

PRESS RELEASE

”South-East European Digital Television – SEE Digi.TV“

The project entitled *South-East European Digital Television – SEE Digi.TV* and its international implementation started on 1 January 2011 and will continue until 30 April 2013.

The Agency for Regional Development of the Republic of Croatia signed a grant contract for financing from the IPA pre-accession programme of the European Union on 28 December 2011 and thus ensured funds for the implementation of the above-mentioned project in the Republic of Croatia for 16 months.

The total value of the project amounts to EUR 1,987,230.50, out of which EUR 140,959.97 was granted to the Croatian Post and Electronic Communications Agency (HAKOM) and to the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM). The European Union finances project activities with 85% of funds from the pre-accession instrument (IPA), while HAKOM's and AEM's contribution amounts to 15%.

The purpose of the project is the harmonization of activities related to the introduction of digital broadcasting services in the region of South East Europe. Some of the project objectives include the following:

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- to minimise digital divide within the region to promote development and implementation of new interactive services on highly penetrated DVB-T technology platform;
- to reduce legal, technological and administrative inequalities in the given field by providing harmonized legal, technical, economic and information campaign approaches and actions;
- to reduce the gap between EU countries and the project region in the area of digital TV broadcasting;
- to harmonize the technology and standardization applied for DVB-T in the region;
- to foster development and implementation of new services for all population groups in the region.

During project implementation, HAKOM and AEM have the opportunity to learn from examples of good practice in the countries of the region and European Union and participate in the exchange of experiences with a view to aligning regulation related to digital switch-over, efficient use of the digital dividend and further development of broadcasting and communications services.

The project also deals with issues of the digital divide and social inclusion and will thus in the long-run contribute to the creation of a region of equal opportunities.

A total of thirteen partners from ten countries in the region participate in the implementation of the project, including one strategic partner and one observer. Partners in the project mostly include regulatory authorities competent for regulation of electronic communications and electronic media markets in their countries and other institutions active in the information and communications services sectors: Albania (NCRT), Austria (RTR), Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRA), Montenegro (AEM and EKIP), Croatia (HAKOM and AEM), Italy (Informest and AGCOM), Hungary (IVSZ), Macedonia (SRD), Slovenia (APEK and Sintesio) and Serbia (RBA).

Project deliverables

Several documents resulted from the implementation of project activities and they, on the basis of the conducted analysis, provide an overview of a legal, economic and technical framework of participating countries in the region.

The analyses served as a basis for the elaboration of guidelines that will help countries in the region improve their legal framework and ensure a smooth digital switchover in the technical and economic sense and preconditions for continuous development and introduction of new broadcasting and communications services for the benefit of the entire society. One of the important project components is the raising of public awareness about the digitalization and the project develops tools and methods for measuring public awareness, including guidelines that may help partner countries in the implementation of information and education campaigns particularly towards the end user.

A total of seven meetings of the Executive and Steering Committees and of technical working groups were held so far during project implementation covering topics important for successful government and financial management of the project and for the implementation of project activities as part of work packages with a view to achieving the set project objectives. Meetings were held in Ljubljana, Vienna, Budva, Zagreb, Gorizia, Skopje and Sarajevo.

The following project activities were carried out so far and their results were presented and are available on the project official website www.see-digi.tv :

I. Legal framework

The legal framework work package will focus on the analysis of the existing legislation on the digital switchover process in partner countries and on the elaboration and implementation of regional guidelines that will assist individual countries with the improvement of their legal frameworks. For the purpose of better use of the digital dividend and its harmonization in the region, guidelines are elaborated within the project to facilitate the digital switchover, together with the co-financing and financing plans for end users and participants in the process.

For that purpose, a **document on the analysis of the existing legal framework** was prepared containing a comparative legal analysis of legislative frameworks for the digital switchover in partner countries. The analysis has shown that national legislative frameworks in individual

European Union Member States and in candidate countries are significantly different and planning and implementation of the digital switchover must take into account previous experiences of countries that have already completed the switchover and the European legislative framework for electronic communications and audiovisual media.

Another document resulting from project activities is the **guidelines for funding framework for the digital switchover** which provide instructions for the elaboration of a legislative framework for funding the digital switchover process in participating countries. It was concluded during the preparation of this document that circumstances related to digital switchover differ between individual countries and it is of exceptional importance to adjust the type of public funding measures to a specific situation in each country. Partners in the SEE Digi.TV project propose the establishment of a special digitalization fund for the allocation of grants and donations for the digital switchover. One more document that resulted from the project is **the document about guidelines on using the digital dividend** which provides an excellent overview of key documents and instructions that may assist countries in the preparation of their own strategies for allocating frequencies from the digital dividend, for protecting the broadcasting and for the international frequencies coordination in the 790-862 MHz band.

II. Technical framework

The work package entitled *Technical framework* deals with technical aspects of the digital switchover process in order to avoid the fragmentation of digital broadcasting in the region.

Work within this area resulted in an **assessment of the technical framework** describing the existing available technologies for digital terrestrial TV and sound broadcasting providing additional information for laboratory and field measurements and the relevant legislation.

The document on receiver specifications and on conformance test specifications describes the applied technologies with a common approach assisting national institutions with the elaboration of these specifications in individual countries.

III. Economic framework

A comprehensive overview of digital switchover strategies in partner countries was elaborated. Regional guidelines for the digital switchover were prepared for each country together with a proposal of the manner in which they need to continue developing their strategies.

The currently available results include the **analysis of national digital switchover strategies** which serves as a basis for further digitalization in the region.

Regional guidelines for the development of digital switchover strategies were developed for each country and this document is of particular importance for countries which still have not implemented the procedure.

IV. Public awareness

Within the framework of the work package for the raising of public awareness on this topic, **tools and methods for measuring public awareness** were prepared. They serve as guidelines for measuring public awareness and a manner for the development of an appropriate research tool. With a view to raising awareness and informing the public about the project, a **Communication Plan** was prepared and two **leaflets** were distributed.

The target audience for raising public awareness about the importance of digital switchover includes not only project partners but all other stakeholders as well, service providers, information and communication technology industry, representatives of national, regional and local bodies and population of participant countries and the media.

Two international conferences of the SEE Digi.TV project were organized. **The First International Conference** took place in Trieste, Italy, from 19 to 20 April 2012, by Informest, in cooperation with the Italian regulatory authority for electronic communications and the media (Agcom), Regional Communications Committee of Friuli Venezia Giulia (Corecom FVG) and all SEE Digi.TV project partners. In addition to project partners, conference participants included regulatory agencies, public and private communications associations and institutions from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The topics discussed at the conference dealt with the issues of the digital dividend, licence granting strategies and related legal issues, raising of public awareness about the digital switchover and threats and opportunities of the digital terrestrial TV platform and application of the DVB-T2 standard.

The Second International Conference was organized on 18 and 19 October 2012 in Ljubljana by the Slovenian regulatory authority APEK, which is also the leading partner in the project. The main topics of the conference included the digital divide, the allocation of the digital dividend, possibilities for future development of terrestrial digital television and situation on the market of television broadcasted via other digital platforms.

It was concluded at the gathering that the digitalization process brings about many issues that require individual preparation of each country and impacts of these issues will differ depending on peculiarities of a region and a country. Furthermore, it was concluded that the project is exceptionally useful for all participants in the region because active and continuous exchange of ideas and experiences contributes to a high level of awareness about all positive and negative impacts of digitalization on markets and individual groups in the society.

Digital television and digital dividend in Croatia

After the adoption of the Analogue to Digital Television Broadcasting Switchover Strategy in the Republic of Croatia, which had as its main strategic objective the switching off of analogue television and the start of full digital broadcasting of television channels in the Republic of Croatia as of 1 January 2011, the digital switchover process was successfully completed by 5 October 2010, which was officially marked as the date of complete digital switchover. The digital switchover enabled the reception of better quality image and sound, the freeing of frequencies for the introduction of new channels which opens up the possibility

for the increase in the total number of channels and the development of media pluralism, and ensures preconditions for planning and allocation of 790-862 MHz band to mobile communications.

Terrestrial digital television channels in the Republic of Croatia are currently broadcast via five networks, that is, digital television multiplexes. The A and B Multiplexes are intended for public services and commercial broadcasters with coverage in the entire territory of the country. Multiplex D is intended for commercial broadcasters with national coverage and for broadcasters with local/regional coverage. Several new channels (RTL2, DOMA TV, HRT3, CMC, SPTV and others), which were not available in terrestrial analogue television, are also broadcast in the MUX A, B and D networks, and some local channels today have much larger regional coverage. Multiplexes A, B and D today offer 30 free to air channels. Multiplexes C and E, by using the DVB-T2 system for the transmission of TV signal, offer around 40 additional standard-definition (SD) and high-definition (HD) channels by means of pay-TV - EVO TV.

The freeing of the frequency spectrum enabled the introduction of broadband networks for mobile communications in the digital dividend 790-862MHz, and, in October 2012, HAKOM's Council granted licences for use of the radiofrequency spectrum for public mobile communications networks in the Republic of Croatia for the 791-821/832-862 MHz band to Hrvatski Telekom d.d. and VIPNet d.d. until 18 October 2024.

Thus the Republic of Croatia became the first country in the region to allocate this part of the radiofrequency spectrum for this purpose. The 791-821/832-862 MHz band is particularly useful for the implementation of the LTE network in rural and less populated areas where the introduction of other types of broadband access is not cost-effective and achievable data transfer speed is much higher than in previous generation networks (GPRS, EDGE, UMTS, HSPA).

Project activities until the end of the year

As part of awareness raising activities, the Croatian Post and Electronic Communications Agency (HAKOM) and the Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) are organizing a workshop on digital television for participants on the market of electronic communications and the media. This one-day workshop will take place on 4 December 2012 at the Dubrovnik Hotel in Zagreb with a view to raising the awareness of market players on the digital switchover and possibilities offered through the use of the freed part of the spectrum, the so-called, digital dividend, and may contribute to the improvement of the existing and introduction of new services and have a positive impact on the reduction of the digital divide.

One more meeting of project partners at the level of the Steering Committee and the technical group is planned before the end of the year in Belgrade. The purpose of the meeting is gradual completion of activities within the technical, legal and economic work package and within the awareness raising package in order to successfully prepare final outputs before the end of the SEE Digi.TV project in April 2013.