

[RS] Digital switch over completed

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The Republic of Serbia has signed and ratified the Agreement for Digital Broadcasting (GE06) and the Regional Radiocommunication Conference (RRC 06), which prescribed an obligation of digital transition for television for European countries by 17 June 2015. The switch-over from analogue to digital terrestrial television in the country was officially completed on 7 June 2015, just ten days before the deadline.

The National Broadcasting Agency “Broadcasting Technology and Links” (Emisiona Tehnika i Veze - ETV) founded by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in the year 2009 is responsible for the technical aspects of the digital transition, as it is the exclusive operator of digital terrestrial networks and multiplexes. The regulatory framework for the Digital Switch-Over (DSO) consisted of the Strategy for the Transition from Analogue to Digital Signal in the Republic of Serbia (adopted in 2009 and amended in 2012 and 2013), the Law on Electronic Communications (adopted in 2010 and amended in 2014), the Law on Electronic Media (adopted in 2014) and the Rulebook on the DSO (adopted in 2010 and amended several times). Originally, the DSO was planned to be completed by 4 April 2012, in accordance with EU policy in the area. However, this plan proved to be too ambitious due to the lack of vacant frequencies for the purpose of testing the digital signal.

In 2012, the amendments to the Strategy completely changed the concept of the DSO by introducing a phased roll-out instead of an one-day switchover process. Other changes that were implemented include the launch of an initial network for testing the digital signal and postponing the final DSO deadline. The main conditions for the DSO that were prescribed in the regulatory framework included the setting-up of the final network and the creation of the user base, i.e. providing an appropriate number of set-top boxes or TV receivers which support a DVB - T 2 signal and MPEG 4 compression standard, as well as the provision of assistance to the socially endangered categories of the population and the launch of a promotional campaign.

The costs of the DSO were initially estimated at EUR 75 million, but the final calculations show that not more than EUR 40 million were spent. The initial network was launched in March 2012. At the very beginning, the network operated from 15 locations covering 15-20% of the population. By 2015, the

digital signal was broadcast from 74 locations covering up to 93% of the population.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a help scheme in 2014. According to that scheme, vouchers were distributed to socially endangered categories of the population enabling them to acquire set-top boxes. In parallel, once there was a sufficient supply of set-top boxes and digital TV receivers in the market, it was concluded that the main prerequisites for the DSO were set in place. The first digital regions were switched off in March 2015, while the final regions were switched off on 7 June 2015. At the moment, 38% of households in Serbia rely on terrestrial signal reception.

Some DSO-related problems were reported in the western parts of Serbia after the switch-off that occurred in early June, but those appear to be solved and the network is, according to official reports, working properly at the moment. The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media has replaced all the analogue terrestrial television broadcasting licenses with digital ones. All licensed broadcasters will continue to provide services in accordance with the original terms of their licenses and they are all guaranteed a sufficient capacity in the multiplex. The major concern at the moment is the future of the local broadcasters, since their transmission costs will now be higher. ETV granted significant discounts, however these will only be valid until the end of 2016.

Србија од данас у потпуности дигитализована, објављено 7. јуна 2015

<http://mtt.gov.rs/slider/srbija-od-danas-u-potpunosti-digitalizovana/?lang=lat>

Serbia fully digitalized as of today, press release of the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, 7 June 2015

<http://mtt.gov.rs/en/releases-and-announcements/serbia-fully-digitalized-as-of-today/>

Od 7 juna bez analogne televizije u Srbiji

<http://etv.rs/87-etvakcije/283-od-danas-bez-analognog-signala>

Press release of the digital network and multiplex operator ETV

