

Digital Dividend Workshop

«The Digital Dividend: Challenges and Consumer Interests»

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EETT President & BEREC Chair 2013

Honourable Minister, esteemed delegates of the ITU, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all in this workshop, co-organised by the ITU and the INA Academy, with the support of EETT, the Hellenic Telecommunications and Post Commission.

It is widely accepted that the transition from analogue to digital TV broadcasting constitutes one of the most important developments in the electronic communications sector over the past few years.

The digital transition not only increases the capacity of broadcasting networks but at the same time can release for other uses a substantial amount of spectrum, in the 700 and/or 800 MHz band, the so-called “digital dividend”.

Numerous studies have amply demonstrated the economic and social benefits emanating from releasing such spectrum. Indicative is a study performed in August 2009, on behalf of the European Commission, according to which, using the 800 MHz band for wireless broadband could generate, in addition to the social value, between 50 and 190 billion euro of private value (discounted value over 25 years), across the EU.

Another, more recent study, performed by the Boston Consulting Group in January 2011, estimates that the deployment of wireless broadband in the 700 MHz band would add 729 billion US\$ to the Gross Domestic Product of Asia, in addition to bringing significant consumer benefits, such as better access to education, improved healthcare and social inclusion.

The exploitation however of the digital dividend is anything but simple. Policy makers and regulators are called to address several challenges,

which are highlighted in a study performed by Aetha Consulting on behalf of the GSM Association. According to this study, the main such challenges fall under three categories:

- (a) Justification of band clearance to facilitate mobile broadband use, including economic justification and structural challenges;
- (b) Obstacles related to clearing historic users from the band, including compensation issues, particularly when this also involves military uses.
- (c) Measures to prevent harmful interference to uses of neighbouring bands (or same band in neighbouring countries).

The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC), of which I have the honour of being the Incoming Chair for 2013, addresses some of the above issues. In fact we are currently performing, in cooperation with the Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) of the European Commission, a study on the economic and social value of spectrum. In fact, spectrum allocation should not only rely on purely economic factors but also on social considerations.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, already six out of the fifteen old EU member states have already completed the frequency auctions in the 800 MHz band. However, only two of them (Germany and Sweden) have made the relevant frequencies definitely available for use. Another six of them plan similar auctions in 2012 or 2013, while only three, among them Greece, have yet to reach a formal decision. In our view, any strategic policy choice must be based on the need to ensure the optimal use of the spectrum, while maintaining a balanced approach between both the mobile and the broadcasting industry, which is now facing significant challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is little doubt about the value of the digital dividend and the challenges that it poses to regulators and policy makers alike.

From this perspective, the present workshop entitled is very useful to the attendees and in turn to our country. I therefore welcome you all and wish you to have a fruitful dialogue and a productive outcome.