[MT] New Internet and Other Data Networks Regulations

IRIS 1999-10:1/2

Klaus J. Schmitz
Consultant, Cologne

The debate over data transmission services via cable network has entered a new phase. As was previously reported (IRIS 1999-8: 16), Malta's ISPs voiced their opposition to Internet access being offered directly through the island's network of cable providers. The conflict reached a brief climax when local ISPs, in a press release of 4 October 1999, announced a boycott of Melita Cable's network with immediate effect. Citing previous efforts to "spur the Telecom Regulator, the Government and Melita Cable to [...] enforce Open Access to guarantee that the Internet in Malta remains a fully functional, free and competitive market", the ISPs justified their action on grounds that Melita itself, was denying access to its network. The boycott effectively cut off all e-mail connections to and from the cable provider's network.

The action was called off the next day following a meeting between the five local ISPs and the Minister for Communications. New regulations were announced and have since come into effect. The new «Internet and Other Data Networks (Service Providers) Regulations» now state clearly that: "The provision of Internet and other data networks access services shall be made through a company whose sole business is the provision of such services". They prohibit cross-subsidisation to or from other telecommunications services or from other activities in respect of Internet- and other Data Networks Access Services. Areas such as concentration of ownership, interconnection etc. are also regulated. The ISPs are required to prepare a Code of Practice containing provisions concerning data protection, customer service, charges, as well as protection against harmful content of the services.

In a news conference on 13 October 1999 Melita Cable announced that it would suspend the proposed new service until a number of issues have been clarified.

Internet and Other Data Networks (Service Providers), Regulations 1999.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026