Basic information

2008/2099(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Reaping the full benefits of the digital dividend in Europe: a common approach to the use of the spectrum released by the digital switchover **Subject** 3.30.02 Television, cable, digital, mobile 3.30.03 Telecommunications, data transmission, telephone 3.30.04 Radiocommunications, broadcasting 3.30.05 Electronic and mobile communications, personal communications 3.30.06 Information and communication technologies, digital technologies	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	TOIA Patrizia (ALDE)	18/12/2007

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	HÖKMARK Gunnar (PPE-DE)	12/03/2008
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	RÜHLE Heide (Verts/ALE)	31/01/2008
CULT Culture and Education (Associated committee)	VISSER Cornelis (PPE-DE)	17/01/2008

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy	2877	2008-06-12

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Communications Networks, Content and Technology	REDING Viviane

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
		COM(2007)0700	Summary

13/11/2007	Non-legislative basic document published		
24/04/2008	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/04/2008	Referral to associated committees announced in Parliament		
12/06/2008	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
26/06/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
10/07/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0305/2008	
02/09/2008	Debate in Parliament		
24/09/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0451/2008	Summary
24/09/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
24/09/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2008/2099(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ITRE/6/61836

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE405.999	07/05/2008	
Committee opinion	IMCO	PE404.482	28/05/2008	
Committee opinion	ECON	PE404.780	05/06/2008	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE407.732	06/06/2008	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE404.745	24/06/2008	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0305/2008	10/07/2008	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0451/2008	24/09/2008	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2007)0700	13/11/2007	Summary
Follow-up document	C(2009)8287	28/10/2009	

Follow-up document	SEC(2009)1436	28/10/2009	
Follow-up document	SEC(2009)1437	28/10/2009	

Reaping the full benefits of the digital dividend in Europe: a common approach to the use of the spectrum released by the digital switchover

2008/2099(INI) - 24/09/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 551 votes to 24, with 38 abstentions, a resolution following the Commission Communication entitled 'reaping the full benefits of the digital dividend in Europe: A common approach to the use of the spectrum released by the digital switchover'.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Patrizia **TOIA** (ALDE, IT) on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy.

The resolution recalls the need for digital switchover which, together with the development of new information and communication technologies and the digital dividend, will help to bridge the digital divide and contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon goals. It stresses that the immediacy of switchover in some Member States and the differences in national switchover plans require a response at Community level that can not wait until the reform directives enter into force (from the 'telecom' package).

A common and balanced approach: the Parliament urges the Member States to release their digital dividends as quickly as possible, allowing citizens of the Union to benefit from the deployment of new, innovative and competitive services. While acknowledging the right of Member States to determine their use of the digital dividend, MEPs affirm that a coordinated approach at Community level would greatly enhance the value of the dividend and be the most efficient way to avoid harmful interference between Member States and between Member States and third countries. Member States are called upon to develop, following a common methodology, national digital dividend strategies by the end of 2009.

Auctions: MEPs consider that, where auctions are used to allocate frequencies, Member States should adopt a common approach as regards the conditions and methods of auction and the allocation of the generated resources. The Commission is urged to present guidelines along these lines. In any event, the digital dividend should be allocated on a technology-neutral basis.

Guiding principles in the allocation of the digital dividend: the resolution underlines that the main guiding principle in the allocation of the digital dividend should be to serve the general interest by ensuring the best social, cultural and economic value in terms of an enhanced and geographically wider offer of services, while also protecting the rights of current users of audiovisual media services and reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity. In this context, MEPs consider that decisions on digital dividend management should promote and protect general interest objectives linked to audiovisual and media policies such as freedom of expression, media pluralism, cultural and linguistic diversity and the rights of minors.

Services available to citizens: the resolution also underlines the contribution that the digital dividend can make to the provision of enhanced interoperable social services to citizens (such as e-government, e-health, e-vocational training and e-education), in particular those living in less favoured or isolated areas, such as rural and less-developed areas and islands. Member States should step up measures to enable disabled and elderly users and users with special social needs to make the most of the benefits provided by the digital dividend.

Unlicensed users: Member States are called upon to recognise the social, cultural and economic value of allowing unlicensed users access to the dividend, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises and the not-for-profit sector. This would increase the efficiency of spectrum use by concentrating such unlicensed uses in the currently unused frequencies (white spaces).

More effective use of the spectrum: in order to facilitate the emergence of innovative and successful national, cross-border and pan-European services, the resolution encourages the Member States to work together and with the Commission to identify common spectrum sub-bands of the digital dividend for different application clusters that could be harmonised on a technology-neutral basis. In this context, MEPs support a coordinated approach at Community level, based on different clusters of the UHF spectrum for uni-directional and bi-directional services, taking into account the potential for harmful interference.

Better cooperation: the Commission is called upon to undertake, in cooperation with the Member States, the appropriate technical, socio-economic and cost-benefit studies to determine the size and characteristics of the sub-bands that could be coordinated or harmonised at Community level. On the basis of these studies, the Commission should submit a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council for better coordination measures at Community level on the use of the digital dividend, in accordance with internationally agreed frequency plans.

The Parliament also adopted an amendment in plenary calling on the Member States to reallocate part of the digital dividend used in the past for military purposes to new civilian applications.

Reaping the full benefits of the digital dividend in Europe: a common approach to the use of the spectrum released by the digital switchover

2008/2099(INI) - 13/11/2007 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: the purpose of this Communication is to propose EU coordinated action to ensure the optimal use of the “digital dividend”.

BACKGROUND: the digital dividend can be described as the spectrum over and above the frequencies required to support existing broadcasting services in a fully digital environment – including public service obligations. Thus, the switchover from analogue to digital terrestrial TV, by the end of 2012, will free up an unprecedented amount of spectrum in Europe as a result of the superior transmission efficiency of digital technology. This offers the EU a unique opportunity to meet the fast growing demand for wireless communication services and it opens up sufficient spectrum for broadcasters to significantly develop and expand their services while at the same time ensuring that other important social and economic uses (the “digital divide”) have access to this valuable resources. The digital dividend could potentially be a “win/win” situation for all interested parties. Of even more interest is the fact that the spectrum of the “digital dividend” is particularly attractive given that it is part of the “best” spectrum located between 200 MHz and 1 GHz. Its good signal propagation entails less infrastructure to provide a wider coverage. This reduces cost and improves service as well as being able to reach remote populations in rural areas.

The current digital dividend is highly fragmented into relatively narrow bands, scattered over many frequencies and intertwined with digital broadcasting channels. Yet, it is estimated that the total value of electronic communications services that depend on use of radio spectrum in the EU exceeds EUR 250 billion – which is about 2.2% of the annual European GDP. The dividend underpins every type of wireless application form broadcasting to fixed and mobile communications. The digital dividend, a public resource, offers an exceptional social, cultural as well as economic potential. However, the benefits can only be fully reaped if it is coordinated at an EU level in order to ensure optimal use of the dividend.

CONTENT: based on the above the Commission is proposing to move towards a common spectrum plan at EU level. This would increase spectrum efficiency thus enhancing the overall capacity and ranges of uses of the digital dividend.

Preserving flexibility: The Commission recognises that the spectrum situation may vary in each Member States depending on the specific broadcasting environment. The common spectrum plan would therefore have to be phased in with sufficient flexibility in order to accommodate legitimate national specificities, such as social and market needs.

Preparing the ground: To pave the way for a harmonised clustering of spectrum bands, the Commission proposes to undertake preparatory work to address a number of important challenges. This includes determining the size, boundaries and access conditions for each sub-band hosting a particular type of network and associated cluster of services. Preparatory work will address the identification of administrative and technical costs involved in displacing services to new frequency bands. Having prepared the ground for a more harmonised approach, the Commission will then use binding Community law to adopt a clustering decision.

Establishing “application clusters” in common spectrum bands: The proposed clustering of spectrum should apply to the main part of the digital dividend, the UHF band. It would constitute a “top-level” spectrum organisation upon which national and EU-wide plans can be developed, defining the bounds within which national flexibility can be exercised by allowing the different levels of EU harmonisation for each cluster. Concretely speaking, the clustering should be based on three sub-bands for the three most common types of network namely: (i) unidirectional high power networks (mainly for fixed broadcasting services); (ii) unidirectional medium to low power networks (typically for mobile multimedia services and newer forms of converged broadcasting/communications services) and (iii) bi-directional low power networks (typically for fixed and mobile broadband access services).

To conclude, the Commission calls on the Member States to facilitate the introduction of new services by working closely with the Commission to identify common spectrum bands in the digital dividend that can be optimised by application clusters. For its part, the Commission will prepare the required measures to reserve and coordinate common bands at an EU level.