

# **Telecommunications: open network provision (ONP) to voice telephony, and universal service**

1996/0226(COD) - 04/11/1996 - Legislative proposal

**OBJECTIVE:** the purpose of the proposal for a Directive is to revise and replace Directive 95/62/EC on the application of open network provision (ONP) to voice telephony, currently in force, to take account of the liberalization of the telecommunications market, scheduled to come into effect on 1 January 1998, and to guarantee the provision of a universal service for telecommunications as laid down in the European Union. **SUBSTANCE:** the modified proposal for a Directive describes the scope of the universal service requirement in telecommunications, which must be accessible to all users in the European Union, and requires that the Member States should ensure, in the light of their national conditions, that such service is affordable. The Directive also lays down harmonized conditions for the provision of fixed public telephone networks and publicly available telephone services in the EU. More specifically, the revised Directive: - stipulates the telephone services and additional services which must be available to all users; it ensures that it is possible for all users on request to have access to the fixed public telephone network, at a fixed location, to make and receive calls, facsimile and/or data communications, as well as a range of basic additional services including itemized billing and tone dialling; - introduces a service quality control mechanism based on a common series of indicators and measurement methods. Where appropriate, performance targets may be set by the national regulatory authorities; the performance data may be published; - introduces an obligation that the Member States should ensure, in the light of their national conditions, that telephone services are affordable tariff; rebalancing should follow the pace of opening up to competition without causing sharp increases in prices for users. The proposal also encourages the use of targeted tariff schemes, rather than the application of uniformly low tariffs, to guarantee that services are affordable for all users. - calls on Member States to introduce mechanisms for consultation with users, consumers, service providers and manufacturers over matters relating to level, quality and affordability of universal service. The Commission may also introduce such mechanisms at Community level. In the case of Member States which under Community legislation are allowed a transitional period in which to liberalize public telecommunications networks and publicly available telephony services, the applicable provisions of Directive 95/62/EC are maintained in force by the revised Directive.