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TRANSITION TO TERRESTRIAL DIGITAL TELEVISION IN ROMANIA

In view of harmonisation with the provisions of the acquis, the Audiovisual Law no. 504/2002 was modified since 22 November 2009. It now includes a series of definitions, in line with the Audiovisual Media Service Directive, such as: digital audiovisual licence, digital terrestrial system, multiplex provider, conditional access system, audiovisual media service on demand. Article 52 of the Law mentions the need to elaborate a *Policy for digital switch over* as well as the procedure for granting digital audiovisual licences. The policy lines were established by Government Ordinance no 1213 dated October 2009.

The Romanian audiovisual media services landscape particularity stands in its capacity to ensure 70% of households's connectivity to cable service providers, services that provide also digital programming. Digital terrestrial television comes as a completion to the 20 or so percentage of households that access television through different provider system. A majority proportion of cable access keeps a low priority for the analogue digital services. As for the 14% of households depending at present exclusively on terrestrial antennae reception, the financing of set top boxes shall be ensured by the owner of the radio frequency licence in terrestrial digital system.

NAC shall to elaborate criteria and procedures for the allocation of digital licences that, in a first stage, will be granted through a NAC Decision; this will allow the broadcasters to make an option for the multiplex that will include the respective programme services.

According to the digital transition strategy, NAC is responsible for the monitoring and application of audiovisual policies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, for granting digital audiovisual licences for multiplexes and for establishing the switch over calendar for terrestrial analogue broadcasting.

A Government Decision has been drafted, that provides for the obligation of the first multiplex to broadcast exclusively national public television programmes. It will broadcast in simulcast until the 1st of January 2013 in parallel with analogue terrestrial television services.

During the transition period, the second digital multiplex shall be implemented. The next three multiplexes shall be implemented after the 1st of January 2013, and the fourth after the date of 17 June 2015. The last five digital multiplexes shall be allotted, through a competitive selection procedure. Terrestrial digital television multiplexes shall be granted in a manner that will allow the broadcast of at least 7 standard definition television channels or a combination of standard, high definition and multimedia services channels.

No analogue terrestrial television radio transmitter shall emit in Romania following the 17 of June 2015.

The following TV channels in Bucharest and Sibiu already experiment with digital terrestrial radio system: PRO TV, SPORT.RO and TVR, in HD system.

TVR1, TVR2, ANTENA1, ANTENA3, B1TV, NAȚIONAL TV PRIMA TV and REALITATEA TV broadcast in DVB-T system.

As for radio channels: ROCK FM, MAGIC FM and ONE FM are broadcasting in Hybrid Digital while ROMÂNIA ACTUALITĂȚI, RADIO 21, ROMÂNIA MUZICAL, ROMANTIC FM, RADIO BUCUREȘTI and PRO FM broadcast in DAB system.

The Romanian experience proves that favourable contexts should not be missed. There was a peak interest from national and international companies in 2008, where they were prone to invest in transition to digital TV, but once the crisis increased, their interest was gradually lost.

On one hand the televisions themselves are not interested any more to plunge into digital terrestrial TV as this would involve investment in a period of crisis; on the other hand the cable networks already ensure extended coverage of households, up to 80%.

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