[CZ] Digital Terrestrial TV in the Czech Republic

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In December 2002 the Broadcasting Council extended the experimental licences of two entities launching the experimental operation of DVB-T in the Czech Republic, Czech Digital Group, a.s. (CDG) and Ceské Radiokomunikace, a.s.

The two entities started broadcasting in 2000, and continued broadcasting in 2001, on the 46 and 25 channels, in the Prague region. The experiment was focussed particularly on the verification of the technical characteristics of the system (particularly various methods of encoding and counter-error security, resistance to reflections and requirements concerning a group of transmitters operating at the same frequency - the SFN network). In addition, the experiment included the transmission of data channels, including the Internet.

Several types of receivers were tested during the course of the experiment, with considerably different characteristics. CDG conducts experimental operation on television channel 46, using three transmitters with an effective radiated power of 10. 5 and 4 kW. The objectives of the experiment are as follows:

- Technical implementation of a single-frequency network (SFN)

- Technical testing, verification of characteristics and technical possibilities

- Preparation of network for future permanent operation (completion with back-up elements)

- Technical and commercial verification of the provided technical services

In 2000, the Broadcasting Council executed a document concerning the Concept of Transformation to Digital Broadcasting in the Czech Republic, at the request of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament. This document was adopted by the Standing Committee for Communications during its 12 meeting held on 8 March 2001. According to Resolution No. 44, a licence for digital multiplex operators should be awarded by the Council after the Council reaches a final decision concerning the multiplex structure, stipulating the percentage rate of auxiliary services, defining the localities for statutory operators, specifying the location of existing nation-wide analogue broadcasters, deciding on the occupancy of vacant positions based on licence proceedings, announcing tender procedures and selecting an appropriate applicant for multiplex operation.

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With respect to the document described above, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Council, executed another conceptual document, entitled the Concept of Transformation to Digital Audio and Video Broadcasting in the Czech Republic. This material completes the previous study, as discussed and approved by the Czech Government under Ref. No. 696/01 on 9 July 2001. This concept includes several important points:

- Obligation of the state administration to ensure adequate space within the frequency range

- Obligation of the state administration to ensure completion of the current media laws in order to ensure that licences may be awarded to digital multiplex operators and ensure the adequate participation of Ceská televize (Czech TV) in digital broadcasting

- Government's duty to submit a draft amendment of Broadcasting Act No. 231/2001 Coll. and/or other acts

- Guarantee positions for nation-wide broadcasters within the first two multiplexes

- Regulation must be carried out by two authorities, i.e. by the Council in the area of digital multiplexes and the Czech Telecommunications Office in the area of telecommunications services and services associated with the duty to ensure digital multiplex broadcasting and administration of the frequency range.

Pursuant to the aforementioned Government Decree, the Minister of Culture was ordered to draw up - in cooperation with the Minister of Transport and Communications - and submit to the Czech Government by 31 March 2002 a draft act amending Act No. 231/2001 Coll., concerning radio and television broadcasting and the amendment of other acts. The Minister of Culture set up a team for this task, later joined by the team for the concept of digital broadcasting (SDV) established by the Council. However, a new Cabinet has thrown out the original digital legislation in favour of a new law covering all communication platforms, which has prevented broadcasters from going ahead with their plans, as drawing up the new law is a protracted process. Legislation covering DTV in the Czech Republic therefore has suffered a setback, and will not be ready until the end of 2003. Two years ago Czech Digital Group and Ceské Radiokomunikace began running tests to determine digital coverage. When the tests were completed, the groups were hoping to begin providing iTV services in order to recoup their capital expenditures. So they have already commented that their inability to begin broadcasting early 2003 will mean further losses. Both are continuing to prepare services, and both companies applied for a licence renewal, which now have been awarded.

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Concept of Transformation to Digital Audio and Video Broadcasting in the Czech Republic, 9 July 2001

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