

# Gospel message fills the airwaves in Croatia

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ZAGREB, Croatia (BP)—After living in Croatia more than 22 years, missionary Eric Maroney understands why some people describe life and ministry as difficult in this part of Europe.



IMB missionary Eric Maroney preaches in Croatia. His sermons are also broadcast twice weekly on a local radio station. Though it takes 20-30 hours for Maroney to prepare a radio sermon in Croatian, he believes the time is worth it to reach the more than 40,000 people who tune in to the program. (IMB Photo)

Maroney has witnessed the reluctance of people to believe the gospel and has endured the skepticism toward evangelical churches. Only one Baptist church stands in western Zagreb—an area of 250,000 people—where his team lives and works.

As church planters, Maroney and his wife Julie looks for new strategies to share the gospel. In 2014, when a Brazilian ministry partner pitched the idea of a radio ministry, Maroney saw it as a part of a larger strategy to spread the gospel and connect seekers with local congregations. Gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions support the effort.

“We approached the local radio station, Radio Martin, and they were willing to host us, despite the fact that the station is affiliated with the Catholic church,” Maroney said. “The first contract was for two 15-minute programs Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

“Over the years, as we’ve developed a relationship with the station director, we’ve been able to negotiate for lower fees and have moved to a live 45-minute program on Wednesday and Friday evening recorded at the radio station.”



A ministry team records an evangelistic program, which airs twice a week and reaches more than 40,000 people in Croatia with each broadcast. (IMB Photo)

The ministry team now includes nine local partners who serve as speakers, translators and technical support. The group fills the airwaves twice a week with a sermon, spiritual songs, interviews with believers and questions from callers. Ratings reported from the radio station’s director reveal more than 40,000 people listen to each broadcast. In a country with only 7,000 evangelical Christians, the number of listeners is significant.

Maroney knows not all listeners are intent on hearing the gospel when they tune in, but they are still opening themselves to a message of truth, he said. Maroney and his team trust the “broad seed sowing” of the broadcasts touch people’s hearts and offer an alternative to those living without the hope of Christ. They have already seen a key impact of the radio ministry, he noted.

“A year after we began broadcasting, a man visited the Dugo Selo [church] plant. After several months of visiting he invited us to start meeting on

Tuesday evenings in an empty storefront that he owned in” another city, Maroney said.

“Six months later, he casually mentioned that the reason he had first visited the Dugo Selo church was that he had been listening to our radio broadcast from the beginning.”

Although it takes Maroney 20 to 30 hours to prepare a radio sermon in Croatian, he is willing to put in the time to reach the multitudes.

In addition to the broadcasts, Maroney and his partners work with a local church to distribute Christian literature, provide a monthly article for the town magazine and host evangelistic events and public concerts. They also teach ESL classes and host summer camps.