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Role of Europe's national regulators reinforced following intense 2008 regulatory agenda

National regulators welcome the Council's common position on the European legislative framework for electronic communications and underline the importance of further competitive deployment of Next Generation Networks.

At its plenary session in Budapest, Hungary, on 4-5 December, national regulators endorsed the outcome of the latest EU Telecoms Council and the progress made in the first reading of the framework review package. They look forward to further improvements in the draft legislation which reflect the I/ERG's agreed principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. They also welcomed current proposals on what they consider to be a solid and workable institutional format for the new European regulatory group.

"The I/ERG believes that the compromise reached by the Council represents a decisive step since it hopefully allows for a final approval of the telecom package to be reached by the middle of next year", said Daniel Pataki, Chairman of the I/ERG. Pataki added that, *"A successful conclusion of the review will allow Europe to regulate more effectively and provide greater benefits of consumers and businesses."*

Regarding the framework review, the I/ERG supports the two-tier institutional approach currently being proposed, where regulatory opinions as well as common positions and ultimate decisions are made by a plenary comprising the national regulators and operative functions are exercised by a separate secretariat. The secretariat should have sufficient but not excessive resources to ensure a professional running of the group. The I/ERG believes it is equally important that the new group enjoys full legal independence and that it has stable access to funding. Finally, the body should be open to participation by non-EU member NRAs.

The I/ERG has also discussed the progress of the deployment of Next Generation Networks Access networks in Europe and issued a separate statement on the subject. It has particularly welcomed that the recent European Commission has identified investments in the development of a high speed broadband infrastructure as one of the key elements of the recovery plan to the current financial and economic crisis. I/ERG Chair Pataki underlined that, *"The rapid deployment of ultra wide band infrastructures represents a key enabler for sustainable economic growth. The ERG shares the Commission view that the long term aim is to have a broadband connection reaching each European home. To upgrade the existing European networks to next generation fiber based networks, a multibillion euro investment will be needed. In addition to fiber based networks, wireless broadband access is also*

key to accelerate the deployment. The current framework provides for the necessary appropriate regulatory tools to ensure a competitive roll-out."

During its plenary meeting in the Hungarian capital, the ERG made progress on a number of important ongoing regulatory dossiers affecting the sector, including end-user empowerment and I/ERG-RSPG cooperation. The I/ERG also discussed the preliminary results of its 3rd Data Report on roaming (April-September) which will soon be made available to the Commission and published.

Based on a public consultation, the ERG adopted yet again an ambitious Work Programme for 2009 aiming to *adjust regulation to a changing market environment and prepare for legal and institutional change.* The priority areas are the following:
- Framework Review
- International Roaming Regulation
- NGN/NGA evolution
- Scope of the Universal Service
- Monitoring of Compliance with Common Positions.

The ERG looks back at an intense year and a series of achievements in its young 7-year history. The body's successful efforts to ensure operational excellence, advance on an ambitious work programme and provide a steady stream of expertise and advice to the European Commission have transformed the ERG into a decisive driver for regulatory change and a strong voice in the broader policy debates shaping the European electronic communications sector. Furthermore the cooperation among regulators led to the development of best practice approaches and ensures a consistent application of the regulatory framework helping to promote the internal market.

Mr. Pataki, president of the Hungarian regulator NHH, will step down as ERG Chairman at the end of the year to commit his time to the Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG), of which he became the Chairman in November. Matthias Kurth of the German regulator BNetzA will take helm at the I/ERG as of January 2009.

John Doherty, head of the Irish regulator, COMREG, has been elected Chair of I/ERG for 2010. Also, Roberto Viola and Chris Fonteijn, Heads of the Italian regulator AGCOM and the Dutch regulator OPTA, have been endorsed to continue to serve in IRG Board together with the Troika (Chair, outgoing and the incoming Chair) in 2009.

All documents will be available on the ERG website: ***http://erg.ec.europa.eu*** and ***http://www.irg.eu***.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

The European Regulators Group (ERG) was created to act as an advisory group to help the European Commission develop the internal market for electronic communications and services and ensure the consistent application of the regulatory Framework.

The ERG takes into account in its work the objectives given to NRAs in Article 8 of the Framework Directive (2002/21/EC) to promote competition, contribute to the development of the internal market and promote the interests of EU citizens.

The ERG consists of European National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs). Its full members are the twenty-seven EU Member States whilst the four EFTA States (Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and three EU Candidate States (Turkey, Croatia and Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) participate as observers.

*For more information please contact the ERG secretariat at **erg-secretariat@ec.europa.eu** or visit our website at **http://erg.ec.europa.eu***