

Contribution from Italy's Regulator: AGCOM

Regulatory principles in promoting universal access to information and communication technologies

1. Universal access to new services and new technologies is a driver in market regulation.
2. This principle has to be counterbalanced with the principle of technological and technical neutrality of regulation.
3. In this light, It's really relevant to define broadband services and technologies' minimum standards in order to avoid market affecting.
4. Now the most common kind of broadband is xDSL, which is strictly related to the access market, that usually is dominated by former incumbent. In some areas alternative platforms are being diffusing (e.g. satellite, fiber, etc.).
5. Regulators and other Public Powers must be aware of the risk in helping incumbents to carry out their dominant position in access market into new broadband markets.
6. Broadband must assume a relevant role in the development of poorest areas and lowest levels of society (digital alphabetisation and digital divide).
7. Broadband services may be part of USO, when neither affordability nor ubiquity are ensured to whole population by free competition. A relevant role could be assumed by Local Powers in diffusing new services.
8. In some cases, Regulators can use USO to lead operators toward social aims.
9. Italian Law (July 2003) has no considered broadband as a part of USO, but has pressed Local Powers to act in order to sustain its development.
10. Anyway, It remains to solve the delicate problem of funding (public, private?)
11. It may be not fair imposing such social costs only on telco private operators.