

INFORMAL DINNER OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS MINISTERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

10 DECEMBER 2006
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

PRESIDENCY SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION ON SPECTRUM POLICY ISSUES

The Finnish EU Presidency organised an informal dinner for the Telecommunications Ministers in Brussels on 10 December 2006. The Presidency had set spectrum policy as the theme of the dinner discussions, in order to prepare ground for the forthcoming review of the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications and services.

The discussions clearly indicated that the radio spectrum is a critical resource for wireless communications, which in turn is one of the key driving forces in the European economy. However, the present situation with differing regulatory systems in each Member State to manage radio spectrum, deprives Europe of significant opportunities in this highly important sector in terms of innovation, productivity and benefits to citizens.

The discussions showed that there is broad agreement on the benefits that can be achieved through a pan-European approach. This would safeguard economies of scale by extending the harmonisation measures to an appropriate level. It is also evident that a coherent action at European level, to define and coordinate common conditions for spectrum use in selected bands in the Single Market, would have a direct impact on growth and employment in the context of the Lisbon process – thus creating benefits also to the citizens. Nevertheless, concurrently it is important to maintain public administrative control over spectrum usage in such cases where specific public interest objectives are at stake.

It is clear that whatever way the digital dividend resulting from the transition towards digital broadcasting will be used, this will affect the whole European economy in a very direct manner. There will also be potential to accommodate new and innovative services.

Mobile television is one such service, and it is here already now. It serves as a test case for Europe. It is a good example of digital convergence, and shows that it is possible to generate new business opportunities, value-added services and benefits to consumers.

What is needed now is a pan-European approach to encourage a rapid and widespread deployment of mobile TV to show to the citizens and enterprises of Europe that there are clear benefits that can be reached by a coordinated approach. It will serve as an example that Europe is able and determined to create possibilities to new pan-European services.

Finding a harmonised way to use spectrum, selecting the suitable bands for pan-European services and carrying actively forward European innovations will help European enterprises to grow and produce wealth to the people.

This is the objective Europe should aim at and the Member States together with the Commission are determined to find a common agreement on this matter, which will be in the benefit of all.

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