



28.9.2012

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**Subject: Petition 0331/2012 by Ulrich Neef (German), on the implementation of DVB-T2 as the uniform standard for digital television and radio in Europe**

### 1. Summary of petition

The petitioner advocates an obligatory switch-over to DVB-T2 (Digital Video Broadcasting – Second Generation Terrestrial) in Europe for both television and radio. According to the petitioner, this would have significant advantages for the quality of broadcasts. Moreover, one uniform standard is cheaper for consumers because they then only need to purchase one set-top box or other receiving device.

### 2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 4 July 2012. Information requested from Commission under Rule 202(6).

### 3. Commission reply, received on 28 September 2012

‘Radio is an important part of the cultural landscape in Europe and is delivered over a huge variety of different platforms. Further to dedicated digital terrestrial transmission for which different standards exist, radio services are also transmitted over the Internet, over digital terrestrial and mobile TV platforms, via cable and satellite and over the well established analogue terrestrial FM and AM networks. Conventional terrestrial radio distribution is becoming more and more integrated into today's innovative multiplatform and multimedia world. However, although radio is almost omnipresent, its relative importance in the respective transmission platforms and multifunctional consumer devices is shrinking. While the market conditions for radio are different from Member State to Member State, the potential benefits from economies of scale, convergence, digitisation and upgrade to more advanced digital standards are similar.

The DVB-T2 standard is a new powerful technology which can be used also for terrestrial radio transmission. It is currently trialled for terrestrial radio transmission in Austria and Denmark. The European Commission is following these developments closely. As there is so far no experience with commercial launches of this technology for terrestrial radio transmission it would seem to be too early to consider mandating this or any other standard at EU level. When considering mandating one single standard it would have to be taken into account that all existing receivers using different standards would become obsolete. For example, already 25% of radio listening in the UK is via DAB<sup>1</sup> receivers. FM and AM receivers are cheap and almost omnipresent in Europe. Furthermore, there are considerations for example in a report by the Communications Committee for the House of Lords in the UK calling for a second switchover to Internet television. According to the report, the government should develop a plan to broadcast all television programme services from the Internet so that the frequencies currently used by the DTT<sup>2</sup> platform can be allocated to other applications such as mobile telecom services. Under this perspective there would also be some doubts if the full transition to DVB-T2 transmission of terrestrial radio would be fully future-proof at a panEuropean scale.

Currently consumers and broadcasters are considered to be best served if the selection of radio transmission techniques is left to market forces, industry co-operation and (co-ordinated and consulted) national policy initiatives within the limits of international agreements on spectrum usage and of spectrum assignment at national level. In accordance with the subsidiarity principle, radio policy is formulated and implemented at Member State level. Since 2002 the Commission has continuously highlighted the potential benefits of co-operation between Member States and continues to support exchange of experience and best practice between them.

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<sup>1</sup> digital audio broadcasting.

<sup>2</sup> digital terrestrial television.