[LV] Concept on the Introduction of DVB-T

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Ieva Berzina
Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania

On 16 September 2004 the National Broadcasting Council of Latvia (the Council) adopted a decision to approve the Concept of the introduction of digital terrestrial television (DVB-T) in Latvia. The Concept had been drafted by a working group including the representatives of major broadcasters of Latvia, as well as government officials and NGOs.

The Concept outlines three phases of the introduction of DVB-T in Latvia, taking into account that terrestrial television is the major provider of national television broadcasting in Latvia. In the first phase, the programs in DVB-T standard shall be distributed in parallel with the analogue programs. Also, the necessary legislation shall be drafted and the need for developing new programs shall be evaluated. In a second phase, the licensing of program packages to be broadcast in DVB-T standard shall begin. The licenses shall be issued through competitions organized by the Council. In the third stage, the program packagers shall choose the distributors of the packages. The distributors shall be licensed by the Public Utilities Commission. The broadcasters may distribute their programs either with the assistance of program packagers, with the assistance of distributors, or by themselves becoming packager and/or distributor. The Concept provides a special role for the only public service television broadcaster of Latvia "Latvian Television" (LTV): the necessary technical resources are granted to LTV at first, and the technical expenses of the introduction of broadcasting in DVB-T format shall be covered by the state budget. The commercial broadcasters shall cover their expenses themselves. The analogue broadcasting switch-off is envisaged differently for public service broadcasters and for commercial ones: the commercial broadcasters may switch off their analogue programs at any time, LTV, however, may be switched off only when 100% coverage of the specific region has been achieved.

The drafting of the Concept was the initiative of the Council itself, as none of the previous concepts drafted by governmental institutions outlined the development of program packaging and audiovisual content. The Concept does not have binding legal force, but it could be taken into account when deciding at governmental level on the further development of digital television. The Concept will be submitted to the Ministry of Transport and Communications in order to be included in the broader concept prepared by the Ministry. The broader concept drafted by the Ministry shall cover both the issues of program packaging and program distribution, as well as the technical means of the introduction of DVB-T.

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