

The European Creative Industries see sufficient Radio Spectrum as essential to their successful digital future, and ask for balanced EU Legislation on UHF



Meeting with the Vice President for the Digital Economy Ansip on February 29, a delegation of employees, employers and civil society representatives united under the banner of the Wider Spectrum Group asked to put culture higher in the implementation of the Digital Single Market as the cultural industries are a core driver for the digital economy. The group underlined that the proposed European legislation on UHF Frequencies is not acceptable because it has left aside the fundamental principles put forward in the Lamy Report and in the opinion of the EU spectrum management administrations so as to secure the future of the Creative Sector.

The delegation which comprised Media and Entertainment trade unions, content producers, live performance, public and commercial TV and radios, network operators and special event technicians was testimonial to the rich ecosystem present in the European Audio Visual Model and Creative Sector and the fact that it relies on frequencies as a key resource. In Europe, the creative industry is the third economic sector strongly contributing to European GDP and employment.

The delegation also highlighted the major contribution being made by the Creative Industry to the EU's Digital Single Market Strategy. Through increased spectrum efficiency, terrestrial television broadcasters are releasing 30% of their current UHF frequencies for 4G and 5G mobile broadband and other new services. These changes will affect 250 Million Europeans who will need to upgrade their television receivers while the wireless equipment needed for special events (such as Euro Cups) and live performance will need to be replaced.

Europe's strategy for the UHF frequencies must therefore balance the effort and investment to be made by the Creative Industries and consumers by a careful transitional roadmap with adequate funding followed by a long term visibility at the 2030 horizon. This is commensurate to the long term investments needed by the industry and the public to replace infrastructure and receivers.

The reference preparatory works marked by the report by Pascal Lamy and the opinion of the EU spectrum management administrations clearly concluded in favor of this balanced approach.

So the Wider Spectrum Group expects to find clarity in the decision on regulatory certainty regarding access to spectrum below 700MHz for television broadcasting for the foreseeable future, i.e. until at least 2030 – this certainty is also important for radio which shares the same infrastructure for its vital access to neighbouring bands; as regards the 700 MHz band, some Member States will need until end of 2022 to achieve the transition without black screens and excessive burden for the consumer – as set out clearly in the RSPG Opinion on UHF; furthermore, the group requested not to threaten the frequencies used by PMSE and live performance by an excessive focus on LTE-Broadcast when the introduction of such system is already possible in telecommunications bands and not planned.

The Wider Spectrum Group underlined to Vice-President Ansip that the stakes are especially important for the Digital Single Market: the Creative Industry is a leader in producing, creating and distributing European contents in linear and non-linear modes to a variety of devices. In the global digital competition, it is Europe's decisive asset and the guarantee to pluralism and public service.