

Press Release

IBC 2009

Digital Television for All

[Munich/Amsterdam, September 1, 2009]

The objective of the EU project DTV4All, coordinated by Brunel University London, is digital television for all, regardless of age or disabilities. Together with program providers and device manufacturers, the use of television will be facilitated for individuals with physical, age-related or mental disabilities. Together with the Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg (RBB) and other project partners, the Institut für Rundfunktechnik (IRT) is presenting early project results at the International Broadcasting Convention IBC in Amsterdam from September 11-15, 2009. DTV4All is partner of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) at booth 10.D21.

Today, there are 38 million people living in Europe with more or less severe disabilities. For these individuals, participation in the information society is clearly hindered. However, not only are people with disabilities encountering barriers in the handling of broadcasting and media technology today but also the elderly. Already, 20% of the population is above the age of 60, and the trend is going upwards. Both, program providers and device manufacturers are faced with the challenge of facilitating the use of television for individuals with physical, age-related or mental disabilities.

DTV4All (Digital Television for all) is funded by the EU Commission under the ICT PSP (Information and Communication Technology – Policy Support Programme). DTV4All investigates existing methods for barrier-free television access as well as new methods. The goal is to assess these methods through comprehensive field tests in four European member states – Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Spain – in order to realize barrier-free access in day-to-day operations as soon as possible on a pan-European scale. The Commission is thus enhancing its efforts to integrate all people in the Information Society and allow them to partake in the quality of life associated with this Information Society.

Good prospects to achieve this goal are perceived in the pan-European switchover from analog to digital television. From this point in time onward, services that some public broadcasting companies are already offering in their programme transmissions, such as subtitling for the hearing impaired or the additional audio description for individuals with impaired eyesight, will be more strongly established throughout Europe; the technology for these features will be realized by the receiver industry based on the methods standardized in Digital Video Broadcasting (DVB).

Moreover, new methods for barrier-free services are being developed in the DTV4All project. High-resolution television (HDTV) and hybrid TV receivers will enable improved on-screen display options and online access via the push of a button on one's remote control. For example, teletext offers and subtitles thus become much more legible. Via the Internet, a video signal of sign language interpreters can be inserted into the broadcast image of the hybrid TV receiver. With respect to audio technology, the "clean audio" method is progressing. For better understandability for the hearing impaired, complex audio content can be simplified, for example background noises or music that may be disturbing and affect the dialogue can be suppressed to the desired degree.

The IRT together with the Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg and other project partners will present first results from the DTV4All project at the International Broadcasting Convention IBC in Amsterdam. At the EBU booth 10.D21, the partners will demonstrate a speaking program guide, the acoustic playback of teletext pages, and an improved form of subtitling for Digital Television, that should be offered, in Germany, with the start of the HDTV service in 2009/2010. As a guest, the BBC will present the selection and provision of subtitles via the Internet synchronized with an ongoing television broadcast programme.

The project partners in DTV4All are: Brunel University London (Coordinator), Danmarks Radio (Danish Broadcasting Corporation), Institut für Rundfunktechnik (IRT), Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB), Red Bee Media Ltd., Televisió de Catalunya, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

You can find more information about the DTV4All project at : www.psp-DTV4All.org

Institut für Rundfunktechnik GmbH

With its head offices in Munich, the IRT supports broadcasting on a national and international scale with its spectrum of services. Its associates are the broadcasting companies ARD, ZDF, DRadio, ORF, and SRG/SSR. The IRT is also cooperating with numerous clients from the broadcasting, media, communications and information technology industries as well as various research institutions and academies. Since its foundation in 1956, the IRT has been committed to preserving broadcasting and accompanying the adjustment of the broadcasting idea to new market environments and requirements.

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