

## **RADIO TELEVISION ESPAÑOLA (RTVE) COMMENTS ON THE RADIO SPECTRUM POLICY GROUP'S CONSULTATION ON ITS "ROADMAP TO 2022 AND BEYOND"**

23 December 2021

The Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) has identified a number of Work Items (WI) for its "Work Plan to 2022 and beyond". Prior to the approval of its final work plan at its plenary meeting on 9 February 2022, the RSPG has decided to submit these WIs to public consultation until 6 January 2022.

In this sense, RTVE would like to make some comments.

- **Strategy on the future use of the 470-694 MHz frequency band beyond 2030**

The timetable set out in the consultation draft is the following one:

- Draft Opinion for public consultation: November 2022
- Final Opinion: February 2023

Article 4 of Decision 2017/899 on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union states that:

*Member States shall ensure availability **at least until 2030** of the 470-694 MHz ('sub-700 MHz') frequency band for the terrestrial provision of broadcasting services, including free television, and for use by wireless audio PMSE on the basis of national needs, while taking into account the principle of technological neutrality (...).*

Regarding national needs, DTT in Spain is by far the largest platform for free-to-air TV broadcasting. According to the latest available audience data, referring November 2021, a 72.4% of total television consumption in Spain (linear and non-linear) is via DTT.

On the other hand, there is no technically and economically viable alternative in the medium and long term to replace this platform while maintaining, at least, equivalent conditions for citizens in terms of coverage, free access and gratuity. Therefore, DTT is the only realistic long-term alternative for the distribution of linear TV content in Spain.

Moreover, despite the excellent situation of infrastructure deployment in Spain, and broadband penetration in homes and businesses, Internet is not as inclusive as DTT. Broadband is not expected to be deployed in many rural areas and the older segment of population do not use it. In fact, there is a double gap. 100 Mbps (or higher speed)

broadband has a population coverage of 88%<sup>1</sup> and TDT coverage is higher than a 98%. On the other hand, more than the 25% of the population aged between 65-74 do not use Internet, according to the latest data from the National Institute of Statistics<sup>2</sup>.

Given the guaranteed availability of sub-700 MHz band for DTT until at least 2030 and due to the high relevance of DTT in Spain in the long term in any foreseeable scenario, **RTVE does not consider appropriate to rush to determine the strategy on the future of this band at least seven years in advance and, above all, before knowing the resolutions to be adopted with respect to item 1.5 of the WRC-23 agenda.**

Therefore, **RTVE considers that this WI must be removed from the RSPG work plan, given that in the terms proposed it generates a scenario of legal uncertainty that would generate market distortions and alterations in the WRC-23 agenda discussions, questioning the agreements reached within the EU. Alternatively, it is proposed to start this Work Item by 2025, but promoting a broad social debate that should go beyond technical issues related to spectrum and considering social, economic and cultural relevance of the use of the UHF band for our democratic societies.**

- **WRC-23**

Considering the implementation of DTT in Spain, the provision of the public broadcasting service considered as essential in DTT and the leak of equivalent alternatives for its replacement in the long term, **RTVE's position with respect to item 1.5 of the WRC-23 agenda is based on the defence of the legal certainty in the maintenance of the DTT service provision in the UHF band and therefore of "No Change".**

Given the occupation of 470-694 MHz band in Spain for DTT, we understand that a co-primary allocation for DTT and IMT would prevent the coexistence of services and could pushing DTT out, as it happened before in the 700 and 800 MHz bands and where such a co-primary allocation exists.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Broadband coverage in Spain in 2020. Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation. <https://avancedigital.mineco.gob.es/banda-ancha/cobertura/Documents/Cobertura-BA-2020.pdf?csf=1&e=IVCXmu>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Survey on Equipment and Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Households. INE [http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica\\_C&cid=1254736176741&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976608](http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176741&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735976608)

There are many frequency bands where 5G can be developed and pending to be assigned at WRC-23. Mobile networks operators do not need sub-700 MHz frequencies in Spain. This approach could put DTT at risk.

Moreover, DTT licences regulated by public authorities of democratic institutions guarantee compliance with a many essential regulations for linear television that, until today, are not guaranteed by any other technological platform operated by third parties for the distribution of linear TV over IP.

Public radio and television, considered in Spain as a public service with special constitutional relevance (Article 20 of the Spanish Constitution), offers its services in UHF band. DTT, as a universal service with free and open access without discrimination of citizens for social or geographic reasons, is today the main distribution platform for audiovisual content, information, opinion and entertainment. This is essential in our democratic societies.

**Any RSPG Opinion regarding WRC-23 cannot ignore Spanish reality and, above all, cannot support decisions that prevent RTVE providing its public linear television service, so that all citizens can have access to this service in equal or even better conditions (e.g. UHD content) in the short term.**

**Therefore, RTVE demands the consideration of a permanent primary allocation for DTT in the 470-694 MHz band.**