

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3015/00

by The Lord Bethell (PPE-DE), Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE) and Charles Tannock (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Gibraltar's access to telephone networks in Spain

Prior to December 1995 the Spanish telephone operator Telefonica (at that time the only GSM operator offering a service in Spain) refused to conclude a roaming agreement with GIBTEL, in apparent violation of competition and single market rules. As a consequence once GIBTEL GSM customers cross into Spain and move outside the area of coverage of their own base stations, they are not able to use their GIBTEL mobile phones until they cross into Andorra, France or Portugal, despite the fact that GIBTEL has concluded roaming agreements with GSM operators in every other EU Member State.

In June of this year it is our understanding that a letter signed by Commissioners Bolkestein, Liikanen and Monti was sent to the governments of Spain and the United Kingdom instructing them to arrive at a solution to both the numbering and the roaming complaints by the end of July 2000, the deadline later being extended to the end of August 2000. This second deadline has now expired with the problem unresolved.

Spanish territorial claims to Gibraltar notwithstanding, could the Commission indicate whether it believes that the citizens of Gibraltar are entitled to equal protection under the European treaties as every other citizen of the European Union, and whether the discriminatory treatment of GIBTEL by Telefonica is legal, and, if so, what measures the Commission proposes in order to uphold the treaties?