[FR] Development Plan for the Digital Economy

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On 20 October 2008 the Government presented the 154 measures that make up its “2012 Digital France” plan, which aims at reducing the gap between France and its international competitors in this specific area. Noting that the digital economy is a vector for growth that has a lot of potential, the plan is based on three major democratic objectives, namely ensuring that everyone in France has access to broadband Internet, ensuring that France switches over to all-digital in the audiovisual sector before 30 November 2011 in keeping with the Giazzi Report submitted in September, and reducing the digital divide. To develop the digital economy, the “2012 Digital France” plan therefore aims not only at equipping as many homes in France as possible with computers and broadband but also supplying them with digital content, thereby encouraging the development of production and offering better availability as well as protecting works and programmes. In the audiovisual field, the plan envisages the creation of a national directory of protected digital works, and of a public observatory of content marking technologies, a shortening of the amount of time before audiovisual content is made available, a charter for the web 2.0 players to undertake to respect copyright, interoperable standards, and a reform of the private copy commission to make the issue more transparent.

The changeover to all-digital will provide an opportunity to take on new audiovisual services – including high-definition television and personal mobile television – and to release a number of frequencies. In this way a number of frequencies resulting from the end of analog television will be allocated to covering the territory with new-generation networks of fixed and mobile super-broadband. Since the prime objective of the plan as far as the audiovisual sector is concerned is to enable everyone in France to receive terrestrially-broadcast digital television and personal mobile television, one of the actions envisaged is aimed at releasing resources for the new television services. The incumbent television channels are keen to switch over to digital as soon as possible in order to make savings (because of the expense of broadcasting in both analog and digital modes). The changeover to all-digital in France will take place gradually, region by region, with completion scheduled for 2011.

The plan does not omit digital radio, for which a band of frequencies resulting from the digital dividend has been earmarked. The all-digital system will also work in favour of the creation of a French-language “gateway” to act as a content aggregator.

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