



## CASE STUDY

new and improved channel management system at

# SBS Belgium

### Customer

SBS Belgium,  
member of the ProSiebenSat1  
Media group

### Project

New channel management system  
by WHATS'On

### Highlights

System switch from one day to the  
next

### Key dates

Customer since 2005  
First production date: 2006  
WHAT'S'On version: 19.5 (2008)

## Trouble-free system switch without safety net.

**On New Year's Eve 2005, from one day to the next, SBS Belgium shifted transmitting from its old system to the its new WHATS'On system. This switch - although without a 'formal' safety mirror - was trouble-free.**

### Need for new channel management system

In the first quarter of 2005, SBS Belgium (Scandinavian Broadcasting System) started to look out for a new channel management system. Jef Aerts, IT-manager of SBS Belgium: "We were looking for a system with much more flexibility than our existing solution. One that was able to not only anticipate the fast changing TV-market, but also one that would fit our own progressive strategy to become a modern forward-looking TV-station (...) Our previous system (Paradigm) was very solid and stable, but did not fit our organisation and therefore the system did not provide us with the flexibility needed to cope with the fast-changing television environment and the competitive challenges we were facing." Other reasons leading to the switch included both the physical and cultural distance between SBS Belgium and their previous supplier. But most of all, there was the primordial need for an embedded workflow tailored to the specific way of working within a European TV-context.

### Selecting the best of breeds

The obstacles SBS Belgium faced in the past, made them look for a channel management system that was able to support their present workflow on the one hand and - most of all - their future growth plans on the other. Independent research, as well as SBS Group headquarters, selected WHATS'On as the most suitable system. Jef Aerts: "Quickly, it became clear for us that the WHATS'On system is one of the few solutions on the market that could meet our criteria of reliability, continuity and manageability in the long run. Being responsible for our station's IT-department, it is my duty to not only make sure the system reflects the strategic plans of the station today and tomorrow, but most of all, to ensure its business continuity."

The old system included both scheduling and media management aspects. Therefore, SBS chose the best of breed solution, by complementing WHATS'On with the sales solution of MediaPro. Both systems have proven to be fully integratable at other stations and their

combination ensures a stable and flexible environment.

## Preparatory study

SBS Belgium started its preparatory study in the beginning of 2005. Based upon the 'known' business requirements, this study investigated the ins and outs of the WHATS'On system in detail. It included a one-week visit of an experienced team of key users camping at MediaGeniX to analyse all the relevant functionalities and features. While executing this study, a requirements document was drafted to detail all functionalities available in the system by default and those that should be developed or customised to suit the SBS station-specific needs. In August 2005 the thorough investigation was completed and the contract was signed. Then, a structured master plan was set up to prepare the actual switch from the old to the new system.

## Making the switch to WHATS'On

Finally on the 31st of December 2005, SBS Belgium broadcasted its last transmission using the old system. From one day to the other, the entire station made the switch to its new WHATS'On system, without the classic safety mirror. The reason why there were no additional parallel runs or other proof of concept scenarios as described in the bibles of ideal IT, was a budgetary one. There were just no applicable resources available to run in parallel. Ideally, to achieve the best data integrity when migrating to a new system, all data should be entered manually into the new system to avoid potential clashes in the conversion. Nevertheless, time constraints and limited resources forced us to try to convert a lot of critical data from the old system. For this data transfer a whole range of conversion tools were used.

The integrity of the data was a major concern for us too and this was also the area where most difficulties occurred during the first day of transmission. Jef Aerts: "The complexity of mapping the old data with all its parameters and codes on the new database structure, was an expected though time consuming bottleneck. These problems had nothing to do with the WHATS'On system however." To streamline what was going to happen that particular day and to solve the data mapping problems, a dedicated team of MediaGeniX people were present on-site to support SBS Belgium's IT-people and schedulers in real time.

Apart from these conversion difficulties, hardly any major and business-critical problem was encountered. Jef Aerts: "This was possible thanks to the flexibility of the WHATS'On system and the availability of on-site professionalism of the MediaGeniX team (...) Flexibility is probably the most important surplus in our relationship with MediaGeniX. Proximity and availability was one of the key added values in this project."

## Preparing for the future

Nine months after installation, more than 95% of the start-up problems due to especially conversion issues, like mentioned above, were already being solved. SBS then started the second phase of its project: the development of extra functionality to ensure continuity of the station in the future, with potential regarding digital TV and VOD, extra channels and potentially also radio scheduling. These developments include trailer management, extra possibilities for budget simulations and ROI-calculations.

*"Being responsible for our station's IT-department, it is my duty to not only make sure the system reflects the strategic plans of the station today and tomorrow, but most of all, to ensure its continuity."*

Jef Aerts  
IT-manager at SBS Belgium

### ABOUT SBS Belgium

SBS Belgium started Feb 1st 1995 as part of the SBS Broadcasting Group, originally Scandinavian Broadcasting System, which was a European broadcasting group operational in commercial television. In 2007, ProSiebenSat.1 Media, a German group, has taken over SBS making it the number two Pan European television group with 48 channels.

The following channels of SBS Belgium are planned by WHATS'ON:



More information about SBS Belgium at [www.vt4.be](http://www.vt4.be) and [www.vijftv.be](http://www.vijftv.be).

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