Basic information

2001/2157(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Services of general interest in Europe **Subject** 2.40.02 Public services, of general interest, universal service	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	LANGEN Werner (PPE-DE)	06/11/2000

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
JURI Legal Affairs and Internal Market	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, External Trade, Research, Energy	HERZOG Philippe A.R. (GUE/NGL)	13/02/2001
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	FLAUTRE Hélène (V/ALE)	12/10/2000
ENVI Environment, Public Health, Consumer Policy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
RETT Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	21/11/2000
CULT Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport	PACK Doris (PPE-DE)	06/02/2001

Council of the European Union

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Secretariat-General	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
20/09/2000	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2000)0580	Summary
30/11/2000	Debate in Council		
03/09/2001	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
16/10/2001	Vote in committee		Summary
16/10/2001	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0361/2001	
13/11/2001	Decision by Parliament	T5-0595/2001	Summary
13/11/2001	Debate in Parliament		
13/11/2001	End of procedure in Parliament		
13/06/2002	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2001/2157(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/5/13751

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0361/2001	16/10/2001	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0595/2001 OJ C 140 13.06.2002, p. 0027-0153 E	13/11/2001	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2000)0580	20/09/2000	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	COM(2001)0598	17/10/2001	
Follow-up document	COM(2002)0331	18/06/2002	Summary
Follow-up document	COM(2002)0689	04/12/2002	Summary

Non-legislative basic document	COM(2003)0270	21/05/2003	Summary
Follow-up document	SEC(2005)1781	20/12/2005	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofR	Committee of the Regions: opinion	CDR0180/2000 OJ C 148 18.05.2001, p. 0012	14/02/2001	
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES1120/2001	12/09/2001	
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0860/2002	17/07/2002	

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 04/12/2002 - Follow-up document

The Commission has presented its communication on the status of work on the examination of a proposal for a Framework Directive on Services of General Interest. As a follow-up to its commitment submitted to the Laeken European Council, the Commission has decided to produce a Green Paper on services of general interest. The Green Paper will allow the Commission to examine the question of a proposal for a framework directive but also to look more thoroughly at the issue of the role of the European Union in ensuring the provision of high-quality services of general interest to consumers and businesses in Europe. The feasibility and possible added-value of a framework directive will be a core subject for the Green Paper. As already suggested by the Commission in its Report to the Laeken European Council, this issue raises complex questions regarding, among other aspects, the possible objectives, the scope of application and the content of such a directive and its links with existing sector-specific legislation. These questions will require further reflection and discussion which is what the Green Paper is designated to stimulate. Following a public consultation on the basis of this Green Paper, the Commission will finalise its examination and present its conclusions together with concrete initiatives and legislative proposals, if appropriate, by the summer 2003.

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 21/05/2003

The European Commission had adopted a Green Paper on services of general interest, which initiated a wide-ranging debate on the future of services of general interest in Europe. It was the first time that the Commission had undertaken a full review of its policies on services of general interest. The reality of services of general interest in the European Union was complex and constantly evolving. The organisation of these services varied according to cultural traditions, the history and geographical conditions of each Member State and the characteristics of the activity concerned, in particular technological development. In conformity with the principle of subsidiarity, the European Union had always respected this diversity and the roles of national, regional and local authorities in ensuring the well-being of their citizens and in guaranteeing democratic choices regarding, among other things, the level of service quality. This diversity explained the various degrees of Community action and the use of different instruments. Since the second half of the 1980s, a number of sectors in which services of general economic interest were provided had gradually been opened up to competition. This had been the case with telecommunications, postal services, transport and energy. The first evaluation carried out indicated that this liberalisation stimulated the modernisation, interconnection and integration of these sectors. It had increased the number of competitors and led to price reductions, especially in those sectors and countries that had liberalised earlier. Although there was as yet insufficient evidence to assess the long-term impact of the opening to competition of services of general interest, there was, based on the available information, no evidence supporting the thesis that liberalisation had had a negative impact on their overall performance, at least as far as affordability and the provision of universal service were concerned. Initial fears that market opening would have a negative impact on employment levels or on the provision of services of general economic interest had so far proved unfounded. Market opening had generally made services more affordable. The impact of market opening on net employment had also been broadly positive. Job losses, particularly amongst former monopolies, had been more than compensated for by the creation of new jobs thanks to market growth. Overall, the liberalisation of the network industries was estimated to have led to the creation of nearly one million jobs across the European Union. However, it was necessary to give a better explanation of the current framework, to look into possible improvements and to define the common general rules to be maintained and developed at European level. The present Green Paper followed requests from the European Parliament and the European Council and dealt with matters raising questions with regard to: - the scope of possible Community action that implemented the Treaty in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity, - the principles that could be included in a possible framework directive concerning services of general interest and the added value of such legislation, - the definition of good governance in the area of organisation, regulation, financing and evaluation of services of general interest in order to ensure greater competitiveness of the economy and efficient and equitable access of all persons to high-quality services that were satisfying their needs, - examination of any measures that could contribute to increasing legal certainty and to ensuring a coherent and harmonious link between the objective of maintaining high-quality services of general interest

and rigorous application of competition and internal market rules. The consultation period would end on 15 September 2003. On the basis of the contributions received, the Commission proposed to draw independent conclusions and, if necessary, to present specific follow-up initiatives.

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 20/09/2000 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present a report from the Commission concerning services of general interest in Europe. CONTENT : services of general interest are a key element in the European model of society. The new Article 16 in the EC Treaty now confirms their place among the shared values of the Union and their role in promoting social and territorial cohesion. These services also contribute to the overall competitiveness of the European economy and are provided in the context of continuously evolving markets and technologies. The globalisation of trade, the completion of the internal market and rapid technological change can bring about increasing pressure to open up new sectors to competition. It is against this background that the European Council of Lisbon requested the Commission to update its Communication of 1996 on services of general interest in Europe. To sum up, the objective of the present proposal is twofold: - to provide further clarification on different levels of public authorities and of the competition and internal market provisions applied to services of general interest in order to respond to the request for greater legal certainty on the part of operators. Of special concern is the field of the rules on State aid; - to further develop the European framework relating to the good functioning of services of general interest, in which local, regional and national authorities as well as the Community have their role to play, in line with Article 16 EC Treaty. Finally, the communication is organised in several sections. In section 2 the Commission sets out its views on the mission fulfilled by services of general interest. Section 3 provides clarification on the application of competition and Single Market rules to services of general interest. Section 4 presents some preliminary results from experience with the application of the universal service principle in sectors liberalised under the Single Market Programme. Section 5 provides orientation for further action to enhance the quality and efficient provision of services of general interest as a key element in the European model of society.

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 18/06/2002 - Follow-up document

This paper concerns a methodological note for the horizontal evaluation of services of general economic interest. The object of the paper is to make a positive contribution to the decision-making process in all policy areas related to network industries providing services of general interest by providing a methodology that can help produce precise, thorough and comparative evaluations of the performance of those network industries and the services they provide. The evaluations will be based on factual information on the evolution of those industries and feedback from citizens, consumers and other stakeholders. They will focus on the following questions: -How has competition evolved in these industries and, in particular, how important was the influence of the market opening process on these changes? This will cover the changes in the number of competitors, the evolution of prices, the degree of openness in the market in legal terms and the evolution of concentration. It will also involve investigating whether more freedom of choice has led to users changing suppliers. -Have these changes had an impact on market performance? This requires an assessment in terms of productivity, innovation, employment and growth, but also on the equally important aspects of affordability, quality and accessibility of services of general interest. -How have these changes been perceived by users? The Commission will undertake consumers' satisfaction surveys. Any discrepancy between users' perception and actual market performances by these industries will indicate the need for more transparency, better communication, and better dialogue with users about their performance. The paper describes in detail the principles that have been taken into account in preparing this methodology. These involve the need to apply the subsidiarity principle, and the requirements for transparency and pluralism. Initially, horizontal evaluations will cover the following sectors : air transport, local and regional public transport, electricity, gas postal services, railway transport and telecommunications. Finally, the Commission will produce annual reports consisting of three main parts: -analysis of structural changes and market performance; -results of the permanent consumer consultation process, and -cross-sectoral review of horizontal topics.

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 13/11/2001 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Werner LANGEN (EPP/ED, D) on the Commission Communication on services of general interest. (Please refer to previous text). Moreover, it called on the Commission to perform a precise and comparative evaluation of the real impact of the policy of liberalisation of such services before embarking on further liberalisation. The Commission is expected to define in the framework directive the common principles on which services of general interest are based at an appropriate tier of subsidiarity. General interest services should be taken to mean services that are important for people's daily lives, therefore including transport, postal services, telecommunications, education, hospitals, social services, drains, refuse collections and water and energy supply, particularly electricity. Parliament goes on to make certain recommendations with regard to particular sectoral cases. A specific approach should be taken to audiovisual services - irrespective of the type of audiovisual broadcast, whether public service television, private television, video streaming, etc., -and culture in order to achieve objectives such as the protection of fundamental rights and democratic principles, pluralism, access for all to culture and technological progress, the right of reply, cultural and linguistic diversity and the protection of users.

Services of general interest in Europe

2001/2157(COS) - 20/12/2005 - Follow-up document

This is the second horizontal evaluation report prepared by the Commission regarding the EU’s network industries which provide services of general economic interest to EU consumers. The networks scrutinised are telecommunications (both mobile and fixed lines), energy, gas, air, rail, road

transport and postal services. Given the wide spectrum of issues affecting these industries the Commission has chosen to focus on a few key points. They are: analysing recent legislative developments, examining the results of studies on the effect of market openings and comparing the network performance in the new EU Member States (EU 10) with that of the old EU Member States (EU 15). In presenting this report, the Commission hopes to stimulate an open and transparent debate on the performance of network services in the EU.

Concerning the EU's legislative framework, the report notes that the general debate on the future of services of general interest has intensified since the publication of the May 2004 White Paper on this subject. A decision has yet to be taken on whether or not to prepare a framework Directive. On the other hand there have been a number of important developments regarding competition provisions for the regulation of the gas, electricity and public transport services. The Commission notes that there are many outstanding issues on the transposition of new Directives and it therefore urges the Member States to take more stringent measures to ensure the appropriate transposition of EU legislation.

Concerning the matter of market structure, the Commission finds that the number of competitors in the telecommunications sector has increased. At the same time, however, the report makes note of the fact that the market share of incumbents remains high in many service industries including telecommunications and the energy sectors. Mergers and acquisitions in the energy sector have resulted in the creation of large pan-European players. The Commission urges the Member States' authorities to scrutinise this development carefully.

Concerning differences between the EU 10 and the EU 15, the report find that there are some difference in the market performance of network industries. The market structure in the ten new Member States appears more concentrated than in the EU 15. Although significant price differences exist between the new and old Member States in nominal terms, the difference is modest once expressed in terms of purchasing power parity – other than in the transport sector. As far as the quality of services is concerned what data there is indicates that both the old and the new Member States face similar challenges.

In the final Chapter the report assesses consumer satisfaction for the network services of general interest. The most recent surveys confirm the results of previous assessments. Overall, the satisfaction of consumers is relatively high but there are important differences depending on the country and sector studied. Postal services receive the best appraisal and inter-city rail transport the lowest. Finally, consumers in the new Member States express concern regarding possible price increases following accession.

To conclude, the report comments that significant milestones have been achieved in opening up the network industries of general economic interest. Nevertheless, the Commission urges the Member States to take a greater interest in removing any outstanding obstacles hindering the completion of the internal market and to introduce effective provisions that stimulate competition between the various market players. The Commission expresses some concern regarding the emergence of large pan-European market players, which, in future, will require closer scrutiny by the competition authorities. The Commission reminds the Member States that, under the principle of subsidiarity, it is they who are responsible for the effective implementation of provisions. At the same time the Commission suggests that the improvements are thanks to the introduction of competitive elements and market openings. According to the Commission, lower prices and labour productivity can be statistically explained by market openings and that countries with a high level of market opening tend to perform better in terms of price and productivity.