

A European View on Frequency Management and Standardisation

Søren Hess – European Radiocommunications Office

Standardisation and frequency management has to some extent been integrated in Europe. Traditionally the spectrum management took place on ITU conferences based on the detailed provisions of the Radio Regulations. During the past 5-10 years the European telecommunications Administrations has developed a strong concept of harmonisation of spectrum amongst the 44 members of the CEPT. Within the ETSI – the European Standardisation institute – commonly agreed standards have been developed and agreed between industry – operators – administrations. ETSI decisions are based on a formal voting and is basically open for unlimited industry participation.

The European Union with currently 15 member countries have taken a number of initiatives which have strong implications on market entrance and use of radio equipment via new requirements on standardisation and frequency management in Europe. In particular the R&TTE Directive requesting harmonised standards with self declaration of conformity for a limited number of essential requirements and as well a strong pressure on CEPT Administrations to harmonise spectrum for unlicensed applications such as Short Range Devices in order for industry to be able to market and put into services the radio equipment all over Europe without national restrictions.

The Frequency Management administrations have taken initiatives to develop a Common European Allocation Table (ECA) with spectrum strategies for the current and future use of spectrum. The strategies have been developed based on the Detailed Spectrum investigation process (DSI) which has been conducted in Europe with active participation and involvement from industry and users all over Europe. The ECA is used as the backbone in all frequency management in Europe and is also used as the basis for National frequency Allocation Tables which are normally adopted as a secondary legislation within European countries. The European Radiocommunications Office has developed a major access system for frequency and standard information in Europe (EFIS).

A general trend in the European frequency management may be the activities on Short Range Devices where strategies with very limited requirements from administrations on the use of spectrum have been adopted supported by generic or specific standards and then leave it up to industry to develop the applications requested by the market. Future technologies such as UWB technology is expected to be regulated this way as well but based on sharing studies in particular regarding passive services. The previous strong control from administrations with services and stations is substituted by guidance and close cooperation with industry via the standardisation work in ETSI as well as industry participation in the CEPT work.

While harmonisation is the key word in the current situation in Europe the future frequency management organisation will need to find new ways including technology driven solutions to achieve compatibility between the new services envisaged in the European market.