

Technology competition vital for Europe's wireless future

Findings of the International Round Table on Radio Diversity, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)



Wireless into the future: International experts discussed at KIT how Europe should deal with new communications technologies.

An international conference of wireless communication experts has determined that Europe's wireless communication schemes are under increasing stress and fail to deliver the full competitive benefits that citizens expect from their radio regulators.

Europe faces unprecedented challenges, including a lack of wireless network and handset technology innovation, fragmented markets, weak competition, challenges from disruptive technologies, high mobile service costs and inflexible allocation mechanisms for current and new radio spectrum. Most significant innovations of the third generation mobile era have come from America and Asia.

Experts from Europe, the USA and Japan took part in this week's International Round Table on Radio Diversity, held at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, to share the latest findings from private industry, national regulators, academia and research institutes.

"Through fragmented and outdated policies, Europe's radio

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regulators fail to foster competition or technology innovation, two of the things that would do the most to reduce costs, enable new services and enhance the region's economic participation in the global wireless industry," said conference chair Arnd Weber, a wireless policy researcher at the KIT's Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis, organiser of the Round Table.

Flexible allocation of radio spectrum for new wireless technologies was identified as a crucial factor to be addressed in order to enhance Europe's global wireless competitiveness. This holds particularly true for use of licensed spectrum.

"As technology development is leading to shrinking total cost of ownership, regulation should allow for a much faster Europe-wide implementation of new radio technologies," said Arnaud Saffari, Chairman of mobile broadband system integrator Kleos and co-inventor of iBurst, who took part in the Round Table. Robert Horvitz, director of the Open Spectrum Foundation agreed, adding that this holds as well for unlicensed spectrum use: "Nothing stimulates innovation as effectively as license-exempt, service-neutral bands. Europe needs more of these in diverse frequency ranges," he noted. While individual research findings varied widely, the Radio Diversity Round Table saw a consensus requirement for new forms of radio spectrum allocation, including pan-European licenses, cooperative use, open use and an increased obligation for incumbent licensees to make better use of spectrum. Efficiency gains could help foster low-cost mobile Internet services for citizens and businesses, while addressing the growth in energy consumption due to operating networks and providing services.

"In some Asian markets, like Japan, it costs as little as 1 Euro cent to send a full mobile email, while in most European markets SMS messages can still cost upwards of 19 Euro cents," said Weber. Isolde Goggin, the former Chairperson of ComReg, the Irish telecommunications regulator, and now an independent consultant, added: "The old-style approach of regulators specifying - sometimes years in advance - what technologies can be used for what purpose in a particular band will not work in today's fast-changing environment. We need to lower barriers to accessing spectrum, allowing new and innovative technologies to get to market quickly and easily. This will benefit both European consumers and the European telecommunications industry."

For additional information, see: http://www.itas.fzk.de/home_e.htm

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) is a public corporation and state institution of Baden-Württemberg. It fulfils the mission of a university and the mission of a national research center of the Helmholtz Association. KIT focuses on a knowledge triangle that links the tasks of research, teaching, and innovation.

This press release is available on the internet at www.kit.edu.