

Le RADIO!

Morand Fachot, Communications Service, EBU

**LE
RADIO!**
Rendez-vous Annuel des Décideurs Indépendants des Ondes

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4th Annual Meeting of independent radio decision-makers



One of the round tables

Le RADIO! (Paris from 12 to 15 February 2006) was attended by some 3,000 visitors, from broadcasters, equipment manufacturers, and various associations.

New media

On the first day a series of debates examined the impact of new media on the radio. The opportunities offered by Internet for consuming radio – webradio and podcasting, which have introduced an era of theme radio and radio-on-demand – were discussed along with radio stations' websites, their content, their profitability and the new economic models developed to ensure their continuity by, among other things, introducing commercial operations on the air.

Plan FM 2006

Officially inaugurating the show on 13 February Dominique Baudis, the president of the CSA (French Broadcasting Council), gave an explanation of the improvements currently being made to the broadcasting frequency schedule in France: "There will not be a major upheaval of the radio environment, no complete levelling of the frequency schedule, but an improvement that could help existing radio stations while encouraging the launch of new stations." He added that this improvement was "respectful of all players, every format and radio model and will enable us to gain roughly 10% more frequencies overall, which amounts to about 600 frequencies."

Community

Independent, association and community radio stations and their role in promoting and developing cultural diversity were also on the debating agenda on the second day.

Representatives of a large number of trade unions, federations and

associations discussed the essential points regarding the future of association radio stations, in particular the reform of the fund that supports "radio expression" – which is still on hold – and the access to additional aids (from the local or regional authorities, the European Union, or other institutions).

The participants also discussed the role these radio stations have to play in cultural diversity and in promoting young talent.

Convergence

Digitization of production, broadcasting and platforms is giving rise to a series of challenges and prospects for broadcasters. Digital convergence also raises the question of the place of radio and television on portable receivers such as mobile phones.

"It is not only television that counts," declared Quentin Howard, the president of WorldDAB, adding, *"I believe in TV/radio convergence. But should we put television on mobile phones? I have my reservations, except for certain specific programmes."*

Pierre Vasseur, the director of advanced studies at Thalès, and Yannick André-Masse, the director-general of VDL, forecast the "homogenization of standards" for TV on mobile equipment (DAB, DMB, DVB-H, 3G, etc.). *"It's not the prospect of watching Titanic on my telephone that excites me, but rather to have news about what is going on in Paris when I'm in Hong Kong,"* declared Pierre Vasseur.

The Convergence day at RADIO! also saw the launch of Digital Radio (DR) an association of a certain number of French and international broadcasters together with equipment manufacturers. A European DR association is currently being set up.

The association's main aim is to promote all radio digitization



Dominique Baudis

techniques. The launch provided the opportunity to demonstrate a number of multi-standard digital receivers (DAB, DRM, FM, AM).

The participants also attended a comprehensive presentation on the various types of digital radio broadcasting: DAB, DRM, iBOQ, satellite radio, and via DVB-S or DVB-T.

Satellite radio was also covered in a separate presentation by the heads of Viatis (WorldSpace). The company's president, Pierre Casadebaig, and the director-general, Benoît Chéreau, outlined the radio services they intend to offer in five European countries: Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. The bouquets will comprise over 50 different channels

per country, available on subscription at a cost of about EUR 100 per year.

The hybrid services broadcast in a combination of satellite and terrestrial relay by transmitters on the L band would mainly be aimed at motorists.

Ratings

The new types of radio consumption (webradios, podcasts) require the methods for measuring audience ratings to be updated.

Representatives from Médiamétrie pointed out that many obstacles make it difficult to accurately measure podcast ratings as, contrary to radio streaming, podcasts were “*listened to off line and at other times*”.

The unprecedented number of participants and the quality of the debates and conferences encouraged by the constant developments in the radio sector, both with regard to technologies and content made this year’s RADIO! 2006 an undisputed success and leads us to expect that next year’s conference will be worth waiting for.



Links:

VDL: www.vdl.fr

WorldDAB: www.worlddab.org

DRM: www.drm.org





Quentin Howard , WordDAB's President