[AT] Digital Television - Grants for DVB-T Receivers

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The digitisation of television in Austria continues: the digitisation plan published by the *Kommunikationsbehörde Austria* (Austrian broadcasting regulator - KommAustria) comprises several stages (see IRIS 2004-3: 5). Stage 1, the preparatory phase, is already complete. Stage 2 involves building up the network in the main conurbations in 2006. The necessary legal framework was created in February 2006, when KommAustria granted to Österreichische Rundfunksender GmbH & Co KG (ORS) the licence to operate a terrestrial multiplex platform (see IRIS 2006-4: 8). For the first time, digital television has been available to all viewers in the Vienna region since 26 October 2006. During stage 3, starting in 2007, the analogue networks will be gradually switched off.

The digitisation fund was set up to support digital broadcasting techniques and digital applications on the basis of European standards in connection with broadcast programmes. According to the "plan for the granting of funding from the digitisation fund of RTR-GmbH for the period from 2006 to 2010", consumers should be given support in order to facilitate and accelerate the switch-over to digital broadcasting. This support for the purchase of digital receivers is meant to apply to all such devices, regardless of their origin, and particularly to boxes that are specifically designed to give consumers the specific benefits of digitisation. These include interactive boxes with which viewers can access additional services such as further information about current television programmes, online encyclopaedias or video on demand.

In line with this plan, Digitales Fernsehen Förder GmbH, a subsidiary of ORS, is offering DVB-T receivers at discounted prices for TV viewers in the Vienna region. The first 100,000 purchasers of such a receiver can cash in a voucher worth EUR 40. The scheme is only valid for MHP MultiText-compatible devices, so that - in accordance with the plan - consumers enjoy the specific advantages of digitisation, such as the picture-in-picture function or interactive feedback channels.

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