Satellite personal communication services in the Union: Community action

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The ECON adopted by the report on the proposal for a decision on Community action in the field of S-PCS in the EU. Even if, as the rapporteur, Mr Karsten Friedrich HOPPENSTEDT, pointed out, "stars wars" is now a piece of science fiction, it has allowed certain projects to be developed, including the networking of satellites covering the entire planet. Satellite personal communication services would therefore offer the equivalent of cellular telephones. However, given the technology which needs to be introduced, the cost of S-PCS would be much higher and would only be used in sparcely populated regions which are not served by cellular networks. Even if cellular network coverage is generally adequate in Europe, a harmonized Community ensemble would lend support to the EU's position at the relevant international fora (CEPT, WRC, ITU). Even if the ECON shared the Commission's wish to achieve a harmonized Community approach as quickly as possible, it rejected the idea of selecting space operators for S-PCS and the granting of licences by the Commission. In fact, the rapporteur considered that there would be too few global competitors in this sector and that selection would be a waste of time in that the available spectrum should allow them to coexist. As far as a harmonized Community approach was concerned, the ECON proposed, while respecting national competence to grant licences, to include it in the "Licences" directive and, at the same time, to extend the concern for harmonization to the field of individual licences.