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Mário Lino

Minister of Public Works, Transport and Communications

Mário Lino began by offering his congratulations for the fact that the conference had been included within the scope of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), bringing together electronic communications specialists from around the world.

In view of the globalisation of markets and the challenge of convergence, a new reality is taking shape: the provision of different communication services not being tied to specific technologies (technological neutrality), in conjunction with the existence of a huge range of equipment providing different services, with the availability of different content. All these factors change electronic communications as it has been seen up until now. As a result there are new challenges that call for new European measures and policy guidelines; these are manifesting themselves during the current review of the regulatory framework of electronic communications.

The Portuguese Presidency has made this issue a priority. Commission proposals on the review of the regulatory framework of electronic communications are expected to be presented in mid November at the time of the EU Council for Telecommunications. The key questions to be addressed include the consolidation of the internal market, new powers for central authorities (Commission veto in respect of remedies), harmonisation in the application of remedies applied by national regulatory authorities and in radio spectrum policy.

Mário Lino also identified further sectorial issues being highlighted under the Portuguese Presidency of the EU:

- the proposed decision of the European Commission on mobile services via satellite in the 2GHz band, which will bring a new dynamic to the electronic communications market;
- the proposed revision of the GSM Directive with the adoption of a new Directive setting out the consensus between the Member States of the EU;
- the implementation of mobile television, supported in a pan-European strategy bringing consumer benefits in terms of available services and content as well as the promotion of cultural diversity;
- the digital dividend in respect of the switchover from analogue to digital television – a subject to be evaluated by WRC-07 in October 2007.

At a national level, Mário Lino pointed out the current challenges of placing Portugal among the best at a global level, in respect of the spread of ICT and making the most of the opportunities that result from the convergence of services and technologies: greater accessibility; greater penetration of electronic communication services and advanced networks allowing universal access; new platforms driving new services, such as eGovernment; the general use of personal computers with broadband access. He also pointed out, in this context, the concrete results that Portugal has already achieved in the area of eGovernment and mobile broadband.

All these objectives, which have the aim of promoting sustainable development, depend on convergence being, first and foremost, the convergence of people and ideas.