



*Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs  
The European Consumers' Organisation*



*European Association for the  
Co-ordination of Consumer  
Representation in Standardisation*

Mr Erkki Liikanen  
Member of the European Commission  
European Commission  
SC 15 06/146 BE – 1049

**Faxed to : 022958502**

Ref. NRO/JMU/GFA/052004113/go  
ANEC2004/ICT/032

**4<sup>th</sup> May 2004**

**Subject: interoperability of Digital Interactive Television services**

Dear Commissioner,

We understand that the European Commission will soon have to decide about whether to impose a compulsory API standard for the interoperability of Digital Interactive TV services around Europe. We are writing to you in order to raise the consumers' point of view to your attention.

**BEUC<sup>1</sup> and ANEC<sup>2</sup> call for compatibility and interoperability of Digital Interactive Television services across Europe.** Since the market has not yet satisfied consumer's demands, an open standard<sup>3</sup> for API would be beneficial for consumers for a number of reasons:

- ✓ An open standard will ensure that different systems in the market can work together and therefore that consumers will be able to receive many television services from the same type of set-top boxes, without having to purchase different sets of equipment.
- ✓ An open standard all over Europe will help to create the conditions for free competition in this field. It will allow consumers to have access to a wide range of information at lower prices.

---

<sup>1</sup> BEUC, the European Consumer's organisation represents 35 consumer organisations in 25 European countries. Since 1962 our task is to influence European Union policy in the benefit of consumers.

<sup>2</sup> ANEC defends consumers' interest in standardisation. ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association and represents consumers from the EU Member States and EFTA countries.

<sup>3</sup> Definition of open standard as consensus-based, publicity available, transparently agreed and commercially exploitable on fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory basis.

- ✓ An open standard should allow all digital TV platforms to support expansion modules that offer access to consumers with special needs (sub-titling, audio description according to e-inclusion principles)
- ✓ We believe that it is the right time to act, as digital television services are only starting to develop and become widely available on the market. Open standards will avoid the multiplication of initiatives leading to fragmentation of resources. The longer we wait the harder the transition will be, both for consumers and for businesses.

In addition open standards and interoperability alone will not deliver an information society for all. Other issues need to be addressed such as the development of attractive consumer services, the creation of a secure environment to ensure consumer confidence, and a clear regulatory environment for new electronic services (digital rights management in particular).

Thank you very much for taking our concerns into account.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Murray  
BEUC Director

Gottlobe Fabisch  
ANEC Secretary-General