

Brussels, 11 December 2006

Telecom Council, Brussels, 11 December 2006

The EU Council of 25 Telecom Ministers will meet today in Brussels. Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, will represent the European Commission. The main subject to be discussed will be the Commission proposal of 12 July to bring down mobile roaming charges in Europe's internal market by 70%. A ministerial dinner was held on 10 December where the economic importance of a more market-oriented approach to spectrum policy was discussed.

Telecom Council issues:

- **Roaming:** First debate at ministerial level about the Commission proposal for a Regulation on Roaming on Public Mobile Networks.
- **Hotline for missing children:** Progress report on the draft Commission Decision on reserving the national numbering range beginning with "116" for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value.
- **Security:** Council Resolution on a Strategy for a Secure Information Society in Europe.
- **eCall:** Commission Communication on "Bringing eCall back on track" – an action plan for reducing road deaths.
- **Internet Governance:** summary of recent developments (new ICANN Memorandum of Understanding, first meeting of the Internet Governance Forum in Athens).
- **Spectrum policy:** an informal exchange of views about the economic importance of the more market-oriented approach to spectrum management proposed by the Commission in September 2005.

Commission proposal for a Regulation on Roaming on Public Mobile Networks

At this Council

The Council will hold the first ministerial policy debate based on a report prepared by the Presidency. Ministers are expected to discuss how to assess the Commission's proposal with regard to:

1. Ensuring that all consumers benefit rapidly from significant and sustainable price reductions across the Single Market, while maintaining a competitive market for operators.
2. Ensuring a balance between administrative simplicity and transparency for consumers as well as flexibility for operators.

Background

Since the Commission proposal of 12 July to lower the excessive price of roaming charged to consumers by mobile operators (see [IP/06/978](#)), considerable progress has been made. This has been guided by the Finnish Presidency which has held seven working group sessions to ensure a speedy political agreement. In parallel, the European Parliament has started to work intensely on the Commission proposal.

Overall, there appears to be strong support for the Commission's objectives and for the need of regulation. The discussion in the Council therefore focuses more on the details of the required EU regulation: how much scope should be left to operators at wholesale level? How far is retail regulation necessary to ensure that reduced wholesale prices are passed on to the consumer? Should the EU regulation on roaming only cover voice or also be extended to SMS and data roaming?

The Commission proposal for an EU regulation on roaming in essence aims to ensure that all private and business consumers in Europe's internal market benefit rapidly from significant price reductions; that operators can compete without abusing the consumer's interests; and that national regulators are kept as free as possible from administrative burden. A recent Eurobarometer Survey indicated strong public support for such a regulation (see [IP/06/1515](#)).

The first reading of the European Parliament is expected to be completed in the first quarter 2007. The new EU regulation can therefore be expected to enter into effect before the end of German Presidency (end of June 2007).

Commission Decision on reserving the national numbering range beginning with '116' for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value

At this Council

The Commission will provide information on the progress made since February 2006 when the Commission had proposed to reserve a single telephone number for missing children as a concrete example of how the EU has made children's rights one of its first priorities. A draft Commission Decision intends to reserve numbers beginning with 116 for harmonised services of social value in Europe and to reserve a hotline number for missing children. This draft Decision will soon be submitted to the Communications Committee (comprising Member States' representatives) for opinion. At the Council the Commission will ask all Member States to support this proposal and to make progress with this initiative as soon as possible.

Background

Hotline telephone numbers for parents to report missing children already exist in several EU countries, but they use different telephone numbers in different countries.

The proposed Commission Decision will allow a single number to be reserved for the same service across Europe. Services provided through these freephone numbers will benefit citizens greatly by helping those in difficulty, or by contributing to their well-being or safety, for example, if a child is lost while travelling or on holiday in another European country.

Reserving such numbers is part of a broader project for Member States to reserve a national range of freephone numbers starting with 116 for services of social value. This is being done via the draft Commission Decision.

The Commission Decision will require Member States to permit listed services to be offered, but will not guarantee that these services are offered. A specific 116 number will be reserved at EU level for a specific service, in the Decision annex. However, assigning the specific number to a specific service provider in each Member State will be a national responsibility.

Commissioner Reding in her letter of 7 December to Susanna Huovinen, Finnish Minister of Transport and Communications and Chair of this Council, calls for an extraordinary meeting of the Communications Committee as soon as possible to ensure Member States' support for the Commission Decision. A public call will then be launched to identify other services that may benefit from 116 numbers.

Commission Communication on "Bringing eCall back on track" – an action plan for reducing road deaths

At this Council

The Commission will present the communication "Bringing eCall back on track – Action Plan", and call on Member States to show their commitment to implement the newly agreed deployment plan for the "eCall" service (see IP/06/1720). This service would enable cars to automatically call for help in an accident, based on the use of the pan-European telephone number for emergencies - 112.

Background

Even though road fatalities in the EU-25 have declined more than 17% since 2001, there remain around 41,600 deaths per year and more than 1.7 million injured in 2005. The pan-European in-vehicle emergency call (eCall) has the potential to save up to 2,500 deaths annually in the EU-25.

In the framework of the Commission's "Intelligent Car Initiative" (see [IP/05/1137](#)), industry and the public sector have worked together on a plan for the full deployment of eCall from 2009 onwards. However, the level of implementation of 112, E112 and eCall in Europe is of serious concern. Many Member States do not yet have the necessary infrastructure for putting eCall into practice. Industry has already reacted by presenting a new deployment timetable, now targeting 2010.

The new Commission Communication presents two lines of action that are crucial for keeping the newly agreed timetable and making eCall a reality in Europe:

1. Member States are given a clear set of actions with deadlines for solving the remaining legal, technical and socio-economic issues for putting in place the necessary 112, E112 and eCall infrastructure.
2. Industry is asked to renew its commitment to eCall. The Commission will start negotiations with the associations of the automotive industry on a voluntary agreement for the introduction of eCall devices in vehicles.

Support is also foreseen for field tests and public awareness campaigns.

Note: At this Telecom Council, **Iceland** will sign the **eCall Memorandum of Understanding** which includes a political commitment to have the requirements for a wide-spread use of the eCall technology in place by 2009. eCall ensures that in a road accident, your car will call automatically the emergency services at a "Public Service Answering Point" (PSAP) and report your exact location.

Iceland is the **10th** country to have signed up to the eCall Memorandum of Understanding (**the other countries are Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland**). The full list, including organisations, is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/esafety/doc/esafety_library/mou/list_of_signatures_mou.pdf.

Council Resolution on a Strategy for a Secure Information Society in Europe

At this Council

The Council is expected to adopt a resolution on a "Strategy for a Secure Information Society in Europe" to politically endorse the Commission Communication of May 2006 on the same subject.

Background

Given that information and communication have become key factors for economical and societal development, related security issues have become a political priority of the European Union. Network and Information Systems now carry volumes of data and support essential services to an extent that were inconceivable only a few years ago. To extract maximum benefit from modern communication networks the security of these systems is a prerequisite for further market development.

In May 2006, the Commission presented a Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, to revitalise the 2001 strategy on Network and Information security (see [IP/06/701](#)). This not only aims at identifying security challenges for information systems and networks in the EU but also to develop a dynamic policy framework based on a culture of security and founded on dialogue, partnership and empowerment with public and private stakeholders. The Commission addressed three main points: specific network and information security measures, the regulatory framework for electronic communications and the fight against cybercrime.

If adopted, the Council Resolution on a Strategy for a Secure Information Society in Europe will provide political support for this Network and Information Security communication and also for that on "fighting spam, spyware and malicious software" (see [IP/06/1629](#)).

For further information on the Strategy for a Secure Information Society see: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/doc/com2006251.pdf

Internet Governance

At this Council

The Presidency will summarise the latest developments related to Internet governance (First meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, follow-up of the World Summit on the Information Society – WSIS –, and the ongoing EU-US dialogue in relation to ICANN).

Background

The Commission seeks to ensure that the Internet be governed in the interests of multi-stakeholders, and that its continued stability and evolution should not be compromised through undue influence of just a few of these.

The cornerstone for internet governance is ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), which is generally recognised by the EU to be doing a very reliable work over years. In October this year, ICANN signed a new contract with the US Department of Commerce allowing ICANN greater autonomy (see [IP/06/1297](#)).

The European Commission has been working for several years on a system of Internet governance entrusted fully to the private sector without government interference in the internet's day-to-day management. The Commission cooperated in 1998 with the US in setting up ICANN and hosted, until 2006, the Secretariat of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) to ICANN. Completing the transition of internet governance to the private sector also had been an explicit request by the EU and its partners at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005 (see [IP/05/1433](#)). This led to the formation of the Internet Governance Forum, which met for the first time in Athens at the end of October, marking the beginning of a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on internet governance. The forum is not intended to take decisions but to make recommendations based on multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Telecom Ministers dinner discusses spectrum policy

On 10 December, EU Telecom Ministers met at an informal dinner to exchange views on spectrum policy.

Commissioner Reding stressed to ministers that better spectrum management is an economic issue and not just technical. It is a question of realising the economic potential of spectrum resources. She underlined the urgent need for a coordinated EU spectrum policy, and for easier and more flexible access to spectra. The release of spectra caused by the move from analogue to digital TV services and the development of mobile TV were examples of the need for coordinated EU action.

In September 2005, the Commission had launched a strategy in order to advance the single market for radio spectrum (see [IP/05/1199](#)). Legislative proposals on a more market-oriented approach for spectrum management in Europe could be presented by the Commission in the first half of 2007.

<p><u>A Press Conference on the outcome of the Telecom Council is scheduled for Monday, 11 December, 13:15 hours, in the press room of the Justus Lipsius building.</u></p>
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