Strategic roadmap for the development of 5G networks in Europe
RSPG Opinion on spectrum for next-generation wireless systems (5G)

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The development of a strategic roadmap for the development of 5G networks in Europe is a key step if we aim at coordinating the introduction of 5G services in Europe. The roadmap will provide sufficient predictability for Member States on the future use of radio spectrum. Based on the assumption that the spectrum is the basic, fundamental element of the digital market, in our view, setting specific deadlines for provision of spectrum for 5G networks in the EU will contribute to the development of the digital single market in Europe.

The provided for public consultation RSPG document: RSPG Opinion on spectrum for next-generation wireless systems (5G) has several elements that we consider important in preparing the strategic roadmap for the development of 5G networks in Europe.

Primary we consider it is essential that 5G services are available for all EU citizens. Experience in the development of mobile networks shows that new services penetrate mainly in major cities and in areas with high population density. Most of the rural areas and areas with less population have no opportunity to use mobile digital services. In this connection, the provision of spectrum in the lower bands such as radio frequency band 700 MHz (694-790 MHz) and below 700 MHz (470-694 MHz) is very important.

For the 700 MHz band use, there is a Commission Decision (EU) 2016/687 for the harmonization of the frequency band 694-790 MHz band for terrestrial systems capable of providing wireless broadband electronic communications services allowing flexibility at national level. The decision precisely defines frequency bands for mobile services and for use in accordance with national specifics.

For the range below 700 MHz a Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union provides considerable flexibility in the use, including broadcasting and shared use of spectrum according to currently negotiated draft provisions. We believe that in order to ensure the development of 5G services is important to identify specific requirements for use of the range. It will ensure the use of services on a primary basis and provide uniform rules for the Member States in shared wireless applications. We consider that giving too much flexibility, according to national characteristics, might result in significant differences between Member States and that might not contribute to the development of the single market in the field of radio spectrum.

Another important issue is to ensure cross-border coordination. Bulgaria borders with three countries that are not EU members. We believe that cross-border coordination would facilitate the determination of frequency bands for 5G, which are set for global harmonization and consistent with the decisions of the ITU. This approach, besides facilitating the coordination, will help the industry due to the international character of the demand and supply of services. In this context, it is appropriate in the preparation of a strategic roadmap for the development of 5G networks in Europe to plan activities for the next World Radiocommunication Conference, which would result in well co-ordinated frequency allocations according to the policy guidelines for the use of radio spectrum in the EU.