



Spectrum award - 2.6 GHz band with possible inclusion of 700 MHz, 1.4, 2.3 and 3.6 GHz bands (ComReg Document 14/101)

Update

Information Notice

Reference: ComReg 15/14

Date: 16/02/2015

1 Update on Consultation 14/101

1. In September 2014, ComReg issued a consultation outlining its preliminary proposals for an award process for spectrum rights of use in the 2.6 GHz band with the possible inclusion of the 700 MHz, 1.4, 2.3 and 3.6 GHz bands (“**Consultation 14/101**”).¹ Respondents welcomed the consultation and there was general consensus that the candidate bands for inclusion in any upcoming radio spectrum awards were the appropriate bands.
2. ComReg received fifteen (15) responses to Consultation 14/101 which it has published today in ComReg Document 15/15. ComReg welcomes and thanks respondents for their participation in the consultation process to date and notes that this process is ongoing.
3. This information notice is intended to update interested parties on certain developments and next steps.

The 3.6 GHz band

4. In April 2010, ComReg highlighted important issues with the Fixed Wireless Access Local Area (FWALA) licensing scheme operating in the 3.6 GHz band.² In particular, ComReg noted that the existing licensing regime does not provide for mobile wireless access services and so is not in line with the relevant European Commission Decision harmonising the use of this band.³ Accordingly, ComReg made it clear that existing FWALA licences in the band would not be renewed or extended beyond 31 July 2017 in order to provide for the introduction of mobility to this band.⁴
5. In Consultation 14/101, ComReg noted that there were potential benefits to the inclusion of the 3.6 GHz band in the proposed award process⁵ but that the band also had certain characteristics (e.g. the likely interest from different types of users) which would differentiate it from, and might justify its different treatment to, other bands being considered for inclusion.⁶

¹ ComReg Document 14/101 - *Spectrum award - 2.6 GHz band with possible inclusion of 700 MHz, 1.4, 2.3 and 3.6 GHz bands.*

² See ComReg Document 10/29 – Information Notice – *Fixed Wireless Access Local Area Licensing – End date of the FWALA licensing scheme in the 3.6 GHz band.*

³ See 2008/411/EC: Commission Decision of 21 May 2008 on the harmonisation of the 3400-3800 MHz frequency band for terrestrial systems capable of providing electronic communications services in the Community.

⁴ See also Section 5.2 of ComReg Document 11/03 for further consideration of this issue.

⁵ See, for example, Section 3.1.3.

⁶ See, for example, Section 5.6 of Consultation 14/101.

6. ComReg notes that one of the more prominent issues raised by respondents to the consultation is in relation to the inclusion of this band in the proposed award process. In particular, there appears to be broad support for the release of rights of use in this band in a separate award process for a variety of reasons (see ComReg Document 15/15 for further information on the views of respondents).
7. In light of the above, ComReg is considering the possible release of rights of use in this band in a separate competitive award process. ComReg expects to issue a consultation on this during the summer of 2015 when the views of all interested parties will be sought. In the interim ComReg may engage with industry on this matter for the purposes of gathering further information.

700 MHz band – Cost Benefit Analysis

8. As noted in Consultation 14/101, ComReg is of the preliminary view that there are benefits to including the 700 MHz band in the broader award process, proposed in consultation 14/101, should it become available for inclusion.
9. As also noted in Consultation 14/101, ComReg published a consultation⁷ in February 2014 on the management and use of the UHF radio frequency band in Ireland (470-690 MHz), which includes the 700 MHz band, wherein ComReg raised the possibility of making the 700 MHz available for other uses including wireless broadband services. ComReg published its response to that consultation (Document 14/85) in August 2014 in which it committed to conduct an analysis of the likely costs and benefits (economic, social and cultural) of RTÉ and Programme Making and Special Events users migrating out of the 700MHz band and into the remainder of the UHF band (“**CBA**”).⁸
10. ComReg would note that it has engaged expert external consultants to assist it in carrying out the CBA. Following its completion, ComReg intends to consult on the results of the CBA. The timing of this will depend upon a number of factors, including the completion date of the CBA study itself, but ComReg anticipates issuing a consultation during Q2 2015.⁹

End.

⁷ See ComReg Document 14/13 - *Management and use of the UHF radio frequency band in Ireland (470 – 790 MHz)*.

⁸ The future use of the UHF band is also the subject of a separate consultation process by the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources.

⁹ <http://www.comreg.ie/fileupload/Publications/AnnualActionPlan2015.pdf>