[BE] Major step forward in the development of DAB+ digital radio services

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On 11 July 2019, the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel belge* (Higher Audiovisual Council of the French-speaking community of Belgium – CSA) adopted a series of decisions allocating radio frequencies for the broadcastingof radio services(including digital services). The implementation of these decisions will help to increase the number of digital (DAB+) radio stations in Belgium.

This is the final stage of a tender procedure lasting several months. Initially, on 21 December 2018, the government of the French-speaking Community of Belgium had adopted a decree setting out the tender procedureunder which the CSA would decide on applications for frequencies and issue licences by granting the right to use a radio frequency or radio frequency network. The applicants also had the right to request the allocation of a radio frequency or radio frequency network for analogue broadcasting. They had to be independent of any government, political party or organisation representing employers or workers.

The CSA then examined the admissibility of the applications that were received, before assessing the eligible applications against the criteria laid down in the decree of 21 December 2018. These criteria mainly concerned the "own-production quota", cultural promotion and the broadcastingof musical works in the French language or works by authors, composers, artists or music producers linked to French-speaking Belgium. Applicants also had to demonstrate the suitability of their three-year financial plan, describe their experience in the radio industry and explain why their project was original and unique.

For digital broadcasting, the CSA granted 75 local multiplex licences for a nine-year period to independent radio stations and four networks covering the entire French-speaking part of Belgium. The CSA welcomes the fact that its decisions are helping to create “one of the richest, most varied digital radio landscapes in Europe.”

Not all available frequencies were allocated during this procedure. A new tender process is therefore expected to be held to allocate the remaining frequencies.

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