

Postal services: further opening to competition

2000/0139(COD) - 22/11/2000

The committee adopted the report by Markus FERBER (EPP-ED, D) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). Essentially, the committee felt that the further opening to competition of Community postal services should be gradual and controlled. Universal services, the permanent provision of a postal service throughout the EU at affordable prices for all users, even in remote areas, should be particularly protected. The committee rejected the proposal for a general reduction to 50 grams in the weight limit reserved to universal service providers such as the Royal Mail or Deutsche Post and demanded that the limit be 150 grams. A ceiling of 150 grams was felt to constitute the most appropriate next step towards opening up the market in 2003. The Commission had also proposed that decisions on the further opening of the market should be taken no later than 31 December 2005 and should take effect from 1 January 2007. This was a step too far for the committee, which refused to indicate any date at all. It said the Commission should come forward with further proposals following a review of the sector which should focus on the need to ensure the provision of universal service in an appropriate manner in a competitive market environment. This review should be presented not later than 31 December 2003. The committee also wanted Member States to implement the amended directive no later than 31 December 2004 and not 31 December 2002 as the Commission was proposing. The deadline should be extended "in order to rule out hasty and poor preparation and the resulting negative impact". The committee also adopted amendments rejecting a total abolition of the price limit for outgoing cross-border mail and all express mail as well as the Commission's definition of special services.