

PRESS RELEASE

UK and German Government Ministers share vision for radio's digital future



London, Wednesday 4 November 2015

UK Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy, Ed Vaizey, and Dorothee Bär, German Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI), today set out their shared vision for radio's digital future.

Speaking to an international audience of over 200 radio experts at the WorldDAB General Assembly in London, the two Ministers emphasised their commitment to digital radio and the importance of working together to accelerate the growth of DAB in Europe.

Ed Vaizey said: "UK listening figures show the future of radio is increasingly digital. It's reflected in the fact that more than three quarters of new cars now come with digital radio as standard. Listeners are already benefitting from a wide range of new digital radio services and significant improvements in reception quality, so the time is right for European governments to work together to accelerate the international adoption of digital radio."

Dorothee Bär said: "Germany is fully committed to a digital future for radio. DAB+ offers significant benefits for listeners and broadcasters. We see particular advantages for motorists - with the potential for greatly enhanced free-to-air traffic information services. DAB+ is emerging as the future platform for radio in Europe. We are keen to work with other markets to help realise this vision."

WorldDAB President, Patrick Hannon, said: "DAB digital radio is making great progress across Europe and beyond. The Ministerial messages we have heard today set out a clear vision for the next phase of DAB's development. International collaboration across all elements of the radio ecosystem will be the key driver of success."

In other sessions at the event, delegates also heard about the opportunities which DAB provides for commercial radio. Case studies from the UK, Italy and Australia illustrated how private broadcasters are developing new services, often using brand extensions, to grow audiences and generate new revenues. Media regulator Ofcom also provided an update about the cost-effective solutions for small scale local broadcasters currently being trialled in the UK.

The third major focus of the event was the automotive sector. Several countries reported significant progress on getting DAB into vehicles. The UK announced that 75% of new vehicles are fitted with DAB. Norway and Switzerland reported similar figures, of 63% and 60% respectively.

All this is against a background of growing international interest in DAB. Norway leads the way with Digital Switchover (DSO) in 2017; Switzerland is close behind with DSO between 2020 and 2024. Solid progress was reported in Germany, Netherlands, UK, Denmark and Italy. Other markets taking early steps include Poland, France, Belgium, Czech Republic and Austria.

Outside Europe, DAB+ is well established in Australia, and a growing number of markets are embarking on trials, including South Africa, the Gulf States and Thailand.

The General Assembly also saw the re-election of Patrick Hannon for a second 2-year term as President of WorldDAB. Patrick outlined WorldDAB's priorities for the coming 12 months – with a particular focus on extending the international footprint of digital terrestrial radio and ensuring that DAB secures its position in cars and mobile handsets.

Anthony Sethill, Founder and CEO Frontier Silicon, was announced by Joan Warner, CEO of Commercial Radio Australia and Chair of the WorldDAB Asia-Pacific Committee as the winner of the WorldDAB Award for Outstanding Service. The award is recognition of Anthony's contribution to the growth of DAB around the world – both in terms of Frontier Silicon's technology leadership and Anthony's personal contribution to the development of DAB in key international markets.

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Media

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About WorldDAB

WorldDAB is the global industry forum for digital radio promoting DAB, DAB+ the digital radio broadcasting standards of choice in Europe and much of 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 WorldDAB 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+ Digital Radio transmitter, there are well over 1,000 services on air and several hundred varieties of receivers are available to market.
