



ECC Decision (06)07

The harmonised use of airborne GSM and LTE systems in the frequency bands 1710-1785 MHz and 1805-1880 MHz, and airborne UMTS systems in the frequency bands 1920-1980 MHz and 2110-2170 MHz¹

Approved 1 December 2006

Amended 18 November 2016

Updated 30 June 2017

¹ Comparable technical specifications to those given in this ECC Decision are given in Commission Decisions 2008/294/EC, 2013/654/EU and 2016/2317/EU, as well as Commission Recommendation 2008/295/EC. EU Member States and, if so approved by the EEA Joint Committee, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are obliged to implement the EC Decision.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1 INTRODUCTION

There is increasing demand to use mobile communications from wherever you are located, including the use of mobile communications terminals onboard aircraft. However, to ensure successful operation of systems which will facilitate this there is a need to establish a basis for the free circulation and use of such equipment within Europe and to provide access to the required spectrum and to ensure that all aeronautical safety issues have been addressed.

2 SCOPE

This decision covers the radio regulatory aspects of operation of such systems, not the aviation safety aspects (both technical and human factors related) that are the responsibilities of the relevant aviation authorities.

3 BACKGROUND

It is a general aim of the Electronic Communications Committee (ECC) to facilitate the free circulation and use of radio equipment. An objective of this Decision is to extend the application of this general aim to include the air transportation domain.

The system under consideration in this Decision (i.e. the equipment necessary to establish a Mobile communications pico-cell² system onboard an aircraft based on GSM, UMTS or LTE technology and to prevent direct connection of the onboard mobile terminals with mobile networks on the ground, “the System”), onboard is intended to provide an interface to onboard mobile communications terminals providing the full range of services normally provided on a mobile communications network. It is important to ensure that the mobile terminals onboard the aircraft do not attempt to register with terrestrial Base Transceiver Stations (“BTS”) and can only register with the onboard System. The link between the onboard System and the ground is out of the scope of this Decision. The link will operate in a different frequency range, probably using satellite links. These satellite links will be operated in accordance with relevant ECC Decisions. The System will only be operated during certain phases of the flight and will not be operated while the aircraft is on the ground or during take-off and landing.

There is a need for a harmonised approach to the System together with its harmonised use to ensure the provision of an uninterrupted service whilst aircraft cross the borders of various countries and to reduce the regulatory requirements placed on administrations, mobile communications network operators and aircraft operators.

It will frequently be the case that on any one flight an aircraft will travel through the airspace of more than one country with the time spent in the airspace of any individual country being of short duration. An agreed regulatory approach is required to ensure that the spectrum utilised by the System can be used in any national airspace that the aircraft is crossing, provided that the System conforms to agreed limits in order to prevent harmful interference.

For the purposes of this Decision only it is assumed that the responsibility for the authorisation of the spectrum utilised onboard an aircraft as part of the System should be that of the country of registration of the aircraft.

Airworthiness certification of the System is the separate responsibility of the relevant aviation authorities for the country of registration of the aircraft.

On 24 September 2014 the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) adopted Decision 2014/029/R which makes it possible for European airlines to allow passengers to use their Portable Electronic Devices in transmitting mode (TPEDs) during all phases of flight i.e. without the need to be in “airplane mode”, on non-

² Pico-cells are cells, mainly used indoors and in this case within the aircraft.

equipped aircraft with the System. In the context of this report PEDs are ac-UE (Mobile Network User Equipment on-board aircraft). However this EASA Decision is focused only on the aeronautical safety considerations with the use of the PED onboard aircraft, and does not consider radio frequency compatibility issues with other applications or services. ECC Decision (06)07 applies to operation of the System at a minimum height of 3000 m above ground.

CEPT noted that the use of a NCU is not mandatory in all CEPT administrations and investigated how to simplify the regulatory framework in 2015/16 further to a request from an operator of mobile communication services on board aircraft (MCA).

CEPT studies in response to EC Mandate on MCA (see CEPT Report 63) have concluded that MCA operations without an NCU are sufficient to guarantee a reasonable protection against resulting interference and signalling issues to and from terrestrial GSM and/or LTE wireless telecommunication systems. For UMTS systems, the studies conclude that an NCU is necessary to prevent connection of User Equipment onboard to mobile communications networks on the ground, and that without an NCU or sufficient aircraft attenuation the resulting connection will cause a partial and temporary reduction in capacity for the connecting and neighbouring ground based cells.

4 REQUIREMENT FOR AN ECC DECISION

There is a need for an ECC Decision to allow for the harmonised use of the System in, and to permit access to, the 1800 MHz and 2100 MHz frequency bands.

This ECC Decision initially designated only the 1800 MHz band for GSM systems. However subsequent to a request to study the possibility to use UMTS and LTE technologies for onboard aircraft mobile communications, the ECC decided to update this ECC Decision on 14 March 2014. The technical conditions for the use of the added cellular technologies are detailed in ECC Report 187 whose results are included in the Annex of this ECC Decision.

In November 2015, the European Commission mandated CEPT to undertake work to determine the possibility to make the installation of a Network Control Unit onboard MCA equipped aircraft optional.

ECC DECISION OF 1 DECEMBER 2006 ON THE HARMONISED USE OF AIRBORNE GSM AND LTE SYSTEMS IN THE FREQUENCY BANDS 1710-1785 MHz AND 1805-1880 MHz, AND AIRBORNE UMTS SYSTEMS IN THE FREQUENCY BANDS 1920-1980 MHz AND 2110-2170 MHz (ECC/DEC/(06)07) AMENDED 13 MARCH 2009, 14 MARCH 2014 AND 18 NOVEMBER 2016, AND UPDATED ON 30 JUNE 2017

“The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations,

considering

- a) that every state has sovereignty over the airspace³, including the radio spectrum, above its territory;
- b) that ECC adopted its Report 093 “Compatibility between GSM equipment on board aircraft and terrestrial networks” and complementary ECC Report 187 “Compatibility study between mobile communication services on board aircraft (MCA) and ground based systems” as well as CEPT Report 63 in response to the Mandate “To undertake technical studies regarding the possibility of making the usage of the network control unit (NCU) optional on board MCA enabled aircraft”;
- c) that the frequency bands 1710-1785 and 1805-1880 MHz, 1920-1980 MHz and 2110-2170 MHz are allocated to the mobile service on a co-primary basis in the ITU Radio Regulations;
- d) that within Europe the frequency bands 1710-1785 MHz and 1805-1880 MHz have been designated for GSM, UMTS, LTE and WiMAX, and are only used by GSM and LTE systems at the time of the adoption of this Decision;
- e) that within Europe the frequency bands 1920-1980 MHz and 2110-2170 MHz have been designated for Mobile/Fixed Communications networks, and are only used by UMTS at the time of the adoption of this Decision;
- f) that a system (i.e. the equipment necessary to establish an MCA pico-cell system onboard an aircraft and to prevent a direct connection of the onboard mobile communications terminals with mobile networks on the ground, “the System”) can enable the use of mobile communications terminals onboard an aircraft during flight;
- g) that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that there is no harmful interference from the System to the ground mobile networks. In particular CEPT Report 63 concludes that a Network Control Unit (NCU) should be implemented in the frequency bands where UMTS ground networks are in operation unless it is demonstrated that there is sufficient aircraft fuselage attenuation ;
- h) that existing NCUs operating in frequency bands other than those where UMTS is deployed respect the maximum e.i.r.p. limits set in ECC Reports 93 and 187. 2.6 GHz NCU operations are no longer necessary under the terms of this Decision and should be deactivated as soon as possible;
- i) that if future technologies related to 5G would involve frequency and time multiplexing access schemes for the transmission and the reception of UE and BS, similarly to GSM and LTE no NCU would be needed when such 5G terrestrial networks operate.
- j) that, provided the power levels and frequency bands used by the System are suitably controlled and that mobile terminals onboard an aircraft in flight are prevented from attempting to register with mobile networks on the ground, and can only register with the onboard System, it is possible to ensure that there is no harmful interference to systems operating outside the aircraft;
- k) that the effect of the System can be confined within the aircraft, facilitating the efficient use of spectrum;

³ This defined as: - the space above a particular national territory, treated as belonging to the government controlling the territory. It does not include outer space, which, under the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, is declared to be free and not subject to national appropriation.

- l) that, without prejudice to the minimum height requirements set out in the Annex, administrations may place additional height or geographic restrictions on the operation of the System over their territory, depending on the terrain and related network deployments in a country;
- m) that for the purposes of this Decision the aircraft cabin space is considered to be subject to the control of the country of aircraft registration and the System will only be used within the aircraft;
- n) that accordingly responsibility for the authorisation of the spectrum utilised onboard an aircraft by the System will be that of the country of registration of the aircraft, in accordance with that country's authorisation regime;
- o) that the use of the relevant frequencies will be authorised by one administration but those frequencies could also be used within the airspace of other countries;
- p) that the installation and use of the System within the aircraft will be subject to regulation, including airworthiness certification, by the relevant aviation authorities and the System cannot be put into operation until it complies with these requirements;
- q) that the communication link between the System and the ground is outside the scope of this Decision;
- r) that all necessary measures should be taken to monitor that the System and its installation conform to the relevant technical parameters given in the Annex;
- s) that, despite measures to ensure avoidance of harmful interference referred to in considering j), k), l) and r) may remain necessary for administrations to assist each other with the resolution of reports of interference in a timely manner, in accordance with appropriate ITU procedures;
- t) that the System provides an electronic communication service to mobile communications terminals inside the aircraft during flight;
- u) that this Decision shall not impede EU/EFTA countries from fulfilling their obligations according to Community laws;

DECIDES

1. that administrations shall allow the use of airborne GSM and LTE systems in the frequency bands 1710-1785 and 1805-1880 MHz, and airborne UMTS systems in the frequency bands 1920-1980 MHz and 2110-2170 MHz provided that the System operator is authorised to operate the System (including the right to use the necessary spectrum) by the country of registration of the aircraft and in accordance with the restrictions referred to in considering l);
2. that the System shall not cause harmful interference to, or claim protection from, any other authorised system;
3. that the use of the System shall comply with the **technical and operational requirements** set out in the Annex;
4. that this Decision **enters into force** on 18 November 2016;
5. that the preferred **date for implementation** of the Decision shall be 18 May 2017;
6. that CEPT **administrations shall** communicate the national measures implementing this Decision to the ECC Chairman and the Office when the Decision is nationally implemented;
7. that CEPT administrations shall communicate to the ECO any additional national measures supplementing this Decision in accordance with considering l), which shall be then made publicly available on the Office web site (<http://www.cept.org/ecc>).

Note:

Please check the Office documentation database <http://www.ecodocdb.dk> for the up to date position on the implementation of this and other ECC Decisions.

ANNEX: TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR AIRBORNE MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

A1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE AIRBORNE MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

The onboard mobile communications system (the System) enables airline passengers to use their personal mobile terminals during approved stages of flight. Mobile communications access onboard aircraft is provided by one or more pico-cell base stations (aircraft-BTS).

In cases where terrestrial GSM and LTE systems are deployed, intra-network interference will prevent onboard mobile terminals from attempting to register with mobile networks on the ground.

Onboard mobile communications terminals must be prevented from attempting to register with UMTS mobile networks on the ground. This could be ensured:

- By the inclusion of a Network Control Unit (NCU), which raises the noise floor inside the cabin in mobile receive bands;

and/or;

- Through RF shielding of the aircraft fuselage to further attenuate the signal entering and leaving the fuselage.

The power of the onboard mobile communications terminals is controlled by the aircraft-BTS. The following frequency bands and associated technologies:

- GSM1800: 1710-1785 MHz and 1805-1880 MHz;
- LTE1800: 1710-1785 MHz and 1805-1880 MHz;
- UMTS2100 (FDD): 1920-1980 MHz and 2110-2170 MHz;

could be used for the provision of mobile communication service onboard aircraft.

The NCU power must be sufficient to remove “visibility” of the networks located on the ground, whilst not being so high as to cause harmful interference to these networks. Similarly the power of the aircraft-BTS should be sufficient to provide a reliable service, without causing harmful interference to networks on the ground.

This decision applies to operation of the System at a minimum height of 3000 m above ground.

A1.2 PREVENTION OF MOBILE TERMINALS FROM ATTACHING TO NETWORKS ON THE GROUND

If terrestrial UMTS systems is deployed in a certain frequency band and if the aircraft fuselage to attenuate the signal entering and leaving the fuselage is not sufficient to prevent from attempting to access networks on the ground, an NCU is needed (see A1.1 above). Therefore, currently the NCU shall operate in the following frequency bands:

- 925-960 MHz

and

- 2110-2170 MHz

and the noise power radiated by the NCU must be sufficient to prevent onboard terminals from receiving and connecting to networks on the ground, while also meeting the requirement, described in the section A.1.3, for maximum power radiated from the aircraft in mobile receive bands⁴.

⁴ If these two requirements cannot be simultaneously met for a particular aircraft height, the minimum height for the operation of the System must be increased.

A1.3 E.I.R.P FROM THE NCU/AIRCRAFT-BTS, OUTSIDE THE AIRCRAFT

The total e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the NCU/aircraft-BTS shall not exceed⁵:

Table 1: Maximum e.i.r.p. produced by the System

Height above ground (m)	Maximum e.i.r.p. produced by the System outside the aircraft in dBm/channel		
	NCU ¹	Aircraft BTS	Aircraft BTS and NCU
	Band: 900 MHz	Band: 1800 MHz	Band: 2 GHz
	Channel Bandwidth= 3.84 MHz	Channel Bandwidth= 200 kHz	Channel Bandwidth= 3.84 MHz
3000	-6.2	-13.0	1.0
4000	-3.7	-10.5	3.5
5000	-1.7	-8.5	5.4
6000	-0.1	-6.9	7.0
7000	1.2	-5.6	8.3
8000	2.3	-4.4	9.5

Note 1: The aircraft BTS is not in operation at 900 MHz, however, an NCU is needed to prevent terminals using other MCA channels from connecting to the 900 MHz terrestrial networks.

It should be noted that the limits, defined in the Table 1, are dependent on the elevation angle at the victim terminal on the ground (see the attachment to this annex). The values contained in the table are for the case where the victim terminal is directly below the aircraft, and are therefore conservative.

A1.4 E.I.R.P FROM THE ONBOARD TERMINAL OUTSIDE THE AIRCRAFT

The e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the GSM 1800 mobile terminal transmitting at 0 dBm shall not exceed⁶:

Table 2: Maximum e.i.r.p. from GSM at 1800 MHz

Height above ground (m)	Maximum e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the GSM mobile terminal in dBm/channel
	1800 MHz
3000	-3.3
4000	-1.1
5000	0.5
6000	1.8
7000	2.9
8000	3.8

It should be noted that the limits, defined in Table 2, are dependent on the elevation angle at the victim base station on the ground (see the attachment to this annex). The values contained in the table correspond to an angle of elevation of 2°, which are conservative.

⁵ The values quoted in the table 2 correspond to a maximum increase of the receiver noise floor 1 dB (i.e. $I/N \leq -6$ dB) with a high statistical confidence using the most sensitive types of base stations and terminals.

⁶ The values quoted in the tables 3, 4 and 5 correspond to a maximum increase of the receiver noise floor 1 dB (i.e. $I/N \leq -6$ dB) with a high statistical confidence using the most sensitive types of base stations and terminals.

In the 2100 MHz connectivity band (UMTS technology, FDD):

- the transmit power of the UMTS terminal must not exceed -6 dBm/3.84 MHz and the maximum number of users should not exceed 20;
- the e.i.r.p. of the ac-UE defined outside the aircraft must not exceed the following values as shown in the table below⁷:

Table 3: Maximum e.i.r.p. from UMTS at 2.1 GHz

Height above ground (m)	Maximum e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the ac-UE in (dBm/3.84 MHz)
	2100 MHz
3000	3.1
4000	5.6
5000	7
6000	7
7000	7
8000	7

In the 1800 MHz connectivity band (LTE technology, FDD):

- the e.i.r.p. defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the LTE terminal transmitting at 5 dBm/5 MHz inside the aircraft must not exceed the values as provided in the table below⁸:

Table 4: Maximum e.i.r.p. from LTE at 1800 MHz

Height above ground (m)	Maximum e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the ac-UE in (dBm/5 MHz)
	1800 MHz
3000	1.7
4000	3.9
5000	5
6000	5
7000	5
8000	5

A1.5 MINIMUM HEIGHT FOR OPERATION

The absolute minimum height above ground for any transmission from the system in operation shall be 3000 metres. However, this minimum height requirement could be set higher, in particular:

- in order to comply with the aircraft-BTS and the onboard terminals emission requirements set in previous sections;
- depending on the terrain and related network deployments in a country.

⁷ The values quoted in the tables 3, 4 and 5 correspond to a maximum increase of the receiver noise floor 1 dB (i.e. $I/N \leq -6$ dB) with a high statistical confidence using the most sensitive types of base stations and terminals.

⁸ The values quoted in the tables 3, 4 and 5 correspond to a maximum increase of the receiver noise floor 1 dB (i.e. $I/N \leq -6$ dB) with a high statistical confidence using the most sensitive types of base stations and terminals.

A1.6 OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The aircraft-BTS shall control the transmit power of all GSM mobile terminals, transmitting in the GSM 1800 band, to the minimum nominal value of 0 dBm at all stages of communication, including initial access.

It is necessary that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that onboard terminals are switched off when the airborne GSM, UMTS or LTE system is not in operation and that mobile terminals not controlled by the System (such as those from professional mobile networks) remain switched off during all the phases of the flight.

A1.7 E.I.R.P. OUTSIDE THE AIRCRAFT FROM NCUS OPERATING IN OTHER FREQUENCY BANDS

If NCUs operate in frequency bands other than those where UMTS is deployed they shall respect the maximum e.i.r.p. limits set in ECC Reports 93 and 187. The total e.i.r.p, defined outside the aircraft, resulting from the NCU/aircraft-BTS shall not exceed:

Table 5: Maximum e.i.r.p. produced by NCUs operating in frequency bands other than those where UMTS is deployed

Height above ground (m)	Maximum e.i.r.p. outside the aircraft produced by NCU			
	Band: 450 MHz	Band: 800 MHz	Band: 1800 MHz	Band: 2.6 GHz
	Channel Bandwidth= 1.25 MHz	Channel bandwidth= 10 MHz	Channel Bandwidth= 200 kHz	Channel Bandwidth= 4.750 MHz
3000	-17.0	-0.87	-13.0	1.9
4000	-14.5	1.63	-10.5	4.4
5000	-12.6	3.57	-8.5	6.3
6000	-11.0	5.15	-6.9	7.9
7000	-9.6	6.49	-5.6	9.3
8000	-8.5	7.65	-4.4	10.4

ATTACHMENT TO ANNEX: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for design/installation of systems

The requirements for operation of an MCA system, which would ensure avoidance of interference into terrestrial networks, are highly dependent on many factors of the System, including the aircraft size and type, its RF isolation characteristics, propagation characteristics within the cabin and the installation of the onboard system.

Defining the emissions requirements outside the aircraft (as given in A1.3 and A1.4) has the following advantages:

- The limits are independent of the aircraft type and technical characteristics, such as size, fuselage construction and its RF shielding features, etc;
- The limits are technology neutral as they would not assume a specific type of installed MCA system (e.g. whether system uses NCU or not, what type of antennas are used for aircraft-BTS, etc);
- The manufacturers and operators of MCA systems have freedom to trade-off different elements of technical system design and choice of installation for achieving compliance with the limits, such as:
 - variation of the output power of NCU/aircraft-BTS inside the cabin depending on the fuselage attenuation;
 - choosing for the NCU/aircraft-BTS an appropriate antenna type, number and their placement so as to achieve the most efficient coverage along the cabin while limiting radiation outside the aircraft;
 - evaluating more precisely the propagation characteristics inside the cabin, e.g. variation of signal strength due to the layout of the cabin, and factoring this into the evaluation of emissions radiated outside the aircraft, and so on.

Administrations wishing to authorise the operation of MCA systems may require that documentation describing the evaluation of installation be provided as part of the authorisation of the MCA system. Additionally, administrations authorising the MCA systems should also consider various mitigation factors such as the distribution of the carriers over the authorised band.

Some factors that might be considered as part of a detailed evaluation are briefly summarised in the following sub-sections.

Further detailed information on these issues is available in ECC Report 093.

Attenuation by aircraft fuselage

The aircraft attenuation is a very important factor when considering how the emission limits outside aircraft should relate to the actual parameters of the MCA system equipment installed onboard an aircraft (notably output power for the NCU/aircraft-BTS and their antenna type and radiation characteristics). However this factor is highly dependent on the individual aircraft features such as its size, fuselage construction and material, number of windows, etc. Therefore it is impractical to find a single precise relationship (analytical or empirical formula), which would be applicable to all aircraft makes/types.

It is envisaged that the manufacturers/operators will be able to evaluate with a reasonable degree of precision the fuselage attenuation of each particular aircraft type where the MCA system is intended to be used and thus would be able to relate the emissions limits outside aircraft with the equipment parameters and emission limits inside that particular aircraft.

Elevation angle at ground victim receiver

The studies described in ECC Reports 093 and 187 demonstrate that the limits for maximum radiation from MCA system in order to protect ground networks would depend on the elevation angle at which the ground victim receiver sees the interfering aircraft. This is due to the fact that for a given height, two factors vary inversely with the elevation angle to the aircraft:

- the lower the elevation angle, the higher the distance to the aircraft and the larger the free space path loss;
- but
- the lower the elevation angle, the higher the victim receiver antenna gain of the ground BTS.

Since the elevation angle will change as the aircraft flies over terrestrial base stations, the worst case elevation angle is assumed when deriving the radiation limits given in the annex.

If the radiation pattern of the aircraft is known, this information could be considered when defining the emission limits for a specific aircraft type and installation (e.g. positioning of NCU/aircraft-BTS antennas in relation to aircraft windows).

More information on this issue (incl. the graphs for emissions limits as a function of elevation angle) can be found in ECC Reports 093 and 187.