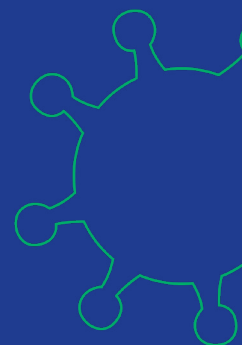
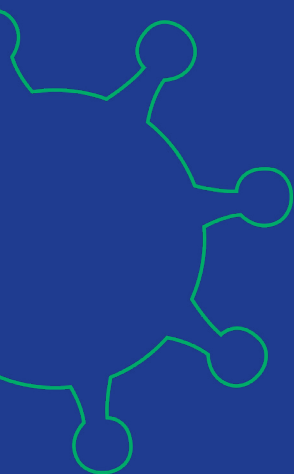


# EBU

OPERATING EUROVISION AND EURORADIO

# COVID-19 REPORT

Public Service Media: Supporting Society Through Coronavirus



SEPTEMBER 2020

## ABOUT THE EBU

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is the world's foremost alliance of public service media (PSM). Our mission is to make PSM indispensable.

We represent 115 media organizations in 56 countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa; and have an additional 34 Associates in Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas.

Our Members operate nearly 2,000 television and radio channels alongside numerous online platforms. Together, they reach audiences of more than one billion people around the world, broadcasting in almost 160 languages.

We strive to secure a sustainable future for public service media, provide our Members with world-class content from news to sports and music, and build on our founding ethos of solidarity and co-operation to create a centre for learning and sharing.

Our subsidiary, Eurovision Services, aims to be the first-choice media services provider, offering new, better and different ways to simply, efficiently and seamlessly access and deliver content and services.

We have offices in Brussels, Rome, Dubai, Moscow, New York, Washington DC, Singapore, Madrid and Beijing. Our headquarters are in Geneva.

Discover more about the EBU at [www.ebu.ch](http://www.ebu.ch)

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world and our place within it – for us all as individuals, as well as for our nations and how they relate to one another. It has been enormously painful and hugely disruptive, and its implications will be played out in ways we cannot even anticipate for years to come.

But, with crises, we also invariably see more positive outcomes such as the emergence of a common purpose, solidarity, creativity, agility and innovation, which is what we would like to showcase in this report.

The EBU is the world’s largest alliance of public service media and this report shows how our Members have responded to the pandemic and helped meet the insatiable demand for content brought about by the lockdown. Our Members have been uniquely placed to deliver the trusted news, informed analysis, educational resources and high-quality entertainment that the audience has required in recent months. And the lessons they have learnt through this experience will undoubtedly shape them for years to come.

In this report, we’ve captured just some of our Members’ many initiatives to provide inspiration to others and highlight exactly why independent, well-funded public service media is as essential now as it has ever been in its nearly 100-year history.



Public service media has responded to the crisis and the audience, in turn, have responded to public service media. I think that’s a testament to all the work people have done, the efforts they’ve put in and the trust our audiences have in our output. This report is trying to capture just some of that.”

**Noel Curran**  
EBU Director General



**PLAY THE VIDEO**  
(see web version)



# KEY LEARNINGS

2020 has been a year like no other – public service media (PSM) has had to respond with extraordinary speed to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Internally that was difficult enough as media organizations had to work out how to reorganize newsrooms and productions for social distancing, as well as manage the cancellation of sport and cultural events and keep all staff safe.

But, as the world went into lockdown, EBU Members also acted with incredible agility and ingenuity to ensure that audiences were educated, entertained and - most importantly - kept informed as we all adjusted to a seismic change in the way we live, learn, do business and connect with each other.

The education of young people was, of course, one of the most challenging issues to address this year and PSM stepped forward with innovative and imaginative solutions - often devised in conjunction with their countries' education ministries - that set-out to inspire young minds while also delivering content to help older students going through exam-critical times in their lives.

It was in the area of education that our Members made one of the greatest contributions. **Our research shows that PSM's educational content reached one in five kids in Europe in the first full week of lockdown alone.**

Dedicated educational programming such as those provided by [RTÉ's Home School Hub](#) in Ireland and [France Télévisions' Lumni](#) were huge successes. The former was the number-one programme on RTÉ player in the first week of lockdown while the latter reached 4.6 million kids aged between four and 14 on TV in the first three months of lockdown, with video content viewed 32 million times.

It was also important to help young audiences make sense of constantly shifting events and PSM addressed this by providing information in the most accessible formats while seeking to offer encouragement, nurture debate and inspire kids and young people to share experiences of isolation and lockdown.

In times of crisis the thirst for information, the desire to connect and the need for reassurance



is multiplied, but in an environment in which an array of digital and linear providers, both formal and informal, seek to offer content, winning and retaining trust can be a constant challenge.

**News offered by PSM providers is consistently ranked among the most valued.** In 65% of European markets they were ranked the most trusted news brands in 2019. It was no surprise, therefore, that people turned to these providers during the COVID-19 crisis.

The proportion of news and information programming offered by PSM rose by 22% in March (against February) to meet the growing demand and the reach of their evening news bulletins went up by 2.5 times during the peak days of the crisis.

Even before COVID-19, issues of fake news and misinformation were topics of concern and were damaging trust in media around the world. PSM tackled this head-on by providing audiences with the ability to fact-check stories – through services such as the [BBC's Reality Check](#) in the UK or Rai's dedicated fake news unit in Italy - or by rating articles according to their accuracy.

**It was also important to help people demystify the science around COVID-19** and to be able to address the concerns of audiences while, at the same time, answering questions in a comprehensible way. That was especially important when it came to accessibility – an area in which EBU Members have a long track record of providing media services to all citizens, including those with sensory disabilities and those from minority groups.

Recognising that the contribution of the creative industries goes far beyond the making of a television programme, the delivery of a set-piece major live event or the creation of a podcast, **PSM sought to support colleagues producing content that contributes to the wider economy** by, for example, offering practical and financial help to independent production companies. ZDF quickly initiated a [broad package of support to Germany's independent production sector](#), including covering 50% of additional costs incurred and funding all additional occupational health and safety measures. This was vital, not just for their survival, but to ensure that there was a pipeline for new content and the development of ideas as lockdown measures eased.

A music festival, sporting occasion or literary event can easily be viewed in isolation, but such events represent hugely important ways for us to engage with others, come together as a community and enjoy a shared interest.



It was critical, therefore, to help keep the creative and performing arts alive. PSM stepped in with ways in which to bring audiences everything from a [movie festival](#) to an eight-hour [lullaby](#), and provided an alternative to the Eurovision Song Contest, the world's most popular televised music event, in a way that not only delighted audiences, but brought people together across Europe and beyond as they sought the connection that music is so adept at providing.

**Collaboration was also key, not just because of the mutual benefits it delivers, but also because we are at our best when sharing.** Several EBU Members made cultural provision a priority thereby ensuring that, even in quarantine, they were able to work with writers, musicians, actors, authors and others to bring audiences the type of content and entertainment they enjoy. TVP in Poland, for example, offered virtual tours of museums and other cultural places during lockdown while Bulgarian National Radio united musical institutions with a common programme of concert videos streamed online under the banner 'Together in the Crisis'.

COVID-19 clearly had a huge impact on television and radio production as well as on the coverage of live sporting events and shared cultural moments. Here, yet again, PSM acted with great agility,

bringing audiences everything from VRT [Belgium's most popular daytime drama](#) produced under safe, social-distanced conditions to coverage of 57 professional cyclists competing virtually for five consecutive days on the most beautiful stages of the [Tour de Suisse](#). The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation used its rich archive to create a sense of community while Armenia TV brought the traditional Easter mass live from Lusavorich Cathedral to millions of Armenians throughout the world.

And there were lighter moments too such as those provided by NRK's popular Norwegian radio hosts Ronny Brede Aase and Tuva Fellmann (who also are a couple and live together) who set-up a studio in their living room to record a [comedy podcast](#) in which the audience could follow them through the large and small challenges of COVID-19.

At a time when lockdown distanced us from family and friends and detached us from work colleagues and we became consumed by events both close to home and on a global scale, community cohesion assumed even greater importance.

The need for us to connect more with each other was already a talking point pre-COVID-19 as concerns about mental wellbeing escalated. The global health pandemic - and fears about what will follow it - has only heightened those worries.

**PSM recognised that connecting the elderly and isolated, providing multi-language information to diverse communities and even showcasing acts of kindness (no matter how small) were all vital in bringing us together.** Within literally days of lockdown in the Czech Republic, Czech TV went as far as to launch a dedicated channel for the elderly suddenly isolated at home. Across our Member network, there were numerous examples of broadcasters promoting positivity and providing access to practical help and coping mechanisms.

Not only has public service media been there beside us on every step of this historic journey, it has demonstrated – once again - that in bad times as well as good, it remains unrivalled when it comes to the value it provides and the trust it inspires in citizens of all ages, interests and backgrounds.





# AUDIENCE IMPACT

Audiences have turned in huge numbers to their local public broadcasters as the pandemic has unfolded across the continent.

PSM news brands are already the most trusted news brands in 65% of European markets.

Globally, TV news channels have been the most-used source of COVID-19 news and information and the second most-trusted source after government updates. For example, 86% of German PSM TV news users rate the coronavirus crisis coverage of ARD and ZDF as trustworthy – the highest attributed credibility of all media on offer. And 90% of Czech TV news viewers consider the crisis coverage of their public broadcaster trustworthy.

In contrast, while almost half of the population used social networks for news on the virus, only 14% rank it as one of the most trustworthy sources.

[See the report](#)

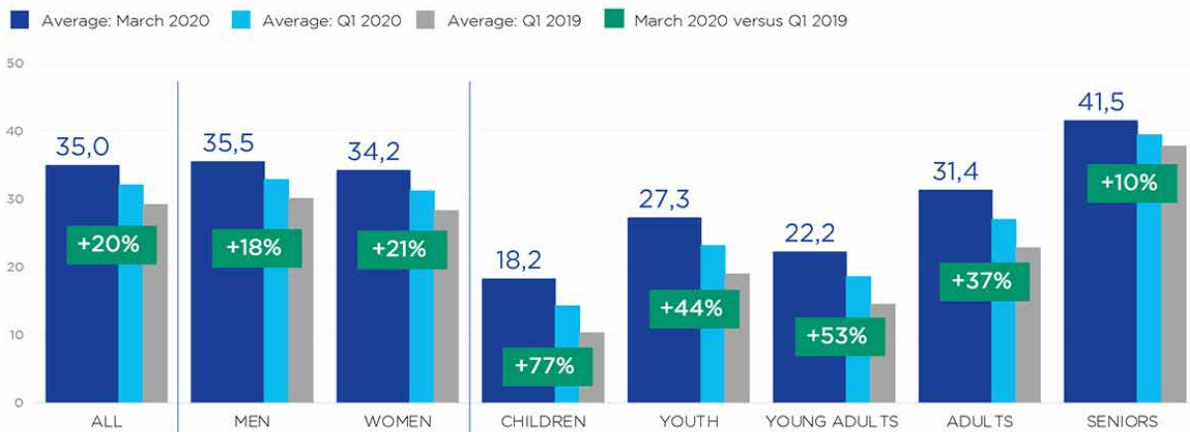
People turn to traditional media when they want news they can trust. The daily viewing share of PSM's evening TV news bulletins increased by 20% in March 2020 (against Q1 2019). Perhaps most interestingly, given how we're constantly told they represent such a hard-to-reach audience, that daily share was up to 44% when it came to 15 to 24-year-olds demonstrating how they also turned significantly to PSM during the crisis.

[See the report](#)

Online, PSM News websites' daily reach was up 2.6 times in March, while visits and sessions on PSM apps and news apps also doubled as people looked for regular updates on the crisis.

## PSM EVENING NEWS GROWS ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHICS

Average daily Viewing Share ( % ) of PSM Evening News by target groups



Age definitions: Children 4-14, Youth 15-24, Young Adults 25-34, Adults 35-59, Seniors 60+. Definitions may vary slightly by country.

### 2019 NET TRUST INDEX IN THE EU



NET TRUST INDEX =  
 '% of people who tend to trust' - '% of people who tend not to trust'  
 AVERAGE NET TRUST IN THE MEDIA = -9

Providing content for children, with schools closed due to the pandemic, has also been particularly important for PSM in recent months.

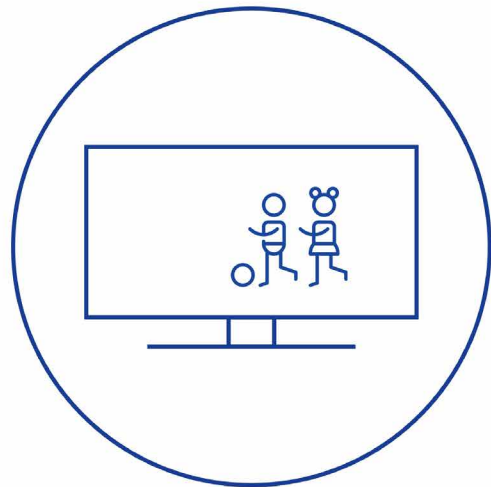
On average, PSM reached 57% of kids every week with their TV services during March. Average daily TV viewing time of children's content on EBU Members' channels increased by 19 minutes in March and April (against the previous month). PSM's online services also became increasingly important with kids websites' daily reach up by 2.3 times in April-May (versus January-February).

Thanks to the fast actions of PSM in partnering with educational institutions, children and teachers were able to benefit from learning opportunities from home as many schools were unprepared to offer distance learning. PSM educational content reached 20% of kids in the first full week of lockdown in March.

PSM have also been supporting the wider creative industries throughout the pandemic. Our Members invest over EUR 19 billion each year in content across the EBU area – 84% of which is spent on original content.

[See the report](#)

## On average PSM reached **57%** of kids weekly with their TV services during peak of COVID-19 crisis



During the crisis, they have been supporting the wider creative sector – giving voice to artists and their experiences, increasing exposure for artists and providing alternative venues and offering financial assistance. At least 53 EBU Member organizations, from 33 countries, have provided some type of relief measures. You can find some of the many examples in our Member case studies below.

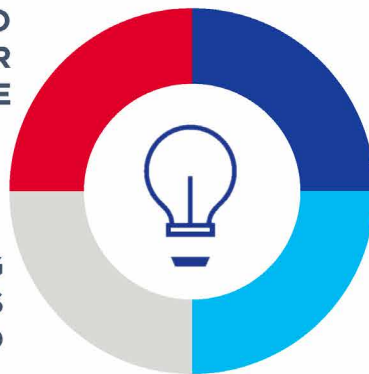
### PSM SUPPORT TO THE SECTOR



**GIVING VOICE TO ARTISTS AND THEIR CRISIS EXPERIENCE**



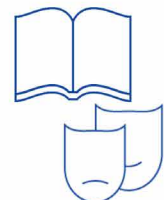
**SUPPORTING CREATIVES IN NEED**



**INCREASING EXPOSURE FOR ARTISTS**



**STEPPING IN FOR CANCELLED ARTS EVENTS**





# PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA CASE STUDIES

Categories

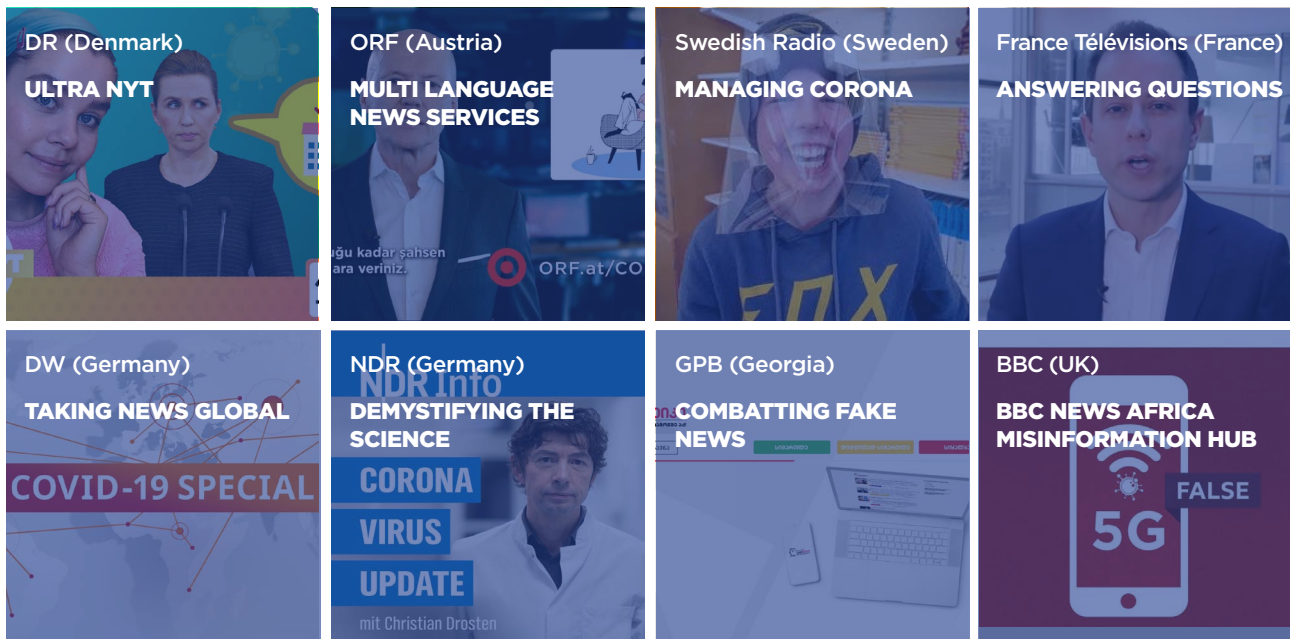
Inform

Entertain

Education

Connect

Collaborate



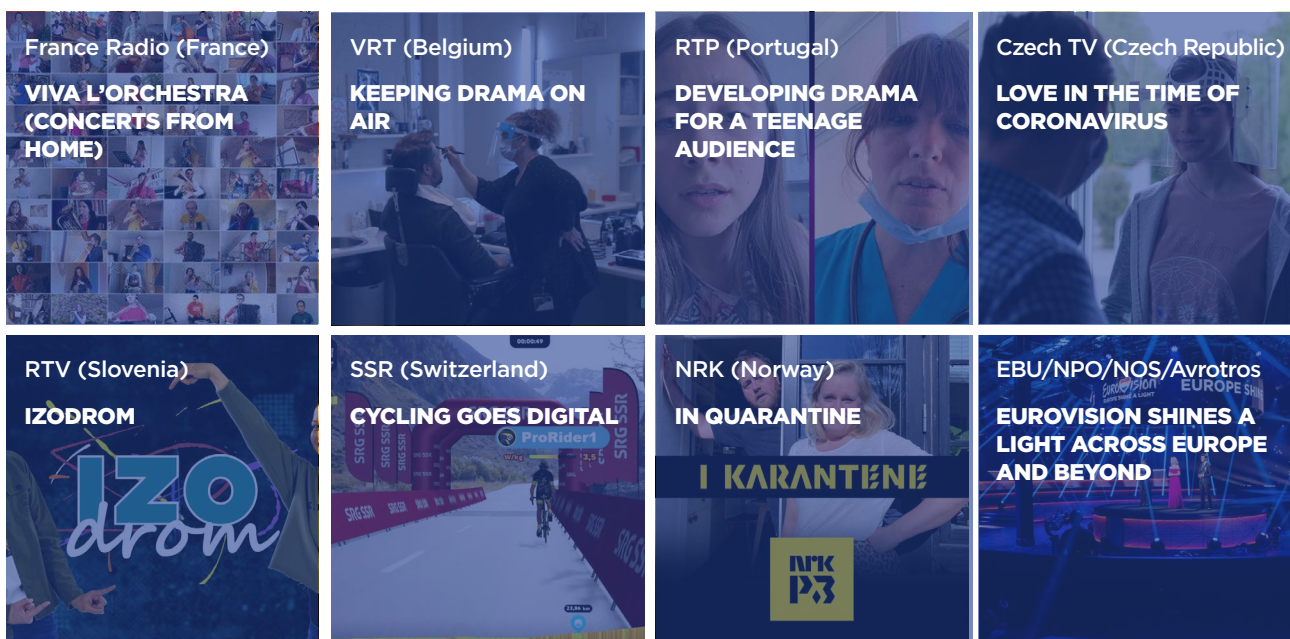
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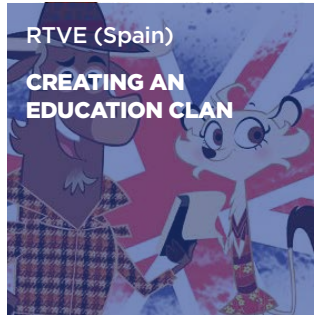
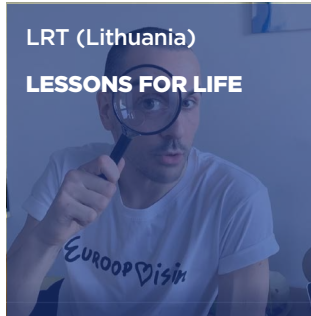
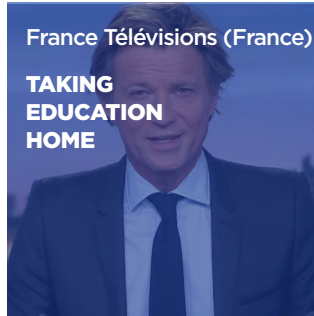
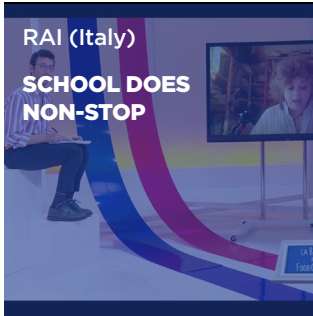
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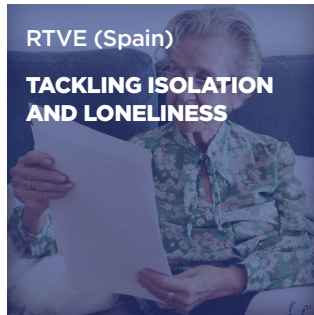
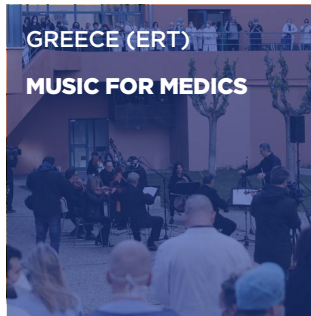
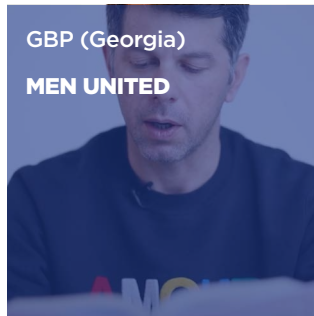
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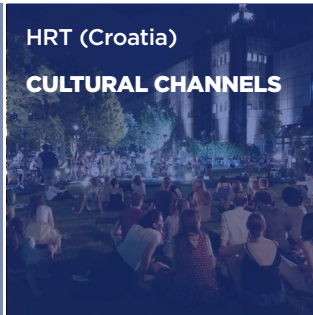
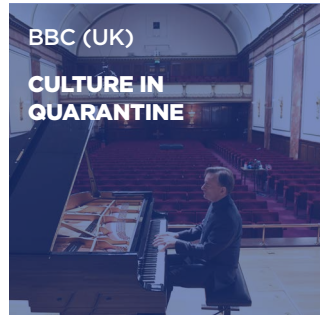
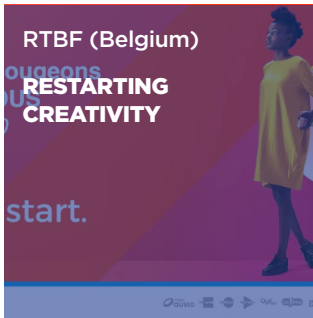
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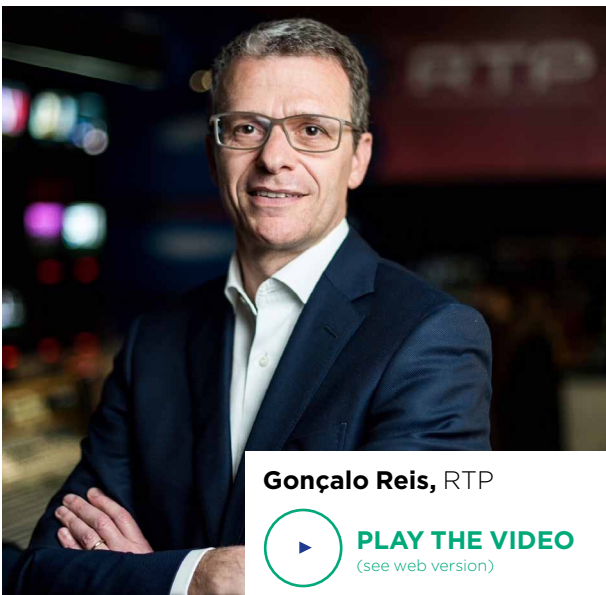
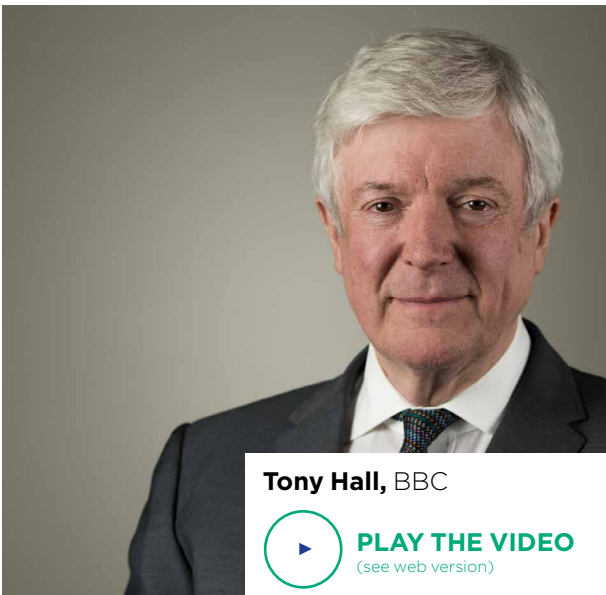






# DIRECTOR GENERAL INSIGHTS

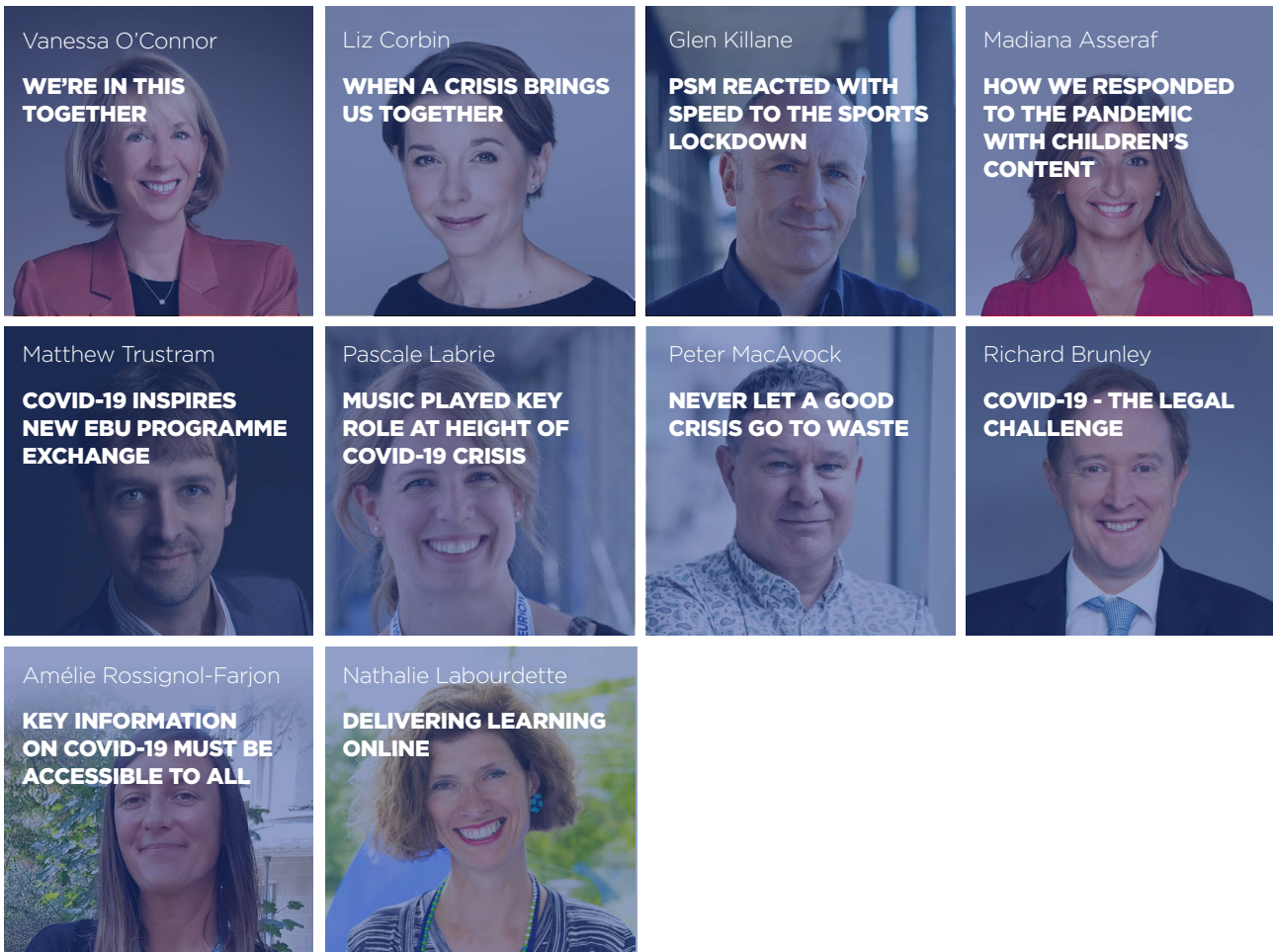
Public service broadcasters have had to respond rapidly to the challenges posed by COVID-19. There have been challenges on many fronts – how to organize newsrooms with social distancing measures in place; how to maintain productions with people in quarantine and how to fill holes in schedules left by the cancellation of live sport and cultural events. Despite all this, teams have mobilised to produce an astonishing array of content and services to ensure audiences were informed, educated, entertained and connected when they needed it most. We asked Director Generals of public service broadcasters across Europe to tell us how they've responded to the coronavirus crisis and lessons they had learnt for the future.





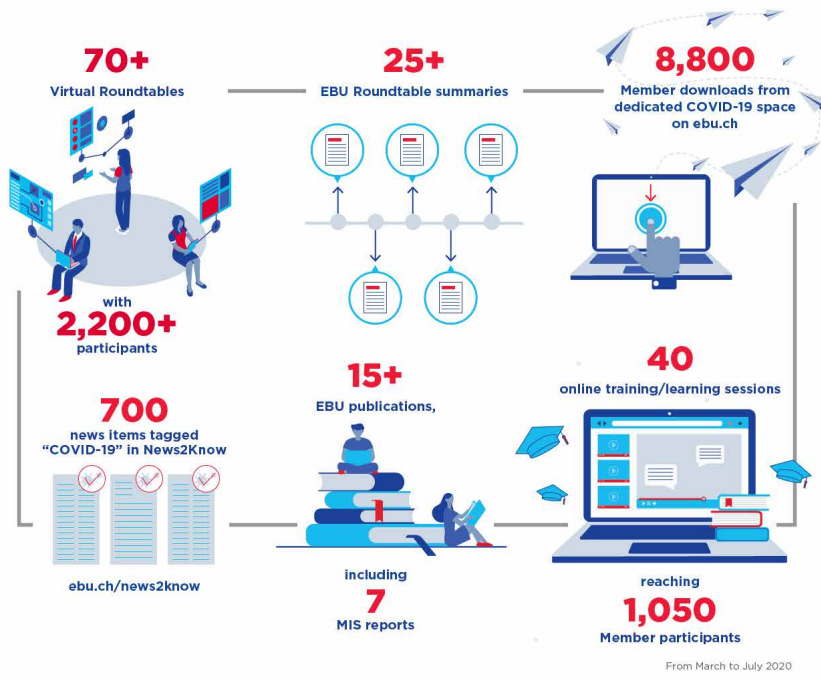
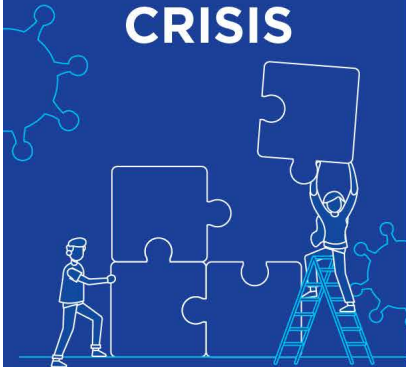
# EBU INSIGHTS

The coronavirus pandemic precipitated a period of unprecedented change and growth at the European Broadcasting Union. Along with our Members, we found ourselves facing a wide range of new challenges from the cancellation of our events to the re-negotiation of sport contracts, new demands for content and data, and the need for new formats to exchange ideas and learnings. We developed a wide range of new services and initiatives to help meet Member needs and support them in better serving their audiences. We also learnt a lot along the way. We asked our managers to share some of their experiences and learnings from the pandemic.



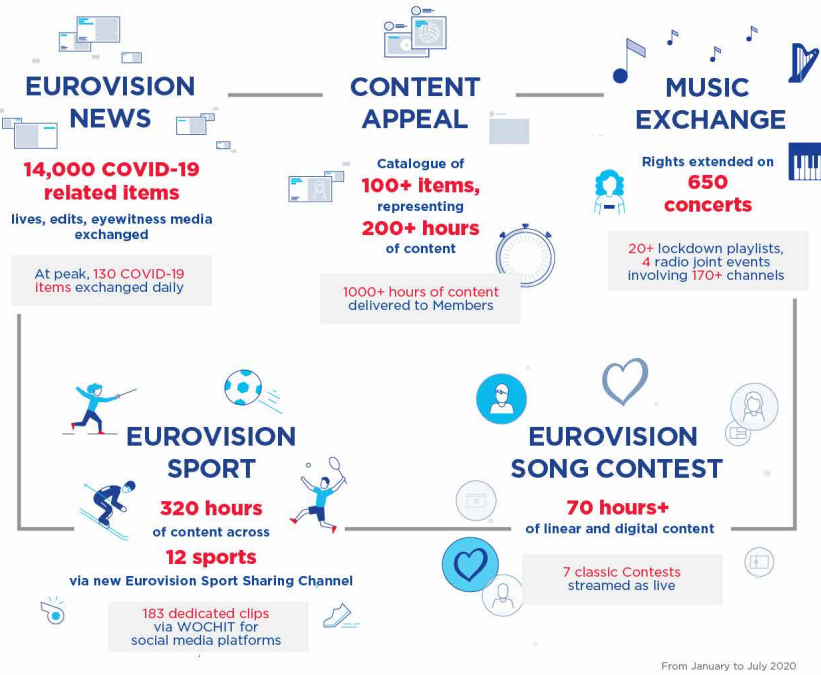
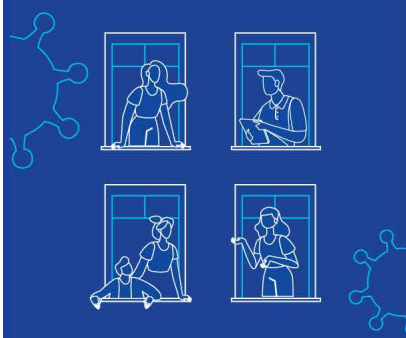


# SUPPORT FOR EBU MEMBERS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



# WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER!

Content exchanges between EBU Members during the COVID-19 crisis



# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Public service media has worked alongside many partner organizations to ensure citizens have had access to timely, accurate news and information about the pandemic; support with education while schools are closed; and opportunities for people to connect and support each other. It's also provided a valuable alternative 'stage' for people to enjoy a wide variety of cultural activities from music to drama and art with venues shut down. And it has kept sports fans entertained despite the cancellation of so many live events. Some of our partners have shared their experience of how the European Broadcasting Union and public service media have supported them and society during the pandemic.

## UNESCO

"It's true public service in action. It's the kind of partnership the world needs, especially now.  
"The mission is far more than a technical one – it's about averting a generational catastrophe. And this is why innovative solutions for learning must be developed, tailored to leave no one behind."

Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education



**PLAY THE VIDEO**  
(see web version)



## ITU

"The high-quality, reliable and trusted news that public service news organizations produce is a powerful and important weapon in global efforts to fight the COVID pandemic."

Doreen Bogdan-Martin, ITU Director  
Telecommunications Development Bureau



**PLAY THE VIDEO**  
(see web version)



## EUROPEAN ATHLETICS

“I was delighted to see EBU Members exercise their ingenuity, sometimes in partnership with event organizers, to create new forms of programming to continue to inform and entertain their viewers, replacing the huge gaps left by the cancellation or postponement of most live international sport.”

Christian Milz, European Athletics CEO



**PLAY THE VIDEO**  
(see web version)



## WIGMORE HALL

“This sort of broadcasting of course, in the middle of a pandemic, is the essence of public service broadcasting and everything that BBC Radio 3 does so well and stands for.  
“We’re very grateful for this wonderful partnership.”

John Gilhooly OBE OSI, Wigmore Hall Chief Executive and Artistic Director

*The BBC broadcast 20 concerts from the Wigmore Hall in June that were shared by the EBU Music Exchange throughout Europe and beyond*



**PLAY THE VIDEO**  
(see web version)



# APPENDIX

[COVID-19 Dedicated EBU Webpage](#) (EBU Members only)

[EBU Lessons from Lockdown Videos](#)

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