

Minutes of 23rd Electronic Communications Forum – 15th December 2011

Present:

Mr Stefan Briffa / Mr Fabian Grima (GO plc)

Dr Gertrude Borg Micallef (MELITA)

Mr Ronald Mifsud / Mr Stanley Gixti (SKY TELECOM)

Dr Rachel Desira (VODAFONE)

Mr Joe Tabone (WEBWAVES)

Ing. Philip Micallef, Mr Ivan Bugeja, Ms Patricia Calleja, Ms Celia Falzon, Ms Katya Scicluna (MCA)

Introduction

Celia Falzon (MCA) gave a brief introduction on developments since last forum (October - December). A summary of these introduction points will be circulated with the minutes.

Fibre-to-the-Home (FTTH)

The MCA Chairman, Ing. Philip Micallef, advised that, following the Digital Agenda Going Local Meeting which was held on 22nd November in Malta, the EU Commission will write to the Italian Government with regard to the interference issues with Malta. The ITU and the Italian Prime Minister have already exchanged correspondence about the issue. On another note, the Commission will also be writing to the Principal Permanent Secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the lengthy recruitment process currently in place and the negative effects this is having on the Authority. Mr Micallef augured that, following the Commission's intervention, a fast track process will be used in the area of recruitment.

Mr Micallef then went on to present a summary of the findings of the feasibility study carried out by Analysys Mason and which were presented to Government on 29NOV. The findings are expected to be discussed by Cabinet on 12DEC, after which a final decision is expected.

During the study, Analysys Mason held discussions and reviewed data with telecoms providers and Government and also carried out surveys in Malta and Gozo.

The findings show that, although the European Commission requires that regulation is considered ahead of government intervention in broadband, in this case it is difficult to see how regulation could ensure that the Government's objectives will be met.

The pros and cons of two possible options were put forward: that of a joint venture versus a Private Design Build and Operate (DBO). Analysys further suggested that Government could implement further actions which would assist in lowering the cost of the project, such as reforming building regulations.

Mr Micallef suggested that, following the Cabinet's Decision, an *ad hoc* meeting will be held with operators to discuss the findings in more detail.

Radio Spectrum Policy Programme (RSPP)

Ivan Bugeja (MCA) advised that the RSPP was adopted by Council and should be adopted by the European Parliament in early 2012.

The Articles pertaining to Inventory and to the freeing up of the 800MHz band have consistently remained the two main issues with the RSPP.

Explained the scope and objectives of the Decision and the provisions related to making spectrum usage more efficient, competition, spectrum needs for wireless broadband communications, spectrum needs for other Union policies like energy and R&D, the establishment on a inventory detailing the usage of spectrum within the EU and the provisions relating to international negotiations. The issue of the 800MHz band and the related derogation possibility was also discussed. The MCA explained that Malta will be writing to the European Commission so as to apply for a derogation from the 2015 deadline to clear up the 800MHz band from broadcasting to be used for other services other.

AOB

Developments at EU level

Ivan Bugeja went on to give a brief overview of developments at a European level since the last meeting. A copy of these will be circulated with the minutes.

BEREC / Commission's investigation on Net Neutrality

Celia Falzon reminded those present that BEREC and the Commission are currently carrying out a traffic management investigation on net neutrality and a questionnaire has been sent to 3 operators with the aim of identifying traffic management practices used in EU member states. It is of utmost importance that the information is provided to the MCA by latest 20th January, 2012.

Planned consultations for Q1 / 2012

A list of current and planned consultations was circulated.

Meeting dates 2012

The proposed meeting dates for 2012 are:

23 March / 23 June / 05 October / 14 December 2012.