

Quelle / Source: Realscreen

ZDF – GERMANY**CHANNEL BREAKDOWN:**

Factual programming is aired on the main channel ZDF, the satellite network 3sat, Franco-German network ARTE, and digital channels ZDFneo, ZDFinfo, and ZDFkultur.

DEPARTMENTS:

ZDF's content is commissioned by editors in various departments, which include contemporary history, current affairs, environmental affairs, culture and science.

WHAT THEY PROGRAM:

As seen in the brochure "Factual Programming on ZDF," available to producers via the [ZDF Enterprises](http://www.zdf-enterprises.de/en/coproductions/coproductions/documentaries) website at www.zdf-enterprises.de/en/coproductions/coproductions/documentaries, the German public broadcaster airs numerous documentary strands, including weekly doc broadcasts in two primetime slots.

In giving the genre such prominence, ZDF also sets high standards for what it airs. Top-notch visual quality, air-tight research and keen attention to the narrative element are requirements.

Contemporary history commissions air on Tuesdays at 8:15pm, with approximately 22 x 45-minute programs and 3 x 90-minute shows slotted over the course of a year. The majority of these are ZDF in-house productions and commissions, with the remaining 20% being coproductions and acquisitions. Another history slot, 'ZDF History,' airs repeats of primetime series and acquisitions on Sunday nights at 11 p.m. Examples of recent history fare include *Secrets of the Third Reich* and *Busting the Berlin Wall*.

Approximately 40 current affairs specials also air in the earlier Tuesday night slot. Thirty of those come from the department of current affairs, and the remainder from ZDF's history department. Of these, 20 are commissioned and the remainder is in-house production. The strand airs on Sundays at 1:30 p.m., and the majority of the 37 x 28-minute programs are in-house productions and acquisitions. They also air on digi channel ZDFinfo.

The department of environmental affairs oversees environmental strand 'Planet e,' which includes programs on such subjects as nature conservation and biodiversity, human beings and development, energy supply, green economy, and climate change among others.

ZDF's department of culture and science oversees doc projects regarding religion, history, nature, medicine and science. In addition to slots airing these docs,

37-minute slots are also allocated to three departmental divisions – History and Science, Church and Life (Protestant), and Church and Life (Catholic) – on a rotating basis.

The Sunday night 'Terra X' slot, airing at 7:30 p.m., focuses on ancient history, mythology and scientific experimentation and has expanded to include wildlife. ZDF calls the projects airing on the strand "science thrillers," and they rate well, attracting several million viewers.

A human interest slot, airing Tuesdays at 10:15 p.m., features the strand '37°,' which examines themes that reside within the intersection of culture, religion and society. For this slot, 80% of the projects are commissioned, 10% are ZDF in-house productions, and 10% are coproductions or acquisitions.

The Church and Life divisions are behind what ZDF calls "high-gloss documentaries on biblical and archaeological subjects" which tend to air around the holidays.

Of course, there's ZDF/ARTE, the joint venture between ZDF, ARD and French culture channel ARTE. ZDF supplies approximately 1,200 hours per year to ARTE, and 35% of those programs are new productions created as coproductions with ZDF and aired by ARTE. Documentaries represent about 40% of ARTE's total programming. Details on ARTE's programming needs can also be found in the aforementioned brochure.

SATELLITE AND DIGITAL CHANNELS:

Producers should also take note of satellite channel 3sat, a co-venture between German broadcasters ZDF and ARD, Austrian broadcaster ORF and Switzerland's SF which receives approximately 220 hours of doc programming from ZDF per year. About 20% of the docs airing on the channel are coproductions or acquisitions.

Digital channels include ZDFneo, which airs factual entertainment and docs in addition to music, fiction, variety and comedy content; news, documentary and information channel ZDFinfo; and cultural channel ZDFkultur.

HOW TO PITCH:

Here, the commercial arm of the broadcaster, [ZDF Enterprises \(ZDFE\)](http://www.zdf-enterprises.de), can be a valuable ally. As a distributor and intermediary between the international market and ZDF, those in its documentary and coproduction department – director [Kristina Hollstein](#) and project manager [Nikolas Huelbusch](#) – can guide producers to the right contacts within the ZDF family for potential productions, copros or acquisitions.

ZDFE also invests in some copros with ZDF, and looks for international partners for them, and it's also looking for projects to acquire from the international market independently from ZDF.

Check www.zdf-enterprises.de for contact emails.

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