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# TECHNOLOGY: Experts predict delays for 5G rollout in Cyprus

25 May, 2019

**While telecommunication companies remain committed to rolling out 5G, experts argue that developments on the ground do not bode well for Cyprus getting superfast mobile internet soon.**

Telecom experts argue that companies are not in a position to adopt 5G technologies by 2020, a goal set by the EU, as providers and the market are not ready for the upgraded mobile internet technology.

The Electronic Communications Department is concerned the EU's timetables will not be met as there is still no infrastructure, standards and end devices to support the technology.

Infrastructure include equipment, antennas and end devices for household and industries.

George Komodromos, the department's director, said the Cypriot market is not ready for such a change nor are providers set for the big leap.

"We believe that providers in Cyprus as well as in Europe are not yet ready. We should also consider that at a European level, providers do not seem to be in a hurry because they want to first depreciate their investments in the former technologies before moving on to new technologies," said Komodromos.

He pointed out that the only ones pushing for the implementation of 5G are the manufacturers of new equipment.

**Huawei factor**

Meanwhile, a commercial standoff between China and the United States are threatening to delay the implementation of 5G s in Cyprus and the rest of the EU.

Electronic Communications and Postal Office Commissioner George Michaelides said that if any limitation is applied on Chinese firm Huawei's product promotion (over security fears), that would see 5G growth delayed both in Europe and Cyprus.

Currently, more than 90% of consumers in Cyprus are served in one way or another by Huawei products, while companies such as MTN and Cyta (4G) rely on infrastructure equipment from the Chinese communication giants.

"The company has a ten-year presence in Cyprus and has developed extensive partnerships with all telecom providers in the country to provide high-level IT and communications services and a rapid transition to a digital transformation of the country that will lead to the further development of the Cypriot economy," said Michaelides.

In March, Huawei appealed a law limiting its activities on US territory calling it unconstitutional. However, since then US President Donald Trump has struck again, essentially imposing a ban on American companies such as Google to cooperate with Huawei.

This would mean that Huawei may no longer have access to software such as Android.

On the other hand, developments earlier in the year on a European front, saw Germany come out in favour of the Chinese company. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel openly supported Huawei's right to participate in the 5G network awarding competition, despite strong opposition from the United States.

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Michaelides said the problem arises as Huawei is the only company which produces equipment for all stages of implementing 5G technologies.

While a number of EU states have already given the green light to firms to purchase equipment from Huawei, all EU states will have to prepare a risk assessment of moving on to 5G technologies.

"All eyes are on the world summit on 5G expansion with global participation which will take place in November, which will look into matters relating to security."

A source from one of the island's main telecom companies, while confirming that providers are not ready for 5G noted that there is no infrastructure for the implementation of the network.

"Antennas will need to be set up, which will need to be in closer proximity to one another than the existing ones set up for 4G," the source said.

"This will give way to concerns over health and environmental impacts. Already a number of European cities have placed limitations on mobile phone antennas, while in some Cypriot villages we have witnessed locals taking to the streets to prevent the setting up of mobile phone antennas," the source added.

Another expert in telecommunication technologies added: "There are no industries which have invested in automation which can be used with 5G."

He added that this is where the state should intervene and facilitate the transmission to 5G but does not seem willing to do so.

"The state has no strategy on the matter. It could have drawn plans which would see incentives for telecom companies to invest in 5G technology-based automation in a number of services such as healthcare and the ports. Industrial areas and ports are perfect for testing out 5G technologies. The state seems not to have a vision for the implementation of 5G."

#### Firms say they are on track

Cyprus telecom companies claim to be committed to rolling out their 5G platforms sometime in 2020, as Cyta, MTN and Primetel are currently running their pilot programmes. According to an EU directive, all member states should have at least one city with 5G coverage by 2020.

Cyta has put the 5G network at the forefront of its challenges for 2019, as the authority has been working on setting up a pilot network.

MTN, earlier in the year, announced that new developments are expected on 5G as a result of the company's recent strategic partnership with Huawei for the development of the 5G network in Cyprus.

MTN Cyprus and Chinese telecoms giant Huawei have agreed on strategic cooperation on the development of a 5G network in Cyprus, initially through a joint research programme and then using a commercial set of services.

Last week Cablenet acquired a set of frequencies which can be used for 5G technology after an auction process. According to sources close to the procedure, Cablenet will pay EUR 7 mln for the frequencies.

Cablenet currently has an agreement with CyTA to use its platform to support its mobile internet services.

However, the acquisition of the 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz frequencies at auction may see the company reevaluate its options.

Cablenet's chief commercial officer Periklis Theodoridis, told the Financial Mirror that the company obtained the frequencies in order to develop their own mobile telecommunications infrastructure.

"Our obligation is to set up a network which will cover 50% of the island by 2021 and 75% by 2023. We will work on developing a 4G network and then, according to developments globally, will evaluate the possibility of acquiring our own 5G license," he said.

Primetel announced last September that it would launch the first 5G pilot platform in the framework of the European Union's Strategic Research and Innovation Plan dubbed "Horizon 2020".

The "5Genesis" project is a pilot platform to test out the bloc's readiness to implement 5G technology in the European Union. The program is to be carried out in five locations, Athens, Malaga, Berlin, Surrey and Limassol.

Primetel's Research and Innovation Team is working on the installation of the first 5G platform in Limassol in cooperation with Space Hellas Cyprus and Avanti HYLAS 2.



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This is to be completed in three stages to provide a platform for experimenting with innovative mobile and satellite telephony, making 5G technology universally accessible.

Primetel said the programme is in the first of three stages.

This 5G technology is to be made available worldwide by the end of 2019 and Europe is set to roam with speeds tenfold of that provided by the current 4G technology as of 2020.

“Exact speeds will vary based on which technology ends up being implemented. Latest reports claim that 5G speeds of up to 7.5Gbps have already been achieved in the lab,” Primetel told the Financial Mirror.

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