EBU R 106 rev2-2008

EBU
Recommendation on MHP

(Multimedia Home Platform)

Geneva
November 2008

EBU Recommendation on

Interactive Multimedia for Digital Broadcasting

<u>Geneva, November 2008</u>

Considering:

a)   Earlier in 2008, the EBU withdrew its Recommendation for the use of MHP in new digital broadcasting services because of uncertainties about licence fees (see overleaf).

b)   Recently the licence holder Via Licensing announced that its licences for the MHP system will be free of licence charges for free-to-air broadcasters.

The EBU Recommends;

MHP is considered an appropriate system for interactive television services for new digital broadcasting services by EBU Members.

EBU Statement on MHP
(Multimedia Home Platform)   <u>Geneva, March 2008</u>

MHP

At the end of the 1990s, the DVB Project developed, in open discussion, an API termed MHP (Multimedia Home Platform). MHP development was supported by the EBU, and was seen as a 'future proof' API that would evolve over time in different versions. A major element of MHP is the use of the JAVA programming language, developed by Sun Microsystems.

In 2001, the EBU issued R106, in which it recommended that MHP should be the API of choice for new digital broadcast services by EBU members, accepting that those who had already started using alternative APIs might not be able to change them.

MHP has since been taken up in several parts of the world and also for some packaged media systems. Several European national broadcasters use it today and the system is technically excellent.

In the last two years, problems have arisen for EBU members in accepting the licensing situation for MHP, as explained in a DVB press release[1]. This means that today, uncertainty prevails and that current and future liabilities are unknown.

The EBU believes that in these circumstances, whatever the technical merits of MHP, it would not be responsible to collectively recommend the system to EBU members. The EBU therefore withdraws its Recommendation R106-2001 with immediate effect.

If this situation changes, the EBU will again review its Recommendation.

The EBU Technical Committee is currently reviewing the ways it can help Members with their future decision-making on APIs. MHP remains a technically excellent interactive television system deployed in a number of markets. It is one of a number of alternatives that could meet EBU members' requirements in interactive television. EBU members continue to believe that interactive television is a most important element in the future of television, and that it should be built on solid technical grounds. The EBU will continue to work toward this objective.

Some background on APIs in Digital Television

Digital television broadcasting technology creates a 'container' for television programmes, audio, access services, or multimedia services. The broadcaster is able to fill the container up to the limits of its capacity with one or more TV channels together with a range of services that are sometimes called 'interactive television' or 'broadcast multimedia'.

These interactive multimedia services may include programme guides, complementary information about the programme being broadcast, games, polling, voting, 'teletext' etc. Such services can be important and valuable additions to television broadcasting.

An agreed 'language' needs to be used for the data that is broadcast to provide these interactive services, and receivers need to be equipped to interpret this 'language'. The language used for interactive multimedia in this context is termed the '**Application Programming Interface**' or **API**. A number of proprietary APIs for digital television broadcasting were developed in the 1990s and several of them are still used today.

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[1] <u>DVB Press Release Number 166, dated 30th. November 2007</u>