

Radio News in the Slovak Republic in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The present scientific study focuses on the issue of radio news in the 21st century. The ambition is to evaluate, at the time of writing this study, the current situation concerning news coverage in the most listened radio entities in the Slovak Republic. In this context, the basic characteristics of a public radio broadcaster and a private radio entity are also described. The results focus on the current state of radio news and its diverse interpretation in selected radio entities in Slovakia based on quantitative content analysis. The study details information on the nature of broadcast news in our research sample of the main news programmes of a public and a private radio broadcaster in Slovakia. It also sets out research questions and hypotheses focusing on the representation of news with a domestic and foreign focus, as well as which foreign countries dominate the foreign news coverage, and the themes in the foreign news coverage. The study summarizes the results of the research, generalizes the data, and also formulates conclusions that define radio news in the 21st century. The research section also includes interviews with executives from two selected media entities to support the results of the quantitative content analysis.

Keywords: news, radio, Rádio Expres, Rádio Slovensko, report

1. Introduction

“The relation between radio and its public has always been based on a mutual act of faith: radio does not know its listeners, it never saw them and, for a long time, it never heard from them. Radio and its listeners have always been strangers to each other. Listeners never knew who the voices on the radio belonged to.” (Bonini, 2014, p. 1) Despite the fact that radio has a worldwide history of more than a century, in our territory (meaning the territory of the current Slovak Republic) the methods of radio communication have changed considerably over the decades. From a sporadic broadcast of a few hours during the day focused on news or culture or entertainment, it (radio communication) has reached the stage where it is a daily and all-day companion of millions of people in our country.

Brečka, Ondrášik and Keklak (2010, p. 12) state that the media system in Slovakia has undergone a complicated development, marked by global tendencies and domestic specificities. Since the time when radio broadcasting was primarily directed by the state under the auspices of Slovak or Czechoslovak Radio, it has become the domain of many private entities in a relatively short period of time, compared to the previous period, from 1923 to 1990. In our country, the dual broadcasting system came into practice in 1991, two years after the fall of the communist regime, i.e. two years after the Velvet Revolution. At the end of October of that year, the Federal Assembly adopted Law No. 468/1991 Coll. on the Operation of Radio and Television Broadcasting. Chudinová and Lehoczská (2005, p. 100) note that Czechoslovakia was the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to adopt such a law. At that time, the law said that the main mission of broadcasters was to serve the public interest, to contribute to the formation of a democratic society, to reflect its pluralism of opinion, in particular by ensuring that their broadcasts do not take into account unilaterally only one particular viewpoint, one religion or worldview, the interest of one political party, movement, group or section of society (Chudinová & Lehoczská, 2007, p. 96). The authors add that it was this legal norm, as amended, that created the framework for dual broadcasting (Chudinová & Lehoczská, 2005, p. 100). This means that it has also opened up space for private enterprise in the field of radio broadcasting. In other words, this legal provision allows for and puts into practice the parallel existence of statutory and licensed broadcasters. Gažicová (2011, p. 56) adds that the Slovak Public Service Media was established as a successor media after the dissolution of the then Czechoslovak Republic.

Brečka (2009, p. 83) adds that on the basis of this law and the opening of the business environment also in the media industry, the number of radio stations has grown considerably. Private entities reacted quite quickly to the politicians'

move – new media entities started to emerge almost immediately.

Hudíková and Habiňáková (2018, p. 21) note that in 1990, for the first time in history, a private entity began broadcasting on our territory. It was *Fun Rádio. Rádio Rock FM* also came on the scene, which, according to the authors, was the first radio station to broadcast in Slovakia 24 hours a day. Chudinová and Lehoczská (2005, p. 158) add that two years before the collapse of Czechoslovakia, the regionally based Regina also started broadcasting. Both radios under the auspices of Slovak Radio. Subsequently, *Rádio Twist* also entered the Slovak radio market (Hudíková & Habiňáková, 2018, p. 21).

With the advent of democracy, the opening of the business environment and borders, or the growing globalization (Francistyová, 2023), new “players” are entering the Slovak market. At the turn of the millennium, *Rádio Expres*, which at that time was specified for transport, started broadcasting. The authors add that gradually radio stations such as *Jemné, Európa 2, Rádio Vlna, Rádio Anténa Rock* or the religiously based *Rádio Lumen* also entered the Slovak radio market (Hudíková & Habiňáková, 2018, p. 21). Over time, some of them disappeared or stopped broadcasting. With technical progress comes internet broadcasting (Chudinová & Lehoczská, 2005, p. 159). Even before the introduction of the dual broadcasting system into practice and before the monopoly radio environment changed, Slovak Radio was the most listened to. Which is understandable, as there was no alternative. Since the advent of private entities, the situation has changed. The most listened to radio station is *Rádio Expres*, which has held the top spot for several years. The second most listened to radio station is one of the Slovak Radio’s circuits, *Rádio Slovensko*. The third position belongs to *Fun Rádio* (Median SK, 2023). The above data shows that public radio has long since lost its leading position, or its position as the most listened to station. “*One of the reasons why radio has continued to remain popular in the digital world is that it has become an effective tool for boosting online sales. Advertisers, marketers, and business people have come to rely on radio to drive leads towards the web, as well as to promote and increase organic search. Radio has created a circle of attraction from advertisers mainly due to its relative low cost, immediacy, and extensive reach.*” (Kuyucu, 2019, p. 55)

1.1 Characteristic Features of Radio News

In the broadest and most general terms, Veľas (2000, p. 5) writes that the role of journalism itself is to report on current events, but also to take an interest in new things happening at home and in the world. In this context, the author adds that news communicates and passes on all these facts and realities. Velas emphasises that the news itself brings out the most important facts about these events. Reporting, according to McQuail (2007, p. 299), is a fundamental activity that defines a significant part of journalism. Informing the general public about important, beneficial, interesting, not/successful tragic, compelling and other facts this is how Kačincová Predmerská (2017, p. 23) defines reporting and complements the aforementioned knowledge. Further, it can be argued that news orientates media recipients in current events by registering these events. The things that people read, hear, and see in different media have an impact on how they perceive the European Union and the European Parliament. This Flash Eurobarometer (2022) offers a thorough examination of consumers’ media consumption patterns, taking into account both offline and internet media. Ipsos European Public Affairs conducted interviews with a representative sample of EU residents, 15 years of age and older, in each of the EU’s 27 member states (European Parliament, 2022, “Background” section). According to this specific Eurobarometer study (2022, “Abstract” section), European residents trust conventional broadcast and print media as news sources more than internet news outlets. 75% of people say that television is their main source of news, and this is especially true for older generations. The written press is the least trusted news source in the EU (49%), followed by commercial TV and radio stations (27%), and public TV and radio stations (49%). The European Union was recently mentioned in the news, on the internet, on television, or on the radio, according to 72% of all respondents.

The main goal of news itself, not only radio news, is to convey information about the current event or to update it. It follows logically that the journalist’s task in this context is to bring the information to the recipient of the communication in a form or format that he or she can understand. The message should therefore be clear, unambiguous and as comprehensible as possible. This is confirmed by the words of Andrea Bugošová, presented at lectures at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, that what a journalist wants to say with his/her news item should be understood by both a university professor and a senior citizen from remote parts of the country. From common knowledge and our experience, in the broadest and most general terms, it can be argued that news reporting answers a number of basic questions about the event the journalist is reporting on or communicating – Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How?, Why?. Some experts add a seventh question: Slovák (1975, p. 47) – With what result?, Ruß-Mohl (2005, p. 51) – From where? or Maršík (2011, p. 66) – By whose cause? We cannot forget that objectivity is an essential and inherent characteristic that must not be absent from news reporting under any circumstances. Our claims are supported and complemented by theorists such as Folrichová and Tušer (2001, p. 4) themselves. In particular, the latter mentions six characteristics of news reporting. First and foremost is timeliness, which should be not only temporal but also social. Next, professionalism must not be lacking, which is reflected in the

linguistic and formal quality of the contribution, but also in a professional approach or correct form. It also mentions objectivity or responsiveness, which the author describes as the ability to react promptly to events. The last characteristic, according to him, is clarity. Television and radio news stories must have these attributes: writing style should be conversational. Each sentence should be brief and contain only one idea. Shorter sentences are better in broadcast news writing. Each sentence should focus on one particular idea. If you give your audience too much information, your audience cannot take it in. Choose words that are familiar to everyone. The most important attribute for writing for “the ear” is to read the story aloud (Telg & Lundy, 2015, p. 1). The radio news item is brief and straightforward. It has 5-6 phrases that provide a summary of the action or occurrence. The news item is delivered by the presenter at a reasonable pace, which aids in listeners’ comprehension. Each phrase in the radio news item contains only one notion. Complex facts and numbers are not used. While the print news article provides in-depth information on the event’s unfolding. Facts and data are used to provide a detailed analysis of the remarks made by famous persons and prominent people. The print news has an advantage over the broadcast news since it provides the news in a written form and can be referred to anytime necessary. The broadcast news is not tangible and cannot be read again (Khandelwal, Tripathi & Sahdeva, 2021, p. 7). When working in radio, usually you cooperate with a respondent. We need to be polite, introduce ourselves, radio and the topic we’re working on. We assure him that the recording does or does not go into the broadcast directly and explain all details (Bôtošová & Furtáková, 2023, p. 97).

1.2 Public Service Broadcasting and Private Broadcasting in Slovakia

The public broadcaster *RTVS (Radio and Television of Slovakia)* in the Slovak Republic provides mass media services to the public. Broadcasting is defined by Act No. 532/2010 Coll. on Radio and Television of Slovakia and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts. The legal norm defines the status, mission, tasks and activities of Radio and Television of Slovakia, its bodies and the management and financing of *Radio and Television of Slovakia*. By law, Slovak Radio is obliged to broadcast on at least five full-screen circuits. Each of them differs in content. It follows logically that the target audience is also different from one circuit to another. Together, they provide all the elements of public access required by law in the context of the *RTVS Act (Act 532/2010)*. In total, Slovak Radio offers nine programme services, three of which are broadcast only on the Internet. *Rádio Slovensko* is the most listened to circuit under the auspices of Slovak Radio or *RTVS* (Median SK, 2023). Chudinová and Lehoczka (2005, p. 112) write that the *Rádio Slovensko* programme circuit is aimed at listeners aged 25 to 49. They add that a characteristic feature has also become the *Rádiožurnál*, which is broadcast, at the time of writing, four times a day. It is a summary news programme with radio reports, short reports or telephone calls.

Rádio Expres is the most listened radio station in the Slovak Republic (Teraz.sk, 2022). It has held its primacy for many years (Brečka, Keklak & Ondrášik, 2010, p. 29). Its history dates back to 2000. It was originally created with a specification for traffic service (Habiňáková & Hudíková, 2018, p. 21). The popularity of *Rádio Expres* grew over time, and so did the way and what it broadcast. Brečka, Ondrášik and Keklak (2010, p. 30) report that the content began to be unified. The authors describe this process as emphasizing the music part of the broadcast, with „the format of news and information becoming almost irrelevant“. The authors add that it was the rise of *Rádio Expres* that became so noticeable that other radio stations began to copy these trends. In its programming structure it also has „*Veľké správy Rádia Expres*“, which is broadcast three times a day. It is the station’s main news program.

2. Method

The primary objective of this study is to determine, on the basis of the theoretical background and the results of quantitative research, how the most listened to radio stations in the Slovak Republic interpret current events at home and in the world in the main news programmes in the context of the selection of topics, their processing, inclusion in the broadcast or different interpretation. For example, with this method we can determine how much news a particular media outlet has published, or which topics are preferred within journalism. The advantage of this type of research is that the results are statistically tested, measurable and accurate. This makes them difficult to question (Mináriková et al., 2023, p. 16). At the same time:

- On the basis of quantitative research methods to evaluate the main selected news programmes of the public *Rádio Slovensko* and the private *Rádio Expres*.
- Evaluate and formulate the news coverage, its interpretation in relation to other facts in the context of current events.

The research material for this study is the main news programmes of the public broadcaster *Rádia Slovensko*, *Rádiožurnál*, and *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*. The individual editions will be monitored for a period of 14 days from 2nd November 2022 to 15th November 2022. The choice of the media monitored was quite clear. The summary news programme was the priority criterion. The commercial *Rádio Expres*, or the entity authorised to broadcast under the licence, and the public service *Rádio Slovensko*, under the auspices of *RTVS*, are the only radio stations offering such a summary.

The time frame was determined on the basis of a two-stage random selection. We divided the year into 12 parts, with each number, from one to 12, corresponding to a specific month. The numbers were assigned to each month based on chronological order. Based on the random number generator, we arrived at the number 11, which in this case corresponded to November. In the second phase, we followed a similar style. A random number generator was used to specify the requirements, with the range bordering numbers one to 30 – corresponding to the number of days in a given month. We understood the number selected by the random number generator to be the day on which the 14-day period during which we would monitor the events in question would begin.

We use quantitative content analysis in our scientific research. Scherer (2004, p. 30) considers it as a method that is suitable for a systematic and intersubjectively verifiable description of communicative contents based on questions posed scientifically. The above facts can be understood to mean that every media-mediated statement can be processed in the same way or that other scientists, following the same steps in investigating the same problem, would arrive at identical results. Quantitative content analysis is also, in his view, characterised by a high degree of structuration, which is automatically associated with a high degree of verifiability (Scherer, 2004, pp. 29-34). Trampota and Vojtěchovská (2010, p. 103) come to a similar conclusion, arguing that quantitative content analysis leads the researcher to independent results. These, they say, can be clearly written in various tables and graphs. Hendl (2008, p. 47) adds that the straightforward collection of, often numerical, data and its rapid analysis using the technical achievements of modern times, can be quickly processed. He considers this to be an advantage. However, Czech theorists Trampota and Vojtěchovská (2010, p. 110), for example, consider it a negative that it provides hard data without explanation.

In the case of using quantitative content analysis, we will use a coding book. Due to the fact that a suitable coding has already been used in the past by Greguš and Kačincová Predmerská (2020, pp. 84-102), we will conduct the research part using the already developed coding. Its existing and verified functionality gives the assumption of relevant, structured and intersubjectively verifiable independent results. Because of the breadth of scholarly inquiry in operationalizing the concepts, we list only a few items:

- **Variable** – according to Trampota and Vojtěchovská (2010, p. 114), it is an observed property, characteristic feature or aspect of coding units not neglected in content analysis, which can take on several categories.
- **Coding unit** – for the purposes of this thesis, it is the author's speech broadcasted in the monitored main news programmes of *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres*. Specifically, these are short reports, flash reports, extended reports, radio reports, etc. These are informative contents that will be heard in individual editions. In our case, announcements and sign-offs of presenters, prelims between contributions or weather cannot be considered as a coding unit.
- **Domestic contribution** – this is an authorial expression of informative content in the form of a short, flash, extended or any other news, or a report, which appears in the broadcast of a summary news programme, where the central characteristic feature is that the topic is immediately related to the Slovak Republic or talks about events on the territory of Slovakia.
- **Foreign contribution** – this is an author's expression of informative content in the form of a short, flash, extended or any other news, or report, which appears in the broadcast of a summary news programme, where the central characteristic feature is that the topic does not immediately take place on the territory of the Slovak Republic, or talks about events outside Slovakia.

Based on the variables identified and the research objective, we formulate several research questions and hypotheses:

- **H₁**: Domestic news stories have a majority representation in the broadcasts of both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* compared to foreign news stories.
- **H₂**: In the main news broadcasts of both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres*, the G7 countries and Russia dominate (except for the Slovak Republic).
- **H₃**: The main news programmes of both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* are dominated by stories focused on politics (national, international and regional).

3. Results

In the period monitored and selected by random two-phase sampling, 259 news contents were analysed. Most of them were broadcast by the public service media *Slovenský rozhlas*, mainly in *Rádio Slovensko* (Note 1). Their number was 204. Private broadcaster providing radio services under licence, *Rádio Expres*, during the reporting period aired in *Veľké správy Rádia Expres* 55 news contents in total. The number of news items broadcast reflects several facts. First of all, *Rádio Slovensko* broadcast four more news programmes than *Rádio Expres*. This means that during the fourteen-day period under review, *Rádio Slovensko* broadcast the same number of main news programmes at midday. *Rádio Expres*

broadcasted ten of them. On weekends there were no *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*. The reason for this is the days off. It is not only on Saturdays and Sundays that radio broadcasters have a different regime than on weekdays.

The number of main news programmes broadcast reflects, not least, the number of topics that the reporters were able to cover. While in the case of *Rádio Slovensko* it was on average 14.57 stories/news per main news programme, *Rádio Expres* aired 5.5. However, these facts can also be seen in a broader context.

While the *Rádiožurnál at 12* lasts around 27 minutes (including sport and weather, which was not the subject of the research), *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*, with an average length of around nine minutes, are up to three times shorter (also taking into account sport and weather, which was also not the subject of the research). Despite this, Slovak Radio broadcast almost four times as much news content as *Rádio Expres*.

3.1 Geographical Coverage of Monitored News Content

During the two-week reporting period from November 2nd, 2022 to November 15th, 2022, we had 259 pieces of news content. Their inclusion in the broadcast and the actual selection from the large amount of information depended on a number of people. Most of the news content broadcast by the public Slovak Radio was of a domestic nature. It was therefore news from Slovakia, or news content that was directly related to the Slovak Republic. Out of a total of 204, the number of messages we characterised as “domestic” was 115. The rest, 89, of the news content was from abroad, or the main topics of these reports were events beyond Slovakia’s borders. *Veľké správy Rádia Expres* during the reference period was broadcast by 55 news contents. Similarly to the case of Slovak Radio, *Rádio Expres* had a majority of news from home in its main news programme at midday. Compared to *Rádiožurnál*, however, several differences can be noted. One of the biggest ones is the fact that *Rádio Slovensko* broadcast 1.29 times more news from home than from the world. *Veľké správy Rádia Expres* had more than twice the proportion of news content characterised as domestic compared to those from the world. In total, there were 37 news stories. There were 18 from abroad, a 2.05-fold increase. The territorial characteristics of the news content are demonstrated in Diagram 1.

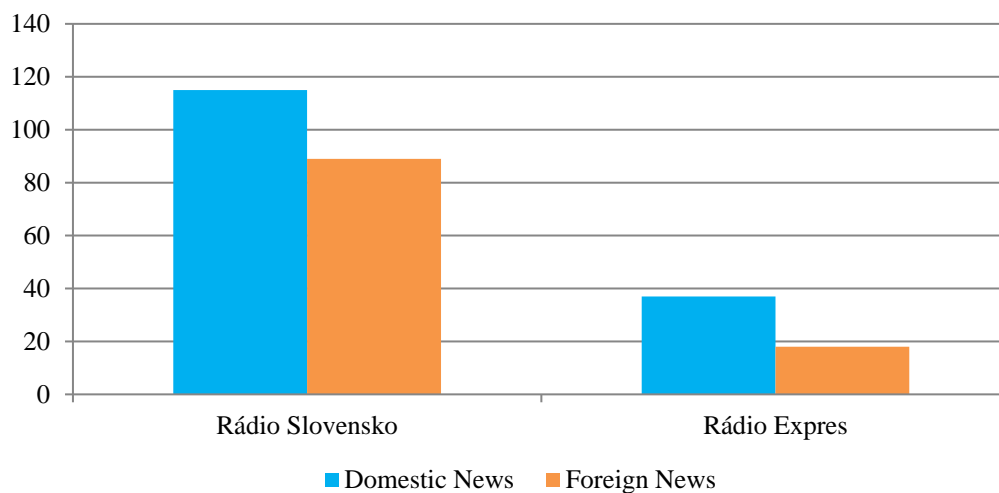


Diagram 1. Territorial Characteristics of News Content

Although this is a rather abysmal difference, it needs to be read in a broader context. Aside from the above-mentioned facts made clear by the heads of the edition, it is in the broadest and most general terms about the time space given to the news programmes themselves. The 27-minute *Rádiožurnál* gives far more room for editors to cover a greater range of topics than the 9-minute *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*. However, one should not forget about the characteristics, the target group or the history of the medium itself.

In the case of *Rádiožurnál*, after conducting the research, we found that it broadcasted the most news during the reference period, the information of which was related to Russia. There were 39 of them. Ukraine was the second most mentioned, or the central country of each news content, thirty-four times in total. This was followed by the USA, which featured in eighteen reports. China appeared in eight cases. Five times, the information was directly related to Iran, the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Egypt and Italy were reported four times. Germany, Turkey, the DPRK, South Korea and France were central actors in three news contents. The Czech Republic, Israel, Poland, Armenia and Slovenia were mentioned twice in the reporting period. The remaining countries mentioned only once in the record sheet for *Rádio Slovensko* were Vietnam, Denmark,

Japan, Finland, Sweden, Scotland, Belarus, Hungary, Peru, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Australia, Belgium, Syria, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Mali and Qatar. One time, the information covered the whole world, excluding no region or country. The following pie chart visually displays how many times and how often the countries listed above appeared in total on *Rádio Slovensko's* main news programme at midday during the period under review. A more detailed elaboration of the above facts is illustrated in Diagram 2.

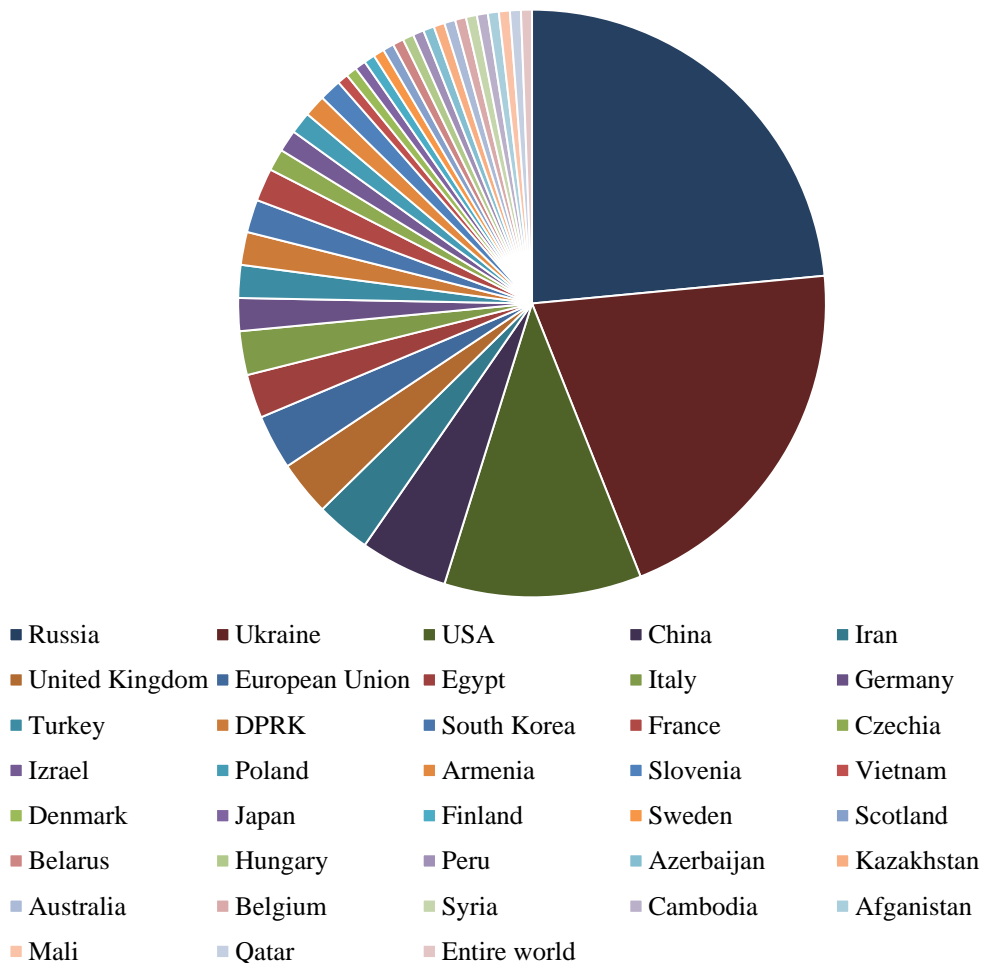


Diagram 2. Countries Covered by the News Content

Velké správy Rádio Expres devoted less space to foreign news than the public broadcaster. Russia was the most frequently mentioned country, up to ten times. Ukraine was mentioned nine times. The European Union four times and the United States twice. The Czech Republic, Poland and Germany were mentioned once in the news content. The countries covered in the news content of *Velké správy Rádio Expres* are presented in Diagram 3.

Several facts can be gleaned from the above. Apart from the fact that *Rádiožurnál at 12* gives more space to foreign topics, not only for reasons of time, but especially for public service reasons, for example, the fact that it has several collaborators abroad who process news content for the public service media on a daily basis.

The above fact gives Slovak Radio more flexibility in reporting on/about the countries where the foreign reporter is located. In addition, this person also has a different perspective on social events; taking into account the fact that he or she lives there. This fact gives Slovak Radio the opportunity to cover even seemingly less important topics, but all the more interesting, for example. Among other things, this results from experience.

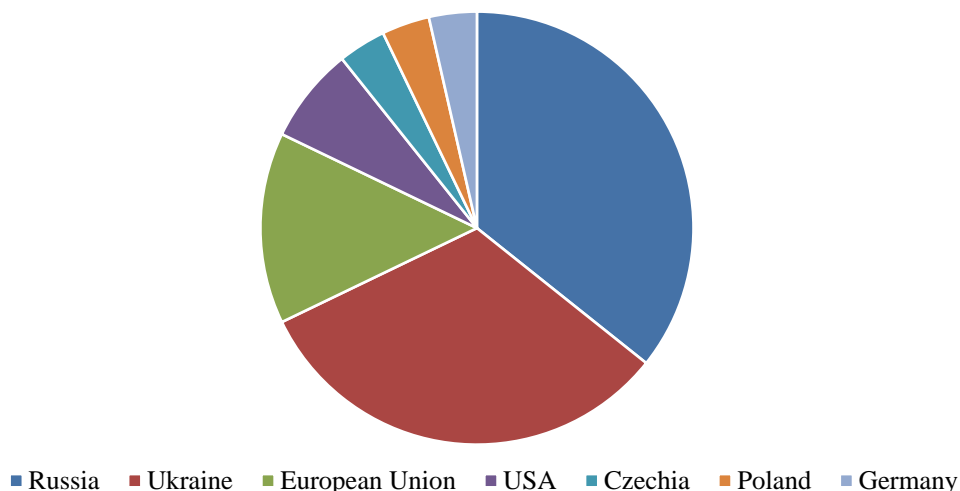


Diagram 3. Countries Covered by *Velké správy Rádia Expres*

3.2 Thematic Composition of Monitored “Foreign” News Content

There were 89 news contents characterised as foreign broadcast by *Radiožurnál*. In most of them, international armed conflict was the central topic of the news. Specifically, it was Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine. International politics was the main topic twenty-one times, domestic politics fifteen times. Recreational or other news made it into the main Slovak Radio news programme seven times. The editors covered economic or economic topics and also the environment with ecology.

Accidents, misfortunes and crime news were featured four times, as well as social issues and health. Attacks and terrorist attacks were the topic twice. In one case, foreign correspondents covered science and technology. Thus, it follows that the most frequent information the listeners learned was about international armed conflicts. As the interview with Jana Drábeková shows, the reason for this is primarily the significance of this event. It is also a war conflict beyond the borders of the Slovak Republic. Overall, *Radiožurnál* covered this topic in 25.84% of the other foreign topics. This is more than a quarter. According to the staff responsible for broadcasting, international politics was slightly less important. It was given space in the broadcasts in 23.60% of the cases. Domestic foreign policy of selected countries was discussed in 16.85% of the stories. The above data is also illustrated in Diagram 4.

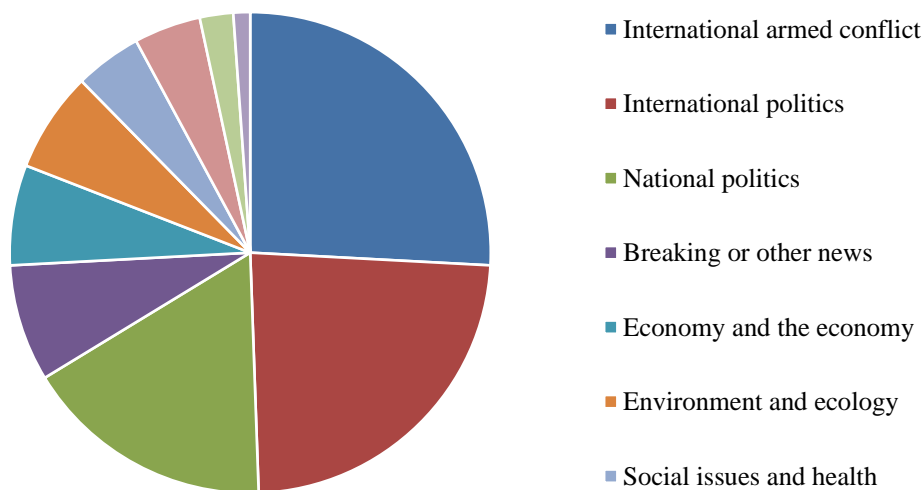


Diagram 4. Thematic Composition of the Foreign News Content of *Radiožurnál*

Foreign topics were covered by *Velké správy Rádia Expres* eighteen times out of a possible 55 news contents. Similarly to Slovak Radio, *Radio Expres* gave the most space to topics dealing with international armed conflict. The reasons for this are the facts mentioned in the paragraph above. The thematic composition of the “foreign” news content of *Velké správy Rádia Expres* is also indicated in Diagram 5.

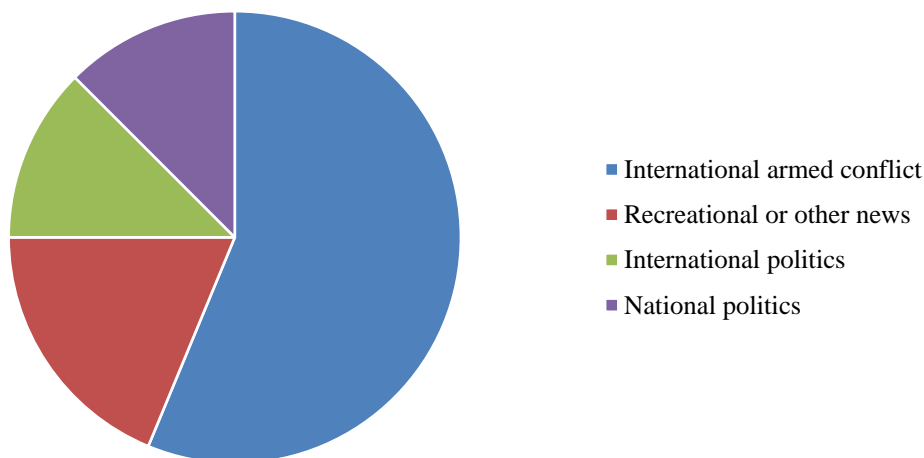


Diagram 5. Thematic Composition of the Foreign News Content of the *Velké správy Rádia Expres*

As many as 50% of all the foreign contributions broadcast were constructed in connection with this topic, and thus there were nine of them. Three times, recreational or other themes were broadcast. This accounted for 17% of the total airtime among foreign news. Twice, media staff covered international and domestic politics, accounting for 11%. Economic and economic topics were given space once, and news staff also chose to provide listeners with information on the environment and ecology once.

Having evaluated the thematic characteristics of foreign news content, it can be concluded that there are overlaps in key facts. Both broadcasters devoted the most time, gave the most space, to international armed conflicts. In all cases, the information was related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As with the “from abroad” stories, a similar trend can be seen in domestic news content. The content composition of *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* is similar. This means that the two teams involved in the preparation of the main news programme at midday, were apparently going through an undifferentiated decision-making process. In the context of the duty of news reporting to respond to current events, it can also be noted that both *Rádiožurnál* and *Velké správy Rádia Expres* selected topics corresponding to the public’s demand to learn new information.

4. Discussion

The collected data, their analysis and the implementation of the research itself give room for the verification of the hypotheses. The total number of research questions was five. This reflects the same number of scientific assumptions, i.e. hypotheses.

H₁: Domestic contributions have a majority in both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* compared to foreign contributions.

Based on the analysis of the data obtained, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis **was confirmed**. The radio magazine broadcasted a total of 204 news contents during the period under study. The majority of them, i.e. 115, were “domestic”. Thus, Slovak Radio broadcast 1.29 times more news from home than from the world in the main news programme at noon from 2 November 2022 to 15 November of the same year. *Velké správy Rádia Expres* broadcast a total of 55 news items. Thirty-seven of these were described as domestic. Compared to the eighteen foreign ones, this is a 2.05-fold increase. This shows that both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* broadcast more domestic news than foreign news. In other words, domestic news has a majority in the main news programmes at midday.

H₂: The main news broadcasts of both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* are dominated (apart from the Slovak Republic) by the G7 countries and Russia.

Based on the information from the conducted research, it can be concluded that the second hypothesis **was not confirmed**. Despite the fact that Russia, mentioned in the hypothesis, was the country around which the central themes of the news content unfolded the most in the case of both *Rádiožurnál* and *Velké správy Rádia Expres*, the remaining, most mentioned countries are not part of the grouping of the world’s most powerful economies, i.e. the G7 group. *Rádio Slovensko* mentioned it thirty-nine times in the main news programmes at midday. *Rádio Expres* aired stories about Russia ten times. In the case of *Rádiožurnál*, the second most frequently mentioned country was the country located east of the borders of the Slovak Republic, i.e. Ukraine. The data showed that *Rádio Expres* was identical. While the public broadcaster mentioned Slovakia’s eastern neighbour thirty-four times in the period under review, the private one mentioned it nine times. The remaining, most-mentioned countries in the Radio Journal were the United States of

America along with China. The U.S. was a central theme in eighteen stories, China in eight. *Rádio Expres* mentioned the European Union four times and the United States twice. Although the US is a member of the G7, China and the European Union do not meet this condition. Thus, the hypothesis was not confirmed.

H₃: The main news programmes of both *Rádio Slovensko* and *Rádio Expres* are dominated by stories focused on politics (national, international and regional).

The analysis of the collected data showed that the third hypothesis **was not confirmed**. *Rádio Slovensko* broadcasted 89 news from the world. Although international armed conflicts were the most frequent topic in the midday news, up to twenty-three times, the sum of news content discussing international, national and regional politics exceeded this number. The number of stories dealing with international politics was 21. National politics was covered by the public broadcaster fifteen times. This means that in total, journalists discussed politics outside the Slovak Republic on thirty-six occasions. Although the first part of the hypothesis proved to be true, the data showing the thematic focus of the foreign coverage of the *Veľké správy Rádio Expres* clearly indicate that the topic of international armed conflict appeared most often in the broadcasts, up to nine times. International and domestic politics were covered a total of four times by the journalists of this private media outlet.

The research itself, the collected data and their detailed analysis supplemented by the contemporary context, the real functioning in practice, together with the testimonies of the most responsible people who have been involved in the broadcasting of news content for decades in the renowned radio entities in the territory of the Slovak Republic, have shown several interesting facts.

The first is the fact that while the commercial entity *Rádio Expres*, which is the most listened to radio on the territory of Slovakia (Trend, 2023), devotes less time to news, the public broadcaster *Rádio Slovensko* remains in many ways true to its traditions. This is indicated by the testimony of Peter Palovič, but also by the very fact that the *Veľké správy Rádio Expres* does not get airtime on Saturdays and Sundays. This may be due to the dynamic times, which force these legal entities to change their broadcasting structure in the context of a saturated information market, but also in general in the sense of radio broadcasters, or in the sense of great competition, for example in the form of Internet portals. News itself, as the main building block of all radio broadcasting, must also adapt to the changes in some way.

It is *Rádiožurnál* that emerges as a show saturated with diverse news content, while the structure itself has remained almost unchanged for many years. Those in charge remain faithful to tradition, and informing the public about more or less important events is similar to what the public broadcaster has offered in the past. In this context, it is important to recall the history of Slovak Radio itself, which dates back to 1923.

The method of obtaining and verifying the facts, which are subsequently reported to the public, remains a matter of unforgettable importance. Despite the differences in the characteristics of the radio stations under study, in terms of being a public service and an entrepreneurial entity, both groups take great care in the way they broadcast information. However, the whole process of acquiring, verifying, combining, comparing and, last but not least, publishing information is important in this context.

The actual quality of the published and broadcast news content remains one of the most important factors for both shows under review. This is confirmed by the words of both news chiefs. Although at first glance it might seem that *Radiožurnál* is more likely to rely on quantity over quality, this may appear at first glance to be evident from the data, which shows that *Radiožurnál* broadcast almost four times as much news content over the period under review as *Veľké správy Rádio Expres*, as well as the number of noontime shows broadcast, of which *Rádio Slovensko* broadcast fourteen and *Rádio Slovensko* ten over the 14 days under review. The above facts, together with the testimony of Jana Drábeková (Note 7) confirm the seemingly complicated process of creating a news programme – from its planning, through the gathering of information to the final broadcast. *Rádio Slovensko* as a news circuit is also supported by foreign correspondents who are directly in Hungary, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom or the United States of America, and possibly by other collaborators in Ukraine, Spain, Greece or Italy. This also gives the public news service the opportunity to offer listeners a far greater range of information compared to *Rádio Expres*.

5. Conclusion

The fact remains that radio has been, is and probably will be one of the fastest media in terms of informing the public about current events. It is the speed at which these broadcasters are able to operate that gives them a relatively large competitive advantage. They are able to publish information virtually immediately, once it has been verified. The spoken word is all that is needed; no further audio or visual content is required. “*Radio is also a source for reliable local news in today’s communities. As other media channels try to regain the trust of the public, radio has stayed far from broadcasting and spreading fake news.*” (Kuyucu, 2019, p. 56)

Research has shown that trends in radio news are changing. A perfect indicator of this fact are two unconfirmed

hypotheses that were based on theoretical knowledge gained from different backgrounds – whether university, media or general. It turned out that public Slovak Radio has no need to shorten or in any way significantly interfere with established structures and practices. Hence the weaker ability to respond to the changing media environment. According to Jana Drábeková (Note 7) *Rádiožurnál* no changes are expected in the near future. However, apparent rigidity and inflexibility can be a great asset in this case. Tradition is, in fact, beginning to disappear in today's hectic times. In this context, the stability, regularity and constancy offered by the public service broadcaster gives listeners the assurance of stable and high-quality radio news.

“Digital platforms have changed the news. The consumption, distribution and production of news have altered fundamentally. The platforms provide a point of access to news – a function formerly performed by media companies.” (Wilding et al., 2018, p. 4) The private *Rádio Expres* is changing and adapting its news coverage to the times. Statements by Peter Palovič (Note 8) suggest that this broadcaster is working with the realities of the time, the current demands of the audience, and thus adapting to the market.

Rádio Slovensko and also *Rádio Expres* have a target group that is satisfied with the content they broadcast. This is reflected in the relatively similar listenership figures over the last period. The responsiveness to their demands also reflects this. Both entities are working with what is available to them and using it to their advantage, with neither taking steps that their listeners could not have anticipated or negatively surprised them. This is why fidelity to tradition in the form of *Rádiožurnál*, or on the other hand the changing and adapting news coverage in the *Veľké správy Rádio Expres*, need not mean anything negative.

Over time, however, the Achilles heel of radio news may become the processing of information itself and people's trust in the news content. *“Very low trust (27%) in news in general reflects decades of interference by business and political leaders. TV stations, including the public broadcaster RTVS, tend to enjoy relatively high levels of trust, whereas digital-only brands are less trusted, even when they have high reach (e.g. Topky). However, one digital-only brand, Aktuality, stands out for its high reach and relatively high trust.”* (Newman et al., 2023, p. 97) On the other hand, the Flash Eurobarometer (2022) showed that Slovaks trust traditional news sources the most. The most trusted news sources were public television and radio stations including their electronic versions, the press including its electronic version, as well as private television and radio stations with their electronic versions.

News is a public good because it fulfills needs that go beyond those of marketers and consumers. News organizations frequently have to publish their information on search engines and social media with little to no financial gain in order to get viewers. Additionally, news providers generate information that is more empathetic and shareable in order to conform to the demands of digital platforms (Wilding et al., 2018, p. 4). From the above we can see some trends, for example in minor qualitative changes in the broadcast of news programmes, but the essence remains unchanged. The reporting of events has been, is and will be the same – from gathering the facts to publishing them. During our research into news programmes, we conducted in-depth interviews with the staff in charge, with Jana Drábeková, Head of the *Rádiožurnál* edition, and Peter Palovič, Head of News and Traffic Service at *Rádio Expres*. The journalists gave a broader context to the issues discussed and supplemented the hard data with opinions and insights, along with the practices behind the radio coverage of the two most listened to radios in the Slovak Republic.

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Notes

Note 1. *Rádiožurnál o 12* is also broadcast on other broadcasting circuits than just *Radio Slovakia*. These include, for example, *Rádio Regina Západ*, *Regina Stred* and *Regina východ*.

Note 2. The article begins with the announcement of the moderator and ends with the announcement of the respective editor who covered the topic and processed it for the midday edition.

Note 3. An example is the war in Ukraine. Russia unleashed it on February 24th, 2022. Despite the fact that this is a fact that does not directly affect the citizens of the Slovak Republic, at the time it was seemingly the most important topic in world affairs, which resonated across all news channels and broadcastp.

Note 4. The opening of a news session is conceived as the seemingly most important contribution, which is made right at the beginning.

Note 5. Examples are, for example, the “news summaries”, “news from home”, “news from the world” in *Rádiožurnál* and the agency service in *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*.

Note 6. A perfect example is the “news overview” which also features 5 different news content. However, the editors, news anchors, or news anchors of a given show can fit the individual information on the topics into a few sentencep. It is thus common for the listener to receive information on up to five topics within two minutes; whereas for stories of 90 seconds or more, the listener receives information on one topic. This is similar, but to a lesser extent in terms of quantity, in the *Veľké správy Rádia Expres*.

Note 7. Interview with Jana Drábeková, head of the *Rádiožurnál* edition.

Note 8. Interview with Peter Palovič, Head of News and Traffic Service of *Rádia Expres*.