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## (OUR) Digital Dividend

by the Vice President for the Electronic Communications Sector,  
Mr Angelos Syrigos



To start with, let us first make clear what the digital dividend is. Until today, our TV sets have been receiving an analogue television signal. This means that each TV station requires 8 MHz of spectrum (within the 470-838 MHz band) to send its analogue signal to our receivers. Digital technology transforms this landscape. Thanks to new compression and encoding techniques, instead of one analogue signal, these 8 MHz can now accommodate the digital signals of at least 4 broadcasters, with exceptional reception quality, a number which increases in keeping with technological progress. Therefore, the existing analogue TV stations need

much less frequencies to transmit digitally.

This technological evolution has two major consequences:

- It enables us to restore some order in the chaotic situation currently prevailing as regards the channels used by TV broadcasters all over Greece.
- The frequencies liberated thanks to this new technology will constitute the so-called "digital dividend".

As to the first point, the need for orderliness in the television landscape is self-evident for every well-governed State. In Greece, it should have been established in the course of the last twenty years, which saw the development of private television. Still, it is welcome even now.

The second point, regarding the digital dividend, is of a more immediate interest for the country's economy. We often hear that the spectrum is a scarce resource. But we rarely have the opportunity to realise this as directly and palpably as in the case of the digital dividend. Already, the Governments in 11 European countries have set down that the 790-862 MHz band will remain outside the width within which free reception digital television broadcasters will be transmitting. This band has been financially evaluated in several different ways, both by the European Commission and individual Governments. Various amounts have been mentioned, which are not of interest to us at this point. What is certain is that the 790-862 MHz band, which is already referred to throughout Europe as the digital dividend, has a considerable economic value that is now quite precious for the winter-beaten Greek economy.

The way in which the digital dividend will be utilised is a decision to be made by the Greek State. This decision must be based on criteria related to the enhancement of pluralism and the bridging of the "digital gap" between urban centres and rural regions, the growth fostered by the new applications of technology, and the fees to be paid in exchange of using the specific band. As long as the Greek Government's Decision stays in line with that made by the majority of the other EU countries, then the 790-862 MHz band should remain "clear" after the completion of the switchover to digital television.

In any case, all this has to do with OUR digital dividend, the dividend that represents an asset of the Greek people. We should not let it go to waste, but rather make best use of it, to the benefit of the citizens and the economy.

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