

Top mobile operators unite against 4G fees

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Six European mobile operators have joined forces to ensure that introducing fourth-generation cell phones will not cost as much as 3G's \$184 billion rollout.

The group will lobby governments, regulators and the cellular industry in Europe to prevent a repeat of the struggles operators faced from paying exorbitant fees for 3G licenses, according to a report in Britain's Media Guardian. Instead of mandating new licenses, the group hopes authorities will allow them to use their existing spectrum to run the faster 4G network.

The companies -- Vodafone, T-Mobile, Orange, KPN, NTT DoCoMo and China Mobile -- are calling themselves the Next Generation Mobile Network Forum, according to the report.

Vodafone spent nearly \$11 billion on its 3G license; Orange laid out \$7.5 billion.

"While the United States allows operators to migrate their networks to next-generation services without having to buy new spectrum, Europe's regulators have largely prohibited operators from migrating to more advanced technology in their existing GSM bands," according to a report in Fierce Wireless magazine.

"Now operators want to deploy technologies such as WiMAX and other high-speed broadband technologies, but they don't want to be forced to buy new spectrum to do it," the magazine continued.

Several companies are already working on their broadband offerings. T-Mobile Chief Technology Officer Hamid Akhavan told Media Guardian on Wednesday that "wireless broadband (will) reach 'parity' with its fixed-line counterpart in terms of speed by the end of the decade. With speeds of 20 megabits a second there is no need to have a fixed-line broadband connection."

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