

Public and Private German Broadcasters United in Digital Radio Roll-Out

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On January 21st, the KEF (Kommission zur Ermittlung des Finanzbedarfes) issued its recommendations for the funding of public broadcasters for digital radio in Germany. German public broadcasters will receive 97 million Euros for the roll out of digital radio and mobile broadcasting in the period from 2009 to 2012. But the KEF has also been persuaded to suggest alternative technical standards for digital radio, a move that has caused a barrage of criticism for the commission.

In response, the public and commercial broadcasters have issued statements **confirming their commitment to the roll out of Digital Radio based on the DAB family of standards**. Herbert Tillmann, chairman of the production commission of public broadcasters in Germany states: "ARD, Deutschlandradio and the Private broadcasters are committed to ensuring a successful re-launch of digital radio in 2009. The KEF's recommendations must not leave behind a complete technological mess, solutions have to be developed now in order to ensure the active participation of the public service broadcasters".

The KEF includes some prominent supporters of the DVB Mobile TV standard which has led to widespread criticism from the broadcast industry and questions about conflict of interest, with Dr. Stephan Ory, General Manager of **APR (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Privater Rundfunk)**, the association of private radio broadcasters, stating: "The KEF is not a group that is authorized to make industrial political decisions, decisions which affect not only the public broadcasters but also the commercial sector". The KEF's recommendation refers to optimized radio via DVB Mobile TV despite the fact that there are no consumer styled DVB radio receivers.

Quentin Howard, President of WorldDMB, said: "It is no surprise to me that Germany's public and private broadcasters have rejected the suggestion that alternative technology choices for terrestrial digital radio are either practical or desirable. Germany already has transmission infrastructure in place for DAB, DAB+ and DMB, and because these all share a common technical standard there are enormous practical benefits for consumers including around four hundred digital radio models which are already being sold in other European countries, with prices from under €40".

The KEF's recommendation for the funding of digital radio will need to be approved by each of the regional German governments (total of 16 Laender), who then have the option of correcting the funding. Many of these regional governments have already expressed their desire to find new ways of funding for digital radio before passing the law.

The main criticism by the commission focused on the poor results regarding the market success of digital radio achieved by the public broadcasters throughout the past few years during which KEF had allotted more than 180 Million Euros for DAB digital radio. However, the main barriers that previously hindered the success of DAB in Germany were mostly regulatory but all of these

barriers have now been overcome. Following the Geneva 2006 spectrum planning conference, considerably more frequencies have been allocated for digital radio, new more efficient audio codecs have been developed and the restrictions of transmitting power, which previously impaired in door reception in Germany, have been lifted. Furthermore, for the first time in Germany both the public and private broadcasters have the support of the regional media authorities, the receiver and automotive manufacturers as well as the retailers for the roll out of DAB based technology. Helmut Egenbauer, CEO Media Broadcast states: "The signs from the industry which we are currently receiving are encouraging and therefore nobody has stepped on the brake for the planned re-launch of digital radio in the year 2009".

ENDS

Notes to Editors: The foundation standard DAB and related standards such as DAB+/DMB can be seen and heard in nearly 40 countries from Canada to Australia, across Europe and the Far East. Countries including India, China and South Africa are testing DAB and developing consumer trials. More than 500 million people worldwide are within range of a DAB/DMB transmitter, and there are nearly 1000 services on air. Created from the onset to enable mobile reception with audio, video and multimedia capabilities, the DAB standard has recently extended its lead into the world of mobile multimedia delivery through its compatible DMB and IP applications. DMB is DAB's Mobile TV solution and shares the same core standard, infrastructure and receiver technology. The launch of the world's first Mobile TV services took place in Korea in December 2005 using DMB technology. Further DMB launches have taken place in Germany. DMB is on-air in China in five cities and more DMB mobile TV services are expected to launch in Europe during the next year. Recently an upgrade to DAB, DAB+, which has a highly efficient audio coding has been ETSI standardized and many countries throughout Europe and in the Asia Pacific are planning commercial launches of DAB+ digital radio services in 2008.

About WorldDMB

WorldDMB is an international, non-governmental organisation whose role is to promote the awareness, adoption and implementation of Eureka 147-based technologies worldwide. The organisation's name refers to 'digital multimedia broadcasting' including radio, mobile TV and broadcast new media services. Its members include public and commercial broadcasters, receiver manufacturers, companies and bodies committed to the promotion of services and equipment based on the Eureka 147 family of standards.