

Ginger Media Group's Virgin Radio and Ericsson trial wireless Internet for radio broadcasting

The Ginger Media Group, owner of Virgin Radio, is collaborating with Ericsson in early trials of wireless third-generation technology that could transform the nature of radio broadcasting, and allow local or national radio stations to reach global audiences.

The trial is a step towards enabling anyone, anywhere to tune in to Virgin Radio programs using 'wireless Internet terminals'. This is instead of the current use of a broadcast radio receiver in areas where Virgin has a broadcast license. These kinds of services will be possible in a few years when third-generation (3G) mobile phones and networks go commercial.

Users will be able to do much more than making and receiving voice calls. They will be able to simultaneously surf the Internet, send and receive video material, watch web TV, do videoconferencing, play interactive multimedia games and choose entertainment sources.

Ginger Media and Ericsson believe that new 3G networks could also open up a completely new distribution channel for services, such as radio programs.

"Third-generation mobile networks will transform the landscape of the radio industry and provide the stimulus for global consolidation into entertainment groups," says Lee Roberts of Ginger Media.

"We can foresee a day when more people around the world will listen to us via a mobile terminal than via a broadcast radio receiver. It offers exciting possibilities for global branding, and will allow us to extend our reach far beyond the geographical limits of our UK broadcast license," Lee Roberts continues.

In a first step, Ericsson and Ginger have added Virgin Radio material to the range of services being trialled at Ericsson's 3G network in the UK. This test network, built on a standard called UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), based on WCDMA technology, is used by existing and future operators, service and application developers, government bodies and other parties.

"Radio-over-UMTS is an exciting new service concept, and is expected to be one of the many services people will access over their 3G terminals," says Richard Carter, UMTS Sales and Marketing, Director of Ericsson Ltd.

“For operators, it’s an attractive service only requiring a small proportion of the bandwidth available. Listeners can select bandwidth for the quality they want to match their audio equipment and budget. So, a hi-fi enthusiast can choose the highest bandwidth to get the best quality,” Richard Carter continues.

Ginger Media has already added an Internet dimension to its broadcast activities. Over 350,000 people a month listen to Virgin Radio over the Internet, making it the most listened to Internet radio station in Europe. But Internet listeners today have to be where their PC’s are. Offering the programs over 3G wireless networks and terminals will give listeners a new freedom to move around and listen to the programs.

Ericsson is leading the development of 3G mobile communications. The company is ideally positioned to support any operator anywhere to migrate into 3G systems. Ericsson offers a smooth migration path from all 2G systems to all 3G systems - based on WCDMA, cdma2000 or EDGE.

The company offers a 3G portfolio with end-to-end solutions, including terminals, applications and infrastructure. Ericsson has already announced 3G experimental systems in several countries on three continents, leveraging the company’s more than 10 years of research in 3G technologies

Ericsson is the leading provider in the new telecoms world, with communications solutions that combine telecom and datacom technologies with freedom of mobility for the user. With more than 100,000 employees in 140 countries, Ericsson simplifies communications for its customers – network operators, service providers, enterprises and consumers – the world over.

Please visit Ericsson’s Press Room at: <http://www.ericsson.se/pressroom>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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Note to Editors

Please visit Virgin Radio’s ON AIR page at;

<http://www.virginradio.com/onair/quicktimelive.htm>

Ericsson has recently published a guide to 3G, ‘Welcome to the third generation’, describing the exciting benefits and possibilities of 3G for users and operators.

If you would like a copy, please contact: central.copy@era.ericsson.se