

Electronic communications: authorisation of networks and services

2000/0188(COD) - 13/02/2001

The committee adopted the report by Angelika NIEBLER (EPP-ED, D) broadly approving the Commission proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading) subject to a number of amendments. The committee felt that the allocation of radio frequencies and the assigning of numbers and rights of way could be done using different methods. It proposed a number of criteria which would be non-discriminatory and transparent and would require objective justifications to be given. The committee also passed an amendment calling on the Member States to distribute the costs of a license evenly over the relevant time period. Where fees for rights of use or rights of way consisted of a one-off amount, for instance a price determined by auction, the right holder should have the opportunity to pay this part of the fee in annual instalments. In addition, the committee wished to ensure the continuity of operators' rights. It emphasised that Member States should not introduce restrictions on licences before expiry of the period for which they were granted unless this was necessary on grounds of public safety. In such cases, operators should be entitled to appropriate compensation. As the information obtained from the operators was commercial and confidential, the committee said it must be made clear that staff of the Member States and the Commission were under an obligation of professional secrecy. Lastly, the committee raised the question of public versus commercial radio broadcasters. It stressed that in order to ensure optimal development of a commercial radio market, efforts should be made to strike a better balance between the frequencies taken up by commercial and public service providers.