A new scenario in digital communication: eSports coverage on public broadcasters in Europe

Un nuevo escenario en la comunicación digital: la cobertura de deportes electrónicos en las televisiones públicas de Europa

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RESUMEN
Introducción: La investigación se centra en el análisis de la cobertura de deportes electrónicos por parte de las televisoras públicas europeas, prestando especial atención a sus contenidos principales, formatos producidos, dimensión y estructura de los equipos de trabajo, rutinas y perfiles profesionales, canales y estrategias de distribución, así como a las previsiones y retos de futuro que se esperan de los e-sports en ellas. **Metodología:** Se realiza un seguimiento online de la actividad de los medios de servicio público (PSM en inglés) con respecto a los ciberdeportes y se contacta con 16 de estas corporaciones europeas para determinar una muestra intencional de estudios de caso. A partir de sus aportaciones se deciden efectuar entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas con método Delphi a los

responsables de los proyectos RTP Arena, Yle eSports y SVT eSports; así como un análisis descriptivo con lectura horizontal y vertical de sus plataformas, contenidos más representativos y redes sociales. **Resultados:** Se identifican dos bloques de corporaciones dentro del PSM: un grupo que incluye a los deportes electrónicos en su agenda mediática, limitando su actividad a la cobertura informativa; y otro que introduce a los e-sports en su programación y genera plataformas adhoc de contacto con audiencias más jóvenes. En conjunto, se detecta una migración progresiva de los contenidos de las televisiones públicas hacia plataformas de terceros y medios sociales, con prestaciones en términos tecnológicos, de interactividad e interconectividad. **Discusión y conclusiones:** El interés creciente de las radiotelevisiones públicas en los e-sports choca con la dificultad de contratar nuevos profesionales para potenciar los servicios de producción y distribución vinculados a ellos, y con la incerteza de determinar quién asumirá estas funciones. La calidad técnica y narrativa de los contenidos se mantiene en una escala ascendente, y las comunidades de usuarios generadas en torno a ellos se enriquecen constantemente en términos cualitativos y cuantitativos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: e-sports; deportes electrónicos; ciberdeportes; medios de servicio público; televisión; periodismo; innovación; redes sociales; internet.

ABSTRACT
Introduction: The research focuses on the analysis of e-sports coverage by European public broadcasters, paying special attention to their main contents, formats produced, size and structure of the work teams, professional routines and profiles, distribution channels and strategies, as well as the forecasts and future challenges expected for e-sports in them. **Methodology:** An online monitoring of the activity of public service media (PSM) with respect to e-sports is carried out and 16 of these European corporations are contacted in order to determine a purposive sample of case studies. Based on their contributions, it was decided to carry out in-depth semi-structured interviews with Delphi method with the heads of the RTP Arena, Yle eSports and SVT eSports projects; as well as a descriptive analysis with horizontal and vertical reading of their platforms, most representative contents and social networks. **Results:** Two blocks of corporations are identified within the PSM: one group that includes e-sports in its media agenda, limiting its activity to news coverage; and another one that introduces e-sports in its programming and generates ad hoc platforms for contact with younger audiences. Overall, a progressive migration of public television content towards third-party platforms and social media, with benefits in terms of technology, interactivity and interconnectivity, can be detected. **Discussion and conclusions.** The growing interest of public broadcasters in e-sports clashes with the difficulty of hiring new professionals to boost production and distribution services linked to them, and with the uncertainty of determining who will take on these functions. The technical and narrative quality of the content remains on an ascending scale, and the user communities generated around it are constantly being enriched in qualitative and quantitative terms.

KEYWORDS: e-sports; cyber sports; public service media; broadcasting; journalism; innovation; social media; internet.

CONTENIDO

CONTENT

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

The disruptive evolution of technological resources and capabilities, together with the digital connectivity provided by the Internet, has driven the growth and proliferation of e-sports in recent years, an environment in which certain video games compete and which represents a social, economic, labor, and entertainment reality that is experiencing a global expansion (DEV, 2016; Hamari and Sjöblom, 2017; Stanton, 2015).

The analysis of the coverage of e-sports by the conventional media arouses interest as it is an incipient reality that is causing a change in the communication model. Even so, no studies have been published to date that examine the activity of public service television regarding cybersports.

The progressive fading of the limits of audience participation in a scenario with an interactive trend leads to a change of roles in which the users and the athletes themselves adopt the position of creators, as they all intervene in the construction of the story with comments, screen appearances, and competing in the different games.

Public television channels in Europe see gamification and content related to video games as a formula for attracting audiences that can serve as a solution to the aging of the public and the loss of relevance for young viewers, which is why they have integrated cybersports into their media agenda for the production of news, retransmission of events, and production of entertainment formats linked to them.

On the other hand, there are still few large-scale projects, the 'RTP Arena' platform of the RTP of Portugal being the reference among the initiatives of public corporations, as it is the only one that has its own website and that works formats on set which are broadcast on their linear broadcasts and Twitch. The common trend on these television channels is to maintain news coverage that only refers to the most important news events, such as the major events of League of Legends (LoL), Counter-Strike, or the main national competitions in their respective countries.

The basic scheme of the cyber-communicative scenario that revolves around e-sports is based on a video game, a regulated competition, and one or more players who meet online, which originates the concept of e-sports, such as a game of FIFA. This is observed, interpreted, and projected by journalists, on the Internet, and to a community of users that interacts, with which two-way cyber communication is established.

The communicative act can also be initiated directly by the players themselves -streamers- during the competition, without the need for a media outlet or journalist to retransmit it, which differentiates it from the communication model characteristic of traditional sports. With this, a participating bidirectional cyber communication arises, since, in this case, the agent who initiates the process has direct participation in the events that have occurred. One last nuance is that both journalists and gamers are the ones who simultaneously intervene in a shared communicative scenario, with which the participating bidirectional communication starts from a formula of co-creation between the agents involved, as represented in Figure 1.
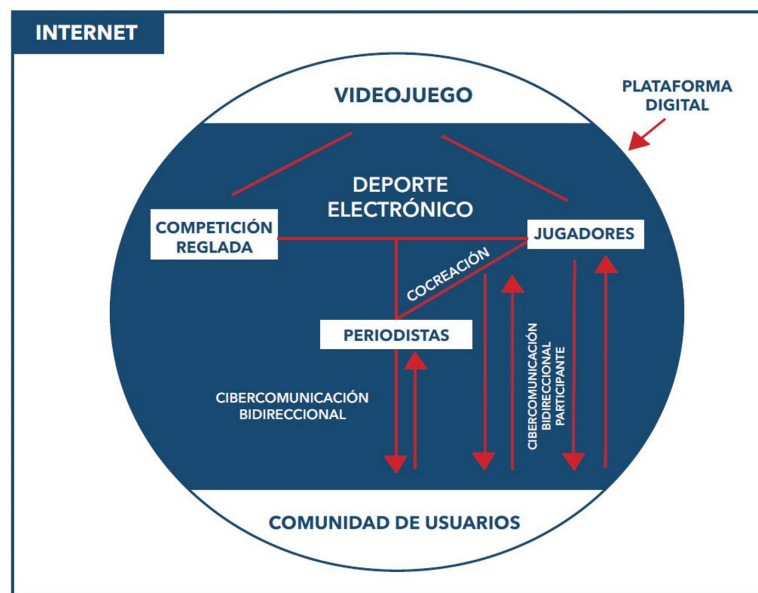
Figure 1: Basic diagram of the e-sports cyber-communicative scenario.
Source: own elaboration

This research aims to analyze how the coverage of e-sports by public television in Europe is currently being carried out, as well as to specify the communication model that is articulated around them. In this line, it seeks to identify the relevant cases and their growth forecasts and contextualize the origin and characteristics of e-sports, the latter through a review of the existing scientific literature that is specified in the following section.

1.1. Background: origin, characteristics, and classification of e-sports

Cyber sports arise from the regulated, competitive, and professional activity of certain video games that, at first, were only played for leisure and recreation (Hamari and Sjöblom, 2017; Taylor, 2012). In this way, different competitions have been established that are increasingly closer to the dynamics of traditional sports.

DEV (2016) points out that the main video games that are most competed for globally are League of Legends, Dota 2, Counter-Strike, FIFA, or Call of Duty; while in Europe, although these are recurring games, there are regional preferences, such as Counter-Strike in the Nordic countries, Call of Duty in Italy, and in Spain, besides the above, Clash Royale, FIFA, or Hearthstone (BBVA, 2021).

Various authors have studied the relationship between the concept of e-sports and traditional sport, analyzing its most relevant aspects to confirm or deny that both start from the same point. ONTIER (2018) indicates that six reasons unite both modalities: (i) there is mainly mental and also physical performance; (ii) participation is organized; (iii) the competitions are regulated; (iv) there is training; (v) they are subject to regulations, and (vi) they are competitive.

With time and the advancement of this discipline, it has been proven that regularly playing video games "improves perception, attention, and spatial cognition" (Bediou et al., 2018, p. 8). E-sports are a type of sport in which people develop and enhance cognitive abilities such as reaction time and decision

making; mental skills such as motivation and self-confidence; physical abilities such as strength in the face of fatigue; and the traditional values linked to these practices such as effort and self-improvement (García-Naveira et al., 2018).

Regarding the motivations that lead users to enter the e-sports ecosystem, Fuster et al. (2013) specified that the usual profiles corresponded to curious people, eager to explore and establish new social relationships, since video games bring players closer to a space of experimentation in which they have the possibility of belonging to a group where they feel recognized and get social support and entertainment, which is far from the conception of the solitary player.

When defining the structures under which these athletes are included and compete, most of them are integrated into professional clubs with an organization and disposition similar to conventional organizations. Those are legally constituted with their technical team, management leadership, players, and specific positions that emerge hand in hand with professionalization, as is the case of physical trainers, sports psychologists, nutritionists, or those responsible for marketing and advertising. This is an infrastructure through which they pursue sporting objectives, as well as economic and business performance, which they mainly achieved by broadcasting the competitions.

To classify e-sports, issues such as the role played by physical effort in them, the condition of the spectator, the precedent and historical context, or the degree of interaction are analyzed. Under this model, links are frequently established between e-sports and chess, poker, and traditional sports (Holt, 2016). The development of these disciplines, both in physical and digital spaces, is possible thanks to the media and the information flow, while Taylor (2012, p.14) adds that "e-sports have codified in their own raison d'etre and environment a deep relationship, both in technology and in the media".

One of the sections that dominate the interests of media researchers concerning e-sports is the study of community creation, live broadcasting, and interaction with streamers (Reitman et al. 2020). The context caused by the confluence of the virtual and physical scenarios has resulted in a point of interest for academics in the sector, who seek to delimit the field of action of both realities.

The organization of e-sports tends to be articulated around specific game genres, such as the case of online multiplayer combat arenas (League of Legends, Dota 2); first-person shooters (Counter-Strike: Global Offensive); real-time strategy (Starcraft 2); trading card games (Hearthstone or Ultimate Team), or sports games (FIFA series). Even so, e-sports are not conceived as electronic versions of conventional sports, even though some, such as soccer, tennis, or baseball, do have representation in games with FIFA or the NHL (Hamari, Sjöblom, 2017).

Taking into account the aforementioned concepts, it is possible to define e-sports as a sports typology in which the main aspects "are facilitated by electronic systems and the entry of players and teams into the scene is mediated by human-computer interfaces" (Hamari, Sjöblom, 2017, p.11). Regarding this definition, the exercise linked to e-sports can be considered, superficially and in general terms, as an activity similar to that of any sport.

The social component of video games is another of the sections that permeate e-sports, in which it has been shown that close relationship with peers is of great importance, just as it happens in conventional modalities. Likewise, e-sports are connected to a live chat that allows the user community to post comments and provide value judgments about the events of the game and encourage the teams and players (Woerman and Kirschener, 2015).

Although the scientific literature that relates e-sports with Public Service Media (PSM) is limited to date, several studies have e-sports as their object of study, as reflected in the previous paragraphs. The same happens with research linked to public service media, of which a prominent bibliography has been completed over the years.

Among the different thematic approaches that lead research on these media, the interest in the concept of public value stands out (Evens and Donders, 2020; Rodriguez-Castro and Campos-Freire, 2019; Lestón-Huerta et al., 2021), as well as the performance in innovation in public media (Sørensen, 2020; Jones and Jones, 2019), the participation and creation of audiences (Vaz et al., 2020, Lünich et al., 2021; López-Cepeda et al., 2019), the analysis of governance and independence (Masduki, 2020; Rodriguez-Castro et al., 2021; Kostovska et al., 2021), or the transformations that public media are undergoing towards platformization (Bonini-Baldini et al., 2021; van Es and Poell, 2020; Duffy et al., 2019).

In the Spanish context, the area of e-sports has been examined by various research disciplines, and there are still no studies that analyze its presence or development in public media infrastructures. In this way, González and Pérez (2018) approach cybersports from an educational perspective and its relationship with the development of skills. In turn, Dilek (2019) provides an approach from the tourism industry and how e-sports events are a tourist attraction. In this line, Muñoz and Esteban (2021) point to the consolidation of e-sports as a leisure and training market. Other authors analyze the cybersports sector from sociology, based on the analysis of the players (Lárez, 2012) or from the sponsorship capacity offered by e-sports in the sports industry (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022).

In the following two sections of this article (objectives and methodology) the different purposes that motivated carrying out this study and the mechanisms selected to try to answer the posed research questions are specified.

2.   Objectives

This study analyzes the current coverage of e-sports carried out by European public television, both due to its growing interest, as it is an incipient topic with a growing presence in the media, and due to its role regarding the time to determine a new communicative scenario where gamification, interactivity, the change of roles of the agents involved, and the disappearance of the limits of participation mark a trend that will transfer to other formats and topics in the short term.

In this sense, the aim is to identify the most relevant projects in these corporations regarding cybersports, as well as to examine the origin of these proposals, their activity, formats of produced content, work teams that compose them, professional routines, and their distribution strategies, both on their own platforms and the communicative use they make of social networks; and anticipate the progress of the sector based on the behaviors that are already beginning to be sensed.

The research questions raised to achieve the objectives described above are the following:

Question 1. What are the most relevant e-sports projects in quantitative and qualitative terms in the context of public television in Europe?

Question 2. What are the origins and current activity around e-sports on television schedules?

Question 3. What are the main formats worked by these corporations regarding e-sports?

Question 4. What are the professional profiles that make up the work teams in charge of cybersports coverage? What is the structure and organization of these groups?

Question 5. How are professional routines linked to e-sports different from those applied in conventional sports?

Question 6. What does the distribution strategy of these initiatives consist of? What communicative use do they make of their web pages and social networks?

Question 7. How is the public value proposition of corporations applied to this content?

Question 8. What are the challenges and future forecasts that are expected concerning this sector?

3. Methodology

Once the bibliographic review of the existing scientific literature on e-sports has been completed, it is appropriate to point out the absence of previous similar studies on the object of study of this analysis: the coverage of cybersports in the European public service media. That is why, since there is no precedent, the research is proposed in an exploratory-descriptive way with a blind hypothesis. Likewise, qualitative methods are used, and in-depth personal interviews are carried out with those responsible for the most relevant e-sports projects in the panorama of European public television, whose positions range from product managers to journalists producing content.

For the selection of the final sample and the projects, a search of the platforms of interest was completed and the public television stations of Germany (ARD and ZDF), Austria (ORF), Belgium (VRT and RTBF), Denmark (DR), Spain (RTVE), Finland (YLE), France (France TV), Great Britain (BBC), Netherlands (NPO), Ireland (RTÉ), Italy (RAI), Portugal (RTP), Sweden (SVT), and Switzerland (RTS) were consulted; who were asked about their corporation's coverage of cybersports and reference projects in the European context. This round of consultations was carried out between September 15th and November 10th, 2021, via email, with the following questions being submitted:

Question 1. What is your corporation's activity regarding esports?

Question 2. What would you say are the leading e-sports projects in the context of European public television?

In this way, in the initial sample of 16 television stations to determine the cases under study (Table 1), the PSM of the three media models described by Hallin and Mancini (2004) are represented: RTVE, FranceTV, RAI, and RTP by the polarized pluralist model, characterized by the integration of the media in party politics and an active role of the State in the media system; the ORF, VRT, RTBF, DR, RTS, SVT, ZDF, ARD, NPO, and the YLE for the corporatist-democratic model, in which there is also a high level of political parallelism and an active role on the part of the State that is legally limited; and the BBC and RTÉ for the liberal model, in which "a relative dominance of market mechanisms and hegemony of commercial communication companies is maintained, with little state intervention" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004, p. 5).

Table 1. Intentional sample relationship of corporations according to the media models of Hallin and Mancini (2004)

POLARIZED PLURALIST	CORPORATIST-DEMOCRATIC	LIBERAL
FRANCE TV (France) RAI (Italy) RTP (Portugal) RTVE (Spain)	ARD (Germany) DR (Denmark) NPO (The Netherlands) ORF (Austria) RTBF (Belgium) RTS (Switzerland) SVT (Sweden) VRT (Belgium) YLE (Finland) ZDF (Germany)	BBC (Great Britain) RTÉ (Ireland)

Source: own elaboration

Taking into account the size criteria of the work teams, quantitative and qualitative production of content, a convenience sample was chosen that responded satisfactorily to the proposals for participation and was made up of three projects: the RTP of Portugal -RTP Arena-, Finland's Yle -Yle eSports-, and Sweden's SVT -SVT eSports-. The meetings are held by video call, in Delphi mode, and in two rounds, through Microsoft Teams between November 19th, 2021, and February 25th, 2022, with an average duration of about 35 minutes. We work with a semi-structured questionnaire that never exceeded 10 questions, in which specific questions were included for each corporation based on the information collected from each of them to delve into each case study. Even so, the main blocks in all of them were: the origin of the project and objectives, number of workers involved, content produced, professional routines, and distribution strategy. The final panel of 4 interviewees was made up of:

Table 2. List of the intentional sample of convenience of members of the projects analyzed

NAME	ABBREVIATION/ CORPORATION	POSITION
Daniel Rodrigues	DR/RTP	Product Manager (RTP Arena)
Juha Lahti	JL/YLE	Producer Yle eSports
Otto Rönkä	OR/Yle	Producer Yle eSports
Simon Engstrand	SE/SVT	Producer SVT eSports

Source: own elaboration

The methodological triangulation is completed with a bibliographical sweep of the existing scientific literature on cybersports or e-sports and a descriptive analysis of the projects, consisting of a horizontal and vertical reading of the online platform of each corporation, with special emphasis on the contents related to e-sport and analyzing the presence of each platform in social networks and the communicative use made of them.

For this, a strategy based on virtual ethnography is established from a partial observation of the elements regarding the object of study (Hine, 2011; Kozinets, 2014). Qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 1990; Ruiz, 1996) is the ideal technique for collecting the information required in the study and is based on the preparation of an analysis table for each of the elements of interest.

The platform analysis sheet (Table 3) integrates variables that allow a comparative review of them to be carried out. These variables deal with formal and functional aspects of the projects, as well as aspects related to the accessibility, design, and browsing of the contents. In the case of Yle and SVT, for example, access to content is partial as many of their pieces are geographically limited, so the variables presented in the following Table 3 are of interest to contextualize the strategies of production and distribution of these projects.

Table 3. Platform analysis sheet

PLATFORM ANALYSIS	
VARIABLES	**CATEGORIES**
Access type	#Independent platform #Integrated section #Browser
Sections	-
Integrated events	Yes/No
Number of events	Nº
Posting frequency	nº/day nº/week
Access to content	#open #partial #closed

Source: own elaboration

For the analysis of the main shows, the use of a file is established that allows defining the characteristics of the audiovisual content in terms of its frequency and television genre, which is accompanied by a qualitative observation around its plot, variables that are specified in Table 4.

Table 4. Analysis sheet of the main shows

ANALYSIS OF MAIN SHOWS	
VARIABLES	**CATEGORIES**
Show name	-
Channel Name	#RTP #YLE #SVT
Release date	Month/Year
TV genre	nº/day nº/week
Frequency	nº seasons/nº episodes /duration

Source: own elaboration

As a last element of analysis, to study the social networks linked to the projects, a Table is proposed from the review and proposal of indicators (KPIs) of the social media library (González et al., 2013) (Table 5) to analyze the tactical performance of the social network profiles of the platforms under study, considering the characteristics offered by each social medium.

Table 5. Social media analysis sheet

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS	
SOCIAL NETWORKS	**INDICATORS**
Twitter	Profile name
	Profile creation date
	Number of users you follow
	Number of followers
Twitch	Profile name
	Profile creation date
	Number of followers
	Number of videos
	Maximum number of views in a video
Instagram	Profile name
	Profile creation date
	Number of publications
	Number of followers
	Number of followed
Facebook	Profile name
	Profile creation date
	Number of followers

Source: own elaboration

4. Results

4.1. E-sports coverage on European public television

Once the vertical and horizontal reading of the platforms and digital spaces linked to the selected projects has been carried out, and the interviews have been carried out with Daniel Rodrigues, product manager of RTP Arena, Juha Lahti and Otto Rönkä content producers at Yle eSports, and Simon Engstrand, producer at SVT eSports, the following results are obtained on the structure of the work teams, professional profiles, produced content and formats, distribution channels, and communicative use of their social networks.

Regarding the work templates, the RTP Arena team is made up of 12 professionals who are fully dedicated to the project. Its organization chart is based on a 'product manager', in charge of making editorial decisions and organizing teams, which, in turn, are subdivided into two groups: a first of content creators, with journalistic and digital professional profiles; and another of 6 people in the studio in charge of audiovisual tasks of production, editing, assembly, or directing.

The situation of the other two radio and television stations analyzed is radically different, as is well reflected in Table 6. While Yle has two full-time producers, at SVT there is only one specialized journalist focused on cybersports. Both corporations receive assistance from their sports newsroom, and in the case of Finnish television, there are different journalists with partial ties to the project. Likewise, both RTP and Yle are reinforced with occasional freelance hires that provide them with assistance in massive events.

Table 6. Structure and professional profiles of the work teams of the analyzed projects

PROJECT	WORK TEAM
RTP Arena	*12 people are 100% dedicated to the project, with occasional collaborations from the rest of the departments. Punctual freelance hiring for large events.*
	1 product manager: Daniel Rodrigues
	5 content creators (journalists, presenters, and social media managers)
	6 people in the studio (producers, editors, camera operators, and directors)
Yle eSport	2 full-time producers.
	Different journalists from the sports team linked to the project by 25/50 or 75% depending on the needs.
	Contributions from superiors for the strategy in content management or negotiations for licenses.
	Freelance announcers or technicians accompanying large broadcasts.
SVT eSport	A single full-time producer specializing in e-sports: Simon Engstrand
	Support from the rest of the sports team, as if it were the coverage of another sports modality.

Source: own elaboration

The contents and formats used in the European public media landscape range from informative news coverage, broadcasts of events and competitions, live broadcasts, magazines, interview programs for players and specialists, as well as fiction formats such as the series ' Gamerne' by Yle, or 'E-sports Saga', by SVT, based on the creation of an e-sports team, which is specified in Table 7.

Table 7. Contents and formats produced in the analyzed projects

PROJECT	CONTENTS
RTP Arena	Informative coverage of e-sports.
	Coverage and transmission of national and international events.
	Live broadcasts.
	RTP Live Plays: test new games (weekly)
	Talk shows with well-known figures in the sector
	Analysis talk shows with specialists: game methodologies, strategy, analysis.
Yle eSport	Broadcasts of competitions.
	Informative coverage.
	Docu-series: Gamerne.
	Magazines: Kiosky Games.
SVT eSport	Documentary series 'E-sports saga'
	Documentary about the e-sports industry.
	Good Gaming: Magazine for testing new video games.

Source: own elaboration

Regarding distribution channels, the only project that deviates from the main page of radio and television content is RTP Arena (Table 8). The Portuguese corporation is also the only one that allocates space for its linear broadcasts to an e-sports format. Yle gives an entire section of its website to cybersports, while SVT has not yet established a differentiation from the rest of the sports categories.

Table 8. Distribution channels of the analyzed projects

PROJECT	DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS
RTP Arena	RTP Arena: own platform
	Linear TV: weekly 30' space.
	Social media: Twitch as a reference; small videos on the rest of the social networks (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram)
Yle eSport	Yle Sand. Integrated e-sports section on its main website.
	Social Media: Twitch, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram
SVT eSport	SVT main website
	Social networks, promotional use: Twitter, Instagram.

Source: own elaboration

Rádio e Televisão de Portugal combines its profiles on social networks in a complementary way, without its content competing with each other in the different digital spaces, in such a way that each site offers specific content linked to the characteristics of each tool. The RPT Arena platform offers different types of access to content that are related to each other to offer comprehensive information that is based on its own main web page.

For its part, Yle is in a growth phase where its community is progressively increasing around e-sports content and broadcasts, while SVT reduces the use of its networks -Twitter and Instagram- to a promotional purpose, with hardly any interaction or relevant actions with their followers. The date of creation and the current number of followers of each project in the different social networks is specified in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of the mapping of social networks of the projects

	RTP	**YLE**	**SVT**
TWITTER	@rtparena	@Yle.fi/eurheilu	@SVTesport
Creation date	abr-16	jul-14	feb-14
Following	1035	341	171
Followers	14.400	8335	1888
TWITCH	rtparena	yleeurheilu	-
Creation date	nov-17	jun-19	-
Followers	59.729	26.765	-
Videos	448	26	-
Maximum viewings	60.170	8633	-
INSTAGRAM	rtparena	yleeurheilu	svtesport
Creation date	ago-16	2017	1/3/17
Posts	1735	256	47
Followers	18.500	1694	111
Following	190	371	50
FACEBOOK	rtparena	Yleeurheilu	-
Creation date	abr-16	ene-15	-
Followers	26.365	5040	-

Source: own elaboration

From the mapping of data from social networks, the numbers of RTP Arena stand out compared to the rest of the profiles analyzed, not only in the number of followers in each of these spaces but also in the number of posts, which is notably higher than the rest. On the other hand, taking into account the date of creation of the profiles, a simultaneous origin of all the RTP Arena accounts can be seen around 2016, which contrasts with the sporadic creation of the Twitter profiles in YLE and SVT (2014), from which an incipient interest in this topic is extracted, which is not strategically coordinated with the creation of a community around e-sports.

Based on the results presented in the previous paragraphs, it is possible to affirm that the new communicative scenario structured around cybersports is becoming more and more extensive, becoming a recurrent theme worked in a precise, specialized way, and with ever greater depth, by public television in Europe. Although initially, the productive routines linked to e-sports followed the creation models of conventional sports, a progressive migration towards platforms and social media is identified, with interesting features in terms of technology, interactivity, interconnectivity, and impact on the age group (16-34) wanted by these corporations.

Among the three selected projects, the 'RTP Arena' of the RTP of Portugal is the platform indicated as a reference by the interviewed professionals of the public media in Europe and the only one consolidated as an independent product. This 360º project[1] has its own website and an active presence on social networks, especially on Twitch, where its account dedicated to the game CS:GO -RTP Arena CS:GO[2]- is the most followed channel in Portugal in absolute terms in the last three years according to the corporation -currently: 182,000 users from the last check-. The other two projects analyzed for their qualitative and quantitative potential, SVT Esports and Yle Esports, present a growing production in breadth and diversity but are integrated as a section within the main web pages of these television stations. The rest of the public television channels such as DR, BBC, France Tv, Rai, or RTVE, among others, timidly began to cover news related to e-sports but without reaching relevant activity as they are isolated pieces.

Figure 2. Interface of RTP Arena, Yle eSport, SVT eSport Saga. Source: RTP, Yle, SVT

According to Daniel Rodrigues, product manager of RTP Arena, the origin of cybersports coverage stems from the intention of these corporations to reach and retain young audiences for whom they were unable to be relevant. In the case of Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, they moved their format from e-sports interviews to linear broadcast once a week, which ensure that this audience followed them to conventional television. In this sense, a progressive adaptation of the conversational tone is identified, originally intended for children and their parents, and increasingly focused on avoiding technical redundancies such as the excessive explanation of the dynamics of the games for a specialized audience often made up of the players themselves.

The presence of 'influencers' or familiar faces for users in these countries is projected as one of the main tools for recruitment, search for notoriety, and impact, as can be seen in Figure 3. Active bidirectional interaction and conversation between creators and consumers emerge as a fundamental factor in this new digital scenario, a link that is reinforced when the participants in the formats are professional gaming players or relevant personalities, as is the case of Magisk at RTP Arena, an iconic Danish player from *Team Vitality*.

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[1] RTP Arena has its own website that is unrelated to the RTP main website, which is complemented by profiles on social networks such as Twitch, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and broadcasts on its traditional linear television channels.

[2] RTP Arena has different channels on Twitch: a central one, 'RTP Arena', and several specific secondary ones for certain video games, such as 'RTP Arena CS:GO', or 'RTP Arena FIFA'.
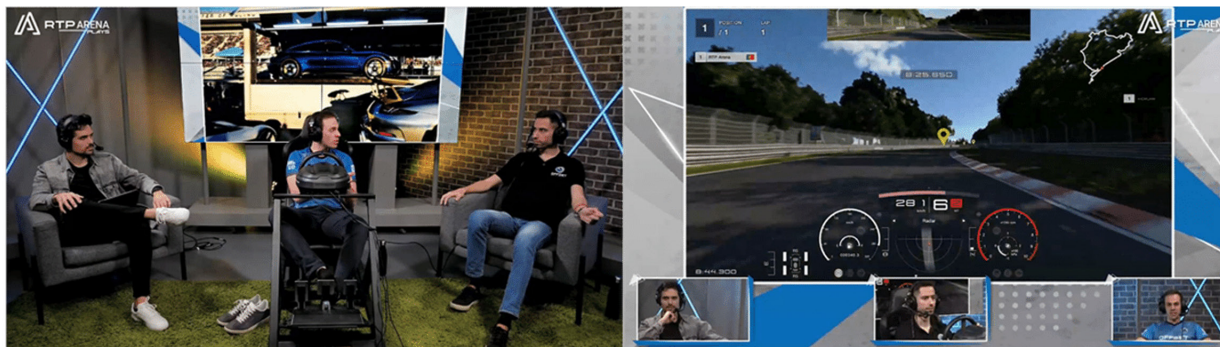
Figure 3: Creation model of RTP Arena with influencers on Twitch. Source: RTP

RTP, Yle, and SVT associate their differential proposal of public value with a greater plurality of games used, with coverage of local content and competitions, and with reinforcing national identity by projecting the image of young players, according to the professionals interviewed. The retransmission rights of the main events are already part of the market dynamics of the great sports tournaments, being affordable to date for the budgets of the public broadcasters studied.

They point to the corporations that are in a phase of ideological openness in their internal structure regarding cybersports, increasingly internalized and integrated into their media agenda. This movement is subject to the uncertainty of knowing who will be the professionals in charge of fulfilling the tasks related to e-sports in the future. At the moment, it is the sports journalists themselves who carry them out, with a greater or lesser degree of specialization, which requires the expansion of teams to achieve significant progress.

The televisions assume their role as producers and transmitters of content, but they do not contemplate occupying the point of the chain of organization of great events or competitions. Their work teams are small -12 people in the case of RTP Arena and two and a content producer in Yle and SVT, respectively-, with essentially journalistic profiles that they complement with technical assistance from freelance professionals on the dates that arouse the greatest interest, as is the case of the LoL World Cups (Figure 4).

Figure 4: League of Legends (LoL) World Cup Final, 2019. Source: Marca

4.2. The opinion of the professionals interviewed

To explain the reasons that motivated the corporations to start their coverage of e-sports, the producers of the analyzed projects specify two main causes: the irruption of this new sports category on the international scene, and its close relationship with young audiences aged between 16 and 34 years old, far removed from its traditional broadcasts. The public value proposition of each project, as well as the changes they have been making to their routines and the future forecasts they foresee, are reflected in Table 10.

(DR/RTP). *"We wanted to start a relationship with this incipient reality that is breaking through. I would say that it has been a success story, both quantitatively, due to the number of users, and qualitatively, due to network fidelity and the migration to linear broadcasts".*

(JL/ Yle) *"Each national station has its own strategy, for us, it has always been a challenge to bring together young people. It is clear that the majority are interested in these contents, now they are the engine of transmissions".*

(SE/SVT) *"E-sports are here to stay, so we have to push it as much as we can."*

Table 10. Scheme of results based on the opinion of the experts

CONCEPT	RTP Arena	YLE eSport	SVT eSport
Origin of the project	Young audience recruitment	Young audience recruitment	Market opportunity
Public value proposition	Plural testing of little-known video games. Instructional content.	National identity: projection of local	Production of less common formats on private platforms
Coverage changes	First a fiction project, then information, and now a hybrid between information and entertainment.	Adaptation of the conversational tone to a young audience (originally intended for parents and children).	Adaptation of the language, now with greater technicalities to avoid redundancies.as.
Future forecast	Multiplication of technological resources linked to e-sports.	Expansion of the work team linked to e-sports.	Deeper, specialized, and more diverse coverage of e-sports.

Source: own elaboration

Regarding their position as public service media in the context of cybersports, these broadcasters are aware of the search for a differential value from less common formats, such as documentary series, a plural testing of video games, using lesser-known narratives, and reinforcing national identity through the transfer of spaces and programs to local athletes and competitions.

(JL/Yle). *"We have thought a lot about what formats to do and what our position here is. We tried the documentary format, little exploited on private platforms, and it was very popular, achieving very good numbers in Finland".*

(OR/Yle). "There are relevant competitions and players in our country, so from our position as a public company, we make sure to give visibility to their talent and effort. We also select a wide catalog of games, with different titles and genres".

The productive routines of e-sports content have undergone a series of variations since the first broadcasts. On the one hand, the corporations analyzed that the participation of well-known personalities or 'influencers' in the different formats projects the impact of these contents. Likewise, it was necessary to adapt the tone of the conversation to adapt it to its most loyal audience, made up of young people and professionals in the sector.

(JL/Yle). "You need the stars, once you have those familiar faces you ensure a certain impact that would be impossible to achieve without them."

(OR/Yle) "At first, many parents wrote to us thanking us for showing them games that they had never seen before and that were not bad for their children. When they stopped seeing the content, we adapted the tone of the conversation to a more technical language".

(SE/SVT). "It is essential to set the tone of the conversation correctly, not to explain too much, speak the language of the game, and avoid redundancies."

The decision to locate on third-party platforms, as is the case with the main social networks, led to a debate at the core of corporations between veteran professionals, in favor of hosting content in their own spaces, and content producers, in favor of moving to those environments frequented by the target audience. The technical advantages of media such as Twitch were understood by these television stations as a creative opportunity to improve their content and strengthen the relationship with the audience through co-creation proposals.

(DR/RTP) "Content co-creation was one of the main focuses when we launched RTP Arena. Our analysis is constant to find out what the public needs and what interests them, we reward participation and loyalty with raffles and invitations to our programs".

(OR/Yle). "Some people with more years in the corporation think that everything should be located in Yle Arena since it is a very popular service. However, our strategy with young people is to move them to the platform they frequent".

The corporations consider that in the coming years a qualitative specialization in the coverage of e-sports will continue. These advances will be represented in the establishment of new projects or sections, and in the consolidation and expansion of existing work teams. The technical capabilities provided by platforms such as Twitch will then be better known by the professionals linked to them, which will allow them to better exploit these resources, pointing to creativity as the axis of change.

(DR/RTP): "The technology linked to e-sports will multiply its benefits in the coming years, and we will also grow together with it. The greater knowledge of these resources will allow us to be more creative and better apply our ideas".

(OR/YLE): "I wouldn't be surprised if in a couple of years our team of two e-sports producers was made up of 8/10 pros. The demand is increasing, and we must be there to satisfy it as much as possible".

(SE/SVT): "We are in the first phase of exploration, but in the organization, we are clear that cybersports will be very important in the future. Everyone at SVT wants coverage to be expanded, but we still don't know who will be in charge."

4.3. Descriptive analysis of the platforms

The RTP Arena website concentrates specific information on e-sports in different formats. The high frequency of news publication in the 'Articles' section stands out, with an average of ten daily publications. The 'Videos' section integrates access to the different audiovisual formats of interviews and talk shows created by the platform, while its third space offers analysis and monitoring of the covered e-sports events.

The platform's interest in integrating open and non-invasive organic access to the different social networks to broadcast content stands out. In this sense, the Rádio e Televisão de Portugal cybersports project offers access links to the sessions on Twitch to accompany the specific analysis of the event. Also, they use the YouTube channel as a player for their audiovisual formats, and, in some cases, they redirect to the RTP PLAY player itself.

The representation of e-sports within the YLE platform is offered integrated within a specific section on its main website. The structure is made up of three subsections that give access to various contents of the platform, among which news about the sector, game manuals, interviews with players, a docu-series, and retransmissions of events from the website itself stand out.

The frequency of e-sports news posts on Yle is weekly. Access to content is partial, it is geographically restricted, limiting the broadcast of its docu-series and retransmissions of events, but releasing news related to e-sports. In this sense, the exponential increase in retransmissions from the platform stands out, increasing from an average of 18 retransmissions in 2018 to 58 in 2021.

In the case of SVT, this corporation offers limited access to cybersports content, which invites the use of the platform's internal search engine using terms such as "e-sport" or "e-games". Even so, the results it projects are limited to the contents highlighted in this analysis. The SVT website limits the viewing of the docu-series but offers access to the contents of its magazine through the YouTube platform.

Table 11. Analysis of the platforms of the explored projects

	RTP	**YLE**	**SVT**
Access type	Independent platform	Integrated section	Browser /Catalog
Sections	Articles /Videos /events	Recommended/ News/ Most viewed	-
Broadcast competitions	yes	yes	no
Number of events	-	94	-
Freq. Publications	10 p/ day	3/ weekly	-
Content access	Open	Partial	Partial

Source: own elaboration

4.4. Descriptive analysis of the main contents

The star content of the Portuguese cybersports project consists of an interview program born in 2016, which besides these conversations, includes gatherings between players and an informative review of the news of the sector. It uses a tone of irreverent humor that is a characteristic symbol of its presenter, Sara Lima. It consists of 6 seasons with a weekly broadcast and a duration of approximately 20 minutes. Its access is open from the RTP Arena platform and its YouTube channel.

Likewise, the fictional e-sports series 'Os players', also produced by RTP, develops a plot centered on a group of friends who form an e-sports team that finally manages to reach a European final. This one-season series with 8 12-minute episodes stands out for its pioneering content, making its exclusive premiere on the RTP Arena platform in December 2016.

Concerning Finnish public television, 'Gamerne' is a documentary series produced in August 2021 that tells the point of view of four Finnish e-sports stars. It focuses on the relationships between the protagonists and the management of professional teams and consists of a season with 12 episodes of 12 minutes each. This documentary stands out for the transversal vision it shows of cybersports in Finland, and it is noteworthy that access to the content is restricted outside the country's territory.

Another content that stands out on Yle is an informative magazine called 'Kiosky Games' in which topics related to e-sports are discussed from a casual and provocative point of view. It premiered in 2019, and since then it has accumulated three seasons with a weekly 10-minute program. Access to the magazine is open from the Yle platform and the program's YouTube channel.

Sweden's SVT they have also produced a documentary series on e-sports, called 'E-sport Saga'. This format narrates the creation of a cyber sports team with non-professional players who achieve success in a Counter-Strike championship. Its premiere is dated December 2021 and consists of a season of 10 20-minute episodes. The documentary portrays the path taken by the players from their position as anonymous gamers to professional life. The Sveriges Television platform does not allow viewing outside of Swedish territory.

The last of the contents selected as the object of analysis is 'Good gaming', an informative magazine on Sweden's public radio and television. The presenters and streamers Ida Ángela and Laura Sipilä lead the program, in which they analyze and test different video games. Acid and provocative humor define the style of a format that, since its premiere in 2019, has completed three seasons with 14 short episodes. Its access is open on the SVT website, as well as on its YouTube profile. The main technical details of each of the selected contents are collected in Table 12.

Table 12. Analysis of the main contents of the projects

	RTP	YLE	SVT
CONTENTS (1). NAME	Os Players	Gamerne	E-SPORT SAGA
Channel	RTP	Yle	SVT
Premiere	December 2016	August 2021	December 2021
Genre	Series- Fiction	Series- documentary	Series- documentary
Seasons	1	1	1
Number of chapters	8	12	10
Duration per chapter	12'	20'	20'
CONTENTS (2). NAME	RTP Arena	Yle Kioski gaming	Good Gaming
Channel	RTP	Yle	SVT
Premiere	2016	2019	2019
Genre	Interviews Reviews	Magazine Informative	Magazine Informative
Seasons	6	3	3
Number of chapters	Weekly	Weekly	14
Duration per chapter	20'	10'	15'

Source: own elaboration

5. Discussion and Conclusions

E-sports broke into the context of public broadcasting as a new theme that has ended up settling down and establishing itself as a new section. The growing specialization of the professionals dedicated to their coverage is linked to the progressive distancing from the work routines applied in conventional sports. In this sense, it is still early to anticipate whether there will be a reconversion of the profile of the traditional sports journalist to an adapted professional, with greater technological and digital skills, or whether it will be the players or experts themselves who cover these functions in corporations in the long term.

The ideological openness that is taking place in the media regarding cybersports is due to quantitative reasons, such as the following and interest showed by a large group of users; and qualitative, as it is a loyal, participative public, belonging mostly to the age group (16-34), very valuable due to its level of involvement and sought after by public companies as it is a broad segment that they will have to serve in the future. However, there is a certain reluctance on the part of the media personnel to multiply their functions for the production of e-sports, and from the management domes there is no question of massive hiring to amplify these services, so the growth of these departments will be consolidated progressively and structurally.

Of the three projects analyzed in this research for their quantitative and qualitative potential, only Portugal's RTP has a platform independent of its main website, and while Yle has reserved a specific section for e-sports, SVT still classifies them along with other sports. Rádio e Televisão de Portugal is the only one that has transferred one of its formats to linear broadcasts, thereby achieving a migration of loyal users from social networks to conventional television. The rest of the public corporations in Europe are beginning their informative coverage of cybersports, which does not yet provide evidence as to whether they will opt for an integrating strategy such as Yle or a disaggregating one such as RTP.

The cross-sectional analysis of the projects and the interviews carried out, allow us to respond satisfactorily to the research questions, the conclusions of which are concentrated in the following Table 13:

Table 13. Relationship of research questions/conclusions

QUESTION/CONCEPT	CONCLUSION
1. Most relevant projects	RTP Arena/Yle eSports/ SVT eSports
2. Origin of projects and current activity	**Origin:** interest in a new communicative ecosystem and in capturing young audiences. **Activity.** Two blocks within the PSM: a group of corporations includes e-sports in their media agenda, limiting their activity to news coverage; and another in which they introduce e-sports in their programming and generate ad hoc platforms for contact with new, younger audiences
3. Main formats	Broadcasts of events and competitions, live broadcasts, magazines, interview programs for players and specialists, and fiction formats.
4. Work teams (profiles/structure	-**Mainly journalistic profiles** with digital skills. Also, more technical profiles related to audiovisual communication tasks (recording, production, editing, or graphic design). -Small size of work teams, made up of one or several full-time professionals. RTP Arena is an atypical case, with a general coordinator and two teams (6 journalists and 6 audiovisual communicators).
5. Professional routines	Increasingly specialized, precise, and differentiated from those of conventional sports. Objective: avoid the redundancy of technical concepts and enrich the narration.
6. Distribution Strategy	Use of proprietary platforms and migration to third-party platforms and social media with benefits in terms of technology, interactivity, and interconnectivity.
7. Public value proposition	Production of less common formats; plural test of video games and reinforcement of national identity through the promotion of players and local competitions.
8. Challenges and prospects	-**Challenges:** Bring communication professionals together with influencers or familiar faces; offer a differential service with public value; adapt to the technical requirements of external platforms and obtain the rights to retransmit events. -**Forecasts:** growth of the sector; expansion of coverage and work teams, with greater specialization, depth, and infrastructure.

Source: own elaboration

The origin of these projects stems from the intention of corporations to counteract the effect of the aging of their audiences and the loss of relevance for young audiences so that e-sports were understood as a market opportunity. It is expected that the cyber-communicative environment that is articulated around e-sports will pass over in the short term to other themes and contents, where the change of roles, the disappearance of the limits of participation, and interactivity will rise as main actors.

Regarding the current activity and the projected coverage by public corporations in Europe, most of them still maintain a timid but growing news coverage, while RTP, Yle, and SVT already broadcast events and competitions, broadcasts live, magazines, interview programs for players and specialists, as well as fiction formats.

The public value proposal outlined by these corporations in their relationship with electronic sports consists of the production of less common formats on private platforms, such as documentary series. Also, they structure this strategy based on the plural testing of video games and the reinforcement of national identity through the promotion of local players and competitions. It will arouse interest in the coming years to see if public broadcasters can boost national tournaments to catch them on the same wave of success that is expected for major world events.

Those responsible for the projects analyzed foresee that in the next stage there will be a multiplication of technological resources linked to electronic sports, which, together with the creative component of the professionals involved, will give rise to new ideas, relationship models with audiences, and products. In this sense, the corporations estimate that the work teams dedicated to cybersports grow to offer a deeper, more specialized, and diverse coverage, increasingly demanded by the audiences.

The phrase "we need the stars", enunciated by Juha Lahti, producer of Yle e-sports, shows that one of the keys to the future will consist of public television giving part of the prominence of their brands to well-known personalities with good management of the tools available and with the ease to create content adapted to social networks. This issue, together with the negotiating capacity of television channels for retransmission rights, the adaptation to the technical requirements demanded by third-party platforms, and the insistence on providing a plural, diverse, inclusive service with public value, will be the main challenges that public television will face regarding e-sports in the coming years.

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Isaac Maroto González is an advertising creative and researcher. He is currently a beneficiary of a predoctoral research contract grant for the training of doctors in 2019 (ref.PRE2019-090667) and has also received a scholarship within the IACOBUS program at the University of Minho. He is part of the Novos Medios group in the Department of Communication Sciences at the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (USC), has a degree in Advertising and Public Relations from the Universidad de Valladolid, and a Master's degree in Film, television, and interactive media from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. His main lines of research focus on the analysis of communicative ecosystems that arise in the media within the interactive and digital context.
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