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Roaming and net neutrality

Agreement reached but major loopholes remain

The European Commission, Council and European Parliament, meeting last night, agreed on the foundations of the package of legislative proposals on a telecommunications single market. According to the agreement, roaming charges will be abolished by mid-2017. However, companies retain the possibility of passing any resulting losses onto the consumers. MEP **Michel Reimon**, who followed the negotiations on this file for the Greens/EFA group, commented:

"Centre-right MEPs, together with EU governments and Günther Oettinger, the European Commissioner responsible for the digital single market, ignored the excellent parliamentary resolution of 2014 on the digital single market: roaming charges will be abolished in mid- 2017 - but the compromise is full of major loopholes. Suppliers will be entitled to offset losses by introducing other fees if they secure their domestic prices and the burden of proof that such supplementary charges are not necessary will lie with the national regulatory authorities. Many governments do not want to abolish roaming charges and will choose their policies along these lines. In addition, there will be a patchwork of national derogations. It's highly questionable as to whether calling and surfing will be any cheaper in 2017.

In a further blow to Green demands, the agreement provides de facto for the abolition of net neutrality. Telecom companies will be entitled to introduce upgraded 'specialised services' for internet use and charge accordingly. It's incomprehensible that after 13 hours of negotiations, the centre-left MEPs gave in on these proposals within the space of a few minutes.

In addition to this, the joint European management of the radio spectrum that has been in place until now and which is necessary for the effective functioning of the system as a whole, was abruptly sacrificed by the Parliament's negotiators with barely a second thought. From now on, management of the radio spectrum will be the exclusive preserve of the national governments. While the development of the European digital single market was supposed to be a central plank of the Juncker Commission's programme, this is a bad start.

Greens will now work on building a majority against the compromise in time for its vote in plenary."

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Michel Reimon

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