Application of the Postal Directive (Directive 97 /67/EC as amended by Directive 2002/39/EC)

2005/2086(INI) - 22/11/2005

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Markus FERBER (EPP-ED, D) in response to the Commission report on the application of the Postal Directive. MEPs drew attention to a number of issues and called on the Commission to clarify the action it proposed to take in certain areas, in particular as regards universal service.

They noted that the transposition of the directive into national law had made good progress overall, although the effects of the reforms on quality, efficiency and customer-orientation had yet to be analysed in detail, and the opening up of postal services to competition had not always resulted in maintained employment levels in the postal sector. The report also pointed out that some Member States were "seriously late" in implementing the directive, particularly with regard to market opening, with the risk of an imbalance in the European postal market and the potential disadvantaging of market entrants. The Commission was asked to state what action it proposed to take to deal with this.

MEPs drew attention to the "sometimes perceptibly divergent developments" of universal service obligations in the Member States and urged the Commission to focus, in its proposed study on the impact which completion of the internal postal services market will have on universal service, on the quality of provision of such service and on its future funding. They said that, in view of the fundamental transformation which postal markets were undergoing, the definition of 'universal service' should be reassessed in the light of altered communications behaviour. The Commission was nevertheless urged to bear in mind in its study that universal services are "qualitatively high-value labour-intensive services focusing on the protection of consumers' interests", and to explore how best to guarantee the involvement of and input from postal customers and to consult the social partners concerned (chambers of commerce and industry, trade unions, etc.), businesses active in the market and local interest organisations. On the problem of funding, the committee noted that the funding models for universal service used so far in the Member States had not been very successful, and that the "tried and tested" instrument in the past had been the reserved sector. It called on the Commission to examine the possibility of differentiating the reserved sector depending on the costs associated with funding the universal service, particularly in view of geographic and demographic constraints. Lastly, the committee called on the Commission to determine whether it was possible to retain the 2009 deadline for completion of the internal market in postal services or whether other stages should be set out in the light of the study's conclusions.

Turning to other issues, the report urged the Commission to continue to take "appropriate account" of standardisation in the postal sector in the interests of consumer protection and in the light of the completion of the internal market. The question of licensing authorisation procedures should also be addressed to ensure that these did not result in new barriers to market access or lead to price distortions. Other recommendations included finding a solution to the differences in VAT levied on services in the postal sector.