# European broadcasters lead in sustainability as US lags amid AI energy concerns



Sustainability in the broadcasting sector is a topic that, while increasingly prominent, elicits critical scrutiny regarding the sincerity of commitments versus mere marketing rhetoric. The challenges and advancements tied to sustainable broadcasting practices were discussed in the first part of a recent Industry Insights roundtable, where industry professionals weighed in on the tangible steps being taken—and those that are yet to be achieved.

The disparity between U.S. and European broadcasters is a notable focus. In Europe, sustainability has become a regulatory expectation, with many broadcasters facing pressure to disclose their environmental impact transparently. As Kristan Bullett, CEO of Humans Not Robots, aptly summarises, there is a significant cultural divide: "In the U.S., the focus on energy independence and fossil fuel extraction has grown as a response to rising energy demands." In contrast, European entities are prioritising rigorous measurement techniques, underlining a commitment to sustainability that sees them actively engage in quantifying their carbon footprints and energy consumption.

Despite the differences, the industry’s move toward implementing sustainable practices holds potential economic benefits alongside environmental goals. The growing recognition of sustainability as a fundamental decision-making criterion is shifting how infrastructure and services are purchased. While some companies may still resort to surface-level green marketing, there is a palpable trend towards substantive action. As underscored by Simon Parkinson, managing director of Dot Group, real sustainability initiatives are evidence-driven and extend across the entire production lifecycle. Yet, he notes, many broadcasters exhibit reluctance to engage with the more challenging elements, particularly in IT infrastructure, which significantly contributes to carbon emissions.

Moreover, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in broadcasting continues to be a double-edged sword. While AI presents opportunities for operational efficiency and waste reduction, there are significant energy costs associated with generative models. Bullett indicates that the considerable processing requirements of these technologies may negate some sustainability gains. Nevertheless, innovations in AI also facilitate smarter production processes. Yang Cai, CEO of VisualOn, points out that AI enhances video workflows by optimising encoding and predictive delivery, which ultimately lowers energy usage—an example of technology that supports sustainable objectives.

However, measuring the effectiveness of sustainability efforts remains fraught with difficulties. Industry participants lament the reliance on rough estimations rather than precise, real-time data to gauge carbon footprints. Parkinson articulates a compelling need for more accurate measurement systems, emphasising that current methods often lead to suboptimal data reporting and a climate of complacency in making meaningful reductions. A recurring sentiment from industry leaders is that true sustainability hinges on robust accountability mechanisms that reflect substantial progress rather than mere compliance.

The enthusiasm around sustainable practices also resonates strongly with audiences. As noted by Lesley Marr, director of sustainability at NxtGenBPS, consumers today are increasingly conscious of companies' environmental responsibilities and expect genuine action behind corporate narratives. This demand for authenticity is supported by evidence suggesting that brands committed to sustainability often outpace their less eco-minded competitors. Richard Jonker, VP of marketing at Netgear, expanded on this notion, underscoring that sustainability is not only a matter of ethical responsibility but also a significant factor in shaping brand reputation and engaging audiences.

The integration of virtual production and cloud-native solutions emerges as a core strategy for achieving sustainability without sacrificing quality—a point that Jason O'Malley, senior partner solutions architect at AWS, strongly advocates. These technologies reduce the carbon footprint associated with traditional production methods, eliminating the need for extensive travel and extensive physical setups. In fact, the push towards cloud-enabling technologies promises a future where high-quality broadcasts can be achieved alongside aggressive sustainability targets.

As the broadcast sector navigates this intricate landscape of sustainability, it strikes an optimistic chord of possibility—one where financial viability and environmental stewardship are not mutually exclusive. Broadcasters equipped with innovative, eco-friendly technologies and commitments to transparency are poised to lead the industry into a more sustainable future. While challenges abound, the concerted efforts to align sustainability with operational practices mark a progressive step in an industry eager to evolve beyond rhetoric and reflect genuine responsibility in its environmental footprint.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2
2. Paragraph 3
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## Bibliography

* <https://www.newscaststudio.com/2025/05/14/industry-insights-sustainability-in-broadcasting-requires-more-than-a-marketing-pitch/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://medialooks.com/articles/sustainability-in-broadcasting-green-practices-and-innovations/> - This article discusses various sustainable practices in the broadcasting industry, including energy-efficient studios, cloud-based workflows, remote production (REMI), reducing e-waste, and sustainable content delivery. It highlights technological innovations such as virtual and augmented reality, AI and automation, next-generation codecs, and carbon-offsetting initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability in broadcasting.
* <https://www.isp-audio.com/en/installation-case-studies/broadcast-production-tv/10373-investment-and-cultural-change-obstacles-to-a-more-sustainable-entertainment-and-media-industry> - The article examines the challenges broadcasters face in adopting sustainable practices, emphasizing the need for financial investment and a cultural shift within organizations. It highlights that while many companies express a commitment to sustainability, obstacles like cost considerations and ingrained industry behaviors hinder progress toward more sustainable operations.
* <https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/comment/the-future-of-sustainability-in-the-broadcast-sector/5182876.article> - This piece explores the future of sustainability in broadcasting, focusing on virtual production and cloud-native solutions. It discusses how virtual production reduces the need for location scouting and travel, thereby decreasing carbon emissions, and how cloud-based workflows can lead to more sustainable working practices by reducing infrastructure and resource consumption.
* <https://jackshoot.com/blog/greening-the-airwaves-how-the-broadcasting-industry-is-pioneering-environmental-sustainability-and-how-you-can-too/> - The article highlights the broadcasting industry's efforts toward environmental sustainability, citing examples like the Paris 2024 Olympic Games' decarbonization pledge and the use of virtual productions to reduce carbon emissions. It also discusses the financial benefits of sustainable practices, such as cost savings from remote productions and the use of renewable energy sources.
* <https://www.muvi.com/blogs/sustainability-in-broadcasting-and-video-streaming/> - This blog post outlines steps toward sustainability in broadcasting and video streaming, including CDN caching and just-in-time packaging. It emphasizes how these practices optimize video delivery, reduce bandwidth consumption, and lower power usage, contributing to a greener service. The article also mentions partnerships with cloud services like AWS to build sustainability solutions.
* <https://www.globalbroadcastindustry.news/broadcast-industry-sustainability/> - The article explores various aspects of sustainability in the broadcast sector, such as energy-efficient technologies, virtual production, and the use of LED lighting. It highlights how companies like Netflix and the BBC have successfully incorporated eco-friendly practices into their operations, including investing in renewable energy and adopting greener production methods.