



**Report to the STF255 Steering Committee  
of the 1<sup>st</sup> Open Meeting for stakeholders  
on the development of a standardization Work Program  
supporting interoperability in digital interactive TV services**

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 10:00 - 15:30  
CENELEC, 35 rue de Stassart, Brussels  
Meeting room Galileo

The first Open Meeting for stakeholders was organized 07/11/2003 in Brussels. It was attended by some 60 representatives from relevant stakeholders including, among others, ESOs, trade organizations and individual companies. A specific effort was made to include media and telecommunications regulators on a national level. This resulted in the attendance of representatives from the regulatory bodies of 6 EU/EFTA Member States. A complete list of attendants to the open meeting and their distribution over the different constituencies is attached to this report.

**Welcome by Ms. E. Santiago, Director General of CENELEC and Mr. Ph. Laven, Chairman ETSI/CENELEC/EBU Joint Technical Committee Broadcast**

After Ms. Santiago welcomed the attendants and introduced the STF as well as the main tasks it is working on, Mr. Laven opened the meeting and underlined the fact that stakeholders are strongly invited to put their comments forward. In this respect he pointed out the "top of the chain" and "bottom of the chain" approach the STF had taken on interoperability as well as the report's characterization that one group of stakeholders believes that horizontal markets are important to interoperability, while another group believes that interoperability begins at the production end.

**Keynote address by Mr. Adam Watson Brown, Head of Sector Media of EC DG Information Society Division B1B**

Mr. Watson Brown introduced the regulatory framework for the STF's activities, explaining article 18 in the Framework Directive, addressing interoperability, although its wording represents a compromise. In this respect the speaker underlined that the key phrases relevant to the debate on compulsory standards are: "freedom of choice" and "sufficient interoperability".

Mr. Watson Brown highlighted some of the issues the STF's report touches upon including: portable content formats, presentation engines, Service Information harmonization and implementation, and cable receiver issues. He noted that the European interactive TV market is more fragmented and less deployed than in the US and agreed with the general sentiment in the previous CENELEC report on "Standardisation in digital interactive television", that interoperability needs to be achieved in different ways in different markets, given the different starting points.

The speaker explained the Commission will address its review of the level of interoperability achieved across European digital interactive markets in a two-stage process. A consultation document is due in the December-January time frame, while a final position will be announced in July of 2004.

## **Modus operandi of the Specialist Task Force and structure of the Work Program drafting process**

The STF presented its modus operandi with a few slides, explaining the regulatory and market environment for the process, the scope of its activities, the milestones for its deliverables and an overview of related areas and topics that it will take into account where necessary, but not address directly.

Several questions were raised with respect to the presentation, specifically on the "economic impact of competing standards" the STF intends to include in the second draft of the Work Program. Some stakeholders in this respect raised the concern that this should have been addressed first. Mr. Brusse acknowledged the relevance of the point made but explained the tight schedule the STF was to work under and the variety of subjects it is dealing with had caused it to delay the issue until the second draft.

Mr. Watson Brown in this respect also underlined that while lack of standards could be a barrier to interoperability, the absence of customer demand for interactive TV services also establishes a barrier in a number of markets.

### **Presentation & discussion of the first draft of the ETSI Technical Report: "Standardisation Work Program in support of digital interactive television and the effective implementation of Directive 2002/21/EC" by ETSI/CENELEC Specialist Task Force 255**

After addressing its Modus Operandi, the STF presented the core of its work, i.e. the first draft of ETSI TR 102 282 V <0.2.1>, the standardization Work Program, focusing on the general aspects, as well as the specific issues relating to functional receiver specifications, Service Information, APIs, presentation engines and portable content formats.

Overall, documents and presentations provided to stakeholders generated positive response, leading to the STF's preliminary conclusion that the substance of its work as well as the delivery schedule it is working to, do not require a fundamental review. Moreover, the 'toolbox-approach' the STF has taken to address interoperability issues across different markets is supported by stakeholders (although it was mentioned that too many options could also have a counterproductive effect).

Nevertheless, a number of issues brought up by stakeholders, both verbal and in writing, pointed out areas and topics that need additional attention. In this respect the following should be mentioned:

- It was suggested by several stakeholders also to focus on the user interface level (as a potential barrier to interoperability and freedom of choice for users), in addition to other levels in the broadcast chain; this, for example touches upon the variety of remote controls currently in use.
- With respect to SI it was mentioned the EBU would support a common SI program approach that goes beyond simple now/next signaling, in order to improve the visibility of the broadcasters' programming. In general it was admitted more effort should be made by broadcasters to agree as far as the use of SI is concerned.
- It was recommended to include relevant aspects of the delivery of digital and interactive television services via IP transport mechanisms into its analysis; this includes for example the use of xDSL transport, next to cable, satellite and terrestrial. Related to this may be the issue that new advanced video coding formats are an interoperability problem waiting to happen, in that current receivers will not be able to decode these future formats

- It was recommended to take a well balanced approach, recognizing the positive effects on further growth of digital interactive television of both standardization as well as the industry's ability to differentiate products.
- Cable operators underlined the specific aspects network operators are dealing with (such as aspects related to the use of a return channel) should be recognized in the Work Program. Also the question was raised what the scope of the report actually is, i.e. whether it sets out to consider enhanced broadcast only, or also 'true' interactive broadcast. Some additional work on definitions will be required here. In general, the comment was made more attention could be given to the (definition of) different profiles of functional receiver specifications.
- Concern was raised about two initiatives for a functional cable receiver specification, coming from EICTA and ECCA, stating it would be good if these two initiatives could be converged into a single specification. However, the existence of differences in market development may have to be emphasized. In this respect, the report may have to distinguish more specifically between horizontal and vertical market development, also with respect to standardization requirements (e.g. with respect to functional receiver specifications) for the near future.
- Some manufacturers underlined that despite the desire to migrate to a horizontal market, broadcasters still require receivers to be built according to their own specifications. What should be addressed as well is the fact that the development of various certification procedures (e.g. from IRT and NorDig) could raise problems.
- The suggestion was put forward to distinguish more clearly between solutions focusing to improve interoperability in 'greenfield' markets and solutions focusing to improve interoperability in established markets.
- With respect to satellite receiver specifications it was commented operators would like to see a standardized terminal, and would like to address interoperability however, the main interoperability problems related to interactive television services existing today are generic and not specific to satellite, cable or terrestrial infrastructures.

Although a relatively large number of national regulators attended the Open Meeting, it became clear that a number of clarifications are needed, for example in the area of their involvement in the SI management process, in order to enable clear input from this constituency into the Work Program. This will be worked on as well by the STF.

### **Closure of the meeting**

In addition to the issues raised by stakeholders, the first Open Meeting did not deliver a clear set of conclusions, it being too early in the whole process. However, it was clear several work items discussed in the draft version of the Work Program still need considerable work and require the involvement of a number of relevant stakeholders. In this respect the STF has chosen a dual approach in which it will seek active coordination on specific subjects with these stakeholders, but also explicitly solicits contributions (to be submitted until 26 November 2003) providing further clarification on a number of the work items.

STF 255  
Sophia Antipolis  
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