

Method and apparatus for remote monitoring of femto radio
base stations

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a wireless communications
5 network, and more particularly, to a method and apparatus
for operation and maintenance of access points in a wireless
communications network.

BACKGROUND

The present invention relates to wireless communications
10 networks. In such networks, a geographical area to be
covered by the network is divided into cells each having a
node. In existing networks the nodes are represented by
Radio base stations (RBSs), or Node-B as called in 3GPP
specifications. Communications to and from a mobile terminal
15 in a cell take place via a node over one or more frequency
channels allocated to the cell. A Radio Base Station (RBS)
in a wideband code division multiple access network (WCDMA),
is a part of a Radio Access Network (RAN).

Cells may be of different types. For example macro cells are
20 used in a network to provide large area coverage. Micro
cells are deployed in many networks to increase capacity.
Within one macro cell coverage area there maybe one or more
micro cells.

Hierarchical cellular communications systems employ
25 different size cells to provide both wide-coverage, basic-
service (macro cell) and high-quality, high-capacity radio
coverage in smaller areas (micro cells). Micro cells are
useful in specific areas. For example, micro cells may be
located to serve areas of concentrated traffic within the
30 macro cell or to provide a high data rate service. A micro
cell uses a low- height antenna and a low base station
transmit power which result in a small cell and a short

frequency reuse distance, thereby increasing capacity. Additional benefits of a smaller cell include a longer talk-time (battery life time) for users since mobile stations will likely use a substantially lower uplink transmit power to communicate with a micro cell radio base station (RBS) than with a base station in a larger macro cell which is likely farther away.

In a hierarchical cell structure (HCS), macro cells and micro cells typically overlap to handle different traffic patterns or radio environments. A micro cell base station may be connected to a macro cell base station via digital transmission lines, or the micro cell base station may be treated just like a macro cell and be connected directly to a base station controller node. Such control nodes are a base station controller (BSC), in the well-known global system for mobile communications (GSM) systems, or a radio network controller (RNC), in the third generation, wideband code division multiple access (WCDMA) systems. For more information concerning Macro cells and Micro cells see WO2005057975, hereby incorporated by reference.

If adjacent cells have a common frequency channel, a terminal crossing a cell boundary will undergo what is called a "soft" handover from a cell to another, i.e. the terminal continues to use the same frequency band. A handover which requires a change in frequency is called a "hard" handover.

In wireless networks of today there is an operation support system (OSS) or Operation and Maintenance (O&M). The OSS can be described as a network management system supporting a specific management function, such as fault, performance, security, configuration etc. The OSS is used for management of for instance macro Radio Base Stations or micro Radio base stations. Planning tools are used for radio network dimensioning.

Figure 1 is a signal diagram illustrating a simplified view of management activities related to a procedure of adding another macro RBS to an existing WCDMA network.

1. Initially, adding of an RBS to a macro network is planned using a specific planning tool. This step can contain for example radio network planning activities and also transmission network activities. The latter involves how the RBS is connected to an Operation Support System (OSS) i.e. also this connectivity needs to be planned.
 2. The RBS (or Node-B as called in 3GPP specifications) is initially configured with generic data. This data is common to all RBSs and one intention is to minimize configuration needed in a following step. This step can be performed already at the factory or at some other central location, before rolling out hardware.
 3. Now the RBS is in a determined location where it will be installed. Any transmission needed for connections towards an RNC (and OSS) are manually defined in the RBS using some local configuration tool. This step may also include some configuration in the RNC and OSS nodes.
 - 3a. The outcome of step 3 is that the RBS is connected to both the RNC and the OSS.
 4. Some other local configuration of e.g. hardware is performed.
 5. The RBS and the macro cell(s) it provides are configured and activated from the OSS.
- At this point the RBS is operational.
6. All O&M related to this RBS is performed using the connection established above in step 3. This includes Fault management e.g. alarm event and log handling, Configuration

management e.g. software upgrades and Performance management
e.g. Performance statistics.

Mobile communications networks are growing rapidly as new
cells are introduced into the networks. Managing an
5 increasing number of Base Stations (BSs), in a mobile
communications network, is becoming a problem. A large
number of RBSs will put high capacity requirements on the
OSS. A large number of RBSs might also make it difficult for
the OSS personnel to detect real problems in a RBS.

10 SUMMARY

An object of the present invention is to provide a new
architecture of a wireless communications network and a
method for operation and maintenance of access points in
such a network.

15 In an embodiment of the invention there is described a
method for operation and maintenance of Access Points in a
wireless communications network. The access points are used
for connecting wireless networks to a core network. The
method comprises a first step of receiving, at a network
20 node, an on-demand triggered request for access point status
information. The request includes access point identity
information. As a following step, the network node is
responsible for investigating if the access point is
registered within the network. This is performed using the
25 received access point identity information. If the access
point is registered within the network the access point
address information is retrieved from a database and the
address information is used for establishing a connection
with the access point. The network node is then able to
30 receive access point status information, which thereafter is
used to send a response message.

In a further embodiment of the present invention the on-demand triggered requests for status information of an access point are initiated by an end user.

5 In another embodiment of the present invention there is described a network node for a wireless communications network having access points connecting wireless networks to a core network. The network node including a first receiver used for receiving an on-demand triggered request for access point status information. The request includes an access
10 point identity used by investigating and retrieving equipment for investigating if the access point is already registered within the network. If the access point is registered within the network retrieving access point address information to be used by the connection
15 establishing equipment for setting up a connection to the access point. A second receiver is used in the network node for receiving access point status information. The status of the access point is thereafter forwarded as a response to the on-demand triggered request.

20 In yet another embodiment of the invention there is described an access point connecting a small area wireless communication network, also called a Femto cell, to a core network. The connection is established via a Femto RNC, the RNC responsible for controlling Femto cells. The access
25 point includes registration equipment used for sending registration messages to the Femto RNC for registering the access point. The registration is part of an initial start-up procedure. The access point further includes download equipment for downloading configuration data from the Femto
30 RNC. Triggering equipment is used as part of the access point for activating on-demand triggered requests for status information concerning the access point. The requests also include access point identity information. A transmitter is included in the access point for transmitting requests to a
35 network node, requesting the network node to perform on-

demand status check-ups of the access point. The access point also includes a receiver used for receiving responses including access point status information.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

5 Figure 1 is a signal diagram illustrating management activities related to prior art networks.

Figure 2 is a block diagram illustrating an embodiment of the present invention.

10 Figure 3 is a signal diagram illustrating an embodiment of the present invention for performing management activities.

Figure 4 is a flowchart illustrating a method according to an embodiment of the present invention.

15 Figure 5 is a signal diagram illustrating another embodiment of the present invention for performing management activities.

Figure 6 is a block diagram illustrating an access point and a network node according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

20 An investigation is performed, by the present inventors, to find a possible way to provide homes or small areas with 3G coverage for a limited number of users using a small Radio base Station (RBS). This kind of small area radio base stations are here called Home 3G Access Points (H3GAPs) or
25 Femto RBSs in some other contexts. A H3GAP is mainly targeted for private homes and small office segments and one benefit is that there is no need for alternative access technology investments or WLAN/UMA/GAN in handsets, since any existing 3G phones will work in such an environment.
30 Examples of 3G standards are Wideband Code Division Code

Multiple Access (WCDMA), CDMA2000 and Time Division - Synchronous Code Division Multiple Access (TD-SCDMA).

The invention described in this document is mostly relevant for a scenario using WCDMA, but it could also be applied in other cases. For example, a similar solution might be developed for GSM, CDMA2000 or TD-SCDMA. In the present description the WCDMA scenario is mostly used to achieve a more easy disclosure and better understanding of the present invention.

10 The H3GAPs provides normal WCDMA coverage for end users and is connected to an Radio Network Controller (RNC) using some kind of IP based transmission. A coverage area provided is called a Femto cell to indicate that the coverage area is relatively small compared with an area of a Macro cell. One alternative for the IP based transmission is to use Fixed
15 Broadband access (like xDSL, Cable etc.) to connect the H3GAPs to the RNC. Another alternative would be to use Mobile Broadband access e.g. HSDPA and Enhanced Uplink. A H3GAP is installed and managed by end users in a plug-and-play manner which creates special needs for such a system.
20

In an embodiment of the present invention a method is described for performing operation and maintenance of a number of access points in a wireless communications network, wherein the number of access points is rapidly
25 increasing.

In another embodiment of the present invention there is provided a method for performing operation and maintenance of a large number of access points wherein the access points are installed and controlled by end users.

30 Figure 2 is a block diagram according to an embodiment of the invention illustrating a WCDMA network including Home 3G access points. The wireless communications network 1 includes a core network (CN) 2 connected to a radio network

controller, RNC 3, using a standard Iu interface. Alternatively, the RNC is a Macro RNC and/or a Femto RNC. The RNC controls all Radio Base Stations that are connected to the RNC, both Macro and Femto Radio Base Stations. In the figure, the RNC 3 is connected to a Macro RBS 4 and to one or more H3GAP 6 belonging to a group of H3GAPs 5. The interface between the H3GAP and the RNC is a Iub+ interface or an Extended Iub interface, and is transported using an IP network providing IP connectivity between a H3GAP and the RNC. As this IP network may consists of unprotected IP networks, security mechanisms between the RNC and the H3GAPs are included. Communication between the RNC 3 and the Macro RBS 4 is IP based or IP/ATM based, and the interface is Iub. The Macro RBS 4 is working as an access point for one or more mobiles 9 within a macro cell 7. The group of H3GAPs 5 are working as access points for mobiles within Femto cells 8. The RNC 3 may also communicate with a H3GAP 6 via the Macro RBS 4. This way the H3GAP uses the Macro RBS as a wireless access point into the core network.

In another embodiment of the present invention the CN 2 might also be connected to two RNCs, a Macro RNC 10 and a Femto RNC 11, dashed lines in the figure. The Macro RNC 10 controls Macro Radio Base Stations, Macro RBSs, and the Femto RNC controls Femto RBSs, H3GAPs, marked with dashed lines. The Macro RNC and the Femto RNC would exchange information concerning access points, if necessary. An OSS 12 usually performs management of access points, Macro RBSs. A H3GAP manager 13 is responsible for managing H3GAPs. The OSS and the H3GAP manager can be stand alone nodes or parts of other nodes like the RNC 3 or the CN 2. The OSS and the H3GAP manager might also be distributed programs in a network 1.

Management of a H3GAP differs from management of Macro RBSs (RBSs covering big areas, Macro cells). Macro RBSs are normally connected to an OSS where an active supervision of

a Macro RBS is performed. Some main differences between management of H3GAPs and Macro RBSs are the following:

- H3GAPs are installed, moved, maintained and switched-on/off by end users compared to operator personnel, which
5 performs these activities for Macro RBSs.
- Management of H3GAPs is not normally planned by operator personnel.
- The number of installed H3GAPs is in many cases at least a
10 couple of magnitudes higher than the number of installed Macro RBSs.

The H3GAPs could be for example automatically connected to an OSS as part of a power-on sequence to decrease configuration of for instance Operation and Maintenance (O&M).

- 15 Ss end users are in control of the H3GAPs, it is highly undesirable that an event or alarm is triggered in the OSS, for example in cases when end users need power outlets for some other devices and so switch off the H3GAPs for a while, or if a related fuse has blown or some other end user
20 related reason. There are many end user related alarm events that might occur and result in significantly increased unnecessary signalling overloading the OSS.

A large number of H3GAPs could put high capacity requirements on an OSS, if the OSS actively is monitoring
25 H3GAPs, since signalling of information and alarm events between H3GAPs and the OSS would become too high. The large number might also make it difficult for OSS personnel to see real problems in a specific H3GAP belonging to the large number of H3GAPs.

- 30 Thus, the present inventors realizing that there will be problems with performing O&M n a large number of H3GAPs, in the new proposed H3G system, therefore suggest the solution

according to the present invention to avoid or at least alleviate such problems. An embodiment of the present invention is to make it possible to perform O&M on such a system.

5 Figure 3 is a signal diagram illustrating an embodiment of the present invention for performing management activities in a communications network including a large number of access points. The signal diagram illustrates the following steps:

10 1. A "Node X" is initially powered up. The Node X can be any type of node providing communication services for mobiles or mobile devices in a coverage cell. When powered up, the Node X performs defined power up activities for this node type, which are predefined and set by a node provider. As part of
15 the power up, the Node X either dynamically builds an identifier for a controlling Network Central Node, or the Node X is already preconfigured with information concerning a Central Node.

2. The Node X is preferably automatically configured. This
20 step could be coordinated by a Central Node, which then chooses specific configuration settings to be used by an access point, Node X, which is controlled by the Central Node. Alternatively, this step could be done locally in an access point. In both cases the Node X shall connect to the
25 Central Node and provide its address information to the Central Node.

Depending on the steps below, the connection between the Node X and the Central Node is maintained as long as the Node X is active, or this connection can be released after
30 the initial power up procedure.

3. The Central Node updates a Database with information concerning to which Central Node the Node X is connected to.

Some identifiers that uniquely identify the nodes are used for both the Node X and the Central Node.

4. Alternatively to point 3), the Central Node updates a Database with Node X IP address information.

5 5. A worried customer having problems with an access point, Node X, calls to an operator's customer care service and requests Node X status information. The request includes Node X identification information. Requests can be triggered in many ways for example: a button on the Node X; a short message service (SMS) to an operator; an SMS to a Central Node; an e-mail etc.

6. An application is activated, in this case by the customer care, after receiving the request, for Node X management.

7. The identifiers in the request are used to locate Node X.
15 The customer care provides the identifiers to the activated application.

8. The application retrieves Node X address information from the Database using the identifiers provided by customer care.

20 9. The application initiates connection establishment to the Node X using two different alternatives.

If Central Node information is used for identifying the location of Node X, i.e. step 3 above, the application contacts the indicated Central Node and requests it to relay the connection request to the correct node, Node X. This
25 could be part of an existing interface between the central Node and Node X.

If node X address information is used (i.e. step 4 above), the application contacts the indicated Node X directly using the IP address information and sends a connection request
30 directly to Node X. The address information of Node X needs

- to be routable from the application. There are different mechanisms to achieve this. One would be e.g. using an IP security (IPsec) connection between the Node X and an Security GateWay (SEGW) placed close to the Central Node. In
- 5 this case it would be secure to have the Node X listening on a specific (e.g. TCP) port for incoming connection requests from the application. Another alternative would be to use public, routable address/es that are either configured in the Node X or communicated during the power-up procedure.
- 10 10. A connection is established between the Node X and the application.
11. Status information of Node X is investigated. Informative logs available are read out from the Node X, and received at the application.
- 15 12. A response is sent back to the end user, the response including Node X status information. The response might be sent in many ways like for example: directly to an end-user mobile terminal; as an e-mail to a computer in connection with Node X; as a message to be presented on a small display
- 20 on the Node X; an SMS; direct call from an operator etc.

In another embodiment of the present invention the application, the database and an electronic customer care program are parts that are located within the Central Node.

25 Thus, the Central Node is a node performing all the controlling steps mentioned above and needed for performing operation and maintenance of an access point, Node X.

In another embodiment of the present invention the application, the database and the electronic customer care

30 program are distributed programs within the core network. The electronic customer care program is a program that is triggered by means of a specific request message addressed

directly to the electronic customer care program. The request message is included with specific parts that are needed to start-up/trigger an application.

Figure 4 is a flowchart illustrating an embodiment of the present invention, wherein a network node includes all means for performing operation and maintenance of an access point. The network node might be centrally located in the wireless communications network as a stand alone node, or the network node can exist as a part of the RNC 3, the CN 2, the OSS 12 and the H3GAP Manager 13. The functionality of the network node might also be distributed among the network nodes in the wireless communications network. The flowchart illustrates the following steps:

1. Receiving, at a network node of a core network, an on-demand triggered request for access point status information, wherein the request includes access point identity information.

2. Investigating by the network node, using the received access point identity information, if the access point is registered within the network. A request is sent to a database where a matching procedure can be performed to find registration information. The investigation can be initiated by starting an application.

3. If the access point is not registered within the network, this means that there is no address to be found, the network node sends a response including a fault message or a registration demand. Alternatively, no response is sent at all.

4. If the access point is registered within the network, an address found, the network node uses the access point identity information to retrieve access point address information from the databases.

5. The network node uses the retrieved access point address information to establish a connection to the access point. The connection might be setup directly to the access point using an IP address of the access point, or the connection might be setup via another node, for example via an RNC.
6. Investigation of the status is performed and status information is received at the network node.
7. The network node sends a response, to the on-demand triggered request, including the access point status information.

With reference to fig. 5, another embodiment of the present invention is disclosed where the access point is a Femto Radio Base Station, Femto RBS, also called home 3G access point (H3GAP). The home 3G access point is connected to a core network via a Femto Radio Network Controller, Femto RNC. The H3GAP, upon powered up, automatically registers with a Femto Radio Network Controller, and downloads configuration data. This means that all H3GAPs are supposed to be registered within the network when an on-demand request is triggered. The connections between the access points and the Femto Radio Network Controllers, Femto RNCs, are IP based connections, and the access point identity is an IP address or an address of a Femto RNC controlling the access point. The communications network is a WCDMA network.

The network node is an Operation Support System node, a modified RNC, a H3GAP manager or distributed program in the core network.

In the following example, the support system for H3GAPs is a H3GAP Manager. The H3GAP Manager could be either a standalone system or integrated in an existing support system. The present invention also comprises a logical network entity called Home 3G Access Database (H3GA DB) is introduced. This entity is a database where information

regarding H3GAPs is stored and it could be a standalone system or integrated in for example an OSS or an RNC node.

The H3GAP is identified using a preconfigured H3GAP Identity (H3GAP-ID), preferably a hardware identity. The H3GAP-ID is
5 also made visible for the end users.

The following principles and requirements could be applied for the H3GAP Manager:

- 10 a. Each H3GAP is identified by a H3GAP-ID. The H3GAP Manager can be aware of all possible H3GAP-ID values on the market and/or the end user will provide this information when he/she calls to the customer care services
- 15 b. The H3GAPs are not continuously monitored at the H3GAP Manager. Instead, it is possible to request each H3GAP to connect to the H3GAP Manager on demand or have the H3GAP Manager to connect to the H3GAP when needed. This principle is called O&M-on-demand in the present disclosure.
- c. It is possible to read out relevant statistics, alarms, error reports and logs from a H3GAP using the "O&M-on-demand" principle.
- 20 d. It is possible to read and set relevant operation parameters from a H3GAP using the "O&M-on-demand" principle.
- e. It is possible to read out contents defined in the H3GA DB for a specific H3GAP. For example, if access control has been defined for an H3GAP, both International Mobile
25 Subscriber Identity (IMSI) and Mobile Station International ISDN Number (MSISDN) information shall be made available, whenever possible. This information is preferably also available in the H3GAP Manager and this is done using the "O&M-on-demand" principle.
- 30 f. As the H3GAP is not continuously connected to the H3GAP Manager, alarms and error reports are sent to the H3GAP

Manager only if requested, based on the "O&M-on-demand" principle.

g. H3GAP Software (SW) should be upgradeable from the H3GAP Manager. It is also necessary to define some kind of batch
5 upgrades of multiple H3GAPs defined by e.g. a specific actual SW release or specific ranges of H3GAP-IDs.

Figure 5 is a signal diagram illustrating an embodiment of the present invention, as mentioned above, for performing management activities. The signal diagram illustrates the
10 following step:

1. Initially, an H3GAP is switched on and it performs defined power up activities.
2. The H3GAP is connected to a Femto RNC and is automatically configured.
- 15 3. The Femto RNC updates a H3GA DB with information about to which Femto RNC the H3GAP is connected to. H3GAP-ID and Femto RNC Identifiers are used.
4. Alternatively to point 3), the Femto RNC updates the H3GA DB with H3GAP IP address information.
- 20 5. A worried customer has problems with an H3GAP and contacts an operator's customer care. The customer provides the H3GAP-ID as an identifier for the H3GAP. The customer care might be an electronic program receiving a specific message, wherein the message includes some predefined parts
25 and information for automatically triggering an application to run. Another alternative is that the customer care is a person being called by an end user.

Another alternative for a worried customer for calling to a customer care service is as follows. The H3GAP is equipped
30 with e.g. a button that can be used by the worried customers to trigger "Automatic H3GAP O&M".

When the end user pushes this button, the H3GAP contacts the H3GAP Manager directly. Address information of the H3GAP Manager can either be preconfigured in the H3GAP or the address information can be signalled to a H3GAP during the
 5 automatic configuration phase, i.e. step 2 above.

Instead of a H3GAP contacting a H3GAP Manager directly, the H3GAP could contact a Femto RNC which in turn knows the address of the H3GAP manager or is probably already connected to it. This could be done by sending e.g. a new
 10 NBAP (Node B application part) message "CONNECTION REQUEST TO ELEMENT MANAGER" for the H3GAP to the Femto RNC.

6. A worker at the operator's customer care service starts the H3GAP Manager application. Alternatively the application is automatically triggered.

15 7. The H3GAP-ID provided by the end user is used to locate the H3GAP and request a connection to it.

8. H3GAP Manager retrieves relevant Femto RNC information or IP address information for the H3GAP.

20 9. If Femto RNC information is used, the H3GAP Manager contacts the indicated Femto RNC and requests it to relay the connection request to the correct H3GAP. This latter step would be part of an "Extended Iub"-interface.

If H3GAP IP address information is used, the H3GAP Manager contacts the indicated H3GAP directly using the IP address
 25 information and sends a connection request to the H3GAP. As IPsec connection is used between the H3GAP and the SEGW, it should also be secure to have the H3GAP listening on a specific (e.g. TCP) port for incoming connection requests from the H3GAP Manager.

30 10. A connection is established between the H3GAP and the H3GAP Manager.

11. The worker can investigate the status of the H3GAP and read out the informative logs available.

12. A response is sent back to the end user, for example via the Femto RNC, to a H3GAP display or directly to an end user terminal. The response includes H3GAP status information. The response might be sent in many ways like for example: directly to an end-user mobile terminal; as an e-mail to a computer in connection with the H3GAP; as a message to be presented on a small display on the H3GAP; an SMS; direct call from an operator using POTS etc.

A more detailed specification of step 9 in figure 5 is described below.

Step 9 can be defined in a more detailed way as following. Note that this only applies for the case when the Femto RNC information is used as defined in step 9 for figure 5, i.e. when the H3GAP Manager contacts the indicated Femto RNC and requests the indicated Femto RNC to relay the connection request to the correct H3GAP.

Requests sent from a Femto RNC to a H3GAP could be standardized as part of the "UTRAN Iub interface Node B Application Part (NBAP) signalling" specification (3GPP TS 25.433).

Messages added could be called for example "CONNECT TO ELEMENT MANAGER" and would contain needed address information, for example IP-address and TCP port, of the Element Manager.

In another embodiment of the present invention, messages "CONNECT TO ELEMENT MANAGER" don't contain any information elements and needed address information is signalled already in step 2, as part of the automatic configuration.

The H3GAP can start acting like a normal macro RBS when connected to the H3GAP manager e.g. send all new alarms and

logs to the H3GAP Manager. In addition the H3GAP could start sending all stored logs to the H3GAP manager.

When the connection to the H3GAP is disconnected, the H3GAP should return to the previous mode of operation, e.g.
5 storing alarms, counters and logs only locally.

Figure 6 is a block diagram illustrating an access point and a network node in accordance to an embodiment of the present invention. In a further embodiment of the invention the wireless communication network 1 includes access points and
10 network nodes communicating with each other via RNCs. Figure 6 shows only a simplified view of the network comprising only one access point, one RNC and one network node. In existing networks there are many access points controlled by one or more RNCs and managed by one or more network nodes.

15 An access point 20 according to figure 6, comprises registration equipment 21 for registering the access point 20, to a Femto Radio Network Controller 30, Femto RNC, upon an initial start-up. This might be performed automatically or triggered by an end user. The access point 20 further
20 comprises download equipment 22 used for downloading configuration data from a Femto RNC 30, and Triggering equipment 23 used for activating on-demand triggered requests for status information concerning the access point 20, the requests including access point identity
25 information. A transmitter 24 is used, in the access point 20, for transmitting the requests to a network node 40 requesting the network node 40 to perform on-demand status check-ups of the access point 20, and a receiver 25 is included for receiving responses, from a network node 40,
30 sent in response to the on-demand triggered requests, the responses including access point status information.

The receiver 25 is also responsible for receiving messages from the Femto RNC 30 requesting the access point 20 to

connect to an application 46, wherein the application performs the status check-up. The application 46 might be part of the Femto RNC 30, included in the Network Node 40 or included in the H3GAP Manager 13.

- 5 The message can be standardized as mentioned before, as a "CONNECT TO ELEMENT MANAGER"-message.

The access point might also be equipped with a display 26 for displaying status information, for example as messages. The display 26 can also be used to display information
10 relating to actions to be taken by an end user.

The network node 40, in figure 6, manages several access points 5, as in figure 2. Figure 6 shows only parts of the wireless communications network 1 needed to explain the present invention in a simple manner. The network node 40
15 comprises a first receiver 41 for receiving an on-demand triggered request for access point 20 status information, wherein the request includes an access point 20 identity. The network node 40 also comprises investigating and retrieving equipment 42 used for investigating if the access
20 point 20 is already registered within the network 1. This is performed using the received access point identity. If the access point 20 is registered within the network 1 access point 20 address information is retrieved. A connection establishing equipment 43 is used for setting up connections
25 to the access point 20. The connection is established based on the retrieved access point 20 address information. A second receiver 44 is included in the network node 40, for receiving access point 20 status information. The status information might be received directly from the access point
30 20 or from an application 46 performing status check-ups. Responding equipment 45 is responsible for sending a response message, back to the requester, wherein the messages include access point 20 status information. The response messages might be sent back to an end user on

demand status requesting terminal or to a device address pre-stored in a database. The on-demand triggered request might also include information to which device and how the response is to be sent and presented.

- 5 It will be understood by those skilled in the art that various modifications and changes may be made to the present invention without departure from the scope thereof, which is defined by the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A method for operation and maintenance of small area Access Points (5) in a wireless communications network (1), the access points (5) connecting wireless networks (8) to a
5 core network (2), wherein the method comprises the following steps:

-receiving an on-demand triggered request for an access point (6) status information, wherein the request includes the access point (6) identity information, initiated by an
10 end user;

-investigating using the received access point identity information, if the access point (6) is registered within the network (1), and if the access point (6) is registered within the network (1) performing the following steps:

15 -using the access point identity information for retrieving access point address information from a database;

-using the retrieved access point address information for establishing a connection to the access point (6);

-receiving access point status information, and

20 -sending a response message to the end user.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein in case of the investigating step reveals that the access point (6) is not registered within the network (1),

25 -sending a response, to the request, including a fault message and/or an access point registering demand.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the response message includes the access point status information.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the access point, when disconnected from the established connection, returns

to the previous mode of operation e.g. storing alarms, counters and logs only locally.

5 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the access points (5) are Femto Radio Base Stations or home 3G access points, hereinafter referred to as H3GAP, connecting wireless Femto networks to a core network.

10 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the network node is connected to an electronic customer care program triggered by means of a specific request message addressed directly to the electronic customer care program, the request message includes specific parts that are needed to start-up/trigger an application.

15 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the network node is a H3GAP manager (13), an Operation Support System node or a node including functions which might be distributed in the wireless communications network.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein the H3GAPs (5) are connected to a core network (2) via at least one Femto Radio Network Controller (11), Femto RNC.

20 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the access points (5), upon power up, automatically register with a Femto RNC, and download configuration data.

25 10. The method of claim 8, wherein the connections between the access points and Femto Radio Network Controllers, Femto RNCs, are Internet Protocol, IP, based connections.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the access point address information is an Internet Protocol, IP, address or an address of a Femto RNC that is controlling the access point.

30 12. The method of claim 8, wherein requests sent from the Femto RNC to a H3GAP are parts of an extended Iub interface, Iub+.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the on-demand triggered request is initiated by an end user making a call or sending a message to the network node, the end user using one of the following devices:

- 5 - a mobile.
- a computer.
- a Plain Old Telephone Service, POTS.
- a button on the access point.

14. A network node (40) for a wireless communications
10 network (1), the wireless communications network having small area access points (5) connecting wireless networks (8) to a core network (2), wherein the network node (40) comprises:

- 15 - first receiver (41) for receiving an on-demand triggered request, triggered by an end-user, for access point status information, wherein the request includes an access point (6) identity;
- 20 - investigating and retrieving equipment (42) for investigating, using the received access point identity, if the access point (6) is already registered within the network (1), and if the access point (6) is registered within the network (1) retrieving access point address information;
- 25 - connection establishing equipment (43) for setting up a connection to the access point (6) based on retrieved access point address information;
- second receiver (44) for receiving access point status information; and

- responding equipment (45) for sending a response, to the on-demand triggered request, the response including access point status information.

5 15. The network node (40) of claim 14, wherein the network node is a stand alone node, a H3GAP manager, a part of a Radio Network Controller (3), a part of the Core Network (2), or distributed functions in the wireless communications network (1).

10 16. An access point (20), connecting a small area wireless communication network (8), to a core network (2), via a Femto RNC (30), wherein the access point comprises:

- Registration equipment (21) for sending registration messages to the Femto RNC (30), in purpose of registering the access point (20), upon an initial start-up;
- 15 - downloading equipment (22) for downloading configuration data from the Femto RNC (30);
- Triggering equipment (23) for activating on-demand triggered requests, triggered by an end-user, for status information concerning the access point, the requests
20 including access point identity information,
- a transmitter (24) for transmitting the requests to a network node (40), requesting the network (40) node to perform on-demand status check-ups of the access point (20); and
- 25 - a receiver (25) for receiving responses, sent in response to the on-demand triggered requests, the responses including access point status information.

30 17. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the access point (20) comprises a display (26) for displaying received responses including the access point status information.

18. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the access point (20) is a Home 3G Access Point, H3GAP.

19. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the network node (40) is a H3GAP manager (13).

5 20. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the connections between the access point (20) and the Femto RNC (30) are Internet Protocol, IP, based connections.

21. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the access point address information is an Internet Protocol, IP, address or an address of the Femto RNC (30) that is
10 controlling the access point (20).

22. The access point (20) of claim 16, wherein the receiving step includes receiving a message requesting the access point (20) to connect to an application (46) before a status
15 check-up might be performed, and before receiving the response.

23. The access point (20) of claim 22, wherein the message is received from the Femto RNC according to an extended part of an Iub interface.

20 24. The access point (20) of claim 22, wherein the access point (20) is a RadioBase Station.