

TELEFÓNICA UK LIMITED RESPONSE TO:

“Consultation: Proposed measures to require compliance with international guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF)”

June 2020

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Telefónica UK Limited (“Telefónica”) welcomes the opportunity to respond to Ofcom’s consultation on Proposed measures to require compliance with international guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF)¹.
2. As a member of Mobile UK, we support the comments made in that response to this consultation.

II. GENERAL COMMENTS

3. Telefónica supports the current safety regime in the UK with respect to exposure to EMF. It works well and results in adherence to the criteria and limits established by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), the independent advisory body to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
4. All operational Telefónica base stations have been installed in compliance with the criteria established by ICNIRP.
5. Telefónica also supports Ofcom’s ongoing EMF measurement testing, which has been carried out for several years. Ofcom has stated that these measurements have consistently shown they are well within the internationally agreed levels published in the ICNIRP Guidelines and Ofcom are not aware of any situations where the ICNIRP Guidelines have been breached.
6. The current regime for ensuring compliance is demonstrably effective and achieves its aims.
7. We note that in its consultation, Ofcom says that it is an evidence-based organisation and it includes information about its approach to impact assessment

¹https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/190003/emf-condoc.pdf

and best-practice policy making. This approach states that one of Ofcom's key regulatory principles is a bias against intervention. Ofcom says this means that a high hurdle must be overcome before it regulates and it aims to choose the least intrusive means of achieving its objectives.

8. Ofcom also says that it can include conditions in spectrum authorisations only where it is satisfied that they are objectively justified and proportionate (as well as non-discriminatory and transparent).
9. Given that the current regime has, for many years, consistently shown full compliance, is demonstrably effective, absent of any failure or harm and achieves its aim, it is not clear that there is a case for intervention.
10. We would welcome further discussions between Ofcom and stakeholders in order to further understand the proposals and details of the processes. This is particularly important due to the inherent complexity involved with multi-tenancy sites and also infrastructure and planning considerations which should be examined with a view to ensuring processes are efficient and effective and do not impose an undue burden or create a barrier to rollout.

III. POINT-TO-POINT LINKS

11. Telefónica notes Ofcom's inclusion of point-to-point microwave links in its consultation. We wish to highlight that such links are inherently different in nature to deployments using wide area or 'coverage' spectrum. Point-to-point microwave systems have a fundamentally different mode of operation characterised by a directional radio frequency beam, pointing to free space by design (i.e. occupational, not general public space). They are also generally of lower power. This differs from coverage spectrum, which by definition is emitted in a wide beam footprint with the express purpose to produce a broad usable signal in areas of general public access.
12. Given the above consideration and that Ofcom states that there is already UK legislation that limits occupational (i.e. non-general public) exposure to EMF emissions for workers, so the consultation does not deal with occupational exposure to EMF, we would like to further understand Ofcom's rationale for the inclusion of these links.