

**PUBLIC ONLINE CONSULTATION
on the challenges for the
EU's Information Society policy beyond 2005.**

A submission to the European Commission

by

**WorldDAB,
The World Forum for Digital Broadcasting**

The World DAB Forum promotes the European Technology Eureka 147(DAB), encouraging the international co-operation and co-ordination between industry bodies thus promoting the awareness, adoption and implementation of DAB Digital Radio worldwide. It represents more than 80 companies from 25 countries - from all sectors of the industry - public and private broadcasters, consumer and professional equipment manufacturers; content/transmission providers; regulators and governmental bodies, committed to converting this technology into a commercial marketing success, to the lasting economic and social benefit of all concerned.

DAB Digital Radio is rapidly gaining ground around the world, and it has been adopted by 40 countries. More than 330 million people worldwide can potentially tune in and listen to DAB services currently on air! The DAB product range now includes in-home tuners, in-car models, kitchen radios, clock radios, boomboxes, CD players, midi-systems, hand-held portables and PCI cards starting at as little as 65 Euros. Most recent functionalities already available on the market include pause, re-wind and record radio.

The commercial success of DAB does not stop at radio. DAB can also provide a low-cost means to access video and data anytime, anywhere. It is highly spectrum efficient and currently the only available platform capable of delivering all these facilities at low cost both in terms of provision and reception. In addition it can work in synergy with other communications platforms (mobile communications, DVB, and the Internet).

DAB facilitates free access to Information Society services, a great contribution to e-inclusion. DAB is a social good.

Brussels, 15 January 2005

WorldDAB welcomes this opportunity to participate in the debate on the future European Information Society strategy beyond 2005.

The questions posed are as follows:

During the eEurope period (2000 – 2005), several developments have changed the context of the Information Society at EU level:

1) Political: a new constitutional treaty: the enlargement to an EU 25; the increasing role of local public authorities, a risk that the EU may miss the Lisbon objective of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010, consensus on recognition the prime importance of societal, cohesion and citizenships objectives at EU level that ICTs have played a major role in recent competitiveness developments and will be an important drivers of societal changes...

2) Technological: nanotechnologies, convergence, mobility, 3G, Ipv6, new generation of computers and networks, ambient intelligent scenarios...

3) Regulatory: a regulatory framework in electronic communication networks, directives on e-commerce and on e-signatures...

4) Social: the Information society becomes a reality in the European Union with massive deployment of ICTs amongst individuals, households and enterprises.

According to you, what are the main technological, economical and societal developments that public authorities have to take into account while preparing the Information Society policy initiative for the next five years?

WorldDAB fully agrees with the Commission's analysis in its Communication "Challenges for the European Information Society beyond 2005", which recognises that the ICT sector is crucial to the economic and social welfare of its citizens and therefore that its development should be encouraged by any EU Information Society policy or initiative.

WorldDAB believes that the facets determining the context of the Information Society at EU level described in the Communication are all relevant and important. However, one overarching development affects broadcasters in particular: convergence.

Digitisation and DAB in particular have given radio an important role to play in the ICT industry, enabling multi-media content to be delivered free to air to European citizens.

We believe that the convergence of platforms and services to deliver digital content offers the prospect of boosting active citizenship and participatory democracy if the converging platforms work in synergy and achieve complementarity one with another. To help this process, any EU Information Society policy or initiative should take due account of the characteristics and prerogatives of each delivery platform.

In the converged, digital world, radio will maintain its intrinsic characteristics: trustfulness and intimacy; portability and mobility; freedom from subscription and

its capacity for being enjoyed by listeners while they do something else. However, DAB has important extra dimensions. It is able to broadcast robustly and with great spectrum efficiency all sorts of data (including video and text), anywhere, on the move and at low reception cost. The social and economic value of digital radio should be valued accordingly.

The Communication on challenges for a European Information Society beyond 2005 gives an indication of the main areas where EU level policy on ICT can make a difference and to that effect, proposes 8 clusters. These issues are identified on the basis of three main criteria: to be the most important issues; to be areas where the public sector can make a difference; and to be issues where there is an added value in addressing them at EU level.

Do you agree with these 8 clusters as the most relevant and comprehensive for the strategy up to 2010? Do you identify others? What would be your Top 3 priority clusters and why?

The 8 clusters identified by the Commission are: Content and services; eInclusion and citizenship; Public services; Skills and work; ICT as a key industrial sector; Interoperability; Trust and dependability; and Exploitation of ICT by business.

For WorldDAB, the top 3 most relevant clusters would be the following:

Content and services are the driving forces for the successful implementation of digital radio;

eInclusion and citizenship: radio is a social good that can bridge the digital divide and enhance active citizenship and participatory democracy;

Interoperability: common open, interoperable standards are needed to enable cross-platform synergies, convergence in mobile environments, etc.

Whatever the architecture of the new initiative will be, actions will be undertaken by the public authorities at both European and national level.

In each of your top 3 priority areas, what are the priority actions to be launched by national policy agendas or by EU level initiatives (regulation, legislation, pilot projects, raising awareness, exchange of best practices)?

Content and services: at national level: Campaign for content (including any funding initiative, tax incentives, subsidies etc.); at EU level: through established fora for national regulators the EU could coordinate the exchange of good practices, in particular in the field of awareness campaigns addressed to citizens and digital content development. The EU could also develop an Action Plan or a programme initiative to support the development of digital content.

E-inclusion: national and EU level: recognise DAB's important role to enable access to the Information Society for all citizens at low or no cost.

Interoperability: at national level: encourage adoption and implementation of standards recommended by the EU and international bodies; at EU level: raise awareness, promote European standards outside the EU.

This public consultation is managed online. We would like to put contributions on our website in order to keep the debate alive during the consultation, and offer stakeholders to comment or to respond.

Please indicate if you agree to your contribution being published on our website?

We agree to our contribution being published on the Commission website

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