

June 2016

techUK response to the Ofcom consultation on updates and amendments to Broadcast TV Technical codes

Introduction

techUK represents the companies and technologies that are defining today the world that we will live in tomorrow. More than 900 companies are members of techUK. Collectively our members employ more than 700,000 people, which represents nearly half of all ICT sector jobs in the UK. These companies range from leading FTSE 100 companies to new innovative start-ups. The majority of techUK's members are small and medium sized businesses.

This response is made on behalf of techUK members who have provided input into this call for input. Primarily this response is representing the views of digital device manufacturers. We do not seek to fully represent the views of other members but where those views have been expressed they have been included.

Summary

techUK welcomes this review and, in addition to providing you with our recommendations and comments, welcome the opportunity of joint discussions as part of the overall review and recommendation process.

We have focussed on considering the impacts on DTT viewers, drawing on input primarily from our Digital Device Manufacturers.

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the Television Technical Performance Code?

Removal of the reference to analogue broadcast requirements in the technical code is reasonable as analogue TV services are no longer provided.

We agree that the quality of pictures broadcast on SD and HD via DTT is generally good and that viewer complaints relating to the broadcast quality, which are not related to local reception issues, are extremely rare.

We also agree that there is no logic to treating quality controls of SD different to HD. We expect the viewing demands for HD channels via DTT to continue to grow. This is driven to a large degree by viewers purchasing ever larger screen sizes; 50" main room sets now increasing the standard main room choice of size. Poor picture quality delivery is more evident on larger screen TVs.

We agree that commercial PSBs should continue to have in place procedures for maintaining a high level of technical quality. A lowering of quality is likely to lead to viewer complaints and could lead to the perception that the receiving device is at fault resulting in a risk of increased product returns and service and repair enquiries, driving cost up for manufacturers, retailers andetailers.

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We also recommend that the removal of minimum picture quality levels should be considered against the simulcast delivery of HD by some channels, this could be a route to encourage viewers to migrate to HD services, which in parallel should be providing continuous programming delivery for HD services, with no gaps for regional services as viewers experience today.

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposed modifications to the DTT Reference Parameters?

We have no counter arguments to make against the proposed changes in sections 4.12 to 4.23. We do have recommendations regarding the consideration of encoding standards and Ultra High Definition which we have covered in Question 3.

Question 3: Do you agree with our proposal not to include an HEVC profile in the Reference Parameters at this stage?

Device Manufacturers favour the use of common global standards for future FTA platform service developments. These standards include future provisions for HEVC encoding standards and the potential future requirement for Ultra High Definition services on DTT to allow DTT to compete as a delivery platform with IP and Satellite.

There is a demand today for the use of HEVC based services, which are already utilised in other markets in Europe and elsewhere and an expectation for a demand from viewers for future Ultra High Definition services.

We recommend that Ofcom consider extending the reference parameters to include HEVC encoding and UHD resolution standards as the planning for these services needs to be considered at an early stage if DTT is to retain its value against alternative IP and Satellite platforms.

The support of MHEG-HbbTV co-existence is less critical because this is a shorter-term UK specific requirement. Other countries such as New Zealand and Italy have shown that it is possible and reasonable to agree a direct swap of middleware. A more pro-active approach can support the more efficient use of bandwidth at an earlier stage, particularly important as we know that bandwidth capacity will come under increasing pressure from alternative service delivery demands.

Ends

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