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Minimising the potential interference to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasting services from Mobile/Fixed Communications Networks (MFCN) operating in the 790-862 MHz frequency band

Joint recommendations from DigiTAG¹, EBU², BNE³ and ACT⁴

Introduction

Terrestrial broadcasting has an important societal role and economic value. The analogue to digital television switchover, which requires considerable investments and commitments from broadcasters, network operators and viewers, will result in releasing a ‘Digital Dividend’ in frequency spectrum.

Several national Administrations have decided to allocate the 790-862 MHz frequency band (the 800 MHz band) to mobile/fixed communications networks (MFCN), following the switch off of analogue terrestrial television services.

The European Commission issued a Decision (2010/267/UE) on harmonized technical conditions of use of this frequency band in the European Union by MFCNs. This decision is based on studies carried out by the CEPT, the results of which are published in CEPT Reports 30 and 31.

These harmonised technical conditions have been derived aiming to reduce the risk of disturbance that the implementation of MFCN in the 790-862 MHz frequency band may cause to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) broadcasting services in the lower adjacent band. However, as expressed in the CEPT Report 30, the concept of ‘block edge masks’ used to define these conditions does not always provide the required level of protection for victim services and, in order to resolve these cases of interference, additional mitigation techniques would need to be applied.

The EC Decision (Article 2, second paragraph) also states that Member States shall ensure that the new systems in the frequency band 790-862 MHz provide appropriate levels of protection to systems in adjacent bands, e.g. DTT broadcasting services.

¹ Digital Terrestrial Action group, www.digitag.org

² European Broadcasting Union, www.ebu.ch

³ Broadcast Networks Europe, www.broadcast-networks.eu

⁴ Association of Commercial Televisions, www.acte.be

Recommendations

In order to provide an appropriate level of protection to DTT services below 790 MHz with respect to emissions from mobile/fixed communications networks (MFCN) operating within the 790-862 MHz band, DigiTAG, EBU, BNE and ACT, recommend that prior to the award of licences for use of the spectrum, the following protection measures be applied:

- a) the most protective level defined in EC decision 2010/267/EC (baseline requirement in case A) should be applied in all cases;
- b) additional mitigation measures are required to be put in place, as necessary, by mobile/fixed communication network licence holders to ensure full protection of DTT broadcasting services. These services include also portable and mobile DTT when these reception modes are part of the national coverage concept. The basis for this protection should be careful network planning by the MFCN operator to avoid situations that may create interference to the reception of DTT. The associated costs of implementing remedies should not be borne by broadcasters, broadcast network operators or viewers. Depending on the actual situation, these measures may include but are not limited to:
 - reducing the power of the MFCN transmitters and adjusting their antenna characteristics to reduce interference problems, taking into account local conditions, especially for the MFCN Base Stations using the first frequency block above 790 MHz;
 - using a Base Station antenna polarisation that is opposite to that of the DTT transmitter, especially for Base Stations using the first frequency block above 790 MHz;
 - use of additional RF filtering at MFCN Base Stations, especially for Base Stations using the first frequency block above 790 MHz;
 - use of on-channel low-power DTT repeaters at the MFCN Base Stations to restore the degradation of signal to noise ratio at affected DTT receivers. Such remedies should be coordinated with the impacted broadcast multiplex operator, since it may not be easily applicable, such as in the case of DTT transmitters operating in a Single Frequency Network (SFN);
- c) It is further recommended that when granting frequencies in the 800 MHz band the following additional measures be considered:
 - to make appropriate information on the licences awarded available, for instance on regulators' websites, so that consumers suffering from interference know why this is happening, to whom they can complain and what action can be taken;
 - setting-up an Entity, independent of the MFCN licence holders, as a point of contact to which cases of interference or loss of DTT service can be reported, to ensure a prompt and effective resolution in a timely manner;
 - ensuring that consumers experiencing loss of DTT service, even after mitigation measures mentioned above have been implemented, are promptly provided with adequate equipment to allow continued reception of DTT services. Such

equipment may include filters connected in front of the DTT receiver or receiving antenna amplifier system to eliminate harmful interference stemming from emissions in the frequency band 790-862 MHz. Such measures must not unduly impair reception of channel 60. The associated costs of these necessary remedies should not be borne by broadcasters, broadcast network operators or the viewers;

- any other actions necessary for circumstances when the above measures have proven ineffective.
- d) It is highly recommended that field trials be organised to observe the ‘real world’ impact of the deployment of mobile/fixed communications services versus the results of theoretical models utilised for prediction purposes. The results should be made available to interested parties in Europe.

The DigiTAG, EBU, BNE and ACT members are fully open for cooperation with Administrations, Regulators, and all parties interested in the use of the 800 MHz band, in the context of the above recommendations.