



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS, CONTENT AND
TECHNOLOGY

Digital Decade and Connectivity

Radio Spectrum Policy Group

RSPG Secretariat

Brussels, 12 February 2025

RSPG25-010 FINAL

RADIO SPECTRUM POLICY GROUP

Progress Report of the RSPG Sub-Group

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

RSPG Secretariat, office L-51 05/DCS,

Commission européenne/Europese Commissie, 1049 Bruxelles/Brussel, BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Telephone: direct line (+32-2)29.21.261, switchboard 299.11.11;

E-mail: cnect-rspg@ec.europa.eu

Website CIRCABC: <https://circabc.europa.eu/w/browse/f5b44016-a8c5-4ef6-a0bf-bc8d357debcb>

Website : https://radio-spectrum-policy-group.ec.europa.eu/index_en

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 one meeting since the 65th Radio Spectrum Policy Group. The meeting was held on the 15th January and continued discussing the various open issues concerning cross-border coordination.

The report of the meeting is annexed to this progress report and an executive summary of the key discussion points is provided below.

1. FM harmful interference around Italy

The budget law approved by the Italian Government in 2024 did not include a direct provision concerning the long-awaited voluntary compensation scheme for FM broadcasting services, despite the strong support by the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT). However, decrees are in preparation addressing specific provisions of various Italian ministries, including of MIMIT. MIMIT’s decree proposal is expected to include a provision on the compensation scheme. No timeframes were provided when the decrees will be adopted by the Italian Government, but this is expected in the short-term. In this regard a process is underway to allocate funds for the voluntary compensation scheme, focusing on 2024 unspent budget allocations within MIMIT.

Italy also embarked on a process to improving their internal procedures on the treatment of reports of harmful interference, which process is still underway. This aims to have a more robust framework when presenting specific cases to operators. Nonetheless, an initial case was submitted by Italy to Radio Capital, being one of the FM operators affecting Croatia’s transmissions from Biokovo on 89.7 MHz. A meeting will be held with Radio Capital to demonstrate the results of the studies, to clarify the situation with respect to the ITU and EU legal frameworks which Italy is required to apply and to identify possible solutions. A similar approach will be adopted to address other cross-border harmful interference cases.

Concerns were expressed by Croatia and Slovenia that the voluntary compensation scheme was not adopted and this will further delay the process to resolve some of the reported FM interference cases. They requested the EC to intervene as appropriate. The EC representative confirmed that the EC will be considering taking different actions in view of the reported delays in the process.

As regards the Biokovo case, it was highlighted that this case was already studied thoroughly by the Good Offices in 2019, and the most effective solution focused on migrating Radio Capital to an alternate frequency. Additionally, Slovenia requested Italy to expedite the examination of their Nanos station on 88.6 MHz.

It was confirmed that the general harmful interference situation caused by Italy to Croatia, France, Malta and Slovenia did not improve since no single interference case has been resolved, including those forming part of the priority list.

The dialogue between France and Italy was still ongoing and agreement was reached on how to treat the French interference case at Bonifacio. France reiterated their request to Italy to make available the data pertaining to Italian broadcasting stations. A bi-lateral meeting was planned for the 21st January 2025 with the intent to make additional progress on the items under discussion.

In conclusion, the SG regretfully noted that the long-awaited provision in the Italian budget law for the voluntary compensation scheme was not adopted as expected and this will result in another delay towards improving the general harmful interference situation in the FM band. Nonetheless, the SG hoped that the process on the adoption of a decree which includes measures on the said scheme is completed successfully. In the circumstances the SG reiterated the importance to finding and implementing effective solutions in a timely manner which are not based solely on the voluntary compensation scheme. In this respect Italy was encouraged to expedite the process as regards resolving the Biokovo interference case, but concurrently also consider other interference cases falling in the priority list such as the Slovenian interference at Nanos.

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

The Adriatic and Ionian group and their neighbouring countries were very active which augurs well to the finalisation of the Adriatic and Ionian agreement for DAB. The Adriatic and Ionian group had to meet on 31 January 2025 and will be considering the date when its activities should be completed. April 2025 was indicated as a preferred period when the activities of the group should be finalised.

Albania reported progress with Greece and North Macedonia where solutions were identified and a frequency allocation plan was provisionally agreed. Albania is still working to finalise the frequency assignments. Albania also addressed a disagreement registered by Montenegro to one of the planned channels for DVB-T. The identified solution still needs to be shared with the group.

North Macedonia held meetings with Albania and with Greece and Bulgaria where significant progress was made on the issues under consideration. Additional bilateral activities have been planned, including with Serbia, to make additional progress. North Macedonia stated that it will endeavour to finalise its frequency coordination activities with its neighbouring countries by April 2025.

In conclusion, the SG noted the good progress made by the Adriatic and Ionian group and their neighbouring countries, and encouraged to keep a good spirit of cooperation in order to finalise this multi-lateral activity.

3. DAB interference around Italy

The discussion focused on claims made by Croatia and Slovenia in past meetings concerning irregular use by Italy of various DAB frequency blocks. The use of the frequency blocks descend from old authorisations and roadmaps were established when the transmissions on these resources should be switched-off.

Italy confirmed that an improvement to the situation was expected as from March 2025.

4. 700 MHz interference

The SG continued debating cases of harmful interference caused by the TV transmissions of Albania to 700 MHz wireless broadband electronic communications networks of Greece, Italy, Montenegro and North Macedonia. No update could be provided by Albania since the lead entity responsible for the replanning of the UHF band did not participate at the SG meeting.

In the frame of the EU accession discussions, Albania was reminded by the EC representative to implement the Parliament and Council decision on the 700 MHz band since this should resolve the reported problems. It was emphasised on the importance for Albania to coordinate this issue better to minimise delays in resolving the reported interference which is affecting various countries.

Croatia reported DVB-T interference caused by Albania TV stations in the sub-700 MHz band and Albania was requested to update Croatia on the implementation of a new UHF plan which should resolve the reported interference. Albania confirmed that the replanning of the sub-700 MHz band was still in process.

In conclusion, the SG requested Albania to provide the contact details of the responsible person dealing with the 700 MHz band interference so that the matter can be addressed more effectively. Albania was also encouraged to resolve the DVB-T interference reported by Croatia in a timely manner.

5. External related issues

Ukraine

The co-chairs had meetings with various entities from Ukraine and their DVB-T operator on the possibility to replace six stations contributing most to the interfering situation in the Zakarpattia region. Ukraine indicated that the proposal of the equipment manufacturer did not correspond exactly to their needs and had to be revised directly by the manufacturer. The revised proposal will include more realistic pricing information. In addition, Ukraine was still analysing the possibility of direct transfer of funds from state institutions to private companies. A response still needs to be provided by Ukraine on these matters.

The co-chairs were also informed that a possible arrangement was found between Ukraine and Poland on how to significantly reduce the impact of 700 MHz DVB-T stations on Polish mobile networks. This considers the replanning of TV stations that have significant impact on Polish territory (i.e. Pidbuzh, Brody, Horokhiv, Kovel, Liubeshiv). According to the estimated simulations, this temporary solution will be reducing interference in Poland by at least 60% and at the same time will not create obstacles to the uninterrupted functioning of DVB-T in Ukraine. These actions are already underway and the Ukrainian side has confirmed identifying a prospective partner to support the implementation of the project. The official letter received by Poland confirms that retuning (mentioned as “temporary solution”) of the above mentioned TV stations will take place in Q1.2025.

As regards the measures in the Zakarpattia region Poland considers these to further reduce harmful interference in Poland. These measures are expected to be implemented in 2025/2026.

6. Date of next meeting

The SG will be holding its next meetings on the 26th March 2025 (09:30-12:30hrs.) in virtual format.

ANNEX

REPORT

RSPG SUB-GROUP

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

Web meeting, 15th January 2025

The co-chairs welcomed the participants to the meeting of the RSPG Sub-Group of the ‘good offices’. The draft agenda of the meeting was then considered and subsequently approved.

7. FM interference around Italy

State-of-play of Italy’s actions on the resolution of FM harmful interference

Italy confirmed that the budget law that was approved by Government towards the end of 2024 does not include a direct provision concerning the voluntary compensation scheme for FM broadcasting services, despite the Ministry’s strong support for its inclusion. However, decrees are in preparation addressing specific provisions of various Italian ministries, including of the ministry responsible for the communications sector (i.e. Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy - MIMIT). The decree for the Ministry is expected to include a provision on the compensation scheme. An indicative timeframe of when the decrees will be adopted by Government is unknown but their adoption is foreseen in the short-term. No information was provided on whether the decrees were initiated by the ministry responsible for finance or else by Government.

Funds are expected to be allocated under these decrees for use by the compensation scheme. In this regard a process is underway with a view of identifying funds deriving from the 2024 financial year that remained unspent by the Ministry, with the possibility of allocating them towards the compensation scheme.

The process on improving the internal procedures addressing reports of harmful interference is still progressing. Fruitful discussions were held between the Ministry and the local offices to define the weaknesses and subsequently, to present specific cases to operators in a more robust way. An initial request was already submitted to Radio Capital, as one of the FM operators affecting Croatia’s Biokovo transmission on 89.7 MHz. A meeting will be held with Radio Capital to demonstrate the results of the studies, to clarify the situation with respect to the ITU and EU legal frameworks which Italy is required to apply and to identify possible solutions. A similar approach will be adopted to address other cross-border harmful interference cases.

Croatia expressed its disappointment that the compensation scheme was not approved as expected, and that the timeframe for the adoption of the decrees is unknown. The current situation reinforces the need for Italy to also consider alternative measures to resolve FM interference, as was suggested by the Good Offices in previous meetings. Croatia requested the EC to support Italy to expedite the process it was undertaking. As regards the Biokovo case, Croatia referred to past activities which confirmed the validity of the measurements and concluded that the solutions were limited, i.e. for the Italian operator to either switch-off or to migrate to an alternate FM frequency.

Italy clarified that the general objective of the compensation scheme is to offer a compensation for networks that will be releasing their authorisation in the FM band and this supports the development of DAB platforms (since the majority of DAB operators also operate FM networks). As regards the Biokovo case, Italy stated that a change of frequency presents the easiest solution subject to finding a usable frequency without disrupting the other Italian stations operating in the area. Italy noted the stricter the solution, the higher is the likelihood for the operator to initiate litigation with the Ministry. The optimisation of FM networks is a more effective solution but presents complex challenges to implement.

On the Biokovo case Croatia highlighted the fact that in 2019 the interference problem was studied in detail within the Good Offices. It was concluded that a solution based on a reduction in transmit power was not feasible since this will reduce the coverage area of the Italian station causing harmful interference. This denotes that an effective solution was indeed identified in 2019, but no effective action was taken by Italy in the interim period. Croatia demanded Italy to take immediate action towards resolving this interference case.

Slovenia expressed similar comments and in view of the circumstances, requested the EC to take legal action against Italy. Slovenia also expressed disappointment that Italy has not as yet considered the priority interference case affecting the station at Nanos on 88.6 MHz. Italy confirmed that this station will be considered after the Biokovo interference case.

The EC representative referred to the exchange of letters with Italy and confirmed that the EC will be considering taking different actions in view of the reported delays in the process.

In conclusion, the Good Offices regretfully noted that the long-awaited provision in the Italian budget law for the voluntary compensation scheme was not adopted as expected and this will result in another delay towards improving the general harmful interference situation in the FM band. Nonetheless, the Good Offices hoped that the process for the adoption of a decree for the Ministry (MIMIT) which includes measures on the said scheme is completed successfully. In the circumstances the Good Offices reiterated the importance to finding and implementing effective solutions in a timely manner which are not based solely on the voluntary compensation scheme. In this respect Italy was encouraged to expedite the process as regards resolving the Biokovo interference case, but concurrently also consider other interference cases falling in the priority list such as the Slovenian interference at Nanos.

Italy-France

It was reported that the discussions between Italy and France are still ongoing. Studies focus on the examination of the objected French coordination requests published in Part A of the GE84 plan where it was agreed that the existing Italian FM stations will be considered in the studies. Agreements were exchanged as regards some of the French assignments and the registration of some Italian stations in the GE84 agreement. It was confirmed that the French interference case concerning Bonifacio will be treated in the same manner. An assessment of the results of studies for Bonifacio is expected to be considered at the next bilateral meeting to be taking place on 21 January 2025.

France reminded Italy to provide the database of Italian broadcasting stations, an action point which has been long outstanding. Italy reiterated that their local offices are working on the matter and challenges were encountered on generating the database in a usable format. Italy will endeavour to make available the requested data for the next meeting in January 2025.

Regarding the situation concerning the Elba case, the matter is expected to be finalised shortly.

Italy-Malta

No progress reported.

Italy-Slovenia

No progress reported.

Reference was made to the several FM harmful interference reports sent by Slovenia to Italy between November 2024 and January 2025. These reports stem from complaints made by the FM operators, and reflect measurements carried out by the administration. As requested by Italy, Slovenia will endeavour to send the interference reports in electronic format.

Italy-Croatia

No progress reported.

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

Albania reported improvements on the cross-border coordination issues with its neighbouring countries. Since the previous Good Offices meeting, meetings were held with Greece and North Macedonia to resolve the issues. Solutions were found and a plan has been provisionally agreed. However, Albania requested additional time to finalise the new assignments based on the agreed notifications. These assignments still need to be provided to the Adriatic and Ionian group.

Albania noted that at the last meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian group, Montenegro expressed disagreement to one of its planned channels (allotment 02) for DVB-T. The expressed concerns were studied and Albania considers that a solution has been found which will be shared with the group in due course.

North Macedonia reported that a bilateral meeting was held with Albania where agreement was reached on the replanning of a frequency block for Albania. The new version of the plan was sent to all neighbouring countries and was subject to a comment from Greece.

North Macedonia also met bilaterally with Greece where FM, DAB and DVB-T issues were discussed and significant progress was registered. A further meeting is planned in February, where it is expected to make additional progress (at an allotment level). In November 2024, North Macedonia and Bulgaria met where the main principles of their future activities were defined and started addressing open issues. Further bi-lateral activities are expected to be taking place in due course. Another meeting is planned with Serbia.

Montenegro remarked that the Adriatic and Ionian allotment plan is based on an agreed compatibility matrix and the plan has been stable since 2022. It confirmed the disagreement given to Albania due to incompatibilities since their proposal was not fully in line with this matrix. Montenegro expressed confidence to the receipt a revised plan from Albania with feasible solutions.

The next meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian group will be held on 31 January 2025 and will be considering the date when its activities should be completed. Montenegro emphasised on the importance to finalise the process and hoped that the pending cross-border coordination issues with the neighbouring countries be resolved as soon as possible. It suggested April 2025 as the preferred period when the activities of the group should be finalised.

North Macedonia confirmed its willingness to sign the agreement with Albania but after resolving the remaining open issues with their other neighbouring countries. It will endeavour to finalise these processes by April 2025.

Croatia added that the signature of the agreement mostly depends on the closure of the cross-border coordination issues between certain neighbouring countries and San Marino's confirmation of the frequency plan to the Adriatic and Ionian agreement. Depending on progress made, the Adriatic and Ionian group will decide on the signature date of the agreement.

Italy stated that from its perspective, the agreement should be signed when all open issues are resolved. Concerning the San Marino issue, Italy confirmed that it will be sharing with San Marino information on the assignments, particularly those assignments which may affect San Marino's rights. It however recalled that San Marino has a comprehensive agreement with Italy through which San Marino obtained some guarantees on the broadcasting of their programmes.

In conclusion, the Good Offices noted the good progress made by Adriatic and Ionian group and the neighbouring countries and encouraged the keep a good spirit of cooperation in order to finalise any remaining open issues.

9. DAB interference around Italy

Reference was made to the claims made by Croatia and Slovenia concerning irregular use of DAB frequency blocks by Italy in some regions and to Italy's roadmaps towards regularising the situation.

Italy stated that according to the provisional DAB agreement, Italy issued licenses to three national DAB networks and was in the process of issuing DAB licences for local/regional transmissions. In some regions, additional interest for DAB frequencies was expressed and this augurs well to the continued development of the DAB platform and to a possible improvement of the FM interference situation.

Italy confirmed that following signature of the DAB agreement for the Adriatic and Ionian region, the authorisations granted to the DAB operators will be aligned as foreseen in the DAB authorisations. It was also confirmed that the provisions foreseen by roadmaps issued by the Ministry as regards the use of DAB frequency blocks deriving from old authorisations was still underway and an improvement was expected as from March 2025.

In that regard, Croatia kindly asked Italy to provide information on the changes performed in the relevant regions (e.g. table with channels switched off/on). No changes were observed by Croatia in the VHF band designated for DAB services since the last meeting.

10. 700 MHz interference

Reference was made to the email sent by Greece prior to the Good Offices meeting, reporting the continued presence of 700 MHz interference caused by television transmissions of Albania.

In response Albania did not provide any information on the matter and stated that it will request the competent persons responsible for the replanning of the UHF band to participate at the next Good Offices meeting so that updated information may be provided. The lead entity is the Ministry for Infrastructure and Energy.

The EC representative reminded Albania that in the frame of the EU accession discussions, Albania was requested to implement the Parliament and Council decision on the 700 MHz band and this should resolve the 700 MHz interference problems. A Sub-committee meeting on digital Transformation and Media between Albania and the EU will be held on the 24th April 2025 and the EC hopes that progress may be registered prior to that meeting.

The EC reiterated the importance for Albania to better coordinate the issue of 700 MHz interference to minimise delays in resolving the harmful interference which is affecting various countries.

In line with previous discussions, North Macedonia confirmed the continued presence of 700 MHz interference and urged Albania to resolve this problem. A similar appeal was made by Montenegro where despite several efforts, the interference problem remained present in the

coastal region. The effect of the interference is damaging mobile operators and consequently, litigation and requests for reimbursement are expected to be received. It demanded information on the process being undertaken in Albania in relation to the migration of TV broadcasting to the sub-700 MHz band.

Croatia stated that it has received from its DVB-T network operator a report on measured interference from Albania, in particular on channels 21, 22, 28 and 45. Croatia explained the situation on a new Albanian UHF plan submitted in 2021 which Croatia commented and requested certain modification of Albanian assignments in order to be compatible with the Croatian DVB-T network. Unfortunately these requests remain unanswered despite reminders sent via email (7 April and 8 July 2022). Albania was requested to provide updates on the implementation of a new UHF plan, especially in regard to the requested modifications to the assignments. Croatia will be resubmitting these emails to Albania.

Albania confirmed that the replanning of the sub-700 MHz band is still in process. Albania was encouraged to cooperate in order to resolve the reported cases of the interference affecting DVB-T in the sub-700 MHz band. Albania was also requested to provide the contact details of the competent persons dealing with for process concerning the 700 MHz band in order to facilitate the exchange of communication. Albania agreed to provide such information after the meeting.

11. Cross border activities with non-EU countries

Ukraine

The co-chair described the situation on the status of negotiations with Ukraine on migrating DVB-T channels operating in the 700 MHz frequency band and causing harmful interference to Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. The co-chairs had several meetings with various entities from the Ukrainian administration and the DVB-T operator on the possibility to replace six stations contributing most to the interfering situation in the Zakarpattia region.

Ukraine indicated that the proposal of the equipment manufacturer does not correspond exactly to their needs and has to be revised directly by the manufacturer. The revised proposal will include more realistic pricing information. In addition, Ukraine is still analysing the possibility of direct transfer of funds from state institutions to private companies. A response still needs to be provided by Ukraine on these matters.

The co-chairs were also informed that a possible arrangement was found between Ukraine and Poland on how to significantly reduce the impact of 700 MHz DVB-T stations on Polish mobile networks. This takes into account the replanning of TV stations that have significant impact on Polish territory, namely: Pidbuzh, Brody, Horokhiv, Kovel, Liubeshiv. According to the estimated simulations, this temporary solution will be reducing interference in Poland by at least 60% and at the same time will not create obstacles to the uninterrupted functioning of digital terrestrial television in Ukraine. These actions are already underway and the Ukrainian

side has confirmed identifying a prospective partner to support the implementation of the project. The official letter received by Poland confirms that retuning (mentioned as “temporary solution”) of the above mentioned TV stations will take place in Q1 2025.

At the same time Poland is very interested in the developments in Zakarpattia Region, since those arrangements will further reduce harmful interference to Poland. During the Polish-Ukrainian workshop dedicated to 5G and organised together with the EC and the ITU (Warsaw, December 2024), Ukraine informed that actions in Zakarpattia region will be carried out at the turn of 2025/2026 or in the 1st half of 2026.

This update was noted by the EC representative. An additional meeting with Ukraine and the EC will be held once Ukraine provides the requested clarifications.

12. Date of next meetings

The Sub Group will be holding its meeting on 26 March 2025 (09:30-12:30hrs), virtually.

List of participants

No. of participants: 32

Country	Organisation
Albania	Authority for Audiovisual Media (AMA)
Austria	Broadcasting Regulatory Authority (RTR)
Croatia	Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries (HAKOM)
Finland	Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (TRAFICOM)
France	French National Frequency Agency (ANFR)
	French Regulatory Authority for audio-visual and digital communication
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)
Latvia	Ministry of Transport, Electronic Communications Department
Montenegro	Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services
Malta	Malta Communications Authority (MCA)
North Macedonia	Agency for Electronic Communications
Poland	Ministry of Digital Affairs
Slovenia	Agency for Communication Networks and Services (AKOS)
	Ministry of Digital Transformation
Slovakia	Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services
Spain	Ministry of Digital Transformation and Digital Infrastructures
-	European Commission