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New measures to cut broadband costs agreed by the Council and the Parliament

The member states' permanent representatives today endorsed the compromise reached between the Council and the European Parliament concerning a directive which will make it **easier and cheaper to roll out high-speed electronic communications networks**, among other things by promoting the **joint use of infrastructure**, such as electricity, gas and sewage pipes.

According to Commission estimates, civil engineering, such as digging up roads to lay down fibre-optic cables, accounts for up to 80% of the cost of deploying high-speed networks. Reducing these costs is expected to encourage investment in broadband rollout and lower the threshold for market entry. More EU citizens will get broadband at a lower cost, wherever they are. It should also contribute to the digitisation of public administrations, thus improving the efficiency of services provided for citizens and companies.

The Greek Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, Mr Michalis Chrisochoidis, stressed, “This Directive is expected to facilitate universal broadband coverage, promoting broadband deployment in remote or scarcely populated areas, in order to ensure access to the information society for more citizens, as a prerequisite for development.

Moreover, this proposal utilises resources that have so far been neglected (e.g. power line networks) while suggesting better use of existing infrastructures by more networks, in order to cut down costs and facilitate broadband deployment.”

P R E S S

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The Council and the Parliament agreed that the legal act would be a directive, instead of a regulation.

As the directive only sets minimum requirements to facilitate rollout and coordination, member states may adopt additional measures in this area.

Main points agreed between the Council and the European Parliament:

Access to existing infrastructure

Every network operator - that is, telecoms operators or undertakings active in other sectors, such as electricity distribution or waste water treatment - will have the right to offer telecoms operators access to its infrastructure for the purpose of broadband installation.

Network operators will have the obligation to meet all reasonable requests for access to their infrastructure as provided for in the directive. Possible grounds for refusal include technical unsuitability, safety, public health or network security.

Access to infrastructure information

In order to be able to effectively plan the deployment of high-speed broadband, telecoms operators will have the right to access, via a single information point, the following minimum information concerning an infrastructure: location, route, type and current use, and a contact point. Similar information would be available about planned infrastructure work.

Where this information is not available via the single information point, the telecoms operators may request it directly from the network operator.

If the question of access to information gives rise to a dispute, any party may refer the case to a national dispute settlement body, which will issue a binding decision. This does not affect the possibility of any party to refer the case to a court.

Coordination of civil works

Network operators will have the right to negotiate agreements on the coordination of civil works with telecoms operators for the purpose of broadband deployment.

If no agreement on such civil work coordination is reached within one month, any party can refer the issue to the competent national dispute settlement body. While the parties must cooperate fully with the dispute settlement body, any party also has the possibility to refer the case to a court.

Dispute settlement bodies and single information points

The tasks of the national dispute settlement body may be undertaken by one or more competent bodies. Similarly, the functions of the single information point may be performed by one or more national, regional or local-level bodies.

Member states may allow these bodies to charge fees to cover their costs.

New buildings

All new buildings - and those undergoing major renovation - for which applications for building permission have been submitted after 31 December 2016 must be high-speed ready. Member states may provide for exemptions where this would lead to disproportionate costs and for specific types of building such as historic buildings and holiday homes.

"Broadband-ready" label

Member states may choose to introduce a voluntary "broadband-ready" label for buildings with high-speed access.

Property rights

The telecoms operators' rights to access physical infrastructure under this directive are consistent with the normal exercise of property rights, that is, the rights of the owner of the land or of the building in which the infrastructure is located.

When will the new measures come into effect?

Member states must adopt national provisions to comply with the directive by 1 January 2016.

They must apply the new measures from 1 July 2016.

Next steps

To enter into force, the text still needs to be formally approved by the Parliament, whose vote in plenary is expected to take place in April, and the Council, which is due to take its decision after the vote in Parliament.

See also:

[Digital agenda for Europe: Broadband cost reduction](#)