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## **“THE FUTURE'S DIGITAL” 0010001001...**

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*The EU wants all member states to convert to digital by 2012. What will that mean? Well first and foremost digital broadcasting allows you to pack far more channels and information in general into the bandwidth than does the current analogue method (what we've got at present). That means we will be possibly flooded with radio and TV stations a bit like the way we can already get them on SKY or NTL satellite digital. But what actually is digital? Well, some stations are already broadcasting digitally, that is sending their signal in the form of 0s and 1s instead of the usual analog way, Some are broadcasting in this way over the internet (which is called streaming - Solas FM, the Christian radio station is one) or via satellite using NTL or SKY. But when people talk about going digital what is usually meant is digital terrestrial broadcasting which is in some sense similar to the way we usually pick up television or 'radio' signals except that the signals will be these 0s and 1s (or digital) and not in analogue form. That will require a special digital receiving device to convert those 0s and 1s back into the voice of Pat Kenny, say. Digital radios do this, for example, and are available already at about €50 a go. One of the 'standards' for this type of transmission is called DABS (Digital Audio Broadcasting Services). Remember that name. Solas FM a currently looking at the possibility of a DABS Christian service for Dublin on FM. Ironically however they seem to be ahead of the BCI who haven't yet put together a policy on digital. Although this might all sound a bit technical it's worth bearing in mind that in the near future this is what broadcasting will be. It's not all positive, however. The advent of digital will allow for more interactive broadcasting and the ready manipulation of part of the screen image, where TV is concerned, which from a psychological point of view can leave the viewer very vulnerable to manipulation - and that's just for adults. The effects on children could be especially significant. For this reason FMA has expressed a number of concerns about certain aspects of the application of new technology in the context of advertising, in particular. Please, again, see our submission on the General Advertising Code on our website [www.fma.ie](http://www.fma.ie)*

*More digital information:-*

*RTE website <http://www.rte.ie/radio/dab.html>*

*Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources - Digital Terrestrial TV (DTT)  
<http://www.dcmnr.gov.ie/Broadcasting/Digital+Television/Digital+Terrestrial+Television+Pilot/>*