

14 March 2011: Social tariff for Internet access

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The *Autorité de la concurrence* has been requested for an opinion regarding the implementation of a broadband internet tariff scheme for consumers on low incomes

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On 8 March, the French minister of economy, finance and industry sought the opinion of the *Autorité de la concurrence* regarding the implementation of a social tariff for broadband internet access.

This request for opinion is a follow-up of a round-table meeting held on 7 March, attended by telecommunications operators and government members Mr Eric Besson, Minister of industry, energy and digital economy attached to the Minister of economy, finance and industry and Mr Frédéric Lefebvre, Secretary of State for trade, craft industries, small and medium-sized enterprises, tourism, services, professionals and consumer affairs, attached to the Minister of economy, finance and industry.

A social tariff is envisaged in two sectors, mobile telecommunications and broadband internet access, with the aim of giving low income consumers access to affordable services. It is inspired by the universal service scheme already in place for landline connections. The foreseen social tariff would consist in labeling offers that include a package of services for a price situated below a price cap. Unlike the universal service for landline connections, operators would not be compensated for delivering these offers, which could raise competition

concerns, particularly regarding broadband access, due to the specific position of the incumbent operator.

In its analysis, the *Autorité* will assess the issues related to such social labeling scheme and provide any useful recommendation regarding its implementation. The *Autorité*'s opinion will be issued by the end of the first semester of 2011.

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