


Procedure file

Basic information		
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	1996/2261(COS)	Procedure completed
Telecommunications services: numbering policy in Europe. Green paper.		
Subject 3.30.03 Telecommunications, data transmission, telephone		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy		02/12/1996
		PPE VAN VELZEN W.G.	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ENER Research, Technological Development and Energy		22/11/1996
	ELDR PLOOIJ-VAN GORSEL Ely		
	JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights		05/02/1997
		PPE PALACIO VALLELERSUNDI Ana	
	TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2028	22/09/1997
	Telecommunications	2021	27/06/1997

Key events			
20/11/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0590	Summary
13/12/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/06/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
18/06/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0215/1997	
27/06/1997	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
15/07/1997	Debate in Parliament		
17/07/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0389/1997	Summary
17/07/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		

22/09/1997	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
22/09/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1996/2261(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 142
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/4/08467

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(1996)0590	20/11/1996	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		COM(1997)0203	21/05/1997	EC	
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report		CES0591/1997 OJ C 287 22.09.1997, p. 0015	28/05/1997	ESC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0215/1997 OJ C 222 21.07.1997, p. 0003	18/06/1997	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0389/1997 OJ C 286 22.09.1997, p. 0180-0232	17/07/1997	EP	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report		CES1177/1997	29/10/1997	ESC	Summary

Telecommunications services: numbering policy in Europe. Green paper.

OBJECTIVE: the launch of a debate to clarify the numbering policy in the European Union in order to take greater account of user needs.

SUBSTANCE: The Commission's green paper stresses that on the eve of the liberalization of telecommunications in the Union the availability of appropriate numbers is essential for effective competition, innovation and consumer choice. It is therefore crucial to define a European policy on this matter. To this end the document proposes a timetable for the restructuring of numbering plans with the following deadlines: * from 1998: - carrier selection: implementation of a simple, non-discriminatory mechanism enabling users to select the carrier of their choice on a call by call basis; - number portability: possibility for users to keep their telephone number when changing to another operator or service provider; - promotion of measures to ensure convergence of national number plans: harmonization of specific access codes and the adoption of a common standard for keypads supporting alpha-numeric dialling (replacement of numbers by words); - implementation of a European Telephony Numbering Space: common numbering scheme and common access codes for special pan-European services, for example freephone services, value-added or mobile services or shared cost calls; - establishment of a common framework for the regulation and administration of a common European numbering scheme; - review of the issues associated with naming and addressing in the context of the Internet. * from 2000: - implementation of a simple non-discriminatory mechanism enabling users to pre-select the carrier of their choice on a permanent or default basis; - extension of number portability for users of mobile and personal communications networks as well as for users of special services; - implementation of a long-term numbering plan involving the creation of a European regional code, '3' followed by the relevant country code, for intercontinental calls. The Green paper stresses that discussion on numbering must be part of the general regulatory debate. On the basis of the results of the consultation with all the interested parties, political positions will be developed which the Commission will communicate to the Council and Parliament. ?

Telecommunications services: numbering policy in Europe. Green paper.

The Committee welcomes the green paper and recognizes that it is an important part of the necessary follow- on to full liberalization. A scarce resource, such as numbering, cannot be another "barrier to entry" or otherwise an impediment to the full development of the necessary open and competitive market place in telecommunications services. However, in considering which proposals to adopt as concrete measures the Commission should not preclude possible alternative solutions which may offer better "value for money" (for both consumers and operators) to those contained in the green paper. A number of studies on the costing of the various measures proposed by the Commission are being undertaken and the Committee considers that additional studies may be necessary. Numbers are a scarce resource and therefore restrictions

on the use of numbers imposed by Member States, their national regulatory authorities or public operators can distort competition and have an adverse effect on the telecommunications market place. Finally, the Committee would urge the Commission to explore a pro-active European role within international fora, and in particular those dealing with naming and addressing in the Internet. ?

Telecommunications services: numbering policy in Europe. Green paper.

The Committee adopted a report by Mr W.G. van VELZEN (EPP, NL) on the Commission Green Paper on a Numbering Policy for Europe, calling for a two-step introduction of telephone number portability, ie. transferability of numbers when the service supplier changes. In the first step, number portability should be introduced in all major population centres by 1 January 2000, and thereafter throughout the Union by the year 2003. The Commission is also urged to come forward with proposals to ensure number portability for mobile phones. The report also calls for a harmonisation of prefix codes for different operators, and for a better coordination of national numbering plans. The Committee did however feel that the proposal to introduce a European '3' code as a worldwide access code for Europe is not realistic at this stage. ?

Telecommunications services: numbering policy in Europe. Green paper.

In adopting the report by Mr W.G. van VELZEN (PPE, NL), the European Parliament expressed itself in favour of harmonization of legislation on telecommunications to introduce carrier selection and preselection and number portability throughout the Union. As of 1 January 1998, users are to have at their disposal a simple and non-discriminatory mechanism enabling them to select the carrier of their choice on a call-by-call basis. From the year 2000, carrier preselection (users decide in advance on the long-distance carrier of their choice but they can override by using prefixes) is to be introduced. Also from 1 January 2000, number portability for the local loop should be available in major population centres. Number portability should also be extended to mobile and personal communication networks. Parliament called on the Commission to amend its legislation so as to enable number portability (transferability of numbers when the service supplier changes, including non-geographical special service numbers) to be introduced as soon as possible, and no later than 1 January 2000. The report also advocated harmonizing the prefix codes for reaching alternative operators and better coordination of national codes. However, Parliament considered it premature to propose introducing the figure '3' as an international prefix for the whole of Europe. ?

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In its opinion, the Committee welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the Commission's communication, especially since the subject raised covers one of the last remaining major areas for action in the telecommunication liberalization process. In the main it reiterates the views expressed in its opinion on the green paper. The Committee welcomes the proposed priorities for action which are needed in order to foster the liberalization process and feels that their aims are realistic and essential if there is to be genuine competition, innovation and customer choice for users, which best suits them in terms of quality, service and cost. The availability of adequate numbers and appropriate numbering mechanisms allocated and designed on a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory basis will contribute to the development of the single market in telecommunication services. Finally, the Committee feels that the responsibility for achievement of these objectives belongs to the National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) and points to the responsibility of the Member States to have the required independent NRAs in place and fully operational on time. Without the NRAs and common rules applicable in the EU, the prospects for the intended uniform numbering plan actions will be materially reduced. ?