

Europe formally agrees to oppose IMT identification for UHF spectrum below 700 MHz band

Jun 24, 2015 by Toby Youell

European administrations have agreed to oppose adding a series of key bands to the list of those allocated to mobile and identified for IMT at this year's World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-15).

The inter-governmental group (CEPT CPG) that is settling the European Common Positions (ECPs) that will guide the continent's administrations in negotiations later this year has agreed to oppose the use of mobile broadband between 470 and 694 MHz.

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It has also agreed to oppose amending the Radio Regulations to enable mobile broadband in a series of other frequency bands, including the upper 400 MHz of the C-band (3800–4200 MHz) and parts of the 5 GHz band that could interfere with Europe's Copernicus space programme (5350–5470 MHz).

The region also opposes allocation to mobile and identification for IMT in the following bands:

- 1300 – 1400 MHz
- 1518 – 1525 MHz
- 1695 – 1710 MHz
- 2010 – 2110 MHz
- 2200 – 2290 MHz
- 2900 – 3100 MHz
- 3300 – 3400 MHz
- 4500 – 4800 MHz
- 5725 – 5850 MHz

By contrast, much of the L-band (1427–1528 MHz) and the lower part of the C-band (3400–3800 MHz) is supported in the European Common Position for allocation to mobile and identification for IMT.

Altogether, the now-agreed ECPs represent a significant change from the CEPT's initial position in 2013 that supported including the entire C-band (3400–4200 MHz) and considered including the lower UHF band and the 2.7–2.9 GHz band.

Innovation on hold, says Ericsson

Opposition in Europe to a co-primary allocation of the band has been predicted for some time, but is still likely to disappoint the mobile industry.

“We have now put innovation on hold in mobile connectivity,” said Lasse Wieweg, Ericsson's director for government and industry relations. He said Ericsson was now hoping for WRC-15 to make the 3.3–3.4 GHz, 4.4–4.5 GHz and 4.8–4.9 GHz bands available for mobile broadband. “This is what we are now looking for in desperation,” he told a recent conference on spectrum management held in Brussels.

Ulrich Rehfuess, head of spectrum policy at Nokia Networks, told the same conference that he shared the view that the pan-European consensus that digital terrestrial TV (and its spectrum) should be protected until at least 2030 is too strict. He said that Nokia's work in using the band for mobile broadband was now focused on trials with broadcasters.

These perspectives were to some extent challenged by Gilles Bregant, chair of the inter-governmental group that advises the European Commission on spectrum matters, the Radio Spectrum Policy Group. He told the conference that the 1920 MHz of spectrum identified by the RSPG as available for mobile broadband in Europe (on paper) appears sufficient for the mobile broadband industry for the near future.

The decision by CEPT, along with a similar preliminary position adopted by its African counterpart, is set to be a relief to Europe's broadcasters. The secretary-general of Broadcast Networks Europe, Lars Backlund, told *PolicyTracker* that avoiding a co-primary allocation of mobile and broadcasting in the band is "very much an issue of long-term survival of this industry". He argued that this is because investors know that co-primary allocations of bands (800 MHz and 700 MHz bands) in the Radio Regulations have been followed by broadcasters vacating them.

He added that his organisation, along with the "Wider Spectrum" group that has recently been formed to advocate on spectrum issues on behalf of broadcasters, will continue to work on this issue because they know a lot of lobbying will be going on between now and WRC-15.

Other ECPs

Positions have also been agreed on agenda items (AIs) 1.9.1, 1.7, 1.11 and aspects of agenda items 7 and 1.16.

Specifically, European administrations are set to advocate for the following positions in Geneva this November:

- The allocation of more spectrum to fixed satellite services in 7150–7250 MHz and 8400–8500 MHz (AI 1.9.1)
- Methods "A1" and "C1-B" on dealing with Issues A and C in relation to regulating for Automatic Identification System technology applications (AI 1.16)
- Support for the use of modern electronic communications during coordination and notification procedures undertaken by the ITU-R when regulating satellite orbital and spectrum slots (AI 7)
- Support for the single method that is proposed to reform the use of the 5091–5150 MHz band (AI 1.7)
- Supporting the identification of the 7190–7250 MHz band for Earth exploration satellite services (AI 1.11)

Agreement has not been reached on other controversial issues, such as the 2.7–2.9 GHz band, which is a candidate for IMT as part of AI 1.1. Identification of this band for IMT is provisionally opposed by CEPT but mobile group the GSM Association and six CEPT administrations persuaded CEPT to revisit the issue at the 8th and final CPG (conference preparatory group) in Bergen (Norway) in mid-September. In the meantime, the CPG sub-group that deals with mobile issues (PTD) will review an alternative proposal to support the band's use for IMT.

European administrations still need to find agreement on which agenda items should be set for WRC-19, how to deal with the leap second, how to reform the satellite filing process and many other issues.

The final ECPs, which are published here along with their drafts, should be agreed at the last CPG meeting. At this meeting, remaining ECPs will be subject to the "10/6" rule in which an ECP needs the support of ten or more administrations and the opposition of six or fewer administrations in order to be adopted. In ITU jargon at the WRC, these ECPs will be referred to as multi-country proposals (MCPs). Once agreed, administrations can only oppose MCPs if they have already informed the CPG by the end of July for the first set of ECPs and the 9th October for the second set.

Support for the proposals has never before been withdrawn after agreement has been made. Nevertheless, Sweden is understood to be preparing to challenge the ECPs and advocate allocating the entire C-band to mobile (3400–4200 MHz), while Russia's views are at odds with Europe's on several agenda items. •

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