
Press release

5G

A deployment framework to take the different national imperatives into account

Paris, 11 June 2020

On 2 April 2020, Arcep announced that France's four mobile network operators – Bouygues Telecom, Free Mobile, Orange and SFR – had qualified to participate in the 3.4 – 3.8 GHz band frequency awards. Each had made the commitments that enabled them to obtain a block of 50 MHz for the sum of €350M. Since then, Arcep has been preparing for the main auction to award the remaining 11 blocks of 10 MHz in the 3.4 – 3.8 GHz band, which had to be postponed due to the recent unprecedented period of lockdown.

A useful dialogue on the framework for launching 5G in France

This postponement nevertheless created an opportunity for a dialogue to open up – as an adjunct to the earlier consultations – about the launch of 5G in France, involving mobile operators, the Government, local elected officials' representative associations and members of Parliament. The guidelines that Arcep is laying out today are drawn from this dialogue, taking into account all of the country's various imperatives, and the contextual elements that emerged from this process: equipping the country with robust, high quality communication infrastructures, ensuring ubiquitous digital access, the situation in the telecom sector with respect to the rest of the economy, managing the public health crisis, environmental issues and French people's relationship to technologies.

Commercial 5G launch by the end of the year, on operators' initiative

Arcep will begin the auction that was initially scheduled for April sometime between 20 and 30 September. This new timetable will give Arcep and the four candidates – Bouygues Telecom, Free Mobile, Orange and SFR – time to perform the physical preparations required for the auction. This main auction will be followed by a positioning auction in October to determine the winning candidates' position on the band, then by the award of the licences which is expected to take place in October or November.

The commercial launch of 5G will then be performed on operators' initiative. Here, Arcep is lifting the obligation listed in the specifications for each operator to deploy 5G services in at least two cities before the end of 2020.

Strengthening 4G access

Arcep wants the focus in the country's more sparsely populated areas to be on 4G. Alongside the New Deal for Mobile, which provides for the massive deployment of new cell sites nationwide, as well as ubiquitous 4G access – which Arcep will be very vigilant in enforcing – the licences that will be awarded in the autumn will carry obligations to strengthen 4G access.

The widespread availability of 4G+ (increasing networks' capacity to at least 240 Mbit/s, i.e. four times the current obligation) will be guaranteed in every region. In particular, operators will be required to ensure that a minimum 75% of their cell sites are 4G+ enabled by the end of 2022. Arcep is calling on operators to step up their efforts in this area, particularly as the initial roadmap for 5G investments have been delayed.

Keeping consumers informed: supporting consumer associations and players involved in measuring QoS

Arcep will also keep a close eye on how operators market their 5G plans. It is therefore inviting consumer associations and players involved in measuring QoS to participate in the work being done under its aegis, to facilitate the development of tools designed to inform consumers about the technical and commercial terms and conditions attached to operators' access products.

“Achieving digital sustainability”: launch of a collaboration platform

Arcep plans to turn environmental issues into a new chapter in regulation. To this end, it is creating a collaboration platform: “Achieving digital sustainability”, and is calling on all interested associations, institutions, operators, digital industry businesses and experts to work together on the issues surrounding not only fixed and mobile telecom networks, but also devices and uses, all major driving forces of digital consumption and its environmental footprint. Today, Arcep is publishing a [press release about the launch of this platform](#), whose scope extends well beyond just 5G.

A steadily evolving framework for 5G, with a rendez-vous clause in 2023

The framework governing 5G will be evaluated in stages. Following the licences awards, operators will be able to begin providing commercial services in the 3.4 – 3.8 GHz band. The deployment of 5G network equipment in this band will take place gradually over several years, and Arcep will monitor the conditions surrounding these deployments: the licences will carry two rendez-vous clauses, set for 2023 and 2028, to take stock of operators' compliance with their obligations and of outstanding needs, notably with respect to mobile network coverage and quality of service.

Associated documents:

- [Page devoted to the frequency awards procedure](#)
- [FAQ about 5G](#)

Arcep at a glance

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Postal Affairs and Print Media Distribution (Arcep), a neutral and expert arbitrator with the status of independent administrative authority (IAA), is the architect and guardian of internet, fixed and mobile telecoms and postal networks in France.