



In this series of portraits, the EBU Technical Review honours leading figures in broadcast engineering. Their contributions have had a major impact on the development of the industry, and by presenting the work and achievements of these men and women, their personality, and their professionalism we shall illustrate some of the lesser-known facets of radio and television development.

Marie Huet – A career in the service of broadcasting

Anyone who has been involved in radio spectrum planning in the past forty years has come across Marie Huet. A leading figure in this discipline at national and international level, her expertise has received the highest acclaim by the international organizations active in this field.

Originating from a farming family established at Chartres (France), there was little reason to suppose that she would turn to engineering as a career. Nonetheless she was attracted by science in general – and by the physical sciences in particular – and so after obtaining the *baccalauréat* she continued her studies at the *Ecole polytechnique féminine*.

In 1943, while the Second World War was still raging, Marie Huet completed her studies and joined the staff of what was at that time known as the *Radiodiffusion nationale française*. There, while employed in the Research Department, she continued her studies, following courses at the *Ecole nationale des Télécommunications*.

Marie Huet's story takes us on to 1950. The new European Broadcasting Union was created in February of that year in Torquay (England); circumstances were difficult as a result of disagreements within the former International Broadcasting Union. H. Angles d'Auriac, Director of the Technical Centre of the EBU asked Marie Huet to join his staff in Brussels. She had already acquired a taste for international affairs and accepted the post. She found herself involved in questions relating to long, medium and short-wave propagation, the allocation of frequencies attributed to transmitters in the European Broadcasting Area (notably in the context of the 1948 Copenhagen Plan), and a variety of other studies concerning sound broadcasting, magnetic recording or interference counter-measures.

Such work occupied Marie Huet for five very busy years with the EBU, after which she returned to Paris, where she rapidly found herself at the head of the Frequency Planning Department. The theoretical aspects of this activity, and its formalism, fitted well with her personal interests and her approach to professional life in general. In the mid-1950s broadcasting networks were very much simpler than those we know today and just a handful of staff were amply sufficient for spectrum management. However, the growth in the numbers of transmitters, the creation of new networks, the expansion of television and the private radio stations were rapidly to

necessitate a corresponding increase in the resources dedicated to this task. From an initial staff of two, the Planning Department of *Radio-télévision française* (RTF), then the *Office française de radio-télévision* (ORTF) and finally *TéléDiffusion de France* (TDF) steadily expanded to almost twenty people. Similar developments were in evidence in the working methods used. When Marie Huet began working in this field, traditional mathematics was the order of the day. But, as network complexity increased and as more-precise results became increasingly necessary, new methods exploiting the computers and data-bases, then coming into use in the European broadcasting organizations, became an essential part of the planning process, aiding – but not entirely replacing – personal experience and intuition.

Marie Huet's interest for the international aspects of her work was also apparent in the framework of the international organizations. As a representative of the French broadcasting community, she found herself nominated as Chairman of several working parties of the EBU Technical Committee. As a renowned expert in transmitter network planning, she participated in all the World Administrative Radio Conferences of the ITU, and the Regional Conferences for Regions 1 and 2, from 1959 to 1985, as well as attending many other ITU Committees.



Her professional expertise and her care to dispell conflict were valuable allies during the Regional Administrative Radio Conference on VHF/FM sound broadcasting which took place in Geneva in 1982 and 1984. She was appointed Chairman of both Sessions and her natural authority and her ability to foster compromise were major factors leading to the establishment of an agreement on the

use of the 87.5–108 MHz frequency band. Marie Huet's personal attributes were in due course recognised by her country which conferred on her the grade of *Officier* in the *Ordre national du Mérite*.

Although she retired in 1985, Marie Huet's globe-trotting days were not over; TDF and the ITU have continued to call upon her services for special missions in Africa and Asia. Taking in such diverse places as the Arab States, the Yemen, Lebanon and Kenya, her professionalism and her understanding of the traditional values of her hosts have always enabled her to work effectively for the betterment of the technical services offered to the listening and viewing public.