

Presentation on ICASA'S Review of the Digital Migration Regulations 2012



KZN^{TV}



Community television in South Africa

- The Association of Community Television South Africa (Act-SA) represents the interests of the community TV sector.
- It is currently composed of licensed community TV stations including Soweto TV, 1KZN-TV, Cape Town TV and Platinum North West TV.
- These stations have a collective reach of over 10 million viewers.
- They have trained thousands of young people in television production, broadcasting and related fields
- They impact the lives of thousands of South Africans every day in their home languages.

Regulatory context and challenges

- The future of DTT is uncertain due to a slow Broadcast Digital Migration (BDM)
- There has been a slow uptake of digital reception equipment and STBs; limited availability of DTT STBs in retail
- Stakeholders question DTT value: high costs vs. low audience numbers
- Community TV risk: high costs of DTT without third-party funding
- Licensing vs. SFN design: community channels are licensed to broadcast locally but SFN requires a regional presence

Call for a national dialogue

- A national dialogue on the future of broadcasting in South Africa is essential
- Act-SA proposes discussions with broadcasters, ECNS suppliers, ICASA, civil society, DCDT
- To discuss the feasibility of the 7-mux plan, the role of DTH, HD viability, transmission costs, financial support mechanisms and post-ASO planning
- Real consultation between broadcasters and the Minister of Communications is required to determine the ASO timing

Regulatory review

- Community channels are shifted to Multiplex 2 with 15% bandwidth allocated for all community channels
- At SD 2Mbps, bandwidth is insufficient for HD; need for no more than two HD community channels per province; potential mux reconfiguration
- EPG/EPI requirement; the ECNS provider (Sentech) must enable EPG; broadcasters rely on the ECNS to implement
- Dual TV/radio transmission (radio on DTT); we need clarity on the required bandwidth and fees
- The role of DTH is underemphasized; DTH can complement DTT; licensing gaps and OpenView transponder constraints affect community channels
- Our plea for “must carry” obligations on commercial platforms has been ignored despite the high risk to community channels if carriage is dropped on DStv.

Recommendations / Action points

- Initiate formal national dialogue on feasibility of 7-mux plan, HD rollout, and DTH alongside DTT
- Clarify radio carriage in TV mux space
- Align SFN-based footprints and licensing for community channels
- Address policy gaps leading to forced regionalisation
- Reconfigure bandwidth to enable HD for community channels
- Consider “must carry, must pay” regulations for commercial satellite platforms
- Coordinate with Minister (DCDT) on ASO/DTT consultation timeline; publish a concrete roadmap with milestones and accountable parties