



## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH  
DIRECTORATE A  
DIVISION FOR INTERNATIONAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

### FACTSHEET

#### THE CZECH REPUBLIC

#### Chapter 19 - Telecoms, Information Technology and Postal Services

##### 1. The *acquis* <sup>1</sup>

###### *Telecommunications*

The telecommunications sector is subject to the competition rules of the Treaty. The opening of telecoms markets across the EU began in 1988 and was completed by 1998. The objective is to promote the competitiveness of the single market and stimulate investment. Following a major review of the sector in 1999, the telecommunications *acquis* was updated in February 2002. Candidate countries will be required to transpose and apply the modified legislation by the time they become members. Implementation requires the removal of any conflict of interest, real or apparent, through the effective separation of regulatory responsibilities from operational interests. This includes the establishment of an independent regulatory authority and a separation of policy and law-making authorities from ownership interests.

The candidate countries will be required to:

- adopt a national telecommunications development policy consistent with Community policy;
- prepare the market players for the pressure of competition once they join the Union;
- transpose and implement Community legislation;
- ensure objective enforcement of the regulatory framework by establishing an adequately resourced and trained independent authority;
- address the communications needs of under-developed regions.

Candidates have made considerable progress in adopting and applying the existing *acquis*, but will need to make considerable additional efforts to adopt the new legislation before accession.

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<sup>1</sup> Information largely drawn from the European Commission, DG Enlargement  
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/negotiations/index.htm>

This will require private sector investment as well as pre-accession aid and, in order to attract this, countries need to complete the process of separating regulatory responsibilities from operational interests.

### *Postal services*

Postal services are also subject to the competition rules of the Treaty. EU policy in this sector grew out of a combination of consumer demand for better, faster services and the availability of new technologies. The policy of gradual liberalisation of postal services was adopted following the widespread debate on the Commission's 1992 Green Paper. The overall objective of the policy is the gradual opening-up of the single market for postal services within a regulatory framework that ensures a universal service.

The candidate countries need to:

- adopt a national postal development policy consistent with Community policy;
- prepare market players for the pressure of competition when they join the Union;
- transpose and implement Community legislation.

## **2. The negotiations**

The chapter has been closed with ten countries and provisionally closed with Bulgaria and Romania. Transitional arrangements have been requested by Bulgaria and Poland.

**Chapter opened**      October 1998

**Status**              Closed December 2002 (provisionally closed in April 1999)

**Transitional arrangements:** none

## **3. Position of the European Parliament**

In its resolution of 4 October 2000<sup>1</sup>, Parliament points out, in this context, that the fulfilment of commitments made during the accession negotiations is the key factor as regards assessment of the Czech Republic's readiness for accession and that the Czech government's attempt to postpone liberalisation of the country's telecommunications market until the end of 2002 is therefore likely to be problematic.

## **4. Latest Assessment by the European Commission <sup>2</sup>**

In its 1997 Opinion, the Commission concluded that the Czech Republic should have little difficulty in complying with the *acquis* in the medium term, provided that current efforts in transposition of laws and their implementation were continued. It added that the tariffs should be further re-balanced in order to enable the public operator to take up competition.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution on the state of negotiations with the Czech Republic, § 3: [A5-0245/2000](#)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Regular Report on the Czech Republic 2002, p. 99:  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2002/cz\\_en.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report2002/cz_en.pdf)

Since the Opinion considerable progress has been achieved. The Czech Republic's telecommunications policy developed strongly along EC lines with an emphasis on competition, development of the telecommunications infrastructure and diversification of the market. However, competition in the telecommunications market was held back unnecessarily for 18 months after market opening in January 2001. The situation was compounded by the relatively weak position of the Regulator and by gaps in the Telecommunications Act. Despite these problems, the Czech Republic is now overall relatively well advanced as regards the market liberalisation. Further efforts are needed to complete the process of liberalisation. Alignment with the postal services *acquis* has made good progress but regulatory improvements are necessary.

Negotiations on this chapter have been provisionally closed. The Czech Republic has not requested any transitional arrangements. The Czech Republic is generally meeting the commitments it has made in the accession negotiations in this field.

In order to complete preparations for membership the Czech Republic's efforts now need to focus on full liberalisation of the telecommunications market and on strengthening the regulatory framework, both in the telecommunications and in the postal sector.

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