**40th EPRA Meeting**
**Tbilisi - 8-10 October 2014**
**Working Group 3**
**Digital Radio: A Chance, a Challenge or a Risk?**
**Summary of the WG**
Krystyna Kuhn, KRRiT (PL)

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| WG Coordinator: | *Krystyna Kuhn, KRRiT* (PL) |
| Board sponsor: | *Damir Hajduk*, EPRA Vice-Chairperson |
| Presentations: | *David Fernández Quijada*, EBU-MIS |
| Background paper: | EPRA/2014/12 |

The group started with a keynote by *David Fernández Quijada* of the EBU's Media Intelligence Service presenting the soon-to-be-published 'Digital Radio Toolkit'. Starting from the premise that the digital radio implementation process across Europe turned out to be much more difficult and slower than expected, the toolkit offer guidelines on how to handle the launch of digital terrestrial radio, building on the experiences and good practices in the countries leading this process in Europe, namely Norway, Switzerland and the UK. 30 different key success factors were identified and exemplified covering eight areas: institutional structure, policy and regulations, content and offer, technology, switchover process, public communications, consumer electronics and the car industry. Mr. *Fernández* also emphasized the necessity of close co-operation between stakeholders as the main condition of progress in implementation.

A brief summary of answers from 32 EPRA members to a questionnaire on digital radio was then presented. The main conclusion is that digital terrestrial radio is developing in Europe rather slowly and unequally: 13 respondents reported neither actions nor interest in radio digitalization, a few countries are leading the process, many countries opted for 'a wait and see' approach.

The position of AER (Association européenne des radios) gathering over 4500 commercial radios across Europe, whose representative could unfortunately not attend, was presented by the group Chair on the basis of a document sent in advance. AER supports a multi-platform future for radio as well as multi-standards solution for devices. In their view, transition to digital broadcasting must be decided at national level, fair access conditions to bands II, III and L band spectrum and net neutrality are paramount.

The animated discussion that followed raised the following points:

- There is no such thing as a universal recipe for successful radio digitalization;

- Audiences are expecting more channels and services. Yet, in the majority of countries, the FM band cannot respond to the rising expectations concerning the extent of radio coverage, quality and functionality;

- While the DAB family of standards is widespread in Europe, DRM and DVB-T2 Lite are being taken into consideration for the future. The harmonization of standards is needed to allow interoperability.

- Radio should be available on every platform. Radio's future is a mix of broadcasting and Internet (hybrid radio).

- Without new services and content, digital radio cannot be successfully implemented, thus perpetuating the chicken and egg syndrome.

- Digital radio roll-out is a governmental decision, taken in cooperation with regulatory authorities for media and frequency management.

- Financial incentives are crucial (e.g. public service fee, reimbursement of operational costs during transition period or investment costs in the network).

- Licensing policy can be another incentive (e.g. long term digital licences, less/no content requirements, commitment to go to digital in exchange for prolonged analogue licences, exemption from licence fees).

- In most countries, the analogue switchover date has not yet been fixed. In contrast with DTT, there is no digital dividend driver. Yet, for practical reasons, moderate harmonization across Europe would seem desirable.

The key conclusion was that digital radio implementation requires multi-stakeholder involvement, also including car manufacturers and mobile services operators. In many jurisdictions, public service broadcasters are playing a leading role. However, real success can only be achieved with a close cooperation of the public and private sectors.