

xHE-AAC Audio Codec now available in Windows 11

The leading PC operating system received the xHE-AAC audio decoder support with the latest 2022 Windows 11 update

Just a few weeks ago we announced that Microsoft added xHE-AAC to the Xbox consoles. Now Windows 11 has received the same feature (<https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2022/09/20/how-to-get-the-windows-11-2022-update/>). This enables streaming service providers to deliver their content more efficiently and with improved intelligibility to millions of Desktop and Laptop PCs.

Microsoft licensed Fraunhofer's xHE-AAC implementation in 2020 and over the past two years, both companies collaborated closely with the goal to bring xHE-AAC to users of Windows 11. Any Windows application that leverages Microsoft's Media Framework (including the Microsoft Edge Browser) can benefit from the OS built-in decoding functionality to play xHE-AAC and all previous flavors of the AAC audio codec family including AAC-LC and HE-AAC.

xHE-AAC enables consumers to enjoy uninterrupted streaming with all types of content – such as movies, music, audiobooks or podcasts. xHE-AAC offers maximum coding efficiency with a usable bit rate range that spans from 12 kbit/s to 500 kbit/s and above for stereo services. This helps video and audio streaming providers to overcome audio bandwidth constraints and thereby facilitates an enhanced, more reliable consumer experience. Such efficiency is particularly crucial in emerging markets where 2G/3G networks still exist in significant numbers and wherever congested 4G/5G networks in major cities are a common reality.

xHE-AAC, is used by Netflix and has been licensed by Fraunhofer IIS to Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta, Inc. It is now natively supported in Microsoft Windows 11 as well as in Google's, Amazon's and Apple's operating systems.