[IE] Commercial Digital Terrestrial Television Licensing Process will not be Reopened

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On 7 January 2014 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) announced its decision not to reopen the licensing process for a commercial Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) service. The decision was made following an analysis of current market conditions which was undertaken by Oliver and Ohlbaum Associates, on behalf of the BAI, together with the consideration of a number of potential business models for commercial DTT and a consultation process with broadcasters and other interested parties.

The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI) - the predecessor of the BAI - began a licensing process for three commercial DTT multiplexes in 2008. This attracted three applications but the process proved unsuccessful as all of the original applicants withdrew from commercial discussions. The process ended in 2010 and was not reactivated. The government then prioritised a Public Service Broadcasting multiplex, and Saorview, the free-to-air DTT service, was launched in 2011 utilising the single public service multiplex.

The BAI are required by section 131(4) of the Broadcasting Act 2009 to endeavour to arrange for the establishment, maintenance and operation of three national television multiplexes, capable of being transmitted by digital terrestrial means to the whole community of the State. In order to discharge its statutory duties with regard to commercial DTT, the BAI commissioned consultants to evaluate the prospects for a commercial digital terrestrial television (DTT) service in Ireland.

The Oliver and Ohlbaum Associates evaluation report, also published on 7 January 2014, found that market conditions in Ireland do not create a favourable backdrop for launching completely new commercial TV services in Ireland. In exploring the prospects for commercial DTT the review considered a number of possible business models, including a free service, a pay service and a service operated as part of a triple play bundle. The evaluation also found that the future viability of Saorview is questionable. The evaluation report and its findings have been forwarded to the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources for consideration of the policy implications for commercial DTT services in Ireland and the potential impact in respect of diversity and plurality in Irish media.

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Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, BAI Publishes Review of Potential for Commercial DTT in Ireland

http://www.bai.ie/?p=4236

Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Prospects for commercial digital terrestrial television in the Republic of Ireland (Oliver and Ohlbaum Associates), August 2013

http://www.bai.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20131204_OOCommDTTRpt_v.Final_MT.pdf

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