

Communications Authority press release

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 92nd meeting held in January 2020:

CA publishes the Spectrum Release Plan (SRP) for 2020 – 2022

The CA published today (January 10) the new SRP for 2020 – 2022 in accordance with the Radio Spectrum Policy Framework promulgated by the Government in April 2007 to inform the industry of the potential supply of spectrum for provision of public mobile and/or other wireless communications services in the following three years.

According to the newly published SRP, the CA will release a maximum of 160 MHz of spectrum in the 600/700MHz bands and 80 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band to the market in 2021 as an ongoing effort to release more spectrum to facilitate the development of public mobile services including the fifth generation mobile (5G) services. In addition, there is 2 900 MHz of spectrum available in the 26/28 GHz bands for assignment. The latest SRP also covers the planned re-assignment of 15 MHz of spectrum in the 850 MHz band and 90 MHz of spectrum in the 2.5/2.6 GHz bands upon the expiry of the existing terms of assignment in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

The SRP for 2020 – 2022 is available on the CA's website (www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_613/spectrum_plan2020_en.pdf).

Free TV licensees not required to broadcast educational television (ETV) programmes from next school year

The CA decided to lift the requirement for domestic free television programme service (free TV) licensees to broadcast ETV programmes for schools after the end of the current school year in June 2020.

The Broadcasting Ordinance (Cap. 562) and the free TV licences empower the CA to require the licensee to broadcast without charge any ETV programme supplied by the Government. At present, Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) is required to broadcast on its English channel (viz. the Pearl channel) one hour of ETV programmes (from 9am to 10am) on each school day. ETV programmes are also broadcast by Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) on its free TV service. The other two free TV licensees (i.e. HK Television Entertainment Company Limited and Fantastic Television Limited) are currently not required to broadcast ETV programmes.

In response to a request from TVB for lifting the broadcasting requirement for ETV programmes, the CA consulted the relevant government bureaux, namely the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau and the

Education Bureau (EDB).

The CA noted that there has been a growing trend in accessing ETV programmes through the Internet and the mobile app, and the consistently low TV ratings (from 0 to 0.5). The need/demand for viewing ETV programmes on free TV channels at designated hours on each school day is expected to further diminish in the future. The CA also noted that following a review on ETV service, the EDB has concluded that ETV service will be re-positioned, from the 2020-21 financial year, to go beyond the confines of traditional TV programmes with a view to developing more diverse curriculum resources in the era of e-learning. The CA considered that the requirement for TVB to broadcast ETV programmes may cease after the end of the current school year (i.e. June 5, 2020) so as to tie in with the EDB's timetable for implementing new measures relating to ETV service from the 2020-21 financial year.

Having regard to TVB's request and the above considerations, the CA decided to lift the requirement on TVB for broadcasting ETV programmes with effect from June 6, 2020. The effect of lifting the requirement would be minimal given that the public could continue to have access to ETV programmes through RTHK's free TV service and other new media platforms. The airtime released may be used by TVB to provide other programmes, thereby broadening the programme choice to cater for the interests of viewers.