged to take quality criteria into account when carrying out its activities but can define these itself. The opinion and assessment of the experts are decisive for the definition of these criteria. For example, the SRG understands the general term “diversity” in a way that the programme and productions are tailored to the different population groups living in our country today, especially regarding age, gender, level of education, socio-economic background, and ethnic origin. Consequently, the offer must consist of a range of content of the most diverse genres and formats and reflect the broadest possible spectrum of opinions. The quality criteria influence SRG’s corporate and offering strategy as well as SRG’s offering charter and the journalistic guidelines of the SRG Enterprise Units (RSI, RTR, RTS, SRF, SWI). In addition, the Quality Assurance System of the SRG offering ensures that these criteria are met thanks to regional implementation.

**Non-definable elements:** Even if the SRG cannot influence them, the non-definable elements are decisive for the market success of its offer. On the one hand, there are cultural as well as vector-specific differences. What is rated as “good” in German-speaking Switzerland is not necessarily equally well received in French-speaking Switzerland. The cultural context in which the media operate can vary. It also has a formative effect. The same applies to vectors. If something is “well received” on television, this does not necessarily mean that it will automatically be equally well received on the radio. The criterion “current”, for example, is much more important for online news than for news on television. The media condition the audience. The decisive factor here is public opinion, which can be evaluated with surveys and usage measurements. In addition to the indefinable elements mentioned, there is a “subjective residual value”. Journalistic products are not industrially produced on an assembly line. To a certain extent, they are the result of creative processes and are often evaluated completely unsystematically. Some programmes go “viral”, whilst others miss their audience and are hardly noticed. Here, the perspective of the audience is crucial, which can be determined with usage measurements and interviews.

The concept of “programme quality” is complex: the perception of the content by the professionals who produce it, the perception of the audience and that of

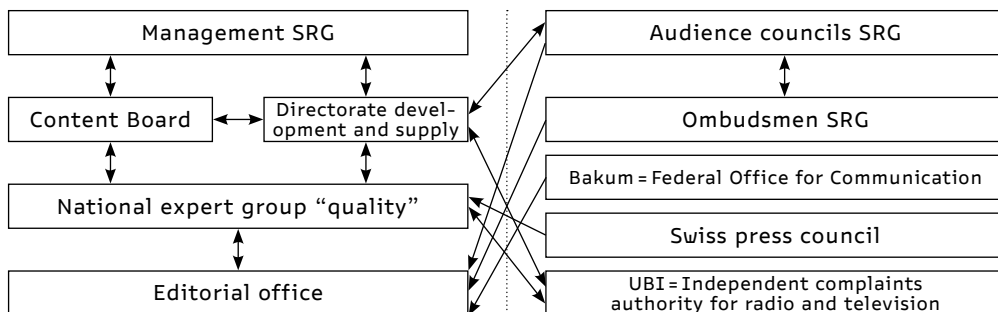
other players such as BAKOM, the supervisory authority which checks compliance with the SRG license, have a decisive influence. The quality management of SRG offerings does not consider all these dimensions but concentrates exclusively on the perspective of the professionals involved in the production of content. To this end, SRG assures the quality of its offerings in various ways: The Market and Audience Research department of DG SRG enables a more global view through the audience’s perception of the offering, and the Public Value project examines quality from the point of view of legitimacy. Quality management of the SRG offering is the responsibility of each individual SRG enterprise unit whose editorial teams produce content. At DG SRG, the quality dossier lies with the Development and Supply Directorate, which primarily coordinates the work in the Enterprise Units via the national “Quality” specialist group (cf. SRG Executive Board decision 10/2018). The quality management, which is specifically designed in the Quality Assurance System, consists of a series of internal controls and instruments with which the conformity of the offer and the above-mentioned criteria is checked. This is done in a circular and iterative process over four phases:



A central coordination unit ensures and checks that the corporate units apply and comply with the principles. This considers the specifics of the respective business unit. If necessary, the principles are adapted and laid down in supplementary regulations. The enterprise units are free to define their own editorial guidelines which are better suited to the cultural environment of their region. The Quality Assurance System of the SRG offering is only one of the elements that make up enterprise-wide quality management. Practically all areas of our media organization contribute to quality. Technology, administration, finance and human resources and training enable the editorial teams to prepare and offer a service of the desired or required quality. Each corporate unit appoints a quality manager who is responsible for internal controls and further devel-

opment. The quality managers meet regularly to exchange experience and knowledge on quality standards within the framework of the national “Quality” expert group. The task of the expert group is to make concrete the requirements of the supervisory authority according to Article 4 of the license, to continuously improve the Quality Assurance System and to align its standards with the media science findings recognised in Switzerland and abroad. The mandate of the expert group formally defines its areas of competence. The quality officer of DG SRG (Directorate Development and Supply) is responsible for the coordination and back office of this body. From a governance point of view, the panel reports to both the Content Board, the highest body for inter-regional cooperation for everything editorial, and the Development and Supply Directorate, which has a budget for national projects. It should be noted that interregional bodies such as the Conference of Editors-in-Chief (CRK), which are represented on the Content Board, can contribute their expertise to the projects of the “Quality” specialist group. The SRG Executive Board, as the highest decision-making body of the enterprise, is the superordinate level. It approves the decisions of the Content Board, which also affects the work of the specialist group. Furthermore, certain projects of the specialist group (e.g. SRG charter of offerings) require the approval of the SRG board of directors as the highest authority of the group.

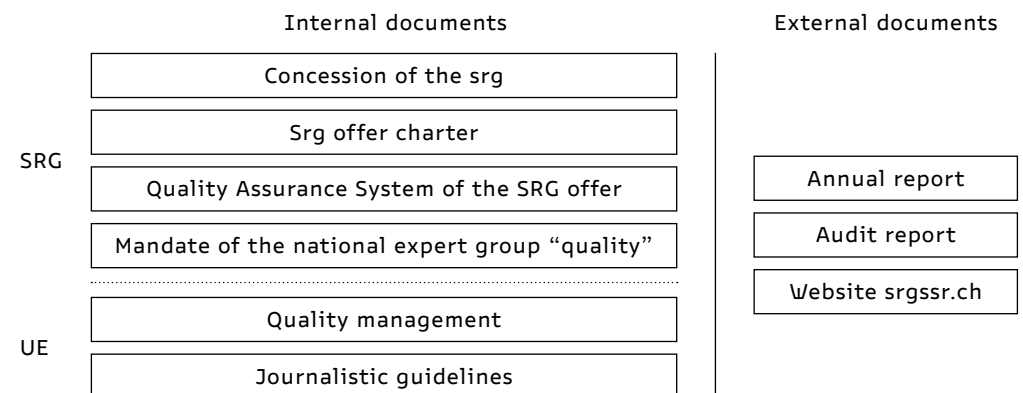
Even if the quality management of the SRG offering is primarily controlled via internal processes, the quality officers and editorial teams of the Enterprise Units take into account the observations and the handling of complaints by the Audience Council and the SRG ombudsman’s offices, both bodies of the operating authority. The quality manager of DG SRG also maintains close contact with the presidents of the audience council, with whom he exchanges views regularly. It goes without saying that BAKOM’s expectations are considered. To promote dialogue and maintain a constructive exchange, formal and informal meetings are held regularly between BAKOM representatives and the quality manager of DG SRG or members of the national “Quality” specialist group.



An overview of the bodies involved in the quality management of the SRG is provided here.

Article 4 of the license requires that external experts periodically monitor the SRG’s Quality Assurance System. For the years 2020–22, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) was entrusted with this task. It was selected from several organisations active in auditing the quality management of private broadcasters. The audits were carried out at several UE editorial units and focused primarily on the relevance and effectiveness of the Quality Assurance System. Fortunately, the results of the audit reports were consistently positive or very positive. The recommendations of the reports, which aim at a continuous improvement of the quality processes at SRG, were implemented year after year by all quality managers in the respective UE. Following a new call for tenders for the years 2024, 2026 and 2028 the audits will now be carried out every two years. The University of Applied Sciences Graubünden (FHGR) was selected to carry out the future audits and possibly confirm the previous results. The “Yearbook Quality of the Media” published by the Research Centre Public and Society (fög) at the University of Zurich serves as a reference for all SRG business units and most Swiss media organisations in terms of in-depth analysis of the quality of information offerings.

Even if the concept of quality is to be considered rather politically (contribution to democracy and the formation of opinion), the study is an important source for those responsible for quality to keep their academic knowledge in the field of media quality up to date. In order to fulfil their tasks and develop further, the editorial offices take into account other studies which BAKOM commissions from time to time to shed more specific light on the quality of the offering. As stipulated in the charter, the activities and results of the SRG’s internal quality controls must be reported annually in the SRG annual report in the “Quality” chapter. The annual report is available on the group’s website: [www.srgssr.ch](http://www.srgssr.ch). The results of the quality audits are also reported on this platform (on a specific page dedicated to quality). The documentation on the quality management of the SRG offering has been organised more systematically in recent years and the content has been summarised, which provides more clarity and order. For information purposes, the hierarchy of documents is shown here:



At the corporate entity level, documentation may vary significantly.

# Social Value for the Community

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This year's congress of the Austrian Sociological Association in Vienna chose the phrase "critical times" as the conference theme, influenced by the various successive and juxtaposed crises of recent years. Parallel to these crises, various social diagnoses, such as the divided society (Kaube and Kießerling 2022), the crisis of liberal democracy (Zielonka 2019), political polarisation (Roose 2021) or the new class society (Reckwitz 2018) characterise processes of social change that describe and problematise a division of society into different political camps. Such multiple divisions can be a threat scenario for democracy if no compromise can be reached in the conflict over different and partly opposing claims and interests of different social groups (Habermas 1996). The foundations for such a compromise are (1) the knowledge of divergent claims, (2) the acceptance of these and (3) the will to reach agreement by the citizens.

The perception of the different claims in society only becomes possible for everyone through public communication in different arenas of the political public sphere. However, this is linked to pre-requisite conditions. At the level of randomly generated public encounters, an exchange with citizens with other positions and views is to be sought. However, if one remains in one's own milieu, which is usually homogeneous in terms of attitudes, one will also find one's own views shaped by similar life situations and professional situations (Geiling and Vester 2007) in conversations about politics.

Empirical research shows that interpersonal communication, "hearing the other side" (Mutz 2006), tends to be overestimated as a way of obtaining information about competing political positions (e. g. Kösters, Jandura 2018). At the level of public gatherings, it is also a good idea to attend events organised by parties, associations, or societies where positions that contradict one's own opinion are discussed. This is another way to facilitate co-orientation in society. However, here too, empirical evidence shows that, at least before elections, only a small proportion of the electorate attends campaign events, and if this is the case, then mostly only those of their own political camp (Schulz 2022). Diverse information on relevant social issues and positions is more likely to be obtained via the mass media (Castro et al. 2018: 552), if the relevant social discourses are depicted in them (Jarren and Donges 2011), than in encounters with the public and public gatherings. Part of the purpose of political journalism for society is to convey knowledge about socially relevant issues, to prepare and make identifiably different arguments and positions on these issues (Weiß et al. 2020) and to provide factual, social, and temporal co-orientation in society (Weiß and Jandura 2017). In this way media provide an arena for the pluralistic exchange of different positions (forum function), legitimise political power

on the basis of transparency and rationality in decision-making (legitimation function) and ensure that citizens can perceive themselves as members of society (integration function) (Weiß et al. 2016).

For a long time, these services were provided in a stable and clearly assignable manner by the traditional mass media such as the daily and weekly press and radio, which – also due to the lack of alternative offerings – achieved a very high reach and thus a broad impact and binding power (Jarren 2019: 67). The digitisation-induced strong differentiation of offerings, which is described with the change from a "low choice" to a "high choice media environment" (van Aelst et al. 2017) and the increasing importance of social media offerings for information use (Newman et al. 2022: 11) offers citizens a new, multi-layered, and multi-faceted freedom of choice. If one follows the debate on the future of public broadcasting, the position is sometimes taken that this high degree of freedom of choice alone will ensure that citizens are sufficiently informed to participate in politics (Imhof 2013) (Barwise and York 2020). However, this line of argument fails to recognise that, from a democratic theoretical perspective, political reporting is subject to performance requirements (Althaus 2012), which cannot or should not necessarily be provided by commercial offerings and/or offerings with a decidedly distinct editorial line due to their specific selection routines (e. g., Curran 2002, Weiß et al. 2016). These offerings are not society-wide, but often promote integration in specific social milieus and are therefore often suitable as forums for internal communication (Jarren 2000). In such forums, topics and positions are negotiated from an ideologically homogeneous perspective, proposals of political opponents are sometimes delegitimised with illiberal forms of brutalising political language and/or discourse alliances are formed with political protagonists who are congruent in their opinions (inter alia Kösters et al. 2021).

However, such a debate culture stands in the way of compromise-building in society as a whole and can lead to social polarisation (Rosconi 2022). Especially against the background of such differentiating information environments and the continuing processes of societal pluralisation, Public Service Media, which do not assume the role of aggregating and mediating claims, but rather the role of mediator in societal conflicts (Kösters 2020), are more important than ever. The aim of this mediating role is to overcome social divisions and to ensure social and political integration. For this purpose, quality standards based on publicity theory must be applied to reporting. The various proposals developed in communication studies (e. g. Strömbäck 2005, Jandura and Friedrich 2014) can be condensed into four dimensions that can be applied independently of the guiding concepts of democratic theory: Relevance, plurality, classification and journalistic professionalism (Stark et al. 2021).

In the relevance dimension, the content is examined to see what significance the topic has for society as a whole or relevant subgroups of society. The higher the relevance of the reporting, the more likely it is to succeed in drawing the audience's attention to the important controversial issues. The plurality of reporting can be determined by means of various criteria. For example, the diversity of topics is used to analyse how broad the spectrum of topics covered is. A focus on one topic or a few topics bears the risk that relevant issues are

disregarded. Recording a plurality of contributors allows conclusions to be drawn about who holds spokesperson positions in the reporting and how these are distributed. Questions about the visibility of government and opposition parties, civil society actors or individual citizens can thus be answered. By recording the diversity of positions, it can be measured whether the contributors who have their say are also given the opportunity to present their own positions or whether they are only allowed to take a destructive stance on other contributor's proposals for solving problems. Ideally, all these plurality indicators are closely interlinked; a broad diversity of topics also leads to different contributors having their say in media coverage and this increases the likelihood that citizens will be informed about the different positions in society. The dimension of classification performance addresses the question of the extent to which reporting contextualises events and thus goes beyond mere event reporting (Stark et al. 2021). Inseparably linked to the quality dimensions presented so far is the fourth dimension, the recording of professional standards of journalism. This refers to the preparation and presentation of content that enables a social negotiation process. This includes the substantiation of positions, the reference to them as well as the handling characterised by a high degree of civility (Wessler 2018, Jandura and Friedrich 2014). If political reporting fulfils the aforementioned criteria of relevance, plurality, classification performance and journalistic professionalism oriented towards the criteria of the deliberation process, this contributes to social integration. The reliable empirical bases on the quality criteria mentioned so far are still rather scarce (Udris et al. 2023, Seethaler 2015). In this respect, public service broadcasting should also regularly assure itself whether this required content quality is made available to the audience.

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# Public Network Value

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The digital transformation has set in motion far-reaching processes of change in society and has also brought fundamental changes to the media and communication sector. With the internet and the principles of networking, a new digital infrastructure developed which created a paradigmatic new ecosystem for social as well as individual information and communication processes. In this global network, which promised egalitarian communication and interaction for all, new players have since emerged as dominant platforms that dominate the game of power and have become central hubs not only of communication but also of its economization and marketing. The large social media platforms in particular set new communication and interaction processes in motion that enable changed forms of participation and create new public spheres, as well as driving forward tendencies of polarization and radicalization. Dynamics of datafication, a newly developing “surveillance capitalism” (cf. Zuboff) or, more recently, the integration of AI for searching, controlling, and also producing content represent additional challenges of development.

Classical media are now faced with the challenge of having to adapt to the new framework conditions and implement sensible transformation processes in line with their mandate. For public service broadcasting, this means that it must develop from a one-to-many medium of classical character (in the sense of a “broadcaster”) to a platform of digital information and communication offerings (in the sense of a network).

The central idea is to create a “Public Value” for society in the digital network as well. The further development of the added value of public broadcasters for the network society (cf. Castells) could consequently be described as the “public network value”, within the framework of which not only the recognized, previously valid quality features represent the basis for all offers, but new quality features – adapted to the changing framework conditions – must be developed based on them (cf. Steinmaurer/Wenzel 2015).

In view of the fact that communication processes in digital networks are becoming increasingly opaque and unclear and manipulation and falsification of content are constantly on the rise, there is a need to secure quality providers in the network who not only stand for reliable content but can also develop new digital formats at a technically high-quality level. They should therefore be able to offer innovative digital services that are clearly distinguishable from purely economically oriented applications and create added value for society. For it is precisely in the digital ecosystem that public service providers must aim to distinguish themselves not only through the quality of their content offerings, but also through their network innovations. The Public Network Value to be achieved should be oriented towards the ratio of social participation, digital inclusion, and social integration in the sense of establishing a public open space. Based on the idea of the digital commons, the goal of the development of new

network offerings must logically be oriented towards the vanishing point of a public (network) value and not – as is the case with large platforms worldwide – a shareholder value.

Regarding the design of digital innovations, which in sum could constitute a Public Network Value, it should be about creating forms of easy access to offers, improving the visibility of services and using central functions of the digital networks. This addresses potentials that aim at intensifying interactive communication and interaction with the audience. In order to achieve such network qualities, corresponding efforts are required on the part of providers in order to make quality-driven content offers for the context of digital ecosystems. Especially in times of uncertain information quality on the net, in which fake news and conspiracy theories can quickly spread, it is crucial that quality-oriented media platforms (can) become fact-oriented clearing houses for “digital content”. This includes tasks such as the increasingly necessary validation and contextualization of content on a journalistic level. But it also includes cooperation with other quality providers from the field of traditional media, as has already been realized in the first steps in the case of research networks. On a structural-technical level, quality-driven providers and platforms should be established in the network, as well as networks and links that create added value for public network values. This could include links, for example to platforms of the EBU or public archives as well as information hubs from libraries or web providers such as Wikipedia. These forms of active networking could strengthen public broadcasters in consolidating their identity as quality nodes in the network. And one of the quality features of PSM should be to make their archives accessible in an advanced, i. e., journalistically curated form, since this often makes it possible to access culturally and socially relevant content. Other dimensions of Public Network Value also include aspects that aim to develop appropriate formats that inform the public about the possibilities and opportunities, but also the risks and dangers of using digital services and the significance of digitalisation for society in general. Just as innovative offers need to be developed on the provider side, it must also be ensured that the users of digital infrastructures also have the corresponding competences and “digital skills” to be able to move around the internet not only as passive consumers, but as actively participating citizens (cf. Digital Skills). In sum, the concept of Public Network Value is characterised by proposing a model for the further development of the classic Public Value Model for the further development of PSM for its digital transformation. The center of both innovation directions must be the claim for public service providers to secure and guarantee the quality standards defined for them. For it is precisely because of the challenges currently presented in the digital networks that it is to be seen as a democratic task for society to afford the development of quality-driven network platforms in the sense of “public service networks”. In this way, an alternative and a counterpart to globally operating platforms can be created, which is based on the target values of the social common good and the safeguarding of a democratic public sphere. The conceptual lines of development thus addressed are to be seen against the background of a respective national media policy, which is called upon to meet the challenges of digitalisation. The

aim should be to secure structures of diversity and a plural public sphere, as well as to strengthen providers who focus on the creation of information and communication qualities that are necessary for democratic policy as well as network innovations that are oriented towards the common good.

In addition to market-oriented considerations, media policy must therefore also be concerned with the quality assurance of social communication infrastructures, especially in the context of digital framework conditions. In view of the perspectives mentioned above, which must be considered for the development of a quality and democracy-oriented media and communication infrastructure, the protection of a public service provider per se can be considered a measure of quality assurance in the context of a diverse provider structure. Especially in the context of digitalisation and the associated “new structural change of the public sphere” (cf. Habermas), the idea of establishing more “public service” network providers – however these may be designed – is therefore discussed and demanded (cf. Internet Manifesto), and not without good reason, against the backdrop of a commercialisation and economisation of the internet that is taking hold worldwide. In this context, it is not only important to constantly check the quality of their journalistic productions from different perspectives – also in the sense of regulated self-regulation – and to correct them if necessary. In the future, it will also be necessary to evaluate and assess the quality of their digital innovation and development perspectives under the aspect of their contribution to a democratic communication culture. This will also have to be done in accordance with the currently (respectively) valid European legal provisions on state aid, which also focus on the need for public service providers to comply with a genuine public service mandate. Against this background, it will be crucial to consider which digital services or forms of offerings of a meritocratic nature are required to create an explicit democratic added value.

Regarding possible paths of further development from Public Service Media to public service networks or digital platforms for society, it will also be necessary to define which quality features are (or can be) expected or must be provided from such a newly defined provider. What forms of networking and cooperation with other quality providers or non-commercial platforms on the net should be developed, both nationally and at the European or international level? With which activities can Public Service Media providers in the digital network succeed in ensuring their public network value as a “return on society”?

And when it comes to thinking about how to implement quality assurance measures for the further development of the digital transformation, there are different approaches to choose from. In addition to the instruments that have already been tried and tested, it will be important to find forms of flexible and adaptive quality assurance, as specific needs always arise anew. While problems caused by fake news, deep fakes or conspiracy theories were and are still being addressed by certain measures – such as fact checking – new challenges arise very quickly because of digital innovation cycles, as we are currently observing in the field of artificial intelligence. Quality-driven providers also must react to this with their possibilities and find answers to any critical or questionable developments.

In this respect, quality development for the context of digital framework conditions must therefore also be understood as a flexible development path. If one finally understands the development steps of the digital transformation through PSM as dimensions within the framework of the creation of a public network value, such a model can generally be understood as a Quality Assurance System for digital ecosystems. For it has the goal – following the model of the “digital commons” – to create social added value within digital networks, to develop qualities as an alternative to purely data-economic models and to aim at strengthening “digital citizenship”. It is not without reason that we are already finding various concepts and initiatives at the European level to build alternatives to globally active players. Even if such efforts are very belated and, precisely because of their non-commercial orientation, cannot in any way contest the position of the large global platforms, it is necessary in terms of democratic policy to create quality nodes and quality-driven networks with added value for society. For the safeguarding of a communicative infrastructure that is committed to the target values of a functioning democratic public sphere and can make an important contribution to the quality assurance of information and communication is to be regarded as a central task for the network society in terms of democratic policy.

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# “The time of naivety is over.”<sup>1</sup>

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ORF Public Value

With these words, Verá Jourova, Vice-President of the EU Commission and Commissioner for Values and Transparency, expressed her concern about the current state of the digital transformation. A handful of globally operating data corpora-

tions have taken extensive control of the internet. Google, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok have created new economic empires and dominate young people's media consumption with their social media offerings. This is a remarkable business success, however connected with massive negative effects: Data collection and supervision, algorithmic control of information, fake news and filter bubble effects transform enthusiasm about the internet into a state of alarm. The latest surge of innovation in digital technology also triggers not just fascination, but – at the same time – fear: Artificial intelligence creating texts and images beyond human control. At the same time the changes of perception of media is also worrying. Increasingly, people do not seek access to editorial media and rely on the newsfeed in their social media consumption. The alarming perspective: the “news-will-find-me” generation receives its information from the very sources it trusts least.<sup>2</sup>

But if media quality is not just a look back at what has already been produced – it has to look into the future: What is quality on the net? Can we rely on the online sources? Is the flood of social media washing away all quality criteria? Can we accept that people get completely different answers to the same question from their digital search engine because artificial intelligence constructs personalized information with the help of algorithmic data analysis? And more importantly, can we trust this content?

The question of quality is more urgent than ever in view of the massive disruptions in the media economy and media perception. Not only market shares and shareholder value are at stake, but the trustworthiness and credibility of information as the basis for a democratic public sphere. The crucial question is whether technologies and artificial intelligence can be publicly controlled. In the case of Google, Facebook and TikTok, the answer is no. How these companies collect data, according to which interests they evaluate it, how they use it, whether for commercial exploitation or even for intelligence surveillance, has not been answered yet. The US government has already classified the Chinese operator of TikTok as a “security risk” because of its collection of data from Americans<sup>3</sup>. If this is indeed the case, wouldn't Google & Co. also be a security risk for Europeans? The question of who owns digital technologies is a decisive quality criterion: Can I trust the information on the net? Is the communication space secure? Who checks algorithms and artificial intelligence? Do the media and those who disseminate public communication have controllable regulations

and functioning quality assurance? How can media users recognize quality on the net, if so, by which criteria?

ORF Public Value has initiated intensive analyses on this in recent years: With the development of “Public Network Value”<sup>4</sup>, Prof. Thomas Steinmaurer has created a basis for determining which quality criteria are relevant for the fulfilment of the public service mission and remit in the digital age.

In numerous contributions, scientific analyses and an international study, the ‘transform’-process has dealt with the digital transformation of the ORF<sup>5</sup>, which was accompanied by a series of public debates in the “ORF DialogForum”<sup>6</sup>. Currently, the Public Value Study “Entertainment in the Digital Age” examines the question of how Public Service Media should behave in the face of Netflix, Disney and Amazon Prime.<sup>7</sup>

The search for a trustworthy internet – not just market-compatible but also democracy-compatible – is one of the most relevant challenges of today's world: This is why the project “A European Perspective”<sup>8</sup> can be seen as a trendsetting beginning of how digital transformation is already being used today for a cross-border public service. Eleven public broadcasters are participating in the pan-European initiative under the leadership of the “European Broadcasting Union”. Its aim is to develop a digital European newsroom. News stories from the participating broadcasters are collected and processed by an automated translation system for the individual national languages. The advantage for media users: A range of quality-checked reporting from different European countries will be created, providing access to authentic information at the push of a button. In addition, work is being done on the development of a public-service algorithm that could be used for a trustworthy source of information while observing existing journalistic quality standards as well as the guidelines on personal privacy and data protection and, above all, under public control. “A European Perspective” is creating pioneering work in the development and implementation of digital technologies beyond commercial interests and thus creates a contribution to the often-requested European public sphere.

This is precisely the point of the “Public Service Internet Manifesto”<sup>9</sup>, which was developed in cooperation with 200 scientists worldwide. It addresses European media policy, but also explicitly the Public Service Media. It calls for a digital infrastructure oriented towards the common good that produces not only “shareholder value” but above all “stakeholder and Public Value” as an alternative to commercial platforms. Public Service Media, their resources, but also their competences should play a decisive role. Within a few months, the “Call for Action” was supported by more than 1,300 academics and media experts worldwide, including Jürgen Habermas, Noam Chomsky, Evgeny Morozov and many others.

However, ORF cannot wait for European solutions. Due to the current challenges of digital media production, the question of quality must be answered in a practical way. Therefore, all ORF regulations, especially its “Social Media Guidelines”<sup>10</sup> are of particular concern to online media production. This is also the case for ORF quality control<sup>11</sup>. Whether audience or expert interviews, Quality Profiles, or Quality Checks, whether Public Value studies or Public Value reports: they all include the dimension of digital transformation. The focus is

on the public service mission and remit, the fulfilment of which is obligatory even in the digital age.

Have we answered all relevant questions? Obviously, no. The developments and the dynamics of innovation of technological development do not allow conclusive and final answers to the question of media quality supporting democracy and citizenship.

Whoever claims quality on the net must also prove it. After all, media users also change their opinions from time to time, especially when the media world changes. After all, democracy is also always looking for new ways to protect itself against corruption and authoritarian attacks, against populism and “alternative” truths, not least against data oligarchies, surveillance and manipulation. If the “time for naivety” is over, the question of trust in media is more important than ever. Public Value, the distinctive quality of Public Service Media, is of particular importance in context to numerous crises, like war and climate emergency, polarization of society and populism. Especially when it comes to maintaining and supporting a “res publica”, a democratic public sphere in the digital age and developing it for the future.



1 Vera Jourová, Vizepräsidentin der EU-Kommission, Kommissarin für Werte und Transparenz, opening remarks at “Internet for Trust” – UNESCO conference, Paris, 23.02.2023; <https://www.unesco.org/en/internet-conference>  
 2 Reuters Institute, “Digital News Report” 2022, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022>; Eisenegger Mark, “Qualität der Medien”, [https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/177510/1/2019\\_HauptbefundeJQM.pdf](https://www.zora.uzh.ch/id/eprint/177510/1/2019_HauptbefundeJQM.pdf), siehe auch: “Informationsdeprivation und News-avoiding”, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=2301&pvi\\_medientyp=t&oti\\_tag=Studie](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=2301&pvi_medientyp=t&oti_tag=Studie)  
 3 “US-Regierung sieht TikTok als mögliches Risiko für die nationale Sicherheit”, Karine Jean-Pierre, 2023, <https://www.derstandard.at/>

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 4 Thomas Steinmaurer, “Public Network Value”, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=2355&pvi\\_medientyp=t&oti\\_tag=Studie](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=2355&pvi_medientyp=t&oti_tag=Studie), siehe auch: “Between the fourth estate and the fifth power”, PUBLIC VALUE TEXTE, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=2385&pvi\\_medientyp=t&oti\\_tag=Texte](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=2385&pvi_medientyp=t&oti_tag=Texte)  
 5 Minna Horowitz u. a., “Digitale Transformation” 2022, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=2355&pvi\\_medientyp=t&oti\\_tag=Studie](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=2355&pvi_medientyp=t&oti_tag=Studie)  
 6 “ORF DialogForum”, u. a. [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=2393&pvi\\_medientyp=v&oti\\_tag=Dialogforum](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=2393&pvi_medientyp=v&oti_tag=Dialogforum)

7 “Unterhaltung im digitalen Zeitalter”, Public Value-Studie 2023, Veröffentlichung: Herbst 2023  
 8 EBU, “A European Perspective”, <https://www.ebu.ch/eurovision-news/european-perspective>  
 9 “The Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto” 2022, <http://bit.ly/psmmanifesto>  
 10 “Social media guidelines”, in: “Dokumente”, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content.php?sid=147&pvi\\_id=1451&pvi\\_medientyp=t&oti\\_tag=Dokumente](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content.php?sid=147&pvi_id=1451&pvi_medientyp=t&oti_tag=Dokumente)  
 11 ORF-Qualitätssicherung, [https://zukunft.orf.at/show\\_content2.php?s2id=176](https://zukunft.orf.at/show_content2.php?s2id=176)



# CHECKS & BALANCES

Why can people trust Public Service Media? Are there any specific quality criteria and – most important – any checks & balances to prove distinctive quality and the fulfillment of the Public Service Mission and remit?

Questions like this have become increasingly important considering the digital transformation, the equally fascinating and frightening consequences of artificial intelligence.

ORF is committed to an extensive Quality Assurance System to document the fulfillment of its legal public service mandate. This collection of articles gives an inside perspective how ORF documents, evaluates and controls its media production in TV, radio and online, creating Public Value, the distinctive quality of Public Service Media.