

SES reply to Dutch NFP 3.5 GHz consultation 2022

SES would like to thank the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate (“Ministry”) for the opportunity to comment on their proposed changes to the national frequency plan (“NFP”) in the 3.5 GHz band (“ontwerpbesluit wijziging 3,5 GHz-band Nationaal Frequentieplan”).

We would like to comment on the following three main aspects: (1) allocation of local networks (“lokaal gebruik”) in the 3.5 GHz band, (2) the possibility for stakeholders other than Inmarsat to file for damages, and (3) clarification regarding the coordination zones around existing FSS earth stations.

Allocation of local networks

One of the changes that is made in the current NFP proposal, compared with the 2021 proposal, is the allocation of the 3400-3500 MHz frequency band for the local networks (“lokaal gebruik”). Whereas in the 2021 proposal the band 3750-3800 MHz was planned for local networks, the current plan contemplates local networks in the lower part of the band (3400-3500 MHz) and would allow national networks to operate up to the 3800 MHz edge.

This change in allocation of the local networks is a concern for SES, since the national networks would now be assigned up to 3800 MHz, which increases the risk for adjacent band interference into FSS earth stations that operate above 3800 MHz. It is well known that a guard band (frequency separation) is needed between the terrestrial mobile networks and the satellite networks.

Depending on the characteristics of the filter specified for FSS earth stations, such a separation can be between 20 MHz and 50 MHz. This means that in addition to the FSS no longer having access to the 3600-3800 MHz band, an additional 20 to 50 MHz will be impaired. Placing the local networks in the 3750-3800 MHz band would allow this 20 to 50 MHz to be ‘absorbed’ below 3800 MHz, as the national networks would be allocated only up until 3750 MHz thereby improving the efficient use of spectrum from 3400-4200 MHz.

SES kindly requests the Ministry therefore to reconsider the allocation of 50 MHz of local network in the band 3750-3800 MHz.

File for damages

The consultation document indicates that there will be the possibility for Inmarsat to file for damages related to the move of their earth station(s). SES fully understands this situation, but would like to add that there are other earth station operators in The Netherlands that also have or will incur costs in order to prepare for operations of 5G networks in 3.5 GHz by installing filters on their earth stations and re-arrange traffic. SES would therefore request the Ministry to clarify that all FSS earth station operators are allowed to file damages due to the transition of services out of the 3.5 GHz band and the installation of filters on FSS earth stations.

Coordination zones around FSS earth stations

The consultation indicates that around existing FSS earth stations a coordination zone will be established within which national mobile license holders will have to coordinate with the FSS earth station. No details are provided other than saying that this will be further detailed in the license conditions. SES requests the Ministry to timely reach out to stakeholders in order to agree on

appropriate criteria to establish such coordination zones. Furthermore, SES also wants to ensure that future FSS earth station deployments will be facilitated.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and look forward to working with the Ministry to achieve a smooth and successful transition.