

Behind the scenes at Eurovision's control centre

CASE STUDY: EUROVISION NETWORK

The Eurovision network hits full capacity most weekends and on major sporting nights in the week, and with that there is huge pressure on our teams to make sure that each and every one of those transmissions goes off without a problem.

"It's a massive challenge and it never really stops. On a typical weekend we will have over 200 live sports transmissions plus whatever is going on in the news. And it's the same on match days during the week," says Puiu Dolea, Eurovision's Head of Resource Management..

Adding up the football from the major European national leagues, plus winter sports, plus Formula 1 and Moto GP this gives a fair idea of the huge demand for simultaneous transmissions.

The Eurovision Control room starts the process with a painstaking line-up of the uplink trucks from each and every venue. This means we have to make sure that each location is up-linking to the right transponder, with the right power, polarisation and bandwidth. Fibre circuit routing is checked and video equipment parameters are set accordingly. Eurovision's vast, worldwide FiNE (fibre) network allows full remote operation of turn-around facilities from the EVC, on capacities over Europe, the Americas or Asia. It is now routine to have high definition transmissions, using three satellites and several transcontinental fibres at the same time.

It is especially important to make sure that video and audio technical parameters are correct if the transmission involves Dolby, because of the delay between the two when there is surround sound encoded in Dolby-E.

Given that each national league can have ten to fifteen matches starting at the same time, this is a major task, but maintaining tight discipline among the third party SNG operators is a vital part of the transmission chain.

Once the line-up is done, the transmissions can actually begin! That means monitoring the signals throughout the games, using Omneon transport stream recorders and transport stream analysers as well as classic audio and video monitoring equipment.

Says Dolea, "Our customers come to us for full service – not just some satellite or fibre capacity. And that means we have to set and then check every part of the transmission chain from A to Z, even though the chain isn't always fully under our control. Our customers don't expect to have to chase faults themselves. They want peace of mind. That's Eurovision's job – to make transmissions with peace of mind for customers. That's the challenge and we are happy to take it on."

STATISTICS

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| > Europe/Middle East/North Africa | 522 MHz, all Ku Band |
| > Pan African and Europe | 18Mhz, C band |
| > Asia-Australia/NZ | 108 MHz, all C band |
| > Americas (North, Central, South) | 90 MHz, all C band |

