

Telecommunications: open network provision (ONP) to voice telephony, and universal service

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Following two trialogue sessions, delegation meetings and technical meetings, a compromise agreement was reached on the 17 amendments adopted by the Parliament, at second reading, concerning the concept of affordable price, the cost of universal service, consumer protection and quality service in contracts, protection of disabled users (the compromise covers the concept of equal access for all proposed services), number portability and the committology. Under the joint text, Member States are obliged to take specific measures to ensure equal access to and affordability of fixed public telephone services for disabled users. Such measures could, for example, include providing services such as directory enquiry free of charge for blind and partially sighted people. The Council also agreed to Parliament's demand that Member States may impose additional requirements concerning the provision of telecommunications services. Such requirements may not, however, affect the costing of the universal service, nor be financed through mandatory contributions from operators.