

The Future of DTT in the UK

EuroNews welcomes the OFCOM invitation to organisations with PSB status to put forward proposals for the use of the new digital terrestrial capacity. A question to ask however, is what is the definition of a public service broadcaster? We note that the Ofcom discussion paper includes within the PSB status '*principally the BBC, the Channel 3, 4 and 5 licensees, and S4C.*' But to be considered a public service broadcaster is it a requirement that the organisation is based in the United Kingdom?

EuroNews is a public service broadcaster for Europe. We contend that the views of EuroNews should, therefore, be considered as part of this consultation of public service broadcasters and that any re-allocation of digital terrestrial multiplex configuration or bandwidth should include a grant of spectrum alongside that granted to the other public service broadcasters.

Should a European public service broadcaster be equally considered for these new reshaped digital terrestrial multiplexes? To consider this question we reviewed the Ofcom Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2007 and found that a PSB needs to fulfil the following functions:

PSB Purposes

- Informing our understanding of the world - To inform ourselves and others and to increase our understanding of the world through news, information and analysis of current events and ideas.
- Stimulating knowledge and learning -To stimulate our interest in and knowledge of arts, science, history and other topics through content that is accessible and can encourage informal learning.
- Reflecting UK cultural identity - To reflect and strengthen our cultural identity through original programming at UK, national and regional level, on occasion bringing audiences together for shared experiences.
- Representing diversity and alternative viewpoints - To make us aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints, through programmes that reflect the lives of other people and other communities, both within the UK and elsewhere.

PSB Characteristics

- High quality - well-funded and well-produced
- Original – new UK content rather than repeats or acquisitions
- Innovative – breaking new ideas or re-inventing exciting approaches, rather than copying old ones
- Challenging – making viewers think
- Engaging – remaining accessible and attractive to viewers
- Widely available – if content is publicly funded, a large majority of citizens need to be given the chance to watch it

Source: Ofcom PSB Review Phase 3: Competition for Quality

Regarding these principal criteria and how those criteria are fulfilled by EuroNews, one should consider the following. EuroNews is the only genuinely international news channel, in terms of its shareholders, staff and editorial policy. The channel is backed by a consortium of European Public Service broadcasters – all of which are members of the European Broadcasting Union.

Informing our understanding of the world

Every 30 minutes, EuroNews offers a complete news programme, followed by features including Parlamento, Europa and Futuris, as well as a press review of Europe's leading daily newspapers and the weather. EuroNews' magazines cover a wide array of themes such as science, cinema, fashion, new technologies, aerospace, etc. EuroNews does this in seven different languages.

Stimulating knowledge and learning

EuroNews was chosen by the European Commission, through a competitive procedure, to produce and broadcast, simultaneously in several languages, information programmes touching on all aspects of European Union current affairs. The service contract, signed in Brussels on 21 February 2005, strengthened the European nature of the channel and its public service remit, it's distinguishing feature from the very start in 1993. EuroNews' programs cover a vast variety of informative topics and include the programs 'Futuris', 'Space', Hi Tech etc. Additionally, EuroNews developed a very original language e-learning tool : "Tell me more".

Reflecting UK cultural identity

EuroNews covers news events and produces features which can include British culture, way of life, interests and aspirations. Other public broadcasters show such programming only within the country of origin. EuroNews goes beyond this by broadcasting in the UK in several European languages, making the programming more easily accessible to the UK's non-English speaking communities. Furthermore, EuroNews can take British culture and set it within a European context. Additionally, EuroNews broadcasts, 24/7, these news and feature items in other European territories so that British culture and priorities are better understood and appreciated by its European neighbours. This is something which no other UK public service broadcaster does in multiple European languages.

Representing diversity and alternative viewpoints

The channel provides world news from a European perspective, 24 hours a day, in seven languages simultaneously. The programs produced and broadcast make viewers aware of different cultures and alternative viewpoints. A look through the program guide at programs (attached) such as "Perspectives", 'EurOpinion', 'Europeans', 'Mediterraneans' illustrate clearly that the channel broadcasts programmes that reflect the lives of other people and other communities, both within the UK and elsewhere.

PSB characteristics:

High quality, original, innovative, challenging, engaging and widely available, we can summarise EuroNews possession of these characteristics in the following way. The channel is currently reaching almost 200 million households globally and according to the results of the EMS Survey published in January 2008, EuroNews is the most watched international news channel by upmarket consumers in Europe. 7 million affluent decision makers and opinion leaders watch EuroNews every week.

'Original, innovative, challenging and engaging?' Consider one of the most popular programs on the channel - "No Comment". EuroNews is the only news channel which allows its viewers to think for themselves on selected pictures of a news event.

EuroNews is already available in the United Kingdom via the Sky DTH platform, Virgin cable, and will be included in the new Freesat platform to be launched in 2008.

In Summary

The public service which the European Commission entrusted to EuroNews is backed by an Editorial Charter, which forms an integral part of the contract with the Commission. The aim of the charter is to ensure the complete editorial independence of EuroNews.

This groundbreaking charter provides a guarantee of independence and transparency for the channel's viewers. The charter can be consulted at any time on the channel's web site, in the seven broadcast languages: German, English, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Russian.

Furthermore, EuroNews recently won the European Commission's call for tenders, launched in June 2007, which was to select an international news channel with the ability to produce and broadcast programming in Arabic, 24 hours a day and seven days a week. A service agreement between the channel and the Commission was signed in Brussels on 6 December 2007.

EuroNews provides programming in seven languages (eight as of July, 2008) which means that the viewer has the choice language with which they prefer to view the channel. This service is perfectly adapted to a digital environment. Moreover, EuroNews has diversified its approach towards digital networks and distribution of the channel includes all platforms including cable, satellite, ADSL, FTTH, telephone and other handheld devices, DVB-H and streaming. The channel, by nature of its multicultural diversity, clearly serves the purpose to inform and to increase an understanding of the world through news, information and analysis of current events and ideas.

EuroNews as Europe's only pan-European public service broadcaster clearly satisfies the terms of a public service broadcaster as defined by Ofcom. EuroNews should be considered an allocation as a public service broadcaster on the United Kingdom's reshaped digital multiplexes.