

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3125/09
by Christel Schaldemose (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Blocking of "Voice on the Net" services

"Voice on the Net" services have become very popular with Internet users in recent years. This possibility has opened the way for cheap and stable Internet telephone services used by millions of consumers every day.

A few weeks ago, however, the German telecom operator T-Mobile decided to block the use of the Skype telecommunications service, which specifically offers telephone calls over the Internet. The explanation given was that blocking Skype would ensure that T-Mobile could manage its telecommunications network effectively.

A normal Skype call, however, only uses 8 to 20 kbit/s, which is equivalent to downloading a normal homepage, and thus has no greater impact on broadband speed than low-speed broadband. This restriction therefore reduces the chances of individual consumers obtaining the cheapest rates for telephone calls.

1. Is the Commission aware that T-Mobile and other operators are preventing their users from using telecommunications services such as Skype?
2. Does the Commission consider that this is compatible with current EU competition rules?
3. Does the Commission consider that this restriction on the right of consumers to choose their telecommunications services complies with EU rules on consumer protection?
4. Will the new telecoms package give network operators the opportunity in the future to impose these and similar restrictions on the use by consumers of broadband for programmes and services?