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Community Radio in Hungary and Its Place in the Society, Politics, and Education*

Abstract: This article examines the community radio scene in Hungary, focusing on two stations in Budapest: Tilos Radio and EPER Radio. The authors explore the unique characteristics and principles of community radio in Hungary through desk research and interviews with key players in the community radio movement conducted in October 2022. They highlight how these two stations, while differing in their specific forms of community broadcasting, share a commonality of being independent and offering an alternative to mainstream and public radio programming. Sustainability was identified as a significant challenge facing community radio stations in Hungary, primarily because of unfriendly media policy promoting voices supporting the government. The article also provides characteristics of the community radio concept and the historical context of community radio in Hungary, noting that this country was the first in Central and Eastern Europe to incorporate the third broadcasting sector into media law.

Keywords: *Hungary, community radio, media in Hungary, Tilos Radio, EPER Radio, media in CEE*

Introduction

The concept of community radio has been studied by many authors from around the world (Day, 2008; Doliwa, 2016; Fraser & Estrada, 2001; Gordon, 2012; Pavarala, Malik, 2007; Velics, 2021). There are many definitions of community radio, but most of them contain the following elements: (1) run primarily by volunteers, (2) on a not-for-profit basis (Gordon, 2006, p. 26).

However, other features of community radio are often mentioned as very important in the community radio context in definitions provided by different institutions and collective bodies. One organization worth referring to in this discussion is The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC). It represents community radio around the world. In 2008, AMARC adopted its Principles for Democratic Legislation on Community Broadcasting, in which one can identify other essential characteristics of community radio apart from those mentioned above. Among them, one can find:
- non-profit social organizations as owners;
- the participation of the community in ownership as well as programming, management, operation, financing, and evaluation;
- independence from political parties or private companies (AMARC, 2008).

Community radio plays a vital role in creating a pluralistic media system. It promotes tolerance and dialogue between people and is successful in shifting peripheral actors to more central positions and not only having their voices heard but also making them more powerful actors in the local communities (Doliwa & Purkarthofer, 2021; Hargitai, 2011; Velics, 2008).

Countries with the most robust community radio sector regarding the number of such initiatives and the audience's involvement include Australia, Canada, India, and many African countries. Community radio is also established and well-developed in Western Europe, e.g., France, Austria, the Netherlands, Ireland, Great Britain, and Scandinavian countries. However, it has grown considerably more slowly in almost all Central and Eastern European countries (Doliwa & Rankovic, 2014).

In this article, the researchers sought to compare the similarities and differences of community radio in Hungary to the global principles that community radio aims for. The main research question is: To what extent do two of the researched community radio stations, Hungary – Tilos Radio and EPER Radio, follow the community media principles in programming, relationships with listeners and collaborators, management, and finances? Hungary is an interesting country to study as it used to be one of the European leaders in non-profit radio development, a sector legally recognized in that country in 1996. Since then, however, most established community-oriented stations have stopped broadcasting (Velics, 2012, p. 265).

The role of media in CEE, with a particular focus on community media

The media certainly had an impact on the overthrow of communism in the region after 1989 (Ociepka, 2003: 18). However, after a short period of a very dynamic upward trend in media freedom, it soon became subject to political and economic conflict. Social gain logic often had to give way to market logic in media policy (Doliwa, 2022, p. 169). Moreover, as was observed by Karol Jakubowicz and Miklós Sükösd (2008, p. 18), in Central and Eastern European countries, public policy in the media field served party goals rather than the public interest.

Unfortunately, these problems are still visible in countries from the region. Central and Eastern Europe is characterized by a visible top-down role of state power in the media (Bognar, 2018, p. 228). Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska associates this phenomenon of the politicization of mass media with the immaturity of political elites and the inheritance of certain habits developed during the communist period (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2002, p. 28).

Politicians in individual countries, despite the democratic systems, still use, to a greater or lesser extent, power and influence to exert pressure on media (Williams, 2008: 149). What is more, the growth of media freedom in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) cannot be called a steadily upward process – it is marked by a series of backward steps, which we can observe in some countries in the region. Poland and Hungary may serve as examples here. In the World Press Freedom Index 2022, Poland fell to its lowest-ever position of 66th, following consecutive years of decline from a high of 18th. Hungary is now ranked 85th, and despite a better ranking than a year before, remains one of the so-called "problematic" countries in the Reporters Without Borders report (World Press Freedom Index, 2022).

The specificity of the region has an impact on the community radio development. In general, it has faced several key obstacles, among which the lack of an overall enabling environment has played the most crucial role. Several problems in community media development in CEE were identified, which may be summarized as follows:

- The lack of political will to modify the law addressing community media;
- Low voluntary involvement;
- Limited knowledge about the idea of community media and possible benefits from the community media sector;
- Weak community media movement;
- Limited governmental and non-governmental sources that could be used for community media support;
- High copyright fees;
- Spectrum occupied by the commercial and public sectors (Doliwa & Rankovic, 2014, pp. 29-30).

These problems persist today. Moreover, the growth of interest in third-sector broadcasting in the region has slowed. In some countries, such initiatives now face even more obstacles than before. One of them is definitely Hungary.

The development of the community radio in Hungary

The history of the Hungarian community broadcasting sector can be divided into four periods: before 1996, 1996-2002, 2002-2010, and since 2011. In Hungary, the third broadcasting sector was legitimized in 1996, and according to the Register of National Radio and Television Commission, by the end of 2007, there were 68 community radio stations across the country (Gosztonyi, 2010, p. 302). From the beginning of 2011, a new law made it much more difficult for them to operate, and the number of community radios suddenly started declining.

Tilos Radio (Forbidden Radio), the first community-oriented, alternative radio station in Hungary, began broadcasting on the 21st of August 1991 and initially worked as a pirate radio. Despite the official frequency moratorium introduced in Hungary in 1993, a regulation was found in the still-binding Press Law of 1986, allowing radio and television studios to make and broadcast non-commercial programs covering local events. At that time, three community radio stations received such permission: SzóKöz Rádió in Szombathely, Szubjektív Rádió in Pécs, and Szóla Rádió in Debrecen (Velics, 2021, pp. 91–93).

The Hungarian Federation of Free Radios (Szabad Rádiók Magyarországi Szervezete), a representative forum of Hungarian community radio stations, was founded on 21 June 1992 by Fiksz Radio, Szubjektív Radio, Tilos Radio and the Association of Community Developers. The organization actively drafted the first Media Act (Gosztonyi, 2014, pp. 86-90).

The first complex media law adopted by the parliament concentrated on financial aspects when defining community radio stations and labeled them as 'non-profit purpose program providers'. Act I of 1996 on radio and television broadcasting started the first official licensing process of 'non-profit' stations, which were not obliged to pay a broadcasting fee for the frequencies used. The law also set up a Broadcasting Fund, which was a fund for public and non-profit broadcasters (Hungarian Parliament, 1996, §77). Already existing community-oriented stations had to apply for a license for 'non-profit' broadcasting, and the strict conditions imposed by the law plunged the sector into a serious crisis. The licensing process was long, and finally, only 10-15 licensed 'non-profit' radio stations operated throughout Hungary in 1997 (Gosztonyi, 2010, p. 298). Despite this relatively small number of stations, they offered listeners access to broadcasting, provided opportunities for volunteers to produce radio programs in a democratic environment, and served as a place where the Hungarian civil society could develop.

By the turn of the millennium, community-oriented radio broadcasting had lost much of its significance. It was the era of emerging local commercial radio stations. In 2002, the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT), seeing the problematic situation of the sector, launched a new application line for so-called 'small non-profit radio stations' apart from the already existing possibility to apply for a regular 'non-profit' radio license (National Radio and Television Commission, 2003).

The technical requirements for small non-profit stations had been limited, e.g., the transmitter's output could not be over 10 Watts, and the height of the antenna measured

from the ground level was limited to thirty meters. Whereas non-profit stations started in the first half of the 1990s had the right to broadcast within a radius of 10 kilometers, the small non-profit stations licensed since 2002 had much more limited coverage, with a typical maximum radius transmitter output of one-kilometer stereo and two kilometers mono pickup counted from the transmitter site.

These regulations may be evaluated in two ways. Firstly, a unique opportunity, even at the European level, has been provided since 2002 to launch small, non-profit, community-oriented radio stations with relatively simple legal and technical requirements. It should be emphasized that community broadcasting schemes, similar to that in Hungary, have not been installed in other former socialist countries. On the other hand, the strictly limited parameters did not guarantee effective operation. However, they caused operational and economic problems for the staff, who were therefore dependent on the authorities, both local governments and media bodies, which provided regular financial support via different open tenders. The financial support coming from the Broadcasting Fund was one of the most efficient. To obtain money from the Fund every year, four types of applications were designed for non-profit radio stations: applications for yearly running costs, for technical development, for starting or developing the broadcast diffusion, and for creating news programs. The amount of self-financing required for different applications ranged from 15% to 50%. The system has worked not without problems, but it has provided a calculable budget framework for operation.

From 2004 to the end of 2007, 56 small community-oriented non-profit radio stations across Hungary were licensed (Gosztonyi, 2010, p. 302). Many operated in villages or disadvantaged areas outside big cities where several mainstream local radio stations operated (National Radio and Television Commission, 2008). Surprisingly, more small non-profit stations were launched in the eastern part of the country, where people were struggling with economic and social problems, than in the western (the so-called 'rich') part of Hungary (Gosztonyi, 2007).

After the general election in the spring of 2010, life in Hungary changed in several ways. Legislation and enactment speeded up, and non-governmental voices have had limited effectiveness during these processes. A new era began for community broadcasting in Hungary as the 2010 law CLXXXV relating to Media Services and Mass media was passed on December 22 and came into force on January 1, 2011 (Hungarian Parliament, 2010).

The Media Authority was established as the country's new regulator responsible for overseeing all media, telecommunications, and postal services sectors. It replaced Hungary's two former regulatory agencies—the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT), the media regulator, and the National Communications Authority (NHH), the telecommunications regulator. The Media Authority is composed of three entities: the President of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority; the Office of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority; and the Media Council—each with a range of competencies

over media, electronic communications, and telecommunications regulations (CMCS, no year). One of the welcome changes introduced by this media act was that community media service was finally labeled as such and not just as 'non-profit.' On the other hand, community broadcasters realized that the definition, the criteria, and the basic principles of community media were formulated inappropriately by the law. Paragraph 66 of Chapter IV in the new media law lacks several essential elements, which are distinctive characteristic features of community radio:

> "Community Media Service Provision
> (1) Linear community media services are intended to serve or satisfy the exceptional needs for information regarding (and to provide access to) cultural programs for
> a) certain social, national, or ethnic minorities, cultural or religious communities or groups, or
> b) residents of a given settlement, region, or coverage area or
> c) in the majority of their transmission time programs aimed at achieving the objectives of public service media service provision set in Article 83 (Hungarian Parliament, 2010)."

The new law does not contain a particular 'small community radio' or clear 'community radio' category. This was squeezed into those mentioned above, the 'linear community media service provider' category. Furthermore, this new regulation introduced requirements almost impossible to fulfill for volunteer-based radio stations: regular coverage of the news about a given social or local community, the need to provide cultural programs, at least four-hour program every day, 66% public service content, 50% of the Hungarian music played, etc. The rules regarding advertising have not been changed, and community media providers can broadcast six minutes of advertisements in one program hour (Hungarian Parliament, 2010).

This category allows all local and regional broadcasters to apply for a linear community broadcaster status. This is beneficial because they can, for example, avoid paying the license fee and have access to financial resources previously dedicated to community broadcasters only. The broad interpretation of the term 'community' gave a chance to apply for a community radio license for stations that were, in fact, not so much community-oriented, volunteer-based, and not-for-profit. As all licenses that had been valid for years had to be replaced with new ones by 30 June 2011, this phenomenon was clearly observable. The Media Authority registered 157 applications before the deadline in this licensing process (eMasa, 2011), but only around 70 came from previously known community broadcasters. By the end of December 2011, most of those stations that had applied and received new 'linear community media service provider' status were professional radio stations. They have paid staff (and no volunteers) and a genuine community of radio listeners participating in

creating the radio. At the local and regional level, 19 new permits were given to those with strong links to the church or the governing party.

Most of the previously known community radio stations suffered financial difficulties during the re-licensing process. They had to provide local current affairs programs for the local community and fulfill all the duties required by the authorities while relying on voluntary work. At the same time, financing a community radio program, which frequently comes from civil organizations, individual sponsors, state funding, or grants, is becoming more problematic (Hargitai, 2014). Since the global financial crisis, the Hungarian economy has become more vulnerable, and support from local businesses or government has started to dwindle. From the beginning of 2011, the new law has made it much more difficult for them to operate, and the number of community radios suddenly declined to only 44. This gave a chance to start new religious radio stations on the same frequency, often replacing well-established community broadcasters with a long history.

Figure 1. Number of small-scale community radio stations over the years in Hungary
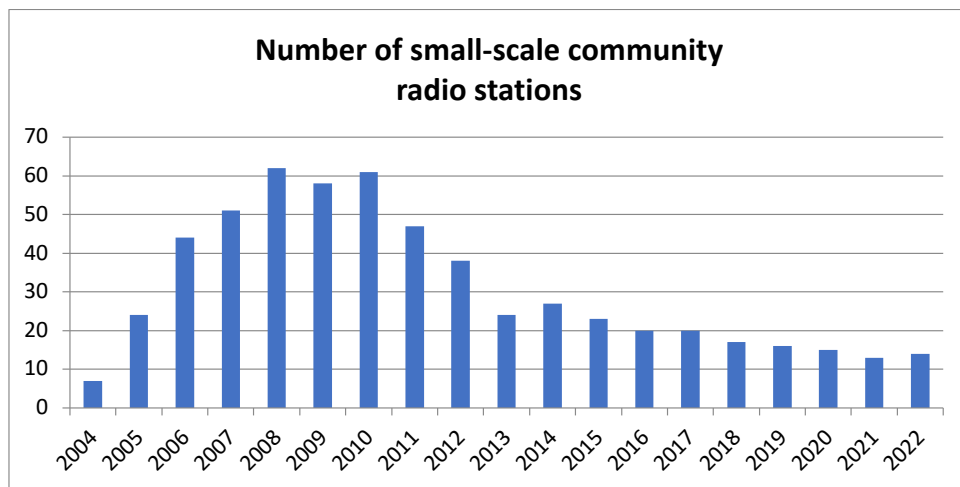
Source: Database of Communications, Media and Motion Picture Statistics of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (2023), Üzemelő kisközösségi rádióállomások száma 2004-2021 (Number of small-scale community radio stations 2004-2021), http://ehmmsa.nmhh.hu/musorszoras/4-46/001/#4-46 with amendments.

During the following years, many representatives of community broadcasting claimed that there was a danger that the principles of community radio would be lost in Hungary. According to current data (12. December 2022), the new law and policy led to the disappearance of many genuine community-oriented radio stations in Hungary, and business – and church-based community radio now flourish. The National Media and Infocommunications Authority database contains 14 small-scale community radios (National Media Infocommunications Authority, 2022a). Along with these, there are 35 community radios on the

local level (National Media Infocommunications Authority, 2022b) and 29 community radios on the regional level (National Media Infocommunications Authority, 2022c), which are primarily church-oriented (Catholic, Evangelistic, Mária Rádió) or local commercial broadcasters that are part of big networks with the same content in several stations.

Materials and methods

This article is partly based on the authors' desk research and previous research. Two representatives from community radio stations in Hungary were also interviewed: Tamás Jamrisko – Chief Editor of the university radio from Budapest EPER FM97.0 and an employee of the Communications Department at ELTE, and Gábor Csabai – Managing Director of Tilos Radio for 16 years, who resigned from this position on 3. September 2022, as an act of protest when Tilos radio's license expired, and it had to wait for a new license for internet radio only.

These are people responsible for the functioning of two of Hungary's researched community radio stations. 60-minute conversations were conducted face to face in the stations on 7 October 2022 in English and Hungarian. The researchers then analyzed them. 'The Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit,' developed by Vinod Pavarala (UNESCO Chair on Community Media) and his team from India (Pavarala et al., 2013), inspired the authors while preparing a semi-structured questionnaire in both stations. However, the toolkit is designed mainly for self-assessment and the peer-review process for community radios that wish to check to what extent they follow community radio principles. Nevertheless, the researchers sought to compare the similarities and differences of community radio in Hungary to the global principles that community radio aims for. That is why the analyzed parameters were reduced or supplemented in the interviews in comparison to the tool created by Vinod Pavarala and his team. They were organized around seven main areas: basic information, vision/mission of the station, programming, community of listeners and collaborators, management, and finances.

Results

Characteristics of the stations. Tilos Radio started operating on 21 August 1991 as a pirate radio station. One of the station's goals was to bring the public's attention to the problem of not having a legal framework for independent and community broadcasters. That year, the radio was immediately awarded the Civil Courage Prize, founded by the Publicity Club, for having the courage to show civil disobedience to a situation that violated the Constitution (Doliwa et al., in print). Tilos Radio played an important role in the 1995 liberalization of the airwaves in Hungary and was licensed in 1995. The coverage area of Tilos Radio is the inner city of Budapest, with 660 thousand potential listeners. The station is a member of the Hungarian Federation of Free Radios and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

Tilos Radio has a community radio license at the regional level. The station broadcasts 24 hours daily, mainly in Hungarian and in Chinese, Spanish, Italian, English, German, and Serbian. Slovak and Russians also host programs on Tilos radio, but they prefer to use the Hungarian language in their shows.

In April 2022, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) blocked the renewal of Tilos Radio's frequency license, citing violations of legal provisions related to age rating and broadcasting time. This decision was met with widespread criticism and condemnation by Hungarian society and international organizations, such as Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), ARTICLE 19 Europe, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), International Press Institute (IPI), and OBC Transeuropa (OBCT). However, in September 2022, the Tilos Cultural Foundation won a tender for a frequency license, allowing Tilos Radio to continue broadcasting for ten years.

EPER FM97.0 Első Pesti Egyetemi Rádió (The First University Radio of the city of Pest) was founded in 2004 and is the only university radio with a license currently operating in Hungary. The acronym of the station has an additional meaning in Hungarian (strawberry). It has a license for small-scale broadcasting and a reach of one kilometer from the transmitter. The license for the station was renewed on 30 September 2021. It is also possible to listen to the station via the Internet and in the form of podcasts, available on the website and on podcasting platforms like Spotify. The station is a member of the Hungarian Federation of Free Radios.

Vision and mission. The mission of Tilos Radio consists of three essential components: free speech, sharing and clashing different points of view and topics, and standing up for human rights. Because of the pirate history of the station and the problematic current situation when it comes to media pluralism in Hungary, the station is often perceived as slightly revolutionary and an opposition radio station. However, in the opinion of the station's managing director, Gábor Csabai, politics is definitely not the station's center of interest.

'Most people think that Tilos Radio is an opposition radio station, but it is a platform for civil movements, activities, and ideas that can appear on this platform. Among these, there are, of course, political opinions. They are welcome as well. We are into public policy topics, even analysis of international political issues, but we do not get into party-related political issues. We invite not only experts to our programs, but we also have programs in which we are curious to see what the ordinary people think (…). Radio is a forum for creative people who think, take care of, and want to act for society, public life, and the environment (Csabai, 2022).

At the very beginning, the mission of EPER Radio was to create and record university lectures because the founders believed that academic knowledge should be available to everyone. They aimed to provide a creative and educational studio for youngsters and students. Henrik Hargitai – the founder and chief editor of the station for nearly 20 years and assistant professor at the Department of Media and Communication – is also a valuable

member of the Hungarian community radio movement. His handbook has inspired and instructed many small community radio practitioners on how to run a community radio station (Hargitai, 2004).

Nowadays, the station's primary goal is to give people interested in producing radio shows or podcasts access to the studio. The station is a community broadcaster and shares values accompanying this concept. For the chief editor, a community radio station like EPER is 'the most democratic way of creating content (…), it does not matter what you look like or where you are from' (Jamrisko, 2022).

The station creators feel independent. Despite rather strict rules regarding media in Hungary, they believe they can broadcast in this formula because the government wants to show that there is a space for alternative voices on the airwaves. However, they are pretty limited these days.

Community of collaborators. The number of program makers on Tilos Radio is impressive and estimated at around 350. They are supported by the technical and finance staff (6-8 people), but some staff members also host their program on the air. The paid crew is limited to seven people at the moment, but it cannot count on a proper salary either. It is instead a form of compensation for their work. The program-makers are volunteers. The station is also supported by temporary volunteers if needed, e.g., when there is an extra task.

According to the survey among listeners that Tilos Radio has at its disposal, 70% of the listeners are men, and 30% are women. This disproportion is reflected in the structure of the program-makers: 85% of them are men, and 15% are women. Different generations are represented in Tilos Radio. There are around 15 people over 60 involved in program creation. Teenagers and secondary school students also come to the station primarily as part of a compulsory volunteer work scheme before the final exam in secondary school. They are a helpful supplement to the station's functioning: they edit programs, do research using phone calls and the Internet, and help with technical issues. There are no children among the program-makers, but the station provides a popular daily program for children: the evening tales. A station is a place where people from minority groups are also welcome – there are around ten program makers with such a background.

Tilos Radio is such a famous and unique station that there is no need to make extra effort to attract volunteers; they come independently because they would like to be part of this phenomenon. The most popular way of attracting new volunteers is for the volunteers already involved in the functioning of the station to bring their friends to the station charmed by what they heard about Tilos from them.

It is not difficult to find somebody to help in the program production process and when unexpected problems need to be solved. The staff mostly use live programs following the website or Facebook account to seek a specialist who usually brings all the necessary tools with him/her and solves the problem without asking for payment. Many people who had a chance to visit the station for the first time stayed at the station as regular volunteers in this way. Around 15 people are always available for any service, and an additional 50-60

people are available occasionally if needed. They play a significant role during special events, integral to the station's activity. They collect donations, sell merchandise products and raffle tickets, and take care of financial issues (e.g., during the Tilos Radio Marathon – which is about asking for donations from the listeners during the same week each year). These volunteers also have an essential role, e.g., in moving the studio to the new headquarters, when there is a need to translate applications into English, or when there are issues with the internet connection. The IT administrator lives 70 km from Budapest and visits the station only 2-3 times a year, but he is in touch with the station daily. Volunteers also collect the obligatory data for the Media Authority from the beginning; they fill in the Excel worksheets. For example, Csabai Gábor's program diary is written by a volunteer who lives in Szolnok and listens to the show there. Taking care of equipment and studios and mobilizing the community in their own neighborhoods are also essential tasks undertaken by volunteers. They do not accept any compensation from the radio. On the contrary, they often donate their time and money to the radio station. They feel privileged to have the 'Tilos Crew' T-shirt. Other Tilos T-shirts are available for everyone, but this one is only for volunteers.

In Tilos, there is no set plan to teach volunteers and program-makers as there is a belief that there is no need to improve the quality of the presenters – the content is more important. It is because Tilos is a radio 'with thousands of different voices, and it is thought that nobody should tell anybody how to speak or behave in front of a microphone' (Csabai, 2022). As the editor underlines, it is essential to be natural and comfortable and have meaningful content to share.

The number of producers and other people connected to EPER Radio is smaller than the Tilos radio station, but it is still substantial, oscillating around 70 people. Only the chief editor is employed full-time. The paid staff comprises six extra people: an accountant, administrative support, the foundation's president, a technical and creative producer, and two sound editors. From time to time, some other people can earn some money on the radio, especially when being involved in producing paid content, like a podcast for ELTE University. Only 20-30% earn some money on the radio.

The community of producers seems to be quite diverse. Female creators prepare half of the content, but there are slightly fewer women among the paid staff than men, primarily because most of the paid tasks are connected with technical aspects of the production. Some Roma and Jewish communities have their programs on EPER Radio. Some shows are also prepared by people from the countryside and not-so-wealthy members of society.

EPER Radio does not have well-developed recruitment strategies apart from classes at the Department of Media and Communication, during which the students often produce shows disseminated by EPER Radio and stay at the station as regular producers or even paid staff. The chief editor mainly contacts the candidates because they already know somebody from the station. However, it is also possible to find an appeal for volunteers on the station website: 'If you wish to work with us, come to our editorial meeting. You can produce programs at the studio, ELTE BTK University, Múzeum krt 6-8, room – 131' (EPER, 2023a).

The volunteers are not only involved in content creation. They help with recording, editing, and other activities. Last year, they painted a second studio of EPER Radio. A form of compensation for the volunteers is access to the studio, and they can also borrow some technical equipment, if needed, and count on workshops provided by the staff. If the volunteers are skilled and trained enough, they can be paid for the work mostly on third-party projects.

Programming. Tilos broadcasts 24 hours a day on air and the Internet. The station's program is very diverse regarding topics and radio genres. Despite not being at the center of interest of the radio, news is an obligatory element of the program. However, the station does not provide political news or anything from the National News Agency (MTI) but concentrates on science, culture, and sports in news bulletins. All programs are accessible for listeners to call in, and the hosts try to make them as interactive as possible.

In October 2023, there were 159 different shows provided by the station within a two-week framework. They are usually based on lengthy discussions with guests and experts, which are not typical interviews. This is why there are called 'conversations' in the station. More sophisticated radio genres like drama or children's programs are also in the radio schedule. It is hard to give an example of a radio genre that the station does not provide: news, interviews, call-in programs, discussions, storytelling, drama, documentaries, music shows, and magazines are well represented. However, it does not provide live transmissions from concerts or sports events.

The radio station has data on online listeners and makes it public daily (Tilos Radio Online Audience, 2023). The most popular show, the Haza és haladás (Homeland and Progress), is broadcast on Friday morning and has the highest rate of online listeners – on 13. January 2023. it had 727 online listeners. It is estimated that offline listening is 50 to 100 times higher than online. That means when 100 listeners are online, the total could be 5,000 or even 10,000 listeners. To some extent, this is confirmed by Tilos Radio's daily radio listenership data from 2020, where the station was ranked ninth on the list of the most popular radio stations with an average of 11,000 listeners per day (National Media and Infocommunications Authority, 2020).

Gábor Csabai is incredibly proud of the nine shows he has invented. He is not the host of these shows. However, he encouraged people to make them happen or suggested the main profile and topics of these programs (e.g., Forgószínpad (Revolving Podium) is run by progressive social organizations such as Direkt36, Mérce, Átlátszó discussing public affairs from a non-governmental perspective; Planet Error – a show about environmental issues or Szőnyeg alól (Under the carpet) about Roma integration).

At Tilos Radio, there are no shows from third-party sources. The station has a unique archive in which everything broadcast since April 2010 is available. Everyone has access to this archive (Tilos Radio Archive, 2023).

EPER broadcasts a 24-hour program using a terrestrial license and the Internet and produces podcasts on a website. However, they are also distributed on podcasting platforms under their name, not necessarily the station's.

The station broadcasts university lectures, interviews, discussions, magazines, vox pops, and alternative shows. EPER is also involved in creating more advanced formats like radio drama, documentaries, and experimental programs (for example, field recording). It is possible to listen to news bulletins at the station, but similar to Tilos Radio, they are mostly related to science, culture, and public life. Breaking news is not present at the station.

In the program, 90% is devoted to talking, and only 10% is music – these are different music bands recorded by EPER radio, which can be used without restrictions. Other kinds of music, in general, are not present in the shows to avoid the complex reporting of the music used – the staff does not want to spend time and resources preparing precisely detailed copyright reports.

EPER Radio does not broadcast live. The radio creators believe live shows are 'an old construction from a past.' This functioning formula was solidified after the COVID era (under the changing university environment, content consumption habits, media situation, and terrestrial reach). Before Covid, they used to broadcast live and are ready to do that again – if needed.

In general, every show in the program is welcome. It is a grassroots model of production. The chief editor is proud of every show because the involvement of the community, not necessarily the show's quality, is significant to him. There were more than 25 shows on EPER Radio in October 2022. As stated by the chief editor: 'We are holding this place for individual creators' (Jamrisko, 2022). He especially admires the shows prepared by the producers, which are not so typical of radio stations. He gave an example of a 'middle-aged lady' who creates shows about culture and science. 'I am very proud of her because it is tough to learn and do these things frequently' (Jamrisko, 2022). He also mentioned the first Hungarian podcast about archaeology as an example of the unique content distributed by the radio.

The station has some recordings about LGBT rights and an interview with George Soros in the archive, but the program is generally not politically oriented. The shows are provided in Hungarian and English, and one is in Portuguese for the Brazilian community. EPER Radio produces an official ELTE podcast, but the university provides the Foundation with some money for this production.

All the broadcasts are archived from the very beginning of the station, and the radio archive is available for the general public (EPER, 2023b).

Community of listeners. The community of listeners plays a crucial role in the success of Tilos Radio. The station engages its audience through various means, including social media platforms like Facebook, Messenger, and Skype. Additionally, the station encourages community members to become involved by hosting their shows, with 70% of the hosts being former listeners. Gábor Csabai emphasizes the importance of giving the community a platform to share their ideas, thoughts, and passions on air. The listeners also have the op-

portunity to provide feedback. Tilos Radio receives many e-mails and has over 40 thousand Facebook fans. The show hosts always ask listeners to call in, write, or come to one of the events organized by the station and meet the Tilos Radio team in person.

The communication system with the listeners in EPER Radio is poorly developed. It is possible to contact the station via phone or social media. However, in general, the show creators have their communication channels or even groups for the listeners on social media, and they are responsible to a great extent for communications. It happens that the creators change the show's format if the listeners suggest it is good to do so.

Management. The management system of Tilos Radio is very community-oriented. 'Tilos radio has no owners, and the owners are only the community of listeners and all the program makers' (Csabai, 2022).

Radio operates as a Foundation with a Board of trustees (Tilos Cultural Foundation, 2023). Program-makers elect the members of the Board and, later on, also appointed by the founder. The Board is composed of seven people. Only program makers or other kinds of devoted volunteers can be members of this board. There have always been 1 to 2 women among the board members in the last ten years. Minority groups were not represented because, in the opinion of Gábor Csabai, 'they show no interest in this form of activity' (Csabai, 2022).

Day-to-day decisions are taken by a democratically elected Editorial Board of five people, while the Board of Trustees decides upon essential issues. However, the General Assembly of Tilos Radio members must approve significant station operations changes.

Regarding EPER Radio, the academic staff of ELTE's Department of Media and Communication funded the Media Universalis Foundation, which created and ran this station. It means the station is independent of the University, although it is located in the University buildings.

The chief editor makes most of the decisions regarding the shows via consultation with the content producers. The more strategic ones are consulted with the president of the foundation. Apart from that, relatively informal communication and decision-making channels take place in the station.

The station management is open to everybody, and every topic can be included in the program, apart from some extreme ideologies like, for example, fascism or theories based on fake news. In recent history, there has only been one show that stopped at the station. This was a show in which the producer began to relativize and partially deny the fact that there was a war in Ukraine.

Finances. The annual budget of Tilos Radio is tiny in comparison to the number of programs it provides and is estimated to be around 30-65 million HUF (75-162,000 EUR). 80% of this budget comes from the listeners and 20% from grants. Even though community radio stations in Hungary can apply for financial support from the Media Council, Tilos Radio decided not to apply. As noted by Gábor Csabai, 'We will not participate in any tender in which the Hungarian state has anything to do with' (Csabai, 2022). One

crucial part of this 80% direct support from the listeners is collected during a 9-day-long support week in summer, the so-called Fundraising Marathon. These days, not only are many bank transfers made, but there are many auctions in which artists offer paintings, sculptures, and organized objects. Tilos products, such as famous T-shirts, are distributed. You can buy a T-shirt for at least 5000 HUF (12 EUR), but some people are ready to pay up to 40,000 HUF (100 EUR). During the last edition of the support week, 39 million HUF (95,000 EUR) was collected.

An additional source of income is the 1% of the tax that taxpayers can donate to the public benefit organization each year. The Tilos Foundation is a popular beneficiary of this scheme, receiving more yearly money. Last year, it received over 24 million HUF (58,000 EUR).

Next to these is a team of Tilos Radio members who take care of the international and national tenders. Gábor Csabai, a financial manager and a professional English translator, constitutes this team. They usually are the beneficiaries of all the grants they apply for.

The foundation operates transparently and within legal guidelines to ensure the operation process and finances are above board. Listeners also have access to the data, which is not mandatory but is published periodically. All support received is directed towards covering the running costs of Tilos Radio. Although there is no advertising at Tilos Radio, it occasionally broadcasts station promotions and promotes events that are connected with Tilos Radio but not connected with earning money.

The financing system at EPER Radio is slightly different. Every year, the station applies to the Media Council for special money dedicated to small-scale community broadcasters – around 10 thousand euros per year is dedicated to running costs and technical equipment.

The foundation which runs the station is a non-governmental organization. It has several advantages because such organizations can apply for grants unavailable to the university.

The station can collect additional money from the productions completed in collaboration with other entities, like ELTE University. The staff also offers editing and mastering services for third-party organizations. Altogether, EPER Radio is able to earn up to 25% of the budget. Some money also comes from donors ready to support the station via PayPal. You can find information about how to do it on the website: 'You can donate to Első Pesti University Radio (the Média Universalis Foundation that operates it) using the button below. We maintain the studio and make the recordings and shows from donations. If your donation is targeted, you can use the 'write a comment' button to write what kind of program or performance recording you want the money for. The cost of recording and editing a lesson is HUF 2,000 (around 5 Euro), and a weekly show (podcast) running for six months is HUF 50,000 (around 120 Euro)' (ELTE, 2022). Similar to Tilos Radio, EPER also does not broadcast advertising.

Discussion

As shown by Peter Bajomi-Lazar, the media policy led by the Fidesz party, aimed at promoting voices supporting the government and silencing others, has had a devastating effect on the whole media system, including community radio (Bajomi-Lazar, 2017, pp. 162-172). Despite this unfriendly media environment, EPER Radio and Tilos Radio still operate as independent radio stations with a not-for-profit nature and no reliance on government and commercial forces concerned. Embedding in the community media model is strengthened by the long history of community broadcasting in Hungary and membership in the Hungarian Federation of Free Radios. EPER Radio and Tilos Radio are deeply rooted in community media vision regarding programming, relationships with listeners and collaborators, management, and finances.

As for the program, it is very diverse and highly community-oriented in both stations. Topics and voices that cannot be heard in the commercial sector or public broadcasting may find their way to the listeners via these community radio stations.

Relationships with the listeners and producers seem to be particularly close in the case of Tilos Radio, which is based on the financial and organizational support of the community. Nevertheless, in EPER Radio, most of the producers are volunteers, as in the case of Tilos Radio, coming from different backgrounds and with different ideas of how to make radio. It makes the stations accessible to ordinary citizens who want to become producers.

The governing system is, to a greater or lesser extent, adjusted to the community media model at both stations. However, it is definitely more visible in the case of Tilos radio, where the members can actively participate in policy, programming, and operations – the General Assembly makes the most critical decisions. Although the democratic management system is not so well developed in the case of EPER Radio, as the chief editor makes most of the everyday decisions (but in consultation with the program creators), the foundation is consulted more strategically once.

Regarding the financial system in the case of Tilos Radio, the station's independence is strengthened by the fact that the station does not apply for the money dedicated to community radio stations distributed by the Fidesz-controlled Media Council and can count on money collected among the listeners. However, neither station broadcasts advertising, which makes them independent from commercial forces.

Sustainability is a significant challenge facing independent community radio stations in Hungary. As was visible in the process of the renewal of Tilos Radio's frequency license, the bottom-up pressure of the civil society in Hungary, as well as the involvement of international organizations, played a role and made the existence of some independent radio projects difficult but at least possible. Their structure, programming, non-profit functioning model, and basic principles are unique and in line with democratic values. However, we have to take into account the fact that even in countries that are very supportive of community-oriented

projects, which is not the case in Hungary, the influence of this kind of initiative on the society, educational, and political system is limited. Karol Jakubowicz well explains it.

'These media are mainly small media, peripheral to the mainstream of mass communication, suffering from severe financial problems even in the countries where they use public funding. Although community media constitute a growing segment of media ecology, the assessment of their activities indicates that they are limited in their effectiveness in achieving their social goals. Their small reach, focus on informational, journalistic, and persuasive content, scarce resources for program production, and the fact that they are mostly radio stations make their contribution to a possible paradigm shift minimal (Jakubowicz, 2011, p. 151).

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