

Mobile Communications Strategy – Measures taken by the Federal Government to pave the way for universal and future-oriented mobile communications coverage

We need a future-proof, nationwide mobile communications network so that all regions, households and businesses can enjoy the benefits of digitalisation – not only in large urban centres, but, in particular, in rural areas.

Full coverage of mobile voice and data communication is long overdue. Dead spots will soon be a thing of the past.

- An important step is our agreement with mobile network operators. For example, 4G will already be available in 99 % of households by the end of 2020.
- With the coverage requirements of the Federal Network Agency from the 5G frequency allocation, we will ensure 5G connectivity on motorways and federal highways.
- The requirements also ensure mobile communications coverage on all regional and federal roads as well as on major waterways and the entire rail network.
- Network coverage for citizens is also dependent on the network operator they use. Sometimes citizens also have the impression of a dead spot where there is actually none. The requirements create incentives for the collaborative upgrading of networks, including in sparsely populated areas. Mobile network operators have already announced that they will jointly develop and use up to 6,000 new mobile communications sites to eliminate dead spots in sparsely populated areas and along transport routes. This will significantly improve coverage across all networks.

With these measures alone, 99.7 per cent of households and 95 per cent of the federal territory will be covered by mobile communications services across all networks by the end of 2024 at the latest. This is a big step towards nationwide coverage and lays the foundation for the 5G network of the future. The 5G super grid will not be available overnight, but will be gradually developed. However, where there is already a 4G network, it can quickly be upgraded to 5G.

We have already achieved quite a lot. But we won't stop here. We want to establish equivalent living conditions. The first objective of this mobile communications strategy is to provide access to households that are not likely to be served without public intervention. For nationwide mobile communications coverage, we also need to include district and local roads.

We will therefore support the development of up to 5.000 mobile communication sites as part of the gigabit rollout with around EUR 1.1 billion euros from the Digital Infrastructure Fund, which will also cover the development of district and municipal roads. In addition, we have agreed that the Federation will establish a mobile communications infrastructure company to actively speed-up and support mobile communications roll-out. The mobile communications infrastructure company will be established as soon as the conditions laid down in paragraph 65 BHO of the Federal Budget Code are met and the qualified spending freeze on the funds has been lifted by the Bundestag.

- We are creating transparency with regard to the actual supply situation – also visible to citizens – and we will be constantly monitoring the progress of the roll-out.
- We are reducing the burden on municipalities and we are making sure that the upgrading happens in an effective and economical manner.
- We are identifying infrastructure that can be provided by the Federal Government (e.g. conduits alongside roads or waterways).
- Together with the federal states and the municipalities, we are identifying practical potentials for speeding up, e.g. with regard to approval procedures or building law.
- We are supporting the exploitation of acceleration potentials by the federal states, e.g. by creating a single contact point for mayors, members of parliament, district commissioners, to help specifically help solve problems on the ground.

With these measures we reach a supply of at least 97.5 % of Germany's territory and 99.95 % of households. Given limited resources, we have to decide where to start. The upgrading must first take place – also in rural areas – where citizens require coverage in order to be able to talk to one another on the phone. We will also ensure coverage through appropriate technologies for the remaining, particularly remote areas with households that can currently only be connected at a very high cost. And we will examine how to ensure an emergency response function when required, including in remote natural areas, with complementary technologies.

To enable agricultural and forestry sector to take advantage of modern technologies, we provide a high-performance spectrum (3.7-3.8 GHz) for own, local networks at very low cost. In order to make it possible to set up such networks tailored to the specific needs of farmers and thus increase the innovation potential of digital agriculture, we will support the establishment of such networks with a funding programme.

The protection of the general public and the environment with regard to electromagnetic fields is a high asset and will continue to be ensured. The Federal Government will also ensure the existing level of protection in the case of 5G expansion. We will strengthen accompanying research on human and environmental impacts and the testing of 5G applications.

Better mobile network coverage cannot be achieved by the Federation alone. This is a task that we share – the Federal Government as well as the private sector. On the part of the Federal Government, this can only be achieved if the federal states and municipalities also contribute. This is particularly the case for speeding up approval procedures, which, at present, often take too long, thus delaying the upgrading of the network. Only if we all work together will we achieve our goal: sustainable and universal coverage of mobile communications in Germany.