

**INTERIM MEETING OF THE IARU REGION 1 VHF/UHF/MICROWAVE COMMITTEE
VIENNA 19.- 21. April 2013**

Document	VIE13_C5_01
Subject	Chairman Report
Society	IARU
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Status	Information

The spectrum between 1 GHz and 3 GHz looks interesting and desirable for many services these days. This means that the pressure on the amateur bands in this range is increasing significantly, and this encompasses very interesting bands used for wide-band ATV, satellite communications, narrow-band long-distance traffic, EME, and many digital modes.

Therefore, we must not only closely watch any changes and trends in the local radio authorities, we also must communicate with them, and exchange our views on what is going on. Again and again, the authorities ask questions, and we must answer them, or at least make our position known with regard to the problem at hand. In the past we have found out that this sort of input first is highly important to remind the decision-makers of the Amateur Radio Service, and secondly, we need to take a clear stand, providing valuable additional information, if possible. He who doesn't react won't be noticed, either. IARU Region I has a competent person for all "spectrum matters". It is Murray Niman, G6JYB, and he is also a co-worker of the IARU VHF Manager.

In 2012, the Contest Robot (iaru.oevsv.at) was up and running for the first time in the IARU VHF & UHF Contests. In the UHF contest, 1,231 logs were processed, and the results were always available online for all participants. Due to the somewhat unclear situation in the handbook, and the lack of a responsible society, the 2012 Contest turned out to be somewhat chaotic. This situation was well reflected in a proposal submitted by the DARC. As is the case with any new system, it didn't run without sputtering, and still needs some fine tuning.

One aspect, however, turned out to be highly beneficial: No logs lost, and the evaluation went well. Other details will have to be worked out, and the 2012 evaluation can be reviewed as well, because all data are available on the server. My – admittedly long-term – goal is to activate the sending of diplomas as PDF files, utilizing a newly designed diploma form. As of 2012, we also will provide a badge for the winner.

Digital modes are very popular, indeed. HAMNET, D-Star and DMR are progressing further, both in terms of hardware as commercially available radio sets, and in terms of software that works in the background. In contrast to analogue modes, the digital ones need databanks, gateways, and data links, which calls for the co-operation of various individuals, working groups and developers amongst us. This is where the different ideas for various operating systems, talk groups, and routing approaches in Hamnet are being developed. As I see it, the development clearly moves in the direction of a digital transmission in a data stream to include video, audio, ATV, Packet Radio, weather data, APRS, a further development of Echolink, etc. This data backbone, with HAMNET as the current transport media, will serve the various interfaces, be it D-Star, DMR, digital ATV repeater outputs, or interfaces for analogue repeaters. As I see it, one of the main tasks of IARU Region I to support this development is to provide for the required spectrum space in the band plans, and this has been already the case.

Another important factor are the interfaces among the systems. We have amateur radio operators who are enthusiastic software developers and can make digital systems fly by creating various platforms like data banks, services, user interfaces, and apps for mobile telephones. It takes standardized interfaces among the various systems to provide an environment for developers to integrate all current and future platforms and applications, so that they can be linked with data banks and servers. In this way, all of them can act on the same level, and there is no crowding out, which would be detrimental to the digital system as such, because users would shy away.

As I already have announced in Sun City, I shall resign from my post as Chairman at the 2014 Conference. By then I will have served in the VHF field for 24 years, and I think it's time for a change. With pleasure do I remember many interesting years, during which I had the privilege to meet outstanding hams, to lead emotional discussions, and to learn about so many different views. Please think of a successor.

Preliminary talks are possible in Vienna, and I shall be pleased to answer any questions about the tasks and the accompanying workload, too.