

THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE REPOSITORY OF RADIO FRANCE INTERNATIONAL: THE AUDIENCE OF LATIN AMERICA AND SPAIN AS A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

EL REPOSITORIO EN ESPAÑOL DE RADIO FRANCIA INTERNACIONAL: LA AUDIENCIA DE LATINOAMÉRICA Y ESPAÑA COMO OBJETIVO ESTRATÉGICO

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ABSTRACT

This article is the result of an analysis of the content offered in Spanish through Radio France International. It offers a systematization and classification of its programs on the web, taking as reference points the name of the program, its content, its theme, and the production model. Of the 21 programs that the Spanish radio station RFI broadcasts on its grid, eight are informative, the main one in terms of content. The objective of these programs is to bring French culture closer to Spanish speakers, as well as to discover the similarities of talent that may exist with that culture in Spain and Latin America. In addition, the sound library of the International Public Radio of France allows the listener to travel through general or cultural current affairs: film, dance, music, theater, or literature.

Keywords: Radio France International, external radio broadcasting, French public radio, web RFI, international cyber radio.

RESUMEN

Este artículo es el resultado de un análisis de la oferta de contenidos en español a través de la Radio France International. En él se ofrece una sistematización y



clasificación de sus programas en la web en la que se toman como puntos de referencias el nombre del programa, su contenido, su temática y el modelo de producción. De los 21 programas de la parrilla de la emisora en español de RFI, ocho son de temática informativa, la principal en sus contenidos. El objetivo de estos programas es acercar la cultura francesa a los hispanoparlantes, así como descubrir las similitudes de talento que pueden existir con esa cultura de España y Latinoamérica. Además, la fonoteca de la radio pública internacional de Francia permite al oyente viajar por temas de actualidad general o cultural: cine, danza, música, teatro o literatura.

Palabras clave: Radio France International, radiodifusión exterior, radio pública francesa, web RFI, radio web internacional.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1927, the BBC, a UK's public broadcaster, began broadcasting programs for its colonies around the world. On December 19th, 1932, it launched a twenty-four-hour-a-day broadcast service to British territories in Africa, India, Australia, and Canada. It was the first serious experience of what would later come to be called the foreign public broadcasting service in most of the countries of old Europe. This British experience began to be replicated on public radio stations in other European countries: in some cases, for example in Spain, initially conceived as a propaganda weapon and, in others, as a means of keeping the Nation in contact with the country's citizens who resided abroad.

But the mission of international public radio has been transforming. In this sense, one of the important missions of the international broadcasting services of today's democratic states lies in projecting the image of a country and its vision of the world.

The Internet has come to make things easier and break down access and interaction barriers with radio in different parts of the world. Content production is much cheaper, and the world is just one click away. It is not surprising, then, that these types of stations have enhanced their services on the Internet to achieve their objectives. This is what Radio France International has done.

1.1. Contextual framework: historical and foundational context

In the last years of the last century, Ortega Benito (1997) commented that Radio France International (RFI) is one of the national program societies of the public sector of the French audiovisual sector.

Created by law on July 29th, 1986, as a subsidiary company of Radio France, it was granted the status of autonomous society by law 3986, of September 30th, regarding freedom of communication. The Board of Directors of the RFI is made up of

representatives of Parliament, representatives of State personnel, and personalities appointed by the National Commission for Communication and Freedoms.

Like the rest of the European international public broadcasters, RFI is in charge of the transmission of sound radio broadcasts intended for international broadcasting, as is the case for example in Spain (Ortiz Sobrino, 2013). Ortiz Sobrino states that, in the Spanish case, Radio Exterior de España has established itself as a vehicle for the projection of the image of Spain abroad. To such an extent that, in the first years of the first decade of the millennium, broadcasts were counted in ten different languages: Spanish, English, French, German, Arabic, Russian, Catalan, Basque, Galician, and Sephardic: languages that have strategic and commercial value for the Spanish State. The same happens on Radio France International, which in recent years has been broadcasting in languages such as Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Romanian, or Russian. In this key of strategic interest for France, their broadcasts in Spanish and their collaboration as broadcasters of these contents with third sector stations (Ortiz Sobrino, 2014) should be framed, as also happens in the Spanish case where their international cooperation work stands out, carried out through agreements with more than six hundred radio stations in Spanish throughout the world (Calvo, 2006).

Radio France International is a French public international radio station. Its headquarters are in Paris. RFI produces programs in French and 13 other languages, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Hausa, English, Swahili, Persian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, and Vietnamese. One of its most prominent stations is the one corresponding to the Spanish language because it covers audiences in Spain and Latin American countries.

Scientific literature has echoed the characteristics and historical perspective of the foreign broadcasting service, both in France and in Spain. In the Spanish case, mention should be made of the contributions of Martínez Arias and Martínez Arias (2013), Ortiz Sobrino (2014), Martín Caro (2000), Calvo 2006, or Montes Fernández 2018. In the case of France, the work of Glevarec (2012), Hendrick (2011), Lefebvre (2011), Cheval (1997, 2003, 2008, and 2010), and the contributions promoted by the Groupe de Recherches et d'Études sur la Radio, which allow framing the French international public radio, both in its origins and from the great reform carried out after the entry into force of the Mitterrand reform in that country, in 1981/1982, stand out.

1.2. Radio France International in the context of Internet radio

According to Milito and Cajús (2009), the Internet has opened up new possibilities for radio, both for the distribution of the signal and for the incorporation of social networks. The authors comment that the presence of radio on the Internet opens the way to a different way of doing radio and packaging content in podcast format (Gallego-Pérez (2010 and 2012) and Ortiz Sobrino (2012), among others.

Radio acquires international reach and coverage with the Internet. In this way, it opens up to the radio the possibility of trans-nationalization and globalization of its contents. Taking advantage of these new possibilities is what French international public radio has been doing.

Cea-Esteruelas (2016) comments that the internet is widely used by the leading-in-audience radio stations in Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Regarding the distribution model, an important evolution is detected compared to previous studies because the use of the webcast and the podcast has practically already become widespread. The data produced by one of her studies reflect that all of the leading-in-audience radio stations in these four countries broadcast sound and radio content live through the Internet (simulcast).

Martínez Costa, Moreno, and Amoedo (2018), account for the importance of the internet for radio broadcasts today. In this sense, they refer to the extensive bibliography on online radio approached from different perspectives: from the theoretical foundation - Cebrián-Herreros (2008 and 2009), Martínez-Costa; Moreno; Amoedo-, to the empirical foundation – González Conde (2014), Gallego-Pérez, (2010 and 2012), and Cea-Esteruelas, (2016).

Radio France International broadcasts its signal through satellites, its website on the Internet, and apps for mobile phones. In 1996, RFI President, Jean-Paul Cluzel, transformed RFI into a continuous, 24/7 radio broadcast on a global scale in 17 languages besides French. That same year, its website was created, and in 1998 its Spanish counterpart. The systems used are mainly streaming or podcast.

In recent years, Radio France International has been broadcasting in languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Romanian, or Russian. In this key of strategic interest for France, their broadcasts in Spanish and their collaboration as broadcasters of these contents with third sector stations should be framed, as also happens in the Spanish case.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research has focused on the analysis of the content offered in Spanish of Radio France International through the web, regardless of whether it is self-produced or associated with other institutions.

Similarly, it has been tried to contextualize this offer compared to other activities of the station, regarding international cooperation.

3. METHODOLOGY

After a historical-technological contextualization that has required taking up some contributions from scientific literature, we have proceeded to analyze the repository of programs in Spanish offered by RFI.

The methodology used has been based on the analysis of the contents of the programs that Radio France International has on its website.

From there, the contents of the programs offered by the station over the internet have been systematized and classified. In this sense, a classification structure based on four items has been elaborated: name of the program, content, theme, and origin of the

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production. Twenty-one different programs have been identified, of varying themes and duration, which have been listened to and classified according to the referenced items.

The analysis work was carried out between September and December 2019.

4. DISCUSSION / RESULTS

Radio France International on the internet: the repository of programs on the web.

4.1. Analysis of the website and the impact of Spanish

Radio France International started, in 1998, its specific website for content in Spanish. The link is a derivation of the official website, hence the relevance of the presence in Spanish for Radio France. <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>



Figure 1. RFI web portal in Spanish

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

The website has an eminently informative role since from the outset it is appreciated that it is an informative, visual, and intuitive window marked by the news that appears in the foreground and the repository of "More news" in the right section.



Figure 2. RFI logo

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

In the drop-down menu (Photo 3), Radio France International divides its contents into News and Listen, in line with offering information and radio content in Spanish. In the News section, the content and its thematic line are already appreciated, focused on information and internationalization, as well as cultural, economic, social, and sports content. In the News section, it is also clear that the main audience for RFI programming in Spanish is the audience from America, which is the first category on the cover menu. From there, content from France, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific is also produced and broadcasted.

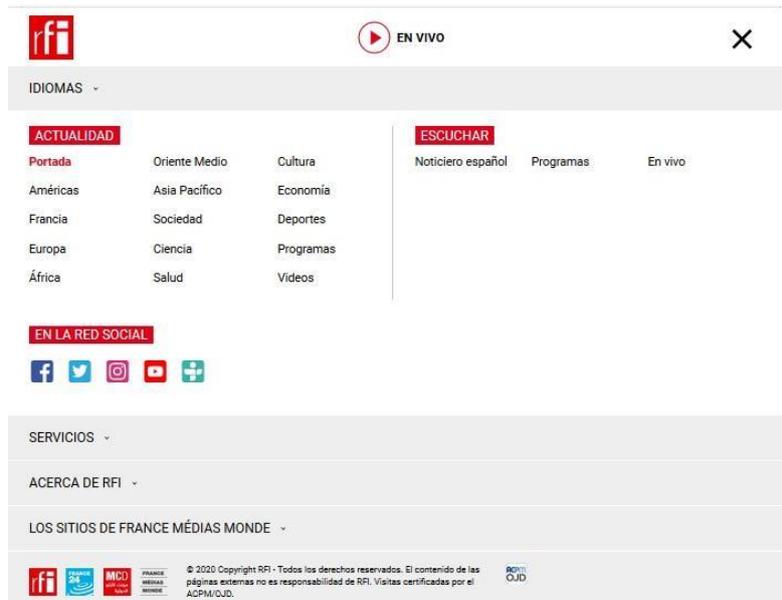


Figure 3. The drop-down menu within the RFI International web portal in Spanish
Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

The radio presence in the "Listen" section is also very relevant, along with the informational presence. The visitor finds the option to listen to the station "Live" at the top of the main menu. Moreover, radio content appears in numerous sections on the home page and subpages.

RFI broadcasts its signal through satellites, its website on the Internet (streaming and podcasts), and apps for mobile phones. The signal is available in various subscription television companies. In some countries, RFI has agreements with FM stations for the retransmission of its programs.

Furthermore, social media and broadcast through YouTube and Tune In have a strong presence on the cover. Radio France International has specific social media profiles for its station in Spanish and offers the listener the possibility of listening to its programs live and on-delay not only on the website but also through mobile devices or smart speakers through the Tune In app where the station already has more than 10 thousand followers. Tune In is already one of the main apps for listening to streaming radio around the world.

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Figure 4. Official profile of Spanish RFI in the radio streaming app
Source: Tune In.

On the main page, featured content appears with a # on the front page, followed by the most prominent locations, and direct access to the program directory and newscasts. In the Newscasts section, the latest newscast can be heard in a fragmented way to facilitate the listener's identification of content and offer shorter fragments (No more than 20 minutes long).

4.2. Analysis of the radio grid and relevance

According to data collected on the France Médias Monde website, "Its collaborators are from 66 different nationalities. Every week, RFI, France 24, and Monte Carlo Doualiya reach 173 million contacts (45% of them in languages other than French), including 126.9 listeners and viewers (measured in 65 countries of the 183 in which at least one of the networks is broadcasted) and 46.3 million monthly visits in their digital universes (2018 average). In December 2018, subscribers to Facebook and Twitter reached 65 million. France Médias Monde is the parent company of CFI, the French media cooperation agency, and is one of the shareholders of the French-speaking channel TV5MONDE".

RFI's programs are mainly French in origin but various content is produced from RFI's correspondents in Latin American countries. The announcers have a wide variety of accents and the presenters are anonymous announcers, people from civil society, RFI professionals, or Hispanic American journalists, as is the case of the Argentine journalist based in Paris, Alejo Schapire, who presents the program Algo Que Decir.

Most of the programs are self-produced by RFI's, although the collaboration with other institutions and media such as France24 or Monte Carlo Doualiya is evident in the credits of the website. In short, these media, together with RFI, form the France Médias Monde group, a French state company.

Delving into the programs produced by RFI in Spanish, and which are unified in the Programs section (Illustrations 5 and 6) on the front page, we identified 21 different programs of varying themes and duration.

Spanish repository
Radio France International

- *Number of programs*
 - 21 programs
- *Name of the programs*
 - Algo que decir*
 - Carrusel de las artes*
 - Crónica cultural*
 - Crónicas Deportivas*
 - Curso de francés: ¿Parlez vous Paris?*
 - Economía y finanzas*
 - El deportivo de RFI*
 - El invitado de RFI*
 - Enfoque Internacional*
 - En Primera Plana*
 - Escala en París*
 - Francés de todos*
 - Francia Hoy*
 - Grandes reportajes de RFI*
 - La fonoteca de RFI*
 - Mundo ciencia*
- Noticias de América*
 - París América*
 - Special programs*
 - Salud y Bienestar*
 - Vida en el planeta*
- *Topic of the programs*
 - Information*
 - Interviews*
 - Economy*
 - Culture*
 - Sports*
 - Science*
 - Environment*
 - Education*
- *Origin of the programs*
 - RFI Production*
 - RFI and broadcasters' co-production*
 - RFI and France 24 in Spanish*

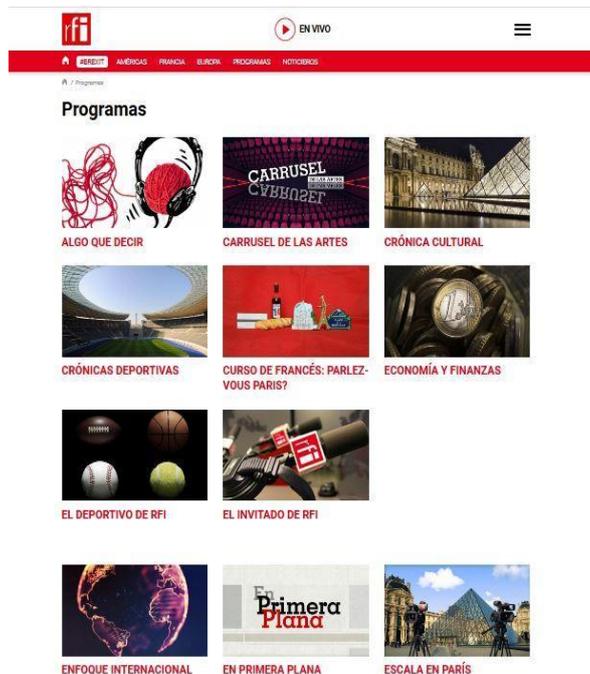


Figure 5. Repository of RFI programs in Spanish

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

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Figure 6. Repository of RFI programs in Spanish

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

Table 1. Description of the contents of the programs in Spanish

Name	Content	Topic	Origin of the programs
<i>Algo que decir</i>	A conversation/interview with international profiles to deepen ideas, opinions on global issues	Information	RFI production
<i>Carrusel de las artes</i>	Weekly report on cultural themes about music, literature, cinema, performing arts, dance, photography, French and Latin American	Culture	RFI production
<i>Crónica cultural</i>	Program on cultural news in France	Culture	RFI production
<i>Crónicas Deportivas</i>	Sports news program on recent events with international connections	Sport	RFI production
<i>Curso de francés: Parlez vous Paris?</i>	26 bilingual reports made by foreigners to get to know Paris and practice the language in the city	Education	RFI production
<i>Economía y finanzas</i>	A magazine dedicated to the economic issues that are featured in French, Latin American, and world news with expert analysis	Economy	RFI production

<i>El deportivo de RFI</i>	Sports summary of the week, with football, tennis, cycling, rugby, Formula 1, + international reports	Sport	RFI production
<i>El invitado de RFI</i>	Interview with a guest in the studio to discuss current political or cultural issues	Information	RFI production
<i>Enfoque Internacional</i>	Analysis program of a current world issue to analyze it in-depth, with interviews with experts and actors from the political and social sector	Information	RFI production
<i>En Primera Plana</i>	Correspondents of the foreign press in Paris and experts analyze the highlights of current issues every week.	Information	Co-production RFI and France 24 in Spanish
<i>Escala en París</i>	Co-produced with France 24 in Spanish, Escala en París is a weekly meeting with artists, athletes, businessmen, scientists, political protagonists, etc. A bridge between Latin America and the City of Light.	Interviews	Co-production RFI and France 24 in Spanish
<i>Francés de todos</i>	A program that helps non-French speakers to differentiate between the different types of accents that exist in the language to understand, for example, eastern French from the street or every day.	Education	RFI production
<i>Francia Hoy</i>	Weekly magazine "that addresses issues of French society or politics, delving into each of them with the analysis of experts and testimonies.	Information	RFI production
<i>Grandes reportajes de RFI</i>	A program made by RFI reporters around the world, which allows, behind the news, to explore a topic, a place, a problem.	Information	RFI production
<i>La fonoteca de RFI</i>	A program that explores French and international music	Culture	RFI production

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<i>Mundo ciencia</i>	A program that addresses scientific topics, science, from archeology to outer space.	Science	RFI production
<i>Noticias de América</i>	An informative program that analyzes Latin American news with the voices of protagonists and observers of the region.	Information	RFI production
<i>París América</i>	An interactive program of RFI, its associated radios, and listeners	Information	RFI production, associated radios, and citizen participation through WhatsApp and email.
<i>Programa especial</i>	Large-format and monothematic special programs about a major event	Specials	RFI professional's writing and RFI production
<i>Salud y Bienestar</i>	A weekly magazine dedicated to the topics of health and quality of life.	Society	RFI production
<i>Vida en el planeta</i>	Program dedicated to planet issues, especially environmental awareness.	Environment	RFI production

Source: Self-made.

Of the 21 programs that the RFI Spanish radio station broadcasts on its grid, eight are informative, the main one in its contents. This is not surprising since RFI is part of the conglomerate of news media that we discussed previously and has an eminently news function that is reflected in its slogan: "News from the world live". Within the informative genre, large-format newscasts are mixed with interviews.

The star program is precisely the daily Newscast that is complemented by programs such as *Noticias de América* (which delves into Latin America news through the voices of experts and protagonists) or *Algo que decir*, a talk show. The international character and the strength of the bulk of correspondents that RFI has is part of the *Enfoque Internacional* program but especially in the space *En primera plana*, which consists of a round of correspondents in all the corners where RFI and France 24 are present.

After the informative topic, cultural content is the other pillar of RFI's Spanish programming. The objective is to bring French culture closer to Spanish speakers, as well as discover the similarities of talent that can exist with that culture in Spain and Latin America. *Carrusel de las artes*, *Crónica cultural*, and *La fonoteca de RFI* (Illustration 7) allow the listener to travel through current and not so current cultural topics, from film to dance, going through music, theater, or literature. Special mention is made of *La fonoteca de RFI*, which acts as a weekly radio container for French

music, contrasting with the information that makes up a large part of the station's programming.



Figure 7. Musical spaces of the program "La fonoteca de RFI"

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

RFI in Spanish also has Sports, Society, Science, Environment, or Special Programs.

In all of them, the station enhances the strength of its extensive network of correspondents and professionals throughout the world. This is the special case of the *Crónicas Deportivas* program in which international connections are made to find out the results of sports as varied as football, tennis, or rugby, as well as the stories behind their protagonists. On the social level, the issues of health, well-being, quality of life, and the environment that increasingly concern the world population and, therefore, radio listeners, have a place in spaces such as *Salud y Bienestar* or clear and easy-to-understand reports with the participation of experts who resolve doubts and clarify concepts that concern society. The duration of these spaces is short and direct, between 15 and 30 minutes, and on many occasions, they have a very didactic structure, such as the one dedicated to Alzheimer's disease: 9 modifiable risk factors.

Informative topics can lead to a large global topic that deserves to be addressed in-depth and through different approaches. The "Special Program" space is the large container in which all RFI newsroom professionals work in a more coordinated way.

Large-format and monothematic special programs about a major event on recent topics such as Brexit, the Notre-Dame fire, or the fight for equality and the MeToo movement.

One of the most relevant informational areas in RFI programming is Economics. The global vision of economic issues through informative pills and spaces of no more than 30 minutes includes analysis and interviews with experts from all continents.

The public and social nature of RFI is also perceived in the educational contents, especially focused on teaching the French language to those who do not master it but want to learn it or are in the process of doing so. The objective is to provide the Spanish-speaking listener from any part of the world, through podcasts or live, a didactic tool to learn the French language in an easy, simple, comfortable, and

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accessible way. The space *Parlez vous Paris?* consists of 26 bilingual reports made by foreigners to get to know Paris and practice the language from the city itself, managing to pedagogically disseminate French and, also, offer tourist and cultural content. If the students/radio listeners already have a command of the language, there is the radio space *Francés de todos*, in which RFI allows you to discover accents and different ways of using the language.

Although RFI programs have a largely French production origin, it should be noted that the announcers have a wide variety of accents and the presenters are anonymous announcers, people from civil society, RFI professionals, or Hispanic American journalists. This fact is not accidental because, surely, Radio France International wants to be respectful of the diversity of accents that represent the language and the culture of Latin America and Spain.

In an online radio, interaction is essential. Precisely, this participatory nature is one of the axes of RFI, with its program aimed at the Latin American public, *París América*. This space, produced jointly by RFI and its associated radios, gives way to citizen participation from both the American and European continents, through voice messages, calls, or email. The result is a program very close to the listener, with topics that interest them, and that they configure. From problems in indigenous communities to cultural talents to discover or citizen entrepreneurship. The topics are very varied, like a social container, and are coordinated and led by professionals from RFI and its associated broadcasters.

4.3. Agreement with other stations, special programs, and awards

Throughout its more than 20 years of life, Radio France International has collaborated with stations in Spain and Latin America to broadcast their programs on these channels or create synergies between waves.

In the Cervantes Routes of the Cervantes Institute in Paris, the radio years of the writer and Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, Mario Vargas Llosa, were remembered on RTF (radio station before RFI):

During the seven years that Mario Vargas Llosa lived in Paris, the writer worked most of them on the radio programs in Spanish of the defunct French Radio Television, RTF, which today are broadcast on Radio France International (RFI). On the radio, he had a program called "La Literatura En Debate" in which he interviewed writers such as Pablo Neruda, Jorge Luis Borges, and Ernesto Sábato, among others. Vargas Llosa worked for several years in this building, since its inauguration in 1963.

For its part, in 2005 on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean Summit hosted by Barcelona, Catalunya Ràdio and Radio France International (RFI) signed an agreement to broadcast a joint radio program that was broadcast coinciding with the events of the said summit on the frequency that Radio France International has in Barcelona at 105.3 FM.

A total of six half-hour programs, with cultural and European content in Catalan, which allowed Catalunya Radio to "collaborate with one of the main transnational radio

stations in the world” and lay the foundations for “future projects”, in the words of the director of the station at that time, Oleguer Sarsanedas.

RFI International's commitment to quality journalism, the synergy between French and Spanish-American talent is evident in the delivery of the “RFI Spanish Reportage” award (Illustration 8), which in 2019 held its fifth edition. An award for journalism students under the age of 30, residing in Latin America and the Caribbean. To participate, students must send a radio report of a maximum duration of 13 minutes, as well as a proposal for a report to be carried out in Paris, which can finally be carried out during the four months of fully paid stay obtained by the winner of the contest.



Figure 8. Logo of the Spanish Reportage Award given by RFI

Source: <http://www.rfi.fr/es/>

5. CONCLUSIONS

Like the rest of the European international public broadcasters, Radio France International is entrusted with the emission of content directed to other countries and is in charge of the transmission of sound radio broadcasts intended for international broadcasting, as is the case with the rest of the main European public radios, including Radio Exterior of Spain. The objective of these programs is to bring French culture closer to the Spanish-speaking population in Latin America and Spain.

The website has an eminently informative role because from the outset it is appreciated that it is an informative, visual, and intuitive window marked by the news. In fact, from the analysis of the twenty-one programs that are broadcasted on the station's grid in Spanish, eight are informative.

The educational nature of Radio France International is reflected in the dissemination content of the French language in which, additionally, announcers with a wide variety of accents and origins participate in prominent programs such as *Parlez vous Paris?*

This fact is not accidental because Radio France International wants to be respectful of the diversity of accents that represent the language and the culture of Latin America and Spain.

In short, this foreign service of French public radio is part of the role of this type of European radio, in which international radios convey, from the perspective of the issuing country, their vision of the different informational aspects of a global nature.

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