Telecommunications : competitive environment (amend. Directives 90/387/EEC, 92/44/EEC)

1995/0280(COD) - 25/04/1996

The committee adopted the report by Mr Fernand HERMAN (PPE/B). For economic reasons and in order to protect consumers, it was essential that the transition from a situation of monopoly to a free market took place within the framework of a specific regulation. That was the objective of the new directive, which was aimed not at limiting the pace of liberalisation, but at establishing a set of rules and an independent regulatory authority with real resources to accompany liberalisation. The amendments adopted by the committee related to the following: - the scope of the directive: the committee excluded radio broadcasting and television from the scope of the directive since they were covered by specific legislation; - universal service: the committee stressed that "universal service" meant a defined minimum service of specified quality which was accessible to all users everywhere at an affordable price and with no limitations connected to specific national conditions. Protection of the environment and town planning were added to the "essential requirements" on the basis of which a Member State could restrict access to public telecommunications networks or services. As regards data protection, the committee added authentication, in other words, the possibility of knowing where messages received had come from. The committee called on the European Commission to draw up a draft directive on the costing and financing of universal service before 30 September 1996; - regulatory authorities: the committee confirmed the independence of national regulatory authorities, which should be in possession of all the resources needed to fulfill their mission, and also called for the establishment of a European Regulatory Authority; - tariffs: any charge for access imposed by operators should take into account the principle of fair sharing in the net cost (not the global cost) of the resources used and the need for a reasonable level of return on investments.