



Smackdown: Swiss Revolt Against 5G Over Health Fears

Ponder the phrase, 'nationwide revolt'. Switzerland is the latest nation to give 5G providers a major setback, following other European nations. Most importantly, Technocracy is taking a huge hit. □ TN Editor

Switzerland was among the first countries to begin deploying 5G, but health fears over radiation from the antennas that carry the next-generation mobile technology have sparked a nationwide revolt.

Demonstrators against the technology are due to fill the streets of Bern later this month, but already a number of cantons have been pressured to put planned constructions of 5G-compatible antennae on ice.

The technology has been swept up in the deepening trade war between China and the United States, which has tried to rein in Chinese giant Huawei — the world's leader in superfast 5G equipment — over fears it will allow Beijing to spy on communications from countries that use its products and services.

But far from the clash of the titans, a growing number of Swiss are voicing alarm at possible health effects from exposure to the electromagnetic rays radiating from the new antennae, and are threatening to put the issue to a referendum in the country famous for its direct democratic system.

It wasn't supposed to be this way.

In February, Switzerland took a big step towards deployment when it attributed 5G frequencies to three major operators, Swisscom, Sunrise and Salt, allowing the country to rake in revenues of nearly 380 million Swiss francs (\$384 million, 350 million euros).

High on their success, the operators raced to trumpet on television advertisements and billboards that the cutting-edge technology would be available this year in cities, in the countryside and even in mountainous regions.

By early July, 334 antennae stations for 5G were operational across the country, authorities told AFP.

But the rollout has run into some serious hurdles.

Several cantons including Geneva have buckled to pressure from online petitioners demanding a halt to construction of the 5G infrastructure.

But while no new antennae are being built in parts of the country, the operators are still converting existing 4G antennae for 5G use — something they can do without authorisation.

National carrier Swisscom thus says it expects 90 percent of the population to have 5G access by the end of the year.

Opponents meanwhile warn that 5G poses unprecedented health and environmental risks compared to previous generations of mobile technology, and are urging authorities to place a full-fledged moratorium on the rollout.

They will organise a large protest on September 21 in front of the government buildings in Bern, and are also working towards putting the

issue to a popular vote.

“I think we have most citizens on our side,” Coco Tache-Berther, of the organisation Fequencia, told AFP, saying Switzerland’s rapid roll-out of 5G was “ultra-shocking”.

Olivier Pahud, who regularly demonstrates against 5G in front of the UN in Geneva, agreed, insisting the technology will have “impacts on health, on the environment, on people’s capacity to think.”

And for people like him, who suffer from “electromagnetic hypersensitivity”, the new technology will be devastating, he said.

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