Digital television: use of standards for the transmission of signals

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PURPOSE : Commission Communication reporting on technical and market developments for digital television. CONTENT : This communication takes place in the context of reporting requirements of Directive 95/47/EC. - After discussing the importance of pay-TV in the development of digital television, the Communication goes on to say that the role of competition law is an important factor in the development of the market. The strength of free-to-air services in some Member States has made it hard to launch digital television through pay-TV. The large investments necessary have led to ventures with a high risk of market foreclosure. The structure of most broadcasting markets makes it hard for competition authorities to accept any new combination of existing players to address new markets. - There is a need for a broader approach to infrastructure, transmission and access. In markets where cable is the main means of delivery, access to networks has been a significant bottleneck for pay television operators. - The switchover from analogue must be realised in a competition neutral way, given that consumers will have to pay for new receiving equipment. Consumer choice should not be prejudiced. - Consumers will need very good quality information in order to make decisions that have tradiionally been made by other market actors and regulators. - The relative market positions of free-to-air and pay television in the longer term is uncertain. Various market forecasts indicate hat pay-TV subscription revenues are growing faster than advertising revenues. Regulation should not hinder market development, notably of innovative new services.