[IE] DTT and Digital Dividend

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In November 2008, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources published a report on the digital terrestrial television trials conducted in 2006. One of the key decisions from the trials was to use MPEG 4, the technology chosen in most countries.

Under the Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2007 (see IRIS 2007-4: 16), RTÉ, the public service broadcaster, is required to provide a digital television service offering access to the Irish national channels (RTÉ, TG4 and TV3) on a free-to-air basis. RTÉ received its licence in 2008 and is expected to launch its service on a phased basis from autumn 2009. RTÉ Networks Limited (RTÉNL), a subsidiary of RTÉ, is responsible for building RTÉ's DTT national network and has been operating a test service using MPEG 4. The 2007 Act placed the onus of identifying and licensing commercial DTT service providers on the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI). In 2008, the BCI awarded a licence to operate the three commercial DTT multiplexes to Boxer DTT Limited, but the latter handed back the licence in April 2009, citing prevailing and anticipated economic circumstances. The licence was then awarded (May 2009) to the OneVision consortium comprising Eircom, TV3, Setanta Sports and Arqiva, subject to the successful outcome of contract negotiations.

One of the results of DTT is that it frees up spectrum for use by other communications services. Accordingly, the Commission of Communications Regulation, ComReg, launched a consultation in March 2009 on a new approach to spectrum use. This followed a number of publications, including a Department of Communications paper on the development of a national policy framework for identifying spectrum for the Digital Dividend. A new statutory instrument, S.I. 192 of 2009, also provided for new regulations regarding the licensing of wireless telegraphy for amateur stations and ComReg has published guidelines for applicants. The regulations came into force on 1 June 2009.

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, "A report on the Digital Terrestrial Television Trial, Ireland, August 2006 - August 2008", November 2008

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ComReg, "Digital Dividend in Ireland/ A new approach to spectrum use in the UHF Band", publication number 09/15

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Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, "Development of a National Policy Framework for identifying spectrum for the Digital Dividend", March 2009

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S.I 192 of 2009, Wireless Telegraphy (Amateur Station Licence) Regulations 2009, 25 May 2009, as Annex 1 to ComReg, Amateur Station Licence Guidelines, publication 09/45, 28 May 2009

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