

Press Release

Digital Radio in Hessen: Network expansion progressing rapidly

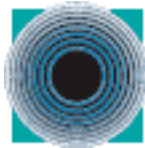
Hessen responds to the demand by the Federal Chancellor and puts new broadcasting stations into operation

Frankfurt/Main, 23 November 2001 – Two months after the start of the regular operation of digital radio in Hessen the transmission network operator responsible, Hessen Digital Radio GmbH (HDR), has put into operation two additional transmitters for the ensemble across the whole Land (Channel 12C). As well as the broadcasting station on the Großer Feldberg, the digital radio programs will now also be broadcast from Krehberg (Darmstadt) and Habichtswald (Kassel). In the next few weeks additional broadcasting stations will follow in Fulda and Dünsberg (Gießen). The Land-wide network coverage for the new radio standard will thereby rise from 32 to 78 percent.

With the commissioning of the transmitter HDR is responding very rapidly to the appeal by the Federal Chancellor: In his opening address to the "Internationale Funkausstellung" (IFA) [International Radio and Television Exhibition] Gerhard Schröder demanded that the network for digital radio be consistently expanded and that available frequencies be used more for broadcasting digital radio programs. Dirk Risse, the Managing Director of HDR, is aware of his responsibility: "The rapid expansion of the network is an important contribution towards accelerating the planned switch from analog to digital radio."

Thanks to a Land-wide coverage of around 80 percent, digital radio programs can now already be received in almost the whole of Hessen. In order to improve fixed-location reception in the conurbations of Frankfurt/Main and Kassel, in the coming year Risse wants to put additional broadcasting stations into operation – full coverage (95 percent) will be achieved in 2003.

Two programs are currently on air throughout Hesse: DeutschlandRadio Berlin and Deutschlandfunk. Four additional programs will initially be added by commercial broadcasters. Frequencies were allocated in June by the Hessische Landesmedienanstalt für privaten Rundfunk (LPR) [Hessen Land Media Authority for Commercial Broadcasting] to Hit Radio FFH, F.A.Z. Business Radio, Planet Radio and RTL Radio. Risse gives his assurance that the programs will be offered as soon as the program broadcasters have concluded the appropriate contracts with Hessen Digital Radio GmbH. This could happen from one day to the next.



"Clear political decisions are called for"

In the view of the transmission network operator, the main challenge now is for program broadcasters and policy-makers to ensure the rapid success of digital radio in Hessen: "The network is established, inexpensive radio equipment is available - now we only need even more programs and supplementary services." The fact that 14 program broadcasters applied with a total of 20 radio programs for the six digital radio licenses in Hessen proves the great interest of the radio producers in the new radio standard. Without a doubt, there is a willingness to make a commitment to the digitalization of radio. However, Risse is convinced that clear political decisions would significantly reinforce the commitment: "If the policy-makers would name a specific deadline, this would not only produce planning and investment security for all parties concerned but would also create a crucial prerequisite for an accelerated and successful changeover."

Contact:

Leipziger & Partner
Johannes Podszun
Tel.: 069 / 75804-419
E-Mail: JohannesPodszun@leipziger.de

Hessen Digital Radio GmbH
Carmen Kautner
Tel.: 069 / 90 43 27 15
E-Mail: Carmen.Kautner@HessenDigitalRadio.de