[GB] BBC Trust Approves Project for On-Demand and Internet Services to be Made Available on TV Sets

IRIS 2010-2:1/22

Tony Prosser
University of Bristol Law School

The BBC Trust, which approves new BBC ventures, has conditionally approved Project Canvas. This is an open joint venture between the BBC and five other partners, including the other UK public service broadcasters, to develop a common standard permitting a viewer with a broadband connection to watch on-demand services, such as BBC iPlayer, the ITV Player and other internet content, on a television set. The content will be accessed through a set-top box attached to the internet; no subscription will be payable except for the broadband connection.

The Trust conducted a public value assessment of the proposal, concluding that it will add a new dimension to digital terrestrial television through an increase in the range of content and services available; that there will be low barriers to access for new producers and providers of content who wish to join the platform; and that it will help to deliver a common technical standard and to drive broadband take-up. The Trust also conducted a market impact assessment which found that there is a growing demand for on-demand content on television, that the project would offer internet service providers the opportunity to develop stronger triple play offerings and that it will offer new entrants providing content an accessible and affordable platform to reach the public. It might, however, slow future growth in subscriptions to some pay-TV services, contribute to the long-term shrinkage of DVD rental markets and negatively affect smaller hybrid DTT/IPTV platforms.

The conditions attached to the approval were that the core technical specification must be published well in advance of the launch to allow all manufacturers to adapt to the new standard; that access to the platform for content providers must be on a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory basis; and there should be a review on the effects of the project on incentives for syndication of content to other platforms. In relation to the BBC's involvement, it must always be possible to access the Canvas platform without a subscription; the BBC must report to the Trust on accessibility features and parental controls and the Trust must approve major cost overruns.

Press Release, "BBC Trust Gives Provisional Approval to Project Canvas", 22 December 2009

http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/news/press_releases/2010/canvas.html

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026