

DigiTAG Web Letter, April 2005

DigiTAG seeks to inform members and non-members about important developments in the digital terrestrial television market. Each month, DigiTAG distributes its web letter with news updates and information on upcoming DigiTAG activities. This month, we examine digital terrestrial television in the United Kingdom.

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Digital Terrestrial Television in Germany

Digital terrestrial television (DTT) can be credited with much of the increase of digital homes in Germany. The number of households receiving digital television has increased by 45% since the launch of digital terrestrial television (DTT) in parts of Germany. By March 2005, over 6 million households received digital television compared with 3.72 million households in May 2004 (1).

The sales of DTT set-top boxes have been strong. Estimates show that between 1.7 million and 2 million digital terrestrial television set-top boxes are now in households (2). And the sales have been much higher than originally anticipated. The consumer electronics association ZVEI initially estimated that between 1.2 and 1.4 million (3) set-top boxes would enter the retail market by the end of 2004. However, by the end of 2004, 2.4 million set-top boxes had been passed on to retailers. Of these, 1.05 million entered the market within the last quarter of 2004 (4), demonstrating growth not only in anticipation of Christmas 2004 but also well into 2005.

DTT service roll-out

In 1997, the federal government enacted the Digitaler Rundfunk Initiative which encouraged the digitalisation of broadcasting and set the year 2010 for the completion of digital switch-over. The launch of DTT services has been managed at the regional level by the States (Länder), however, and already several States have launched their DTT services and shut off their terrestrial analogue television signals.

The digital switch-over process has taken place within a very short period of time. DTT services are launched in a given area followed by analogue switch-off only a few months later. The Rhine Main area had one of the shortest simulcast periods in Germany. It launched digital services on 4 October and shut down its analogue terrestrial television signal on 6 December 2004.

Berlin / Brandenburg

On 31 October 2002, Berlin / Brandenburg became the first State to

DTT News Round-up

For all articles, please go to [DigiTAG News](#)

France - DTT services have officially begun

French DTT has been officially launched by the Prime Minister on 31 March at 18.00. Currently, 35% of the population will be able to access 14 free-to-air television programme services.

Coverage will be extended to 50% of the population in September. Additional free-to-air television services will likely launch in June while the pay DTT platform will launch in September.

In addition, the CSA has requested new working group on expanding DTT coverage

In a letter sent to the Prime Minister, the CSA has requested the establishment of a working group to examine access to free-to-air digital television services in remote locations.

According to current roll-out plans, DTT will cover 85% of the population by 2007. However, it may be difficult to provide DTT services to the remaining 15% of the population. The proposed Working Group would be mandated to provide proposals on how digital television services can be accessed by the entire

launch DTT services. When terrestrial analogue television ceased on 4 August 2003, Berlin / Brandenburg became the first metropolis in the world to complete the switch to digital terrestrial television.

About 274,000 digital terrestrial television set-top boxes have been sold which is more than the total number of homes in the area that depended on the terrestrial platform prior to the launch of DTT services (5). Two conclusions can be made. Firstly, the number of terrestrial homes has increased. The total number of homes using the terrestrial network as the primary television reception platform increased from 6.5% prior to the launch of DTT services to 7.8% as of the end of 2004 (6). Secondly, homes with cable or satellite television reception are also using the digital terrestrial platform for their second and third television sets.

North Rhine Westphalia

North Rhine Westphalia, along with northern Germany, was the next area to launch digital terrestrial television services. On 24 May 2004, the first phase of services were launched in Cologne / Bonn followed by the launch of the second phase of services on 8 November 2004 in the Düsseldorf / Ruhr district. This has allowed 14 million inhabitants in the State, out of a total population of 18 million, to be able to access DTT services (7).

In early November 2004, the DVB-T Project Office for North Rhine Westphalia estimated that 390,000 set-top boxes had entered into the market (8). It is now estimated that approximately 850,000 set-top boxes have entered into the market (9).

Northern Germany

The launch of DTT services in northern Germany is the result of the combined efforts of four States. Like North Rhine Westphalia, northern Germany launched the first phase of its DTT services on 24 May 2004 in Hanover / Braunschweig and Bremen / under Weser. The second phase of the launch took place on 8 November 2004 which extended DTT services to Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. Eleven million viewers can access DTT services which, in most areas, provides 24 television service programmes. It is estimated that by the end of 2004, 850,000 set-top boxes had entered the retail market (10).

The DVB-T Project Office for Northern Germany estimates that the number of terrestrial homes has increased since the launch of DTT services. The greatest number of households relying on the DTT platform for their primary television reception can be found in Bremen. There, the number of terrestrial households increased from 13% in January 2004 to 17.1% in March 2005 (11).

Rhine Main area

DTT services have been launched in the Frankfurt / Main / Wiesbaden region since 4 October 2004. Following the analogue switch-off in early December 2004, viewers can access over 20 different television service programmes. It is estimated that 146,000 set-top boxes have already been sold (12).

A look to the future

Other States are currently preparing for the launch of their DTT services.

population following analogue switch-off.

Source: [CSA website](#)

Poland - DTT plans on track

The Polish national commercial stations Polsat and TVN have officially agreed to create a 50/50 joint venture named Polski Operator Telewizyjny (POT) to introduce DTT service later this year.

Telewizja Polska (TVP) is currently not part of the consortium although it is running experimental DTT services in several parts of the country.

Source: [Broadband TV News](#)

Italy - 1.2 million pre-paid DTT cards sold

According to the Vice President of Mediaset, over 1.2 million pre-paid DTT cards have been sold. He expects the number to reach 1.6 million within the next two weeks.

Pre-paid cards were launched in January by Mediaset and La7, part of the Telecom Italia group. They provide access to Italian Serie A football games on the DTT platform.

Source: [Dataxis Research](#)

United Kingdom - Digital television penetration just under 60%

Ofcom has published its Digital

- In Bavaria, the DTT launch is set to take place on 30 May 2005 in Munich / Southern Bavaria and in Nuremberg / Erlangen. Viewers will be able to access 24 television programme services (14). In early April, a new antenna was placed on the Olympic tower in preparation for the upcoming launch (15).
- The region of central Germany is planning to launch its DTT services in Halle / Leipzig and Erfurt / Weimar as of November 2005.

Germany has demonstrated that its initiative to launch digital terrestrial television with only a short digital/analogue simulcast period has been a successful formula. And viewer interest in DTT has been demonstrated by the remarkable sales of DTT set-top boxes. This makes Germany a strong candidate for world leader in the switch-over from analogue to digital terrestrial television.

1. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
2. http://www.broadcastpress.de/pdf/02.05/BM05_02_S20-23.pdf
3. http://www.broadcastpress.de/pdf/02.05/BM05_02_S20-23.pdf
4. http://www.vdi-nachrichten.com/vdi_nachrichten/aktuelle_ausgabe/akt_ausg_detail.asp?source=rubrik&cat=1&id=21094
5. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
6. <http://www.pc-magazin.de/common/nws/einmeldung.php?id=36262&type=0&nrubrik=&datum=>
7. <http://nrw.ueberallfernsehen.de/start.html>
8. <http://nrw.ueberallfernsehen.de/start.html>
9. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
10. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
11. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
12. Projektbüro DVB-T Norddeutschland
13. <http://www.dvb-t-bayern.de/>
14. See <http://www.zdnet.de/mobile/tkomm/0,39023192,39131959,00.htm> for a video of the installation.
15. <http://www.dvbt-mitteldeutschland.de/>

About DigiTAG

DigiTAG aims to encourage and facilitate the implementation and introduction of digital terrestrial television services using the Digital Video Broadcasting Project's Standard (DVB-T). It has some 60 members from broadcasting, network operators, regulatory, and manufacturing organisations throughout Europe and beyond.

Visit the [DigiTAG website](#)

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Television Update which shows that by 31 December 2004 a total of 59.4% of UK households received digital television compared with 55.9% at 30 September 2004.

The number of DTT households is estimated to be around 4,592,920. This is an increase of 678,000 households in comparison with the number of DTT households at the end of September 2004.

An adjustment has been made to the DTT platform estimate to account for the number of households which have more than one television receiving digital broadcasts. Latest estimates suggest that 25% of sales of Freeview set-top boxes in the last quarter of 2004 were bought for use with second televisions by households which already receive digital broadcasts.

Check the [Ofcom](#) website for the full report.

And in more United Kingdom related news, the **first switch-off took place in Wales.**

The analogue transmission to 460 homes in the Welsh villages of Ferryside and Llansteffan will be switched off on 28 March. This is the first area to switch-off analogue television in the United Kingdom.

A survey of the 1,200-strong population found that 98% of respondents want to switch to digital permanently.

Source: advanced-television.com