

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

European regulators call for simpler, more effective EU telecoms regulation framework to deliver more choice for consumers

23 February 2006

The European Regulators Group (ERG), an advisory group to the European Commission made up of Heads of National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs), today published its response to the EC's call for input ahead of the forthcoming Review of the EU regulatory Framework for electronic communications and services.

The Framework was introduced in 2003 to encourage competition, innovation and investment in telecommunications across the EU. It was decided during its inception that it should be periodically reviewed, with the first review to be completed by mid-2006.

The ERG suggests that the objectives of the Framework remain valid and that, by and large, it provides regulators with the tools they need to achieve those objectives. It also strikes an appropriate balance between encouraging investment and permitting deregulation where appropriate. However, as markets evolve and new technologies are introduced, NRAs will need the flexibility to develop new priorities in line with these changes.

Some subtle adjustments to the Framework may therefore need to be made, and the ERG has identified the following as key areas for attention:

- The Framework imposes a significant burden on regulators (and by extension on industry) in terms of process and administration. Process requirements should be streamlined and simplified to help NRAs – especially those that are smaller and less well-resourced – to concentrate on the highest priority issues.
- The Framework must deal with certain competition issues in a more effective manner to ensure real equality of access to key network infrastructure that is essential to the development of competition. NRAs must be able to impose remedies across several communications markets, as a dominant player in one may be able to exert influence over competition in another.
- Greater competition has many benefits, but has led in some cases to an increase in concerns relating to consumer marketing and privacy. More should be done to protect consumers from the excesses of a competitive and open market.

The views of the ERG as expressed in the response are shared by the Independent Regulators Group (IRG).

Annual report

The ERG also today published its Annual Report which details the work undertaken in 2005. It also provided stakeholders and interested parties with the ERG Manual which explains the ways in which it advises and supports the European Commission on the implementation of the regulatory framework for electronic communications.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

The **European Regulators Group (ERG)** consists of European National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs). Its full members are the twenty-five EU Member States whilst the four EFTA States (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and four EU Accession/ Candidate States (Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and Croatia) participate as observers. The ERG was created to act as an advisory group to help the European Commission develop the internal market for electronic communications and services and ensure the consistent application of the regulatory framework.

The ERG takes into account, in its work, the objectives given to NRAs in Article 8 of the Framework Directive (2002/21/EC) to promote competition, contribute to the development of the internal market and promote the interests of EU citizens.

The Independent Regulators Group (IRG) is an unofficial forum of NRA Heads. The IRG members are the heads of the same thirty-three countries as those of the ERG.

For further details please visit <http://www.erg.eu.int/>.

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