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Roberto Viola

ERG and IRG Chairman

To ensure the defence of the public interest while guaranteeing that the regulatory environment does not impede innovation; this was how Roberto Viola, chairman of the European Regulators Group (ERG) in representation of AGCOM (Italy), set out the challenge faced by national regulatory authorities (NRAs) when speaking of regulation and convergence. He also added that greater international cooperation would lead to better results being achieved.

With 35 members (27 Member States of the European Union and 8 observer countries), the ERG is the world's largest NRA network. Roberto Viola highlighted the work of ANACOM as a highly active member of the Group, especially in the work of disclosing information of the IRG and in analysing the various issues under debate.

The ERG has formulated a series of common positions on a range of topical regulatory issues. Roberto Viola considers that competition depends also on the quality of the technological infrastructure and, therefore, that regulation needs to provide a balance between return on investment and the measures imposed.

As far as the second and third pillars are concerned, Roberto Viola highlighted the information already set out with regard to next generation networks (NGN) and the common position to be presented by the working group on VoIP at the next plenary, where a consensus between NRAs is expected. The ERG chairman also announced that new common positions will be presented shortly, especially on termination in mobile and fixed telephone services.

The ERG is currently drawing up a report on convergence, which Roberto Viola stresses is a challenge from an institutional point of view, in that the work being carried out requires a link between the NRAs, content regulators and competition authorities. He went on to emphasise that convergence can be seen as the migration from a vertical to an horizontal market, at different levels – regulation will need to come up with answers in respect of the type of service, network, access and technological support, with solutions needed that do not inhibit innovation.

In terms of ERG future role, Roberto Viola indicated that since February, work has been underway with the European Commission on the evolution of the Group. With harmonisation being the key component of the role performed by the European NRAs, there needs to be a mechanism that allows the harmonised application of their decisions.

It was also mentioned that the visibility of the ERG required greater professionalism and that all are interested in accelerating its evolution, with the Group engaging in ever greater international interaction with other international organisations. Roberto Viola highlighted the cooperation at the Mediterranean level (with a meeting scheduled for December 15th with the countries of the Mediterranean basin) and with Asia, alongside the relations that exist with Latin America, especially with the Latin American Forum of Telecommunications Regulators (Regulatel), in which ANACOM plays a fundamental role.