

CZECH REPUBLIC



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After years of tests limited to a few cities, regular digital radio broadcasting began in the Czech Republic in April 2011. For now, the DAB/DAB+ multiplex is available to about one third of the Czech population, covering the most populated cities of the country. A selection of public service channels is available along with small private broadcasters, religious broadcasting and retransmission of Italian stations operated by the RTL Group. The total station count to date is 14.

This year the coverage area will be extended to the northern part of the country with a total population of 1.83 million. However, the timetable for this expansion remains to be determined. Once Northern Bohemia is covered, the signal will be available to about 49 % of the population.

Currently there is only one DAB/DAB+ multiplex operator, the company TELEKO, which uses the L-band. Another operator, RTI CZ, has announced (without giving further details) that it is considering launching digital radio broadcasting in the south-west part of the country during 2012. If this goes ahead, the total reach could be slightly over half of the population by the end of year.

Czech Radio supports digital broadcasting in its regular programs about media and new technologies. A selection of digital receivers is available in the radio shop at Czech Radio's Prague headquarters. Despite the large coverage area, customers can buy devices in fact only via the internet, including via one e-commerce portal operated by TELEKO. None of the country's major electronics retailers offer digital radios and it is questionable whether they will begin doing so during 2012. Despite all this, thousands of radios have already been sold.

Czech Radio is considering launching a new digital channel for children and teenagers in September 2012. The station would be available via an internet stream and over DAB, broadcasting a reduced schedule until December, with the expectation of extending its programming from January 2013.

Further presence of Czech Radio stations on DVB-T platforms has been questioned after Czech Television announced its plan to add one more channel to the public service multiplex. That would in fact mean an end to

radio channel broadcasting over DVB-T due to bandwidth capacity limitations. No decision has yet been made because of legislative circumstances, and negotiations continue.

All eight nationwide public radio channels are available (besides FM) via satellite, DVB-T, internet streams, DAB, cable TV networks, mobile phones and IPTV. Regional stations can be heard via internet streaming, cable TV, mobile phones and on IPTV.