

ABA Policy and Research looks at the myriad of political and regulatory initiatives around the world in broadcasting, new media and spectrum management policy.

Regulatory policy roundup – international developments

The growing pace of convergence and digitalisation has given rise to a number of political and regulatory initiatives around the world in broadcasting, new media and spectrum management policy. Emerging themes relevant to the public interest include interactivity, mobility, customer sovereignty and the nature of institutional frameworks. At the same time, the response of individual countries to global trends is tempered by differences in national institutions, regulatory frameworks and industry structures.

A selection of recent developments in the United Kingdom and the United States is presented below with links to relevant web sites.

United Kingdom

Digital television and spectrum management

Digital TV draft Action Plan

On 12 October 2001, Douglas Alexander, E-Commerce Minister, and Kim Howells, Broadcasting Minister, announced the publication of the draft Digital TV Action Plan.

www.digitaltv.culture.gov.uk/ministers_fwd.html

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have published the draft as a first step in the development of a comprehensive action plan to prepare for switchover to all-digital TV broadcasting to be published by the end of the year. The plan is intended to

promote the take-up of digital television and prepare for and manage a cessation of analog terrestrial broadcasting.

www.digitaltv.culture.gov.uk/pdfs/draft_digital_TV_action_plan.pdf

One objective of the draft action plan is to respond to the Radiocommunications Agency/DTI Cave Review of Spectrum Management, due to report at the end of 2001. Given the significant growth and innovation in wireless communications, the review seeks to ensure that the framework for spectrum management keeps up with the pace of change.

www.spectrumreview.radio.gov.uk/newsite/welcome.htm

Recent consumer surveys

June 2001 DCMS survey - Consumers and Digital TV

www.digitaltv.culture.gov.uk/pdfs/digtv_final_report.pdf

August 2001 – Office of Telecommunications (OFTEL) Research Study: Digital TV - Consumer's Use and Perception

www.oftel.gov.uk/publications/research/2001/digtv0901.pdf

July 2001 – Independent Television Commission's (ITC) annual survey of viewing habits in the UK, "Television: The Public's View"

www.itc.org.uk/documents/publics_view.pdf

Media ownership

On 22 October 2001, the Culture Secretary, Tessa Jowell, announced that the Government will publish next month a consultation paper asking for views on how best to regulate media ownership. The Culture Secretary also delivered a speech on cross media, noting the need for Governments to periodically clarify the rules on media ownership, and in doing so, to strike a balance between economic and cultural aims.

www.culture.gov.uk/creative/index.html

Organisational Change

Office of Communications (OFCOM) Report

Report commissioned by the Regulator's Steering Group on the foundations for the proposed new UK communications regulator.

www.radioauthority.org.uk/downloads/pdf/tower1001.pdf

United States

Broadband deployment

Speech by Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman, Michael K Powell, on 25 October 2001 on broadband deployment.

Highlights the classic chicken-and-egg dilemma - broadband applications that consumers value are not yet offered to justify broadband service, yet the lack of broadband subscribers inhibits

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subscription. Sets out tools and solutions available to government.

www.fcc.gov/Speeches/Powell/2001/spmcp110.html

Digital broadband migration

Speech by Michael K Powell on 23 October 2001 on digital broadband migration.

Sets out the five areas guiding the FCC's agenda - broadband deployment, competition policy, spectrum allocation policy, re-examination of the foundations of media regulation, and homeland security.

Media policy objectives seek to re-examine and rebuild the factual foundations that support a contemporary regulatory regime for media, while ensuring that the traditional goals of diversity, competition and localism are met

www.fcc.gov/Speeches/Powell/2001/spmcp109.html

Digital Television (DTV)

FCC DTV Task Force

Press Release by Michael K Powell on 11 October 2001 announcing a FCC DTV Task Force to review the ongoing transition to DTV, and to make recommendations to the FCC concerning priorities to facilitate the transition and promote the rapid recovery of broadcast spectrum for other uses.

www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Mass_Media/News_Releases/2001/nrmm0110.html

Media ownership

FCC Chairman, Michael K Powell, announced on 29 October 2001 the creation of a Media Ownership Working Group that will be tasked with developing a solid factual and analytical foundation for media ownership regulation. The findings of this working group will provide an empirical and analytical basis for the FCC to achieve its long-standing goals of promoting diversity, localism, and competition in the media.

hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-217228A1.doc

The creation of the working group follows Chairman Powell's previous announcement on 13 October 2001 that the FCC would review its rule barring common ownership of a broadcast station and daily newspaper in the same market, and to consider whether or to what extent the rule should be revised.

www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Mass_Media/News_Releases/2001/nrmm0109.html

The FCC's Order and Notice Paper of Proposed Rulemaking are at

www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Mass_Media/Orders/2001/fcc01262.pdf

The public interest

FCC Commissioner Copps' speech on 15 October 2001 on the public interest.

www.fcc.gov/Speeches/Copps/2001/spmjc105.html

Spectrum plan for advanced wireless services

On 5 October 2001, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), the FCC, the Department of Defense (DOD), and other Executive Branch agencies have developed a new plan for the assessment of spectrum for advanced wireless services.

www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/threeg/3gplan_100501.htm

Organisational change

Report on FCC reform business plan by Special Counsel to the FCC Chairman, September 13, 2001

www.fcc.gov/Reports/fcc_reform_091301.html

