**Public Service Media provide support to audiences in times of crisis**

As the COVID-19 outbreak has escalated throughout Europe, public service media organizations (PSM) have not only kept audiences informed, educated and entertained, they have offered vital support as this unprecedented crisis deepens.

A **new report from the European Broadcasting Union** (EBU) shows how public service broadcasters have responded to the challenges of the pandemic by rapidly modifying their programming.

PSM organizations have offered critical support to their audiences at this difficult time. New content offers have helped foster solidarity, brought people together to help tackle the crisis and championed the creative industries.

For example, in Switzerland, SRF is increasing the amount of Swiss music played across its radio channels to support local artists, and Yle, in Finland, is investing in more cultural content to provide home-theatre experiences that bring Finns together. In the UK, BBC local radio stations are joining up with volunteer groups to help co-ordinate support for the elderly, housebound or those at risk.

News obviously remains at the core of PSM’s offer and audiences have been turning to PSM in increasing numbers for accurate, timely information. Public service broadcasters have extended the number of news broadcasts, created dedicated talk shows, provided opportunities for audience interaction and produced special podcasts, to name just a few initiatives.

Audience data from 18 key European markets (including the UK, France, Spain, Italy and Germany) shows that many more people are turning to PSM for reliable, real-time news and information on the crisis. At key junctions, the reach of PSM organization’s evening news bulletin has doubled while daily viewing is up 14% on average. Younger viewers are also tuning in in increasing numbers with daily viewing of the evening bulletins up 20% amongst that age group.

Online news reports from PSM are providing audiences with a continuous stream of reliable information on the developments in their countries and across the world. Daily reach has almost tripled in key markets and the numbers are growing as the crisis develops.

Education has also taken on a new significance for PSM as broadcasters have stepped up their offer for children and young people following the closure of many schools throughout Europe. Children’s programming hours have been extended, educational content increased on different platforms and new content developed to help with remote schooling. In Spain, for example, RTVE has launched a new web and mobile application ‘EduClan’ to showcase videos on all school subjects, while RTS in Serbia is airing lessons for students on TV and online.

Across Europe, PSM organizations have also risen to the challenge of entertaining audiences that are confined at home and deprived of many of their other leisure activities. Rai, in Italy, has launched a new TV sport channel with archive sport events and Czech TV has created a new channel ‘CT3’, launching today, with content tailored specifically for older audiences.

EBU Director General Noel Curran said: “Public service media organizations have provided a vital lifeline to millions of citizens throughout Europe during this challenging time.

“The EBU continues to support them in their work by offering a network to share ideas and learn from each other’s experiences, opportunities to exchange content at a time when productions are being postponed, and collaborations to ensure timely, accurate reporting when it is needed most.”