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Cilla Benkö comments on the Swedish Government's decision regarding DAB

"Postponing the development of a digital terrestrial network is bad news for the Swedish radio audience," comments Swedish Radio's Director General Cilla Benkö following the government's announcement not to proceed with the transition to DAB+ in the near future.

"The FM network is now full and terrestrial radio will remain a vital service for a long time to come. IP-based radio, i.e. radio broadcast via the Internet, will also be important in the future, but it will not be able to replace the terrestrial network," says Cilla Benkö.

"We will continue to broadcast in FM and I assume that this decision does not affect our task and our current activities in terms of scope, programming and quality," continues Cilla Benkö.

According to Cilla Benkö, "In countries such as Norway and Denmark, where the digital terrestrial network is used with full force in a competitive market, we are seeing the radio audience increase both in terms of user numbers and listening time. This is because the radio audience has new and exciting stations to listen to. We are not seeing any corresponding increase in listening in Sweden."

"Even now, we at Swedish Radio know that our audience do not appreciate certain clashes in the current selection of FM stations. For us, a digital terrestrial network is an opportunity to correct this. Furthermore, a digital terrestrial network is both cheaper to run and more environmentally friendly. Today's announcement means we are holding on to old technology, which in turn means there is the risk that in the long term Sweden, which is currently regarded as one of the leading countries in Europe when it comes to radio broadcasting, will lose that position as the audience opt out of an analogue alternative in an otherwise digital world," says Cilla Benkö.

The Minister of Culture writes that it is still unclear how a digital terrestrial network would work. One of the Government's main reasons for waiting with the decision is that there are different views on how the radio's emergency preparedness can be maintained with a digital terrestrial network.

In recent years, Mats Åkerlund has worked with digital radio matters at Swedish Radio and has the following comments on the subject:

"Many countries in Europe are developing digital terrestrial networks for radio. In 18 months' time our neighbour, Norway, will begin the transition from FM to DAB. NRK's emergency preparedness will then be transferred to the Norwegian DAB network which, according to the authority responsible, now has a better coverage in the country than FM and which is also considered to be as robust as FM. So it is likely that we will soon be able to look to Norway for answers," says Mats Åkerlund.

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