

Position Paper

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Future usage of the frequency band 470-694 MHz within the EU

The Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) has launched a public consultation on the Draft Report «Assessment of future usage of frequency band 470-694 MHz within the EU». Bitkom appreciates that the RSPG is taking a detailed look at the future use of the frequency band and welcomes the opportunity to provide comments.

General Assessment

In addition to the future demand for Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcasting (DTTB) and Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE), there are various interested parties who have a long-term need to use parts of the 470-694 MHz band. In Germany, public mobile network operators and government users such as Public Protection and Disaster Relief (PPDR) or defence have stated their demand for spectrum in 470-694 MHz for future applications to be able to provide the necessary performance and capacities.

In the next decade, in a Gigabit Society as per EU targets, broadband connectivity to homes could make UHF spectrum use for (linear) video distribution obsolete for fixed use cases in a number of EU countries. Bitkom welcomes RSPG's considerations on alternative distribution paths for DTTB.

Future scenarios

Bitkom recognises the need to create an extended regulatory framework for the 470-694 MHz band that will allow Europe to respond in a timely manner to a changing demand situation for spectrum resources in the 470-694 MHz band after 2030.

Bitkom supports maintaining the primary allocation for the broadcasting service and supports sustainable solutions for the long-term continuation of PMSE use and the continued operation of relevant services such as radio astronomy and wind profiling radars.

Bitkom continues to support further considerations of an additional primary allocation in the band 470-694 MHz or parts thereof for the mobile service as a sustainable regulatory framework to allow an open European discussion on the future use of this band, considering different national demands while respecting existing regulations such as GE06.

Recommendations

The draft RSPG report shows the divergence in DTTB usage rates between member states. It concludes that there is no one-fits-all solution satisfying the needs of all member states during the period 2030-2040. Bitkom therefore appreciates that the RSPG recognizes the need for considering different scenarios and the different needs of countries.

The main objective for the ongoing review of the future usage of the UHF band should be to ensure an efficient way of spectrum usage but also consider the different needs of the Member States. Europe needs to develop a to-the-extent possible harmonised approach but also providing flexibility to serve national circumstances and needs. To enable flexible usage, cross-border coordination is one of the most important aspects. Bitkom encourages RSPG to develop suitable usage scenarios for 470-694 MHz beyond 2030 also based on socio-economic benefit considerations.

In addition, Bitkom would like to emphasize the need for an overall spectrum management strategy which secures the Digital Decade & Connectivity Goals that the EU has defined. Especially regarding the 6G era, the EU is responsible to provide the spectrum resources necessary to reach these digitalization goals to the benefit of everyone.

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