

NetEvents: 4G in Europe will take years to catch on

by Derek du Preez

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4G services are unlikely to get any real traction in the European mobile telecoms market before the year 2021, according to industry experts speaking at the [NetEvents](#) conference in Barcelona this week.

"In Europe the 3G rollout happened fairly recently and users have only started to take advantage of the benefits over the past five years or so," said Phil Tilley, European marketing co-chair for [Alcatel-Lucent](#).

"From a user point of view, if HSPA delivers a perfectly acceptable experience then they couldn't care less whether it's 3G or 4G."

Nigel Wright, vice-president of wireless product marketing for [Spirent Communications](#), agreed and argued that it is not cost-effective at the moment for mobile operators to make the switch.

"The rollout of LTE (4G) is going to vary wildly in Europe and will as a result be a rather patchy picture for some time yet," said Wright.

"In Western Europe a lot of operators are going to continue to follow the HSPA roadmap and HSPA will continue to dominate by all projections for the next 10 years."

In addition, speakers pointed out that 4G roaming would be highly problematic.

Different countries will use different spectrum bands and this will create problems for users travelling between countries. Their phones will not be able to switch between these spectrums, they said.

Dean Bublely, analyst and founder of tech business analyst firm [Disruptive Analysis](#), said: "A big issue with roaming capability is spectrum – there are too many frequency bands being used [internationally]. Creating devices that support a number of these bandwidths is difficult. We might never see devices that support all of these due to the difficulty in making the chipset and radio components," he said.

"If you are operating on one frequency and travel to another country using one of the others, it simply won't work."

This view was met with widespread agreement by attendees at the event.

"Roaming is a huge challenge and it is going to be a long time before we see phones capable of global roaming," said Nigel Wright, vice-president of wireless product marketing for [Spirent Communications](#).