

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Towards Europe-wide systems and services -

**Green Paper on a common approach in the field of
satellite communications in the European Community**

Communication from the Commission

SHORT PRESENTATION

Satellite communications have developed dramatically during recent years. As the European Community approaches the Europe-wide market of 1992, satellite communications are becoming a vital element for the trans-European services and networks needed for the single European market, and the broader continental dimension which is developing from the revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe.

Since satellite communications represent by far the largest commercial application for satellite technology, they will determine, to a large extent, the commercial success of Europe's effort to gain a strategic and future-proof position in space. They have developed into an essential element of the common European audio-visual space, which is a central precondition for Europe's future political and cultural identity and coherence.

This Communication is being written at a time when the European Community is about to achieve its aim of completing the internal market by 1992. Satellite communications can make an important contribution to this process, given the appropriate regulatory and market developments.

In the field of satellite communications the challenge is particularly great. The Community's internal market is still highly compartmentalized. This may, if no changes are brought about, hamper the development of its satellite industry, which is still in its infancy in service terms - despite its advanced position in technological terms. This compartmentalisation has not allowed the appropriate use of the potential of the new satellite communications technologies for the provision of Europe-wide systems and services.

The need for change is therefore undeniable. The compartmentalisation of the Community's satellite communications market cannot be maintained in view of 1992.

Abolishing these restrictions is not only in the interest of users, service providers and equipment manufacturers, but also in the interest of the Member States themselves. The Commission's move for liberalisation in the field of terrestrial telecommunications, based on the Green Paper for the development of a common market for telecommunications services and equipment, was supported by all Member States, since they were convinced that they would otherwise forego the potential growth of this market, the business opportunities for their industry and the supply of their users with advanced telecommunications services.

In the field of satellite communications, the same considerations apply.

Furthermore, the recent changes in Eastern Europe define a range of applications which may prove particularly suited to satellite technology. Only with a lifting of restrictive national regulations within the Community, thereby allowing the implementation of Europe-wide satellite terminal networks, can the European Community play a full role in meeting the emerging satellite communications needs of its Eastern neighbours. Otherwise Central and Eastern Europe's satellite technology and equipment needs are likely to be met by suppliers from third countries, who can build on the existence of major satellite terminal networks already implemented in their home countries due to their more liberal regulatory regime.