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Keynote for 10 November 2016

Mr President,

WorldDAB Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm pleased about being here as a representative of one of the German Länder, who are responsible for media politics in Germany. We in Rhineland-Palatinate chair and coordinate the broadcasting commission of the Länder.

I'm glad that I will have the opportunity to talk about the future of digital radio in Germany. But maybe some of you, especially those, who are well informed about our broadcasting system, will think, why for heaven's sake, the management invited a German media politician.

Other states would say in this subject area, Germany could learn from us.

And I have to admit: I can understand those considerations!

Pause

We in Germany have a strong economy and a low unemployment rate,

We have a diverse industry and a lot of media enterprises,

We have qualified and established public and private channels and stations,

We have a variety of audio visual media services, we have satellite, cable, terrestrial digital TV, Web-radio,

But we really do not have one good supply of digital audio broadcasting in Germany.

That's why I'm happy to be here:

On the one hand to learn from you and

On the other hand, trying to convince you that we will have the chance to find an European solution for the standards for digital devices and a legislative framework for all member states.

We in Germany are not living on an Island, we have borders to Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxemburg, Belgium, Poland and the Netherlands, Denmark and the Czech Republic. So we prefer a European way for DAB and DAB+.

Not living on an Island doesn't mean, that it is not admirable how the roll-out of digital radio was proceeding in UK and in Norway. I remember, it was in 2003 when I was in Great Britain and got to know how they built up the world's biggest digital radio network. This included actually more than 100 transmitters, two national DAB ensembles and a lot of local and regional ones. No less than 250 commercial and 34 BBC radio stations across the UK. Congratulations to this development.

Congratulations to Norway too. Early next year Norway will become the first state which is switching off FM transmissions in favor of terrestrial digital broadcasting via DAB+. This is really courageous.

Pause

For nearly 20 years the need for digitalization of radio transmissions has been recognized in Germany and we still try to promote it.

Allow me a short retrospective view!

In 1997, the federal government and the German Länder decided to launch a public initiative “digital broadcasting”.

We drew up a veritable status report with several reasons for the digital broadcasting. I’m sure you will know the reasons:

- integration of broadcasting into modern multimedia systems (for example smartphones),
- reduction of capacity bottlenecks,
- cost reduction,
- enabling new services and business models.

The transmission from analogue to digital radio should be done till 2015. This was quite ambitious.

But what happened? Radio broadcasting in Germany is still using FM, we have not yet reached the objective set in 2000.

Let me provide you with some figures to be able to trace the development of Digital Radio in Germany:

The DAB rollout started in 2011 with the first national digital radio multiplex. Recently the 100th transmitter was started. The expansion of the first national multiplex coverage still continues. Public radio services by Deutschlandradio and 9 commercial radio services by different broadcasters are transmitted via this multiplex.

We in the German Broadcasting Commission consider DAB as a sustainable technology with many benefits compared to analogue FM.

This is a milestone!

We will improve broadcasting distribution and coverage, use frequencies more efficient and provide a greater choice and functionality.

1,5 years ago we founded the German digital radio board as one of 15 high-level representatives of the Federal Government and the Länder, ARD, Deutschlandradio, commercial broadcasters, regional media authorities, radio devices and car manufacturers and the federal network agency.

In one of our experts reports about the future of terrestrial radio we described that the limits of the technological possibilities of analogue radio were exhausted precluding new operators from entering the market. As far as we know, the situation is comparable to the situation in Austria.

Some weeks ago the broadcasting commission agreed on a second national digital radio multiplex allocated to a commercial operator. We expect that the second national digital radio multiplex will give an added boost to the development of DAB in Germany.

What will be the key of success? Is it the number of DAB users? Or is it the number of digital radio devices?

Based on current information, nearly 13 percent of German households have a DAB radio, about 14 percent of the population use DAB.

There is still large scope for further gains!

To accelerate market penetration of DAB devices, Rhineland-Palatinate made a statement in the Bundesrat (our 2. Chamber) for a law amendment.

Our proposal is to legally require manufacturers to produce their radio devices with both analogue and digital receivers.

Hopefully the Bundestag will now agree to our proposal. We are fighting for their approval!

Finally the European Commission, namely the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, Mr Günther H. Oettinger invited me as a supporter or lobbyist for an interoperability obligation in EU legal framework, for example the interoperability of digital television consumer equipment similar to Art. 24 of the Universal Service Directive. In December we'll meet again to continue our consultations about an obligation.

The success of digital TV would probably not have been possible without that regulation.

Having said that, I am coming to the actual issue – to the future of digital radio in Germany:

I'm sure the future of radio is digital! But we discuss the technique iP or DAB.

I'll prefer DAB, because of the advantages. On a Norwegian DAB website I found that quotation: "The reception was even better than our calculations predicted". This is what I also hope for our initiative!

Referring to the advantages of DAB, quality is one of the most important ones. But another one should become more and more important: The high cost burden of simulcast and multicast phases. The fees for the public broadcasting companies are high and the common political goal is that they should not increase any longer. So we have the need to find an exit strategy.

Therefore the Digital switchover is only a question of time. The simulcast phase should be as short as possible and as long as necessary.

If you were to ask me whether the future of digital radio was DAB or IP, I would say "both"!

However, I should like to underline the importance of the terrestrial transmission that provides listeners an easy and reliable way to consume radio when and where they choose without any additional charge. IP radio certainly complements terrestrial radio, but it is not able to replace it partly due to the use of data and expenses in connection therewith.

Mr. President, let me conclude by saying that I am convinced, DAB is going to contribute ...

... on the one hand to enabling citizens access to new services, increasing their traffic safety,

... and on the other hand to ensure an efficient use of scarce frequencies and promoting media plurality!

These benefits are definitely worth promoting! Therefore, we are all encouraged to actively participate over the next time in jointly establishing the framework conditions under which Digital Radio can prosper.

Thank you for your attention!