

From analogue to digital TV in the terrestrial network

– plan for the transition in the whole of Sweden

Digital TV technology provides better sound and picture quality and reduces susceptibility to interference. There is also space for many more TV channels with digital than with analogue technology and the transmission costs for each programme service are less. Interactive services can be transmitted alongside TV programmes. This is why the world of television, like all other electronic production and distribution, is changing over to digital technology. The Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) has decided that transmissions in the terrestrial network, i.e. broadcasts that households receive using an ordinary roof aerial, will convert to digital technology before 1 February 2008. In December 2004 the Government decided that the transition will begin in the autumn of 2005 in three areas: Gävle, Motala and Gotland. In June 2005 the Government took a decision on the remainder of the transition. This decision means that analogue transmission will be closed down in phases throughout the country in 2006 and 2007 according to a set timetable. The whole switchover will therefore be completed in good time before 1 February 2008.

Background

In 1997 the Riksdag decided to introduce digital terrestrial television in Sweden. Transmissions started two years later, in 1999. Since 2002 the digital transmission networks have been expanded so that some 95 per cent of the Swedish population can receive more than 25 programme services and 50 per cent can receive another 5. The Riksdag has decided that at least 99.8 per cent of the population must be able to receive the digital terrestrial transmissions of the public service broadcasters Sveriges Television (SVT) and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR), i.e. coverage must be the same as for the analogue terrestrial network. An expansion of the transmission networks is now under way and Teracom estimates that some 98 per cent of the Swedish population will be able to receive digital transmissions in the first part of 2006. The remaining expansion will take place in connection with the close-down of analogue transmissions, i.e. continuously during 2005-2007.

Sweden will be one of the first countries in Europe to complete the switchover, but several countries in Europe are planning for the same technology shift over the next few years. The European Commission has recommended that all Member States plan to complete the transition by 2012. In Germany, the city of Berlin changed over to digital TV in the autumn of 2003. The United Kingdom plans to make its transition in 2010-2012 and Finland will convert to digital TV in 2007, according to plans.

Viewers can receive the digital terrestrial transmissions of the programme services SVT1, SVT2, 24, Barnkanalen (a childrens' channel) and Kunskapskanalen (the Knowledge Channel) and the main TV 4 channel in the same way as analogue transmissions, i.e. without having a programme card and subscription. Other programme services are available on subscription from the operator Boxer. The number of households subscribing to terrestrial digital TV is increasing rapidly; at the end of September 2005 Boxer had 483 000 subscribers.

Today the group that only receives terrestrial analogue TV consists of about 20 per cent of households and is decreasing rapidly. These are the households that are directly affected by the transition and that must connect a digital box to their TV receiver to secure their viewing in the future. In addition to these households, there are a large number of households that receive TV via other modes of transmission, like cable or satellite, but that also use the terrestrial network for a second or third TV receiver in the household or for a TV in their summer house or caravan, for instance.

Digital TV Commission

In 2004 the Government appointed a commission with the remit of planning the transition, of following technological development and the rollout of networks and of coordinating information on the transition to the general public. The Commission, which has taken the name of the Digital TV Commission, is chaired by County Governor Lorentz Andersson. One important part of the work of the Commission consists of coordinating measures, concerning both information and technical planning, taken by the actors involved, primarily Teracom, SVT and TV4, but also municipalities, interest organisations and the rest of the TV industry. To make the transition as simple as possible, all parties involved must cooperate to solve the technical issues and give each group the information it needs.

First phase

The Government decision taken in December 2004 means that the transition started in the autumn of 2005 with the closure of analogue transmissions in Gävle, Motala and Visby. These areas were chosen because the municipalities themselves showed interest in participating in the first phase. The exact time and date in each area has been set after consultations between the broadcasters involved (SVT, UR and TV4) and the Digital TV Commission. As a result of the Government's decision the Digital TV Commission

started extensive information campaigns in the areas involved in the spring. Very close cooperation has been established with the municipalities and various interest organisations that are affected have been linked into the work of the Commission. The Commission has also sent out information to all households, retailers and organisations. The Commission is training consumer advisers, identifying information providers, arranging seminars and lectures and organising a help line and has opened a website with information. One result of this work is that more than 90 per cent of the households affected in the three areas stated at the beginning of the summer that they knew what was going to happen, who was affected and what the individual household was expected to do before the transition. The transition itself has taken place without any major problems.

Second to fifth phases

On 22 June 2005 the Government determined that the continued transition from digital to analogue transmissions will begin in February 2006 and the whole of the remaining transition will take place in four phases. This means that the transition will be implemented completely in November 2007. As in the first phase, the Government's decision builds on a plan drafted by the Digital TV Commission in cooperation with the actors most closely involved, i.e. Teracom, SVT and TV4. The date given in the table is the date on which analogue transmissions of SVT2 will close. Analogue transmissions of SVT1 and TV4 may continue for up to three weeks after that date. After the analogue transmissions have closed down completely, text information will be transmitted in SVT1 and/or TV4 for an additional few weeks. This will give viewers who have not noticed the change further time to supplement their receiver.

| Phase | Analogue transmissions of SV2 close Transmission stations (inc. slave transmitters) | Date |
|-------|---|--|
| 2 | Kisa, Norrköping Västerås, Uppsala, Örebro, Östhammar Bollnäs, Borlänge, Hudiksvall, Mora | 27 February 2006 3 April 2006 2 May 2006 |
| 3 | Borås, Emmaboda, Finnveden, Halmstad, Jönköping, Nässjö, Skövde, Varberg, Vislanda, Västervik | 6 November 2006 |
| 4 | Stockholm Sollefteå, Sundsvall, Sveg, Tåsjö, Ånge, Örnsköldsvik, Östersund Arvidsjaur, Gällivare, Kalix, Kiruna, Pajala, Älvsbyn, Överkalix | 12 March 2007 16 April 2007 14 May 2007 |
| 5 | Filipstad, Karlstad, Lycksele, Skellefteå, Storuman, Sunne, Vännäs Bäckefors, Göteborg, Trollhättan, Uddevalla Helsingborg, Hörby, Karlshamn, Karlskrona, Malmö | 3 September 2007 24 September 2007 15 October 2007 |

Special graphics showing the details of the transition to digital TV are also available in the website of the Digital TV Commission www.digitaltvoergangen.se. There you can also see when the transition will take place in different municipalities and get all kinds of help and information about what the transition can mean for individual households.

Additional copies of this fact sheet can be ordered from the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, fax +46 8 723 11 92, email info.order@educult.ministry.se

The fact sheet is also available on the website of the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture at: www.sweden.gov.se/education

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