

Application of open network provision (ONP) to voice telephony

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When accepting the European Parliament's amendments to its common position last July the Council adopted the Directive on the application to voice telephony of the principles of open network provision (ONP). The Portuguese delegation argued against the Directive; the explanation of its vote was published in Press Release 7840/95. The Directive pursues three fundamental objectives: - determining the rights of the users of voice telephony services in their relations with telecommunications bodies; - improving access for all users, including the providers of services, to the fixed infrastructure of public telephone networks (the Directive does not apply to mobile telephones); - encouraging the provision of voice telephony services at Community level. It will offer users guarantees, in particular as regards: - connection at affordable prices and within officially determined times; - detailed invoicing; - procedures for the settlement of disputes; - special tariffs for certain social groups; - the supply of directories and public telephones; - the introduction of pan-European numbers for free calls. As regards certain aspects (quality of service, invoicing, the provision of additional voice telephony services), the Directive entrusts the Commission with the task of ensuring that the measures taken by the Member States to achieve the objectives laid down converge at Community level and it provides for a procedure whereby the Commission, assisted by a regulatory committee, can take binding measures should that convergence be insufficient. The Directive will enter into force in a year. It includes a review clause so that before 1 January 1998 it can be adapted to the requirements of the liberalisation of the Market.