

history

The twenties

The world discovers a way of immediate and far reaching communication: the radio.

1924

The Anen brothers, François and Marcel, enthralled by radio broadcasting, install a first transmitter in the attic of a house in « rue Beaumont » in Luxembourg. The name of this transmitter is Radio-Luxembourg.

1927

France adopts the Bokanowski law which tightly regulates the French radio broadcasting. At the same time the French Post and Telecom adopts new restrictive rules which make it difficult for French radio pioneers to broadcast. As a result they emigrate to Luxembourg.

1929

Business men from Paris and Luxembourg create the Société Luxembourgeoise d'Etudes Radiophoniques. This company buys up the Anen brothers' station. François Anen becomes technical head of the new company.

The thirties

CLR (Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion) is born. As a European pioneer, the company broadcasts a unique programme in several languages using the same frequency.

1930

The Société Luxembourgeoise d'Etudes Radiophoniques obtains the exclusive licence for radio broadcasting from the Luxembourg Government.

1931

The members of the Société Luxembourgeoise d'Etudes Radiophoniques found the Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR). The main shareholders are : CSF, Paribas, Havas, Compagnie des Compteurs (Schlumberger) and the Banque Industrielle Belge.

1931

The construction of the transmitter site in Junglinster begins.

1932

Part of the Villa Louvigny, once a 17th century fort located in the heart of Luxembourg, is rented as headquarter for all radio activities except transmission.

1933

Foundation of an orchestra which later became the famous Orchestre Symphonique de Radio-Luxembourg under the direction of Henri Pensis.

First broadcast of Radio-Luxembourg in French, German and English on long wave from the Villa Louvigny's studios and from the most modern and powerful transmitter in Europe: the transmitter site in Junglister. The international and multilingual programme is a huge success in Germany, Great-Britain, France and Belgium and astonishes CLR's competitors .

1934

Radio-Luxembourg broadcasts for the first time ever live from the "Tour de France".

1936

In addition to the Villa Louvigny's studios, a second Radio- Luxembourg studio is set up at "22 rue Bayard" in Paris.

1937

Following the ongoing success of Radio Luxembourg, CLR buys the Villa Louvigny and extends the premises.

1939

On the eve of war, the Luxembourg Government, concerned about keeping Luxembourg's neutrality, requests CLR to stop broadcasting, a decision already considered by the management. The staff is made redundant and operations are closed down.

The forties

War time years - on demand of the Government, CLR suspends its activities. From 1944 on, the Allies use the radio station for their communication needs. Radio-Luxembourg starts re-broadcasting on November 11, 1945.

1940

On the day of the Nazi invasion, Radio-Luxembourg installations are among the first objectives of the Wehrmacht in the Grand-Duchy. Four weeks later, the Germans troops restart the station and use for their communications needs until autumn 1940 - then they incorporate it to the Reichsrundfunk network.

1944

American troops come to liberate the country. Broadcasting starts under US allied command after the transmitters, which have been damaged by the German army, are repaired.

1945

Departure of the Americans - The return to the Villa Louvigny is a bitter disappointment for re-hired staff as most of the equipment is destroyed and the Villa Louvigny is plundered.

November 1945 Radio-Luxembourg starts re-broadcasting with the famous words : “Bonjour le Monde, ici Radio-Luxembourg.”

1948

Birth of «Les Amis de Radio-Luxembourg», an association of Radio-Luxembourg admirers in France.

The fifties

The use of a medium wave transmitter contributes to the spectacular development of radio and the beginning of CLR's audiovisual adventure: CLR becomes CLT.

1951

Inauguration of CLR's new medium wave transmitter in Junglinster.

Radio-Luxembourg transfers its English programme to medium wave 208. “Two-o-eight” becomes a new reference for young Britons. Part of the broadcasting on medium wave is also occupied by a programme in German, Dutch and Luxemburgish. The success of Radio-Luxembourg grows day by day.

1953

At the inauguration of the “new” villa Louvigny the winged lion «Alas Leoni dedit» (it gave wings to the lion) is fixed on the front of the new building.

1954

The management of CLR enters into a new era of broadcasting : television. On July 1st, CLR becomes CLT (Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Télédiffusion) and begins the construction of a TV transmitter and studio in Dudelange.

1955

First airing of Télé-Luxembourg, a TV channel in French language, broadcast to North-East of France, Luxembourg and South of Belgium.

1956

Transfer of the medium wave transmitter from Junglinster to Marnach to have a better reception in England.

1957

A programme in German language is reintroduced on medium wave 208. This radio programme will come across as a phenomenal success. Years later, this programme will specialize in an “oldies” format and will be renamed RTL – Der Oldie Sender to become today’s RTL Radio - Die besten Hits mit Gefühl.

1959

The radio programme in Luxemburgish language is extended and transferred from the medium wave to short wave 92.5. Today’s RTL Radio Lëtzebuerg is born.

The sixties

Increasing the power of its long and medium wave transmitters, Radio-Luxembourg, which from now on bears the name RTL, becomes one of the most powerful private radio broadcasters in the world.

1969

Birth of a TV programme in Luxemburgish language (two hours of mixed programming per week broadcast every Sunday) - this programme named Hei Elei Kuck Elei is the predecessor of today’s RTL Télé Lëtzebuerg.

The seventies

Birth of colour TV - Télé-Luxembourg goes from one success to another, thus following its radio sister's footsteps.

1970

Construction of more powerful long wave transmitters in Beidweiler - the transmitters in Junglinster will only be used as back up.

1972

First broadcast in colour of Télé-Luxembourg - the success of Télé-Luxembourg increases in the North-East of France and Belgium.

1975

Creation of RTL Productions, a production company in Luxembourg, which is the predecessor of today's BCE (Broadcasting Center Europe).

1979

CLT buys the French TV-magazine TéléStar, created in 1976. With this acquisition, CLT enters the publishing business.

The eighties

Deregulation begins across Europe. The European countries open their doors to private TV and radio. CLT moves closer to its audiences, setting up subsidiaries in the main European countries.

1984

Launch of RTL Plus in partnership with UFA, a Bertelsmann company (today RTL Television and market leader in Germany). The TV channel RTL Plus starts to broadcast a German language programme from Luxembourg. The slogan of the channel that started on January 2 with the birth of the RTL Plus logo is "RTL Plus, the refreshingly different programme ("Das erfrischend andere Programm")

1987

Launch of the TV channel M6 in France and RTL TVi in Belgium.

1989

Launch of RTL Véronique (renamed RTL 4 in 1990) in the Netherlands, a TV channel in the Dutch language.

Launch of Atlantic 252 in Ireland, a radio station in English language.

The nineties

CLT continues expanding into new countries and setting up a complementary network of TV channels and radio stations and thus starting to build families of station. At the end of the nineties the merger of CLT and UFA creates the leading European broadcaster and production house and is a turning point in CLT's history: CLT-UFA is the European Entertainment Enterprise.

1991

The new building at Kirchberg is inaugurated: it will be the Group's administrative and radio headquarter. The TV activities stay in the now legendary Villa Louvigny.

Radio Luxembourg, the medium wave frequency programme that contributed many decades to the reputation of CLT in Europe and especially in the United Kingdom discontinues broadcasting on medium wave. This finally leads to the close down of the station but CLT is still present in the UK via Atlantic 252.

After the acquisition of a stake in Radio Contact in 1990, CLT launches the radio stations Bel RTL in Belgium and 104.6 RTL in Germany.

1993

Launch of the TV channel VOX in Germany.

Launch of the TV channel RTL II in Germany and RTL 5 in the Netherlands.

Acquisition of a stake in Fun Radio, a French radio station.

1995

Launch of Club RTL in Belgium and Super RTL in Germany, a joint venture with Disney.

1995

Launch of Veronica, a radio and TV station in Dutch language based in Hilversum (rebranded as Yorin and Yorin FM in 2001).

Launch in France of RTL 2 (previously M40), radio station in French language

1996

Following an agreement between CLT and the Luxemburgish Government, the Orchestre Symphonique de RTL becomes the official state orchestra and is renamed Grand Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg.

In the Netherlands, the TV and radio stations are brought together under the single organization HMG (renamed RTL Nederland in 2004).

Opening ceremony of a second building at Kirchberg, the new TV center. TV and radio are brought together on one site; the Villa Louvigny is sold.

Téva, a digital thematic channel, has been launched in France.

Launch of RTL7 in Poland, a TV channel in Polish language based in Warsaw and in Luxembourg (sold in 2001).

Launch of TPS in France, a digital pay-tv bouquet. In Germany, CLT also planned to launch a digital offering under the name Club RTL but the project was cancelled due to uncertainties surrounding the technical stands and the high costs of broadcasting rights. In France, the market conditions for TPS look more favourable (20 % of TPS sold to Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux and M6 in 1998).

With the sale of 100% of Groupe TéléStar to EMAP, the Group decides to completely withdraw from the publishing business and puts its strategic focus on its strengths television and radio.

1997

The creation of CLT-UFA: Bertelsmann, shareholder of UFA, and Audiofina, shareholder of CLT, merge their tv, radio and production businesses and create the leading commercial TV, radio and production company in Europe. CLT-UFA is jointly owned by Bertelsmann and Audiofina. The new company combines the strengths of CLT, a leader in pan European broadcasting and creator of the RTL brand with historic UFA, a major player in broadcasting, production and rights. As a result of the merger, CLT-UFA significantly reinforces its position in Germany and becomes the major shareholder in RTL Television and RTL II. The other major assets contributed to the merger by UFA are (a selection):

TV

Vox, Premiere

Radio

Radio NRW, Antenne Bayern, Radio Hamburg

Production and rights

UFA Sports, UFA Film, Trebitsch

The company Ufa Film- und Fernseh-GmbH was founded in 1984 on the basis of the historic Hamburg-based Universum Film AG (UFA), founded in 1917, and brings together the broadcasting and production business of Bertelsmann AG.

Launch of the TV channel Channel 5 (the only purely advertising-based national terrestrial channel in the UK, five years later rebranded Five) and RTL KLUB in Hungary.

Purchase of Havas Intermédiation, a French company with subsidiaries across Europe, most of them operating under the IP (“Information et Publicité”) name. IP sells advertising space for CLT-UFA’s radio stations and TV channels. In 1998, IP’s national companies are integrated in the respective national stations and channels.

Following the merger, CLT-UFA’s priority is to realize potential for synergies and create new links between the different divisions and companies. In rights, CLT and UFA bring together their fiction rights and form CLT-UFA International. The newly created UFA Sports, Europe’s leading sports rights company, provides the TV channels with sports coverage. At the same time channels start to share know-how.

1998

The EU Commission does not approve the planned pay TV merger of Premiere and DF1 (Kirch Group). The deal aimed at developing pay TV in Germany through a restructured Premiere. In 1999, CLT-UFA sells its 45 % stake in Premiere to Kirch Group and focuses on free-to-air TV.

The new century

CLT-UFA becomes RTL Group, the leading pan-European broadcasting and production company, and tries to increase stakes in its channels wherever possible.

2000

CLT-UFA increases its stakes in VOX and Channel 5.

The merger of CLT-UFA and Pearson Television, a London based content production company, creates Europe's leading integrated broadcaster and content provider: RTL Group. RTL Group is listed on the London, Brussels and Luxembourg stock exchanges. The merger significantly reinforces RTL Group's position in the content business. As a part of the merger Pearson Group's stakes in Antena 3, a Spanish TV channel, and in Channel 5 (today five) are brought into RTL Group.

2001

Following a share swap with GBL in which GBL changed its 30 % stake in RTL Group against a 25 % stake in Bertelsmann AG, Bertelsmann becomes majority shareholder of RTL Group. On May 11, the European Commission approves RTL Group's new shareholding structure. Bertelsmann now holds a 67% majority in RTL Group.

Launch of RTL Shop in Germany - RTL Group develops synergies; RTL Television, RTL NEW MEDIA and the French TV channel M6 are the owners of RTL Shop while Bertelsmann Services Group is its distribution partner.

RTL Group, Canal+ Group and the Groupe Jean-Claude Darmon sign an agreement to merge their sports rights activities to create Sportfive, the leading sports rights company.

RTL Group retreats from the UK radio market and the Polish tv market by selling Atlantic 252 to Teamtalk and RTL 7 to ITI Group.

December 2001 Bertelsmann entered into an agreement with Pearson plc, shareholder in RTL Group, to acquire Pearson's 22 % stake in RTL Group.

2002

The final of the FremantleMedia (formerly Pearson Television) production Pop Idol wins a huge UK audience. This is the start of a successful international roll-out of the Idols format.

Acquisition of n-tv, a German news TV channel and various holdings in German radio stations from Holtzbrinck: a selection: Radio NRW, Antenne Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Antenne Thüringen, BB Radio, Antenne Niedersachsen, Radio Brocken



RTL Group delists from the London Stock Exchange but remains listed on the Brussels and Luxembourg stock exchanges.

2003

HMG is awarded a frequency for a new radio station, RTL FM, and improved coverage for Yorin FM.

2004

Plug TV, a tv channel of the Belgish RTL family, is launched.

M6 acquires Paris Première, a TV channel based in Paris.

RTL Group launches the Croatian TV channel RTL Televizija increasing its presence in Eastern Europe.

RTL Group sells its interest in Sportfive and completes a new transaction with Advent International: Funds managed by Advent International and RTL Group form a new company that purchases all of the shares in Sportfive formerly held by RTL Group and Canal + Group. RTL Group holds 25 per cent of this new company.

RTL Group acquires 11.6 % holding in Grupo Media Capital, a leading Portuguese media company which is involved in television, through the free to air broadcaster tvi, radio, via four stations, outdoor advertising and internet and publishing activities.

2005

RTL Group celebrates the 50th anniversary of television broadcasts from Luxembourg.

M6 Group launches the digital channel W9.

RTL Group acquires a 30 % shareholding in the Russian TV network REN TV.

The Group buys the remaining shares in the UK TV channel Five taking RTL Group's shareholding to 100 %.

2006

Five has launched two new digital theme channels Five Life and Five US whilst RTL Television has started RTL Crime, RTL Living and Passion. The latter is a joint venture with UFA.



RTL Group has sold its stake in the German sports and marketing company Sportfive.

2007

RTL Group sells its entire shareholding in the Portuguese media company Grupo Media Capital to Grupo Prisa.

RTL Nederland launched the family's fourth Free-TV channel, RTL 8.

The asset deal between RTL Group and John de Mol's Talpa Media Holding which brought the radio station 538 into the Group, was closed.

RTL Radio in France launches the digital radio stations RTL Autrement and RTL L'Equipe.