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Progress Report of the RSPG Sub-Group

on “Good offices” to assist in bilateral negotiations between Member States

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Progress Report of the RSPG Sub-Group on

“Good offices” to assist in bilateral negotiations between Member States

The “Good offices” Sub-Group (SG) held two meetings since the 61st meeting of the Radio Spectrum Policy Group. The meetings were held on the 13th July 2023 (hybrid) and on the 25th September 2023 (virtual) where discussions endeavoured to progress on the various cross-border coordination issues. The reports of these meetings are annexed to this progress report and an executive summary of the key discussion points is being provided below.

It should be noted that the SG meeting held in July welcomed the participation of Montenegro and North Macedonia to their first meeting of the RSPG ‘good offices’.

1. Update on the development of the Adriatic and Ionian regional agreement for DAB

Key points

- The SG reaffirmed the importance of finalising the Adriatic and Ionian agreement for DAB since this will contribute to resolving DAB and certain cases of FM interference problems.
- The issues raised by Slovenia on reaching a common understanding with Italy on the application of ITU rules remain unresolved. A bilateral meeting moderated by the SG co-chairs and with the support of the European Commission was held on the 10th October where potential solutions were identified to resolve these bilateral issues. These solutions are being considered by Italy.
- Italy and Montenegro have a pending cross-border coordination issue which is relevant to this Agreement. Italy raised compatibility issues with Montenegro’s DAB station at Bjelasica, a station located outside the relevant coordination zone. The issues raised are possibly attributed to the application of different versions of the propagation model (P.1812) which are providing diverse results. Italy recognised the importance of this station for Montenegro and committed to re-assess the situation. A bilateral meeting is expected to be held between the parties prior to WRC-23.
- The cross-border compatibility issues between Albania and North Macedonia were considered and recommendations made on how North Macedonia may optimise its frequency allocation plan in the VHF band. The draft channel distribution plan for the Adriatic and Ionian group was also shared with North Macedonia. As a result of the SG discussions, North Macedonia initiated a process to analyse possible solutions for the region. Once established, these solutions will be shared with the members for this consideration.
- The SG recognised the commitments made by the concerned countries to find solutions for finalising the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region. The SG encouraged these countries to resume discussions within their group as soon as possible.

No progress was made on the development of the DAB regional agreement since the Adriatic and Ionian group reconvened last in December 2022.

On the basis of previous SG discussions, it was reported that the lack of progress within the Adriatic and Ionian countries in relation to the finalisation of the DAB agreement is associated with two main issues, namely:

- a) Cross-border coordination problems between Albania and North Macedonia in relation to the use of some channels which are affecting the partitioning of the DAB frequency plan for the Adriatic and Ionian countries.
- b) The position taken by Slovenia due to a lack of a common understanding of the ITU rules as defined by the Radio Regulations, as well as Italy's objections to Slovenia's request to register additional stations in the GE84 plan.

Nonetheless, following on the issues considered at previous discussions within the SG, Italy confirmed that it received an official letter from San Marino confirming that San Marino will not oppose to changes that will be made to the GE06 plan. A copy of this letter will be shared with the members of the Adriatic and Ionian Group.

Concerning the issues between Italy and Slovenia as aforesaid, Italy replied to a letter sent by Slovenia, but their respective positions are still divergent. Particularly, Slovenia made reference to the fact that Italian courts also ignore the ITU Radio Regulations and as a result Slovenian operators using coordinated frequencies are required by the Italian courts to significantly reduce their emission parameters as a means of protecting uncoordinated Italian stations. These litigation cases are initiated by Italian operators. Both countries confirmed their willingness to find solutions to their problems and agreed to hold bilateral discussions with the support of the SG co-chairs and the European Commission.

In an attempt to address the issues with North Macedonia, Italy carried out a review of the channelling plan of the draft regional DAB agreement. The results of this process were shared with the Adriatic and Ionian group on 12 July 2023 and discussed at length at the July meeting. The revised plan was deemed not feasible since the review did not consider the requirements of countries neighbouring the Adriatic and Ionian countries. The concerns expressed by Albania, Croatia and Montenegro are detailed in Annex I and Annex II.

As regards Montenegro, bilateral discussions are expected to be held with Italy, possibly with the support of the SG co-chairs, to seek closure on an open point concerning Montenegro's station at Bjelasica. Although this station is located outside the buffer zone with Italy, Italy raised compatibility issues which may be attributed to the application of different versions of the propagation model as per Recommendation ITU-R P.1812.

North Macedonia, which does not form part of the Adriatic and Ionian group, provided a general overview of its radio spectrum requirements for DAB and stressed on the importance to respect the principle of equitable access to radio spectrum. In considering the matter it was observed that North Macedonia is distributed in 8 different allotment areas, some of which are small in size. Merging some of these allotment areas will effectively result in less spectrum requirements, better utilisation of the radio spectrum and facilitate the frequency coordination

discussions with neighbouring countries. These elements, as well as the draft frequency distribution plan for the Adriatic and Ionian group were considered by North Macedonia, who initiated a process which could potentially lead to resolving the issues in relation to the Adriatic and Ionian agreement. North Macedonia intends to share its results with the SG and expects that discussions with neighbouring countries will follow. The SG welcomed the initiatives being taken by North Macedonia in this regard.

In conclusion, the SG reaffirmed the importance of the DAB agreement and noted the positive approach of the concerned parties to seek closure of the process. In this regard the concerned parties were encouraged to resume discussions within the Adriatic and Ionian group as soon as possible with the aim of finalising the regional DAB agreement.

2. DAB interference around Italy

Key points

- The DAB interference problems reported by Croatia and Slovenia persist. Italy is still of the view that the reported DAB interference may be resolved by implementing a temporary solution based on the use of frequency blocks 7C and 7D since these blocks are not used in neighbouring countries. This solution may be implemented in a short timeframe.
- Croatia and Slovenia still oppose to Italy's proposed temporary solution and suggested to use other frequency blocks registered to Italy which are currently not in use. Despite these objections, Italy is using these frequency resources.
- Slovenia expressed a need to use the same frequency blocks 7C and 7D during the transition period. It secured frequency coordination agreements with all countries except Italy.
- Italy was requested to provide a report detailing how it intends to align to the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region once it is signed. Italy was also requested to clearly clarify the process leading to the use of 7C and 7D, including in a situation where the said agreement is not finalised.
- Progress was made on the DAB interference case reported by Malta on frequency block 12C. Although the interference situation has improved, a joint measurement activity will be carried out with a view of identifying the location of the DAB transmitter affecting Malta.

In Italy's view, the only solution to resolve the interference reported by Croatia and Slovenia in a timely manner is by using frequency blocks 7C and 7D. This is based on the fact that these frequency resources are not used in the neighbouring countries. It was clarified that this solution will be temporary until signature of the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region. Consequently, following signature, the Italian national DAB plan will be modified to terminate the right of use of 7C and 7D and to align the same plan with that adopted for the Adriatic and Ionian region.

Croatia and Slovenia reconfirmed their reservations to the implementation of this solution and expressed concerns that despite their strong objections, frequency blocks 7C and 7D are being used in Italy without the necessary coordination agreements. Such use of the radio spectrum constitutes a breach of ITU rules and the European Electronic Communications Code.

Italy reaffirmed that it was not possible to use alternative frequency blocks, including those which are currently unused, since these frequency resources will be used in due course, in accordance with the Italian national DAB plan.

Slovenia also has a need to use the same frequency blocks 7C and 7D as soon as possible and during the transition period for DAB. Slovenia has already successfully coordinated 7C and 7D with eight countries, but Italy's agreement is still pending.

In order to address the concerns expressed during the discussions, Italy was requested to produce a written report to:

- a) clearly state how it intends to align to the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region once it is finalised and to indicate what frequency blocks it intends to use instead of 7C and 7D;
- b) clarify the process leading to using 7C and 7D;
- c) define the expected duration of the rights of use for 7C and 7D; and
- d) state the line it will be taking as regards 7C and 7D if the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region will not be finalised.

As regards the DAB interference case reported by Malta on frequency block 12C. Progress was registered and the interference situation has improved. However, a joint measurement activity will be carried out with the cooperation of the concerned Italian operator with a view of identifying the location of the DAB transmitter affecting Malta.

3. FM interference around Italy

3.1 France

The interference case affecting the French FM station in Bonifacio (Corsica) on 88.3 MHz is still being discussed with Italy. The discussions with Italy also incorporate the other FM stations located in Corsica, and some pending French notifications to the GE84 plan which in total amount to 40. The results of Italy's studies were subject to additional bilateral discussions.

The database of the Italian stations located in the North Sardinian was provided to France so that the necessary studies may be undertaken. Italy will be providing additional datasets for this area and for other relevant areas once the necessary technical verifications are completed.

The bilateral talks also intend to find solutions to four French stations operating from Elba Island without an Italian authorisation. A solution based on article 18.2 of the ITU Radio Regulations was being considered.

3.2 *Malta*

No developments were reported on the pending FM interference cases by Italy.

3.3 *Development of an action plan to resolve FM interference affecting Croatia and Slovenia*

Key points

- The action plan requested by the RSPG to resolve FM interference problems caused by Italy to Croatia and Slovenia could not be developed since the work of the Italian working group dealing with FM issues is still not finalised. The Italian working group foresees to finalise its draft report before WRC-23. The contents of this report will be disclosed with the SG only when the report has been evaluated by Cabinet.
- Some actions stemming from the report of the Italian working group may be implemented immediately, whilst the implementation of some other actions is subject to Government's positive consideration.
- No progress was also made as regards Italy's commitment to address specific cases of FM harmful interference included in the priority list.
- Due to this lack of progress, the interference situation in both Croatia and Slovenia did not improve.

Italy stated that the working group established under Legislative Decree 207/2021 has not yet finalised the draft report but is working to complete it prior to WRC-23. It was clarified that some of the recommended actions of the report may be implemented immediately, whilst the implementation of some of the other actions is subject to Government's positive consideration.

In addition, no progress was registered on resolving the priority cases of FM harmful interference.

Croatia and Slovenia expressed their disappointment to the fact that the Italian process is taking longer than expected. Any delays in relation to obtaining the necessary clearance on the political related recommendations was of concern since this will prolong the implementation of measures to resolve interference problems. Both Croatia and Slovenia appealed to Italy to expedite the process.

It was acknowledged that the action plan to be developed by the SG should be realistic and implementable. In the circumstances, such an action plan may only be developed once the SG receives confirmations on the actions that may be taken by Italy to resolve harmful interference problems on the basis of the working group report.

4. 700 MHz interference

The SG continued discussing reports made by Italy concerning interference caused by broadcasting stations of Albania to Italian mobile networks operating in the 700 MHz band. The concerned Albanian broadcasting stations are operating on TV channels 50 to 53 and the interference problem is predominantly present in the whole region of Puglia, parts of Basilicata and parts of the coast of Calabria towards the Adriatic and Ionian Sea.

Albania carried out some radio monitoring activities to identify the station causing the interference but requested Italy to submit interference reports based on Appendix 10 of the ITU Radio Regulations.

Similar interference problems are experienced in North Macedonia which were reported to Albania in October 2022. North Macedonia urged Albania to resolve this long outstanding interference problem.

It was clarified that the process in Albania for the release of the 700 MHz band for mobile electronic communications services was still underway and no precise time frame could be provided of when this process is expected to be concluded.

The SG supports the implementation of transitory solutions intended to eliminate cases of harmful interference in the 700 MHz band.

5. External related issues

- Cyprus-Turkey: Regarding the recording of a new unified Cypriot plan below 700 MHz under the GE06 plan, Cyprus is still facing an objection from Türkiye to such recording in ITU.

As it appears, an agreement has been reached between Greek and Turkish Cypriots under the umbrella of the United Nations (Bi-communal Technical Committee on Broadcasting and Telecommunications) for the use of all channels below the 700 MHz band for digital TV broadcasting, addressing the needs of the entire island that, in order for these channels to be secured, the Cypriot Government submitted the relevant notifications to the ITU for modification of the GE06 plan. It is essential for Cyprus therefore that Türkiye's objection in ITU be lifted: since the television channels below the 700 MHz band including those channels that have been agreed to be used by Turkish Cypriots are still not registered in this ITU Plan, which deprives from the necessary regulatory protection against interferences coming from neighbouring countries, which is a situation where both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are affected.

- Belarus: Belarus sent several notifications to the ITU to register point-to-multipoint stations in the 3.4-3.8 GHz band along the border with the Russian Federation. This shows that the band is being used for IMT.

- North Macedonia (FM band): North Macedonia stated that it received continuous objections from Greece and Bulgaria when effecting frequency coordination in the FM band, without explanation.

These administrations are encouraged to enter into a dialogue with North Macedonia to address the reported issues.

- Albania-Montenegro (UHF band): Montenegro reported that it is unable to finalise the registration of broadcasting assignments in the GE06 due to a missing agreement from Albania. The request from Montenegro was still under review by Albania.

The countries were encouraged to hold bilateral discussions with a view to making progress on this pending matter.

6. Date of next meeting

The SG will be holding its next meetings on the 6th November 2023 (10:00:12:00hrs.) and 11th January 2024 (09:30-12:30 hrs.), both in virtual format.

ANNEX I

REPORT

RSPG SUB-GROUP

“Good offices” to assist in bilateral negotiations between Member States

Hybrid meeting, 13th July 2023

The co-chairs welcomed the participants and thanked the European Commission for hosting the meeting of the RSPG Sub-Group of the ‘good offices’ in Brussels. The representatives of Montenegro and North Macedonia were also welcomed to their first meeting of the Sub-Group by the co-chairs and by the European Commission representative who pointed to the importance and benefits of coordination as called for by the EECC.

The draft agenda of the meeting was then presented and agreed without amendments.

1. Update on the development of the Adriatic and Ionian regional agreement for DAB

In introducing this agenda item, an overview of the open issues which are preventing making progress on the finalisation of the Adriatic and Ionian regional agreement for DAB (hereinafter the ‘regional DAB agreement’) was presented. Reference was also made to the discussions held at the 61st plenary meeting of the RSPG which agreed on the importance to finalise the regional DAB agreement as soon as possible since the agreement is expected to resolve the DAB harmful interference problems of Croatia and Slovenia, and to resolve certain other cases of harmful interference in the VHF sound broadcasting (FM) band. These interference problems are being caused by Italian broadcasting stations.

The continued lack of progress in the finalisation of the regional DAB agreement was on the one hand attributed to the fact that the Adriatic and Ionian group did not reconvene to continue discussions on the reported open issues, namely¹:

- c) Cross-border coordination problems between Albania and North Macedonia in relation to the use of some channels which are affecting the partitioning of the DAB frequency plan for the Adriatic and Ionian countries.

¹ The last meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian group was held in December 2022.

- d) The position taken by Slovenia due to a lack of a common understanding of the ITU rules as defined by the Radio Regulations, as well as Italy's objections to Slovenia's request to register additional stations in the Geneva 1984 (GE84) plan.

Italy reported that at previous discussions of the Sub-Group, it was requested to seek confirmation from San Marino as regards modifications of the GE06 plan in line with the draft plan to the regional DAB agreement, as San Marino has GE06 rights and does not form part of the Adriatic and Ionian group. Italy confirmed that it received an official letter from San Marino confirming that San Marino will not oppose to the changes that will be made to the GE06 plan, in line with the draft plan to the regional DAB agreement. Italy anticipated that this letter will be shared with the members of the Adriatic and Ionian Group.

Regarding the pending issue with Slovenia (as per (b) above), Italy stated that it replied to the letter sent by Slovenia some time ago. Italy expects to have bilateral discussions with Slovenia on the matter.

Italy also made reference to the issues with North Macedonia (as per (a) above), where based on indications provided by North Macedonia on their spectrum needs in the VHF band, Italy revised the draft channelling plan to the draft regional DAB agreement. The objective of this process was twofold, namely, to try to resolve the issues between Albania and North Macedonia and to accommodate the spectrum needs of North Macedonia without compromising the core of the current plan, as agreed within the Adriatic and Ionian group. The results of this process were shared with the Adriatic and Ionian group on the 12th July for their consideration, in particular to assess whether the proposed constraints may be accepted. Additional elements including the limitations which derive from agreements with other neighbouring countries would need to be taken into account if the proposed solution is not satisfactory. However, in case the responses received are supportive of the Italian proposal, then, the results will be shared with North Macedonia and the technical issues around the regional DAB agreement considered as solved.

Montenegro stated that pursuant to the GE06, it is permitted to use 1 VHF channel for TV and 3 frequency blocks for DAB and these numbers satisfy Montenegro's broadcasting needs. Hence, the motivation to be involved in the coordination activities of the Adriatic and Ionian group was not to increase the number of layers but to contribute to satisfy the equitable access of the radio spectrum for all, since certain neighbouring countries had 1 DAB layer less than Montenegro, Slovenia and Croatia. In addition, Montenegro's involvement was also necessary to define the technical parameters of assignments for their 3 DAB layers. Montenegro stated that it was not conditioning the final acceptance of the regional DAB agreement with any particular provision since it believes that the concerned parties will find a suitable middle-ground solution to address specific FM interference issues to the benefit of all countries.

Montenegro provided information on the open issues of relevance to it within the Adriatic and Ionian group. It stated that so far, the group conducted four planning iterations based on a compatibility matrix as a basic hypothesis of compatibility between the relevant allotment areas of all countries within the group, including the allotment areas outside the buffer zone for the Eastern countries. This was important to align the plan of the regional agreement with the plans

of the countries which are not parties to the same. In these activities, Montenegro showed the utmost flexibility and considers that the plan resulting from the 4th planning iteration was the most favourable for the concerned countries.

For Montenegro, the outcome of the 4th iteration was satisfactory since it was provided with the same number of rights when compared to the GE06. In around mid-2021, Montenegro was faced with the first issue, namely incompatibility for their allotment area Bjelasica since their third DAB layer was objected to by Serbia (not a member of the Adriatic and Ionian group). The only solution possible was to change the structure of the network for that particular layer by dividing the said allotment area by five small allotments and this provided compatibility with Serbia as well as with the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region. Following the exchange of the technical parameters of the assignments on the basis of the draft frequency distribution plan, Italy raised compatibility issues for a specific assignment at Bjelasica, which is located outside the buffer zone with Italy. In order to address this issue, Montenegro proposed a reduction in the effective radiated power (erp) towards Italy by 8 dB. Additional reductions to the erp level will not be possible since they will make the assignment unusable.

Montenegro indicated that the incompatibility issue raised by Italy is due to the application of different versions of propagation model as per Recommendation ITU-R P.1812. The results provided by the most recent version of the model (P.1812-6) are not realistic and are 30 dB higher in field strength when compared to those obtained by the previous version (P.1812-5) over a distance exceeding 300 km with no line-of-sight. This was substantiated through measurements and thorough studies, the details of which were subsequently submitted to Italy in December 2022 for their review. These studies show that Bjelasica will not be causing harmful interference to Italy. Montenegro stated that Italy's response to this issue was still forthcoming. On this point Montenegro emphasised on the importance that the outcome of this process shall be comparable to what they currently have under the GE06, and if this is not achievable, they are prepared to consider withdrawing from the multilateral activities of the Adriatic and Ionian group. On this issue, Italy committed to provide a response to Montenegro by the end of the first week of September 2023.

In reaction to Italy's recent replanning activities as circulated to the group on the 12th July, Montenegro stated that some of the proposed solutions are not compatible for the Eastern-side countries. In particular it noted that the proposal for the use of VHF channel 5 in the Bjelasica allotment area is not acceptable since this is used by Serbia in two of their neighbouring allotments. Therefore, Italy's new proposal could not be acceptable. Moreover, Montenegro also mentioned some compatibility issues between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In reply, Italy stated that in order to try to find an acceptable solution, the concerned Eastern countries are to provide with details on their plans together with any constraints and conditions stemming from bi- and multi-lateral agreements outside the buffer zone, based on which further analysis will be undertaken. Italy observed that running a fifth planning integration was possible but not deemed feasible.

North Macedonia informed the Sub-Group that for TV, it has 7 layers in the UHF band (in use) and 1 layer in the VHF band and that their DAB frequency blocks on channels 11 and 12 are still not in use. Regarding the VHF band, the possibility of converting their TV GE06 plan entries for DAB use was being assessed.

North Macedonia confirmed that its interest to participate in the multilateral activities within the Adriatic and Ionian group on the regional DAB agreement was not considered positively. Consequently, it is not involved in the replanning exercise of the VHF band for DAB and as a result equitable access to radio spectrum cannot be achieved. Nonetheless, it received several frequency coordination requests from neighbouring countries concerning the VHF band. The excellent technical cooperation of North Macedonia with Albania and Serbia was noted.

Regarding the Italian proposal concerning the revised plan, North Macedonia stated that it requires time to analyse this proposal and consultations need to be undertaken with their stakeholders, including the Ministry and broadcasters, taking into account that North Macedonia is not in the same starting position as the other Administrations. North Macedonia requested that when the process concerning DAB will reach its final stages, it expects that its future DAB frequency blocks will enjoy international recognition. Due to the political situation, it demanded that the frequency coordination agreements with neighbouring countries are signed at the same time and place of signature of the regional DAB agreement. This will ensure that North Macedonia's international recognition is respected.

The co-chairs clarified that the Good offices Sub-Group was a different body from the Adriatic and Ionian Group and therefore clarifications to some of the issues raised by North Macedonia cannot be provided.

Albania indicated that it required time to analyse the revised plan submitted by Italy. Albania confirmed that it had exchanges with North Macedonia to resolve incompatibilities, but no concrete agreement could so far be reached. Albania stated that it can only sign the regional DAB agreement if it resolves the incompatibility with North Macedonia, without which the agreement will not be implementable.

Croatia confirmed the receipt of North Macedonia's interest to form part of the two regional groups discussing spectrum matters. In view of the progress made by these groups, it was deemed that it will not be efficient for North Macedonia to join in at that particular point of time. Nonetheless, the member countries of these groups offered their support to North Macedonia and Croatia confirmed that this offer is still valid.

Regarding Italy's proposed revision of the frequency plan, Croatia stated that this proposal was not satisfactory. This is mainly due to the fact that it was not possible for Italy to take all constraints into account, such as the channels which are used in Serbia and Hungary as well as the situation in the South-East European Group, where agreement was reached on a channel distribution plan for the VHF band. It considered that a solution should focus in the border area between Albania and North Macedonia.

In addition, Croatia clarified that within the Adriatic and Ionian group the propagation model based on P.1812-5 was being used since this reflected best the results of field measurements.

Montenegro supported this information and requested Italy to consider using P.1812-5 when assessing their case (as described above).

Italy also commented to some of North Macedonia's comments. As the name of the group implies, the Adriatic and Ionian group was limited to countries falling within a certain coordination area and in a certain way the work of the group was a continuation of the work done for the UHF band. Regarding the comments expressed during the meeting to the revised plan, Italy noted that the constraints of countries neighbouring the Adriatic and Ionian group must be taken into account to optimise the outcome of the planning process.

North Macedonia noted that additional DAB frequency blocks were required to respect the principle of equitable access to the radio spectrum resources and provided an overview of the solutions being considered as regards DAB planning in the VHF band, i.e.

- To record DAB allotments in the GE06 Plan, when the procedure of Article 4 of the GE06 has to be followed. As a result, all TV channels will also be recorded also for DAB in the frequency allotments defined for TV (8 allotments).
- To use and record DAB assignments in the MIFR under TV Plan entries following Article 5 of the GE06. No additional coordination is required in this case, except if a corresponding plan entry bears remarks.
- To use the regional principle of re-planning channel 10, already recorded for TV, to be used for DAB (as it was done, for example, by Serbia).

North Macedonia reiterated that it required time to analyse these options and that a consultation procedure with the relevant entities need to take place.

North Macedonia clarified that it was waiting for the recognition for its future channel block assignments, following which it will be signing agreements with Albania and all neighbouring countries.

Albania stated that the issues with North Macedonia's request to have a third DAB layer is more complex to resolve, even since North Macedonia does not form part of the Adriatic and Ionian group. In practice North Macedonia may also use the TV layer for DAB, which will result in 6 DAB layers in total.

North Macedonia indicated that it would like to have additional T-DAB frequency blocks in respect to the main principle of equitable access to the radio spectrum. North Macedonia respects the possible given solutions by the other Administrations but has its own discretionary right to decide on the way of using the recorded channels/blocks in the near future. It was observed that North Macedonia is distributed in 8 different allotment areas, some of which are small in size. Merging some of these allotment areas will effectively result in less spectrum requirements and better utilisation of the radio spectrum. Additionally, this will also facilitate the frequency coordination discussions with neighbouring countries, including Albania and Bulgaria. Regarding the above-stated possible solutions to repurpose GE06 TV plan entries for DAB, it was noted that this approach is possible as long as the field-strength level for DVB-T

is continued to be respected and this may be done by applying a correction factor of 6.371 dB. North Macedonia was invited to investigate these replanning options which will benefit Albania and the entire region.

Slovenia noted that its geographical size is similar to that of North Macedonia and the country has been configured as one single allotment area. Single frequency networks are used across the country to improve the frequency efficiency.

North Macedonia clarified that for DAB, the country will be configured in two allotment zones. At this stage the number of layers per allotment area was still unclear and will be determined following a public consultation procedure.

Croatia extended its availability to support North Macedonia during frequency replanning and coordination activities. Croatia also offered to share the maps of the regional DAB agreement which could be used by North Macedonia when considering the suggestions made by the Good offices Sub-Group.

In relation to DAB, Greece stated that in addition to the discussions within the Adriatic and Ionian group, account should be given to the SEDDIF and GE06 agreements. With reference to the Italian proposed modification to the draft plan to the regional DAB agreement, Greece noted that the proposal seemed acceptable. It confirmed its availability to continue discussions and to find solutions with all neighbouring countries.

2. DAB interference around Italy

Slovenia and Croatia

Regarding the solution proposed by Italy for resolving the current DAB interference by using frequency blocks 7C and 7D, Italy confirmed that the use of these blocks will be temporary until the regional DAB agreement is finalised. The solution was based on the consideration that these blocks in GE06 plan are assigned exclusively to the western side of the Adriatic coordination area (Italian side) and not on the other side, with aim to reduce and optimize spectrum resources. Following signature, the concerned countries need to concur with Italy on the timeframes required on the migration of the DAB transmissions on 7C and 7D to other frequency blocks pursuant to the said regional agreement. Italy reiterated that the use of 7C and 7D was the only possible option to resolve the DAB interference in a timely manner and was based on the fact that none of its concerned neighbouring countries was using these resources. Italy clarified that through their frequency authorisations the Italian operators are aware that following signature of the regional DAB agreement the current DAB transmissions need to migrate to other frequency blocks.

Slovenia stated that the temporary Italian transmissions on 7C and 7D were objected to by Slovenia and Croatia and therefore such use is deemed uncoordinated. It added that these two frequency blocks are envisaged to be used by Slovenia as soon as possible during the transition

period. The transition period has already started, and frequency coordination agreements were signed with other countries in the region thus allowing Slovenia to use these two frequency blocks 7C and 7D with immediate effect. Croatia stated that the putting into use of any new stations without any formal frequency coordination agreement as required by ITU rules and the EECC is not acceptable. Both Slovenia and Croatia requested Italy to clearly state what frequency blocks it intends to use instead of 7C and 7D following signature of the regional DAB agreement, as apparently 10 other frequency blocks are available and could be used without problem.

Italy stated that in line with its national DAB plan, some spectrum authorisations were issued to allow the DAB market to develop. The DAB frequency blocks which are currently not in use are intended to be used in due course following issuance of the relevant spectrum authorisations. A reply to the question raised will be prepared and shared on the basis of the current frequency distribution plan.

Malta

Malta reported that the Italian interference on frequency block 12C was still present and requested Italy to indicate the timeframe when this interference case will be resolved. In response Italy stated that the concerned operator is operating on the basis of a previous temporary authorisation and will be migrating to another frequency block in accordance with the provisional national plan for DAB. The migration process is expected to be finalised very soon.

3. FM interference around Italy

Update on the work being done by the Italian working group

Italy confirmed that the work of the Italian working group dealing with FM issues is still ongoing. The draft working group report is expected to be finalised by end July 2023. Italy stressed that some of the recommendations require political approval prior to being considered for implementation.

France

France provided general information on the interference case affecting its station in Bonifacio, Corsica on 88.3 MHz. Whilst discussions with Italy on this specific case are still ongoing, France also initiated discussions on the other FM stations operating in Corsica, some of which are located in the Bonifacio area. In this regard it was highlighted that 39 modifications to GE84 plan entries concerning stations located in Corsica were submitted to the ITU.

It was highlighted that in June 2023, Italy agreed to share information on their FM networks in the North of Sardinia. The data provided was still being analysed and may be updated by Italy. On the 12th July, France and Italy had a bilateral meeting to compare their preliminary compatibility assessment results of the GE84 plan modifications.

France and Italy are expected to continue their bilateral dialogue on the various issues and their next meeting is scheduled to take place towards end September.

Malta

No improvements were reported on the pending FM interference cases with Italy.

Development of an action plan to resolve FM interference affecting Croatia and Slovenia

Both Croatia and Slovenia did not report any improvements to the FM harmful interference situation. They expressed their disappointment that after 20 years of continuous reporting and discussions, the situation did not improve. Due to this interference the broadcasting operators and the countries were subject to financial, social and cultural damage.

Croatia hoped that the action plan being developed by Italy will be realistic and implemented in the shortest possible timeframe. In line with commitments made by Italy in other meetings, Croatia expects that in resolving case-by-case interference problems, priority will be given to the Biokovo station.

Slovenia requested the EC to intervene to resolve this issue in view of Italy's clear violation of ITU rules as well as of Article 45 of the EECC.

The EC representative expects that Italy takes proper action to resolve the long outstanding harmful interference problems concerning the FM band, and it will consider taking legal action if no positive progress is made on this matter. It stressed that the current situation can no longer be tolerated, and that following issuance of the report by the Italian working group, Italy should rapidly come up with a satisfactory solution.

Italy stated that it understood the disappointment of the affected countries due to lack of progress in resolving any of the reported FM interference problems. Italy was hopeful that as a result of the activities of the Italian working group, the situation will be improved. As a consequence of the work of the Italian working group and other related activities, it was not possible for Italy to study less complex interference cases forming part of the priority list in line with discussions held at previous meetings.

In conclusion, Italy was once again urged to comply with its international obligations concerning spectrum use and to give due importance to the priority interference cases, in particular those for Nanos and Biokovo which cases remained outstanding for an inordinate amount of time.

4. Any other business

700 MHz interference between Italy and Albania

Reference was made to previous discussions where it was reported that the broadcasting networks of Albania were affecting the provision of Italian electronic communications services in the 700 MHz band.

Albania requested to have a bilateral dialogue with Italy so that transitory measures may be implemented. Albania also requested Italy to provide a detailed report on such interference, which shall include information on which TV channels are affecting the provision of such services in the 700 MHz band. Albania remarked that the process leading to making available the 700 MHz band for electronic communications services was still under way.

In response Italy agreed to provide Albania with the requested report so that the appropriate action may be undertaken. In order to expedite the process, Albania will be sending a note to the Ministry and other actors so that proper solutions may be found in the shortest time possible.

UHF issues between Albania and Montenegro

Montenegro stated that in 2017, the 700 MHz band was released from broadcasting services and multilateral agreements signed with the concerned countries. At that time Albania was not able to participate in the discussions and to sign such agreements, but Albania has in due course initiated a replanning process to release broadcasting services from the 700 MHz band. Several bi and multi-lateral meetings were held with Albania to achieve 7 layers in the sub-700 MHz band.

Albania was very cooperative with Montenegro which led to the implementation of a provisional transition plan where Albanian broadcasters operating in neighbouring allotment regions on channels 51-56 regions were migrated. However, the bilateral agreement with Albania focusing on the parameters of broadcasting services (assignments) could not be finalised and as a result, Montenegro's submission to the ITU for the modification of the GE06 plan were considered unfavourable. Montenegro suggested Albania to submit their requirements for the replanning of the sub-700 MHz band as soon as possible.

The information provided by Montenegro was noted and the matter will be dealt on a bilateral basis with Albania so that progress may be achieved on this matter.

External related issues

- Cyprus-Turkey: Regarding the recording of a new unified Cypriot plan below 700 MHz under the GE06 plan, Cyprus is still facing an objection from Türkiye to such recording in International Telecommunication Union (ITU). As it appears, an agreement has been

reached between Greek and Turkish Cypriots under the umbrella of the United Nations (Bi-communal Technical Committee on Broadcasting and Telecommunications) for the use of all channels below the 700 MHz band for digital TV broadcasting, addressing the needs of the entire island that, in order for these channels to be secured, the Cypriot Government submitted the relevant notifications to the ITU for modification of the GE06 plan. It is essential for Cyprus therefore that Türkiye's objection in ITU be lifted: since the television channels below the 700 MHz band including those channels that have been agreed to be used by Turkish Cypriots are still not registered in this ITU Plan, which deprives from the necessary regulatory protection against interferences coming from neighbouring countries, which is a situation where both Greek and Turkish Cypriots are affected.

- North Macedonia-Albania: Interference reports concerning the 700 MHz band were sent to Albania on 28 October 2022, but the interference problem is still on going. North Macedonia insisted to consider this problem with urgency due to continuous reports of operators using this band. North Macedonia is required to ensure that holder of a authorisations use assigned radio spectrum without any interference.

In response, Albania made reference to information conveyed by Montenegro and stated that a transitory migration plan has been developed for entities that use frequencies in the 700 MHz band, specifically the temporary change of frequencies from the uplink band to the downlink band.

- North Macedonia (FM band): North Macedonia stated that it received continuous objections from Greece and Bulgaria when effecting frequency coordination in the FM band, without explanation. The excellent cooperation at a technical level with these countries was noted and are looking for another opportunity to discuss the matter even on a multilateral basis.

Greece noted the complaint made by North Macedonia and committed to report the matter to the responsible Ministry. Greece was hopeful that a solution may be found.

5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the RSPG Sub-Group of the Good offices will be held remotely on the 25th September 2023 (09:30-12:30hrs).

List of participants

No. of participants: 24

Country	Organisation
Albania	Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP)
	Authority for Audiovisual Media (AMA)
	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Austria	Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance
	Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications (RTR)
Croatia	Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM)
France	French National Frequency Agency (ANFR)
Greece	Hellenic Telecommunications & Post Commission (EETT)
	Ministry of Digital Governance
Hungary	National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH)
Italy	Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT)
	Italian Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM)
Lithuania	Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania (RRT)
Malta	Malta Communications Authority (MCA)
Montenegro	Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services of Montenegro (EKIP)
North Macedonia	Agency for Electronic Communications (AEC)
Slovenia	Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia (AKOS)
	Ministry of Digital Transformation
-	European Commission

ANNEX II**REPORT****RSPG SUB-GROUP**

“Good offices” to assist in bilateral negotiations between Member States

Web meeting, 25th September 2023

The co-chairs welcomed the participants to the meeting of RSPG Sub-Group of the ‘good offices’. In their opening remarks they indicated that this was the fifth meeting of the Sub-Group held in 2023 and that it was desirable to make progress on the various open issues which have been under discussion for quite some time.

The draft agenda of the meeting was then considered and subsequently approved following modifications to add items under ‘Any other business’.

1. Update on the development of the Adriatic and Ionian regional agreement for DAB

The Sub Group confirmed that finalising the Adriatic and Ionian regional agreement for DAB (hereinafter the ‘regional DAB agreement’) in a timely manner is a priority since the agreement is key to, in particular, resolving DAB and certain FM harmful interference problems. It was acknowledged that within the Adriatic and Ionian group, no administration is taking the lead towards this process.

Italy confirmed that no new developments took place on the regional DAB agreement since the last Sub Group meeting held in July 2023, and confirmed its willingness to continue the dialogue with the other countries. Italy expressed confidence that the agreement may be finalised in a satisfactory manner.

The Sub Group encouraged the parties to resume discussions within the Adriatic and Ionian group as soon as possible towards finalising the regional DAB agreement.

Italy-Slovenia

Slovenia confirmed that Italy replied to their letter but their positions on reaching a common understanding of the ITU rules are still divergent. Slovenia stated that the main issue is that Italy ignores the Radio Regulations and allows the use of uncoordinated frequencies and by doing so, it causes harmful interference to Slovenian stations. The other issue is that Italian courts also ignore the Radio Regulations and there are litigation cases initiated by Italian operators using uncoordinated frequencies against Slovenian operators using coordinated

frequencies. As a result, Italian courts require Slovenian operators to significantly reduce their emission parameters as a means of protecting the uncoordinated Italian stations.

Notwithstanding the divergent views, Slovenia expressed its willingness to continue a dialogue with Italy with a view of reaching a compromise on these issues as well as on the fact that Italy systematically objects to Slovenia's requests to register additional stations in the Geneva 1984 (GE84) plan.

In response, Italy also confirmed its willingness to discuss the issues with Slovenia in a bilateral meeting. Italy stated that it proposed revisions to their bilateral agreement and requested Slovenia to indicate the exact points where Italy's proposals are not in line with the Radio Regulations. Italy confirmed that it is committed to resolve FM interference problems but a solution limiting Italy to only use its GE84 rights will not be realistic.

In conclusion it was agreed that Italy and Slovenia should hold a bilateral meeting to discuss their open issues with the support of the Sub Group co-chairs and the EC.

Italy-Montenegro

The July meeting of the Sub Group considered concerns raised by Montenegro on the position taken by Italy as regards Montenegro's assignment at Bjelasica. This assignment is a Geneva 2006 (GE06) registered station and is located outside the buffer zone with Italy. The issue appears to be attributed to the propagation model used in assessing the compatibility, where assessments based on version 5 and version 6 of Recommendation ITU-R P.1812 provided divergent results. At that meeting Italy agreed to comment on the concerns expressed by Montenegro in September.

Italy informed the Sub Group that this specific matter is still being assessed and suggested to hold bilateral discussions once their assessment is completed. Italy's assessment, which is expected to be completed by around mid-October 2023, will take into account the fact that the Bjelasica station is already registered under the GE06 plan and that this station is critical for Montenegro. Montenegro supported Italy's proposal to continue discussing this issue in a bilateral meeting with the support of the Sub Group's co-chairs as necessary. Montenegro indicated that during 2024 it plans to put into operation various stations, including that at Bjelasica and expressed preference to resolve this technical issue with Italy, preferably prior to WRC-23. It also expressed its commitment towards finalising the regional DAB agreement.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia confirmed that it will be actively cooperating with the parties towards finding mutual solutions leading to finalising the regional DAB agreement.

North Macedonia stated that in line with the Sub Group recommendations made at the previous meeting, and after taking into account the frequency distribution maps for the Adriatic and Ionian region provided after that meeting, it initiated a process to analyse all possible solutions and to develop their own proposals.

The first proposal consists in extending the coverage of VHF channel 5 in the western side of North Macedonia and channel 9 in the Eastern side. It noted that the possible release by Albania of channel 9 in the border area will allow North Macedonia to use this channel in the entire country. North Macedonia also requires an additional frequency block in the other allotment zones.

North Macedonia stated that in case a mutual acceptable solution is found, it will require time to compile electronic notices for its allocations and assignments, for inclusion in bilateral or multilateral frequency coordination agreements. North Macedonia emphasised that it supports bilateral and multilateral cooperation between neighbouring administrations, and it actively cooperates in finding solutions. It expects that North Macedonia's problems be treated in the same manner and on the importance of resolving all open issues.

North Macedonia confirmed that it will be sharing its first set of proposals with the Sub Group soon. Discussions with the neighbouring countries are expected to be taking place to discuss North Macedonia's proposals.

Albania-North Macedonia

On the developments presented by North Macedonia, Albania stated that it looks forward to receiving the new proposals from North Macedonia, and upon receipt it will meticulously scrutinise the suggested alterations with the aim of arriving at the most optimal solution.

Albania informed the Sub Group that it carried out technical analysis of Italy's proposed revisions to the draft frequency distribution plan which was provided to the members of the Adriatic and Ionian group on 12 July, and highlighted the following issues:

- Channel 5 proposed to be used in allotment 6 (Albania) for DTT is not compatible with the same channel proposed for North Macedonia;
- Frequency block 11C proposed to be used in allotment 6 (Albania) for DAB is not compatible with the same frequency block proposed for North Macedonia; and
- Frequency block 12A proposed to be used in allotment 6 (Albania) for DAB is not compatible with the same frequency block proposed for North Macedonia.

Albania also stated that it has an internal difficulty concerning the use of channel 8 proposed to be used in allotment 3 for local DTT transmissions. Albania confirmed that it will be cooperating fully to resolve these problems with its neighbouring countries.

In addition, Albania presented incompatibilities referring to Italy's proposal, highlighting issues such as channel 5, which has been suggested for the Elbasan allotment (AL006D). Albania will be causing interference to Mali Vljaj, North Macedonia.

North Macedonia requested clarifications to the concerns expressed by Albania for channel 5 since this channel is already GE06 registered for North Macedonia. North Macedonia clarified that it is not familiar with Italy's proposals of July 2023 but expects that the proposals it is finalising (as reported above) will improve the compatibility situation.

Croatia stated that Italy's proposed revisions to the plan were discussed at the previous Sub Group meeting and considered not feasible since the proposed revisions did not take into account the requirements of neighbouring countries.

In conclusion, the Sub Group recognised the commitments made by the concerned countries to continue cooperating in the process leading to finalising the regional DAB agreement. Specifically, the concerned countries were looking forward to receiving North Macedonia's proposals so that the additional compatibility assessments will take place. In this regard the Adriatic and Ionian group was invited to reconvene and to continue its discussions.

2. FM interference around Italy

Update from Italy on work done by the working group dealing with FM interference

Italy stated that the working group established under Legislative Decree 207/2021 has not yet finalised the draft report, but is working to complete it before the start of the 2023 World Radiocommunication Conference (i.e. 20 November 2023). Italy clarified that it will only disclose the contents of the report with the Sub Group, including any solutions to resolve cross-border harmful interference, only after the report has been evaluated by Cabinet.

Italy noted that due to the summer period, no progress could be made towards resolving any of the priority cases of FM harmful interference problems. Nonetheless it collected additional measurements on the FM harmful interference situation, and in Malta's case this information is being analysed with a view of identifying what specific actions may be undertaken, with the support of the local office in Sicily.

Following a question by the EC representative, Italy clarified that some of the recommended actions which will be included in the said report may be implemented immediately, whilst the implementation of some of the other actions is subject to Government's positive consideration.

Croatia and Slovenia expressed their disappointment that the Italian process is taking longer than expected. Croatia expressed concerns that the approval process of the political related recommendations will be prolonged and therefore Croatia will continue suffering from Italian harmful interference. It proposed to expedite the process in order to start resolving some cases of harmful interference, in particular the priority case concerning the Biokovo station.

Slovenia stressed that Italy's violation of ITU rules and the EECC should prompt the European Commission to take legal action so that the Italian process may be expedited. Slovenia noted that due to this interference, its broadcasters are suffering economic damage, whilst Italian broadcasters using frequencies which Italy has no international right to use are making profits. A rapid solution is therefore required.

The EC representative stated that it was clear what Italy's legal obligations are and suggested that Italy should do its utmost to submit the report to the Ministry prior to the next RSPG plenary meeting.

France

France reported that limited progress by correspondence was made since the July meeting of the Sub Group. In addition to the Bonifacio interference case on 88.3 MHz, the discussions with Italy include some pending French notifications to the GE84 plan (Part A), which in total amount to 40. France received the results of the studies done by Italy and these are to be discussed bilaterally during this week. Progress on this matter is considered to be moving at a very slow pace.

It was also reported that France was provided with a database of Italian stations located in North Sardinia. Given that the data may not be fully comprehensive, Italy was requested to provide the complete set of data for North Sardinia and other relevant areas as soon as possible since this has a bearing on the results of the studies being undertaken.

Italy expressed confidence that at their next bilateral meeting, agreement will be reached to some of the French notifications. As regards the request to provide a comprehensive database, Italy stated that it will be providing such once the process to verify the technical parameters of the stations by the local office is completed.

Italy mentioned that it is trying to find solutions to four French stations operating from Elba Island, without an Italian authorisation and that a solution based on article 18.2 of the ITU Radio Regulations is being considered. Following this process, Italy will be seeking to issue an authorisation to these French stations.

Malta

No improvements were reported on the pending FM interference cases with Italy.

Development of an action plan to resolve FM interference affecting Croatia and Slovenia

Both Croatia and Slovenia did not report any improvements to the FM harmful interference situation.

The Sub Group was informed by Croatia that it was finalising its measurements on the FM band and that the interference reports are expected to be submitted in October 2023. Croatia noted that so far, no change was noted to the FM harmful interference situation. As regards the priority interference cases Italy confirmed that no action has been taken towards their resolution. In this context Italy noted that the Italian working group was looking at means on how to make enforcement actions taken by the Ministry against stakeholders more effective.

In response Croatia reminded Italy that the priority cases amount to 40 out of a total of 160 interfered Croatian transmitters. Due to this interference broadcasters are suffering from social, cultural and financial damage.

It was acknowledged that the action plan to be developed by the Sub Group should be realistic and implementable. In the circumstances, such an action plan may only be developed once the Sub Group has confirmations on the actions that may be taken by Italy to resolve harmful interference problems on the basis of the working group report.

3. DAB interference around Italy

Malta

Malta reported that following its harmful interference reports on frequency block 12C, it was informed by Italy that the Italian DAB operator vacated this frequency block. In this regard Malta was requested to confirm the status of the interference. Based on frequency monitoring activities, Malta confirmed to Italy that the Italian interfering station was no longer being received.

However, following additional measurements carried out in September, Malta informed Italy that this interference case was once again present. In this regard Malta and Italy agreed to conduct a coordinated measurement activity with the cooperation of the concerned Italian operator, with a view of identifying the transmitting location of the DAB transmitter affecting Malta.

Slovenia and Croatia

Regarding the solution proposed by Italy for resolving the current DAB interference by using frequency blocks 7C and 7D, Italy reaffirmed that the use of these two blocks will be temporary until the regional DAB agreement is finalised. Italy stated that the choice of using these two frequency blocks was clearly expressed at the previous Sub Group meetings.

In relation to Slovenia's requirement to using 7C and 7D during the transition period and before signature of the regional DAB agreement, Italy reiterated that these resources are actually assigned, under the GE06, in the coordination area in some allotments of Italy and San Marino, while Slovenia has other channels. Therefore, from a GE06 standpoint both countries are not at par. Italy emphasised on the importance to sign the regional DAB agreement in short order in order to allow Italy and other involved Administrations to move, with certainty, on the channels of the agreement, that in such cases may differ from GE06's current rights, and to only use radio spectrum in accordance with coordinated rights.

Slovenia stated that the reasons of their objections to Italy's intention of using 7C and 7D was clearly expressed at the previous Sub Group meeting. It added that Italy continues to deploy uncoordinated DAB stations and expressed concerns that the situation is becoming similar to that in the FM band. Slovenia noted that several frequency blocks in the VHF band are still unused and requested Italy to state what frequency blocks it intends to use instead of 7C and 7D. Slovenia suggested that the identified frequency resources should be released as soon as possible in order to avoid harmful interference.

Italy reminded the meeting that the Italian provisional DAB plan foresees 3 national and 3 regional DAB networks. Rights of use of radio spectrum were already assigned by the Ministry to the national DAB networks no. 1 (RAI), no. 2 (DAB Italia) and no. 3 (Euro DAB Italia). RAI filed an appeal against the Italian courts since it prefers to use the frequency blocks for network no. 3. Recently the Courts issued an order to the Ministry to carry out a new assignment procedure for networks no. 1 and no. 3. Accordingly, the Ministry directed Euro DAB Italy to stop the migration process based on the provisional plan frequency blocks, already

in progress, until the new assignment is finalised. The Ministry is working on the new assignment.

Frequency block 7C is allocated to network no. 1 (RAI) and 7D to network no. 2 (DAB Italia). Euro DAB has already done 89 conversions of the frequency blocks. As regards the local networks, the Ministry has commenced the frequency assignment procedure during the past months. The relevant rights of use will be issued once this process is completed.

Italy clarified that following signature of the regional DAB agreement, the provisional national plan of Italy will be modified in order to terminate the use of frequency blocks 7C and 7D. Instead of these frequency blocks Italy will be using others pursuant to the said regional DAB agreement. Italy committed to prepare a brief report to highlight how it will align to the regional DAB agreement once it is finalised. Italy will endeavour to make available this brief report prior to the next meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian group.

Following a question from the EC representative, Italy stated that the frequency blocks which are currently not used will be used in accordance with the provisional plan frequency blocks assignment to the respective operators and within certain timeframes. Italy reaffirmed that its requirement to use frequency blocks 7C and 7D is temporary until signature of the regional DAB agreement, for the purpose of resolving DAB interference problems. These two blocks are currently not used by Slovenia and Croatia, although Slovenia expressed interest to use them.

In response Slovenia stressed that Italy was using frequency blocks 7C and 7D despite the fact that during the frequency coordination procedure Italy received objections to such use by Croatia and Slovenia. It questioned why Italy continues using these two frequency blocks. In addition, Slovenia stated that its requirement to using 7C and 7D was successfully coordinated with 8 countries and will be used during the transition period. In accordance with the draft regional DAB agreement, 7C and 7D will be allocated for use by Slovenia. It was clarified that Italy's explicit frequency coordination agreement on the use of 7C and 7D by Slovenia is still pending.

Croatia stressed that it does not accept the putting into operation of any transmitter without prior coordination. In accordance with the draft regional DAB agreement, 7C and 7D are designated for the countries located in the Eastern side of the Adriatic Sea and Italy is designated with other channels. The justifications provided by Italy on why it is persisting on using 7C and 7D are not clear.

Croatia requested clarifications on the Italian process leading to the use of 7C and 7D (e.g. which frequency blocks are used now, the planned date of the frequency migration process, etc.). Clarifications were also requested on the expected duration of the rights permitting the temporary use of these frequencies as well as what will happen to such rights in the event that the regional DAB agreement will not be finalised.

The Sub Group considered opportune that Italy's response to these questions is included in the brief report to be prepared by Italy. Italy was also invited to respond to the other questions in writing since this was critical in making progress on the topic under discussion.

4. External related issues

- North Macedonia (FM band): North Macedonia reported that no progress has been made on its requests to coordinate FM stations under the GE84 agreement. It reminded its neighbouring countries Albania, Greece and Bulgaria to provide positive comments and on the application of the principle of reciprocity.
- Belarus: Belarus sent several notifications to the ITU to register point-to-multipoint stations in the 3.4-3.8 GHz along the border with the Russian Federation. This shows that the band is being used for IMT.

5. Any other business

700 MHz interference between Italy and Albania

Italy reported on the status of 700 MHz interference caused by Albanian television stations.

Italy stated that their 700 MHz mobile networks are experiencing interference caused by the television stations of Albania operating on channels 50 to 53. These channels overlap with the uplink portion of 700 MHz band. The level of the interference signal is dependent on tropospheric ducting and is more severe during the warm months. The interference is predominantly present in the whole region of Puglia, parts of Basilicata as well as parts of the coast of Calabria towards the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. Examples on typical interference levels was also provided. Italy requested Albania to indicate when it expects to make available the 700 MHz band for mobile electronic communications services.

Albania stated that upon receipt of the information from Italy, it took the necessary measures to identify the station causing the interference, through radio monitoring. Nonetheless, Italy was requested to provide additional information as per Appendix 10 of the ITU Radio Regulations as soon as possible. Based on these reports, the necessary measures will be taken to resolve this interference. As regards the release of the 700 MHz band for mobile electronic communications services, Albania stated that the process is still underway and no precise time frame could be provided of when this process is expected to be concluded.

Italy confirmed that it will be providing the requested reports at the earliest opportunity.

The EC Representative made reference to the Parliament and Council Decision on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band and stated that transitional solutions shall be found as soon as possible with a view to eliminate any harmful interference. The EC hoped that Albania will be able to release the 700 MHz band for mobile electronic communications services soon since this will bring economic advantages to the country.

UHF issues between Albania and Montenegro

Montenegro referred to its intervention at the previous Sub Group meeting concerning the submission of notices to the ITU under the GE06 agreement.

Montenegro reaffirmed that the bilateral agreement with Albania focusing on the parameters of broadcasting services (assignments) could not be finalised and as a result, Montenegro's submission to the ITU for the modification of the GE06 plan were considered unfavourable. This matter remained pending for quite some time. A letter was sent to Albania on this matter on the 28th July 2023.

In the circumstances, Albania was invited to hold bilateral talks, with a view of finalising the said frequency coordination activities, preferably before WRC-23.

Albania noted this request and confirmed receipt of Montenegro's letter. Albania stated that Montenegro's request is still under consideration.

Registration of TV allotments under the GE06 by Italy

Croatia stated that BR IFIC number 3004 (5 September 2023) includes various notifications submitted by Italy. Croatia considered that three of these notifications with the intent to add new allotments for Udine on channels 28, 29 and 34 were confusing since in accordance with the UHF Adriatic agreement, these channels are assigned to Croatia. For this reason, Croatia provided a negative response to these notifications. Italy was requested to clarify this issue.

Italy stated that in principle, these notifications should be in line with the UHF Adriatic agreement and the necessary verifications will be made to identify any possible errors. Croatia will be notified on the outcome of these verifications.

Italy-France – pending TV requests for local transmitters

Italy stated that in 2017 an agreement was signed with France concerning the UHF band and pursuant to this agreement, a country may use additional channels in the coordination area subject to obtaining the agreement of the other country.

Italy has a need to deploy low power television transmitters (i.e. less than 10 dBW power) to provide television services in specific uncovered areas, especially in valleys and on mountains. In this regard it requested France to give its agreement to the deployment of such low power television transmitters. Italy clarified that it does not intend to register these transmitters in the GE06 plan in order to exonerate France from the requirement to protect these transmitters from any possible harmful interference caused by French television stations. Italy stated that the frequency coordination requests were sent to France in July. In this regard France was requested to accelerate the consideration of Italy's requests.

Italy indicated that similar requests were also submitted by France. In general, these were considered favourably and only the request concerning Mont Alban to use channel 27 is pending. Italy indicated that since this channel is shared between Italy and Monaco, the

requested agreement may be granted. Another request from France to establish a high-power transmitter (32 dBW) could not be accepted.

France stated that the request concerning 8 of these transmitters may be considered as closed. The technical parameters for the French station at Mont Alban are still under review and therefore the updated set of technical requirements cannot be submitted. France also stated that it only has two pending frequency coordination requests from Italy, one with eight assignments received 11 September 2023 (reply requested by 11 October 2023) and the second request is for three assignments received last week (reply requested by 20 October 2023). France indicated that it expects to provide its comments to Italy within the requested timelines.

Italy thanked France for the information given, in particular to the confirmation that the request sent in July 2023 for the establishment of the eight transmitters was agreed to by France.

6. Date of next meetings

The Sub Group agreed to hold a short meeting on the 6th November 2023 (10:00-12:00hrs.) to consider progress on the various open issues. The subsequent meeting of the Sub Group will be held on the 11th January 2024 (09:30-12:30hrs).

List of participants

No. of participants: 26

Country	Organisation
Albania	Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP)
	Authority for Audiovisual Media (AMA)
	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
Austria	Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications (RTR)
Croatia	Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM)
France	French National Frequency Agency (ANFR)
Greece	Ministry of Digital Governance
Italy	Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT)
	Italian Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM)
Lithuania	Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania (RRT)
Malta	Malta Communications Authority (MCA)
Montenegro	Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services of Montenegro (EKIP)
North Macedonia	Agency for Electronic Communications (AEC)
Slovenia	Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia (AKOS)
	Ministry of Digital Transformation
Sweden	Swedish Post and Telecom Authority
-	European Commission