Third-generation mobile and wireless communications system UMTS: ccordinated introduction

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At a moment when 11 out of 15 Member States have issued 3G licenses and as the first 3G networks are about to be rolled out, the Communication briefly takes stock of the situation and identifies in particular four critical layers which may impact on the successful deployment of 3G services over the forthcoming years: -The regulatory environment; -The financial context; -Gaining experience with the new market; -Outstanding technical issues. The Communication confirms the confidence the Commission has in the 3G market perspectives, while recalling the underlying policy objectives in terms of building the Information Society, capitalising on the success of 2G, securing jobs, and preserving and expanding the lead the European Union has on mobile communications in terms of technology development, competitiveness and service deployment. To overcome possible difficulties, the Communication proposes action lines which could help easing the transition from 2G to 3G. The measures relate to the improvement of the regulatory environment, tackling pending technical issues and supporting the development of innovative wireless applications and content offers as well as ensuring a continuous R&D effort in the sector at Community level. With regard to the actions to be taken at EU level, the report notes that the cost of low degree of harmonisation of licensing methods and conditions has become evident in the on-going 3G licensing round. The apparent distortions to the European single market for mobile communication services call for EU level action. - First, while making future wireless services a commercial success is a task for private enterprises, it is the responsibility of the Community to ensure that the right regulatory conditions are in place for the future. - Secondly, co-ordinated action in support of future wireless services can be offered via the existing Community policies such as research programmes and the eEurope Action Plan. - Thirdly, there are newly emerging regulatory issues related to the present licensing round - which is carried out under existing legislation - that may yet increase fragmentation, if action is not taken. Lastly, the Commission intends to launch without delay, within the scope of legislation in force, a dialogue with the Member States and the operators and equipment manufacturers, in order to explore concrete means to facilitate deployment of 3G networks and services.