

Press release

FM switch off to follow original timetable

Bern, 26 August 2021. The Swiss radio industry has decided to switch off FM transmitters on 31 December 2024 as originally planned. This is also when the current FM licences expire. As of this date, it will no longer be possible to broadcast radio programmes on FM frequencies. The return to the original switch-off date gives consumers more time to upgrade their radios.

In 2014, the Swiss radio industry agreed to end FM broadcasting by 2024 at the latest. However, given that almost three-quarters of radio programmes were listened to via digital receivers at the end of last year, the industry decided that it would make sense to bring forward the phased switch-off of FM stations to August 2022 (Swiss Broadcasting Corporation SRG SSR) and January 2023 (commercial stations). The move was agreed by forty-two out of forty-four radio broadcasters and the SRG SSR.

However, in recent weeks the FM switch-off has been the subject of public debate. In the German- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland, the vast majority of radio broadcasters are still in favour of an early end to FM transmissions. However, in French-speaking Switzerland it has not been possible to find a sufficient majority to agree on the details of implementation. As a nationwide solution is needed, broadcasters have had to revert to their original plan of ending FM transmissions on 31 December 2024. Furthermore, the latest market survey figures show that listeners need more time to prepare for the switch. Pushing back the deadline gives consumers more time to upgrade their radios, particularly car radios. Since 2020, the share of new vehicles fitted with DAB+ radios has been almost 100 per cent. It is mainly older cars that are unable to receive digital broadcasts via DAB+ or other means and need an upgrade. Upgrade kits are available on the market in various price brackets. New vehicles from the EU sold in Switzerland have had to be fitted with DAB+ radios as standard since 2019.

The radio industry is aware that there is no future for FM after 2024. The existing licences expire at the end of 2024. It will no longer be possible to broadcast radio programmes on FM frequencies after that date.

The general conditions regarding DAB+ will have improved still further by the end of 2024 and there will be an even greater shift towards digital radio usage in the run up to the switch-off date. It is likely to be even easier to upgrade car radios as more devices come onto the market.

The postponement of the FM switch-off to the original date of 31 December 2024 brings with it significant costs for radio broadcasters amounting to many millions of francs. In the long term, no operator can afford to broadcast programmes simultaneously via FM and DAB+, and it makes little sense from an environmental perspective.