

HOW NETSTAIRS BROUGHT INNOVATION TO EBU INCREASING TV VIEWERS BY NEARLY 20%

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BIG RISE IN TV VIEWING FOR EUROPEAN ATHLETICS INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS AS EBU MEMBERS SAMPLE REMOTE TECHNOLOGY INNOVATIONS



The number of live TV hours viewed during coverage of last week's European Athletics Indoor Championships in Torun, Poland jumped by an average of nearly 20% in nine key European TV markets, compared with the previous edition, which was held in Glasgow, UK in 2019.

TV audiences showed renewed appetite for the championships following the recent dearth of top-quality sporting action on TV screens enforced by the Covid pandemic.

Meanwhile, EBU Members took advantage of several technology innovations aimed at making it easier for them to interact remotely with athletes, with governing body European Athletics and with Eurovision Sport during the continuing lockdown restrictions. These included a pioneering Virtual Media Centre.

In all, 32 TV channels broadcast the championships, which took place on 4 to 7 March, with many national TV audiences having something to cheer as medals were won by athletes from 23 of the competing nations.

EBU Members in nine key European athletics markets – RTBF (Belgium), YLE (Finland), RAI (Italy), NOS (Netherlands), NRK (Norway), TVP (Poland), TVE (Spain), SVT (Sweden) and BBC (UK) – posted an average increase of 19.26% in the number of hours of live coverage viewed, compared with Glasgow 2019.

In Sweden, SVT scored a huge 141% average live market share increase from 10.58 in 2019 to 25.51 this year, its best figure since 2011. SVT's live market share peaked at 56.4% on Sunday evening as Armand Duplantis, Sweden's 21-year-old rising pole vault star, narrowly failed with a world record attempt, having already taken the gold medal and set a new championship record.

Meanwhile, in Italy, the number of live hours viewed soared to over 3 million from just 192,709 in 2019, as EBU Member RAI ramped up its live coverage to over 20 hours in 2021, compared with only three hours in 2019.

In Poland, the host country, EBU Member TVP registered the highest total of live hours viewed of the nine broadcasters: nearly 15.5 million hours, versus nearly 11.5 million hours in 2019.

Technology innovations

Continuing Covid restrictions gave Eurovision Sport and EBU Members the opportunity to introduce several technology innovations that enabled broadcasters to maintain unilateral production and interaction with athletes while having no staff on site.

A hybrid cloud-based platform utilising SRT (Secure Reliable Transport) technology was used by Eurovision Sport to distribute streaming content to EBU Members and partners;

A Virtual Media Centre meant that European Athletics' media team could manage live interviews between athletes and journalists remotely;

A cloud-based remote mixed zone system enabled four EBU Members – NOS, NRK, SVT and RTE (Ireland) – to conduct interviews without the need for their journalists to be physically present in the stadium;

ALL ATHLETICS, a pilot project for OTT exploitation, was trialled in France, using a cloud-based live mixer.

Franck Choquard, Eurovision Sport's Head of Content & Platforms, said: 'With all of the efforts being invested by European Athletics and the Local Organizing Committee to deliver safely an international event of this scale for the first time in months, it was our duty at Eurovision Sport to deliver innovative solutions for increasing the reach and visibility on all platforms.

'We are very proud of our Members' coverage and the way they exploited our new solutions to increase the exposure of the event. The EBU and its members are committed to using digital transformation to deliver higher value to all our partners.

Dobromir Karamarinov, interim president of European Athletics, said: "I am very proud that European Athletics has been able to deliver a safe and successful European Athletics Indoor Championships in Torun, Poland, thanks in large part to the great work done by the local organising committee. These impressive TV figures show that European Athletics' major events remain an attractive and engaging product for TV audiences and broadcasters."

In 2018, the EBU and European Athletics renewed their worldwide media rights contract, taking the partnership, which began in 1981, through to the end of 2027.

The agreement covers the worldwide television and radio rights for European Athletics' major events from 2020 to 2023 and from 2024 to 2027. This includes the flagship European Athletics Championships in 2022, 2024 and 2026.