

Information Society services: procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations and of rules

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Regulating the Information Society is mainly a member state's responsibility. This poses a real risk that the development of information services in the EU is hampered by contradictory or inconsistent regulations at the national level. The Committee adopted a report by Mr Mark HENDRICK (PES, UK) endorsing a Commission proposal aimed at preventing the emergence of such an inconsistent patchwork of national rules (Co-Decision, first reading). The proposal will amend Council Directive 83/169/EEC which established a mechanism for vetting draft national rules applicable to goods by obliging Member States to submit them to the Commission for review prior to implementation. A "stand still" period of three months allows the Commission and other member states to analyse the drafts and comment on them. The Commission proposal seeks to extend this review mechanism to legislation concerning information society services, ie. those provided "at a distance, electronically and on the individual request of a service receiver". The Committee adopted several amendments to the proposal, in particular calling for a review of the Directive by 1 July 1999 and for the setting up of a consultative group of experts from industry and academia, which will advise the Commission on these matters. The Committee also approved a Commission Proposal for a Council Decision on a multi-annual programme to stimulate the establishment of the information society in Europe (Consultation). The aim of this programme is to provide a legal instrument under which to carry out actions such as studies concerning the information society proposed by the Commission. Amendments adopted by the Committee seek to include monitoring of the effectiveness of the measures taken as an integral part of the programme.