

# Duality of Estonian Public Service Media in reflection of the world and in positioning society<sup>1</sup>



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**ABSTRACT:** This article focuses on changes in the public service broadcasting system of Estonia in the 1990s and 2000s. We present our vision of the paradigms changed and of principles in the structure of Public Sphere. We determined four periods of paradigm change: 1991–1994 the period of anew defining Public Service; 1994–1999 the period of enlargement and aggressive structuring of Broadcasting Field; 2000–2007 the period of stabilisation and from 2007 the period of restructuring Public Service Broadcasting. We present our arguments in support of these periods. We offer the study of Estonian Public Service Broadcaster as a model case, one option of development of PSB in the 1990s and 2000s. The empirical basis of the article relies on the results of analyses of radio and TV programmes and audiences carried out by the researchers of University of Tartu.

**KEYWORDS:** public service broadcasting; commercial broadcasting, media policy, public sphere; Estonia



## INTRODUCTION

Following the fall of Soviet system, totalitarian state and centralized media control, the belief and hope in building in Estonia a western-style society with citizen-centric powerful media was well established. PSB has been nation uniting force and creator and carrier of strategic debate over the years in events like regaining inde-

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pendence, joining, the European Union and NATO, presidential elections, positioning global themes in Estonia and Estonia globally. The research has shown that public service broadcaster is seen as credible source of information and channel of quality. These have been aegis arguments in specific discussions of the necessity of PBS as such.

After rigid state control liberal market ideas were embraced in everything, including media field as belief prevailed of necessity of free will of an entrepreneur. This principle has led to commercial broadcasters having certain advantages while PSB has had constant problems with legal frame, leadership and financing. There while the expectations of PSB to fill the role of Public Service Media have retained in principle. Due to historical reasons the understanding of definition of PSB has been difficult for Estonian public and legislators alike. The understanding and defining is based on legislation and understandings of Estonian Republic before WWII and of Soviet occupation time, when the strong resistance content of media did fulfil the criteria of PSB in principle. The article will present the case of this duality.

The idealistic vision of PSB as a carrier of national culture has been stated both in law and in strategic plans of PSB. The legal network for PSB and Commercial Broadcasters (CB) is worked out by Parliament and Standing Committee and is based on the requirements and directives of the EU.

This idealistic vision does constantly encounter the everyday practicalities when legislators make explicit decisions of financing PSB or amend Broadcasting Act. In theory and in speeches most politicians acknowledge necessity of stable and professional PSB in a small country, and in decision making the viewpoint of politicians seeing PSB as a remnant of previous times and as unnecessary contesteer prevails. The reasons of the encounter will be explained in the article.

Over the years the lack of funds in PSB has forced on governing board choices between technology and content, the waves of firing employees and restructuring organisations abruptly, long-term plans are not implemented.

The development of new media solutions is viewed as salvage for PSB for Estonia prides itself explicitly as being an e-state. Estonian PSB has stated in the last strategic plan for years 2010–2013 that the main change in PSB will be digitalisation (analogue switch-of will take place in summer of 2010) and the new media should be developed into one of the most used in Estonia by 2012.

## **CHANGES AND DYNAMICS OF ESTONIAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

The change in society in the end of 1980s and in the beginning of 1990s exhibited empirically the key role the media, especially the electronic media, played in the transformation of socio-political system. Reflexive broadcaster has simultaneously been an educator of citizens.

Up until 1990 the Estonian state broadcaster functioned with one TV channel and three radio channels. The Estonian electronic media in the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s was by its stable structure, broadcast quality, internal diversity and social meaning similar to the model of Nordic PSB system – an intensive journalistic programme based on social responsibility (see Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 143–197).

The most active period of Estonian electronic media as a policymaker and modifier of society was in the years 1986–1992. This time has been named Golden Age of Estonian TV and Radio: there was a sufficient number of creative employees, programmes had professionally good journalistic and ethical basis, informative broadcasts were the bearers of active citizen's position. The interest of audience stood high and the assessments of programme were exalted.

In the background of this achievement stood the work of analysis centres of ETV and ER. In the Information and Calculus Centre in Estonian Radio from 1969 over 20 people studied the content of media and researched audience; there were regular systematic audience polls on expectations and interests, of potential behaviour between 1970 and 1992.<sup>2</sup>

Supporting the TV-Radio system was the technological modernization as the dominant ideological principle inside the broadcaster.<sup>3</sup> Estonian electronic media was upfront in looking for innovative solutions in the Soviet Union, although it did not reach the world level.

Like in other transition states the changes in Estonian electronic media during and after the fall of the Soviet Union were rapid and full of contradictions. The struggle for media ownership can be allocated as a position struggle for more general change of paradigm. After the change of political structure in 1990s the Estonian society entered swiftly into totally new reality – arrival of commercial world meant also arrival of new owners and imposing of ideologies. The socially active populace of early 1990s was directed into new paths, to find new roles. The position of policymakers was obtained largely by commercial media that became the creator of ideological views and of taste for active target group. The role of public service media was weakened.

Estonian PSB experienced significant audience losses in the 1990s. In contrast, in the traditionally high-public-service-share Nordic countries the trend has been more stable and even ascending (see Tab. 1).

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<sup>2</sup> ETV Department of Methodology, Perspective Planning and Training started research in 1976, "Information Paper of Television" (TVIL) comes out from 1979, The Yearbook of TV-Radio Committee (ER IAK) in 1983. Modernization in ETV and ER started in the middle of 1970s.

<sup>3</sup> Since 1980s in Broadcasting the contradiction between technology based production-ideology and national mythical-ideology had grown: *We already openly talked of producing broadcasts, there-while the work was done on the basis of legend hanging in midair* (Peep, 2005).

Table 1. Public Service Broadcasting audience trends in Estonia and Scandinavia, 1995–2008

Country, PSB	1996	1998	2004	2008
Estonia ETV	27	23.2	18	15.8
Estonia ER	(1995 est. 75 nonest. 62)	42.7	38.7	35.5
Finland YLE-TV	48.2	45.7	45.2	45.5
Finland YLE-R	67	61	50	43
Sweden STV	49	48.2	40.4	34.1
Sweden SR	67	65	63.6	64.1
Denmark DKTV	27	31	34.1	28.7
Denmark DKR	74	70	65	71

Sources: EBU Guides, Vol. 2: EBU Members' Audience Trends 1992–2003, September 2004; EBU Strategic Information Service (SIS); EBU Members' Audience Trends 1995–2007, July 2008; EBU Strategic Information Service (SIS); EBU Members' Audience 2008, 2009; EBU Strategic Information Service (SIS); MBF TV and radio diary studies 1996–1999.

## FINANCES AND COMMERCIALISATION OF BROADCASTING FIELD

The Broadcasting Act in 1994, that defined ETV and ER as PSB, granted a mixed financing system for PSB consisting of state funding (funding from state budget decided on yearly bases without fixed percentage or long-time agreement) and other income, including commercials (share of the advertisements in the programme could not exceed 5%). The system placed PSB on advertising market to compete with CB, which CB considered unjust (Shein, 2005). The smallness of Estonian advertisement market, the number of broadcasters competing and PSB's success in advertising market created intense tensions until 2002 when PSB financing system was changed and state funding became the substantial part of PSB revenue. The change gave positive impact to economic indicators of CB who started to pay broadcasting licence fee in fixed sum and received monopoly in advertising market. The economic indicators of PSB decreased, as even while Estonian economy was growing fast, the state funding from state budget relatively diminished (Jõesaar, 2005 and Fig. 1).

Characteristic of the attitude in the political sphere is the change of approach of government and parliament to the agreement of CB, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Broadcasters Union and ETV-ER which resulted in ETV leaving the advertisement market and CB starting to pay the broadcasting licence fee. The agreement was signed in good belief that the income from licence fee will become additional fund for PSB budget that lost advertising income. Instead the financial ministry argued

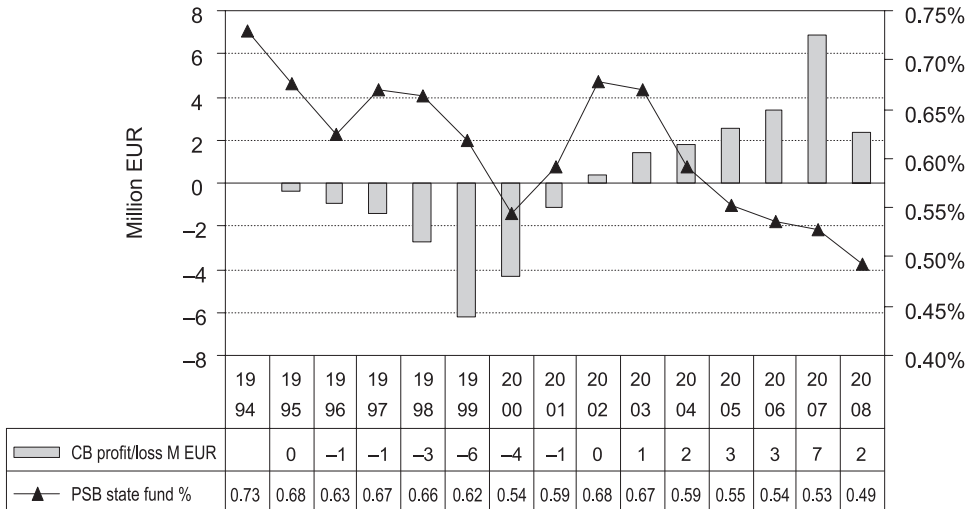


Fig. 1. The CB losses and profits in comparison of PSB's percentage of state budget

Source: Statistics Estonia.

that no receipts to budget are to be asserted to certain receiver, so the licence fee for CB and loss from giving up advertisement for PSB are not connected (Interview: Sookruus, 2009).

## DYNAMICS OF PROGRAMMES AND DURATION

From 1990 until 2009 the yearly duration of broadcasts has increased 17 times in Radio and 5 times in TV. The enlarged number of channels did not bring forth diversity of programmes, instead in CB the share of own production has gone down (see Tab. 2). In the beginning of 1990s until 2000s the arrival of CB and inclusion of commercials in PSB inclined all broadcasters evidently towards entertainment and mass culture. The struggle for audience and shares of advertising market in TV field forced differentiation in orientation of channels. The specification of Estonian TV channels was complete by the beginning of 2000: in ETV (PSB) dominated news and current programmes, educational and social programmes, in K2 (CB) dominated films, serials and soap operas while in TV3 (CB) dominated reality shows and participatory games for money.

In radio field the struggle for advertising market and audience share was less painful as most commercial channels oriented more on light music and entertainment. Characteristically in 2004 the ER (PSB) channels aired for 1 minute of news and publicity broadcasts aired 1.5 minutes music programmes while in CB the ratio was 1:8.4 (Statistics Estonia 2006). There were some exceptional CB like Radio

Kuku, which declared its motto to be ‘Radio for thinking person’ and did fill its programme with broadcasts close to PSB mission.

Table 2. Dynamics of Estonian electronic media channels, programs, duration and audiences of PSB and CB 1991–2008

Channels, duration	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
TV channels	4	7	7	7	5	4	4	4	15
PSB (ETV)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
CB	3	6	6	6	4	3	3	3	13
Radio channels	na	21	22	27	33	30	31	32	34
PSB (ER)	na	1*	1*	1*	5	5	5	5	5
CB	na	17	20	26	28	25	26	27	29
Duration TV	19 307	6 457	8 767	23 489	32 463	19 607	20 743	23 401	71 385
Own production %	9.8	46.9	39.6	30.5	50.5	26.6	17.1	15.5	
Duration R	na	104 507	155 439	234 734	267 078	238 247	227 654	277 195	287 337
Own production %		96.9	97.5	75.8	90.6	93.5	94.5	94.3	95.5
TV programmes %	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
News, publicity	na	na	na	19.3	24.3	20.3	17.2	18.0	21.7
... PSB	22.6	22.4	23.7	21.9	23.9	26.2	24.9	na	23.0
Entertainment	na	na	na	13.8	14.6	8.5	21.2	11.4	11.6
...PSB	6.1**	10.2	9.0	11.5	10.6	15.1	17.1	na	17.0
Sport	na	na	na	7.3	4.8	9.3	7.6	6.4	10.1
...PSB	4.1	14	14	8.2	9.4	9.9	9.0	na	7.0
TV-plays, films, fiction	na	na	na	53.5	45.6	48.7	48.5	54.7	35.0
...PSB	43.5	19	26.1	28.9	28.8	23.9	31.3	na	21.0
Radio programmes %	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
News, publicity	na	na	na	23.9	34	31.9	31.8	28.7	27.1
... PSB	na	na	na	22.8	32.2	26.0	27.9	na	na
Entertainment	na	na	na	7.9	4.8	15	7.7	7.3	7.5
...PSB	na	na	na	8.6	5.1	13.1	7.1	na	na
Sport	na	na	na	1.2	0.7	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.9
...PSB	na	na	na	1.1	0.7	0.9	0.9	na	na
Music	na	na	na	52.7	48.9	38.1	45.2	47.9	50.2
...PSB	na	na	na	50.2	46.4	31.1	40.0	na	na

Audience share % TV	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
ETV (PSB)	na	na	27.0	24.4	16.1	na	18.1	17.3	15.6
ETV2 (PSB-digi)***									0.2
K2 (CB)	na	na	15.0	12.7	12.5	na	19.7	21.9	19.8
TV3 (CB)	na	na	15.6	15.9	17.4	na	23.7	20.0	18.2
TV1 (CB)****				6.4	9.5				
K11 (CB-dig)***									0.8
TV6 (CB-dig)***									0.8
Other	na	na	32.1	40.6	44.1	na	38.5	38.4	44.6
Audience share % R	1991	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008
Vikerraadio (PSB)	na	na	na	15.1	17.2	17.8	22.6	21.7	22
R2 (PSB)	na	na	na	8.0	7.7	6.1	5.8	2.9	3.4
R4 (PSB)	na	na	na	10.5	8.1	10.0	9.5	10.0	9.1
Klassikaraadio (PSB)	na	na	na	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.5	0.7	0.7
Elmar (CB)	na	na	na	16.4	13.7	15.7	14.2	11.4	14.8
Sky Plus (SB)	na	na	na	6.3	7.5	7.5	9.6	9.0	8.1
Star FM (CB)	na	na	na		2.1	1.8	2.9	5.3	5.4
Russkoje Radio (CB)	na	na	na	4.5	5.7	4.5	5.6	6.5	7.2
Kuku (CB)	na	na	na	4.6	4.5	4.8	4.3	4.0	3.5
Power Hit Radio (CB)	na	na	na		0.9	1.0	1.8	1.8	2.0
Other	na	na	na	27.1	24.1	22.5	23.1	26.8	23.4

\* until 2000 ER channels were statistically counted as one

\*\* including music

\*\*\* started in 2008

\*\*\*\* halted in 2001

na – not available

Sources: H. Shein, *Suur teleraamat*, Tartu 2005; P. Vihalemm (ed.), *Meedia süsteem ja meediakasutus Eestis 1965–2004*, Tartu 2004; ERR Research Centre; Statistics Estonia; AS Emor.

## TRUST OF THE AUDIENCE

The criteria of functioning of a broadcaster are the audience's need for the channel and the trust in the channel. The research has shown dynamics and clear preference in trust of audience in PSB over BC (see Tab. 3).

According to data from audience research, in the early 1990s about 80% of Estonians aged 15–74 followed ER and ETV on workdays. Audience interests in 1990s

focused on news broadcasts and on themes such as regaining independence for the Baltic States, Estonia's relations with other countries and the actions of Estonia's government (Infokanalid, 1991, p. 7).

After regaining the independence the interest focused on entertainment, infotainment and edutainment as shows research into most popular broadcasts or most watched channel. As the source of information, news and knowledge PSB kept the position until the middle of 2000s – the main news source was ETV's news programme 'Aktuaalne Kaamera' ('Actual Camera'), the oldest news programme in Estonian TV-field. K2 launched an infotainment style news magazine 'Reporter' in 2004, which is frequently the most watched news programme in TV, but not the most trusted.

From radio programmes news is also mainly listened to from ER (33%) and Russian language channel (37%), from news of CB is preferred by 20% of population (*ibid.*, p. 338).

Table 3. The audience trust in Estonian media 2002–2008

	2002	2005	2008
ETV (PSB)	52	59	49.5
C TV	35	33	30
ER (PSB)	49	53	49.3
C Radio	31	27	24.6
Newspapers	34	33	30.1
Internet portals	20	16	19.5

Source: Research Project 'Me. Media. World 2002.2005.2008,' University of Tartu.

## THE PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT OF ESTONIAN BROADCASTING AS PUBLIC SPHERE 1990–2009

The development of Estonian PSB can be reified in phases that draw on the evolution of Estonian society's public sphere – the political structural change of public sphere and change of Broadcaster (1990–1994), the differentiation of public space and designing of PSB (1994–1999), the rise of purport and significance of public space and establishment of distinctions of structure of public sphere (2000–2007), stabilising of public sphere, the trend of liaison, new reform of PSB reform (2007– ...) when restructuring of the PSB is substantial again.

### 1991–1994

Characteristic is defining the ideas well rooted in European old democracies for Estonian public and following idealistic visions. The creation of CB meant the com-



ing of a new broadcasting spectrum into the public sphere – turn from solitary channel system to multi-channel system.

The ETV and ER are in development stage, separating from Soviet-time institution and leaving behind state control. The legislators engage in defining general concepts and ETV and ER are regulating itself and creating its own principles of restructuring.<sup>4</sup> The main achievement is successful abstaining from turning ETV and ER into politically manipulated institutions characteristic to some other transitional states.

The first CB that left a mark on changing TV structure, 'Reklaamitelevisioon' ('Commercial Television' RTV) is created inside ETV with an indicial plan to create a commercial second channel for ETV (Shein, 2005). The idea is set aside and the RTV separated from ETV.

Development in the radio market during the 1990s included the launching of numerous music and entertainment stations and the transition from MW to FM waveband broadcasts. The first private CB started in 1991 (Lõhmus, 2002).

### 1994–1999

Characteristic is official creation of PS institutions including PSB and implementation of CB. Estonian Parliament starts legislatively to define and follow the styling of public sphere in PSB through yearly budget of PSB and discussion of action account. In the middle of 1990s preference of CB over PSB is prevailing course both legally and conceptually. In 1996–1999 the aggressive policy of CB pursues achievement of monopoly in advertising market, including the plan of terminating PSB. As a possibility the limiting and closing of channels was proposed – one TV and one radio channel could have been left to the field to forward important information (Allikmaa, 1999). The plan was opposed in public sphere and was not implemented directly. The lobbying provided for the strengthening of CB.

In 1990s the CB is given possibility for the 'limited service' that predicates on economical effectiveness. The author of the idea of 'limited service' is a director of ETV in 1994–1998, he sets PSB to secondary role and leads as a producer of programmes with larger costs and less attraction for audience. As the cost of broadcast production grows, the PSB has to constrain its capacity and variety, concentrate on producing the programme important for the development of democracy and culture, likewise on subject fields and themes that CB does not touch on (Shein, 2002, p. 107). The programme of PSB simplifies, the artistic production in television, decreases children programmes diminish. The niggardliness lowers

<sup>4</sup> 1.02.1993 the head director of ETV presented a plan of restructuring PSB system, seen necessary for two reasons: 1. 'presently valid ETV structure is uncomfortable and counter-productive' and 2. 'ETV has to gain the role of business subject.' The Public Service programme, ETV is preserved (Shein, 2005, pp. 403–405).

the quality of broadcasting, the employees are pressured by lack of resources and hectic ideologies. It is clarified that as 'crotchets of little cultural regions' the cost of own production exceeds eight times the cost of in-bought foreign programmes, thereat only PSB has obligation to produce at least 51% own programmes (Shein, 2002, p. 107).

The confrontation of CB and PSB decreased by 2000 as the clear course is taken toward joining the EU and due to that a channel ensuring in the future movement of unconditioned structures information was necessary.

## **2000–2007**

At the beginning of the phase the paradigm change in attitude is seen the preference of the economical interests over citizenship interests has taken place. The beginning of the phase also sees deep crisis and re-opening of discussions of the socio-political and cultural questions in the public sphere after the manifesto of Estonian social scientists 'Kaks Eestit' ('Two Estonias' 2001) that was absent from agenda between 1994 and 1999.

The attitude of leaders of society changes from unconditional preference of PSB to contradictory viewpoint, little support is given to the creation of public sphere necessary for citizens. 'As the persons forcing ETV to give up advertising again were politicians and officials operating in the interests of private channels, the public opinion was carried by voices talking of advertising as mortal sin' (Raag, 2006). PSB (ETV totally, ER partially) gave up commercials. The clear separation of PSB from CB is an advantage to PSB image. 'Understanding that PSB could have been rather an agent of citizens' society and not a mouthpiece of a coalition currently in power have not reached minds yet' (Raag, 2006).

## **2007–...**

Characteristic is great rise in citizen initiative and participation in collective actions, including 'Teeme ära' (May 2008, 'Let's do it' – a collective clearing of rubbish all over state), 'Mõttetalgud' (May 2009, 'Think Along' – a collective overstate think-tank).

In the spring of 2007 the recently found stability of PSB is shattered by restructuring – the rapid unification of ETV and ER throws PSB into structural identity crisis as the previous structure is fragmentised, but a new structure was not worked out. Synergy of two organisations is created with difficulty (for instance, the co-operation of news departments of ETV, ER, online has a draggy start). The budget cuts due to economical crunch lessen the state funding of PSB. The trust of public stays high in Public Service Broadcasting, audience trends of PSB start to ascend.

Table 4. The transformation of Estonian Public Sphere and Broadcasting 1991–2009

	Structural change in public sphere and broadcasting 1991–1994	Division of public space: new media system 1994–1999	Ascent of purport of public space, division of public sphere 2000–2007	Establishment of distinctions of public sphere and ascent of common activities 2007–
General structural change of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• validating of constitution and re-establishing parliament</li> <li>• explanation of idea of public sphere to the legislators</li> <li>• high citizen activity and participation in public sphere</li> <li>• separation of ER and ETV, dismantling Soviet Television-Radio</li> <li>• CB legitimised</li> <li>• the competition for content between CB and PSB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explanation of idea of public sphere to the public</li> <li>• de-escalation and crisis of participation in public sphere</li> <li>• focusing on domestic affairs</li> <li>• division of public space as public service and private system</li> <li>• creation and structuring of PSB</li> <li>• aggressive seizure of advertising market by CB and attacking existence of PSB</li> <li>• trust in PSB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ascent of participation in public sphere and citizen's initiative</li> <li>• focus on changes in global political structure, Estonia confluence with EU and NATO</li> <li>• reifying population as an audience, competing for audience's attention (ratings)</li> <li>• antagonism of benefit of interest groups versus citizenry</li> <li>• BC commencing to interest of commerce</li> <li>• PSB course to designing public sphere and citizenry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appreciation of fending the interests of public and citizenry</li> <li>• creation of Estonian Public Broadcaster</li> <li>• power and control as disquisition themes</li> <li>• technological change – transition to digitalized media</li> <li>• quest for adequacy</li> </ul>
Type of programme	1991–1994	1994–1999	2000–2007	2007–
Public programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active participation in political breakthrough</li> <li>• programme functioning as a political and social forum</li> <li>• state broadcasting as part of transforming system</li> <li>• preferred topics cultural and political news</li> <li>• conflicting topics presented in broadcasting</li> <li>• professional ethical component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• competition of programmes</li> <li>• lack of analytical feedback and strategies for professional development of programme</li> <li>• legitimisation of institutions of a new political structure</li> <li>• poor coverage of social problems and everyday life topics, disappearance of children programmes</li> <li>• professional ethical background</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pursuit towards politically and journalistically balanced programme</li> <li>• declared openness without real openness</li> <li>• BC greater activity in problem solving</li> <li>• audience seen as a citizenry</li> <li>• professional ethical background</li> <li>• advertisement-free programme (from 2002)</li> <li>• cheapening of programme</li> <li>• start of digitalisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structural identity crisis in spite of high trust of the public and ascending ratings</li> <li>• new structure of PSB as ETV and ER united into Public Broadcaster</li> <li>• professional esthetical background</li> <li>• digitalisation as future goal</li> <li>• online portals as asset to PSB</li> </ul>

Table 4 – cont.

Type of programme	1991–1994	1994–1999	2000–2007	2007–
Commercial programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1991–1995: expansion of private stations</li><li>• launching of new types of programmes and new roles in TVs and radios (as media channel without journalism, DJs in the radios)</li><li>• large percentage of in-bought programme</li><li>• commercial as content element</li><li>• 1996–1999: change of ownership, growth of foreign participation</li><li>• orientation to the audience as a consumer</li><li>• weak ethical background</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• impact of foreign capital grows</li><li>• cheapening of programme (Radio Kuku, Radio Tartu)</li><li>• plenitude of cheap TV serials</li><li>• ‘culture industry’ route of CB (Latin-America)</li><li>• weak ethical background, scarce broadcasts with ethical basis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• change to online stations</li><li>• online – field included</li><li>• special competitions (dancing, singing etc.)</li><li>• activity of game of chance and for money</li><li>• evolvement of esthetical background</li><li>• seizure of entire advertising market of TV</li><li>• profounder programmes</li><li>• in-bought programmes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• infotainment and edutainment programmes</li><li>• signification of esthetical component</li><li>• digital ‘daughter’ channels for major players</li></ul>
Specialised programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*1992–1995: formation of a chain of local stations on a commercial basis</li><li>*focus on local information, local problems</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* stations with religious orientation emerging</li><li>*expansion of music stations</li><li>*establishment of experimental stations (e.g. Nõmme Radio)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*continual segmentation of audience</li><li>*formation of specific groups of interest or consumption</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* local TV station as a political instrument (idea of Capital’s TV)</li><li>*clear goals and target group (religion etc.)</li></ul>

Source: Lõhmus 2002, revised and updated.

THE DEBATES ON BROADCASTING IN THE PARLIAMENT AND STANDING COMMITTEE 1992–2009

As in democratic systems in general, the legislative basis of Broadcasting, including PSB, is created by Parliament. The theme of Broadcasting stayed on agenda since the election of the first Estonian Parliament after regaining independence in 1992. The level of interest and amount of debates has differed in time, ascending around paradigm changes and decreasing in between (see Fig. 2).<sup>5</sup>

The final decisions agreed in Parliament are drafted and prepared by a Standing Committee, Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC). The main debates are held in pre-

<sup>5</sup> We analysed the minutes and protocols directly dealing with PSB, ETV or ER and/or CB and left out the debates on other laws and acts which do touch Broadcasting field (e.g. Authorship Act, Advertising Act), speeches or questions in government’s briefings in the Parliament and ‘open microphone’ as these usually did not carry debate.

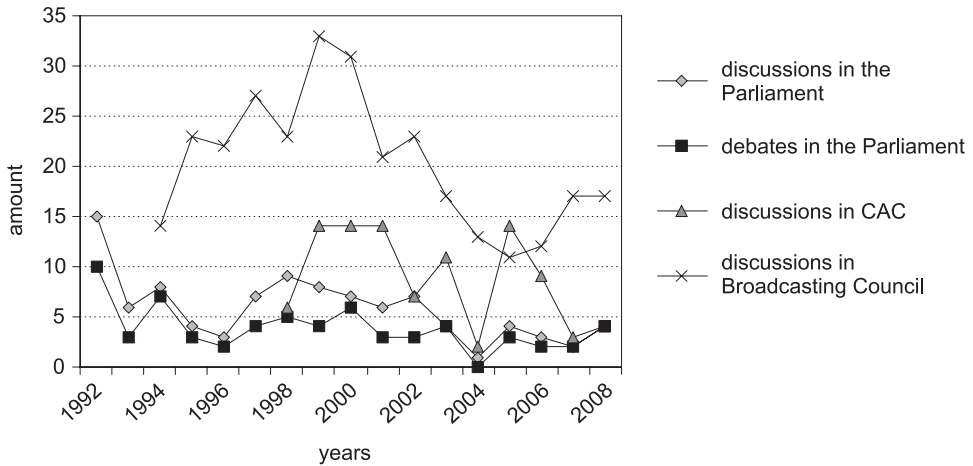


Fig. 2. Comparison of amount of debates and discussions on PSB in Estonian Parliament, CAC and Broadcasting Council 1992–2008

Source: Minutes of Parliament sessions, protocols of CAC and minutes of BC sessions.

paratory stage in CAC, to which various experts and representatives of ministry's concerns may be included.<sup>6</sup> Debates in Parliament deal less with content of the theme or when they do, the detailed discussions do not affect the outcome of the vote notably.

Dominant themes in CAC and in the Parliament do not completely coincide, but one theme prevails over others in both cases and throughout all phases – the financing of PSB (see Figs. 4, 5). Financing is seen as the instrument of pressure by governing powers and as means of creating a status for PSB in the eyes of state and public sphere. For the ways of creating stabile financing the licence fee for audience was disregarded as solution difficult to explain to public who over Soviet years had got used to free access to electronic media (Interview: Sookruus, 2009; Interview: Lauristin and Vihalemm, 2009). While in CAC the need of stabile financing is supported in words and deeds, in the Parliament the support is clear in speeches, but voting is predominantly directed by party policies (Sookruus, 2009).

Connected to the financing either explicitly or implicitly are theme categories advertising, legislation and CB licences placed on Figs. 4, 5 (see for comparison Fig. 3). Advertising in PSB is in the second place in percentage in CAC protocols and in fourth position in the Parliament minutes. The main direction is reducing the impact of commercials in the PSB. Theme disappears in 2002 after removal of PSB from advertising market.

<sup>6</sup> The protocols of CAC are publicly available since 1998. Some sensitive cases like choosing the members of BC are closed sessions with no protocol publicly available.

The category of Broadcasting licences for CB has three phases – the debates centring on the right of issuing the licences for the channels freed after transmission of Soviet programmes had stopped; deciding the cost of licence fee; deciding to abolish the licence fee with the pretext of creating favourable digitalisation environment for CB analogue channels. Theme is more actively debated in CAC than in the Parliament, the direct connections between MPs and CB show better in Parliament.

The category of PSB's content is in percentage of themes in Parliament in the second place, but mainly deals with MPs dissatisfaction with the content of PSB programmes as a whole or specific programmes like music or publicity. Connected to content is the category of control over PSB, which is explicit in the phase before 1994 and implicit after the acceptance of Broadcasting Act.

Specifically important category for CAC is BC members and competence.<sup>7</sup> The theme gets special importance after the principles of membership of BC are changed on during ETV crisis (1998–2002) and in CAC sessions, which were held behind closed doors, the non-political member candidates are interviewed in depth for their programme and views of PSB.

## **CASE STUDY ON EXAMPLE OF DEBATES ON THE LEVEL OF ONE ELEMENT OF STRUCTURE, THE BROADCASTING COUNCIL (BC)**

Estonia has no institution supervising whole Broadcasting Field. BC is fulfilling a contradictory role of supervisor and developer of PSB, also actively participating in creation of regulations for broadcasting.

The analysis of essential themes dealt in sessions of BC shows that biggest attention is given to budget, following debates on co-operation (Fig. 3), which demonstrates the PSB's significant position in society, the communication with non-governmental institutions and citizens. The least BC has dealt with accountability, political balance and themes of analysis and development.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Estonia has no institution supervising whole Broadcasting Field. The BC as highest governing body of PSB was created by Broadcasting Act in 1994. The main functions of BC are appointing boards of ER and ETV, ERR since 2007, the validating of main directions of activities and development plans of ER-ETV/ERR, validating budgets and delivering these to Ministry of Cultural Affairs, questions connected to PSB structure, validating the procedure of reporting of elections, supervising and accountancy (RHS 1994, RRHS 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Between June 1994 and June 2009 307 sessions of BC were held, 1458 themes were discussed altogether. The categories are: regulation (legislation work groups, proposals to Parliament, Government), accountability (accounts of budgetary year, report to Parliament), budget (monitoring and modifications to the PSB budget, discussions of future budget), advertising (general issues, advertising market, exceptional advertisements in PSB), development and analysis, programme, political balance (procedures, elections), control (audit, self-audit), structure (creation, liquidation, reorganisation of departments and other units), board (appointment, member validation, contracts, salaries, punishments), technology (including digitalisation, building), co-operation (communication with organisations, NGOs, citizens).

The minutes of BC sessions demonstrate the recognition of importance of control by the BC only in 1999 after the crisis of ETV caused by managing mistakes. ETV developed loss of 77 million EEK which meant almost total financial collapse. In the background of the development of crisis is dragging of decision on advertisement-free PSB in legislative workgroup and ETV attempt to solve the situation itself through agreement with CB. BC gave the attempt its approval. The attempted agreement followed the example of Broadcasting System of Finland where MTV OY (CB) paid guerdon to YLE (PSB) pending on the profit. Regrettably, the solution was not sustainable in Estonia's small market. Crisis also fed on ETV's enlarged programme duration which increased the expenses beyond state funding limits. The collapse could have been avoided with quondam control of BC.

In 1999–2002 BC turned biggest attention to budget – it makes up 46% of all discussions. This phase included disputations of continuations and disruption of the agreement mentioned above, the loss inflicted by management errors by ETV's board, the cuts in state budget due to economic slump, finally the question of guarantee of rise of state funding after the change of Broadcasting Act in 2001.

Since 2000, BC has considered the developed and strong PSB an important institution for performance of Estonian state and society. The retainment and development of this position is directly connected to state funding. While the development of PSB has not been a priority to the political forces, as a rule the BC has requested larger sums of state funding than is finally determined with the law of State Budget (Shein, 2004; Jõesaar, 2009). Attempts to create in society broader debate on PSB's

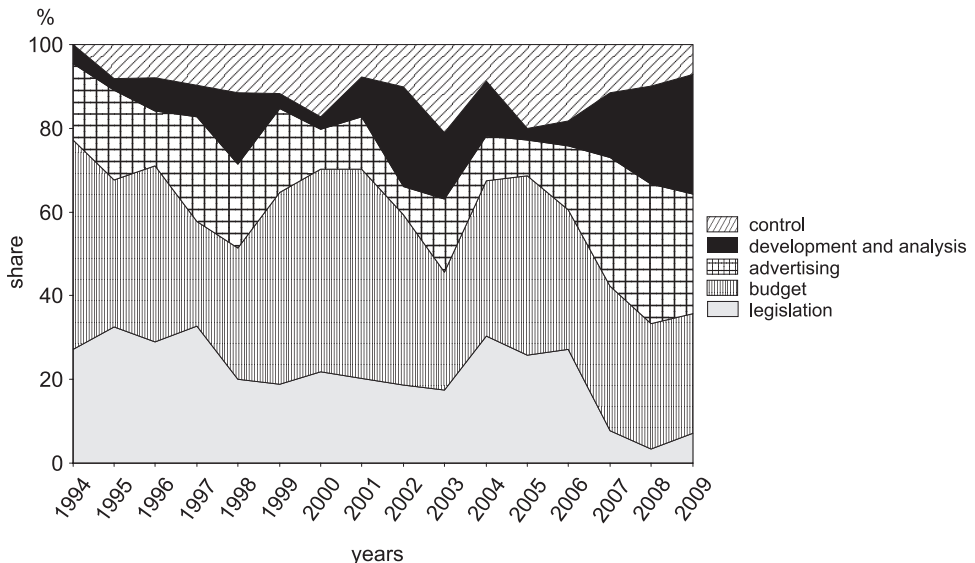


Fig. 3. Dominant categories in the Broadcasting Council sessions between 1994 and 2009

Source: Analysis of minutes of BC sessions 1994–2009.

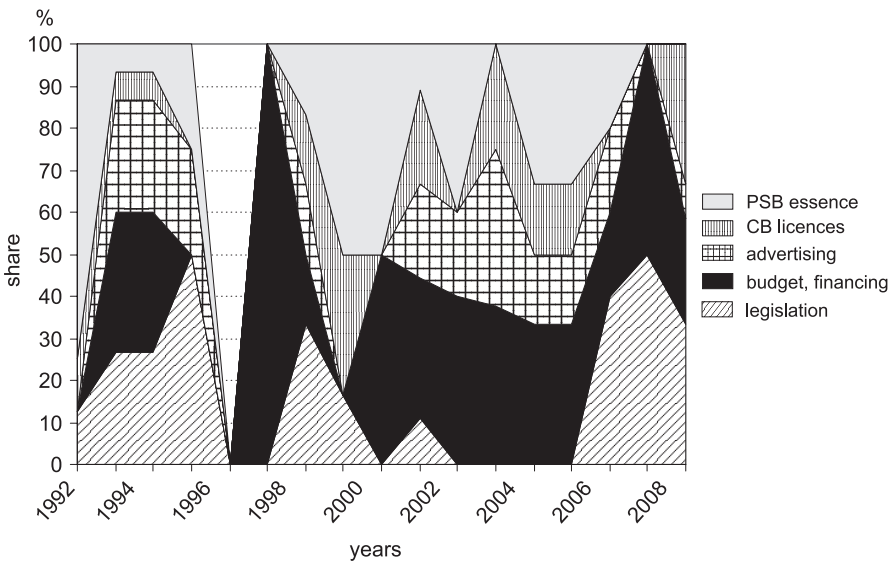


Fig. 4. Dominant categories in the Parliament sessions between 1992 and 2008  
Source: Analysis of minutes of Parliament sessions 1992–2008.

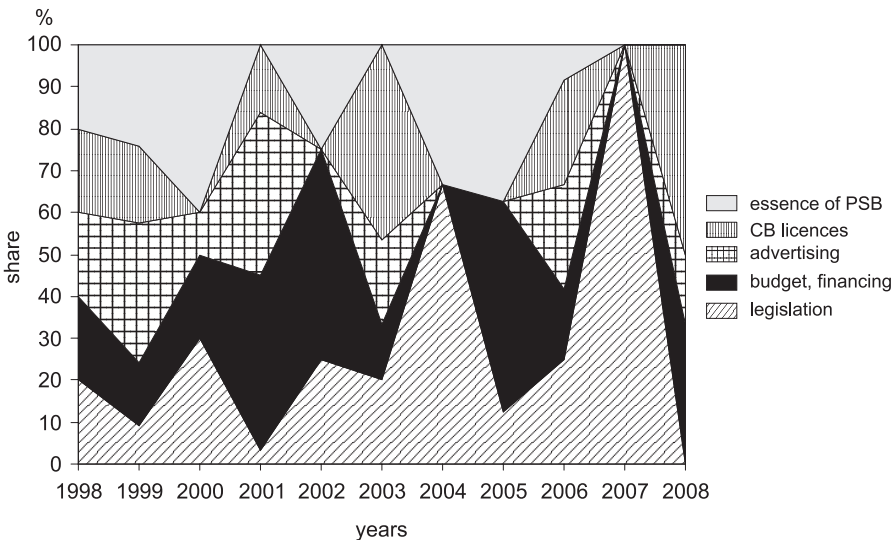


Fig. 5. Dominant categories in the CAC between 1998 and 2008  
Source: Analysis of protocols of CAC 1998–2008.

development perspectives and launch discussions on long-term strategic plan failed (Shein, 2004) mainly because the prevailing viewpoint prioritized CB. Following the ETV crisis in 1998–2000 the first PSB development plan was drawn up. The



'Development Plan for Estonian Television and Estonian Radio for the years 2003–2005', which evolved between 2001 and 2002 and passed the reading in Parliament, was meticulous but idealistic.

In the background stood direct conflict between opposition–coalition – in the phase of 2000–2003 the opposition had upper hand in BC, though such financing plan was indented fulfilling of which coalition had no will or budgetary means. Sobeit decisive vote in the BC would have belonged to coalition, the rapid ascent of state funding would have not been included into the plan. The BC followed significantly more realistic path with succeeding development plans.

Development and analysis were an important part firstly in development plan for the years 2003–2008 and after creation of ERR their importance has ascended (Fig. 3).

The participation in legislative work intensified again in 2004 with preparation of new Public Broadcasting Act. Focus was on politicizing BC and uniting ETV-ER. The legislative activity of BC has lessened after Public Broadcasting Act was approved in Parliament.

## CONCLUSION

Charting the dynamic process of development of Estonian PSB shows that the keywords of transformation have been rather finance and commerce than programme and democracy; PSB has struggled for survival.

Seemingly there was and is lack of will to create PSB as strong bearer of public sphere, the intent has been hidden with the constant arguments of stabile financing of PSB. The structural change for PSB has invariably come in the moment when the future of building strong, powerful and independent PSB is sanguine.

Especially was the lack of will present in first personnel of BC and in the Parliament between 1994 and 1999 when the main achievement was avoidance of liquidation of PSB. The numerous amendments to Broadcasting Act by the Parliament have not disengaged the law of contradictions with other laws, mainly the difference between State Budget Act that states the principle of determining the use of state funds for one financial year while the Broadcasting Act prescribes the acceptance of PSB strategic plan for three years with budget plan included.

The lack of will is also demonstrated in the change of approach to the agreement of CB, Cultural Ministry, Broadcasters Union and ETV-ER which resulted in ETV leaving the advertisement market and CB starting to pay the broadcasting licence fee.

We do not argue that the theme of the content of PSB has been avoided by the Parliament as principle whilst the determination of the content belongs to the institution, PSB itself. But political side has not encouraged the PSB to define or feel stable enough to create its essence. The governing board chosen by BC has seldom had persons with clear and broad vision for PSB and of PSB. When head of board has made an attempt to create a vision, the everyday technicalities and instability

created by constant problems with financing have extinguished the spark, the lack of control created also ambience of irresponsibility.

The public has not yet reacted critically to decisions or indecisions of politicians, the open or hidden goals of the actions of politicians. Even the debate defining clearly Public Sphere and more specifically PSB is not openly led, but is limited to public discussion of the lack of journalistic professionalism in newspapers. Theme is ignored by BC due to their 'neutrality'. It means that the next important topic of 'journalism' and 'media' will arise.

Impact of Adorno-style 'culture industry' and its implicit ideology has created broad groups of society interested in commercial interests and consumption interests (Adorno, 2002; Lõhmus *et al.*, 2004b). Positioning Estonia and world through everyday media has been done academically *via* analysis of different channels (comparison of news programmes, debates, etc.). Interestingly, neither the Parliament nor BC has turned to previous researches of Broadcasting and audience that have been done in Estonia since 1969 to wise up of veritable tendencies of development.

The Broadcasting itself as public sphere is in change again. The economic crunch and transition to digital technologies and proliferation of the Internet, the change of paradigm is eminent in the near future. This should spring off needs of audience.

In Estonia the existence and necessity of PSB is not disputed any more as principle but the attempts to bridle it are still present. Not all the attempts by all the parties involved are even conscious. Currently the PSB is the only media system in Estonia functioning on democratic principles and as such the development of PSB is a key question of evolvement of society and, on the other hand, the evolvement of media system.

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