[FR] Digital Dividend

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On 23 July the committee on the digital dividend delivered to the Prime Minister its report on the reallocation of the terrestrial frequencies that will gradually be released by the ceasing of analog broadcasting by 2011, the date of the switchover to all-digital. Following the recommendations put forward by the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (national audiovisual regulatory authority – CSA) in its contribution delivered a month ago, the committee is in favour of a "reservation of all the necessary broadcasting frequencies, i.e. most of the digital dividend, to enrich the offer of digital audiovisual services". As the CSA had remarked, the strong penetration of terrestrially-broadcast television is a feature of the scene in France. Extending the coverage of digital television, "the mass vector for broadcasting television to the population", should therefore be given preference above all other reception modes in the allocation of the frequencies that have been released. The distribution of the digital dividend indeed raises the question of the primacy of certain services over others – the frequencies released are firstly intended to meet all the needs of the audiovisual sector, which include not only the development of digital television but also the development of new services such a personal mobile television, high definition, and digital radio. The digital dividend also provides an opportunity to encourage local television stations and keep them in place. There are currently 18 free channels and 11 pay channels available on TNT covering 85% of the population. Four channels are available in HD in France – France 2, TF1, M6 and Arte – and three more channels are expected in HD before the end of the year.

On the radio side, the CSA put out a first call for applications on 28 March 2008 for digital radio, thereby covering 30% of the population.

Lastly, on 27 May, the CSA selected from among 36 applicants the first 13 personal mobile television services, including private terrestrially-broadcast channels (TF1, M6 and Canal+) and several TNT channels (BFM TV, Direct 8, i-Télé, NRJ 12, NT1, Virgin 17 and W9), joined by Eurosport and two new channels – EuropaCorp, a company owned by Luc Besson, and Orange Sport, owned by a newcomer to the television sector, the incumbent telecom operator Orange. Thus the personal mobile television scene illustrates the new power struggle the sector is experiencing.

The Government is expected to give its opinion on the use of the digital dividend in the autumn.

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Rapport de la commission du dividende numérique au Premier ministre en vue de l'adoption du schéma national de réutilisation des fréquences libérées par l'arrêt de la diffusion analogique, juillet 2008

http://www.dividendenumerique.fr/pdf/Rapport_de_la_CDN_-_23_Juillet_2008_-final.pdf

Report by the committee on the digital dividend to the Prime Minister with a view to adopting the national scheme for reusing the frequencies released by the end of analog broadcasting, July 2008

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