

Electronic communications: common regulatory framework for networks and services. Framework Directive

2000/0184(COD) - 30/07/2004 - Follow-up document

This Communication sets out the Commission's position on interoperability of digital interactive television services pursuant to Art. 18 (3) of Directive 2002/21/EC on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services (the Framework directive).

Article 18 (3) of the Framework directive requires the Commission to examine the effects of Art. 18, concerning interactive television services. If interoperability and freedom of choice for users have not been adequately achieved in one or more Member States, the Commission may act with the aim of making certain standards mandatory.

This Communication is based on the results of a public consultation launched in March 2004.

A wide range of players responded to the consultation, notably manufacturers, network operators, broadcasters and API providers; also consumer associations and others dedicated to particular viewpoints. Responses to the public consultation paint a conflicting picture as to whether adequate interoperability has been effectively achieved. The Commission considers that in view of the complexity of the technological and market environment, the very different perceptions of interoperability held by market players, and late implementation of the Framework Directive in many Member States, the aim of the review is essentially to determine whether there is a case to propose making one or more standards mandatory.

The Commission concludes that there is no clear case for mandating standards at present; the issue should be reviewed in 2005. Meanwhile, a range of promotional actions are proposed to promote the deployment of interactive digital services using the Multimedia Home Platform (MHP) standard, currently the only open standard for APIs adopted by EU standards bodies. These include the creation of a Member State group on MHP implementation, confirmation that Member States can offer consumer subsidies for interactive television receiver equipment, subject to conformity with state aid rules, and monitoring of access to proprietary technologies.

Lastly, the Commission seeks to ensure that European citizens benefit from a growing range of interactive DTV services, available on an increasing number of transmission platforms, and considers that the market is best served at the present time by continuing to apply the provisions already agreed by the European Parliament and the Council in the Framework Directive.