

# Softil's MCX Enabling Framework Became the Powerhouse of Deployed Solutions Across the Globe in 2023

*A headline development was receiving the ICCA's Accolade "Best MC-X Product of the Year"*

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL, January 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The year 2023 was one of continuous evolution of the critical communications ecosystem towards broadband, open standards-based



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communications technologies known as MCX (3GPP Mission Critical Communications for Mission Critical push-to-talk, video, and data.)

New technologies always sound revolutionary as they climb the "hype peak," but once the technologies reach the "plateau of productivity," as MCX largely has, progress becomes more of an evolutionary nature.

"The year 2023 was a milestone for the Mission-Critical Communications industry," says Pierre Hagendorf, Softil's CEO. "Softil's BEEHD enabling MCX technology has now become the powerhouse behind deployments in networks

across the globe and has been recognised by the ICCA as the best framework technology for developers of MCX products and solutions."

## Growth of MCPTT In Service

Technology is only as good as it is used. While MCPTT had been deployed for some time now (initial deployments in South Korea go back to 2018), 2023 showed definite growth in deployments. The most notable is with Southern Linc, with its Critical Linc MCPTT service being selected by Georgia's public safety operations. As part of this deployment, Softil partners L3Harris, Catalyst Communications Technologies and AdvanceTec Industries delivered their innovative products for first responders. L3Harris XL200 radios are a game changer for the entire industry as they offer full MCPTT capability for on-network communication, combined with P25 direct mode for situations where direct mode communications are either preferred or necessary. Catalyst brought its IntelliLink LMR/MCX gateway solutions to the table, while AdvanceTec enabled vehicle-mounted MCPTT solutions. Catalyst LMR/MCX gateways and MCX dispatch

solutions also made it into the FirstNet catalog in 2023. In an entirely different part of the world, in India, BEEHD based MCX solutions have been deployed in the latest railway project. All in all, Softil technology is now powering live MCX solutions in 5 networks in production spanning three continents.

It is great to be acknowledged

The International Critical Communications Awards (ICCA) is one of the most coveted levels of recognition in the critical communications industry and are awarded every year in multiple categories. These awards, decided by a well respected panel of judges, represent recognition of the unique and meaningful contribution of a company or an individual in advancing solutions for public safety users. Receiving the “Best MC-X Product of the Year” for Softil’s BEEHD framework was testament to the pioneering work of Softil in creating the best enabling technology for the MCX industry. Softil was delighted to receive this accolade at the ICCA 2023 award ceremony in Helsinki, Finland in May, 2023.



Pierre Hagendorf, Softil's CEO

Device to Device communications

Device to device communication, usually called Direct Mode or D2D, is a critical element of communications for first responders. Taken for granted in LMR networks, D2D has been the Achilles heel of broadband MCX communications due to insufficient radio capabilities in 4G devices.

The 5G standard, and particularly 5G-Sidelink, is a new technology that promises to close this critical gap, allowing potentially 2 km range for D2D communication on standard smartphone transmission power. 2023 became a pivotal year when MCX/MCPTT standards-based direct mode communications had been developed and demonstrated. Qualcomm, Softil and Alea demonstrated MCX D2D communication interoperability using Qualcomm’s 5G Sidelink chipset, demonstrating device discovery and establishing group communications with multiple devices without any network connectivity between the devices. The solution was demonstrated during the ETSI MCX Plugtest #8 in October 2023 in Malaga, Spain, and later on during TCCA CCBG meeting in Krakow, Poland in November. Unquestionably, this was a milestone event for PSBN technologies.

MCX deployment plans pick up momentum

The year 2023 might make history as the year when most European countries declared their MCX plans. At various events during the year (observer sessions at the ETSI Plugtests, Critical Communications World (CCW) conference, the TCCA’s CCBG meeting and others), public safety organizations from several European countries including MSB, DSB, BDBOS, ASTRID amongst

others, stated their plans to move towards public safety broadband communications. Most European initiatives plan to start transition toward MCX communications in the 2026/2027 timeframe, with expected completion in 2028/2029. This is an unquestionable a step forward towards much-needed standards-based public safety broadband communications.

Interoperability is a journey, not a destination

In 2023, the interoperability journey continued at ETSI Plugtests. The first took place in July, 2023 in Paris, France, hosted by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and it was focused on testing the FRMCS features of the MCX standard. The second ETSI MCX Plugtest took place in October 2023 in Malaga, Spain, hosted by the University of Malaga, and focused on the full range of MCX and FRMCS functionality based on content of the 3GPP Release 17/18. The event in Malaga also had a record number of face-to-face attendees. The Plugtest in Malaga was the first event where D2D functionality was tested.

Rise of MCX testing

If there is one key requirement for public safety communications solutions, it would be to “never fail.” It is critical that first responders can rely on their communication tools 24x7x365. The only way to guarantee this is by testing, testing, testing.

In MCX testing, two developments headlined 2023. First, the TCCA and GCF with the help of a number of other organizations made a significant effort to create a certification program for MCX devices. The test specification was finalized and final details had been discussed at a number of dedicated events. We expect that MCX certification will start taking place during 2024.

Realizing FRMCS vision

Railway transportation is key to a cleaner, more sustainable future. Modern and reliable railway communications are essential to railway operations. FRMCS (Future Railway Mobile Communication System) developed by UIC had been developed to replace current aging GSM-R technology. In development for the past eight years, FRMCS has made significant progress during the past three years, and particularly in 2023. The 5GRail project, aimed at validating the FRMCS v1 specification, was successfully completed and offered invaluable feedback for the development of the FRMCS v2 specification.

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