

IT'S EASY TO BE GREEN

Industry Initiative to Cut Energy Consumption of 'Complex' Set-Top Boxes

Adriana Mattei, Zetacast

Energy use is largely driven by economic growth; as the economy grows more energy is used, more fuel is needed to generate electricity and carbon emissions increase. To try to combat the increase in carbon emissions, the European Commission has developed a series of environmental measures. The most relevant to energy using products is the 2005/32/EC directive, or 'Ecodesign' Directive. This aims to establish a coherent framework, where ecodesign requirements relevant to

specific product groups can be set by either self-regulation or by regulatory 'Implementing Measures'. Set-top boxes (STBs) for digital TV have been classified as 'Simple' if they do not support conditional access, 'Complex' if they do. An Implementing Measure has been introduced for Simple STBs. However, this approach is less appropriate for Complex STBs where greater savings can be achieved by the various members of the value chain, including semiconductor suppliers and service providers, working together to minimise the Complex STB carbon footprint. In addition, this methodology increases flexibility and innovation whilst not compromising the customer experience.

To meet the challenge of creating an industry-wide action plan, companies within the Complex STB market have got together and developed an industry-led voluntary agreement. This is a self-regulatory initiative aiming to reduce the potential environmental impact of Complex STBs, whilst avoiding any negative impact on the functionality. This agreement seeks to define practical yet challenging

maximum values for total power consumption that can be met by the large majority of the market. If adopted, the agreement would come into force on 1st July 2010 and would be the first of its kind in the TV industry, binding the whole Complex STB ecosystem – service providers, software, chipset as well as STB manufacturers – under a single umbrella.

At the time of writing, the agreement had been presented to the Consultation Forum under the Ecodesign Directive and 32 companies had already indicated their support: ADB, Amstrad, Broadcom, BSKyB, BT, Canal+, Cisco, Conax, Humax, Intel, Irdeto, Liberty Global, Kabel Deutschland, Microsoft, Motorola, Nagra, NDS, NXP, ONO, OpenTV, Pace, Samsung, SES-Astra, Sky Deutschland, Sky Italia, Sogecable, STM, Tatung, Telenet, Thomson, Viasat and Virgin Media. Further support would be welcome - the greater the level of support from the industry, the greater the chance of success for the initiative and the better the result for the environment. For further information, please go to www.difgroup.eu.

