



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2016) 5299 final*

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera dei Deputati for its Opinion on the proposal for a Decision on the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union {COM(2016) 43 final}.

As part of its Digital Single Market strategy for Europe the Commission has presented a vision of universal, high-quality connectivity for businesses and the public. The proposal for the use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band follows the first proposals made under the Digital Single Market strategy in December 2015 on copyright and digital contracts.

The Commission is pleased that the Camera dei Deputati shares the view that it is necessary to coordinate at EU-level the transition of the 700 MHz from digital terrestrial TV (DTT) to wireless broadband services to meet the needs of increasing mobile Internet traffic.

Indeed, the Commission would like to underline that the allocation of the 700 MHz band to wireless broadband would allow mobile operators to offer higher-speed and higher-quality broadband to consumers in wider areas. It would provide mobile broadband speeds up to 100 Mb/s, in line with the Digital Agenda for Europe targets, and allow the EU to catch up with leading world regions in terms of 4G mobile broadband take-up. In addition, it will help bridge the digital divide in Europe and foster the Digital Single Market, both pre-requisites for the EU to move forward with 5G deployment and the innovative applications it would enable. The coordinated designation of the sub-700 MHz band for flexible use which safeguards the provision of audiovisual media services to mass audiences would protect the European audiovisual model and provide legal certainty to broadcasting operators while providing the necessary flexibility to accommodate the large variety of national situations in terms of digital terrestrial television and wireless broadband demand.

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The Commission notes the Camera dei Deputati's concern with regard to the proposed date for a coordinated release of the 700 MHz band in the EU and its invitation to introduce the possibility for Member States to delay the release of the 700 MHz band for a period of up to two years. The Commission also notes the Camera dei Deputati's proposal to reserve the sub-700 MHz band for digital terrestrial television and Programme Making and Special Events (PMSE) services until 2030 with the exclusion of any services other than TV broadcasting and the request to evaluate positively the potential adoption by Member States of relevant measures to foster the replacement of consumer equipment and the technological adaptations required at broadcasting network level.

Since 2015 the 700 MHz band has been allocated to both broadcasting and mobile services in the International Telecommunications Union's Radio Regulations, as could already be foreseen after the 2012 World Radio Conference, and is used near-worldwide for wireless broadband services. There are therefore significant gains that can be made, in terms of economies of scale for network equipment and end-user devices, from a timely refarming of the 700 MHz band. Some Member States are already advanced in the transition process and the longer it takes for all Member States to complete the transition, the more interference there will be between neighbouring countries. The Commission underlines that the draft proposal sets out an obligation on the result to be achieved by the Member States by 2020, but leaves open how they achieve it within the national legal system, which leaves flexibility on how to address existing licences and migration costs, including compensation for purchasing new consumer equipment, such as a set-top-box.

The Commission notes the situation of Italy in terms of the usage of the 700 MHz band by digital terrestrial television services and the currently limited availability of alternative TV platforms. To this regard, the Commission would like to suggest that a series of measures can be considered to facilitate the timely clearance of the 700 MHz band and the most efficient use of the UHF spectrum:

- an upgrade to the DVB-T2 (Digital Video Broadcasting – Second Generation Terrestrial) standard (adopted by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute in 2009 and already in use in several Member States) would allow better quality digital terrestrial television programming ;*
- the use of alternative TV platforms for pay TV distribution would offer the additional benefits of reducing cross-border interference issues and requiring the replacement of consumer equipment only for current digital terrestrial television pay-TV viewers; in this regard, the satellite platform is well established and the reach of fixed Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband networks capable of supporting Internet Protocol Television is expected to increase massively by 2020 by virtue of both market investments and the Piano Nazionale Banda Ultra-Larga;*
- a national use of Single Frequency Network (SFN) architecture for a more effective loading of all Multiplexes; and*

- *support for the diversity and variety of content while avoiding scarce spectrum resources being used merely to broadcast the same content at different quality standards and at different times.*

Discussions between the Commission and the co-legislators concerning the proposal are now underway and the Commission remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached in the second half of this year.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the concerns raised by the Camera dei Deputati and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Violeta Bulc

Member of the Commission