

The history of radio and Cellnex/Broadcast Partners' role in it

13 February 2025. World Radio Day. A day when many a radio enthusiast's heart beats faster - and that certainly applies to Broadcast Partners. A good moment to look back on the rich history and impressive development of radio, to reflect on the indispensable role this medium plays in our daily lives, and to look ahead to the promising future radio holds.

The development of radio in the Netherlands

Radio emerged at the end of the 19th century and grew into a mass medium in the 1920s, bringing news, music and entertainment directly to the people. During World War II, radio played a crucial role, after which the medium developed further with innovations such as FM, transistor radios and digital broadcasting.

To meet the growing demand for radio, CBT Electronic was founded in 1979 in Terneuzen, later renamed Broadcast Partners. From the late 1990s, Broadcast Partners started working with commercial broadcasters to make the FM band more accessible, which led to the design of the Zero-base frequency plan.

The major breakthrough came in 2003, when the Netherlands went through the largest ever reallocation of FM frequencies. This operation gave the Dutch radio landscape a significant boost, creating more space for stations and listeners. But developments did not stop there, with the rise of DAB+, a new era dawned for radio.

In 2013, Broadcast Partners deployed the first nationwide DAB+ network on behalf of the national commercial broadcasters. With this, Broadcast Partners plays a crucial role in shaping the digital future of radio and helps build the future of this beloved medium.

Why does radio play such a crucial role in our lives?

Radio is a natural part of everyday life for many people. It is all around us: you get up with it, listen to it in the car, turn it on during holidays, and hear it in the supermarket, in shops or even at the hairdresser's. In short, radio is always present. But it is more than just a source of entertainment.

Radio plays a vital role in our society. It connects (local) communities with (regional) news, culture and events, and provides a platform where stories are shared and heard. In addition, radio is a unique platform to raise social and political awareness. It gives citizens a voice and encourages them to actively participate in public debate.

What we often forget is the crucial importance of radio during crises. In emergencies, radio repeatedly proves its value as an essential communication tool. When other networks fail, radio remains operational, providing reliable information to the population.

Developments do not stop

Over the years, the radio sector has seen numerous developments. DAB+ has made its appearance, adding digital technology to traditional FM broadcasting. DAB+ offers more efficient use of the radio spectrum and creates space for more stations.

In addition, the rise of internet radio and streaming has made radio accessible via computers and smartphones. This offers not only global reach and on-demand listening, but also personalized stations. An interesting development is

Visual Radio, where live broadcasts are enriched with visuals, such as video content, graphics and social media integration.

Yet FM remains an important part of the radio landscape, thanks to its broad accessibility, reliability and large listener base. FM is also important in emergency situations; for example, when mobile networks or the internet are down, FM radio remains operational.

Future trends and how Broadcast Partners/Cellnex responds to them.

The transmission range is a decisive factor for the success of a radio station. We do everything we can to continuously improve a radio station's lifeline. When it comes to transmitter coverage, we check the theoretical coverage and make the most of the broadcasting license. We achieve this through a well-thought-out combination of transmission equipment, antenna systems, and transmitter sites. Cellnex Netherlands has 24 high transmission towers and more than 4.000 sites suitable for telecommunications and broadcasting. We continuously monitor our transmitter networks using our self-developed monitoring and control system. This ensures we are always immediately informed about the current status and performance of our transmitters! Additionally, we conduct practical field and drone measurements to continuously optimize the transmitter network and get the most out of the license.

We continuously keep looking for new improvements to the transmitter networks based on the latest insights and modern techniques. At the same time, we at Broadcast Partners are also working on innovative antenna solutions tailored to customer needs and future technologies. Opportunities for expansion of the coverage area are always exploited.

Radio stations can also rely on us for radio automation and broadcast products. We are also the right address for studio equipment, such as uniquely designed studio furniture and innovative antenna solutions. At the same time, we offer solutions for cloud-based radio broadcasting. We make digital broadcasting possible with our in-house designed DAB+ hardware and software solution aXemble. We have a tailor-made solution for every radio station!

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Cellnex is Europe's largest telecommunications towers and infrastructures operator, enabling operators to access a wide network of telecommunications infrastructures on a shared-use basis, and thus helping to reduce access barriers and to improve services in the most remote areas. The company manages a portfolio of more than 138,000 sites, including forecast roll-outs up to 2030, in 12 European countries, with a significant footprint in Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Poland. Cellnex, which is listed on the Spanish Stock Exchange, is part of the selective IBEX35 and Euro Stoxx 100 and enjoys outstanding positions on the main sustainability indices such as CDP, Sustainalytics, FTSE4Good, MSCI and DJSI Europe.

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