Basic information

2007/2152(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Interoperability of digital interactive television services **Subject** 3.30.01 Audiovisual industry and services 3.30.02 Television, cable, digital, mobile 3.30.06 Information and communication technologies, digital technologies	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CULT Culture and Education	WEBER Henri (PSE)	13/02/2006

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	ȚICĂU Silvia-Adriana (PSE)	26/06/2007
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	VERHEUGEN Günter

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
02/02/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0037	Summary
21/06/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
04/10/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
15/10/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0390/2007	
13/11/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0497/2007	Summary
13/11/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/11/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2007/2152(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CULT/6/34576

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE392.245	24/07/2007	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE394.035	25/09/2007	
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE392.081	02/10/2007	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0390/2007	15/10/2007	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0497/2007	13/11/2007	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2006)0037	02/02/2006	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2008)412	18/12/2007	

Interoperability of digital interactive television services

2007/2152(INI) - 02/02/2006 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to review the interoperability of digital interactive television services.

BACKGROUND: in July 2004, the Commission published a Communication setting out its position on the interoperability of digital interactive television services pursuant to Article 18(3) of Directive 2002/21/EC on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services ('the Framework directive'). In that Communication, the Commission concluded that there was no clear case for mandating standards for interactive television, and indicated that the issue would be reviewed in 2005. The Communication also proposed the setting up of a working group to identify actions that could improve market take-up of the Multimedia Home Platform (MHP) standard. In May 2005, the Commission published a Communication on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting proposing a target date of 2012 for Member States to make the transition to digital television and switch off analogue TV transmission. Moreover, in 2005 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on accelerating the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting (see RSP/2005/2634) as well as a non legislative resolution on the transition from analogue to digital broadcasting: an opportunity for the European politics in the audiovisual and cultural diversity areas in 2006 (see INI/2005/2212).

CONTENT: this review builds on that earlier assessment, and takes account of the market developments since July 2004. Over the past 18 months the Commission has held an intensive dialogue on digital TV interoperability with interested parties in both the public and private sector in the 'MHP Implementation Group'. This Group has been presented with reports of the situation in ten Member States, and has served as a forum for the exchange of ideas and best practice.

Developments in the market, particularly in Italy, have shown that interoperability can be achieved when stakeholders act together with a common aim to implement a technical standard like MHP, but that this in itself is not sufficient to ensure the emergence and growth of interactive digital television services; further business and technical developments are needed.

The Commission's priorities are now to work with Member States to ensure the successful switchover to digital TV, which is a pre-requisite for having interactive digital services, and to support open standards and the ongoing cooperation on interoperability and exchange of best practice between Member States and between stakeholders.

The Commission's priorities are to:

- work with Member States to ensure the successful switchover to digital TV – as the facilitator for interactive digital services: the Commission will follow up its Communication of May 2005 on switchover, and will be monitoring closely the progress in Member States. Information on the switchover plans of the Member States will be published regularly on the Europa Website;

- promote open standards and interoperability: in the context of digital switchover, interoperability of digital television services and technologies, the Commission will continue to promote open standards developed by European standards bodies;

- support cooperation between Member States and between stakeholders: the Commission will continue to bring together Member States in the Broadcasting subgroup of the Communications Committee, as a forum for the exchange of experience and best practice on digital TV in general, and interactive digital TV in particular;

- promote international cooperation on digital TV open standards and interoperability: digital television has the potential to foster digital inclusion and social cohesion. The Commission will continue to promote open, interoperable standards for digital television so that content can be exchanged across the world. The Commission has established and funded a series of actions to promote international co-operation in research, development and standardisation on digital TV. This could be extended to international collaboration in implementation and production of digital TV;

- monitor use of proprietary technologies: the use of proprietary technologies will remain subject to competition law review.

Interoperability of digital interactive television services

2007/2152(INI) - 13/11/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Henri **WEBER** (PES, FR) on the interoperability of digital interactive television services. The resolution was adopted by 593 votes in favour to 40 against with 18 abstentions.

The report affirms that the new audiovisual technologies should allow the broadcasting of pluralist information and quality programmes, accessible to an ever increasing number of citizens. It points out that respect for the pluralism of information and diversity of content is not automatically guaranteed by technological progress but must be implemented by the national and European public authorities through an active, steadfast and vigilant policy. Given the role of television in a globalised society, the technical and legislative choices relating to interoperability should be not merely of an economic nature, but also of a social and cultural nature, and stresses that attention should be paid above all to users" interests.

Succeeding in the digital transition and promoting open standards: Parliament felt that the success, in as short a time as possible, of the transition from analog to digital is a prerequisite and a priority and was is concerned about possible delays in meeting the 2012 deadline. The coordinated development of digital television at Community level is essential if users are to benefit from the advantages of the internal market and in order to reduce the price of television receiving equipment and achieve greater penetration by digital interactive television services. Accordingly, Parliament urged the Commission to support the Member States in drawing up a common plan of action at Community level. Member States are called upon to speed up the transfer to digital television, taking account of market demand and topographical and regional demographic factors. Those Member States which have not yet drawn up a national plan for the full switchover to digital television should do so by the end of 2008.

Parliament fully supported the Commission's approach in terms of its intention to cooperate fully with the Member States with a view to switching over to digital television successfully and facilitating interactive digital services. It reiterated that imposing a single standard by legal means was not the right solution but only a final sanction, but it did not approve of market intervention alone as a means of resolving the problem of interactivity. Parliament shared the Commission's view that it would be advisable to continue promoting open standards such as MHP or MHEG-5, which were recognised by European standards bodies, in relation to the switchover to digital and the interoperability of services. Members maintained that these open standards were the most appropriate ones for ensuring the technological neutrality of networks and the free movement of information, respecting the special necessities of countries where frequency capacities were limited.

The Commission was urged to continue actively to promote the introduction of open European digital television standards in all regions of the world and to encourage international cooperation in this area, thereby ensuring the widest possible access to digital content. Parliament regretted that interactive television in the EU had ultimately proved to be less commercially successful than expected. It called on the Commission to study the reasons for this phenomenon and to submit regular reports on the efforts made by the Commission and the Member States to develop the digital television market and its numerous offshoots. It was essential to provide consumers with more information on the opportunities offered by digital platforms and the necessary equipment, so that they are able to make informed technical and cultural choices. Parliament called on the Commission to help the Member States and local authorities, by disseminating best practices, to exploit the potential of the new technologies in order to communicate with their citizens more effectively.

The need to consider the impact and mastery of the new technologies: Parliament invited the Commission and Member States to inform the public about future developments in digital interactive television services, and recommended that digital television service providers take active steps to inform users about existing interactive services. It stressed the importance of discussing at European level the social and cultural implications of the

digital society and the adaptation of national education systems to the cultural and social changes brought about by the new technologies. Member States were asked to establish mechanisms which guarantee a non-discriminatory structure for electronic programme guides that can guide users through the digital services offered.

Lastly, Parliament pointed out that the European audiovisual model was based on a creative dichotomy between public and private audiovisual services. It stressed that under no circumstances should the new technologies disturb that balance by weakening the competitiveness of the public sector, which should continue to have guaranteed access to digital platforms.