

Telecoms package - MEPs eager to start talks on roaming and net neutrality

Following today's green light to start negotiations on the telecoms package, MEPs will try to convince member states to ban, rather than lower, roaming charges and include proper safeguards for an open internet (net neutrality). MEPs are also expected to urge member states to give the Latvian presidency a broader mandate, including rules to facilitate trade on radio spectrum frequencies, needed to develop the market for fast mobile internet.

"Council now has a mandate to start negotiations with Parliament on the telecoms package. The Latvian Presidency should call for an immediate opening of trialogues", Parliament's rapporteur Pilar del Castillo (EPP, ES) commented. Her report - Parliament's mandate for negotiations - was adopted on 3 April 2014 and reconfirmed by the Industry committee after the elections.

"Parliament wants to abolish retail roaming charges for voice, SMS and data by 15 December 2015 and improve radio spectrum management to develop 4G and 5G throughout Europe. We also want further guarantees to maintain the openness of the Internet by ensuring that users can run and provide applications and services of their choice as well as reinforcing the Internet as a key driver of competitiveness, economic growth, jobs, social development and innovation", she added.

Ending "roaming" charges in 2015

In the vote last year, MEPs called for a ban of "roaming" charges (extra fees for using a mobile phone to call, send text messages or access the internet in another EU country) anywhere in the EU as of 15 December 2015. If roaming services are abused, however, capped charges could exceptionally be imposed, MEPs said.

Net neutrality - equal internet access for service suppliers

MEPs want clear rules to prevent internet access providers from promoting some services at the expense of others. They shortened the European Commission's list of "exceptional" cases in which internet access providers could still be entitled to block or slow down the internet and introduced a definition of "net neutrality": that in the open internet all traffic is treated equally, without discrimination, restriction or interference, independently of its sender, recipient, type, content, device, service or application.

A broader mandate

The Plenary mandate from last year is broader than the mandate agreed by member states today. For instance, MEPs wanted rules to improve the trade with radio spectrum frequencies - necessary to create a functioning internal market for wireless broadband communications.

Next steps

Both Parliament's and Council's agreement is needed to adopt the final legislation. Now that member states have a mandate, informal negotiations ("trialogues") aiming at reaching a compromise will start as soon as possible, probably in the end of March.

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[Profile of rapporteur Pilar del CASTILLO \(EPP, ES\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Ensure open access for internet service suppliers and ban roaming fees, say MEPs \(Press release 3 April 2014\)](#)

[Council press release: Roaming and open internet: Council ready for talks with EP](#)

[Committee on Industry, Research and Energy](#)

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