

18 January 2018

Joint statement to EU institutions on interoperability of radio sets

During the ongoing trilogue meetings on the proposed Directive establishing the European Electronic Communications Code, we, the undersigned organisations, call upon **your support to introduce specific provisions to promote the interoperability of radio reception devices in the final text of the EU Code.**

Introducing such provisions at an EU level is a key step in helping radio migrate to a digital future – bringing benefits to listeners, broadcasters and device manufacturers. These provisions would help accelerate the adoption of digital radio across the EU – thereby encouraging innovation and competition, delivering economies of scale and ensuring the interoperability and cross-border portability of devices.

Article 105 and Annex X of the proposed Code contain provisions that successfully supported the promotion of interoperable digital TV equipment in Europe. We strongly advocate the creation of a similar success story for interoperable radio reception across Europe.

Radio is widely accessed by listeners across Europe. On average, 87% of European citizens are reached by radio every week.¹ This capability must be retained in the digital era. Radio is an important medium through which citizens access a diverse range of information, news and entertainment - often with a regional and local focus. In an era where access to media is influenced by a growing range of mostly global players (often technology giants), radio is the most trusted medium in Europe.²

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT DIGITAL RADIO CAPABILITY?

1. TO MAXIMIZE BENEFITS FOR EU CITIZENS. The digitization of radio is key to improving the sound quality and increasing the number of services, including a range of new data services, to better respond to the needs of listeners today and in the future. Digitization will also provide the best geographical coverage of radio, both nationally and across borders.
2. TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE EU DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET AND BOOST ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT. Support for digital radio and the creation of a predictable regulatory framework at EU level will help the medium modernize and maximize the growth potential of and investment in radio. This will facilitate the creation of new radio and cross-platform services and will promote the internal market for transmission infrastructures by creating a Europe-wide market for digital radio equipment and services.
3. TO FACILITATE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY. Terrestrial radio broadcasting, whether analogue or digital, is a secure, reliable, popular and free-to-air platform. It is resilient during natural disasters, it provides robust emergency warnings where needed and provides reliable traffic information for Europeans. The emerging adoption of digital terrestrial radio across Europe (such as DAB, DAB+ standards) will maximize these advantages.

Currently, national DAB or DAB+ services are available in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Malta, Italy, Denmark and Slovenia. Services are also available in France, Poland, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the Czech Republic. Trials are currently taking place in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. In addition, the neighbouring countries of Norway and Switzerland have deployed nationwide DAB+ services, with the former having switched off its FM networks in 2017 and the latter due to do so between 2020 and 2024.

¹ Currently, over 9000 different radio services are available across the EU (based on EBU MIS data, 2017).

² Eurobarometer 86, Report - Media use in the European Union, Autumn 2016.

New provisions on interoperable radio sets will ensure cross-border portability (especially important for motorists) and remove obstacles for digital take-up.

As a key component for enabling Europe's digital society, Internet connectivity can also enhance radio capabilities. However, as Internet delivery is less efficient and less reliable than terrestrial broadcasting (e.g. in times of emergency), online acts as a complement to terrestrial radio broadcasting, rather than as a viable alternative. In some countries with no current plans to introduce digital terrestrial radio, there may be higher aspirations for Internet-based radio.

4. TO FOSTER EFFICIENT USE OF SCARCE SPECTRUM RESOURCES. The promotion of digital radio will result in more efficient use of radio spectrum. Whereas an FM frequency supports only a single broadcast service, a DAB+ frequency can carry up to 20 different services simultaneously.

Together, we call upon your support to consider and adopt provisions in the EU Electronic Communications Code to ensure the future of radio in a digital environment.

We welcome the position of the European Parliament in so far that it provides that radios sold in any EU market should have analogue and digital radio receiving capability.

In order to maximize the very wide reach and benefits of radio across the EU, also in the digital era, we believe that **this basic provision should at least apply to all in-car reception devices and to the majority of consumer radios.**

Yours sincerely,



Noel Curran,
Director General, EBU



Travis Baxter
Chair, EDRA



Patrick Hannon
President, WorldDAB

About European Broadcast Union (EBU)

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) is the world's leading alliance of public service media (PSM). We have 73 Members in 56 countries in Europe, and an additional 33 Associates in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Our Members operate almost 2,000 television, radio and online channels and services, and offer a wealth of content across other platforms. Together they reach an audience of more than one billion people around the world, broadcasting in more than 120 languages. The EBU operates Eurovision and Euroradio services.

About European Digital Radio Alliance (EDRA)

EDRA is an alliance of European broadcasters, representing many hundreds of stations, who are committed to make digital radio the norm and the preferred choice for listeners. It includes both public service broadcasters and private broadcasters, both commercial and in the community sector.

About WorldDAB

WorldDAB is the global industry forum for DAB Digital Radio, facilitating the adoption of DAB / DAB+ networks and services across Europe and beyond. We are a not-for-profit membership organisation representing companies and organisations from across the sector (including government departments, media regulators, public and private broadcasters, transmission network operators, receiver manufacturers, silicon providers and car makers). Two thirds of our 99 members are from the EU.