



Thomas Rabe
Chief Executive Officer
RTL Group

Chief Executive's report

In 2023, we demonstrated the resilience of our businesses in a particularly challenging environment. As announced, we invested through the cycle. We grew our streaming services, extended our market leadership positions, in particular in Germany, and released globally acclaimed content. The second half of 2023 was one of the most profitable half-years in the history of RTL Group despite weak advertising markets and significant investments, enabling us to pay an attractive dividend. Our shareholders will also benefit in 2025 from the value crystallised by the expected sale of RTL Nederland for €1.1 billion.

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Gains in streaming and linear TV

Due to challenging TV advertising markets and lower Fremantle revenue, our Group revenue was down 5.4 per cent to €6.2 billion in 2023. Our Adjusted EBITA decreased from €922 million in 2022 to €782 million. This was mainly due to lower profit contributions from RTL Deutschland, caused by the significant decline of the German TV advertising market.

Our streaming services progressed strongly. Paying subscribers for our streaming services in Germany, Hungary and France grew by 30.5 per cent to 5.6 million, and our streaming revenue grew by 72.6 per cent to €283 million, thanks to the rapidly growing number of paying subscribers, higher revenue per subscriber and the first-time inclusion of 6play in France.

In Germany, our family of TV channels increased its combined audience share to 27.4 per cent in the target group of viewers aged 14 to 59. RTL and Vox were the leading two commercial channels in the country, and RTL Deutschland extended its lead over ProSiebenSat1, the main commercial competitor, to 5.8 percentage points – the biggest lead in the last decade.

Strengthening our core with sports rights

Our strategic framework – to strengthen our core businesses, to grow our streaming and content businesses, and to build alliances and partnerships – remains unchanged and continued to guide us in 2023.

To strengthen our linear TV channels and gain new subscribers for our streaming services, we continued to invest in premium content across all genres – including the exclusive rights for live sports events. With a new studio, on-air team and coverage across linear TV, streaming and radio, RTL Deutschland successfully added American Football to its content portfolio. As the exclusive TV partner of NFL in Germany, RTL Deutschland increased the audience share in the 14 to 59 and 14 to 49 target groups in comparison to the average figures for the previous season. With an average share of 23.0 per cent in the 14 to 29 male target group for games with a 22:00 kick-off in Germany, the NFL was particularly successful among young men – allowing us to reach viewers which are particularly important for advertising clients.

RTL Deutschland will continue to show Uefa Europa League and Uefa Europa Conference League games on linear channels RTL and Nitro and streaming service RTL+. RTL Hungary will start broadcasting around 200 Uefa Champions League games per season from 2024/25. For the Uefa Euro 2024, RTL Deutschland acquired the free-to-air TV rights to 12 matches from Deutsche Telekom, while Groupe M6 will broadcast 13 matches – including the final, one semi-final and two quarter finals.



Thomas Rabe with CFO Björn Bauer and Deputy CEO & COO Elmar Heggen at the 2023 Virtual Management Meeting.

A streaming milestone

In August 2023, RTL Deutschland reached a milestone with the launch of its all-inclusive entertainment offer – Germany's first multimedia app. Alongside video content, RTL+ now offers music, podcasts, audio books and magazine content in one single app. Thanks to a cross-media marketing campaign and an attractive mix of reality formats, football matches and films and series, RTL+ enjoyed significant growth.

Groupe M6 recently announced plans to expand its streaming service M6+, previously known as 6play. The additional investments of €100 million in content, technology and marketing will ramp up over time. The service will be primarily financed by advertising (AVOD), complemented by a premium subscription tier (SVOD). With a range of high-quality free content and multi-screen accessibility, M6+ will offer viewers an innovative experience while strengthening its value proposition for advertisers.

Following the envisaged disposal of our Dutch streaming service Videoland and the investments in M6+ in France, we have updated the targets for our streaming services RTL+ in Germany, RTL+ in Hungary and M6+ in France. By 2026, we aim to reach around 9 million paying subscribers and around €750 million of streaming revenue. We plan to increase the content spend for our streaming services to around €500 million and to become profitable by 2026.

Award-winning content

As part of Fremantle's boost plan to reach full-year revenue of €3 billion by 2025/2026, we continued to invest in our global content business in 2023.

Fremantle was named 'International Producer of the Year' by The Hollywood Reporter for its outstanding achievements in drama and film production. In the documentary sector, the company launched *Undeniable*, a new premium documentary label. Fremantle continues its acquisition strategy in 2024, with the acquisitions of France-based Asacha Media Group, which has majority stakes in eight production companies in France, Italy and the UK, and Singapore-based Beach House Pictures, which focuses on non-scripted entertainment.

Our investments in production and talent are paying off, with Fremantle celebrating major creative successes in 2023. The company won a total of 145 awards, including two Golden Globes and The Golden Lion for Element Pictures film *Poor Things*, and three awards at the Rome Film Festival for Wildside film *C'è ancora domani* (There's Still Tomorrow). The success of *Poor Things* has continued into this year, with the film winning five BAFTA awards in February 2024 and four Oscars in March 2024.

We are on track to reach our ambitious revenue target – which would effectively double the Fremantle business within five to six years.

Future-focused alliances and partnerships

Alliances and partnerships will shape the future of the European media industry and help us compete with the global technology platforms. We have established stronger collaboration in the areas of national and international advertising sales, advertising and streaming technology, and content – and we are exploring additional opportunities. For example, as part of the sale of RTL Nederland to DPG Media, we will enter into a strategic partnership with DPG Media in the areas of technology, advertising sales and content. With Sky Deutschland, we formed a content partnership under which RTL Deutschland will broadcast and stream seven Formula One races and one game from the English Premier League per match week.

End of an era for Groupe M6

Nicolas de Tavernost decided to step down from his position as Chairman of the Executive Board of Groupe M6. On 23 April 2024, David Larramendy, currently a member of the Groupe M6 Executive Board, takes over and will lead the company into the next phase of growth and transformation.

Nicolas de Tavernost is one of Europe's most distinguished and successful media managers and a pioneer of commercial television. He has been with M6 since its foundation in 1987 and over the past 30 years, has shaped the company into one of the most successful media groups on the continent. He is an inspiration for our Group and a role model for all executives: Merci, Nicolas!

Long-term prospects

The transformation of the media industry is a formidable challenge. I remain convinced that it holds big opportunities for those ready to shape the future. RTL Group is actively shaping the future: by investing in content and technology to maximise reach across linear and streaming, by developing advertising technology to drive monetisation, by forming alliances and partnerships and by actively managing its portfolio to create value for all its shareholders.



Thomas Rabe presented the Bertelsmann Entrepreneurial Award to Nicolas de Tavernost, Chairman of the Executive Board of Groupe M6, in 2022.

“Nicolas de Tavernost is an inspiration for our Group and a role model for all executives: Merci, Nicolas!”