



PRESS RELEASE

DVB AGREES CONDITIONAL ACCESS PACKAGE

Geneva, 27th September 1994 - The Steering Board of the European Digital Video Broadcasting Project, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Peter Kahl, has agreed a Conditional Access (CA) Package which, it believes, will enable successful introduction of digital television in Europe. The Package of techniques and operational agreements was agreed by the DVB Steering Board during its September 27th meeting following more than a year of detailed discussion. This important and innovative package has been reported to the European Commission.

The DVB Conditional Access Package is founded on a Common Scrambling System for DVB Transmissions, which is its key technical element. Further agreements regarding technical issues including Simulcrypt, a Common Interface and provision for transcontrol at Cable Headends are also part of the Package.

Mr. Kahl said: "The DVB believes that these techniques may be used to allow any owner of DVB equipment to receive all programmes available to him through a single receiver." The Package also includes recommendations relating to the inclusion of Common Scrambling, Common Interface and CA elements in DVB receivers, and on anti-piracy legislation.

Finally, the DVB Steering Board has agreed a Code of Conduct which will govern key relationships in the industry between providers of conditional access facilities and broadcasters. The aim is to ensure that all those who control conditional access elements in decoders offer to provide fairly for the use of these decoders by co-signatories. The code will come into force on January 1st 1995.

In acknowledging the applause at the conclusion of the Steering Board meeting, Mr. Kahl paid tribute to the spirit of cooperation amongst DVB members that had enabled the package of proposals to be finalised. He said: "I am grateful to all those who participated in these detailed and sometimes difficult discussions - we can now move forward with an industry-wide agreement which reflects the realities of the market and helps European consumers to benefit from the introduction of digital TV."

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

This note sets out in detail the elements of the DVB's Package on Conditional Access.

The first agreement is the definition of a Common Scrambling System for DVB transmissions. This system specification will be available to companies signing a non-disclosure agreement.

By using the common scrambling system in conjunction with the standard MPEG data transport it is possible to include in a DVB transmission many messages which all enable control of the same scrambled broadcast but are generated by a number of different CA systems. This agreed technique, known as "Simulcrypt" allows flexibility in the use of different CA systems by a single broadcaster. He may deliver one programme to a number of different decoder populations that contain different CA systems or to the transition between different CA systems in any decoder population, for example to recover from piracy.

A Common Interface has been proposed which enables the use of the common descrambler, together with proprietary CA elements, in a detachable module which can be inserted in a interface socket in a DVB receiver. It is agreed that this basic interface should be at the MPEG transport level. The Steering Board expects that a specification can be issued to the European Standardisation Bodies for standardisation during 1994. Use of such an interface will enable the separate delivery of the proprietary elements of conditional access to DVB receivers containing the interface.

Again through the use of the common scrambling system, it is possible to arrange to have different CA system in use on either side of a boundary between transmission media - for example at the boundary between satellite and cable transmissions. Transcontrol is the process of changing the CA system without changing the scrambled signal - in particular without descrambling and rescrumbling. This technique allows the change of control over the signal to be achieved at low cost.

In discussing the way these techniques should be used the DVB has proposed a regime which aims to let any owner of DVB equipment receive all programmes available to him though a single receiver. The DVB thus recommends therefore that all digital receivers in use in the DVB area should incorporate means of using the DVB common descrambling system and that CA systems using the common scrambler should allow transcontrol at media boundaries so that cable operators can control their local receiver base.

The DVB regards all CA system elements, other than the Common Scrambling system, to be proprietary and proposes a licensing regime for CA systems which will allow manufacturers to decide freely whether to include a Common Interface or different CA systems in a receiver. Thus where licensing is undertaken, it should be on fair reasonable and non-discriminatory terms and inclusion of other CA systems or a Common Interface should not be excluded as a result.

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In its communications with the European Union the DVB continues to recommend the adoption, as quickly as possible, of anti-piracy legislation in all member states of the European Union and the Council of Europe. As new television markets open and the number of pay services grows, piracy will be an increasingly important issue. The provision of suitable anti-piracy legislation is thus an important element of the future policy for the operation of digital television.

The final operational agreement in the Package is the Code of Conduct. This will govern key relationships in the industry between providers of conditional access facilities and broadcasters. It aims to ensure that all 'Providers' who control conditional access elements offer to provide for the use of these decoders by co-signatories under fair and reasonable terms and on a non-discriminatory basis. The code is designed to come into force on January 1st 1995 and to remain in force until January 1st 1997, by which time it will have been subject to review and possible extension.

The European DVB Project now comprises more than 145 member organisations, including broadcasters, service providers, and industrial companies. The Conditional Access Specialists Group, the Ad-hoc Group on Conditional Access and the Steering Board were instrumental in the preparation of this Conditional Access Package, whose approval represents a vital link in the introduction of Digital Television Services in Europe.

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