[DE] Policy Document by Media Authorities and Broadcasters on Restructuring of Broadband Cable Network

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The Direktorenkonferenz der Landesmedienanstalten (Congress of Land Media Authority Directors - DLM), the body responsible for monitoring private broadcasting in Germany, has repeated its call for a comprehensive digital cable network to be set up in Germany as quickly as possible. In a new policy document, it has laid down some fundamental principles for the transition from analog to a digital cable system.

The DLM believes that, for technical and financial reasons, splitting levels 3 and 4 of the network structure is not advisable in view of the need to build digital network structures quickly. Economically-workable structures are needed, even if there is a danger they might pose new problems from the point of view of concentration. The DLM is therefore calling for the development and introduction of open decoder standards. It also believes that equipment with CIs (Common Interfaces) and CI-CAMs (Common Interface Conditional Access Modules) should be available to all operators. Even in a digital cable market, according to the DLM, broadcasters' views should be taken into account on the basis of their constitutional position; it is therefore unnecessary to stipulate a certain capacity when allocating cable space. With the separation of content and transmission methods likely to disappear, access must be more strictly regulated so that all service providers may be guaranteed equal opportunities. The DLM believes that the transition to a digital cable network should be accompanied by specific regulations on the form and duration of so-called simulcasting, the simultaneous use of analog and digital technology. Such regulations should be introduced gradually, both for financial and technical reasons. Two different models are proposed, although a combination of the two is also conceivable. Under the first model, the situation for all analog channels would remain unaltered, provided the network concerned did not reach more than 20% of connected households with digital terminal equipment. For each 5% over the 20% mark, one channel would have to be digitised. However, if users were equipped with the appropriate analog and digital receivers, all channels on a single network could be switched over at once.

The public broadcasters and the Verband Privater Rundfunk und Telekommunikation (Private Broadcasting and Telecommunications Union - VPRT) have also published a joint document expressing their views on technical and

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operational requirements of a new broadband cable allocation system. They argue that terminal equipment (subscriber connection boxes) should not be an exclusive component of the cable network. Providers believe that the technical specifications of the cable network should be disclosed. The relevant content and service providers would have to agree to any changes to network technology or to the terminal equipment used by the network operator, eg change of encryption system or programming interface. The document states that content and services must be displayed by the terminal equipment's basic navigator in a fair and non-discriminatory way, so that the services offered by the network operator are not given special priority. Services must be directly accessible and a bundle-specific electronic programme guide (EPG) should be provided. The cable network operators would have to ensure that the required transmission capacity was available to broadcasters.

Policy document of the Land Media Authorities on Restructuring of Broadband Cable Network of 8 June 2001

Papier vom 20. Juni 2001 "Technische und betriebliche Anforderungen an ein neues Breitband-Kabelverteilsystem in Deutschland" von ARD, ZDF und VPRT

http://www.vprt.de/db/positionen/referenzmodell_endfassung200601.pdf

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