

RADIONET3

TRIPS OF WP7

RADIO ASTRONOMICAL SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT	EC Final Workshop on Analysis of technology trends, future r needs and demand for spectrum
DATE	11 July 2013
PLACE	Brussels, Belgium
PARTICIPANTS	Wim van Driel (CRAF)

BACKGROUND:

The Radio Spectrum Policy group (RSPP) of the EC has called for a study on the “Analysis of technology trends, future needs and demand for spectrum in line with Art.9 of the RSPP”. The study was organized by a private consultancy firm, Analysys Mason. This was the final Workshop organized for the study, in which the Analysys Mason team presented their methodology, results and conclusions, in the presence of over a hundred representatives of major stakeholders in radio spectrum use (including CRAF), and of the EC and a dozen of its member states.

CRAF, which represents the interests of the European radio astronomy community in matters of spectrum management (a.k.a. frequency protection), is keeping a close eye on the interests of our scientific community in the framework of this study – the (commercial) demand for more frequency allocations is ever increasing, and lots of money could be made from using “our” frequency bands for commercial purposes. The Radio Astronomy Service is a so-called “passive” (i.e., non-emitting) radio service, whose frequency bands cannot be shifted around in the spectrum and whose strict interference protection criteria need to be respected by the active (i.e., emitting) spectrum users. These crucial points need to be pointed out over and over again, in particular to the EC.

CRAF was represented at this politically important meeting by its Chair, Hans van der Marel, and Wim van Driel, ex-chair of CRAF and IUCAF, and member of the CRAF Core Team.

HIGHLIGHTS:

This final workshop in the series was rather short (3 hours) and aimed more at letting the consultancy firm present their methodology, results and conclusions than at having a true workshop-like final debate with major stakeholders and EC representatives.

The study concerns the frequency range 400 MHz-6 GHz only. The time horizon was 10 years (2012-2022). A detailed analysis was made for 8 EC focus member states (CZE, FRA, GER, ITA, POL, SPA, SWE, UK), extrapolated to the EC as a whole. Fourteen radio spectrum use applications were defined, including “science” (= radio astronomy).

Regarding radio astronomy, it was noted that (1) the current usage of the bands is highly homogeneous across the 8 focus countries, (2) spectrum usage levels are likely to remain within the current designations for this category, and (3) key stakeholders have stated the importance of maintaining the current spectrum

designations for this category. Translated from EC-speak, this roughly means that we will keep using our bands for the foreseeable future and that we cannot simply move to other frequencies to do our science.

Quite some criticism, some of it rather severe, was aimed at the consultancy firm, who obviously are not experts in the Byzantine world of radio spectrum technology, use and regulations. Part of it was due to perceived misunderstandings or mix-ups when interpreting spectrum use data from websites.

Unease was also expressed towards the EC and its RSPP on what exactly will be done with the results and conclusions of this study which has the loaded terms “future needs and demand for spectrum” in its title. The EC made the point that “this is not a spectrum redistribution exercise”.

Within the short time available for technical clarification questions, CRAF asked about the definition used for “unused spectrum”, as radio astronomy does not emit in its frequency bands, which might then mistakenly be considered as “unused”. We ultimately got a reassuring reply from one of the consultants. CRAF also asked why only the frequency bands 3100-3400 MHz and 4800-5400 MHz were mentioned on the slide “science – current usage and key drivers”. The question was noted and will be addressed in the final report.

NEXT STEPS:

The final, 300-page report of the study will be released this summer. CRAF will read its contents with great interest, and send in final comments if deemed necessary.