[CH] Universal Service Extended in Telecommunications Sector

IRIS 2002-1:1/24

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The Swiss government is taking technical and sociological developments into account by extending the universal service. From 1 January 2003, all Swiss residents will be entitled to a digital connection as well as an analogue terminal as part of the universal service. The Bundesrat (Federal Council) has fixed a maximum price for the use of a digital connection. The upper price limits for national telephone calls have been reduced in view of recent price developments. The price of an analogue connection remains unchanged.

The minimum quantity and features of public telephones (Publifone) have been lowered, since demand is steadily falling as a result of the growth of the mobile telephone sector. In principle, however, every local community will remain entitled to at least one public telephone. Depending on population size, geographical area and structure, further call boxes may be provided in locations to be determined in consultation with the local authorities concerned.

The Fernmeldegesetz (Telecommunications Act - FMG) of 30 April 1997 stipulates that one or more telecommunications service providers should be obliged to make available all elements of the universal service to all sections of the population within the territory covered by their licence. Under an interim regulation, Swisscom AG must fulfil this requirement by the end of 2002.

Looking ahead to the expiry of this interim period, the Eidgenössische Kommunikationskommission (Federal Communications Commission - ComCom) is currently dealing with an invitation for tenders for the next universal service licence.

Verordnung vom 31. Oktober 2001 über Fernmeldedienste (FDV)

http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c784_101_1.html

Decree on Telecommunications Services

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