

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

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Danielle AUROI (Greens/EFA, F) in response to the Commission's communication on the full roll-out of third generation (3G) mobile communications. Pointing out that telecommunications technologies were advancing rapidly and constantly evolving, and that 3G mobile communications offered great potential for the future development of the information society, the committee called for a clear direction to be set now with a view to their introduction into Europe. The Member States were urged to speed up the implementation of the new electronic communications directive and to enact new national legislation in this area in as harmonised a manner as possible. The report underlined the importance of ensuring free and fair competition, enabling companies to operate on the market on an equal footing, irrespective of their size. Private investment must be encouraged and must not be hindered by over-regulation. Noting that consumers were not yet convinced about the possibilities of 3G, MEPs stressed that transparency of information, freedom of choice and affordable prices were needed to encourage demand and create a climate of confidence. This could be achieved inter alia through measures to encourage the use of open platforms, so that consumers were not confined to the output of a single operator. The committee also endorsed the Commission's approach of encouraging network infrastructure sharing throughout the EU to facilitate a more rapid and harmonised roll-out of 3G networks and services. It pointed out, however, that such shared use must be governed by freely agreed conditions which are not detrimental to healthy competition. The report also drew attention to the need to protect children when they use the Internet and called for ways of achieving this to be examined by the Commission and by suppliers of services. Special attention should also be paid to the security of payments made by mobile telephony, which was crucial for boosting consumer confidence. Turning to the health issues raised by mobile communications, the committee pointed out that the EU Member States had followed the WHO recommendation regarding limits for exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF). It supported the independent scientific study programmes commissioned by the WHO into the possible effects of electromagnetic waves and called for an active contribution to the public debate on this issue by all involved. The Commission's plan to establish a European Information System on EMF involving all stakeholders was welcomed. Lastly, Member States were urged to ensure that the positioning of mobile telephony network equipment was planned "with the most scrupulous regard for health and the environment" and determined in accordance with transparent planning procedures.