Mobile communications system: full roll-out of third generation 3G

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PURPOSE : to present a Communication concerning the way towards the full roll-out third generation mobile communications. CONTENT : this communication takes stock of the situation in Europe at the moment when nearly all Member States have issued licences for third generation (3G) mobile services and networks, as the first 3G networks are starting to be rolled-out and when the first commercial applications are being announced. The communication identifies the major challenges ahead which all actors involved needs to tackle if 3G is to fulfil the great expectations and its significant potential in building the EU information society which the Commission addresses through its eEurope 2005 Action Plan. In addition, the take-up of 3G is a continuous process which requires continued attention by public authorities. There are no simple answers to the challenges ahead but 3G has developed sufficient momentum to overcome the present difficulties. The report state that the Commission remains confidence in this respect. The Commission believes that commercially-viable advanced wireless systems, including 3G, are indispensable for Europe to attain the goals set in Lisbon with respect to a competitive knowledge-based economy and the realisation of the Information Society. After a continuous effort to develop 3G and to prepare for the deployment of a new wireless service generation, the roll-out of networks is finally under way while growing evidence for a significant market potential is emerging, albeit uncertainty as to its detailed evolution persists. Besides a general economic recovery, to which the mobile sector including 3G could considerably contribute, the sector is best served by letting the market drive the process ahead, and by allowing healthy competition to generate new products which consumers will want to buy. Administrations, including the Commission, can however contribute to confidence in the sector by ensuring a predictable and stable regulatory environment conducive to a competitive market serving the consumers' interests. For the immediate future, administrations can act to help overcome the difficulties encountered in the physical deployment of networks by harmonising the conditions and speeding up the procedures applicable for the acquisition of base stations sites. In addition, they can foster efforts to improve public awareness on safe usage of mobile equipment. In the longer run, the lack of harmonisation in licensing conditions and assignment across the European Union for 3G may represent a hindrance to integration in the Internal Market for telecommunications and may cause market distortions and uncertainty in the sector. This must be avoided as much as possible in the future, especially taking into account that new countries will shortly join the EU. The Commission intends to use the new regulatory framework in electronic communications to work together with the national administrations to develop new harmonised approaches to licensing and attribution of rights to use radio spectrum for new 3G licences and for other wireless applications. Until the market reaches cruising speed, the take-up of 3G is a continuous process which requires and deserves continued attention by public authorities. There are no simple answers to the challenges ahead,but 3G has developed sufficient momentum to overcome the present difficulties. The Commission remains confident in this respect.