

Contribution to the GSR15 consultation

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To overcome the Digital Gap is a very important and challenging task and innovative ways of fulfilling our regulatory tasks are much needed. This applies to the world scale, where ITU and other organizations do their very best to foster innovative ways of reshaping the regulatory landscape and it also applies to the national and even regional level. Also in well developed Countries - such as Switzerland- , a political debate on the Digital Gap between densely populated areas with a great choice of high performing telecommunications networks – be it mobile or landline technology - and scarcely populated and sometimes remote areas understandably takes place and shows a demand for new ways of shaping the regulatory environment in telecommunications.

In the past, many Countries have implemented Universal Services Obligations (USO) to deliver a minimal service to their population and to business entities such as SME's, who cannot afford specially implemented large scale business solutions. In Switzerland, the guaranteed bandwidth within the USO-license has been increased to 2 Mbits/s downlink and 200 Kbit/s uplink as of 1.1.2015. This was possible due to the already very well deployed wireline network of the USO lincenseholder, who is forced by market pressure to constantly invest in its assets. Infrastructure competition of platform competition served so far as an excellent force to bridge the Gap to a certain level. With the increasing deployment of new and highly capable telecommunications networks – be it mobile or fibre – the economically more interesting parts of Countries tend to be served even better in the future. In order to avoid an increasing Gap between those well served customers and less interesting areas, mobile technologies are probably better suited – economically and in terms of deployment speed – to keep everyone connected and provided with enough bandwidth.

In order to allow for an efficient deployment of mobile networks, cost cutting measures such as the co-utilization of network elements could be required. Also, the trading of licensed spectrum or the introduction of class licenses can reduce transaction costs for network operators and can therefore have a positive impact on the market dynamic. Where coordination issues between building permit authorities or public health authorities with the telecommunications sector arise, the telecommunications Regulator might have a role to play speed up the deployment by acting as a moderator between the different parties. As an example, the Swiss Regulator elaborated best practice guidelines on the deployment of networks – mobile and fibre or other technologies – together with other government agencies, local authorities and operators, which proofed to ease the network rollout.

Once the telecommunications networks and services are deployed, its utilization very much depends on the trust, the customers put into the services provided. Protection issues are therefore of importance. Many countries have seen a substantial rise in telemarketing behavioral patterns, which are for many users unacceptable. More and more telemarketing activities are made by showing false telephone numbers (“spoofing”), so the called party cannot act against the calling party who is sometimes outside the Country. Besides technical measures by the operators and national legislation to act against unsolicited telemarketing calls, the international discussion should be strengthened, in order to re-establish the much needed trust of the users.