

Cross-border bank transfers

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The proposal for a directive, which sought to regulate intra-Community (rather than cross-border) transfers, was linked to the problem of competition. The ESC appreciated the Commission's efforts to improve the transparency and quality of the implementation of these transfers, by providing a minimum frame of reference and general rules in accordance with the principles of the internal market. It noted, however, that in one respect the draft Directive differed significantly from the plans repeatedly expressed by the Commission: whereas it had been repeatedly stated that the rules were intended to assist consumers and SMEs to transfer funds easily in the internal market, the document under review aimed to improve cross-border transfer services for 'citizens and businesses', which implied that the directive should extend to all payments, and especially high-value and urgent transfers. The Opinion also highlighted an inconsistency between the declared aim of the proposal for a directive, which was to prepare the way for economic and monetary union, and its scope, which included credit transfers denominated in third-country currencies, which would not be absorbed by the single currency. The ESC thus called for the scope of the directive to be confined to the currencies of the EU countries, including the ecu, and to transfers sent from one EU country to another EU country. As regards the draft communication, the ESC noted that in various parts of the document terms and concepts were used which were too vague and likely to give rise to doubts, not certainty. It thus recommended reviewing the text to make it clearer and allow minimum scope for interpretation by the parties concerned. It also stressed that the provisions should cover not only banks but also any other institution offering payment services to the public.