

# DIGITALEUROPE Position Paper on Digital Radio

## Full digitization and harmonisation of terrestrial radio

Brussels, 31 March 2017

### KEY MESSAGES

DIGITALEUROPE welcomes the Digital Single Market (DSM) strategy of the European Commission, as digitisation offers various new possibilities to the consumer. Unfortunately, the digitisation of terrestrial radio is not explicitly mentioned within the DSM programme. Whereas most broadcasting infrastructures have already become digital across Europe, the digitisation of terrestrial radio still is rather nascent.

#### Benefits for the consumer

Digitisation offers clear benefits to the consumer: freedom of choice across a greater variety of services, user friendliness and better audio quality, with a wider reach and reliability even while on the move. Digital radio also offers new services which are not available with analogue and is able to provide additional text or visual information: for example, detailed traffic information as defined by the Transport Protocol Experts Group.

#### Digital Radio is spectrum and cost efficient

Considering that spectrum is a scarce resource and that the transmission of digital radio is more spectrum efficient compared to analogue radio, the spectrum assigned to digital radio broadcast (Band III, channel 5 - 13) should be continuously guaranteed in the forthcoming discussions on radio spectrum management. Low transmission costs and spectrum efficiency allow a greater variety of programmes. The transition to one digital network will also generate energy efficiency gains in terms of required broadcasting and transmission energy.

#### Status quo in European countries

Digital terrestrial radio is a fast-growing sector within the EU: Over 11 Million DAB/DAB+ receivers have been sold in Denmark, Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands up to Q4 2016.<sup>1</sup> Road coverage ranges are already between 95%-98% in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark

Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands are currently working on a migration from analogue to digital radio broadcasting.<sup>2</sup> Stakeholders in Germany have recently confirmed support for a digital radio action plan which includes mandating of at least one digital interface in radio receivers to support market growth. The Czech

<sup>1</sup>Source: WorldDAB "DAB+/ DAB Digital Radio - Europe and Asia Pacific (Q4 2016)" – See: [https://www.worlddab.org/public\\_document/file/869/WorldDAB\\_Infographic\\_Q4\\_2016\\_FINAL\\_web.pdf](https://www.worlddab.org/public_document/file/869/WorldDAB_Infographic_Q4_2016_FINAL_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Norway has already begun with an FM switch-off, while it is scheduled to start 2020 in Switzerland. Digital radio support is continuously increasing in the United Kingdom, maintaining its position as leading digital radio market.

Republic, France, Italy, Poland and Slovenia have expanded regular digital radio broadcast, while other European countries are running trials. Device manufacturers provide a wide range of digital broadcasts and also hybrid receivers - the variety of devices is continuously growing.

## Harmonized terrestrial Digital Radio experience across Europe essential

Despite the recent growth of digital radio, the pace of the different Member States in respect to migration to digital radio is uneven and as a result, the European Digital Single Market is suffering fragmentation, highlighting the need for a coordinated European solution. We therefore very much welcome the high-level roundtable on digital radio broadcasting initiated by Commissioner Oettinger in his former role.

DIGITALEUROPE would consider supporting a proposal to introduce a European Regulation, which would require new radio receivers to be capable of receiving both analogue in Band II and digital transmissions in Band III or via IP (fixed or mobile), insofar that these provisions are proportionate and avoid market fragmentation.

### Therefore DIGITALEUROPE calls on policy-makers:

- To avoid fragmentation within the different countries, a European strategy for the digitization of radio is needed. We support herein a high-level roundtable on digital radio by the Commission.
- To focus on the digitization of terrestrial radio on the European level and to include digital radio within the Digital Agenda. With a view to a switch-over, a scenario with gradual phases could be developed.
- To encourage all the stakeholders to agree on a European base receiver specification.
- To maintain and guarantee the allocated spectrum in Band III for Digital Radio broadcast in the forthcoming discussions on radio spectrum management.
- To take the interests of all involved stakeholders into account. With a view to devices, a timeframe of 1.5 – 2 years is needed to shift complete radio receiver line-ups to devices supporting digital radio.
- To make any potential regulation proportionate and to take a single market approach, encouraging market-driven economies of scale for product development. In respect to receivers, the focus should be on devices with the main function of radio broadcast reception only. Digital radio receivers have to be able to find multiple and attractive terrestrial digital radio services, so particular attention has to be put on synchronizing availability of services (with decent coverage) and devices.
- To accompany these actions with an information campaign towards the consumer: taking into account the experience of other changes in technology, e.g. the switch-over from DTTV to DTTV2 in some countries, a comprehensive communication is of utmost importance. Voluntary initiatives similar to the Digital Tick Mark can be supported in this regard for effective consumer communication.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.getdigitalradio.com/industry/what-is-the-tick-mark/>

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## ABOUT DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies.

DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies. DIGITALEUROPE's members include 62 corporate members and 37 national trade associations from across Europe. Our website provides further information on our recent news and activities: <http://www.digitaleurope.org>

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