

The European Creative Industries see long term availability of Radio Spectrum for Broadcasting and PMSE as essential to a successful digital future and growth of the European Cultural and Creative sectors, and ask for a balanced EU Decision on UHF



The Parliamentary Event hosted by Members of Parliament Stefano Maullu and Patrizia Toia “Growth of the European Cultural and Creative Sector: Why Spectrum Matters” on 21 June 2016 is an opportunity for the Wider Spectrum Group to explain why the UHF radio frequency spectrum used by terrestrial broadcasting and audio PMSE is a key resource for the future of the Creative Sector and the associated jobs and growth.

The Wider Spectrum Group represents Media and Entertainment trade unions, content producers, live performance, public and commercial TV and radios, network operators and special event producers and technicians, and is testimony to the rich ecosystem present in the European Audio Visual Model and Creative Sector. Europe’s creative industries represent 7% of European GDP and account for 14 million jobs. This sector is a global leader in producing, creating and distributing content for both linear and non-linear distribution to a variety of devices.

Any future UHF spectrum strategy for Europe should allow digital terrestrial TV - which is used by over half of Europe’s population - and audio PMSE to continue developing and innovating to the benefit of European Citizens and the creative industry.

The Creative Industry expresses concerns over the lack of balance in the proposed European decision on the UHF Frequency band. On the one hand, the Commission proposes to allocate 30% of radio spectrum currently used for digital terrestrial TV (the “700 MHz” UHF band) for 4G and 5G mobile broadband. When this transition has completed, harmonized spectrum at EU level for mobile use will amount to 1260 MHz, which is more than anywhere else in the world.

On the other hand, the text under discussion fails to provide sufficient clarity on exclusive access to the only remaining radio spectrum for broadcasting and audio PMSE below 700 MHz for the foreseeable future, i.e. until at least 2030. Lack of legal certainty would also substantially weaken the creative industry’s capability to continue to develop and innovate for its audiences. Also the wireless production equipment needed for special events (such as Euro Cups) and live performance events would need to be replaced.

The earlier high level landmark report by Pascal Lamy and the opinion of the EU Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) have both clearly concluded in favour of a balanced approach providing long term guarantees for the use of radio spectrum below 700 MHz for broadcasting and PMSE.

Given that the terrestrial networks are instrumental for carrying a wide range of free-to-air public service and commercial TV channels and that European broadcasters fundamentally provide the means to innovate and develop for a healthy and important European content creation and production sector, the Wider Spectrum Group underlines the importance of a balanced decision on the UHF band as an important cornerstone of the Digital Single Market.

In conclusion, the Wider Spectrum Group expects to see clarity in the Decision on the UHF band regarding exclusive access to spectrum below 700MHz for TV broadcasting and audio PMSE for the foreseeable future, i.e. until at least 2030. This means that any other use may not adversely affect broadcasting nor audio PMSE. Such long term certainty is also equally important for radio broadcasting which shares infrastructure with TV to provide services to basically the whole European population. A related issue is the proposed timetable for clearance of the 700 MHz where some EU Member states will require until the end of 2022 for network conversion and for avoiding putting excessive burden on consumers to prematurely invest in new receiving equipment.