

Radio equipment and telecommunication terminal equipment and mutual recognition of their conformity

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Placing radio and telecommunications equipment on the market is presently subject to approval by a telecommunications authority or assessment body in the Member States. Although in 1991, a mutual recognition principle was introduced through Directive 91/263/EEC, it failed to reach its full potential because of restrictive implementation in national laws. At the same time the telecommunications market has changed dramatically over the last few years, with lots of new products with relatively short life-cycles - usually below 3 years. As current assessment and approval procedures not unfrequently last up to 18 months, the Commission has put forward a proposal for a more flexible regime based upon manufacturer's self-testing and unilateral declarations of conformity : which is what applies to other technologically similar devices such as TV sets, audio equipment or computers, subject to general safety requirements as well as specific requirements on electro-magnetic compatibility to avoid radio interferences. The proposal covers not only telecommunications equipment (wired or wireless) but also all kinds of radio-wave equipment whether they are used for telecommunications, broadcasting or remote control of appliances. The proposal sets out a definition of the equipment concerned and of the essential requirements to be safeguarded as well as the procedure for ensuring compliance by the manufacturer of the equipment with the essential requirements. Finally, the absence or limitation of prior type-approval does not prevent Member States from exercising their responsibility in surveillance and preservation of public interest, for example by withdrawing faulty products from the market. Reporting for the Committee, rapporteur Imelda READ (PES, UK) broadly welcomes the approach chosen by the Commission. The Committee does however propose a number of amendments to overcome certain shortcomings of the proposal, In particular, the Committee seeks to strengthen the essential requirements that equipment covered by the directive must meet. The amendments seek, inter alia, to ensure that failures or disturbances caused by inadequate connections or non-compliant equipment are traceable without difficulty and have limited consequences for the users or the networks. Also, the Committee wants to ensure that the equipment is designed with the needs of disabled users in mind.