

Brussels 1 September 2014

## **Report of the High Level Group on the future use of the UHF Band.**

### **Broadcast Networks Europe (BNE) welcomes the recommendation for long term access to UHF spectrum for Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), but is concerned by the possible displacement of DTT from the 700 MHz Band.**

BNE has actively participated in the High Level Group to ensure the future of the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) platform to European consumers and the audio-visual sector.

BNE is pleased that the report by the Chairman of the High level Group, Mr Pascal Lamy, recognises the key role of DTT in the European audiovisual landscape based on a thorough analysis both of current audiovisual and mobile services and future trends. The Chairman's analysis clearly highlights the enduring role of linear TV, the prominence of DTT as the most popular TV platform in Europe, and the essential role DTT plays in the delivery of free to air content to European citizens.

BNE welcomes the recommendation by the Chairman to retain the current exclusive use of frequencies below 700 MHz for DTT for the foreseeable future - that is until at least 2030 - and that EU should have a common position reflecting this recommendation at future World Radiocommunication Conferences and in future EU radio spectrum policy.

These safeguards would give Consumers, Broadcasters, Broadcast Network Operators and the wider broadcast sector the necessary security of access to spectrum to sustain future investments in services, networks and infrastructure. The safeguards would further allow the DTT platform to continue to develop and innovate to meet broadcasters' needs, while supporting a broad content offering and range of quality TV formats for all audiences.

BNE appreciates the recognition by the Chairman that complementarity between DTT and mobile broadband networks is the right way forward, as compared to hypothetical convergence of networks.

Finally, the 700 MHz band is intensively used by DTT, but some Member States are contemplating a future release of this band for mobile broadband services. In the event that these frequencies are to be cleared of DTT, BNE endorses the Chairman's recommendation that the approach adopted should facilitate the least costly and disruptive transition for DTT operators and consumers.

Therefore BNE commends the inclusion in the report of a transition roadmap and measures limiting the negative impact on consumers and current DTT spectrum users, who should certainly not be any worse off by any future displacement of DTT from the 700 MHz band. However, noting that the burden of implementation of such European and Member States potential decisions would ultimately fall on the Broadcasting sector and European citizens, BNE is extremely concerned by the recommended release date of 2020 which has not been substantiated by a detailed analysis of the process and timetable outlined in the transition roadmap. Even with the proposed flexibility of two years (e.g. until 2022), this would leave too little time to adapt DTT platforms and the very large installed receiver base across all member states.

BNE will continue to contribute actively to the policy debate on the future use of the UHF Band. It is essential that policy decisions maintain ease of access and plurality of content consumption for European citizens and sustain the dynamic and highly competitive market for audiovisual content that has developed in Europe, at the heart of which is DTT.

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*BNE is a trade organization for Terrestrial Broadcast Network Operators for Radio and TV in Europe based in Brussels. The 16 BNE members are operating in 21 European countries. Members are Abertis (Spain), Arqiva (UK), České Radiokomunikace (Czech Republic), Digea (Greece), Digita (Finland), ETV (Serbia), Elettronica Industriale (Italy), Norkring (Norway), OIV (Croatia), ORS (Austria), Swisscom Broadcast (Switzerland), Radiocom (Romania), Rai-Way (Italy), RTENL (Ireland), TDF (France) and Teracom (Sweden). In addition Terrestrial Network Operators in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, and Monaco are represented by their respective parent (and BNE member) company.*