

ZVEI Position Reconfigurable Radio Equipment

Introduction

As digitalization advances and software becomes increasingly integral to radio equipment, the topic of "Reconfigurable Radio Equipment" is gaining attention in regulatory discussions. A key question is to what extent software updates may affect a device's compliance with the essential requirements of the Radio Equipment Directive (RED). For the vast majority of radio equipment on the market—where firmware remains unchanged throughout the product lifecycle—this question is largely irrelevant. Only a small subset of devices, known as Software Defined Radios (SDRs), have the capability to reconfigure radio parameters via software. In such cases, it remains unequivocally the manufacturer's responsibility to ensure continued compliance with the RED essential requirements.

Contrary to software-defined radio, most software updates are not related to essential requirements addressed by the impact assessment. Typically, firmware updates offer new functionalities to the end user, but the radio module's firmware remains unchanged for the life cycle of radio equipment.

In most cases hardware is specifically designed and optimized for designated functions, making it unlikely that software updates will significantly affect the compliance of radio equipment, such as by greatly increasing a product's transmitting power or anything related to health & safety, such as overheating, explosion or human exposure. Furthermore, from an electrical safety standpoint, the design of the hardware is far more crucial than the software component. Due to the constraints of specific hardware designs, updated software cannot simply elevate power consumption to create additional electrical safety risks. Therefore, given the fixed nature of hardware settings, ZVEI believes there is little to no risk about those requirements.

Therefore, introducing any further regulatory measure will not bring the desired results.

Proposal

ZVEI believes that Option 1 (non-legislative awareness raising initiative) would be the best one. This would be in form of guidance document to explain how to deal with software updates, what need to take into account by the manufacturers to minimize potential non-compliance issues later. Furthermore, standards shouldn't allow the user to change anything that can affect essential requirements as additional safeguard measure.

If a delegated act is necessary, it must comply with the principles of proportionality, particularly in line with the Commission's new burden reduction and simplification agenda. It should implement justified and limited administrative burden only on product classes or categories at high risk of non-compliance. Moreover, the delegated act should assess its impact on innovation and the development of new competitive products and software applications. The load of regulations especially for SMEs is already extremely high. Adding more regulation will hamper the ability for SME to keep up with innovation in other regions.

Contact

Jonas Gock • Manager • Digital and Innovation Policy Department • Division Digitalization & Law
Mobile: +49 162 2664-914 • E-mail: jonas.gock@zvei.org

ZVEI e. V. • Electro and Digital Industry Association • Amelia-Mary-Earhart-Str. 12 • 60549 Frankfurt a.M.
Germany • Lobby register no.: R002101 • EU Transparency Register ID: 94770746469-09 • www.zvei.org

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