

EU to convert TV frequencies to mobile

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: The European Union should convert a whole spectrum of television and radio frequencies for use by mobile broadband by around 2020 as smartphone use soars, a report has urged.

Former World Trade Organisation Chief Pascal Lamy's report on the changing face of the media said the 700 Mhz spectrum should be "repurposed" for wireless broadband.

But the report, commissioned by the EU in January, said "regulatory stability" should be ensured for broadcasting to continue its current use of the 470 to 694 Mhz band until 2030.

Lamy, a former EU trade commissioner, told reporters his was "a sort of peacemaking mission" between broadcasters and the mobile phone industry over use of the UHF (Ultra High Frequency) spectrum.

He wanted to limit the impact on radio and TV broadcasters while freeing up space for the rapidly growing use of mobile phones and the internet in general, particularly for viewing content once only available on TV.

EU digital commissioner Neelie Kroes told the same press conference there was a need to supply enough spectrum for broadband while safeguarding broadcasting.

Lamy produced his report in his own name after presiding over a working group of broadcasters and the broadband industry, he acknowledged, had not subscribed to compromise.

The report received a mixed reaction.

In Britain, the BBC said the report had recognised that broadcasters could only be expected to clear the spectrum if they receive certainty of access to their remaining spectrum and compensation for the transition.

The European Broadcasting Union criticised the time frame, saying it was too soon to free up the high end of the spectrum which did not leave enough time for the modernisation of digital terrestrial TV.

By contrast, GSMA, which represents mobile phone operators worldwide, said the date should be brought forward to catch up with North America and Asia.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge