[NL] Digital Audio Broadcasting

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In a letter to the Dutch Parliament, the Minister of Transport and Communications announced a Government policy on Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB).

The public, being used to the high sound-quality of compact disc, now also demands better quality of broadcasting. To solve some of the problems of FM-broadcasting, the Council of the European Union started a programme called 'Eureka 147; Digital Audio Broadcasting' in 1984. This resulted in a successful demonstration of the DAB-system in 1984. The system was standardised (European Telecommunications Standard 300401) in recent years and by now it is ready for mass production. The fact that traditional infrastructure and receivers are not fit for DAB will cause a slow and gradual market-introduction. Still DAB is expected to replace FM-broadcasting within 20-25 years. Besides the improvement of broadcasting quality, DAB offers a solution to the increasing scarcity of FM frequencies. An average DAB-program will only need 20% of the spectrum space that a comparable FM-program uses. The possible development of new services is another big advantage of DAB. Particularly the possibility of mobile access to the internet will be of great importance.

The Government aims to divide up the available capacity (of 12 to 34 radio programmes) in the first half of 1998. Channel capacity can increase to 50 programmes in the beginning of the 21st century, accompanied by a considerable growth of space for information-services. If the market's interest in DAB will lead to scarcity of DAB capacity, frequencies will be divided up by auction.

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