

Postal services: further opening to competition

2000/0139(COD) - 30/05/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a European Parliament and Council Directive amending Directive 97/67/EC with regard to the further opening to competition of Community postal services. **CONTENT** : the Postal Directive 97/667/EC, adopted by the Council, Parliament and Commission on 15 December 1997 established in Article 7 a timetable for the further gradual and controlled opening to competition of postal services particularly with a view to the opening up of cross-border and direct mail as well as on a further review of the price and weight limits, to take effect from 1 January 2003. The main objective of the Commission's proposal is to move towards the completion of the internal market for postal services while ensuring the maintenance of universal service in line with the Directive and the Lisbon Summit conclusions. This will allow the benefits of greater competition to improve the service levels, in terms of both quality and prices available to posting customers and to strengthen the European economy as a result. This can be best done by agreeing a substantial step on 1 January 2003 while also providing a timetable for decisions on further market opening. The Commission believes that the step in 2003 should be clearly achievable for Member States and that it should focus in particular on markets where opening has already occurred and on the fastest growing segments where the impact of competition on universal service providers can be offset by market growth. The step should also be significant enough to create actual competition. The Commission similarly believes that in line with the requirement from the Lisbon Summit the decision on further market-opening in 2003 should be followed by an additional step towards the completion of the internal market, to be proposed before the end of December 2004 following a review earlier that year. Against the background and objectives described above, the Commission believes it is essential to establish through this proposal a roadmap for continuing the process of modernisation of the postal sector launched by the Postal Directive. Such an approach is in line with the objectives of an open and competitive internal market, supported by the Lisbon Summit conclusions. It is also a necessary and proportionate response to the needs both of users and of the broader European economy. Furthermore, this proposal amends the Postal Directive to set a clear course and timetable towards the further opening of the Community postal sector, but in an orderly manner that will allow sufficient time for the market as a whole, and the universal service providers in particular, to complete the modernisation process and adapt to the conditions of greater competition in a stable and predictable regulatory environment. Therefore, this proposal provides for the continuation of the process of gradual and controlled opening of the internal market for postal services to take place in two further stages. The next stage, to be given effect by 1 January 2003, consists of a general reduction in the current weight and price limits for certain services which may continue to be reserved with a corresponding elimination of all weight and price limits for outgoing cross-border mail and express mail. A subsequent stage of market-opening will take effect by 1 January 2007. It will provide for a further reduction of remaining exclusive rights granted to universal service providers in accordance with Article 7 of the Directive, subject only to the need to maintain universal service. The scope of the further step should be decided by the European Parliament and the Council no later than 31 December 2005 based on a proposal from the Commission to be tabled by 31 December 2004, following a review of the sector.