General authorizations and individual licences in the field of telecommunications services (common framework)

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The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs adopted the report by Mr W G VAN VELZEN. As of 1 January 1998, the telecommunications market in the European Union would be largely open in most Member States. In order to create a sound competitive environment, a clear European regulatory framework needed to be established. The aim of the directive was to establish common principles governing the systems for granting general authorisations and individual licences in the Member States in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The amendments adopted by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs related to: - the scope of the directive (Amendments Nos 6 and 8): the directive related to the granting of authorisations for the provision of services and also the establishment and/or operation of infrastructures needed to provide these services. Radio and television broadcasting was expressly excluded from the scope of the directive; - regulatory authorities: the committee proposed establishing a European Regulatory Authority which would carry out the tasks currently the responsibility of the Commission and the national authorities more effectively (Amendment No 5); - universal service: the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs excluded the possibility of sheltering behind specific national conditions in order to limit its scope (Amendment No 9). Respect for public service requirements concerned, in particular, the minimum geographical coverage (Amendment No 44); - conditions for authorisation: the committee called for the widest possible dissemination of information at European level through the national official gazette of the Member State concerned and the Official Journal of the European Communities (Amendments Nos 10 and 11). Amendment No 12 set out the grounds on which Member States could request individual licences. The committee also provided further clarification of the conditions, timetables and appeals involved with regard to individual licences (Amendments Nos 13, 14, 15 and 16). It highlighted that the limitation on the number of individual licences, under certain conditions, also applied to the establishment and/or operation of infrastructures. The committee called on the Member States to periodically review whether any opportunities existed to increase the availability of frequencies (Amendment No 18). They should inform the Commission of the situation every two years; - timetables: the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs proposed that the timetable for both the implementation of the directive and the harmonisation of the conditions linked to general authorisation should be shortened. During this transitional period, the committee hoped that the Commission would examine "at any time" any condition, criteria or procedure set out in a national authorisation (Amendment No 27).