[UA] New Developments in Digital Broadcasting in Ukraine

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The National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting, the Ukrainian audiovisual regulating authority, made several important decisions that change the situation with the introduction of digital television into Ukraine. On 8 December 2010 a license was issued to the Zeonbud company, that would now be a content provider for four national multiplexes MX-1, 2, 3 and 5.

Earlier, in October 2010 the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting adopted decisions on introducing a new system of digital multiplexes in Ukraine and invited players at the broadcasting market to forward their proposals to the National Council to introduce digital TV network in DVB-T standard (MPEG-4 encoding).

At the same time the National Council cancelled its earlier decision on multiplexes MX-1, 2, 3 and 5. The decision that was canceled set a clear plan for all existing national TV broadcast channels as to their place in the future digital broadcasting system. Now some stations may not be included in the lists to be approved for spots on the multiplexes. According to the previous plan MX-1 was reserved for encoded channels and MX-5 - for regional broadcasters. In the new system of multiplexes there will be no encoded multiplex and no multiplex for regional broadcasters, that has now given rise to complaints from a number of local TV channels.

There is also an unclear situation with the MX-4 multiplex. In 2008 the National Council announced 10 winners of a contest for broadcasting on MX-4 and issued the relative licenses. In July 2010 it canceled eight licenses out of ten due to unuse of the allocated spots by the winners. The future of the remaining two companies that broadcast on MX-4 is also quite unstable.

Ukraine still has no strong strategy for digital switch-over and no guarantees for current terrestrial broadcasters. This may cause serious problems in the very near future, especially for a PSB company yet to be established. The TV and radio broadcasting law (as amended in 2006) has a norm that guarantees spots in digital broadcasting only for the terrestrial companies that existed at the moment of the amendments, thus the PSB company is entitled to only one spot in the digital multiplex, which it would take from the current State broadcaster.

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