

Telecommunications - Taiwan

Ministry publishes public consultation on mobile broadband service licences

Contributed by **Shay & Partners**

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In June 2012 the Ministry of Transportation and Communications solicited public opinions regarding the deregulation of new mobile communications services (ie, the attention-grabbing plan for fourth-generation (4G) licensing).

Under Article 6 of the Telecommunications Act, the business activities, scope and number of Type I telecommunications enterprises to be deregulated will be announced by the Executive Yuan. With respect to the deregulation of this new mobile communications service, the ministry has been instructed by the Executive Yuan to amend the Table of Business Activities, Scope and Number of Type I Telecommunications Enterprises, which will be submitted to the Executive Yuan for announcement after public opinions have been solicited and consolidated. It is expected that the National Communications Commission (NCC) will announce the tender rules for 4G licences next year according to the scope of deregulation and number of licences officially determined by the Executive Yuan.

According to the consultation paper released by the ministry, the scope of 4G licensing will be limited to 700 megahertz (MHz), 900 MHz and 1800 MHz in the future under the principle of technology neutrality, where no system will be designated and technologies will be limited to available technologies for these bands as announced by the International Telecommunications Union during the effective term of the licences.

According to the consultation paper, the ministry proposes that in the coming year, the NCC will issue nationwide licences for each band as follows:

- Three licences are planned for the 700 MHz band, with 2 x 15 MHz available block bandwidth for each licence.
- Two licences are planned for the 900 MHz band, with 2 x 15 MHz available block bandwidth for each licence.
- Three licences are planned for the 1800 MHz band, with 2 x 20 MHz available block bandwidth for each licence.

Each operator may participate in the tender for all bands, but cannot obtain more than one block in each licensed band.

The licences for each band will be released by June 2014, and operators may commence activities after available frequencies have been obtained and deployment is completed. For the 900 MHz and 1800 MHz bands, mobile broadband operation will basically commence in July 2017, since the existing Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) mobile phone licences will expire in June 2017. However, to encourage operators to introduce new telecommunications technologies as early as possible in order to enhance frequency utilisation efficiency and provide services, if an operator's GSM band overlaps with the 900 MHz or 1800 MHz band for which that operator is awarded a contract, such an overlapped band:

- will be renewed for mobile broadband use; and
- will not be subject to the limitation that operation should commence in July 2017.

The government has agreed to renew licences for existing operators of GSM mobile phone and pager services in Taiwan pursuant to the policy decisions of the Executive Yuan in November 2010 and August 2011. However, the term of such licences will expire on June 30 2017.

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