



CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMISSION ACTION PLAN ON THE DIGITALISATION OF THE ENERGY SECTOR BY THE EUROPEAN UTILITIES TELECOMS COUNCIL

The European Utilities Telecom Council (EUTC) is pleased to offer its advice to the Commission on the formulation of a Roadmap for the Digitalisation of the Energy Sector.

To reach the goals outlined in the Action Plan, electricity transmission and distribution networks need enhanced and reliable connectivity to a much wider range of assets than currently in the evolution towards smarter grids.

Connectivity must be secure, reliable, resilient, ubiquitous and scalable in order to provide the specialist features required from a utility telecoms network monitoring and controlling energy networks if those energy networks are to be capable of delivering the services outlined in the Action Plan reliably, sustainably and cost effectively. Moreover given the lifespan and nature of utility usage, the chosen connectivity solutions must be present and available for a long period (20+ years). The technical requirements related to this connectivity are very specific of the utility sector, and critical for the end-to-end performance and control of the connectivity.

As identified in a study for the Commission¹, commercial networks are not capable of delivering these highly specialised services; utilities must self-provide these dedicated services in many cases, often requiring access to a small amount (in relative terms, if compared with the commercial networks available to the general public) of radio spectrum to do so.

If this spectrum can be allocated in a harmonised block across the Community, as is the case for other industry vertical sectors such as railways, airlines, shipping, broadcasting etc, it will benefit European citizens through lower costs of equipment, more functionality and interoperability. It will also provide a larger coherent market for European industry from which to prosper in global markets.

In order to support these objectives, the Action Plan should include such measures as:

- Access to suitable spectrum to enable energy companies to construct private wide-area IMT2020 telecoms networks dedicated to utility operations.
- Support for development of features in global 3GPP standards to ensure that the telecoms networks of the future have built-in features to enable energy companies to deliver the European Green Deal Objectives in the most effective manner.
- Support for infrastructure sharing to enable utilities to use and offer their assets, both telecom and non-telecom assets whilst respecting necessary measures to ensure the safe and secure continuous primary usage of these assets, and as such supporting other Community objectives such as universal broadband and gigabit connectivity more cost-effectively. At the same time, the reciprocity principle should be enacted, so that utilities may be granted access to the same group of assets from other stakeholders involved in the 2014/61/UE Directive.

¹ "Is Commercial Cellular Suitable for Mission Critical Broadband?" Study on use of commercial mobile networks and equipment for "mission-critical" high-speed broadband communications in specific sectors: A study prepared for the European Commission DG Communications Networks, Content & Technology: ISBN: 978-92-79-38679-4.

The European Utilities Telecom Council (EUTC)

The European Utilities Telecom Council (EUTC) is the leading European Utilities trade association dedicated to informing its members and influencing policies on how telecommunication solutions and associated challenges can support the future smart infrastructures and the related policy objectives through the use of innovative technologies, processes, business insights and professional people.

This is combined with sharing best practices and learning from across the EUTC and the UTC global organization of telecommunication professionals within the field of utilities and other critical infrastructure environments and associated stakeholders.

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