

Implementation of the rules on competition

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The Council held a debate on major points of the proposal for a Regulation and drew the following conclusions: The Presidency welcomes the further progress made on the basis of the work done under the French and Swedish Presidencies and notes with satisfaction that the text of a number of provisions of the proposal is close to consensus. The objective of Article 3 of the proposal, insofar as it endeavours to guarantee undertakings a level playing-field in the European Union and to open the way to optimum operation of the network, seems to be largely shared by the delegations. It confirms, however, the need to continue discussions on Article 3, with particular reference to its implications for national legislation. The Council considers that the main operating principles of the network should be enshrined in a joint Council and Commission statement, whereas the detailed arrangements could be set out in a Commission communication prepared in close cooperation with the Member States. It reaffirms the need to press ahead with work in order to secure adoption next year and enable the new arrangements to be introduced prior to the accession to the Union of the first candidate countries.