

Information note to the Press (Press Release No. 22/2020)

For immediate release

TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA

TRAI Issues Recommendation on Interoperable Set Top Box.

1. **New Delhi, 10th April, 2020** - The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has today released recommendation on interoperability of Set Top Box (STB) for digital TV broadcasting services.

2. Presently the STBs deployed in the Cable TV networks are non-interoperable, i.e. the same STB cannot be used interchangeably across the different service providers. As far as STBs deployed by Direct to Home (DTH) players are concerned, STBs comply with the license conditions to support Common Interface (CI) module based interoperability. However, in practice, even in DTH segment the STBs are not readily interoperable. The lack of interoperability of STBs between different service providers not only deprives customer of the freedom to change his service provider but also creates a hindrance to technological innovation, improvement in service quality, and the overall sector growth.

3. TRAI has been engaging with the stakeholders for quite some time for introducing STB interoperability. The issue has its own challenges with disparate interest groups among Distribution Platform Owners, CAS vendors, STB manufacturers and other stakeholders. Since the broadcasting sector is content centric, the security of content and robust anti-piracy features are necessary. Affordability of STB remains an important criterion and any suggested solution should not cause undue increase in price of STB. Ensuring proper content security, strong anti-piracy features and flexibility while keeping the STB costs reasonable are the main challenges for achieving STB interoperability.



4. In this regard, TRAI had *suo-motu* issued the Consultation Paper on 'Interoperability of Set Top Box' on 11th November 2019 seeking the view/response from all the stakeholders towards identifying appropriate solution to implement the interoperability of STBs. In response, comments from thirty seven stakeholders and counter-comment from one stakeholder were received. An Open House Discussion (OHD) was conducted on 29th January 2020.

5. Based on the comments/inputs received from the stakeholders, discussion held during OHD and on its own analysis, TRAI has finalized its Recommendations on 'Interoperability of Set Top Box'. Few of the salient features of the recommendations are:

- i. All ~~the~~ set-top-boxes in India must support technical interoperability in principle, i.e. every STB provided to a consumer must be interoperable.
- ii. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting may include a suitable clause/ condition in the permission/ Registration/ Cable Television Network Rule mandating all the DPOs (DTH as well as MSOs) to compulsorily facilitate service provisioning through the interoperable STBs either provided by DPOs or procured by the consumers from open market.
- iii. There are technical and commercial constraints to universal STB. Therefore, Interoperability of STBs, with effect from the date as prescribed vide the extant clause/ condition, shall be ensured within the DTH or cable segment. That is, the interoperability shall be applicable within the DTH segment and within the cable segment respectively.
- iv. MIB may notify through licensing conditions or amendment in Cable Television Network Rules 1994 as per the Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995 or through any other appropriate mechanism mandatory use of DVB CI+ 2.0 standards (with USB CAM) as per the ETSI



TS 103 605 standards both for DTH STBs and STBs being used by MSOs from a prospective date.

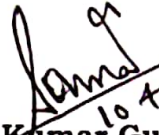
- v. A time of six month may be given to both DTH operators and MSOs to adopt DVB CI Plus 2.0 standards (with USB CAM) as per the ETSI TS 103 605 standards from the date of MIB notifications. MIB may also coordinate with BIS so that suitable amendments are brought within this time frame.
- vi. The Authority recommends mandatory provisioning of USB port based Common Interface for all digital television sets in India. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) in coordination with TRAI and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) may request BIS to amend the specifications for digital television sets to include provisioning of USB based Common Interface port as per DVB CI Plus 2.0 standard based on ETSI TS 103 605 standards. Such specifications must mandate TV manufactures to:
 - a. Provide all digital television sets with minimum one open interface port based on DVB CI Plus 2.0 standards permitting simple connection of USB CAM to allow reception of television signals.
 - b. Provide the digital television sets with built in tuners to enable reception of television content through both satellite and cable platforms.
- vii. Setting Up of Coordination and Implementation Committee:
 - a. A Coordination Committee may be set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) having members from Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and representatives of TV manufacturers. The Committee may steer implementation of revised STB standards for both the DTH and the Cable TV segment. Further the committee may maintain continuous oversight for setting up of the Digital Television Standards by BIS to provide for DVB CI Plus 2.0 port



based on ETSI TS 103 605 standards and to have provision for reception of both DTH and Cable television signals.

b. The coordination committee may steer the adaptation of the revised STB and digital television standards in a time bound manner.

6. The recommendations have been placed on TRAI's website www.traigov.in . For clarification/information, if any, Shri Anil Kumar Bhardwaj, Advisor (B&CS) may be contacted at Tel. No.: +91-11-23237922, Fax: +91-11-23220442 or email id. advbcs-2@traigov.in.


(Sunil Kumar Gupta)
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Secretary, TRAI.