



UNIVERSITATEA "LUCIAN BLAGA" DIN SIBIU
FACULTATEA DE ȘTIINȚE ECONOMICE

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DIN PERSPECTIVA INTEGRĂRII ÎN ANUL 2007

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TELEPHONY SERVICES TO THE EUROPEAN UNION STANDARDS

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Telecommunications branch had over the last years a special dynamic evolution, characterized by reorganization, privatization, liberalization, in conditions of a great technological evolution. The main specific normative papers which govern the telecommunication sectors are the law of telecommunications and the law through which the agreements are ratified by the World Commerce Organization (WCO), regarding Commerce with Telecommunications Services. By Telecommunications Law No. 74/1996 are defined the telecommunications services, the service suppliers' and operators' general obligations, is defined the normalize authority and the attributions are specified. Romania engaged to liberalize all the segments of the telecommunications market, appropriate to an EU program and to respect a succession of principles in this domain.

The telecommunications branch had over the last years a special dynamic evolution, characterized by reorganization, privatization, liberalization, in the conditions of a great technological evolution. In the last decade it was the most dynamic sector, the investment index being exponential.

The mobile telephony is, today, a serious competitor of wired telephony. At present on Earth, statistics say, there are more than 500 million mobile phones and this number is estimated to double in the next years.

Telecommunications have developed very much in the last years. The cell phone became a consumer good and in 2002 the mobile subscribers outnumbered the land - line ones. Telecommunications have stopped being considered a luxury service. In the context of communication and the right to information, fundamental rights of citizens are recognized and respected, thus ensuring a universal service that has become a special condition of the new society.

In Romania there are 2 types of telephony services:

- Land-line services – for the moment only by Romtelecom Company mediation; the near future ensures the appearance of some competitors.

- Mobile telephony services - by authorized operators mediation (Connex, Orange, Cosmorom, Zapp).

In Romania there are two GSM900 operators, one GSM1800 and one NMT operator.

The two GSM900 operators, Mobifon and Mobil Rom, have received in December 1996, following an international public auction, a 10 years license with the possibility of renewing it. The services were initiated in May, respectively June 1997 and have proved a big commercial success. Cosmorom, a Romtelecom subsidiary, received on December 1997 a 10 year license for GSM1800.

The main specific normative papers which govern the telecommunication sectors are the law of telecommunications and the law through which the agreements are ratified by the World Commerce Organization (WCO), regarding Commerce with Telecommunications Services. These are completed through government resolutions and Ministry orders. The operators and services suppliers work on the basis of licenses and authorizations released by the Information Technology and Communications Ministry, in its capacity of normalizing authority. The licenses are public.

By Telecommunications Law No. 74/1996 are defined the telecommunications services, the service suppliers' and operators' general obligations, is defined the normalize authority and the attributions are specified. Romania ratified (through Govern Prescript No. 1/1998, adopted by Law 169/1998) the 4-th Protocol of the General Agreement of Telecommunication Services (GATS), negotiated under the World Commerce Organization aegis. Romania engaged to liberalize all the segments of the telecommunications market, appropriate to an EU program and to respect a succession of principles in this domain. Thus, the telecommunications market was liberalized in February 1998, except for the public local telephony and loaned lines for which there have been kept exclusive rights until the 1st of January 2003. The use of frequencies is the target of a normative paper for some services only. For the other services the harmonization is realized in CEPT.

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The economic progress of any nation depends on the existence of a developed private sector, characterized by the direct competition, the companies' easier access on the market and the initiative's encouragement. The privatizing is, first of all, the context that could produce the economic dynamism for a functional economy.

One of the privatizing pillars in Romania is the liberalizing in the sector of the telecommunication services by the transfer to the private sector of important parts of the public sector. The efforts must concentrate on implementing of legal and institutional frames for the privatizing program in this sector.

The 2003 year, characterized by the complete liberalization of the electronic communications' market, can be considered as a "preparatory year". Before this date, the other market segments were already liberalized (the mobile telephony, data communications, Internet services supplying, cable television and satellite networks). RomTelecom have lost thus, at least theoretical, the monopoly position concerning the voice services in the fixed telephony.

Although the first half of the 2003 year have registered a little wane of RomTelecom incomes, its market shares won't much decrease after the first liberalization years. A comparison with the developed countries situation, where the telecommunications liberalization took place in 1998, illustrates the competition level that the new operators can develop. Thus, in keeping with the 8th report of the European Commission, the former monopolist' market share (expressed in incomes from the retail services) have decreased with more than 25% for the international and long-distance calls. For the local calls, the dominating operators' market shares have diminished below 75% in only four countries. In 11 from the 15 member countries, more than 90% from the telephone users have access to more than three alternative suppliers for the local calls and in the 12 member countries over 90% from the telephone users may use more than five alternative suppliers for the international and long-distance calls.

One year after the liberalization moment, there were only two alternative fixed telephony offers, two factors putting off the competition being the late appearance of ANRC (The National Authority for the Communication Settlement) and a penetration rate of 19% for the fixed telephony, with more below the neighboring countries average (38% in Hungary and Czech Republic). We could add the fact that, using the classic technology, in Romania the fixed telephony is an unattractive business because of the high investments that it involve, comparing with the mobile telephony, and the decreased incomes determined by the low tariffs. The European Commission' country report for 2003 specifies, in the section dedicated to the telecommunications and the information technology, that the native industry is still marked by some competitors' state capital. One solution could be the communication operators' privatizing with state capital, followed by the partnerships with the great international operators, thus including the Romanian companies in the international traffic.

The great number of operators who announced their intention of penetrating the profile market surpassed the most optimistic expectations of the analysts. The size of the Romanian communications market, supported by the companies' communication budgets and the purchase power of the residential customers segment, doesn't justify the economic activity of such a great number of operators. A similar experience of the neighboring countries demonstrates that, in a few years, the operators number will decrease below 1% due to the market maturing process. The maturing process of the electronic communications' Romanian market will lead implacable to mergers and acquisitions, position consolidations by advantageous partnerships and, also, bankruptcies. The small operators could survive for a while to the small services level, offered for a modest group of customers. They can have three possible solutions: to rise enough so that they could turn into great operators, to develop their network sufficiently so that they would be purchased by a great operator or to offer their services for a short time and to reinvest the gained money in another business when they can not compete any more.

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