

# France 'delays 3G telecom licence tender'

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A man looks at mobile phones displayed in Cannes, southern France, during the GSM World congress in 2005. France has delayed a tender for a fourth mobile phone licence to examine the conditions, a top official said Wednesday, as existing operators warned they could go to court if the price were set too low.

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"We have decided, just to be absolutely sure on this point, to request a new study on the total price of the licence," French Secretary of State for Industry Luc Chatel said in an interview on Radio Classique.

"We have asked the commission in charge of evaluating state assets to check that this amount corresponds clearly to the price of the fourth licence," Chatel said, adding that the tender would take place "by the summer."

Chatel has said that the licence will cost 206 million euros (273 million dollars).

Existing operators SFR, [Orange](#) and Bouygues Telecom -- who paid far more for their licences -- warn the bar should not be set too low for new entrants and have held out the possibility of court action if the financial conditions are deemed to be unfair.

French group Iliad, which owns the popular Internet access provider Free, has already said it will be bidding for the third-generation (3G) [mobile network](#) licence, while [Virgin Mobile](#) says it is looking into a possible bid.

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