Telecommunications: future development of the market in directories and other information services

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OBJECTIVE: the Commission communication aims to set out guidelines for the future development of the market in directories, give that directory enquiry services will play an essential role for the use of telecommunications services in a competitive environment. CONTENT: the Commission stresses that directories are an important medium (7.5% of the advertising market in the EU) and that they are the most important access route to telecommunications services. In addition, thanks to new technologies, especially interactive services such as videotex, the sector was only now entering the multimedia sector and could help considerably in developing this new market. The introduction of a competitive environment in the telecommunications sector means that Community telecommunications rules need to be extended to directory and information services. It also means that a universal directory needs to be maintained, together with an information service which is easily accessible to and affordable by all users. Consequently, the Commission proposes the following guidelines for developing this sector: - maintaining a universal directory and a directory enquiries service in a competitive environment: users of voice telephony services should be given at least one complete "white pages" directory in each Member State and should be able to access an information service at an affordable price; - abolishing exclusive and special rights on the telecommunications directories market contained in certain national regulations; - access and marketing conditions: access to raw data on subscribers should be granted on the basis of objective, transparent, non-discriminatory criteria. In addition, access should comply with Community legislation on competition rules, the provision of an open network and protection of personal data and privacy; - promotion of new technologies (electronic directory, CD-ROM and X500 service) and promotion of multimedia; - protection of privacy: protection of personal data should be guaranteed during the provision of directory services; - protection of intellectual property rights: the benefit of national and Community provisions on copyright should be extended to directories.