Third-generation mobile and wireless communications system UMTS: ccordinated introduction

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The Committee has approved the Commission's proposal for a decision aimed at supporting and co-ordinating the introduction of the third generation of mobile telecommunications (Co-decision, first reading). The main advantage of the new system, known as UMTS, is that unlike the current GSM system it will also provide multimedia services, such as fast Internet access with a quality at present only available with fixed equipment. Although the first UMTS services will not be available on the market for several years, the Commission considers it necessary to draw up a legislative framework for the licensing process and the allocation of frequencies so as to give operators and manufacturers the legal certainty required to make the substantial investments needed. It is hoped that Europe, through the promotion of common standards and rules, will be able to repeat the success it had with the GSM system where early standardisation boosted rapid deployment of competitive networks and services. Rapporteur Felipe CAMISÓN ASENSIO (EPP, E) fully agrees with this approach. He has, however, tabled a number of amendments seeking to ensure sufficient coverage in less populated areas and full compatibility between GSM and UMTS.