

Postal services: common rules for the development of the services and improvement of quality of service

1995/0221(COD) - 26/07/1995 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVES: - To guarantee the provision of a high-quality universal postal service within the Community on a permanent basis, which is affordable and accessible to everyone, and whose financing is assured in the long term; - To harmonize the conditions under which postal services are provided and eliminate legal and technical barriers to cross-border trade, with a view to establishing the single market.

SUBSTANCE: The proposal for a directive from the European Parliament and Council provides for the following measures: * Respect for the universal service: - Member States shall ensure that users have the right to a universal service corresponding to the provision of high-quality postal services, at affordable prices, throughout the territory of the Union; - the postal services which come under the universal service are subject to obligations of transparency, equality of access and non-discrimination in respect of: the quality of the service, the tariff principles and the transparency of accounts; the conditions of access to the universal service provider's network; the characteristics of the universal service (collection and distribution frequency, contact points, etc.); * Improving the quality of the services: - the setting of standards by Member States for national services and, at Community level, for intra-Community cross-border services; - performance checks to be carried out by independent bodies, which are not associated with the universal service providers, in accordance with harmonized procedures; - annual publication of results. * Definition of harmonized criteria for services which are likely to be reserved for universal service providers: - Two criteria are retained for defining the scope of the services reserved for domestic mail: . a weight limit to be applied to domestic mail of less than 350 g; . a price limit calculated as follows: five times the public tariff for a standard item of correspondence in each Member State (normally a letter weighing 20 g); - Outgoing cross-border mail, which is in fact already liberalized in most Member States, will be excluded from the reservable services; - Incoming mailshots and cross-border mail may continue to be reserved up until 31 December 2000, insofar as this reservation is necessary for the financial stability of the universal service provider. The Commission will decide on or before 30 June 1998 whether it is necessary to maintain incoming mailshots and cross-border mail in the reserved sector beyond 31 December 2000, by taking account of developments in this sector; - A general review of the size of the reserved sector will be undertaken at the latest before the first half of 2000. * Harmonization of technical standards: the directive provides for a procedure which will allow harmonized standards to be drawn up and adopted on the basis of mandates which have been given to the European Committee for Standardization; * Separation of the functions of operation and regulation: the directive requires all Member States to set up an independent national regulatory authority for postal operators. Universal service providers are required to keep transparent accounts and to draw up separate accounts for services which are open to competition and for reserved services.