

What's Hot in DAB!

The World DAB Forum Newsletter N.2 - July 2001

Please find below the 2nd World DAB Forum Newsletter. We received many positive comments following the 1st Newsletter and we hope that you find this one as informative and enjoyable.

We have tried to resolve the technical problems caused by sending the e-mail to such a large group and hope that on this occasion you do not receive the complete list of addressees which are in the BCC. We have also tried to ensure that all quotation marks appear as such and not as question marks.

The WorldDAB Project Office
<http://www.worlddab.org>

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Brussels – EC Expert Delegates meet with Digital Radio Industry

At the request of the European Commission, radio industry representatives met with the Digital Broadcasting Expert Group – the DBEG – earlier this month. The DBEG is a group of experts from national Member State governments and national authorities which advises the European Commission on digital issues. The meeting set out to explore Member States' views on the creation of a European strategy for the industry.

WorldDAB proposed that a single European market was the sine qua non for the effective launch of digital radio and market uncertainty would remain until appropriate legislative frameworks and infrastructure were in place on a pan-European scale.

The Commission was very supportive, suggesting that the only way forward for this important and distinctive medium was concerted action by industry players on one hand, and both national and European political institutions on the other, committed to creating the right environment for investments.

The industry was invited to describe its plans, which included discussion of network roll-out and up-grade, digital radio services, the prospect of digital satellite radio services, audio-coding, manufacturers' plans, data services, and consumer awareness.

Member States were to decide whether or not to confer a coordination role on the European Commission and accept benchmarking activities in areas more traditionally of national competence, such as licensing regimes, frequency allocation, the involvement of public and private operators, implementation policies.

Member States agreed to maintain radio on the agenda of DBEG, but no agreement could be reached concerning the areas of intervention. National delegates were reluctant to allow the Commission to intervene in areas of subsidy, and, notably, spectrum allocation.

It is clear that Member States have yet to fully appreciate the need for a pan-European approach to the analogue/digital transition and that their competence in broadcasting matters would not be infringed.

WorldDAB's European Affairs Committee is satisfied with this result but is conscious that more work needs to be done to persuade Member States to champion radio before the next DBEG meeting in October 2001.

EC officials hope that Member States will agree to a review of licensing regimes as a first step towards a European strategy for the implementation of digital radio.

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News from Singapore

In Singapore this month, DAB experts from Europe, North America and Asia shared ideas about how to turn digital radio into a profitable industry.

WorldDAB President, Michael McEwen, gave the keynote speech at a conference which was part of Broadcast Asia 2001. He told delegates that digital radio represented a strategic investment by the radio industry. The business plans of multiplex operators were based on losses in the early years, followed by substantial profits. That was good business sense, not least because if radio didn't make the leap to digital, the industry's very existence would be in jeopardy over time.

Debate at the conference tackled the issue of the relative importance of data services, simulcast radio channels and new stations. Simon Spanswick, who was at that time working for the UK multiplex operator Switchdigital, argued that the answer would vary from market to market, depending on each country's regulatory framework and different market conditions.

But Assaad Bagharib of Singapore's MediaCorp Radio argued that DAB's abilities as a broadband broadcast data channel would be important. "DAB has a few years head start over 3G and DVB," he told the conference, "we need to make sure we capitalise on this advantage".

Glyn Jones from the UK's national multiplex operator, Digital One, commented, "The event focussed on the real business issues of digital radio's launch with a useful exchange of experiences from different markets."

Note: Simon Spanswick is now working for Digital One in a business development role.

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Australia briefed on DAB

A delegation from WorldDAB has visited key players in Australia this month to provide a comprehensive briefing about developments in DAB world-wide.

Julie Ackerman and Simon Spanswick went to Sydney to ensure radio broadcasters, regulators, government officials and others were fully briefed with the latest information on the rollout of DAB.

One of the key messages to come from the various meetings in Australia is that knowledge about the availability of receivers, for example, is low. The general opinion prior to the WorldDAB visit was that few, if any, commercial receivers are available for public purchase in Europe, and that prices remain very high. The delegation was able to correct this view and to update opinion-formers in the Australian radio industry on the receiver and chipset situation.

The delegation believes that there has been a significant resurgence of interest in the Eureka 147 DAB system in Australia among commercial broadcasters.

WorldDAB will continue to provide support to the Australian radio industry as planning for the introduction of digital radio broadcasting proceeds.

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Spain

Spain's Foro de la Radio Digital – a group which includes most of the country's DAB licencees, receiver manufacturers and network operators – has drawn up a plan it hopes will drive public awareness and takeup of digital radio.

The Foro has identified in Spain many of the same problems facing digital radio operators in other countries. These include a lack of knowledge and understanding of digital radio among consumers and retailers; a low supply of receivers on the market and restrictive prices for those which do exist; and no new, unique services broadcasting on digital radio to attract new listeners.

To combat these problems, the Foro has set itself three main goals:

- 1) To create a website and telephone information line on the technology, existing receivers, price points and availability, with links to manufacturer websites.
- 2) To create six advertising campaigns which will be presented on free airtime by the license holders via their analogue radio programmes and their newspapers.
- 3) To analyse which added value services would receive the greatest social interest and could be best used as a source of public help. The aim would then be to launch a first phase of 10-20,000 receivers located in public locations such as schools and county councils.

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NEW PRODUCTS

From Singapore.....

Some exciting new digital radio prototypes and concepts were on show at the Broadcast Asia Exhibition this month.

Apex Communications System of Taiwan had a range of new products on display, including a dual mode receiver for both audio and data reception; a SmartOffice lap-top computer with integrated telephone and DAB receiver to allow reception of wide-band DAB data streams directly into the computer; and a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) with integrated DAB receiver bringing data streams directly onto the PDA screen.

(<http://www.apex.com.net>)

Other DAB prototypes were on show from CET Technologies

(<http://www.dab1.com/>) and from Digital Wireless Systems, both Singapore based.

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From Arcam.....

Digital radio pioneer Arcam has brought out a stylish new replacement for its Alpha 10 tuner. The DiVA DT81 receives DAB programmes in both Band 3 and L-Band, and incorporates hardware and software improvements over the Alpha 10, which is being discontinued. The unit boasts both manual and autoselect dialling, comes with 16 presets for storing stations, is available in black or silver finish and retails for around £650.

<http://www.arcam.co.uk>

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From Matsushita.....

The low cost, lightweight, battery powered portable digital radio moves another step closer as Matsushita, known for its Panasonic and Technics brands, announces its development of an advanced single-chip baseband signal processing LSI for DAB. Matsushita says its new device will enable the first battery-powered portable DAB receiver with a two-channel simultaneous audio reproduction capability. Texas Instruments and Digital One/IMG have also announced the development of low power chips, all of which is good news for

the digital radio industry.
<http://www.piel.co.uk/dab>
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And Finally.....

In last month's newsletter, we highlighted London digital radio station, Ministry of Sound's "first ever paid for advertising on DAB". Now, UK national digital radio station, Core, is claiming that honour with a campaign it ran back in November 1999 for a new Mars chocolate bar. So, before we award the glory to Corecan any other broadcaster beat that date for a bona fide, paid for campaign? Let us know.

<http://www.core.musicradio.com>

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