

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

1995/0221(COD) - 09/05/1996 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

In adopting, by 257 votes to 34 with 19 abstentions, the report by Mr Brian SIMPSON (PSE, UK) on the proposal for a Directive on common rules for the development of Community postal services and the improvement of quality of service, the European Parliament expressed the view that a balance must be struck between the obligations of universal service providers and the specific or exclusive rights granted to such providers with a view to financing their obligations. A universal service should be regarded as a public service; it was necessary to ensure that, outside the reserved sector, there was fair competition among universal service providers and between them and other operators. Taking the view that the liberalization of direct mail and incoming cross-border mail would harm the ability of postal administrations to maintain traffic volumes and therefore services and employment, the report amended Article 8 of the Commission proposal substantially. The report expressed the view (contrary to that of the Commission) that in order to ensure the maintenance of universal service and the economic viability of the operator responsible for providing it, direct mail could be reserved to the universal service providers in each Member State. Similarly, it considered that the distribution of cross-border mail could continue to be reserved until five years after the entry into force of the Directive (whereas the Commission had set a deadline of 31 December 2000), after which the Commission was called upon to present a proposal on the subject. Unlike the Commission, the report also expressed the view that special services, such as express mail, and new services could likewise form part of the universal service. The report also observed that any form of harmonization must take account of the Community objectives of economic and social cohesion and ought therefore to ensure the uninterrupted provision of the universal service in the most remote or least advantaged regions. It therefore stressed the need to offer an identical service to all users (and not only those whose circumstances were similar). The principle of universal service accordingly required a uniform national tariff. Lastly, as increasing competition on the postal market was likely to increase the need for social protection of workers, the report stated that the restructuring resulting from the application of the Directive must give priority to the preservation of existing jobs and to safeguarding the social protection of employees.