

Analysis

What a 5G moratorium would mean for Switzerland

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered a wave of digitalization, pushing communications networks to the limits of their capacity in the process. The current situation underscores the importance of a high-performance telecommunications infrastructure. Despite this, modernization with the new 5G mobile communications standard remains a thorn in the side of various citizens' movements and politicians. There are calls not just for drastic restrictions on mobile communications, but in some cases even for a nationwide moratorium on 5G.

The latest study from Avenir Suisse looks at the 5G mobile communications standard in a broader context. It reveals just how important a modern telecommunications infrastructure is in terms of innovation and progress. Anyone who has analyzed the recent tussles between the world's geopolitical power blocs will have come to the same conclusion. The United States, China, and the EU are currently in a tug of war for leadership in mobile technology.

Given the opportunities of this new technology, it's hardly surprising that there's such intense competition to win the 5G race. The situation in Switzerland, however, is astonishing. Even though the verdict of science is clear – in over 40 years of mobile communications there has been no consistent proof of damaging health effects below the valid limits – few dare to challenge the claims of people opposing the technology, and the modernization of the telecoms infrastructure has already been delayed. This threatens to stop the current wave of digitalization in its tracks.

From Avenir Suisse's point of view, this means there is a need for action in three areas:

_The federal government can no longer shirk its responsibility. The frequencies for 5G have been auctioned off, and now the necessary technical adjustments should also be made to the framework.

_At the same time, science and business have to take up the gauntlet. The telecoms infrastructure is key to the country's future, and not just since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, so the the anti-business narrative has to be countered resolutely.

_Last but not least, the demarcation of roles between the federal, cantonal, and municipal authorities has to be respected. When it comes to the mobile communications infrastructure the federal government quite clearly has the lead, and should not be challenged by local solo efforts.



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