

Background of the public consultation on the Lamy Report: the future use of the UHF TV broadcasting band

The UHF TV broadcasting band in the frequency range 470-790 MHz is currently used across the EU mainly for digital terrestrial television (DTT) and wireless audio equipment for programme making and special events (abbreviated as PMSE and in this case essentially wireless microphones) for stage performance and content production in a number of locations such as theatres or open air venues. DTT services delivered to citizens via the UHF band cover a variety of TV channels in standard definition (SD) and high definition (HD) formats, which are received at homes by means of rooftop and in-house antennas. Many of these channels are free at the point of reception, meaning that citizens do not pay access fees for watching them on their TV sets.

The UHF TV broadcasting band has recently become subject to competing demand from mobile operators who wish to use it to provide wireless broadband services at higher speeds and better geographical coverage. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is the United Nations (UN) specialised agency responsible for issues that concern information and communication technologies. The ITU has agreed at its last World Radiocommunications Conference in 2012 (WRC-12) that the upper portion of the UHF broadcasting band, the 694-790 (so called '700') MHz band, may be used either for broadcasting or for mobile services in the EU with effect as of 2016, depending on country choice.

The situation varies across Member States in terms of DTT's market role and penetration compared to other broadcasting platforms such as satellite, cable or IPTV. Nevertheless, the EU needs to develop a coherent position on the future use of the UHF broadcasting band in order to maximise benefits to its economy, citizens and cultural diversity. In the run-up to a long-term strategy, the Commission will take into account several inputs. One of them is the Lamy Report, others would come from the Radio Spectrum Policy Group, Commission studies and the responses to this consultation.

The Lamy Report makes two main recommendations:

1. The "2020-2030-2025" formula: the 700 MHz band should be vacated from DTT use by 2020 (+/- 2 years) and made available ('repurposed') for wireless broadband thus offering additional spectrum to mobile operators. The transition, if and when the band is repurposed, is a major challenge at national and EU level. The formula also foresees regulatory certainty for DTT in the spectrum below the 700 MHz band until 2030. The report recommends a market review clause by 2025 to re-assess developments and adjust the EU strategy, if necessary.
2. The "flexibility option" proposes downlink-only wireless broadband use of UHF broadcasting spectrum in the remaining portion below the 700 MHz band (in the band 470-694 MHz). Broadcasting use would always have priority, yet specific channels or

locations not used for terrestrial broadcasting or PMSE could become available for downlink-only applications depending on national circumstances.

The report focuses on a coordinated EU position in future World Radiocommunications Conferences to support the European framework. In particular, it proposes that the EU does not support the primary allocation of the 470-694 MHz band – which would remain the only spectrum available to DTT –to mobile services at the next WRC in 2015 (WRC-15).