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The past 2015 was a work-intensive and productive year for the electronic communications sector in Bulgaria and for the Communications Regulation Commission (CRC/the Commission). At the core of the dynamically changing market and regulatory environment stands the rapid technological development. The transition to high-speed broadband IP-based next generation networks, including to 4G technologies in mobile networks, the scaled-up convergence of fixed and mobile networks, the wide take-up of OTT, bundled services and of Machine-to-Machine communication, and the increased consolidation in the sector are all trends and factors that pose serious challenges to regulation. Therefore the main focus of the CRC agenda for the last year was the active participation in the ongoing European Regulatory Framework review as a member of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) and of the Independent Regulators Group (IRG). In this aspect, a major priority for CRC in 2015 was the updating of the commission's Action Strategy for the period 2016 – 2018. The goals and the lines of action defined therein are in compliance with the main European goals for effective completion of the single electronic communications market and for maximum harmonisation of the regulatory rules and mechanisms, taking into account the market specifics and the Bulgarian national characteristics.

In the past year CRC successfully continued its priority work on definition, analysis, and assessment of relevant markets as a tool for imposing of regulatory obligations, aiming to stimulate competition to the benefit of the end users. Recommendation 2014/710/EC¹, which updated the list of markets susceptible to ex-ante regulation, altered the product scope and the boundaries between some of them, with a view to reflecting the technologic and market developments. Its implementation, related to the second round analyses of the wholesale markets for local and central access provided at a fixed location was another challenge for CRC in 2015. After a successful notification procedure to the European Commission, the enforcement of regulatory obligations on the market for wholesale central access provided at a fixed location was withdrawn because it became effectively competitive market. In 2015 the Commission undertook a third round analyses of the markets for call origination from and call termination on public telephone networks provided at a fixed location and of the markets for voice call termination on individual mobile networks and launched public consultation procedures for the two draft decisions. Preparations were also started for the second round analysis of the wholesale market for high-quality access provided at a fixed location according to its new product scope.

Following one of its main priorities, the effective management and efficient use of the scarce resource - radio frequency spectrum, in 2015 CRC approved the updated Regulatory policy for radio frequency spectrum management for civil needs. With a focus of promoting the wide take-up of wireless broadband electronic communication services, one of its main objectives is the allocation of adequate radio frequency spectrum in cost-effective frequency bands. Conditions were created, in an active and transparent dialogue with the stakeholders, to assign the requested by the undertakings frequency resources in the 1800 MHz range. Acting as a mediator, CRC contributed to reaching an agreement and fair allocation of this scarce resource, necessary for the wide penetration of the 4G mobile services on the Bulgarian market.

¹ *European Commission Recommendation from 9th Oct 2014 on relevant product and service markets within the electronic communications sector susceptible to ex ante regulation in accordance with Directive 2002/21/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services*

Promoting the interests of the users of electronic communication services is a strategic objective in the CRC's work. In 2015 the Commission continued its efforts to ensure transparency for the end users of the conditions for usage of electronic communication services. A thorough inspection was conducted on the performance by registered providers of the requirement to publish the achieved quality of service parameters of Internet access services. A prepared by CRC inquiry form was published on its Internet site to assess the customers' satisfaction from the quality of these services. Consequently, the end user possibilities were facilitated for optimal choice of the Internet access service provider, while the analysis of the input inquiry forms was an instrument used by CRC for taking timely and adequate measures. An amendment of the General requirements for carrying out public electronic communications was placed for public consultations, providing additional measures for ensuring transparent conditions in the provision of electronic communications services and for protection of the end users in their relations with the providers of these services.