

2nd Generation Terrestrial

The world's most advanced Digital Terrestrial TV system



What is DVB-T2?

DVB-T2 is a digital terrestrial transmission system developed by the DVB Project and designed for use in a post-Analogue Switch-Off (ASO) environment. It introduces the latest modulation and coding techniques to enable highly efficient use of valuable terrestrial spectrum for the delivery of audio, video and data services to fixed, portable and mobile devices. DVB-T2 is not designed to replace DVB-T; rather the two standards will coexist in many markets for many years.

Background

The most widely adopted and deployed standard for Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) is DVB-T, published in March 1997. Services are on air in more than 35 countries with many more set to launch in the coming years. A mature and well-established standard, it benefits from economies of scale that lead to very low receiver prices and is flexible enough to enable a wide range of business models. Nonetheless, the approach of ASO in Europe and other developed DTT markets has generated an impetus to update the standard in a similar way as has already been achieved with DVB-S2 for satellite broadcasting. There will be many competing demands for the spectrum that will be released at ASO – with DVB-T2 the DVB Project offers broadcasters a means of using that spectrum in the most efficient ways possible using state of the art technology.

More than sixty DVB member companies have contributed to the work, which generated hundreds of meeting days and thousands of emails. As with all DVB standards, the final specification is based on a carefully considered set of Commercial Requirements. Key requirements included an increase in capacity and improved robustness. (Current projections suggest that capacity gains of around 45% will be achieved.) The new standard was also required to be able to reuse currently existing receive antennas and downlinks.

How does it work?

As with its predecessor, DVB-T2 uses OFDM (orthogonal frequency division multiplex) modulation, with a large number of sub-carriers delivering a robust signal. Also in common with DVB-T, the new specification offers a range of different modes making it a very flexible standard. In the realm of error correction, DVB-T2 uses the same coding that was selected for DVB-S2. LDPC (Low Density Parity Check) coding combined with BCH (Bose-Chaudhuri-Hocquengham) coding offers excellent performance in the presence of high noise levels and interference, resulting in a very robust signal.

Several options are available in areas such as the number of carriers, guard interval sizes and pilot signals, so that the overheads can be minimised for any target transmission channel. A new technique, called Rotated Constellations, provides significant additional robustness in difficult channels. Also, a mechanism is provided to separately adjust the robustness of each delivered service within a channel to meet the required reception conditions (e.g. in-door antenna/roof-top antenna). This same mechanism allows transmissions to be tailored such that a receiver can save power by decoding only a single programme rather than a whole multiplex of programmes.

DVB-T2 also specifies a transmitter diversity method, known as Alamouti coding, which improves coverage in small-scale single-frequency networks. Finally, DVB-T2 has defined a way that the standard can be *compatibly* enhanced in the future through the use of Future Extension Frames.

	DVB-T	DVB-T2
FEC	Convolutional Coding + Reed Solomon 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8	LPDC + BCH 1/2, 3/5 , 2/3, 3/4, 4/5 , 5/6
Modes	QPSK, 16QAM, 64QAM	QPSK, 16QAM, 64QAM, 256QAM
Guard Interval	1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32	1/4, 19/256 , 1/8, 19/128 , 1/16, 1/32, 1/128
FFT size	2k, 8k	1k, 2k, 4k, 8k, 16k, 32k
Scattered Pilots	8% of total	1%, 2%, 4%, 8% of total
Continual Pilots	2.6% of total	0.35% of total

Figure 1. Table comparing available modes in DVB-T and DVB-T2

Market Deployment

In the years ahead, in countries where DVB-T services have become well-established, regulators will be keen to achieve full Analogue Switch-Off (ASO) and, in the process, release valuable UHF and VHF spectrum for other purposes. Some countries have already completed ASO. One option at ASO will be the introduction of new services using DVB-T2 technology. This could enable, for example, the roll out of new nationwide multiplexes offering multichannel HDTV services, or perhaps innovative new datacasting services. As with DVB-T, the new standard is certain to target not just roof-top and set-top antennas, but also PCs, laptops, in-car receivers, and a whole range of other innovative receiving devices.

The transition from DVB-T to DVB-T2 will need to be carefully managed in such countries, if such a transition happens. The DVB Project fully expects DVB-T and DVB-T2 services to co-exist side-by-side for some time to come - and it's clear from the experiences in Australia (DVB-T, MPEG-2 video coding) and France (DVB-T, MPEG-4 video coding) that terrestrial HDTV services are perfectly viable without using DVB-T2.

The first country to deploy DVB-T2 is likely to be the UK, where ASO is already under way. The regulator there, Ofcom, has stated its intention to convert one nationwide multiplex to DVB-T2 with the first transmissions of multichannel HDTV set to begin at the end of 2009.

Next Steps for DVB-T2

The specification setting work is largely completed. The draft specification will be before the DVB Steering Board for approval at the end of June 2008. On approval it will be released as a DVB BlueBook and sent to ETSI (European Telecommunications Standards Institute) for publication as a formal standard. Vendors are already working on the design of DVB-T2 equipment, with the first prototypes expected by the end of 2008. In parallel, further work will be required within the DVB Project and elsewhere on the creation of implementation guidelines, validation testing, etc.

Links

- www.dvb.org – the main website of the DVB Project
- www.etsi.org – all DVB standards are available for download directly from the ETSI website