Electronic communications: universal service, users' rights relating to networks and services

2000/0183(COD) - 12/07/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to bring forward and consolidate existing texts in telecommunications regulation and update them in response to technological and market developments. CONTENT : the aims of the proposed directive are as follows: - to adapt and modernise existing measures on universal service so as to define the scope of the service, the rights of users and the measures for compensating providers of the service without distorting competition. - to create a process for reviewing the scope of universal service provision - to lay down specific users and consumers rights where necessary - to carry forward current measures on and ensure the viability of leased lines in the EU until competition in these services develops; - to allow National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) to take measures on behalf of users and consumers; - to underpin industry's efforts to ensure interoperability of consumer digital television equipment. The first chapter sets out the scope and aims of the directive. The second chapter focuses on traditional universal service obligations, and includes provisions for designations of operators by Member states for the rovision of universal service, as well as new provisions on costing and recovery by designated operators. The third chapter relates to users and consumers rights but includes an important article on retail price regulation. NRAs must provide for retail tariff regulation of any organisation with significant market power to prevent it from setting its tariffs or terms in such a way as to disadvantage some or all consumers or to prevent other operators or service providers from competing against it. This chapter also addresses consumer contracts, the quality of services, the transparency of information available to the public and guarantees access by all users to emergency services and directory enquiry services. It also confirms the international access code of '00' and deals with completion of calls originating with the new '3883' European regional code. New provisions on interoperability for digital television equipment have been included in this chapter while another new provision ensures proportionate compensation to network operators that bear 'must carry' obligations in relation to public service broadcasting. The fourth chapter carries forward existing provisions for leased line services, but provides for progressive elimination of these provisions, in cooperation with the Commission as the market for these services become competitive in each Member State. A provision on other mandatory services is also included. The fifth chapter, relating to procedures, provides for consultation by NRAs with user groups befor an NRA adopts measures.