

# PMSE users worried about German plans for 700 MHz band

Jul 30, 2013 by Dugie Standeford

**German plans to auction 700 MHz spectrum as part of a second digital dividend “completely neglect” the interests of the programme-making and special events (PMSE) community, according to Dré Klaassen, co-president of the Association of Professional Wireless Productions Technologies (APWPT).**

German regulator BNetzA has proposed setting aside no more than 96 MHz for wireless microphones and has suggested several alternate bands, but Klaassen said most of those frequencies won't work for PMSE. Even if they are combined, they won't amount to the 96 MHz needed for just the daily PMSE productions.

PMSE suffers from a low profile among spectrum regulators

The PMSE community is also worried about the situation in France, which also plans to release the 700 MHz band for mobile broadband services, he said.

PMSE users will potentially lose half of the spectrum they currently have following the first digital dividend, said Klaassen, export sales manager and regulatory specialist for equipment maker Audio-Technica. In general, the sector's spectrum is diminishing, and compensation for the cost of moving to new bands is minimal, with the industry itself is expected to bear most expenses.

Moreover, most PMSE users are not aware of what is happening because the spectrum discussion takes place at CEPT or some other high level, Klaassen said. Most wireless microphone users become aware of the problem only when they encounter interference from 4G services.

German PMSE users held a general licence in the 790–862 MHz digital dividend band but are now restricted to 710–790 MHz, Klaassen said. Plans in Germany and other countries to auction the 700 band will leave PMSE users "high and dry". So far there is no information on how wireless microphone users who invested in moving to the 710-790 MHz band will be compensated, he said.

## Disrespecting Länder policy?

Germany's federal structure means its states (Länder) participate, through the Bundesrat, in Germany's national legislative and administrative process. At a meeting in November 2012, the Bundesrat noted resolutions adopted in 2009 and 2010 which limited Germany's digital dividend to the 790–862 MHz frequency range. The legislative body decided on 6 June to change the frequency regulation in favour of use by wireless microphones, and compensated PMSE users for the spectrum lost to the digital dividend by setting aside spectrum in the 1452–1492 MHz range. The activities of the national regulator BNetzA's, however, “do not seem to respect the policy decisions of the Bundesrat,” APWPT said.

Wireless microphones could use 1.2–1.6 GHz frequencies but the band must be globally accessible because no equipment manufacturer will produce microphones for just one country, Klaassen said.

## Disaster for major events

BNetzA's strategy paper for the 700 MHz band lists several alternative bands for PMSE, but Klaassen said each one has problems, and together they won't make 96 MHz of spectrum available. The APWPT position is that any further erosion of the UHF band will harm the PMSE industry. BNetzA is “completely neglecting our interest” and its proposal will be a disaster for sports, concerts, cultural festivals and other events, he said.

France and Germany are rumoured to be in bilateral talks on implementing the 700 MHz second digital

dividend as soon as possible, Klaassen said. (The French government confirmed last month that it will allocate the band to mobile broadband). He fears that doing so will open debate at WRC-15 on reallocating the rest of the UHF band.

That won't be as much of a problem for TV distribution in countries such as the Netherlands that are well-cabled as it will for Mediterranean EU countries that are more dependent on digital terrestrial TV (DTT), he said. DTT is what most politicians use to get their messages out, and “they're about to shut themselves off” by making it impossible for PMSE to cover elections and other major events similar in scope to the London 2012 Olympics, he said.

## **Secondary status unhelpful**

PMSE suffers from a low profile among spectrum regulators, Klaassen said. Some are aware of it but do not know how to deal with it. Some say that because it's a secondary status service – which can use spectrum as long as it does not interfere with primary users and must solve interference problems itself – there is no need to take any action. PMSE's status is “not helping to solve the issue,” he said.

Given their status, wireless microphone users are easy to ignore, but that does not resolve the situation, Klaassen said. Either PMSE's status or the conditions of its secondary usage must be changed, or regulators must come up with at least two frequency bands that don't have technical drawbacks for wireless microphones. The APWPT now plans to inform all the major sports associations, cultural festivals and others that under Germany's plan their events will be impossible to produce, he added.

Asked at a European spectrum management conference in June what the future of PMSE might be if the 700 MHz band is given to wireless services, Brussels regulator Roberto Viola said the European Commission is not “jumping to conclusions” about the band because it's highly used by many communities in Europe, including PMSE. The Radio Spectrum Policy Group is working on the issue and the Commission will rely strongly on its advice, he said. Viola, who is the deputy director of DG Connect, said he's sure a solution will be found. The Commission knows about the problem with current users in the band and does not want to jeopardise their uses. •

## **Related content**

- French minister confirms 700 MHz will be allocated to mobile (**ATNewsItem**)
- Germany to release 700 MHz band for mobile broadband (**ATNewsItem**)
- RSPG highlights difficulties of reallocating 700 MHz band (**ATNewsItem**)
- PMSE industry hits back as Ofcom paves the way for DD2 (**ATNewsItem**)