

France Télévisions aims to reflect national diversity



francetélévisions

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Directory of Experts

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In brief

National television broadcaster France Télévisions employs some 11,000 staff, of whom 43% are women. They are over-represented in areas like human resources and communication, but under-represented or absent in technical roles. There is also a very obvious ‘glass ceiling’.

Conscious of its responsibility as a public corporation to reflect the diversity of the French population, in 2011 France Télévisions adopted a diversity strategy comprising four pillars: gender, ethnic-cultural, socio-cultural and disability. In 2011 it decided to create a directory of experts whom programme-makers and journalists could call on.

The company therefore asked specialist NGOs for nominations of experts with diverse profiles in terms of age, ethnic origin, disability, geographic location and, of course, gender. It received 400 suggestions, which it weeded down to 100 experts through a strict quality control procedure. The directory was then placed on the company's intranet.

In the short period since its introduction, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of women appearing in expert roles in some programmes.

In order to remain useful tool, the directory will need continual promotion and updating.

A responsibility to the public

France Télévisions is the French public television broadcaster which is responsible for five national TV channels and one overseas TV channel, as well as co-producing films for cinema.

It employs some 11,000 staff, of whom 43% are women. Women are over-represented in certain jobs (i.e. human resources and communication) and under-represented or indeed entirely absent from certain other roles, for example technical jobs. There is also a very obvious 'glass ceiling': out of a total of 13 members of the Executive Committee (the highest decision-making body), there are only two women (one of whom has only been nominated very recently) and women make up less than a third of members of the extended Management Board. Only one channel (France 4) has a female director.

France Télévisions considers that as the public audiovisual provider it has a particular responsibility in terms of diversity, including gender equality. As the former president of the company said: "When you are addressing five million people, you can't but have a great sense of responsibility". France Télévisions also has specific obligations in terms of diversity under the 2009 Law on Audiovisual Communication, and has signed a collective agreement on gender equality.

As part of its ongoing commitment to equality, it has launched a series of actions in favour of diversity in general and also gender equality. The overall diversity strategy has four pillars: gender, ethnic-cultural, socio-cultural and disability. An important gender equality strategy is currently being launched.

France Télévisions has recognised the importance of improving the representativeness of the French population in the programmes it broadcasts. In particular, it has sought to increase the diversity of experts who feature in news and current affairs programmes and documentaries. The vast majority of experts who appear on television current affairs and scientific programmes and news features are male, white, over 50, non-disabled and come from the Paris region.

NGOs propose a diverse range of experts

In order to facilitate this process, it decided in 2011 to set up a directory of experts which would be made available to programme-makers and journalists, comprising experts with more diverse profiles in terms of age, ethnic origin, disability, geographic location and, of course, gender. It now includes 100 experts, who have all been individually vetted for quality.

Its objective is to change perceptions and overcome stereotypes of the role of women in society, by increasing the number and proportion of women experts appearing in television programmes, particularly current affairs programmes and documentaries.

In order to put together the tool, the Director of Diversity in Programmes asked specialist NGOs to propose names. Four hundred experts were proposed from various speciality fields such as politics, environment, technology, science and information technology, and were then individually checked by the director so as to ensure that they were of the quality needed to appear on television programmes. Even if experts may have excellent qualifications or knowledge, they may not have a suitable personality for appearing on television.

The directory entry for each expert includes their key fields of knowledge, links to their major publications, their geographical location (since France 3 in particular has regional television studios), the source of information on the expert (particular NGOs), and a space for comments by TV producers or directors who have worked with the expert.

The directory was finalised, with 100 quality-checked experts, and placed on France Television's intranet system. It has been promoted to all the directors of channels, and will continue to be promoted in order to encourage its use. A Diversity Representative has been nominated in each channel, who will also promote its use. The Diversity Representatives meet once per month to discuss progress.

The directory was only completed in mid-2012 so it is difficult to identify specific outcomes or changes in such a short space of time. However, there is some evidence of change already. For example, in the current affairs programme *C Dans l'air* on France 5, there had previously been virtually only male experts in every expert panel. However, since the directory has been introduced, the producers have been able to include at least one woman expert in each panel.

In March 2014, France Télévisions was awarded the Label Diversité by the national standards body AFNOR Certification for a period of four years.

Need for promotion and updating

By increasing the number of women experts, the directory enables women to access prestigious roles. By the same token, it increases women's voice in all the themes covered by media and in all media products. If TV producers and journalists use it, it could lead to sustainable impacts. New experts will be identified and become part of the circuit of those called upon to feature in programmes. However, to ensure this, the directory will need to be promoted, used and regularly maintained in order to remain relevant. Time resources will need to continue to be allocated to the update of the directory.

The impact on the wider population could be important, by influencing the way in which the wider population views the role of women in society and in the workforce. However, such impact will be difficult to measure. As to the directory's efficiency, substantial time inputs have been required in order to identify experts and ensure their quality.

It is as yet too early to assess how effective the directory has been, as it has only been completed recently. However, it should be possible to measure its effectiveness over coming years by monitoring the participation of women experts in programmes.

Monitoring is voluntary, but is conducted regularly, every week. The online tool provides a clearly-defined and consistent methodological approach. Since the aim is not to stigmatise particular divisions but to encourage a voluntary approach to using the directory and increasing diversity, the results are not made public. Gender experts and media experts from inside the company are involved closely in monitoring and, as part of a new gender equality strategy, outside experts from outside are also involved.

Scope for expansion

The tool has not yet been evaluated. However, its impacts will be carefully monitored by the Director of Diversity in Programmes and by the network of Diversity Representatives. It is also monitored every week by the channels themselves via a specific self-monitoring tool on the place of women, also available on the intranet. This data provides data for the monitoring carried out by the French High Audiovisual Council (CSA), but is also designed for the channel management teams themselves, to raise awareness on this issue.

The directory is part of a series of measures to promote diversity in France Télévisions, including a new specific and comprehensive gender equality strategy which is currently being launched. This should ensure that it continues to receive funding for updates, adding new experts and promotion, and also that it maintain a prominent position within the institution to ensure its use by production teams when selecting experts. It could be improved and made more relevant for a wider variety of areas of expertise and TV programmes by adding more experts. The availability of more experts would allow programme makers a bigger choice of female experts.

Three factors have made the directory a success. Every single expert has been checked for quality, as any unsuitable expert could bring the whole directory into disrepute and stop programme directors using it. The high-level directors of each channel committed themselves to using the directory and promoting it to their programme production teams. The directory project was built into a wider equality strategy including diversity representatives in each channel.

The main obstacles the project faced have been convincing TV production teams to use the directory and to test new experts, and continuing to update and maintain the directory to ensure its continuing relevance and quality.

The lessons learned from the process are:

- The need for quality in order to guarantee the sustainability of the tool
- The time-consuming nature of the quality assurance process, which cannot be avoided while setting up such a tool
- The importance of high-level support at the top of the corporation, but also in each channel
- The importance of linking into wider strategies and networks
- The benefits of cooperating with NGOs with specialist knowledge

Contacts/Further Information

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Further information

Website



France Télévisions (2007), Accord Groupe sur l'égalité femmes-hommes



Commission sur l'image des femmes dans les médias (2008), Rapport sur l'image des femmes dans les médias



Commission sur l'image des femmes dans les médias (2011), Rapport 2011 : Les expertes – bilan d'une année d'auto-régulation



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France Télévisions logo from its website via French Wikipédia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France_T%C3%A9l%C3%A9visions#mediaviewer/F...

Label Diversité logo from its website: <http://www.afnor.org/profils/centre-d-interet/dd-rse-iso-26000/archives-...>

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TOOL: Monitoring