

European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA)

A proposal for the use of the 169MHz Band

EHIMA represents all the major manufacturers of hearing aids in Europe and the industry is the main supplier of such instruments for the hard of hearing public. In addition it is a major exporter of hearing aids. Part of the range of products produced by the industry is that of hearing aids with the means to take an input from a radio receiver. Very small receivers have been developed to fit onto hearing aids, which in combination with a radio microphone provide benefit to large numbers of hard of hearing people. This benefit is achieved by allowing the hearing aid user to pick up the speakers voice close to the mouth. This then minimises the effects of distance and background noise which prove so damaging to a hard of hearing persons ability to hear at even short distances and in noisy situations such as meetings, conferences etc. These devices also provide considerable benefit, and are widely used in the education of deaf and hard of hearing children allowing them to participate in normal education.

A major problem has been the lack of a recognized frequency band for these radio devices to operate on in Europe. Consequently hard of hearing people using this type of equipment while being able to operate legally in their own countries cannot do so in other European countries. This causes users serious problems and unnecessary expense to resolve the difficulty. In addition it is a barrier to the development of a market for these products, as they have to be tailored for each country, this in turn adds to the cost.

EHIMA would therefore ask for consideration to be given to the use of this band specifically for products to be used by hard of hearing people. EHIMA would, of course, be very willing to enter into discussions as to the technical aspects of the use of the 169MHz band as well as to the use of these products.

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