

Radio FRO

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Abstract in English

Radio FRO is an independent radio station, in Linz, Austria. Following the basic idea of independent radio stations in Austria, it provides open access especially for under-represented social groups, such as migrants and different ethnic minorities. In doing so, today's broadcasting consists for about 20% of non-German speaking or multilingual programmes. Radio FRO also makes efforts to realise a poly-ethnic medial landscape, in order to reflect the inner diversity of migrants' communities as best as possible.

Area

Media

Kind-category of project

Radio

Kind-category of actor

Limited Liability Company

Country

Austria

Year

1998-

5 key-words

radio, independent radio, community radio, access to media, medial representation

1. THE PROJECT

1.1 Description of the project (*objectives, activities and results*)

Actor

Freier Rundfunk Oberösterreich GmbH

Kirchengasse 4

4040 Linz

AUSTRIA

www.fro.at

Project goals

Radio FRO was part of the movement that established free radio stations in Austria. They therefore follow the principles of free and independent radios in general. Besides the two categories of independence – being non-governmental and non-commercial - providing an open access for everybody to medial spheres is another basic principle. Veronika Leiner, a member of Radio FRO's executive board, describes the main difference between the public state broadcasting and independent

radios as follows: “Public broadcasting has the mandate to represent or reflect different groups in society from a perspective of reporting, whereas independent radios are supposed to represent different groups by providing open access for them in order to formulate their own programmes themselves.” Thus the participation of migrants and different ethnic groups is logically an important element of Radio FRO.

Moreover, Radio FRO wants to set an example in realisation of a poly-ethnic medial landscape, which reflects poly-ethnic society (see 1.3 Place and context). That means, in short, not to understand the varied ethnic groups as monolithic entities but to reflect their inner diversity as well.

More about the basic principles of FRO:

<http://www.fro.at/ars02/>

Study about the radio’s intercultural conception:

http://www.fro.at/ars02/fro_studie.rtf

Based on these principles the main goals are:

- providing the possibility for otherwise unrepresented minorities to articulate themselves and to participate in medial spheres
- providing a place where different minorities can find familiar languages and sounds
- cultivating foreign languages
- opposing indirect trials to assimilate minorities by giving them their own public space
- encouraging an intercultural discourse
- drawing attention to minorities within a majority society and adjusting misperceptions and stereotypes of them in public
- showing the diversity inside different migrant groups in order to abolish the deep rooted picture of two monolithic groups: “we” and “the others”

Programme

The broadcasting referring to intercultural aspects has to be distinguished into two parts: the autonomous programs of the different ethnic communities and the additional programs initiated by the radio itself.

Autonomous community radios:

From the 115 programs, 25 are broadcasted as non-German speaking or multilingual programs. Altogether there are 16 different languages that can be found within Radio FRO’s programme.

Some examples:

- Ikarus – Serbo-Croatian, German
- MAIZ – Spanish, Portuguese
- XMA – Turkish, German
- Radio Bosnia – Bosnian, German
- Fundamental Radio Show – English
- El Quinto Pino –Spanish

- Kollegium Mark Dizdar – Bosnian
- Hungaro Studio Linz – Hungarian
- Radio ATIB – Turkish
- Die kurdische Stimme – German
- Can FM – Turkish
- Radio Polonia – Polish

The participating language and cultural communities are always changing. One of the latest projects is a Tanzanian program in Swahili, which reflects the actual trend of the African community becoming one of the biggest migrant communities. Beside this, the traditional main groups remain Turkish/Kurdish and the former Yugoslavian communities.

Of course, the content of the community programs differs a lot. To a large extent the programs consist of entertainment and music. Music has to be seen as a very important element in order to strengthen its own identity. But information is also an important aspect of most of the programs. Concretely, the communities' radios provide information about every day problems of the addressed group in the City of Linz and the surrounding area. These issues are discussed through the "call-in" programs, where listeners have the chance to participate via telephone

Following the basic conception of open access and presenting the inner diversity of different groups, the single programs are entirely autonomous regarding their content. Basically, Radio FRO provides the platform on which plurality can grow. The programme makers only have to consider some fundamental principles like not being racist or otherwise discriminatory. But considering more concrete political or cultural views there are no guidelines for the users of the platform.

This does not mean that Radio FRO supports separation and is not interested in intercultural discourse. Actually, its secondary goal is to facilitate interaction between the different ethnic and cultural groups and to engage the users in debates about controversial themes. In order to encourage discussion and self-reflection of the radio shows, a monitoring of the individual programmes is intended by the radio's leading panels. These efforts, however, still remain on a very low level due to limited financial resources.

Additional intercultural programs:

In order to accomplish these intercultural aims, the radio initiates additional programs, where Radio FRO tries to act actively on problematic and actual topics.

Some examples:

- "Second Generation News" – broadcasted in 2001/2002 focusing on young people whose parents or grandparents came as migrants to Austria.
- Migration@EU (2004) – a cooperation project that served mainly as a information programme, (migrants took part in creating it)
<http://www.fro.at/migration/>
- a new project in cooperation with the Black Community of Oberösterreich, which aims to present different living realities of African migrants in Austria

Internal organisation:

Although there does not exist any system of quotas within the inner structure of the radio, how it can be found at other comparable institutions like the Swiss Radio LORA or Radio Orange 94.0 from Vienna, Radio FRO tries hard to involve migrants and minority people. Their aim is to engage more such people on different lower levels as well as in decision-making panels. However, regarding the relatively small region of Linz, it would be difficult to find enough people who are interested to work actively in this field. "Everybody is engaged in a lot of different organisations and projects. People who want to stand up for their interests are very few," says Veronika Leiner. This is confirmed by Tulay Tuncel, the Vice-President of the Foreigner Integration Council of the City of Linz, who complains about an overall disinterest in political activity or furthermore a deficit in political consciousness among migrants in Linz.

Results

In general, the success of Radio FRO is proved by its large knowledge within the community. The big response of listeners is shown, for instance, when people call the Radio in order to actively take part in programmes or in even more cases of a failed broadcast, people ask for their missing programme.

Without any concrete numbers, Veronika Leiner is convinced that the program reaches its target groups in the different communities. Beside some communities, which are difficult to reach, for instance some Asian ones, the Radio no longer has to ask them directly in order to motivate them to participate.

Otherwise, the homepage and the online live-stream are also often used medial products of Radio FRO.

1.2 When and how long: structure and steps of the project

Radio FRO has its roots in the pirate radio scene, which opposed the state monopoly in broadcasting. Austria was one of the last states, which abolished the state monopoly. Finally, Radio FRO could go on-air official in 1998, when it received its own radio frequency.

As already mentioned, due to the independent radio principles, open access and supporting diversity were the aims from the very beginning. At this time the radio was focussed mainly on programs produced by people from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia and Hungary. In the meantime, as the entire number of broadcastings has grown, the number of different languages has increased and diversity has been deepened. Compared to 2002, when Radio FRO broadcasted 75 different programs in 16 languages, today there are 115 programs and 25 languages. Nowadays, it is said to be a frequent problem finding a place for the new programs due to lack of time.

Four years ago, on the basis of a survey, it was found out that among migrants' communities the demand exists to follow the radio on the weekend rather than on a working day. Thus they restructured the programmes in order to satisfy this demand and in order to fulfill their mission to make actual access to media possible. Thus one can hear from Saturday noon until Sunday evening mainly foreign language programs on Radio FRO.

1.3 Place and context

To understand the role of Radio FRO in its context, it seems to be necessary to introduce, in short, on the one hand the social context, which means the migrant population, and on the other hand the situation of the media in Austria.

Population Austria:

In 2005 Austria has had a foreign population of 9.6 %. In Oberösterreich, the federal state, of which Linz is capital, it is about 11%. Most foreigners are from the former Yugoslavia (about 4% of whole population) and Turkey (about 1.6%).

[<http://www.migrationinformation.org/>]

Population Linz:

There are about 140 different nationalities in all.

Officially registered foreigners: 24.275 – 12.9 % of total population

Main groups among these are:

- Former Yugoslavia: 48.5 %
- Turkey: 12 %
- Germany: 5.9 %
- Former Soviet Union: 4.3 %

[1.1.2005, Homepage city of Linz,

http://www.linz.at/zahlen/040_Bevoelkerung/070_Auslaender/]

However, there is also a considerably high number of people who originated from Africa or the former Soviet Union. The last mentioned are a relatively "new" ethnic group compared with Turks or Yugoslavs. Altogether, people who speak more than one language or are non-German speakers constitute of about 20% of Austria's population. At least in total numbers, Radio FRO with its 20% non-German or multilingual programmes reflects this proportion as best as possible.

Considering the situation in the media, two problems can be found. On the one hand, the mainstream media show a rather negative attitude towards migration topics. According to Tulay Tuncel, the Vice-President of the Foreigner Integration Council of the City of Linz, a xenophobic attitude exists to some extent, and there is definitely a deficit in objective reports about ethnic minorities in Austria.

On the other hand, "the extent of reporting about (and moreover from and for) cultural and ethnic minorities is beyond every realistic proportion" states Karoline

Kumpfhuber in her study about Radio FRO. The contradiction between social reality and its reflection in the media appears in different fields. Not only in the case of the broadcasted programmes which deal with ethnic communities, but also within the field of labour and participation of minorities. Heavily criticised are the public media, which does not fulfil its duty to feature adequate information, cultural themes and entertainment according to society's diversity. Currently, the public media station ORF was sharply attacked by one of its own most well-known reporters because of its inner structure lacking of plurality and standing under permanent pressure of politicians (see <http://derstandard.at/?url=/?id=2450151>

<http://www.stol.it/nachrichten/artikel.asp?KatID=ba&ArtID=77162>).

In contrast to the Turkish communities, which have already managed to have their own newspapers in their language, especially in the relatively young and smaller ethnic communities, for example from African countries, are in need of possibilities to be represented in the media in order to keep their identity and not losing track of their roots completely whilst living in a very foreign environment. According to Karoline Kampfhuber, different ethnic groups are threatened to be assimilated by very subtle means. Media could mean for them a possibility, which helps to prevent this process by occupying public space with their own language.

Towards a poly-ethnic media landscape

Based on this concept, Radio FRO tries to deliver access to the media for different ethnic groups. However, for Radio FRO it is not enough to only represent the different groups in a rather traditional way. The Radio follows the idea to reflect a poly-ethnic society in a poly-ethnic media landscape, like it is proposed by the social scientist Charles Husband. He refuses a treatment of ethnical minorities from a paternalistic point of view, when they are tolerated but nothing else. He prefers a polity of differences, where the majority has to accept that there exist different ethnic groups and that they are different from each other as well as within themselves and therefore they cannot be seen as homogenous and monolithic entities. In contrast to the usual practise of the mainstream media there has to be recognized and shown that contradicting opinions also exist among members within one ethnic group. This means to provide a big variety of autonomous minority media which reflect society's diversity and diversity within different ethnic groups. Husband also recognizes that this would probably lead to a fragmentation of the media public and support incoherence of civil society. Thus, he suggests another media infrastructure which will enable the dialogue between different identities possible.

Radio FRO tries to serve as a model of this idea of a poly-ethnic media landscape. Hence, the Radio delivers a platform, on which different ethnic groups and at the same time different orientations of these groups can create broadcasting as autonomously as possible. Moreover, Radio FRO tries hard to establish a structure that encourages dialogues and discussions within the group.

1.4 Target

First of all, single community programmes are addressed to the members of the own community. However, music is seen as a universal language that calls on the attention of all people.

In addition, the multilingual programmes and the information programmes about migrants and minorities address a broader public as a target group.

1.5 Methodology

The main methodological points in short:

- autonomous broadcasting for single groups
- influencing programmes by monitoring and encouraging the dialogue without a dictation of the programme's content
- addressing directly certain underrepresented groups like second generation migrants

- creating special broadcastings about migrant and minority topics

1.6 Authors, Funding and Networks

Authors

The program authors come from the single communities. Furthermore Radio FRO gives the possibility to different associations within the communities, which otherwise would not have a great chance to represent themselves and to call attention. Other programmes for a broader public are made by people from communities together with radio makers from the Radio FRO team.

Funding

The ambition of Radio FRO is to keep the financing as widespread as possible. About 49% of the support are public subsidies from the City of Linz as well as from the federal state of Oberösterreich. The rest is made up of grants from different projects, e. g. the subscription system for private users or the cooperation with different cultural and educational institutions.

Networks

The ways of cooperation are often different and depend on the specific project. For example the Black Community is a partner in the current project about African migrants.

Another permanent partnership exists with various institutions in the field of culture and education in the region of Linz; for example with different museums. These institutions have their own programme on Radio FRO, where they can broadcast information about their work.

Besides, connections and partnerships between different independent radio projects not only in Austria but also in other countries might provide the single radio with experiences and ideas.

2. COMMENTS AND HINTS FOR AN EVALUATION

2.1. Strengths

“We are actually the best in the field of representation”, states Veronika Leiner from Radio FRO. Indeed, representation and free access has to be appreciated as one of the biggest strengths of the radio.

The radio makes a real effort to implement the idea of participation shows the example of the programme’s restructuring, following the demands of the migrant listeners in order to be actually listened (see 1.2 When and how long).

Radio FRO realizes the idea of being a platform in different ways. According to Veronika Leiner, firstly they provide a place of diversity on a micro-level as it can be seen in the different reports about personal situations. Secondly, on a macro-level, broadcasting a big amount of different community radio shows. That plurality is supported proves the activity of many associations. It allows them to go beyond their limited means within association membership meetings in order to reach a broader public and to spread their ideas. In doing so it leads to a real presentation not only of different ethnic groups but also of a reflection of different political and cultural orientations.

But Radio FRO serves not only as a platform to reflect already existing discourses but it can also be seen as a medium for intercultural exchange and new ideas. A good

example is the founding of the intercultural media projects MEDEA, and later followed by PANGEA. These today autonomous projects originally emerged as a spin-off project from the education programme of Radio FRO (see CASE STUDY PANGEA).

Additionally, intercultural practise takes place on a more informal level, when people meet each other in the locality of the radio.

2.2.Critical points

2.2.1 The organisation's perspective

2.2.2 Interculture map perspective

The main deficit still exists in creating a "real intercultural" dialogue. This is also affirmed by Veronika Leiner, for whom it is a pity that there aren't enough resources in order to initiate and moderate intercultural dialogue between the different programme makers.

The radio is not able to fulfil the goal of providing a structure in which - besides the autonomous programmes - intercultural support, care and discussion with the single programme makers are possible. Here, it lacks of work force and financing. On the other hand, to involve more migrants in collective actions would need more active and interested persons from that side. This lack is obvious as well.

The autonomous non-German speaking program remains very fragmented. But it can be seen as a first step and, following Husbands theory, it is inevitable. The other possibility would be the total deficit in medial representing and further misperceptions in public about society's composition.

3. LINKS

<http://www.freie-radios.at/>

umbrella association of independent radios in Austria