

# Joined up thinking on DTT

THREE ORGANIZATIONS, THE EBU, DVB AND BNE, ARE COLLABORATING ON A NEW INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION, PARTICULARLY IN COUNTRIES WHERE ANALOGUE SERVICES STILL DOMINATE. THE EBU'S **WALID SAMI** AND **MARCELLO LOMBARDO** PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW.

Although public service media (PSM) channels are widely available on subscription-based platforms such as satellite, cable and IPTV, terrestrial television remains the backbone for accessing free-to-air services and is the most widely used means of receiving television globally. Over 300 million households receive analogue television and nearly 200 million households receive DTT (digital terrestrial television), of which around 120 million are in Europe.

Despite the success of DTT, many countries around the world have yet to complete or even begin the digital switchover process. At the same time, there has been unrelenting pressure from big spectrum consumers, like mobile network operators, to secure the use of further portions of spectrum allocated to terrestrial broadcasting. Given the unique social and economic opportunities that DTT offers, it is in the interest of governments, broadcasters and other industry stakeholders to maximize their collaboration toward accelerating its rollout. This would also help preserve spectrum for use by terrestrial broadcasting in the long term.

## JOINT INITIATIVE

To promote the win-win situation that arises when a DTT offer is successfully launched, the EBU, BNE

(Broadcast Networks Europe) and the DVB Project last year embarked on a joint initiative. The idea is to share knowledge and bring experts together to facilitate the successful introduction of DTT in countries that still rely on analogue television. The initiative is focused on ITU Region 1, and thus covers all of Europe and Africa as well as the Middle East and CIS countries.

The group has identified key factors that are crucial for the implementation of DTT. These include the process for identifying a suitable business model, the definition of the broadcast network parameters, the measures needed to ensure adequate video quality for viewers, and the strategy for creating an appealing programme portfolio.

Those key factors formed the basis of the first event organized under the new initiative, in collaboration with the ITU. On 26 October 2016, the ITU played host to a workshop in Geneva on "Assistance for DTTB implementation". It was well received by the diverse audience that included frequency regulators, broadcasters and relevant industry stakeholders. The response from workshop attendees confirmed that there is a real appetite for implementing DTT, but also a need to set out best practices with regard to the factors identified. There was also evidence of considerable interest in the transition from DVB-T to DVB-T2.

## AUB AND ASBU

The group is now strengthening its collaboration in this field with the AUB (African Union of Broadcasting) and ASBU (Arab States Broadcasting Union), the EBU's sister unions in ITU Region 1. This collaboration aims firstly to refine the identification of the critical factors for DTT implementation, and secondly to raise awareness among broadcasters about the possible negative consequences for PSM of a failure to implement DTT.

Last February's celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the AUB provided an opportunity for fruitful discussions. The event brought together directors general of African broadcasters, presidents and secretaries-general of other broadcasting unions, and key figures from governments and the media to explore how to promote authentic content in the African media.

One of the most crucial messages the EBU, BNE and DVB brought to AUB colleagues was the ongoing need to defend access to spectrum for broadcasting. Even though broadcasters achieved significant success at WRC-15 (the ITU's World Radiocommunication Conference in 2015), the pressure on spectrum has not abated. There is a continued need for broadcasters to work together: successful DTT platforms will be the best shield against future attacks on spectrum as the broadcast community works towards WRC-19 and WRC-23.

With ASBU, collaboration is focused around a series of DTT-related workshops that take place every autumn as part of the EBU/ASBU week of technology. The EBU was also pleased to participate in the ASBU TV and Radio Festival from 25 to 28 April in Hammamet, Tunisia.



Marcello Lombardo being interviewed at the ASBU TV and Radio Festival in Hammamet, Tunisia.