

Information note to the Press (Press Release No. 24/2016)

For immediate release

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

TRAI issues a Pre-consultation paper on Set Top Box Interoperability in Broadcasting TV Services.

New Delhi, 4th April 2016:- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today released a pre-consultation paper on Set Top Box Interoperability in Broadcasting TV Services.

2. India has a large base of pay TV subscribers. Predominantly, the pay TV services are being delivered through Cable TV and Direct-To-Home (DTH) systems. There are 6 DTH operators, 2 IPTV operators, 2 HITS operator and large number of Multi System Operators (MSOs) providing pay TV services through Addressable Systems in the country.

3. For addressable Cable TV Systems Set Top Boxes (STBs) are required to receive the TV signals. Due to various technical, commercial and market driven reasons, presently the STB is tied to specific Distribution Platform Operator (DPO). That is, the same STB cannot be used interchangeably across the different service providers.


4. As per the report submitted by DTH Operators to TRAI, as on December 2015, around 85 million of STBs have been either sold or provided to the subscriber in the market, out of which only around 55 million STBs are in active mode. This indicates that around 30 million STBs are lying idle or unused, mainly because of non-interoperability of STBs. Since the inactive STBs cannot be used for reception of services of the other operator, the money invested into the STB go waste and it also results in e-waste. The exact data in respect of Cable TV services is not available but it is anticipated that the numbers of inactive STBs are very large.

5. TRAI has taken up the issue relating to development of interoperable STBs in Digital Television Broadcasting sector that should be compatible across operators using same platforms. STB interoperability would empower the consumers to change their cable TV (or DTH) service providers whenever required, without changing their STBs and without any major cost implications. This would shift the focus of the sector towards providing better quality of services to the consumers at competitive prices. Implementation of STB interoperability, may also make them available in the open market, reduce cost and address the challenge of e-waste resulting due to discarded set-top-boxes. Availability of set-top-box in open market will reduce capital requirement of service providers and improve the cash flow position of the industry.

6. The pre-consultation paper seeks to identify various issues related to interoperability of STBs, challenges, concerns of the industry and the possible solution to achieve the same on the technical interoperability of STBs.

7. Comments of various organizations, industry bodies, standardization bodies, STB manufacturers, Chip vendors, Conditional Access System providers, software providers, stakeholders, experts, individuals etc are solicited so that various issues can be identified and suitable solutions to implement STB interoperability can be worked out.

8. Written comments on the paper are invited from the stakeholders by 29th April, 2016. The comments may be sent, preferably in electronic form to Mr. Sunil Kumar Singhal, Advisor (B&CS) on the e-mail address sksinghal@traigov.in or gs.kesarwani@traigov.in. For any clarification/information, Mr. Sunil Kumar Singhal, Advisor (B&CS) may be contacted at Tel. No.: +91-11-23221509, Fax: +91-11-23220442. Comments will be posted on TRAI's website www.traigov.in.


4/4/2016
S K Gupta,

Secretary in-charge, TRAI.