

## **DEVELOPMENT OF BULGARIAN NATIONAL RADIO (BNR) AS PUBLIC MEDIA. OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

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**Abstract.** The idea of the present material is to analyze the structure and activity of the Bulgarian National Radio /BNR/ as an important element in the media system of Bulgaria.

From this point of view, the good management and the results of the activities of BNR are extremely important to our society. The creation of quality and credible content; timely and accurate information to listeners, educating and entertaining the audience; creation of cultural events through the formations of the BNR; creation of a program for Bulgarians abroad and, accordingly, for foreigners in Bulgaria – all these commitments should be fulfilled by the team of BNR.

Analysis of the activity of the individual structures of the BNR and the identification of existing weaknesses are key to making the right management decisions. Namely, these solutions are presented by the author, with an emphasis on the main function of BNR – the creation of quality content and its distribution on all technically existing platforms.

Special attention is paid to the national programs “Horizont” and “Hristo Botev”, as well as to the regional programs broadcasting in 9 regional centres. Specific recommendations are given for better organisation of the work process to guarantee impartiality and professionalism.

The importance of the development of programs in the Internet environment and the prospects for the development of the BNR streaming channels and the corresponding podcasts are emphasized.

An important emphasis is placed on the activities of the bands of BNR – orchestras and choirs and their important contribution to the development of culture in Bulgaria.

Last but not least, attention is paid to the technical development of radio and the importance of using new technologies to create and distribute content.

The ultimate goal is to support the management process of a public media such as BNR and to emphasize how important it is for such a media to be a leader in the development of the media environment in the country.

*Keywords:* public media; radio industry; intellectual property

## **Introduction**

What is the Bulgarian National Radio and what is its place in the Bulgarian media environment?

The Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) was established in 1935 by decree of Tsar Boris III and during its almost 90-year history has passed and is currently going through a number of positive and constructive periods, along with less successful structural, programmatic and personnel changes.

BNR is a complex organizational system that has no analogue in the Bulgarian media landscape. This system combines 2 national and 9 regional radio programs; radio for Bulgarians abroad; niche-based music streaming channels on Radio Binar; symphony orchestra, folk orchestra, big band, choir; recording studios, production activity. The BNR team numbers over 1,300 people. BNR is governed by a board, which has a mandate of three years, led by the chairman, who is also the day-to-day manager of the radio.

The budget for the radio is over 54 million BGN per year (for 2023) and laid as a basis in the budget for 2024. over 64 million BGN, most of which is provided through transfers from the state, and approx. BGN 2 million comes from own operations.

According to the Radio and Television Law, “Bulgarian national radio makes national and regional programs; programs for abroad, including for Bulgarians abroad; broadcasts intended for Bulgarian citizens who do not speak Bulgarian as their mother tongue, including programs in their own language. Regional programs cover events of local importance. They are created in the regional radio centres and are intended both for the population of the respective region and for participation in the national radio programmes.” (Article 50 of the Law on Radio and Television). And the very important legal requirement “Bulgarian National Radio prepares its programming policy in accordance with the requirements of national public broadcasters for radio and television activity.” (Article 49 of the Law on Radio and Television)

In short – a serious media structure that will create content that is intended for a wide range of users, i.e. for all individual elements in society, regardless of how many there are and what influence they have in it. Each individual member of our society should find what he prefers in the programs of BNR, can receive reliable and timely information about the country and the world, be able to educate himself and at the same time be entertained with BNR.

According to the latest data from the Media Research Hub on the radio market in our country, monthly the radio reaches 91% of Bulgarians aged 16 – 74. The survey was carried out by THE TALK GROUP (Austria) among internet users aged 16 – 74, in the period June 2022 – July 2023 in 6 waves, 4,009 respondents were examined, which corresponds to 3,828,296 people.

Among the 20 most listened radio stations in Bulgaria at the national level, audience 16 – 74, BNR is present with only 2 programs – “Horizont” (in 9th place)

and “Hristo Botev” (in 17<sup>th</sup> place). The data is worrying because it shows that, unlike public radio stations in countries such as the UK, Germany, France, and others, BNR has a relatively small audience for its national programs, and regional ones mostly have zero or close to zero listenership. And all this against the background of the serious financing of BNR, which, as we indicated above, is over 54 million BGN per year, with a trend of 64 million BGN in 2024. Just for comparison, total advertising, and sponsorship revenue for radio as a medium for 2022 amounts to about BGN 20 million (according to data from one of the largest advertising agencies in Bulgaria, Piero 97). This means that all the other commercial media in the country, except BNR, make their programs, which are clearly more preferred by listeners in Bulgaria, with a financial resource almost 1/3 from of these of the BNR. Apparently, it is not about underfunding of BNR, but about inefficient use of the financial resources of the state and the budget it gives.

In this regard, the leadership of the Bulgarian People’s Republic, regardless of who rules the country, should reconsider its priorities and, in its management concept, comply with the expectations of the public in Bulgaria, as well as with modern trends for the development of a public media. To support the construction of a successful strategy for the development of BNR and considering my 30 years of experience in media management, I offer my vision for the development of BNR as a public media as a modern media organization with enormous potential – organizational, human and financial – so that it gets its important and responsible place in the structure of the media industry in Bulgaria, as well as in the music industry and in general in the culture industry.

### **I. Development of public radio**

In recent years, we have witnessed dozens of predictions from our and foreign media and advertising specialists regarding the future of radio as an industry. After the rise of television and its transformation into the most important electronic media – in terms of influence and advertising revenue – and with the rise of the Internet and all the new digital devices for listening to music, radio has considered as a dying medium.

Despite all predictions, however, radio is alive and will continue to live for a long time. The people who make radio every day have done and are doing everything to keep up with the development of new technologies and to be with their listeners, except on the broadcast and on all their devices – smartphones and tablets; on the Internet – through streaming channels, podcasts, and websites; via satellite; in cable networks; on social networks – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Some radio stations have even started broadcasting video content on the Internet to meet the needs of users.

The role of radio has strengthened even more in recent years in view of the COVID-19 pandemic experienced by humanity. “The rapid spread of COVID-19

worldwide in early 2020. prompted governments to restrict the free movement of people, both internationally and regionally within the affected countries, and in many cases for a period of time and within a single settlement. The negative effects have been manifested in a significant decline in travel and tourism services, disruption of global supply chains, decline in final demand for goods and services, restrictions in certain industries, reductions in employment and income” (Tsankova 2023). But it made listening to radio even bigger and more necessary for people around the world.

However, the truth is that the power of radio is in the sound. The sound of music it emits; to the people who talk on the radio – presenters, newsmen, reporters; the speech of interlocutors and listeners; the sounds of the event venues covered; the sound of signals and jingles used, even advertising.

The development of public radio has a perspective in 3 directions:

1. Create quality content and make it available to everyone’s audience existing platforms.

Development of the coverage on the radio – now analogue, I hope soon digital also in Bulgaria – is the main platform for reaching the programs to the public. The emphasis is on the audio content that is broadcast, in all its forms, but without entering the territory of television.

The content that public radio creates is the key to success. With the rapid development of Spotify and Apple Music, as well as other platforms for streaming music and other audio, especially podcasts, radio has a unique chance to be present in people’s minds as a necessary and useful medium. Why? Because the aforementioned platforms have this success thanks to the opportunity they give their users to access a large selection of music of all genres for a monthly fee. These platforms even motivate people to create their own radio. Public radio can offer the same people quality and varied music for free, surprising them daily in a way that they themselves cannot – with a new song or a well-forgotten old one, or with an old recording by a brilliant musician or conductor – the possibilities are endless. About the music that is broadcast, about the problems in everyday life, about art, about science, about politics, about love, etc. etc. But it must be about what they – the listeners – like and what gets them to listen to the radio.

“In recent decades, in all spheres of public life, the main factor for success in the competitive struggle is creativity. Based on this, creativity is a mandatory requirement for modern management and participates in all its principles and functions.” (Krushkov 2020, pp. 166 – 167).

2. The development of radio in the internet environment.

The radio is present in the Internet environment through the created, maintained and developed pages for the radio as a whole and its individual programs. These sites publish information, in the form of news, comments, interviews, etc., that have already been broadcast. In addition, there are opportunities on websites to listen to the programs in

real time in an Internet environment. And finally, in terms of importance – the presence of a few audio and video podcasts.

The websites of the BNR programs should be updated more often. And here I don't just mean in relation to current information, which unfortunately in BNR, freezes after 7:00 p.m. and often on holidays, and also regarding the appearance of the sites and their functional capabilities. They must always be modern, "upgraded" and updated.

"The digital environment is a virtual, simulated space characterized by rich colours, rapidly changing images and attractive design solutions. The two most important business identifiers in the digital environment are the website and the domain name. Without them, the company cannot build its successful business identity" (Todorova 2019).

All technical possibilities for access to BNR programs in the internet environment must be used – in all ways and everywhere.

There are many and varied niche music streams to create. Not just by genre – currently BNR has 6 in number. And streams on a specific occasion. For example – for Christmas – a channel with Christmas music. In the summer – a channel with summer songs. A month before the National Day – a channel with only Bulgarian music or historical stories. The ideas are endless and when the entire database of musical works and the archive is digitized and accessible to music editors and journalists, realization is possible and simple.

Audio and video podcasting should only be done for the interesting programs, with archiving of the most prominent ones. Video should be created and used not only to advertise the radio or its products – shows, presenters, lineups, concerts. Clips that are uploaded to the BNR channel on YouTube and other similar platforms must be interesting and generate viewership and thereby income for the radio. The technology for this is known, we just must do it.

Sales of music on Internet platforms (iTunes, Amazon, etc.) should be developed and monetized accordingly. Only those works whose production and performance rights belong to BNR. Another source of income if done correctly.

### 3. An increasingly tangible presence of radio in social networks.

If they do not talk about BNR there, do not "like", do not "follow" the programs and lineups – this leads to the loss of the audience. Rules for work in social networks should be adopted and a team should be created and trained to work only in this direction. Now, in BNR, work with and in social networks is sporadic, piecemeal, and unprofessional.

## **II. Organization and management of BNR**

### 1. The organizational structure of BNR

To implement all proposals for the development of BNR as a strong and preferred public media, the construction and functioning of the relevant governance structures is of central importance.

**Table 1.** Organizational structure of the BNR



This is my proposal for the organizational structure of BNR. For the proposed structure to work, it is important to say the following:

– The members of the board of BNR should have their own portfolios for which they are responsible and which they control. BNR in its entirety and structure is a serious business organization and should be managed according to the rules for business management, one of which is “delegation of rights”. It is not possible for the general manager to cover all processes and activities without serious support from the other members of the board and directorates. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 55, Act 1 of the on Radio and Television Law, BNR is administered by the board and the director-general, and not the other way around. And since the content of the programs is the key to success, my view is that one member of the board should have a direct commitment to the Horizont program, another to the Hristo Botev programme, and a third to all regional programmes. This means that specialists with experience and reputation who know and understand the problems and can contribute to solving them calmly and professionally are proposed and approved for these positions. The work of the board of BNR is to ensure normal working conditions, rules and their compliance, peace of mind and technical safety, and journalists and other colleagues in the programs are responsible for the content they create daily.

– The meetings of the board of BNR should be on a previously known, specific day of the week. All proposers of resolutions, as well as persons affected by these resolutions, must attend these meetings, ready to provide information and answer questions. The agenda and minutes from the board meetings should be publicly announced on the BNR’s internal network, and those of great public interest – on the company’s BNR website.

– Every week a board meeting will be held where all directorates will step in, where all relevant matters will be discussed and resolved, and the implementation of the assigned tasks will be reported.

– Once a month, the directors of the regional radio stations must be present and participate in these meetings.

– The public council in BNR should meet once every three months, in accordance with the rules for its activities. The members’ opinion is extremely important to the BNR management, as public corrective, and advisor. It is good to have representatives of these organizations in the public council, which are closely related to the activities of BNR – Union of Bulgarian Composers, Musician, Profon, Theater Author, Union of Musicians, etc.

– The program director in BNR should have coordinating functions between the national and regional programs and dispose of a small team to support his activities. This team should also include the staff who will be responsible for the presence of the BNR programs in social networks and their content, generated by and for BNR. The program director leads and guides the work on the European programs for

which BNR is implementing.

2. Deepen cost savings by reducing the number of employees

The reform of BNR, which will reduce the number of employees, must continue. There are currently just over 1,300 full-time employees in radio. It is important to make the necessary calculations regarding the need to hire new people and gradually reduce the number of employees to such an optimal number that enables the implementation of the activity and at the same time ensures the employment of the workers and better payment for their work. The optimal number, considering the current state of the various types of activities in BNR, is around 700 – 800 people.

It is also necessary to introduce an attestation regime, which will allow a monthly evaluation of the activities of the employees in BNR and will show how the tasks are carried out in practice and what is the contribution of each employee. The results of the monthly or quarterly certifications will be the basis for additional monthly remuneration, which will be differentiated, and not as it is at the moment – the same for everyone, regardless of the quality and quantity of the work performed.

### **III. Funding of BNR**

The budget of BNR as a primary allocator of budget funds is formed from two sources:

- budget transfers
- own income

In the case of budget transfers, the approach to determining the size is wrong. Currently, this amount is determined based on estimated program hours that BNR is obliged to produce in the relevant budget year. These estimated program hours are multiplied by some imaginary, analysis- and economic-logic-free cost per program hour that is the same for all individual programs. This approach should be changed by making a detailed calculation of all the activities carried out by the individual departments in BNR, which are currently realized. BNR does not only produce content, as I indicated above, it develops concert and production activities, sound recordings, etc. In addition, more serious funds for capital expenditures should be foreseen, since the current ones are extremely insufficient and do not provide what is necessary for the development of BNR.

Own income is grossly insufficient. Apart from advertising and sponsorship, they are also from other activities of BNR, but they have enormous potential for increase, and the ways and means are indicated in this material.

What is important for workers is that normal, good working conditions are provided, that people are informed about all important decisions that affect them and that a policy is pursued to increase incomes ahead of inflation in the country.

All the above should be an absolute priority in management, as well as good communication with the trade union organizations in all economic matters.



#### **IV. Development of the programs for BNR**

1. The “Horizont” program is the most important polythematic national program of BNR. For it to meet listeners’ expectations daily and create quality content, the following recommendations should be considered:

Regarding creative structure:

– It is necessary to drop the production system of coordination, because in its form it is a strange form. To replace it with a streamlined coordination system, led by the editor-in-chief and his deputies, which guarantees compliance with the rules and at the same time independence, absence of censorship and ensures a calm and professional environment for journalists in carrying out their activities.

– It is mandatory to introduce or remind about the work rules and a mechanism to comply with them. This is, for example, about: speech/music ratio in the various shows; for the maximum duration of the different forms of speech; for criteria for choosing topics and interlocutors in the shows; to strive to avoid telephone interviews with poor quality and replace them with interviews that are done either in the studio or with quality, as if the guest is in the studio (there are technologies for this and BNR knows and uses them); for rules for additional financial incentives for those who work harder and do better. And everything else that is important and that will provide equal opportunities for all journalists to participate in the creation of the program, as well as conditions for receiving adequate remuneration for the work.

– A new sound pack of the program is required.

– An analysis of the program and, if necessary, the rejection of certain shows or their reorganization is necessary.

– Daily promotions of the leading shows in the program should also be introduced.

Regarding the organization of the work process:

– Creation of a mechanism for the selection of the editorial board and regulations for its activities;

– Development of the editorial board of a written professional code for the “Horizont” program, in accordance with the leading European standards in this field. Mandatory familiarization of all journalists with the code and its inclusion as an integral part of employment contracts;

– Creation of rules for the appointment of journalists in “Horizont”, for their professional and administrative development and for determining salaries;

– Mandatory requirements for a high level of language, written (for all journalists) and oral (for journalists present on air) culture, which can be proven through relevant entrance exams; Still mandatory training in this area;

– Creation of an adequate management structure for the program, where direct managers participate in the team creation of the shows and daily analyze and

evaluate the performance of the presenters and editors;

- Mandatory teamwork in journalistic work. Now, the presenter, by virtue of being in front of the microphone, makes all decisions and acts as he sees fit, often against the opinion of the program's editors, the line manager, etc.

- Mandatory compliance with the format clock in "Horizont" information broadcasts – limitation of speech modules

- Wider participation of professionals from the program in the creation of the musical scenarios for the news broadcasts. Special attention to Bulgarian music. It is inadmissible for the subjective taste of certain music editors to rule over the public's expectations about what kind of music should be on the BNR channels;

- Competition to create new shows; when you participate in additional funded productions; a kind of "mandate" of teams when they create shows and modules with external funding, so that everyone who has demonstrated qualities has the chance to join;

- Total ban on recorded broadcasts;

- When Saturday and/or Sunday are designated by the authorities as working days due to working off, "Horizont" program should transmit on a weekday schedule, not on a holiday schedule, as is current practice;

- Shows in the night hours should also be mainly topically oriented, the presenters have an obligation to follow the events of the increasingly tense global puzzle;

- Rules for creating and sending shared content between individual programs. For example, cultural reports and topics about "Horizont" program should be done by journalists from "Hristo Botev", Sofia topics – by journalists from Radio "Sofia", etc.

- The current practice of many journalists working two or three times a week (and sometimes less) on a plan for low pay is better to replace with daily news editorial tasks for better remuneration.

2. The "Hristo Botev" program – the national program of BNR for culture

For the "Hristo Botev" program, it is very important to start work on updating the program - program by program, presenter by presenter - with the goal of creating a better sounding and above all more listened to national culture. program. Examples of widely listened to programs with such characteristics in Europe are available, we just must "match our clocks" in this matter as well. And as a first amendment I propose the following for discussion: Education courses under the program "Hr. Botev" modeled after the BBC. A series of annual lectures by leading personalities from the world – Bulgarians and foreigners – on important topics from business, economics, ecology, space travel, physics, in general, any field of science and art that may be of interest to our listeners.

"Hristo Botev" program continues to be the only cultural program in our country. But is it really an oasis for culture? Unfortunately, it continues to be a hybrid of

political, economic, cultural, and musical programming, with a predominance of pop music and showmanship, as it was designed to be at its inception, but it pays that price even today. Today, “Hristo Botev” is overcrowded with too long text shows and is something like a “talk newspaper” with short musical windows, mostly with pop music. The cultural references, to the extent that they exist, such as the otherwise interesting “Artefir”, are necessarily garnished with often catchy American pop music or jazz, regardless of whether it is the poetry of Goethe, the drama of Chekhov or the paintings of the great Bulgarian artist Vladimir Dimitrov – The master. Classical music, as well as almost banished poetry shows, and Radio Theater have a minimal share. Not even the classical operetta, the art song, the Italian canzonetta, the Strauss waltzes, the light folk classics are heard. And this especially applies to Bulgarian classics, as well as Bulgarian musicians. Our classics Pancho Vladigerov, Lyubomir Pipkov, Marin Goleminov, Petko Stainov, Veselin Stoyanov, Parashkev Hadzhiev, as well as our contemporary composers, are also rarely heard.

Therefore, Hristo Botev’s program continues to sound quite archaic, which also shows the low listening rate.

The poor coordination between the two programs “Horizont” and “Hristo Botev” is also surprising. Despite the lack of serious or classical music, both broadcast it at almost the same time. In the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and at night/morning from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., when hardly anyone listens to the program. The “Hristo Botev” program should become a rich, cultural program, where every day there will be a lot of radio theatre, poetry, cultural reviews, programs on literature, philosophy, aesthetics, history, and mainly classical music.

My recommendations for this are as follows:

– A unit must be set up to produce cultural news according to political and sporting principles, to be broadcast as special broadcasts.

– The program should not only reflect cultural events, but also create them, spawn public initiatives linked to the country’s cultural matrix and thus become an active part of cultural life, not just its mirror. It is extremely important not only to invite the creators, but to go to them, i.e. to create mechanisms that they could identify with and themselves become spokespersons for it beyond the borders of the radio. For this purpose, clips can be made with the voices of our most prominent and prominent artists and cultural people in our country and around the world, who in one sentence can introduce themselves and say why they listen to and choose “Hristo Botev” program.

– It is known that the BNR fund is rich. It has been collected for several decades, but often the recordings of Bulgarian performers, of which there are quite a few, are simply in the fund’s archive. The main task of the “Hristo Botev” program is to take them out of this fund and broadcast them continuously as short modules, not as a separate show or only in a certain time segment.

– The hybrid nature of the program leads to shows that have no place in it, and that serve the bad practice of national radio with different programs that create competing products – for example, the morning information block of “Hristo Botev”, which completely deviates from its specificity. The only cultural program does not need to engage its audience with service information, that is the job of the information program. Instead, in the so-called rush hour, books should be read or broadcast radio theater, as happens in most serious cultures of radio programs in Europe.

– Mandatory introduction of a format clock (this is valid for all BNR programs) - to determine the duration of each individual module or genre - interview, report, conversation, etc., which currently has the same duration as the relationship between speech and music.

– Very often, finished programs sent by Euroradio (EBU – The European broadcasting Union) are preferred at the expense of national creativity. A balance should be established between information, cultural policy, culture, music, national and world, the program should have a national, but also metropolitan, European, and cosmopolitan identity.

### 3. “Radio Bulgaria”

“Radio Bulgaria” fulfils the following missions by design:

– to present the image of Bulgaria, the country’s cultural and national identity in the media space and be the main source of information from and about Bulgaria to an audience of millions;

– to establish a media bridge with the Bulgarian communities in different parts of world;

– to provide the population from ethnic minority groups in Bulgaria with programs in their mother tongue;

– to build the image of our country abroad, according to the priorities in the government’s foreign policy;

In its broadcasts to Bulgarians around the world, Radio Bulgaria is guided by two main goals. The first is to inform our compatriots about the events in the country in different areas: politics, economy, history, and culture. The second main goal, related to the uniqueness of “Radio Bulgaria”, is to maintain close contact with Bulgarians around the world and their organizations. The programs for them and with them are tailored to the geographical distribution, social, educational, and other characteristics of the dynamically changing Bulgarian communities abroad in recent decades. Thus, at least three listening audiences stand out, completely different in terms of characteristics and interest:

– traditional, historically compact Bulgarian communities (western suburbs, Moldova, Ukraine);

– Bulgarian emigration in recent decades (old and new emigration)

– the new generation of Bulgarians who were born or grew up abroad/

After analysis and after countless conversations with our compatriots living

abroad, I propose to start work on a project aimed at expanding the area of broadcasting BNR programs in the Bulgarian language in those countries and regions where there is a compact Bulgarian population. We are talking both about the western outskirts and Macedonia, as well as Ukraine, Moldova, and Albania. But also, for Spain, USA, UK, Canada.

There are three ways to expand the distribution area:

- by increasing the broadcasting power of BNR transmitters in the border areas;
- by obtaining licenses for broadcasting in the countries where there is a Bulgarian diaspora;
- or by renting time from existing licensed radio stations in these countries.

The work on this project is promising, it will show the country's self-confidence and commitment to our approx. 2 million compatriots who live abroad and are the biggest "foreign investor" in Bulgaria, through the money they send to their relatives or through the purchases they make in their home country. Additional funding should also be provided if the possibilities of BNR are not sufficient for the implementation.

#### 4. Development of the regional radio stations of BNR

There are currently 9 regional radio stations in BNR – in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Burgas, Varna, Shumen, Blagoevgrad, Vidin and Kardjali. The program schedules of the regional radio stations should be analyzed and, if necessary, reorganized. The aim is to avoid the internal competition that currently exists between the separate programs of BNR – national and local – which are accepted in the same settlement. When classical music is played on "Horizont", "Hristo Botev" and Regional Radio Station "Varna" (for example), how can the listener in Varna, who likes classical music, choose one of our three programs. And whoever doesn't like it, what should he do – switch to another radio? Of course, that's not the point. This requires coordination.

Signals indicating that each of these radios is part of BNR must be developed and included in the programs of the regional radio stations. This is an element of the corporate culture, which is sometimes missing in BNR.

The equipment in the regional radio stations must very quickly be brought into line with modern technical requirements. Simply put – digital consoles and new computers, like in Sofia.

A question for discussion and decision-making - should the transmission of the central news of "Horizon" at 7 a.m., 12 and 18 p.m. remain on the air of the regional radio stations? It's not a bad idea to ask the listeners, especially since "Horizont" can be heard perfectly in all the cities where the regional radio stations broadcast.

"Radio Sofia" should be transformed into a real city radio.

"Radio Sofia" was launched as a "youth radio", in practice it was a radio broadcasting parliamentary sessions from Wednesday to Friday (why they were broadcast only in Sofia, if they were so interesting and which young people listened to them, I know not), it was a radio program called "The Infoholics" (philosophical

and endless musings of two elderly intellectuals) and some but very poorly chosen music. The idea is to make Radio Sofia the real urban Sofia radio, which is currently missing from the airwaves in Sofia.

How will this happen?

– The topics on the radio – only the city and the region. But everything interesting from the city and the region. And it's not small at all. And without ministers and other high-ranking statesmen as interlocutors – they are for “Horizont”. Radio Sofia will only cover the work of the mayor and the head of the municipal council.

– The music – very diverse, why not 50% Bulgarian. There is a large niche for this, including using this fact to introduce new Bulgarian works to listeners and invite their performers to talk about them. Thus, they become the “advertising faces” of Radio Sofia. Both they and the radio and the listeners will win.

– External promotions of Radio Sofia. At all important events in Sofia, Radio Sofia must be present – in the form of co-organizer, media partner, main media covering the event – this is mandatory. And it can initiate such events itself, which it is trying to do at the moment, but somehow sporadically.

### **Radio Binar**

Radio Binar should develop its niche music channels in accordance with the vision stated at the beginning and cover, if necessary, with video, events that are important to BNR, but not create them. Video is not our strength, because we neither have the modern technique for it, nor do we have the prepared teams, and even less do our listeners expect this kind of product from us. Incidentally, this is the strategy of the leading European public actors.

Continuation of the radio school, which has already trained many new graduates. Inclusion in the groups of pupils and young people - students and pupils - who want to have knowledge about how radio is made.

### **V. General reorganizing of BNR' musical ensembles to activate creativity for achievement of valuable projects**

BNR develops the following musical ensembles in its “BNR Music House”: Symphony Orchestra, Big Band, Folk Music Orchestra, Children's Radio Choir, Mixed Choir and Radio Children's Choir.

Special attention should be paid to the BNR's symphony orchestra, the Folk Music Orchestra and the BNR's big band. They should be much more engaged – at home and abroad – where they can present their art and generate image and income for BNR.

Frequent tours and concerts with the bands of the Bulgarian People's Republic in the cities of the country should be organized and carried out, as well as visits to the Bulgarian communities abroad.

The concert of the supergroup “The Foundation” with BNR’s symphony orchestra in April 2016. is an example of the new proactive and targeted policy of BNR to create valuable pop products and collaborations. After the extremely successful “BG Rock Symphony” concert at the end of 2014, which filled hall 1 of National Palace of Culture and the unique concert with “Foundation”, as well as the album released together with them, we must continue in this direction of creating valuable products – sought after and liked by many people.

Of course, these concerts and the summer festival in the garden in front of the “Ivan Vazov” National Theatre are an addition to everything that the BNR Symphony Orchestra, the Big Band, the Folk Music Orchestra, and the choirs do during the season.

The policy of the BNR to support Bulgarian music and culture must continue. It should contain:

- a percentage increase in the broadcasting of Bulgarian music, with the aim of increasing income and opportunities for the development of Bulgarian musicians and producers of cultural content;

- renovation of the BNR studios and creation of a new resource for sound recording of music and concerts – after repair of the 1st studio; the renovation and purchased and installed new equipment in the 5th and 7th studios; the new audio recording software; the new mobile recording studio for multi-channel digital recording, efforts should continue with the upcoming renovation of both the 2nd and 40th studios and their re-equipment, as well as the construction of the much-needed 39th post-production studio, which is currently lacking in the radio. The goal is for all these studios to be equipped with the same equipment and software, to be fully compatible with each other, for the use and recording of Bulgarian musicians under preferential conditions, and offered abroad to provide additional income.

- BNR as the biggest source of income for Bulgarian musicians /through PROFON (Society for the Collective Management of Related Rights in Music) and MusicAuthor/ and for Bulgarian artists /through TheatreAuthor and ArtistAuthor/ should continue its activities in this direction. Together with the management of the aforementioned companies for collective rights management, a long-term cooperation framework should be drawn up and defended vis-à-vis the Ministry of Finance, where an increase in the fees for the use of works in the radio’s programmes, the so-called copyright and related rights;

More ideas for turning BNR into a cultural centre and a place where interesting and valuable events take place:

“BNR in honour of...”. The idea is a series of concerts in honour of famous and valuable Bulgarian artists who are in the audience and their colleagues perform their songs – in their original form or modified. The idea is that it should be a celebration for the special artist who is honoured with the concert in his honour and a celebration for the audience in the hall;

“BNR Pop”: launch of a new platform for popular concerts, including rock, pop, jazz;

“BNR Talents” – launch of a new platform for contemporary music in two directions: – annual competition to support and produce young Bulgarian talents; – attract a young and influential audience through concerts and broadcasting of recordings of the rising stars of the modern world;

“BNR Children”: screenings of classic cartoons with live accompaniment by the symphony orchestra, the Big Band or the children’s radio choir.

## **VI. Technical development of BNR**

### **1. Signal quality and coverage of BNR programmes**

The signal for the national programs of BNR is now completely digital from the broadcasting studios to the satellite transmission. At all transmission points, national programs are received via digital satellite receivers. Analog transmission via relay systems was discontinued. National programs are fully ready for digital transmission when it is technically possible. The aim is for this to happen with all the regional programs of BNR. A clear plan for this is necessary, as well as financial security.

The already established system for round-the-clock monitoring of the quality of BNR programmes, through its 52 control points and SMS notification system in case of problems, guarantees full control over the work of all almost 160 transmitters. In addition, this system ensures that the partners from whose points the shipment takes place are paid the same amount - in terms of quantity and quality - as is sent and received. And that gives reason to demand quality and the right service.

The security of the broadcasting of BNR programs should be the main priority of every management. It should be borne in mind that “of significant importance in the security area is the principle that implementing a certain type of security measure or separate individual actions can hardly lead to the desired effect. Simply building interconnected solutions into a single integrated security system can provide a high level of efficiency” (Krushkov 2020, p. 142).

The technical renewal of the broadcasting, production and recording studios of BNR, both in Sofia and in the country, must continue.

**2. An enormous sound archive of national value must be saved through digitalization.**

More than 180,000 hours of recordings from the beginning of radio’s existence to the present are stored in the Golden Fund and in the Phonotheque of the BNR. This is music, speeches, radio theatre productions, shows, competitions, etc., which have enormous historical and cultural value. Unfortunately, all this is stored on tapes, discs, and other analogue media, which do not allow effective use of this archive and correct accounting of its use, in terms of settlement and payment of copyright and related rights.



“In digitization, digitized data is the basis for knowledge that is used to take concrete actions and initiate change. Digitization has created digital business with new opportunities for production, distribution and creation of new digital products and services.

Digitization in culture create an infrastructure of archived creative products created from the beginning of human civilization to the present day.” (Stoyanova 2022).

Almost all public service broadcasters in Europe have digitized their archives. Until now, BNR has made timid and limited attempts in this regard. At the end of 2015 was purchased, and in April 2016 and extremely professional equipment was installed, a team was trained and the real digitization of the archive of BNR was started. This process must continue quickly so that the Bulgarian public can gain access to this invaluable wealth, parts of which will be able to be used free of charge for scientific purposes by students and researchers.

The begun digitization of The Gold Fund and The Phonotheque should continue under clear working regulations. I believe that in view of the world’s practice and in view of the possibilities in terms of personnel, it is normal to count on a digitization of 10 – 12,000 hours per year, which means that in 10 – 12 years the entire analogue matrix will be digitized. I think it is within BNR’s power to soon buy more workstations and train more conductors, to shorten the period for digitizing the archive to a reasonable 5 – 6 years.

3. To reach the transmission signal of BNR to the drivers on the highways and tunnels of Bulgaria.

After the construction of many kilometres of new motorways in Bulgaria, it is high time that BNR programs can be heard in their tunnels – something that has not been done until now. Work must also start with this issue – from an application to the Norwegian Communications Authority to obtain the necessary permits to build broadcasting points in 10 tunnels. The order of construction and operation of the transmission facilities should be specified with the Road Infrastructure Agency and the work itself should start – within 6 – 8 months the project should be finalised, and motorway drivers should be able to listen to BNR programs continuously.

In this way, another obligation of BNR will be fulfilled – to inform listeners in critical situations, regardless of where they are.

4. Based on contracts entered with the Ministry of the Interior, fire safety, civil defence and road transport control, the necessary information is obtained extremely quickly and directed to the public. The instructions for each type of disaster will be prepared by the specialists in the specific direction and will be always available in the studios and in the computer system of the radio. Staff working on the broadcast programs and on the website will undergo training to acquire the skills to work with this information.

5. Real measures should be taken to secure funds for the rehabilitation of the

BNR building. The funds that are paid annually for heating and cooling are large. It is necessary to renovate the main administration building of BNR.

6. Start of new intranet (internal) network. Through this, in addition to document circulation, which will save time and money for consumables, everything that happens on the radio, which they need to be informed about or which is important, will be made known to all employees of BNR daily for them. Including the agenda for the meetings of the Board of Directors and relevant decisions. As a summary of what is happening in BNR, a monthly electronic newsletter will be produced and distributed via the intranet network. With the opportunity to ask questions of the managers and with clear regulations for their answers – in time and to the point.

### **VII. Formulation of new vision, mission, and values for the radio**

The vision of BNR includes the logo and the logos of the individual programmes. If it is considered that updating the vision of BNR and the programs is necessary, a national competition should be announced for new proposals for a vision – up-to-date and modern. When it comes to radio's mission and values, I believe that considering the realities of the modern world and against the background of the rapid development of technologies and the environment, BNR must reformulate its main priorities. This is a task that must be carried out on the radio, after extensive discussion and consensus among all employees.

### **Conclusion**

The importance, necessity, and significance of public radio in the modern world is key to any democratic society. In an environment heavily dominated by misinformation – through social networks, fake websites, and hybrid attacks – the presence of credible and accountable public radio is extremely important. Radio creates quality content, distributed through all possible technological means and reaching a large group of listeners.

Therefore, that is why I present in my present work I present a comprehensive concept for the management and development of BNR, which I hope will be considered by the management in the public media. At the same time, elements of it can be used in the handling of all electronic media. Because the media differ from each other in the content they create, in the personalities that are the basis of this content, but the principles of management are close, regardless of whether it is public or commercial media. The goal is to attract the audience's attention and hold it maximally and fully.

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