

# The new role and structure of the EBU

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## 1. The reasons for change

Over the past ten years, many new challenges have been thrown down at broadcasters in the public sector – rapid technological progress, the ending of monopoly status, the emergence of fierce competition from private operators, the linking together of telecommunication, computer and multimedia giants, etc. In order to survive this onslaught, public service broadcasters have had to strengthen their alliances; it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete alone in the rapidly-changing audiovisual world.

The EBU has served the collective interests of public service broadcasters for the past 45 years. In order to assist its Members better in meeting these new challenges, it has embarked on a process of reorganization which will be completed at the end of 1995. In particular, the “new” EBU aims to provide:

- more effective decision-making and business-type management;

*In the face of major upheavals in the audiovisual world, the role of the EBU has been redefined. A new structure is already in place and its methods of functioning are in the process of being adapted to suit more accurately and efficiently the needs of Members.*

*This article gives the reasons for the changes and describes in broad terms the EBU's new structure and principal functions. It concludes by taking a brief look at the new structure of the technical sector and gives the terms of reference of its principal bodies.*

- reduced costs for Members;
- a more transparent financial system.

Although there will be a move towards business-type management, the EBU will remain an *association* – not a commercial undertaking – in which every Member has equal rights.

## 2. Overview of the new structure

In contrast to the old set-up, which was built around four committee structures (Television

Programmes, Radio Programmes, Legal and Technical), the new structure has a third dimension embedded within it, which classifies the objectives of each part of the overall activity programme.

Three classifications or “axes” of activity have been adopted:

- Professional Association;
- Operational activities;
- Study and Development projects.

In the future, these three axes will constitute the principal sub-divisions of EBU activity. The concepts are laid out in *Section 3*.

Whenever appropriate, activities will be approached in a multi-disciplinary manner. In terms of the new business-type management being introduced within the EBU, we need to know whether the task in hand is in defence of the interests of the whole membership (“professional association”), for specific operational purposes, or in preparation for the future requirements of the membership (study and development). The new structure of the EBU therefore represents a rather complex inter-weaving of axes of activity, study structures, support functions and member representation, the whole linked through the staff of the EBU Permanent Services in Geneva. A representation of this structure is shown in *Fig. 1*.

The right-hand side of the diagram shows the main areas where the Members are directly involved – as elected officials in the Committee structures, as experts in specific study areas, or as members of the various Assemblies. The left-hand side is occupied by the EBU Permanent Services, whose primary function is one of active support. It is seen that the bulk of the Study and Development activity is in the hands of the Members, with the Permanent Services providing functional support. The Operational and the Professional Association areas, in contrast, are concentrated in the Permanent Services. In the Professional Association area, it is essentially the Members who provide support to the relevant EBU services (economic intelligence, communication, etc.), and the results derived from this action are re-distributed for the benefit of the whole membership.

Most of the new structure is already in place or should be completed by the end of this year. The new financial structure, however, will not come into effect until January 1996.

## ■ 3. Axes of activity

### ■ 3.1. Professional Association

Activities of the Professional Association include:

- the representation and defence of Members’ interests, particularly in dealings with the European Institutions;
- economic intelligence;
- communication.

The costs incurred by activities conducted through the Professional Association are borne by all Members.

#### ■ 3.1.1. European Affairs

The European Union (EU) is becoming involved in a growing range of broadcasting-related issues, including “Television Without Frontiers”, “Pluralism and media concentrations”, “Deregulation in the telecom field and information society in Europe”, “Conditional access” and the “Public service broadcasting concept”. Today, there are numerous draft EU directives which, if approved, would affect EBU Members not only as broadcasters, but also as commercial units. Another source of concern for EBU Members relates to the Council of Europe, which periodically holds Ministerial Conferences on broadcasting-related topics (such as the one in December 1994 called “Mass Media Policy”).

The EBU office in Brussels provides a vital interface with the European Union. Personal contacts are made more easily through this office, allowing EBU Members to present their views to the European Union on all aspects of broadcasting, including copyright, labour rights, fiscal rights, public marketplaces, telecommunications deregulation and new technologies. On behalf of Members, the staff in Brussels can assist civil servants in the European Commission with the drafting of texts which relate to audiovisual matters, by making available the EBU’s extensive know-how, documentation and research in this field. The staff in Brussels can also brief Euro-MPs on audiovisual matters – the well-informed Euro-MP can have a very positive influence on the outcome of questions raised in the European Parliament (which sits in Strasbourg but whose committees meet in Brussels).

In response to the increasing involvement of the European Union in audiovisual matters, the EBU’s presence and level of activities in Brussels have been strengthened.

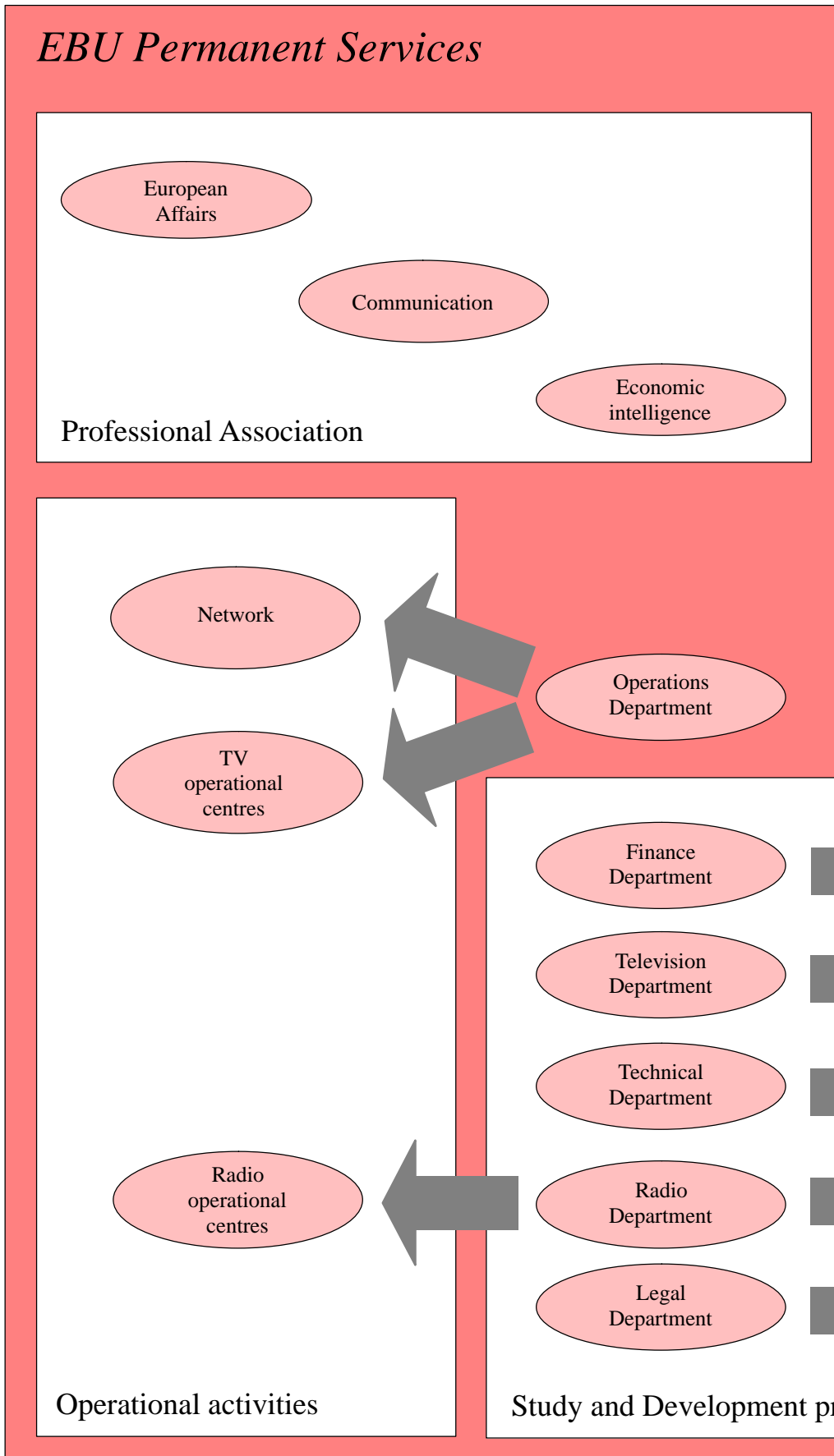
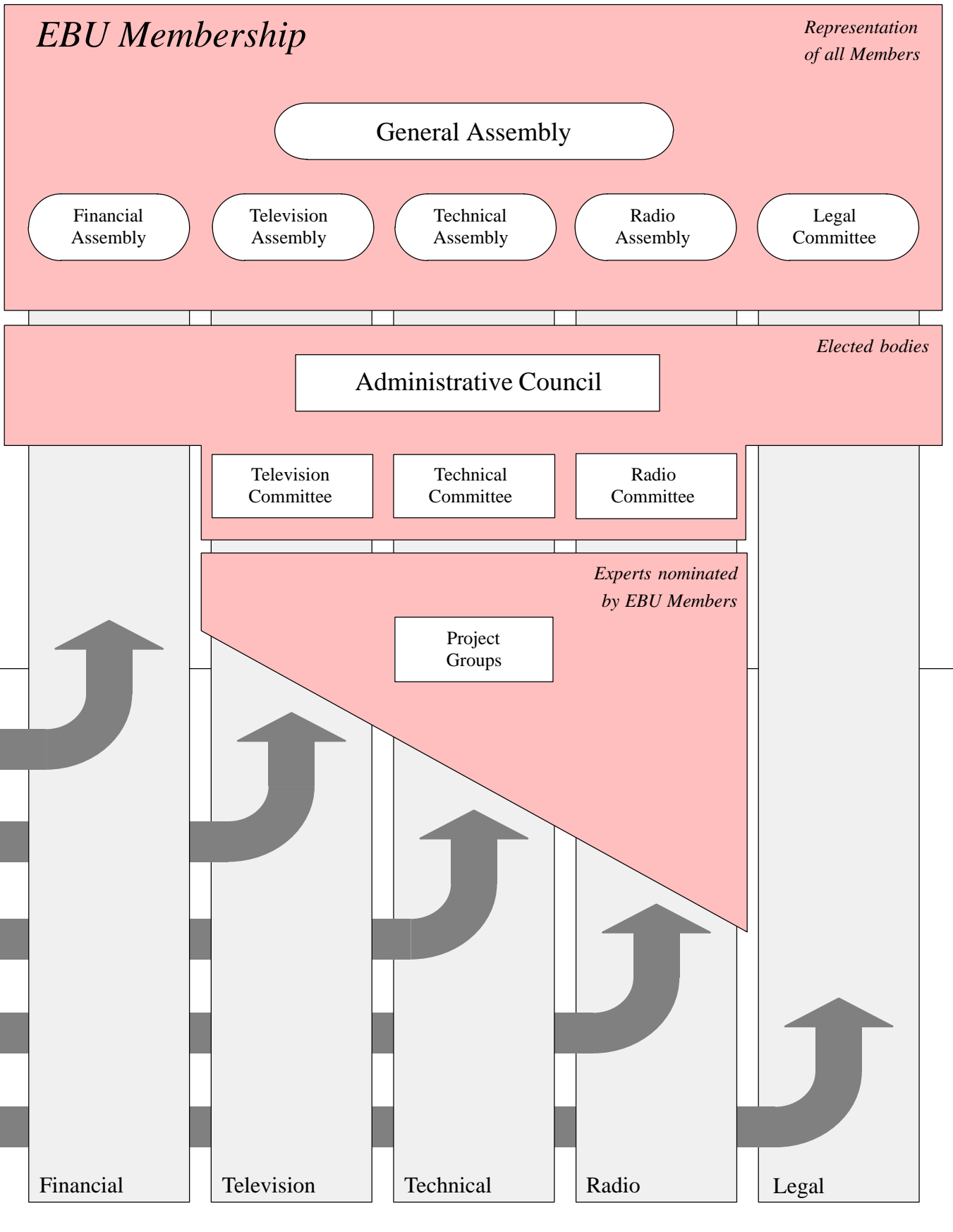


Figure 1  
New organizational  
structure of the EBU.



### ■ 3.1.2. *Communication*

The function of the EBU's communication resources is to promote the EBU message and image. This is done by means of press releases, publications (e.g. **EBU Technical Review**, "Diffusion") and logos (for both printed and on-air use), and also by attendance at international broadcasting conventions, symposia, exhibitions and seminars (e.g. the EBU Village at ITS Montreux).

As a result of the reforms, a new communication policy is being developed to strengthen its effectiveness in certain areas.

### ■ 3.1.3. *Economic intelligence*

The big multinational private groups devote very large resources to economic intelligence, which involves the synthesizing of information to derive integrated development forecasts.

Members have indicated that economic intelligence should be developed as an EBU activity, to provide support to the strategy and planning departments of EBU Members. Thus, as part of the present reforms, the EBU is investigating ways in which it could reinforce its present activities relating to the collection, processing and distribution of data on the audiovisual media – at a national, European and international level, and in the technical, legal, economic, programme and audience research fields.

## ■ 3.2. *Operational activities*

### ■ 3.2.1. *Television*

Operational activities in the television domain include:

- day-to-day running of the Eurovision network;
- the acquisition of sports rights, the exchange of sports programmes and the setting up of sports operations groups;
- the exchange of news, the mounting of special news operations, and the deployment of the EBU Bureaux in New York, Washington and Moscow.

Television operational activities, exposed to ever-increasing competition, cannot ignore the laws of the market and their continuation is to a great extent linked to their economic viability. Thus, since January 1995, these activities have been entrusted to separate television operational centres (e.g., the Network Centre, the Sports Acquisition

Centre) under the responsibility of the Director of Operations. These centres, which have their own budget, are organized in the form of management units to ensure their optimum effectiveness at minimum cost; they are expected to become self-financing.

Some operational activities in television are essential for all Members and would be endangered if all Members did not participate; for example, news exchanges, the sport operations groups and the negotiation and administration of sports contracts. Such activities will continue to be funded by all EBU Members.

### ■ 3.2.2. *Radio*

In the radio domain, the main operational activities are:

- news and current affairs;
- sport;
- Euroradio, which comprises mainly music exchanges.

These activities are the responsibility of the Radio Department, under the authority of the Director of Radio.

From January 1996, radio operational activities will have their own budget; operational costs associated with radio sport, news and current affairs and Euroradio will be charged directly to Members. However, some operational activities in radio are essential for all Members and would be endangered if all Members did not participate. An example is the music exchange programme (apart from Euroradio) where the costs will continue to be funded by all EBU Members.

## ■ 3.3. *Study and Development projects*

The Study and Development activities of the EBU comprise projects and studies which aim to strengthen the competitiveness of active Members in the changing audiovisual world, both individually – with strict respect for the EBU's principles of solidarity – and collectively. These activities are geared to the concerns of all or part of the active membership; they are managed according to criteria of efficiency, effectiveness and results. Preference is given to fixed-term and ad-hoc projects.

Nevertheless, some Study and Development activities require the work to take place within the framework of *permanent* projects, otherwise the

result could be an unmanageable atomization of work. These projects are expected to meet the same management, planning and budget requirements as the fixed-term and ad-hoc projects and are subjected to constant supervision. Where the results are inadequate, permanent projects will be cancelled.

From January 1996, all projects in the Study and Development phase will be financed from the EBU's general budget.

## ■ 4. *Involvement of Members*

All EBU bodies and groups are composed of Members' representatives. The secretariat for meetings is provided by the EBU Permanent Services (see *Section 5*).

The new EBU structure (see *Fig. 1*) aims to strengthen the influence of Members on the workings of the EBU, and should enable Members to associate more closely in the development of projects which are in accordance with their individual interests. It should also ensure simplified and speedier decision-making.

### ■ 4.1. *General Assembly and Administrative Council*

The supreme body of the EBU is the General Assembly which is composed of representatives from all the member organizations, both active and associate. It meets once a year.

From the active membership, the General Assembly elects – for a four-year term – the 19 members of the Administrative Council, including its President. The Administrative Council normally meets twice a year.

In addition to the General Assembly and the Administrative Council, Members are involved in EBU activities via:

- Assemblies and Committees;
- Project Groups;
- Specialized Meetings;
- Users' Meetings.

### ■ 4.2. *Assemblies and Committees*

There are five Assemblies/Committees which separately meet once a year (twice a year in the case of the Legal Committee):

- Radio Assembly;

- Television Assembly;
- Technical Assembly;
- Financial Assembly;
- Legal Committee.

The Radio and Television Assemblies have replaced the former Programme Committees, the Technical Assembly has replaced the old Technical Committee and the Financial Assembly has replaced the former Finance Symposium. The Legal Committee is unchanged.

The four Assemblies and the Legal Committee bring together very senior staff (directors, senior managers, etc) within each sector to articulate the interests of the membership, so that these matters can be pursued by the EBU. They also provide a forum for the exchange of information and experiences, and enable professional discussions to be organized on themes of relevance to the activities of each sector.

The television, radio and technical sectors each have a Committee. The Radio and the Television Committees are the key bodies concerned with EBU policy in their own particular media, whereas the Technical Committee deals with all technical matters.

Using the television sector as an example, the Television Assembly elects ten members to the Television Committee and, from among them, a Chairman and three Vice-Chairmen. A further four members are appointed by the Administrative Council – three of them on the basis of proposals from the Technical Committee, the Radio Committee and the Legal Committee – to provide an element of cross-membership. The 14 members of the Radio Committee are elected/appointed on a similar basis, with three of the members being proposed by the Technical Committee, the Television Committee and the Legal Committee. There is no cross membership on the Technical Committee.

Here are just a few important functions of the Radio, Television and Technical Committees:

- they offer guidance to the Administrative Council and the General Assembly on EBU policy and ensure that, within their own sector, decisions taken by these two bodies are implemented;
- they decide on how the budget for Study and Development should be used, take fundamental decisions relating to projects and studies, and supervise the work of project groups (see *Section 3.3*);

- they participate in the work carried out with regard to “economic intelligence” (see *Section 3.1.3.*);
- they actively take part in the EBU’s lobbying activities (see *Section 3.1.1.*).

### ■ 4.3. *Project Groups*

One aim of the reorganization is to focus EBU work towards defined projects rather than ongoing studies. The Radio, Television and Technical Committees are therefore responsible for setting up Project Groups and for defining their remit, duration, resources and membership.

In order to ensure consistency across the Committees, a standard “Project Remit Structure” has been proposed. All ongoing projects have been listed and are now in the process of being restructured according to the new principles. New projects will be identified by the Committees in the early autumn of this year.

Within the technical sector, the permanent working parties and sub-groups have now been abolished. New activities to meet the changing audiovisual climate are being launched by Project Groups which involve only those Members taking part in specific mono-disciplinary projects and studies.

Within the radio and television sectors, the project groups are of two types: permanent Programme Groups (such as News & Current Affairs, Sport and Music) and Project Groups which manage all activities not covered by the Programme Groups, e.g. multi-disciplinary projects. These groups do not conduct operational services.

The Radio Committee can additionally appoint Coordinators in disciplines that are not covered by the radio Programme Groups, e.g. Radio Drama, Youth Programming, Broadcasts for Motorists, and New Technology.

### ■ 4.4. *Specialized Meetings*

The Committees can hold Specialized Meetings from time to time – to consult, involve and inform a wider spectrum of people that have an interest in particular projects.

### ■ 4.5. *Users’ Meetings*

In the operations sector, Users’ Meetings – which bring together user groups such as transmission chiefs, heads of news and heads of sport – are held

periodically to make proposals for improvements to the television operational services provided by the EBU. In the case of operational activities that are supported by a reduced number of Members, the Users’ Meeting is supplemented or replaced by a Consortium Members’ Meeting which plays the role of a Board of Directors (e.g. the Eurosport Consortium).

## ■ 5. *EBU Permanent Services*

As chief executive officer, the Secretary General supervises all activities of the Permanent Services. With a current staff of around 250 people, the Permanent Services coordinate all activities of the EBU and manage the Union’s day-to-day operations, notably Eurovision and Euroradio.

There are six main departments in the Permanent Services, each headed by a Director (a Controller in the case of Finance and Administration):

- Radio Department;
- Television Department;
- Technical Department;
- Legal Department;
- Finance and Administration Department;
- Operations Department.

The functions of the first four Departments are generally similar to one another, i.e. to defend Members’ interests within the framework of the Professional Association, and to assist them with projects and studies.

The Finance and Administration Department now has a strengthened role. One of its major projects is to implement new management and control tools which, among other things, will increase financial transparency for the Members and the Permanent Services.

The newly-formed Operations Department is the largest department. Its main function is to direct the Eurovision Control Centre (EVC) and the other television operations centres that have been set up (see *Section 3.2.*). Before the reforms, functions of the Operations Department were shared between the old Television Department and the old Technical Department.

As Radio operations are on a relatively small scale, this activity remains within the Radio Department, under the authority of the Director of Radio.



## 6. Organization of EBU activities in the Technical Sector

The EBU has a substantial infrastructure of technical groups which are composed of specialists, experts and managers. Each group analyses particular technical areas, makes recommendations and takes action to trigger laboratory studies, experiments, field trials or re-equipment programmes. The groups are composed of selected staff from the Technical Department and representatives from the member organizations. The coordination is done by the EBU staff.

The combination of EBU Members and staff from the Permanent Services is recognized throughout the broadcast technology fraternity as one of the most influential single forces in new media developments in the world. No-one can predict with certainty what tomorrow's radio and television world will be like. However, it is most likely to include Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), digital television broadcasting (DVB) and HDTV – all of which are being very actively pursued by the EBU's technical sector.

### 6.1. Adaptation to circumstances

The changes in the audiovisual media environment that were noted in the introduction have had a direct impact on the technical study programme of the EBU, not only in terms of the topics under scrutiny but also the manner in which the Union has been able to contribute.

There has been rapid growth of European collaborative projects in the past decade<sup>1</sup>, causing many of the EBU Members to re-orientate their activities towards direct commercial participation in these projects. Consequently, the EBU Technical Committee now finds itself with a revised role, not as primary research coordinator as in the past, but as defender of the interests of the global EBU membership – even, perhaps, in opposition to the views of certain of its own Members. In effect, the EBU participates in these projects as either a partner or a sponsor, as the representative of the collective membership. This means that member organizations which are making direct contributions can exploit them also for the collective benefit, and those which would otherwise not be involved can still seek to influence technological developments at the highest level.

1. See the article starting on page 32.

## Terms of reference

### EBU Technical Assembly

The main tasks of the Technical Assembly are:

- To provide a forum for the exchange of experience and information in the technical domain among its members.
- To organize professional discussions on themes of relevance to activities in the technical sector.
- To offer guidance to the Technical Committee on the policy to be followed by the EBU in technical matters.
- To elect thirteen members of the Technical Committee, including its chairman and two vice-chairmen, in accordance with the election procedure adopted for members of the Union's Administrative Council and its President and Vice-Presidents subject to the provision of Articles 7 & 10 of the Statutes.

Figure 2  
Terms of reference of  
the EBU Technical  
Assembly.

One element of the former EBU role which has remained – and which is indeed gathering strength – is the representation of Members' interests in dealings with the international and European technical standardization bodies. The EBU's expertise continues to be recognized at the highest levels in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for example. Furthermore, the EBU's partnership with the European Telecommunication Standards Institute (ETSI) is on the point of being reinforced through the extension of the EBU/ETSI Joint Technical Committee (JTC) to embrace CENELEC, for the standardization of broadcast-related consumer products. In an era of increasing fragmentation and deregulation, this collective role of the EBU vis-à-vis the world's regulatory bodies seems destined to remain as a cornerstone of the Union's technical activity.

### 6.2. Technical Assembly

The Technical Assembly (formerly the Technical Committee) is an annual gathering open to Technical Directors or those responsible for the technical policy in each Member organization. The terms of reference of the Technical Assembly are given in *Fig. 2*.

Every two years, the Technical Assembly elects 13 members to the Technical Committee which sits three times a year.



## Terms of reference

### EBU Technical Committee

1. The Technical Committee has a membership of 13 members, who are elected biennially, for a two year term, by the Technical Assembly of the EBU Members.
2. The technical Committee has a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen who are also elected by the Technical Assembly at the same time as the above.
3. The Technical Committee is empowered to take all the necessary measures in the collective interest of EBU Members, including the establishment of technical activities, policy, document approval, lobbying, etc.
4. To plan technical activities of the EBU, with regard to technological innovation and evolution, and to initiate studies and projects accordingly.
5. The Technical Committee shall maintain close relations with the Radio and Television Committees and recommend and repond to suggestions of projects of a strategic and/or multidisciplinary nature.
6. The Technical Committee must provide the Technical Assembly with a full report of the activities and actions taken by the Technical Committee at the annual Technical Assembly.
7. The Technical Committee shall appoint the Chairmen and Members of the Management Committees.
8. Coordinate and harmonise the work of Management Committees (with special emphasis on the setting of priorities).
9. The Technical Committee should recommend one Member for each of the Radio and Television Committees.

#### Production Technology Management Committee

1. To organize and supervise collective activities in technical operations areas of EBU Members, such as television and radio production equipment practice and maintenance, SNG, and teletext.
2. To organize collective activities in the broad field of training on behalf of EBU Members.
3. To form Project Groups to undertake the appropriate studies.
4. To provide regular progress reports to the Technical Committee, to respond to requests from the Technical Committee, and to identify and propose to the Technical Committee new work areas as the need arises.
5. The Membership of the PMC is appointed by the Technical Committee for a two-year term.
6. To organize meetings, (workshops, seminars, etc.) in order to inform and consult all Members in relation to the mandate of the Committee.

#### Broadcasting Systems Management Committee

1. To organize and supervise collective activities in broadcast system research and development (including all distribution systems) and frequency planning.
2. To arrange where possible and advantageous, Project Groups which form the nucleus of funded European collaborative projects in the Eureka, RACE, or other series.
3. To form Project Groups to undertake the appropriate studies.
4. To contribute to the work of CEPT, the ITU and other relevant international organizations.
5. To provide regular progress reports to the Technical Committee, to respond to requests from the Technical Committees, and to suggest new areas where events suggest work should be undertaken.
6. The membership of the BMC is appointed by the Technical Committee for a two-year term.
7. To organize meetings (workshops, seminars, etc.) in order to inform and consult all Members in relation to the mandate of the Committee.

#### Network Development Committee

1. To organize and supervise studies and other activities which can be of value to the future development and operation of the Eurovision and Euroradio networks.
2. To propose to the Technical Committee new areas that could usefully be explored to increase the EBU network revenue, to act on tasks proposed by the Technical Committee and when requested to prepare reports and submissions for the Television and Radio Committees and the Network Finance Policy Group.
3. To form Project Groups to undertake appropriate studies.
4. The members of the NDC are appointed by the Technical Committee with a two-year term.
5. To organize meetings, (workshops, seminars, etc.) in order to inform and consult all Members in relation to the mandate of the Committees.
6. Draft relevant contributions to international standardization bodies.

Figure 3  
Terms of reference of the EBU  
Technical Committee and its three  
Management Committees.

### ■ 6.3. *Technical Committee*

The Technical Committee reports directly to the Administrative Council and works in close liaison with the Radio and Television Committees. Its terms of reference are given in *Fig. 3*.

Because of the wide range of studies, projects and expertise involved in the technical sector, the Technical Committee appoints and oversees three Management Committees, each of which is responsible for a specific development area.

### ■ 6.4. *Management Committees*

The three Management Committees that report to the Technical Committee are as follows:

- Production Technology Management Committee (PMC);
- Broadcasting Systems Management Committee (BMC);
- EBU Network Development Committee (NDC).

The Technical Committee appoints the chairman and members of each Management Committee on a biennial basis, defines their terms of reference (see *Fig. 3*) and offers them guidelines. Reports that have been prepared by the Management Committees are approved twice each year by the Technical Committee, or more often if required.

Each Management Committee proposes a programme of work, together with an “order of priority”, which has to be approved by the Technical Committee. When approval has been given to a programme of work, the Management Committees establish Project Groups to undertake projects and studies.

### ■ 6.5. *Project Groups*

Each Project Group has a Project Manager who is appointed by the relevant Management Committee. Group membership is kept to an absolute minimum and only comprises experts in the relevant fields. Each Project Group is given precise terms of reference, a fixed budget and a time limit by which the work must be completed.

In all cases, the Management Committees determine the needs, the benefits and the costs associated with each proposed project, before approval is granted. They also determine the priority attached to each project and continually review the work to ensure timely and efficient completion of the project.

## ■ 7. *Conclusions*

The international alliances that are being formed among commercial broadcasters, sometimes reinforced by telecom and computer enterprises, are only the precursors of tomorrow’s audiovisual landscape. While this landscape will offer vast potential for public service broadcasters, it is likely to create inequalities and even exclusions. Thus, the public service broadcasters – whose activities are normally confined to within their own country or region – must arm themselves with the tools to meet this competition. In that context, cooperation between public service broadcasters, under the umbrella of the EBU, constitutes the tool *par excellence*.

To enable the EBU to represent the Members’ interests in the most efficient manner, it has re-organized its activities into three key sectors: the Professional Association, Operational activities, and Study and Development projects. While the operational activities will be expected to become self-financing, the other two sectors – funded by the Members – should strengthen the EBU’s role in representing the interests of all Members. As part of the economic savings demanded by Members, the Permanent Services have been streamlined and a strengthened role has been given to the Finance and Administration Department; a new system to increase financial transparency for the Members and the Permanent Services will shortly be put in place.

The wide-ranging measures outlined here are designed to ensure that the EBU membership is collectively and individually in a better position to face up to the difficulties that lie ahead. Not un-naturally, there are some signs of resistance to the changes. There is a particular concern that, whilst the senior managers of the member organizations have well understood the reasons for changes and generally support them, there remains much to be done to convince and persuade middle managers that the changes are for the better.