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MEDIA RELEASE

ICASA publishes draft regulations on Digital Sound Broadcasting services for public comments

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Pretoria – The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA/the Authority) is seeking written submissions in respect of the draft Digital Sound Broadcasting (DSB) Services Regulations. Written submissions must reach the Authority by no later than 16h00 on 29 December 2020 and the submissions must be electronic.

In developing the draft regulations on DSB, the Authority considered its Position Paper and Findings Document published in March 2019, the Policy Directive on DSB issued by the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies on 10 July 2019 as well as the Draft White Paper on Audio and Audio-Visual Content Services Policy Framework published by the Minister for public comment.

Digital broadcasting services utilise a terrestrial distribution network, similar to the current analogue radio services, with one of its advantages, amongst others, spectrum efficiency, which allows more radio channels or stations and a variety of good quality content to the listeners. The objective of licensing DSB services is to provide additional radio channels or pop-up channels under the DSB licensing framework.

Furthermore, the introduction of DSB services is intended to bring about innovation and promote competition within the radio space. Of greater importance is to note that the DSB service will not, in the short and medium term, replace the current FM/AM broadcasting technology but will rather be supplementary i.e. consumers will still be able to tune into their favourite radio stations using their analogue radio receivers.

“It is quite critical to distinguish between online or Internet radio as opposed to digital radio. The former is currently not regulated in South Africa, therefore the introduction of digital radio services is not meant to cater for such services even though DSB itself can also be streamed online. However, the latter uses terrestrial networks in the same way as the current analogue radio services”, says ICASA Adv. Dimakatso Qocha.

The Authority anticipates that licensing in the DSB framework will be informed by the capacity available on the multiplexers and standalone channels. The draft Regulations envisage a phased approach to the introduction of DSB services, starting with the primary markets (Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) and the next phase will be in the secondary markets (North West, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, Free State and Limpopo).

Ends...

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