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# The transition to digital television in Greece: Now what?

## ABSTRACT

*This article aims to provide an overview of the current state of digital television in Greece. By examining the latest digital developments in the middle of financial crisis, it suggests that the Greek government adopted a purely market-driven approach leaving the private forces to take up digital terrestrial television. The closure of the public broadcaster, ERT, has accelerated the neo-liberal market-driven policy and Greece has ended up as one of the countries that have left the development of digital terrestrial television entirely to the private sector.*

## INTRODUCTION

The transition to digital television – cable, satellite or terrestrial – is part of a larger process of change (Galperin 2004; Hart 2004) but, the development of digital television depends on the existing media structure. Although there are numerous variations, following the ‘structural variation’, European countries seem to form four distinct groups:

- Countries, where the terrestrial reception mode dominates (France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and Finland).

## KEYWORDS

digital television  
digital terrestrial television  
ERT (Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation)  
Digea  
Nova  
OTE (Hellenic Telecommunications Organization)

- Countries where cable infrastructure is the dominant mode (Sweden, Denmark, Benelux countries, Germany and Austria). It seems that the analogue switch-off is not a major issue in most of these countries.
- Countries with neither widespread cable penetration nor particularly advanced DTT plans look as if they will struggle to meet the deadline (Greece, Ireland, Poland and other countries). In these countries DTT is still in a trial phase.
- Eastern and Central European countries, where the preparation for the digital switchover adds to the complexity of post-Communist transformation in broadcasting (see Jakubowicz 2007).

Another variable for the development of the new media focuses on the differences between larger and smaller countries. In effect, smaller countries cannot easily pursue developments in the communications field as easily as larger ones, and the starting points for dealing with problems and issues are often very different, drawing, as they do, on factors of power, resources and market size (Papathanassopoulos 2002). Thus, the digital switchover becomes a challenge for smaller countries in the European Union whose media markets might be less developed and mostly unregulated (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2009).

A third important variable is that political, social and financial conditions impact the development of the media systems and consequently the development of the new media (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002). In Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, for example, private interests with political alliances control the private media and seek to use their media properties for political ends and ambitions (Mancini and Zielonka 2012). In an equal way, they want to take advantage of the new developments in the field. Additionally, the financial conditions seem to be equally important for the development of the new media. For example, a country in a situation of economic turmoil does not allow unhindered development of the new media.

The policy adopted for the development of the new media is equally important. According to Starks (2007), one can see four policy paths:

- In the *market model* the costs are borne primarily by the broadcasting industry, the receiver industry and the consumer. Public expenditure is limited to the role of government and regulators and public policy aims to encourage the market to produce solutions that meet the nation's needs.
- In the *public policy-driven model* the government sets the timetable for the switchover, regardless of the level of market demand for new services and new receivers, and therefore has to provide a substantial part of the funding, either directly or indirectly.
- Finally, one notices a *do nothing* policy option. This case leaves the development of digital television to the market and keeps the government out of it.

The development of Greek digital television, either terrestrial or satellite, was left to the private sector. The recent financial crisis has heavily affected the public policy regarding the development of DTT as well. In this article I will argue that the Greek government adopted a purely market-driven approach and relied exclusively on the private sector for the development of DTT. However, in the initial phase, the government used the public broadcaster as the driver of development. It seems that the financial crisis in relation to the obligations to the European Union's switch-off plan has led the government to leave the development of DTT entirely to the market forces and private TV companies.



## A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE GREEK MEDIA SYSTEM

The media sector in Greece is characterized by an excess of supply over demand. There is a plethora of media outlets for such a small market of eleven million people, while a little less than half of the population resides in the capital, Athens. On the other hand, this seems to be a kind of tradition in Greece, since there are more newspapers, more TV channels, more magazines and more radio stations than such a small market can support (Papathanassopoulos 2001).

The deregulation of the state broadcasting monopoly in the late 1980s has led to a radical transformation of the whole media sector. In fact, the Greek newspapers faced the biggest challenge in their history: increasing competition from electronic media and the need to harness the publishing tools offered by new technologies. For newspapers, these challenges required the reconsideration of traditional publishing goals and marketing strategies. The magazine sector also witnessed a sharp decline in sales, and it reacted by closing some of the old, traditional titles and publishing new ones, with minor effects (Papathanassopoulos 2005). The broadcasting sector has undergone a spectacular change: from a broadcasting environment with two public TV channels and four public radio stations, in the early 1990s, it has become an overcrowded environment comprising 160 private TV channels and 1200 private radio stations, but none of them with an official license to broadcast. In effect, in a paragraph for the digital satellite and pay-TV television law of 1998, the then socialist government foresaw that those TV stations that have applied for an official license might be regarded as holding a temporary licence to broadcast. This 'practice' has been 'implemented' by successive governments, either the Conservatives or the Socialists, up to the time of writing these lines.

In sum, the Greek TV system has a strong but unregulated private broadcasting terrestrial sector, coloured by patronage politics, cronyism and haphazard policies resulting to a weak public broadcaster. The public broadcaster, the ERT (Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation) with three terrestrial channels ('ET1', 'NET' and 'NET') was closed down by the government in June 2013. Although the terrestrial market is overcrowded, with a plethora of national and local stations, six private channels ('Mega', 'ANT1', 'Alpha TV', 'Star', 'SKAI', 'Macedonia TV') attract high viewership shares. In addition, Greece has undergone broadcasting commercialization, adopting a market-led approach. Like other southern European countries, the main mode of reception in Greece is through terrestrial frequencies.

The unprecedented financial crisis and recession since 2009 has affected both the media sector in general and the public policy regarding the development of DTT in particular.

## DIGITAL SATELLITE TV

The development of digital satellite TV in Greece was left entirely to the initiatives of the private sector, while the role of government was limited to overseeing the developments in the sector. Digital satellite transmission commenced in March 1998. Multichoice/Netmed Hellas, the pay-TV operator in the analogue frequencies, announced its intentions to go ahead with its own digital platform, called Nova. But a day before this announcement, the then socialist government came out in favour of a single satellite platform, in which all the interested parties, both private and public (e.g. Hellenic Telecommunications



Organization (OTE), ERT) could participate. In effect, the government through a new law on 'the provision of subscription of broadcasting services and related regulations' attempted to cover all aspects of subscription broadcasting services, and not only those of satellite and digital television services (see Iosifidis 2002). But there was more talk than action. Nova could not wait any longer, and announced the start of digital satellite TV. In fact, on 16 December 1999 Nova officially started its operation by securing three transponders on Eutelsat's 'Hot Bird' Satellites 2, 3 and 4, respectively, all located at 13° East.

One and a half years later, the private TV station, Alpha TV, entered the digital television universe with its platform Alpha Digital. The second digital satellite platform in the Greek media landscape started operations on 29 October 2001 (see Papathanassopoulos 2011; Iosifidis 2002). Regardless of the fact that there were voices arguing that the Greek broadcasting market was too small to sustain competing digital platforms operating incompatible decoding technologies, Alpha Digital considered that subscription television was in its infancy in Greece and would develop considerably, thus creating a strong digital TV market with a vast business opportunity. The newcomer considered that convergence and technological developments would provide room for a second operator in the market. The result was a 'war' between the two satellite digital platforms, and the Greek premier league became one of the most expensive programmes in European television, resulting in a fiasco. After a year of intense competition, especially over soccer TV rights, Alpha Digital, with only 35,000 subscribers, on 9 September 2002 announced the suspension of its operation due to its failure to meet its economic obligations (Papathanassopoulos 2006). In practice, the eagerness of the interested businesses to introduce digital TV services led them to ignore both the size of the Greek market and Greek consumers' behaviour. It was also proven in practice that the Greek market is too small for competing digital pay-TV ventures without interoperability.

A few years later, Multichoice/Nova was bought out by telecommunications operator Forthnet for 491 million euros. In autumn 2013, the telecoms (voice, Internet and mobile) operator Wind announced the beginning of talks with Forthnet for a potential collaboration or even as a major investor in the venture. The number of its subscribers increased to 400,000 by the mid of 2013. Nevertheless, one wonders why the Greek viewer should become a subscriber, given that there are so many free channels at his or her disposal, and especially when most of them broadcast premium movies and soccer games on a regular basis.

### **IPTV**

IPTV is a recent development in the Greek digital TV landscape. It is considered to be the third digital platform after satellite and terrestrial, profiting from the fact that cable TV networks are practically non-existent in Greece. Currently there are only three IPTV commercial services on offer. On Telecoms, a joint venture with Vivondi and Hellas-on-Line offers a package of video-on-demand and a rather limited range channels. But the significant player, up to now, is the television package by the largest telecom company in Greece, OTE, OTE TV now offering its services through their own closed IP Network (local loop unbundling from incumbent telecom operator OTE) or via satellite. OTE TV's 'Full Pack' includes more than 70 digital channels, with exclusive sports and film content as well as the most complete bouquet of national and local channels. In August 2009, the former conservative government



permitted Hellas Sat, the Greek satellite system, to launch a direct-to-home satellite service on the Greek market that OTE aims to use for its IPTV service. It is worth noting that the launch of this OTE-backed operation comes ten years after the launch of Multichoice Hellas/Nova, owned, as noted, by OTE's main competitor in broadband connections, Forthnet. Hellas Sat will use the Hellas Sat 2 satellite at 39° East that is already home to its 750,000-subscriber Romanian service Dolce. The company is also working with the Bulgarian platform Bulsatcom, with whom the new service is expected to share high-definition content. Hellas Sat 2 is received in around 2,500,000 households in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. OTE TV has announced that the number of its subscribers has risen to 200,000 in September 2013.

## DTT: THE PUBLIC PHASE

DTT seemed to be the next priority the former conservative government (2004–2009). In effect, the government aimed to undertake the integration of Greek television industry into DTT through the public broadcaster (Papathanassopoulos 2011), while the present coalition (Conservatives and Socialists) government aims to complete the final switchover by the end of 2014 or beginning of 2015.

As noted, the public broadcaster, ERT, acted as a pioneer in introducing DTT to the Greek audience. ERT undertook a pilot project launching three brand new channels (not simulcasting ERT's analogue channels) that were available only on DTT. ERT started broadcasting these DTT channels – 'Prisma Plus' (launched on 16 March 2006), 'Cine Plus' (25 April 2006) and 'Sport Plus' (29 May 2006) – while no legislative framework was in place in Greece. Prisma Plus was a channel with broad-based appeal that was fully accessible to those that were sight or vision-impaired and broadcast daily for seven hours, with programmes that used sign language and subtitles. Sport Plus (sports) and Cine Plus (mainly films) used to broadcast on a 6–10 hours daily basis. The programmes used to repeat around the clock. In 2009, ERT digital channels broadcast new productions co-funded by the EU within the 7th Framework project. The three digital channels were funded exclusively from ERT's budget, carrying no advertisements (according to ERT's officials the public service broadcaster did not want to offend or alienate the private broadcasters by eroding their advertising revenues). It is also noted that ERT's licence fee was increased to about 55 euros (paid by all households via the electricity bill) to cope with the additional expenditure related to digital channels. ERT's digital terrestrial programme was initially broadcast only to Athens, Thessaloniki and later to a handful of other major cities (Larisa, Volos, Trikala, Karditsa), but there has been no timetable and plan for covering the whole of Greece.

In 2008, ERT was planning to launch a second multiplex that would broadcast the current analogue channels as well as the 'Hellenic Parliament Channel'. This project materialized on 27 September 2010, rather haphazardly following the pressure resulting from the introduction and development of the digital terrestrial platform, Digea, a consortium operated by the private TV stations. What is more astonishing is that ERT's first and second multiplexes broadcast using MPEG-2 as the compression system, although the private broadcasters were using the MPEG-4 system. Although ERT has said that it would migrate to MPEG-4 system there was no plan for this 'migration' until ERT's 'last days'.

Moreover, no interactive services were offered by ERT, although the first interactive service, 'infoplus', was planned to commence in 2008. By and



large, one can say that the main problem with the policy-choice of ERT as the 'champion' of the switchover process was that the public broadcaster could not convince citizens to turn to digital TV. This was probably related to the low level of popularity of the public broadcaster, as well as to the lack of content offered by ERT's digital channels (in most of the cases low-budget programming that was neither attractive nor innovative).

### **DTT: THE PRIVATE PHASE**

In August 2008, the government, after some pressure, asked the private broadcasters to participate intensely, in effect to take the lead, in the digital switchover. According to the law of 2007, entitled 'New Act on Concentration and Licensing of Media Undertakings', the private analogue TV broadcasters were encouraged to collaborate with ERT in forming a single multiplex operator company that would act as the network operator for the whole Greek Digital Terrestrial Platform. This was reminiscent of the digital satellite case, but in reality, the government aimed to use the private broadcasters as the drivers of the digital development. The components of that digital TV policy were the finalization of the Greek digital map, as well as the adoption of flexible, effective procedures regarding the granting of the digital licences.

In July 2009, Digea Digital Provider S.A. was officially named as the DTT network provider for the seven main Greek private TV channels ('Mega', 'ANT1', 'Alpha', 'Alter', 'Star', 'Macedonia TV' and 'SKAI'). The name was taken from a unification of the words 'digital' and 'Gaia' (meaning Earth). Broadcasts from Digea began in summer 2009 and gradually they have spread in many regions of the country until the full digitalisation of the terrestrial frequencies (November 2014).

Digea's main area of activity centres on the provision of networking and multiplexing services, both to the above-mentioned shareholders and any legal entity opting to use the company's services. The project was a complex technical, financial and communications venture with considerable investment capital, which was implemented gradually with considerable success. In effect, the development of DTT by Digea was forecast to be completed within three to four years. In this first transitional phase the TV stations would be simulcasting to the majority of households in both digital and analogue signal. During this period, Greeks were expected to familiarize themselves with digital television, and would be asked to equip themselves with the appropriate devices so that their television sets would be able to receive and process digital signals, or to purchase new sets that would include the necessary equipment. At this point, certain broadcasting areas/centres (such as Aigina for the Attica region) were chosen so that the already overloaded Ultra High Frequency (UHF) spectrum would be able to accommodate the frequencies carrying digital signals. In these cases, a certain number of consumers had to purchase the appropriate set-top box or, if possible, re-orient their antennas to face another analogue broadcasting source. During the first transition phase, 23 transmission points were planned to be activated to digital technology. For this purpose, Digea implemented a major TV campaign concerning the advantages of digital technology through the private stations that participate in the consortium (Papathanassopoulos 2010). The final switch-off phase will be concluded when approximately 90 per cent of Greek households will be equipped with the necessary digital reception technology.



In effect, the digitalization of the terrestrial frequencies and the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting was regarded as the best opportunity by the Greek government to regulate, in effect to by-pass, the unregulated Greek TV landscape and provide it with a new regulated system based on digital terrestrial transmission. In fact, the aforementioned Law 3592/2007 made it possible for licensed television stations to transmit digitally their analogue TV programme using frequencies that would be allocated for the period up until the digital switchover. The majority of those frequencies have been used for analogue TV broadcasting by local TV stations, but the frequencies will be cleared so as to be available only for DTT broadcasting. The procedure for licensing DTT stations is to be regulated through a Presidential Decree.

According to the 2007 Law, the responsibilities for the Ministry of Transport & Communications and the Ministry of Press and the Media are to establish the regulatory framework for the licensing procedure; to create the frequency map and establish the technical requirements and to grant the licences. With regard to the regulatory bodies, the Law foresees that the regulatory agency the NBC is responsible for initiating the tender procedure for the granting of licences and for checking the compliance with the relevant legislation regarding content. The other regulatory body, the EETT, will be responsible for checking the incumbents for compliance with the technical requirements. Finally, this new legislation contains provisions on the implementation of the Electronic Communications Services and Networks Directive 2002/77/EC, as well as on television via broadband networks (IPTV) and wireless networks (mobile TV).

The former conservative government created a provisional frequency map where the whole country was divided into fourteen broader services areas. Each area comprised the transmissions sites (primary and secondary). It was also envisaged that where frequencies have been used by local channels for analogue terrestrial television, these would be cleared for digital terrestrial broadcasting by national TV channels (free-to-air and pay-TV).

But little was done. Its successor, the then socialist government was facing the worst economic crisis in Greece's modern history and in practice seemed to have postponed any initiative in the area by the public broadcaster. In effect, it closed down the public broadcaster's digital arm, ERT Digital. In March 2013, the then socialist led coalition government decided to close down ERT's digital arm, ERT Digital, with its three digital channels. In their frequencies, the government in an unprecedented move decided to broadcast BBC World, Deutsche Welle, Euronews and TV5 Europe.

In practice, the government left the development of DTT entirely to the private broadcasters and considered them as 'champions'. The case of the Euronews is indicative. As the European channel turned to the Greek language, the public broadcaster, obviously following government's orders, excluded Euronews from ERT's digital terrestrial frequencies.

The digital operator, Digea, as noted, is controlled by the private national channels but it is legally a separate entity. In theory, access to the platform can be open to all and transparent. Moreover, this is similar to other countries where the public broadcasters are no longer the (sole) infrastructure providers. In practice, Digea has emerged as the sole provider of DTT in Greece and consequently has a monopoly status on DTT as well as a dominant position in the DTT market in particular and the digital television in general. This is because 95 per cent of the Greek TV households receive their TV signals over the air and there is an absence of an alternative competitive media platform (either satellite or IPTV). In other words, the shareholders of Digea are also



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- Allotment 15 (Lamia) – November 2013
  - Allotment 22 (Pyrgos), 23 (Tripoli), 25 (Kalamata) 26 (Sparta) – December 2103
  - Allotment 2 (Plaka), 3 (Thasos), 4 (Paggaion) – January 2014
  - Allotment 20 (Attica-SFN-1), 21 (Attica-SFN-2) – March 2014
  - Allotment 17 (Ainos), 18 (Patra), 19 (Korinthos) – April 2014
  - Allotment 5 (Thessaloniki), 6 (Xalkidiki), 12 (Larisa), 14 (Volos) – May 2014
  - Allotment 1 (Evros), 7 (Florina), 8 (Metaxas), 9 (Ioannina), 10 (Thesprotia), 11 (Corfu) – July 2014
  - Allotment 13 (Arkananika), 16 (Karpenisi), 24 (Nafplio) – September 2014
  - Allotment 27 (Western Crete), 28 (Central Crete), 29 (Eastern Crete), 30 (Dodecanese), 31a (Cylades-SFN-1), 31b (Cyclades-SFN-2), 32 (Samos), 33 (Lesvos), 34 (Kastelorizo) – November 2014
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Source: Government Gazette, 2012.

Table 1: The plan of the Greek switch-off.

the owners of the national private TV stations. They are also powerful players in the Greek economy associated with the construction industry, shipping and property complexes of media.

In the last five years it seems it is Digea rather than the successive governments that decided on the system (MPEG-4), the frequencies they will use (according to the provisional map of frequencies), and the areas in which they will start simulcasting, while the regulatory authority, the NBC, acted as a spectator – implementing the inaction policy path of the successive Greek governments regarding broadcasting policy. The whole information campaign for the public has also been left entirely to Digea. But, at the time of writing, there is no governmental plan regarding the digital dividend, at least with central planning and with a strict time-frame. Moreover, there have been no feasibility studies concerning the development of HDTV, and the government has not yet announced the final number of multiplexes per area. The ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks has formed, however, a working group to advise the minister on how to proceed.

Meanwhile, the whole media sector has been heavily affected by the financial crisis. This situation causes some to wonder whether Greece has a realistic plan for completing switchover within the EU time frame. On the other hand, digital television may be seen as a driver for development. Executives at Digea claimed that in areas where DTT was the only mode of reception, the population changed their TV set almost immediately (Papathanassopoulos 2011). They also have claimed that awareness has been raised: while two years ago Greek people equated digital television with the flat screen TV, nowadays the population is more aware of the various facets of the new medium. In effect, in July 2012 the parallel transmission of analogue and digital signals was discontinued for the most part of the Attica region giving a major impetus for the development of DTT in Greece, and a good motive for the electronics stores since Athenian households were forced to buy new set-top boxes or new TV sets or even reception equipment.



## THE CLOSING DOWN OF ERT AND THE EFFECTS ON DIGITAL: A DISCUSSION

On Tuesday, 11 June 2013 at 23:50, the screen of the public broadcaster ERT went black. On the radio stations of the Greek public broadcaster there had already been a few hours total silence. In effect, a few hours earlier the conservative-led coalition government announced its decision to close down and subsequently restructure Greek public broadcasting corporation ERT 'on the right track'.

This decision marks the first time a Greek government has plucked the necessary political courage to close down a public organization, a state company that entirely controls. In effect, the entry of private TV channels was disastrous for the public broadcaster in terms of audiences and advertising expenditure. ERT's three channels have witnessed a steady erosion of market share since private TV channels launched in late 1989 (ET1 19.7%, ET2 8.7% in 1990, ET1 2.9% and ET2/NET 8.6% and ET3 3.5% in 2010) – the sharpest decline among western European state broadcasters.

While the two major political parties (Conservatives and Socialists) were climbing on and off the commercial bandwagon, they gave no real thought to how to renovate the public sector and redefine the concept and mission of the public service broadcaster. The emergence of private stations has been disastrous for the public broadcaster. The paradox is that few disagree that the public broadcaster was bureaucratic and overstaffed. But, any time a report or a proposal for change came out, this provoked political controversy and strikes among the staff of ERT. The outcome, up to now, was non action and the decline continued. In short, the public broadcaster had become a minority service, in terms of TV ratings and advertising revenue. This made it difficult to justify even its licence fee (paid through the electricity bills) (Papathanassopoulos 2006).

But the way the government closed down the public broadcaster provoked the angry reaction of the oppositional parties, trade unions, etc. The opposition claimed that the government fired ERT's 2500 employees to prove to Greece's international lenders (the so called 'troika' – International Monetary Fund, European Commission and the European Central bank) that it was serious about cutting the country's bloated public sector. The troika of international lenders expects 4000 jobs to go by the end of 2013. Moreover, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), press associations as well as more than 50 Directors General of European Public Broadcasters reacted to this decision. Additionally, the EBU relayed ERT's signal via the satellites (via Hotbird 13A in Europe, APSTAR 7 in Asia and Intelsat 19 in Oceania as well as via the Internet web page). In effect, ERT made use of new technologies by sending its signal via hundreds of Internet sites and social media; it adopted a new cooperative method of news production and content, it managed to host various views and voices and finally achieve unprecedented ratings never achieved in its history: 2.8 million single users were watching its programme in the first days from the EBU site. On the other hand, the government asked all private media stations to stop re-broadcasting ERT programmes, arguing that any broadcast bearing the logo ERT, would 'face disciplinary action'.

More than a month later, a transitional TV channel called 'Public Television', formed by the government in the aftermath of a decision by the Court of Appeals that a channel of a public service mission should stay on,



due to the international and local outcry, started transmitting a poor diet of programming based on old documentaries films and later on news on the ERT's digital frequencies.

But what is interesting is that the command for shutting down ERT's channels on 11 June 2013 was given by the government to Digea. In fact, Digea followed and implemented the wishes of the government. Perhaps, it is not a coincidence that Digea has been upgraded to the sole national player regarding the digitalization of the Greek TV universe. Nor is it a coincidence that Digea's owners, the private TV channels were positive rather than negative to the government's decision regarding the closure of the public broadcaster. Neither that technicians of the private TV channels, accompanied by the police forces, switched-off the transmitters of ERT, interrupted ERT's signal and then helped the broadcast of digital signal bars. The latter were broadcast by the two private platforms/operator, OTE and Digea. According to Nicos Michalitsis, former Director of ERT's Maintenance section:

people were wondering what kind of relationship these private companies might have with ERT's closure. The truth is that they don't only relate to, but they also actively participated in, particularly Digea, a government plan for the total control of the TV landscape, as it will come out in the new digital era.

(2013)

Digea, as noted, has already been granted an operation license for the initial phase of switch over to digital transmission throughout 23 different emission areas all-over Greece. On the other hand, ERT's closure coincided with the consultation of the specification of the auction for the DTT frequencies allocation. The consultation ended on 19 June 2013 and according to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Telecommunications Development, Menelaos Daskalakis, the auction was to be announced by 30 June 2013. Six months later, at the moment of writing this article, nothing has been done. Nevertheless, according to the provisions of the auction (given in consultation before ERT's closure) two frequencies were allocated to the public broadcaster (out of three that ERT hold until its closure), four frequencies for network providers with a nationwide coverage (out of two as previously) and two frequencies for network providers' regional coverage. As the press reported, each of the four frequencies can carry up to eight TV channels. The license will last for fifteen years at the amount of 16.4 million euros. Regarding the regional platform (which can carry two to three channels where appropriate), the price is at 1.93 million euros (Infocom 2013). Additionally, the 'disappearance' of ERT from the TV frequencies, seems to satisfy all of those who were against the High Definition project of the public broadcaster, the ERT HD.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

With the demise of ERT and until its successor becomes fully operational, Greece reaches the final development of DTT without having a public service broadcaster to participate in the whole process and most important phase. Second, DTT seems to resemble the analogue TV era since no channel will have an official license to broadcast. The government aims to get approximately 16.4 million euros from the platform provider, but it is uncertain who will pay since the private TV companies, the owners, as noted, of the digital



operator have not paid anything yet for using the digital frequencies and the analogue frequencies in the past. But, as we know the Digital Dividend is the key. The public broadcaster, or ERT's successor, will be allocated fewer frequencies. The government might allocate the new public broadcaster with fewer frequencies, since it will be a 'short version' of its predecessor, ERT. Private TV companies may not have the money to 'bargain' extra frequencies since their finances are in a difficult situation after operation in the four years within a very negative financial climate due to the fiscal crisis.

So, who can 'pay the ferryman'? It seems that only the telecoms operators in general and the mobile operators in particular (in many cases they are the same) have the financial resources, and, most importantly, the cash the bankrupt Greek state needs desperately. The US case is indicative: the government forced the terrestrial stations to abandon the analogue frequencies and go digital, and it then turned around and sold this spectrum to mobile telecoms operators. The closure of ERT may be a 'chance' for raising money, but it remains to be seen. But in Greece 'anything goes', for example, the delays in the case of the Greek DTT seem to be a never-ending story.

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