Universal service in telecommunications: assessment criteria for national schemes for the costing and financing

1996/2268(COS) - 18/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Wim van VELZEN (PPE, NL), Parliament expressed its disapproval of the fact that the important subject of universal service was regulated in a variety of directives and communications. It called for a consolidated directive on telecommunications and a directive on costing and financing the universal service to be drawn up at an early date. It asked the Commission to publish an overview of legislation on the financing of universal telecommunications service in the Member States. Parliament subscribed to the principle that the rules for universal telecommunications service should only relate to the costs to be charged to the provision of the universal service. It considered that net costs should be calculated on the basis of procedures and criteria which were objective, transparent, non-discriminatory and which satisfied the principle of proportionality. It called on the Commission to: - ensure that market operators were not asked to make a contribution to universal service for as long as there were no cost-based interconnection tariffs in a Member State; - ensure that Member States seeking to finance the net costs of universal service in the telecommunications sector from the public budget only took such action if it fully conformed with the rules on state aid, in order to prevent an unfair advantage for existing enterprises. Finally, Parliament emphasized that, even after tariff restructuring, each citizen should have the right to a connection which was affordable and that a universal service mechanism could be set up for this purpose.