

Citizens' summary

EU initiative to create an integrated European telecoms market

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

Europe still faces a deep economic and social crisis. It must tap into all sources of growth to restore its competitiveness, drive innovation and create new jobs. The European Commission is proposing new rules to complete the European market in electronic communications.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- As the Internet becomes increasingly central to the global economy, information and telecommunications technologies (ICTs) are becoming an ever more important driver of growth.
- The European market for electronic communications is still too fragmented to capitalise fully on this growth driver.
- To remedy this state of affairs:
 - any telecoms operator must be able to offer the same high-quality services to any customer anywhere in the EU
 - all individuals and businesses must be free to use digital services, irrespective of where they are based within the EU.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Consumers and businesses** would enjoy greater choice and better quality of service "anytime, anywhere and on any device", including the abolition of unjustified roaming charges and price differences between domestic calls and calls to other EU countries.
- **Citizens** would enjoy more efficient public services.
- The **European telecoms industry** would be better able to compete globally and provide affordable superfast services.
- Other industries would benefit, such as **car manufacturing** and **health**, which rely on connectivity for production, for logistics and distribution, and for their products themselves.
- The **wider economy**: the transition to a digital economy is expected to add an annual 0.9% (€10 billion) growth to the EU's GDP.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- The different rules that apply in different EU countries make it hard to operate and consume services across borders.
- Only the EU has the perspective and the power to create a single set of rules that would apply across Europe.

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

- Consumers and businesses would be able to pick the best offers, regardless of where they are, including:
 - freedom to switch providers
 - clearer information about Internet contracts (e.g. connection speeds, data caps, etc.)

- better protection in contractual relations.
- Site blocking and online throttling would be banned (except in very limited, clearly justified cases).
- Telecoms operators would be able to do business in all countries with a single EU authorisation.

WHEN ARE THE NEW RULES LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

By spring 2014.