

[RO] Digital Switchover Postponed

IRIS 2010-9:1/35

*Eugen Cojocariu
Radio Romania International*

The Romanian Government decided on 11 August 2010 to postpone the switchover from analogue to digital television until 1 January 2015. The previous deadline foreseen for the switchover was 1 January 2012.

The new Decree repealed Government Decree no. 464/2010 on the granting of licenses to use radio frequencies in the digital television system and the modified Strategy of transition from analogue terrestrial to digital television and the introduction of digital multimedia services at national level, approved by Government Decree no. 1213/2009 (Official Journal of Romania no. 357 of 31 May 2010). The Strategy was first published in the Official Journal of Romania no. 721 of 26 October 2009 and modified afterwards (see IRIS 2009-9: 17/26, IRIS 2010-1: 1/36, IRIS 2010-3: 1/34 and IRIS 2010-7: 1/32).

The postponement of the switchover put an end to the ongoing tender for the granting of the first two national digital television multiplexes. Seven companies had bought the Terms of References (tender specifications) for the first two Romanian national DVB-T digital multiplexes, which should have been granted by way of distinct comparison-based selections organised by the Autoritatea Națională pentru Reglementare și Administrare în Comunicații (National Authority for Administration and Regulation in Communications, ANCOM). The tenderers will be reimbursed by ANCOM the Terms of References costs.

The analogue television UHF band frequencies services will be terminated by 1 January 2015, but can coexist with digital services until then. The Government will adopt another Decree to establish the new calendar to implement the above mentioned Strategy.

The postponement decision, which surprised the broadcasting market, was officially explained by the will of the Government to release Romanian citizens of buying new TV devices during the economic crisis and to assure the operators a reasonable amount of time to comply with the new technical demands. Allegedly, the decision was taken in order to find a solution to offer one of the licenses to RADIOCOM, the Romanian State-owned public radio and television programmes provider, without breaching EU legislation.

