

WorldDMB and FGA work together on digital radio development

Thursday 13th February: On Thursday 6th February FGA (Fiat Group Automobiles) hosted a successful meeting of WorldDMB and Italian digital radio industry representatives. The event was an opportunity for WorldDMB and FGA to discuss common goals and provided a platform for WorldDMB to build a relationship with one of the fastest growing automotive brands offering digital radio in-car.

The meeting started with a presentation of the current status of digital radio worldwide by WorldDMB President, Patrick Hannon, as well as country updates from the digital radio country associations such as Digital Radio UK (DRUK), Digital Radio Deutschland, Germany, and a combined presentation from the different digital radio groups in Italy: Digital Radio Italy (Club DAB Italia, Euro Dab Italia), information from NXP the chip manufacturer and Raiway the technical division of RAI public broadcaster.

Patrick Hannon said “We have been greatly impressed by the level of energy and commitment to digital radio being demonstrated by Italian broadcasters. We were extremely pleased to learn about FGA’s interest in fitting DAB+ in several models. We look forward to working closely together as digital radio extends its footprint across Europe.”

The key messages given to FGA at this meeting included; the expectation of drivers in many markets of the inclusion of digital radio in all new cars and the six countries around Europe discussing FM switch off. Technologically the key areas of focus were the availability of automotive grade chip sets which was discussed in the presentation given by NXP and the ease of user experience in-car related to digital radio. Focus was also placed on the ability of DAB+ as a transmission system that is able to carry large amounts of data free to air, and that it is reliable and robust in emergency situations.

Coverage was also a key discussion topic. It was evident from the presentations that coverage is rapidly growing in all nations, including Italy where 60% of population can already access a wide variety of digital radio services whilst driving. DAB+ in Italy offers the driver a higher sound quality than is currently available on the crowded FM bands.

Sergio Natucci, COO, Club DAB Italia said “The collaboration with FIAT is a central point in the development of the digital radio market in Italy and in Europe. The Workshops in Turin puts this collaboration into effect. FIAT realises the value of radio and the benefits DAB+ services offer drivers. Club DAB Italia is improving coverage areas in the north and central Italy and seeks to provide at least 65% of total coverage by end of 2014. Digital radio is

already a reality in Italy and provides the opportunity to get perfect sound in-car! The point of no return has been reached, now we have to launch more and new programmes”.

Eugenio Le Teana, said "We have always been aware that the success of digital radio would only be possible with a co-ordinated effort by all of the broadcasters and the digital radio industry. The event in FGA is a confirmation of this cohesion. EuroDAB Italia has for over ten years been working on the digital project is currently providing outdoor coverage exceeding 65% of the population and we are working daily to improve this."

Presentations were also given by Fiat to outline their current position and some thoughts on the future development of digital radio. Fiat already has four models available with DAB+ as an option and with closer collaboration it is hoped that this number will increase.

Digital Radio Italy presented all activities which have been carried out by the Italian digital radio industry in the last 6 months to promote digital radio consumer awareness. There was also an overview of all activities planned for 2014 including an in-store training video for sales people and three large advertising campaigns planned for release in April, August and October. As in the last three weeks of January there will be a common advertising campaign broadcast 6-8 times per day for 2-3 weeks on all 12 National Radios networks in FM to 26m listeners per day.

RaiWay confirmed to FGA that RAI has allocated approximately €6m to renew and develop digital radio infrastructure. The first step in this process is to renew the infrastructure in place currently with over 60 new transmitters installed between 2014-2015. RaiWay also said they actively support FGA in road testing all new receivers.

Following the meeting a closer technical and marketing relationship was offered by WorldDMB to FGA worldwide to assist in their digital radio development strategy. This meeting was the first of a series of automotive meetings run by WorldDMB for this sector.

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About WorldDMB

WorldDMB is the global industry forum for digital radio promoting DAB, DAB+ and DMB - the digital radio broadcasting standards of choice in Europe and Asia Pacific. Its global membership includes public and commercial broadcasters, network providers, receiver manufacturers, chip manufacturers, and car manufacturers. Members collaborate to deliver advice and tailored solutions on all aspects of the switch from analogue to digital radio including regulation, licensing, technology trials, network build out, marketing and production of new digital radio content. Broadcast radio professionals have access to this body of expertise which is delivered through leading-edge industry events, car manufacturers' workshops, tailored workshops and seminars and the WorldDMB website via the members-only information portal that includes an extensive online ETI library. More than 500 million people worldwide are within range of a DAB/DAB+/DMB Digital Radio transmitter, there are well over 1,000 services on air and several hundred varieties of receivers are available to market.

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