

TRAFFIC AND TRAVEL INFORMATION (TTI) BROADCASTING

Traffic and Travel Information broadcasting history

Broadcasters recognized the need to help drivers, with easy to understand information, many years ago! EBU member organizations - the national broadcasters with country-wide coverage - have a long successful history of public service TTI broadcasting, delivered free to the end user. For many years they have cooperated to develop this important area of broadcasting through the ongoing EBU Broadcasts for Motorists activity and through the Eurotravel conferences, usually held every four years. The range of TTI broadcasting is considerable and includes many thousands of spoken TTI announcements across Europe every day, supported by TV and Teletext information and service phones. Recently this has been augmented by newly developed services using the Internet and emerging RDS-TMC services.

Within the EBU framework, this significant broadcasting sector is supported operationally by daily contacts between EBU members across national boards, to provide strategic knowledge covering TTI situations in other countries.

TTI coming up-to-date

In the last ten to 12 years, massive amounts of research and development have been funded by the European Commission (EC), within the very wide Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) budgets, to bring forward many technical solutions for TTI collection (eg road sensors), information interchange (eg DATEX) and dissemination (eg RDS-TMC).

However, in the last five years, significant commercial exploitation, using non broadcasting delivery (eg GSM phones) has been developed to the extent that TTI - broadcasting and narrowcasting - now has many new opportunities and threats to consider.

European perspective for TTI

These developments have led the European Union (EU) to declare its policy for RDS-TMC, as the first priority action for deployment Europe-wide in the next few years (*Community Strategy and Framework for the Deployment of Road Transport Telematics in Europe, COM(97)223 final*). Over the last two and a half years, the EBU has been working in the EC funded EPISODE Project, which is concerned with monitoring the RDS-TMC final implementation plans. It is providing a "voice" for the broadcast sector in the TTI and Transport worlds, which are dominated by ministries and very large industrial companies who use their lobbying power, through ERTICO, to influence EC policy-making, and ultimately this reaches the European parliament decision-makers.

TTI issues are not all straight forward!

The EU priority action to deploy RDS-TMC was considered to become an EU Directive. This would have imposed the need for broadcasters to implement RDS-

TTI has a long successful
history - before RDS-TMC

New technologies for TTI
funded by "Europe" within
ITS budgets

RDS-TMC is high
implementation priority for
Europe

Commercial interest in TTI
may not be public service
oriented

Public broadcasters RDS-TMC
services poorly coordinated

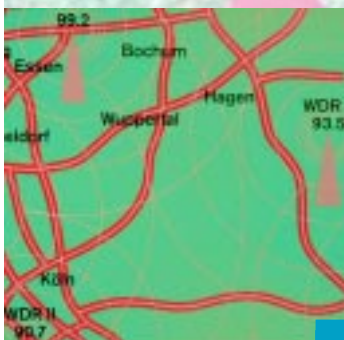


TMC, without any possibility of escape! Nevertheless the outcome was a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for RDS-TMC services with so-called, ALERT functionality. It appears that this MoU hides the use of the ALERT-Plus protocol for Status oriented messages, as well as the ALERT-C protocol for RDS-TMC Event oriented services (see article 13). Implementation of ALERT-Plus will *not* be acceptable to public service broadcasters, who cannot release the very large RDS data capacity required for ALERT-Plus.

The commercial sector has continued to attempt to push a point of view, which hardly recognizes the public service elements of TTI and, as a result, the EU objective of European-wide deployment of RDS-TMC is considerably delayed.

The EPISODE Project

The EPISODE Project, being a inter-disciplinary group, where journalists, programme editors and engineers have worked closely together, has been able to monitor both editorial, end-user and technical issues. As a result, it has issued a number of Project Statements which are on the EPISODE Project web site at URL: www.rds.org.uk/episode. These Statements were not always welcomed at the time of issue, but later the non-broadcast sectors involed in RDS-TMC implementation have come to realise that the concepts and predictions therein were indeed realistic and valid. Additionally, the EPISODE Project developed the text of an EBU Statement D81-1996 on RDS-TMC, which suggests a positioning in favour of RDS-TMC implementation, but also looks towards the future of DAB.



RDS-TMC implementation steps

Across Europe, many EC-funded Projects are now beginning to set up RDS-TMC deployments, but these are being driven by ministry and government agencies. The Euro-Regional Projects, in particular, are aiming at solving cross border issues. From the broadcasting viewpoint these are not fully coordinated and different models are being used, including some in which the network-capable public service broadcasters are not included. In this context the power of the European member states' transport ministries to decide on their policies (even potentially to the disadvantage of the broadcasters traditional sources of information) must not be underestimated.

The European trend for separating broadcasters and transmission operators has been a cause for concern within the EBU, because the TTI world does not understand the resulting difficulty that broadcasters face in coordinating on-air information via the various delivery mechanisms in use: Spoken radio announcements, Internet, TV, Teletext, and RDS-TMC.

"A fifth of driving time is spent getting lost on unfamiliar roads and motorists waste 350,000 tonnes of fuel going around in circles" - The Automobile Association, UK

"European statistics suggest that some 680 million road journeys are made each weekday, lasting an average of 20 minutes. If 10% of the traffic is held up in traffic jams, that represents a total cost of ECU 32 billion per year, not counting heavy-goods traffic! The cost in time lost, owing to traffic problems, is estimated at 0.5% of the European GDP. Public service TTI broadcasting, helping to alleviate these problems, is a far from negligible contribution to the economies of the EU Member States."