

...ing revenue" worth an estimated €8.5 billion annually. However, don't pack your phone just yet as strong lobbying from the GSM Association (the industry lobby) could pay off. The Member States' Governments and the EU Parliament still need to reach agreement regarding the level of the cap for maximum roaming charges, with MEPs favouring lower charges than Germany, the UK and France want to see. Another stumbling block is whether there should be an 'opt-out' or 'opt-in' system. Under an opt-out (favoured by MEPs and the EU Commission) consumers would automatically benefit from lower charges under the EU Regulation or opt for a better package provided by an operator. Under an opt-in system consumers have to tell their operators they want the lower Roaming Regulation rates. Socialist Group MEPs have indicated that they may vote against the text if the Member State governments refuse to agree to the opt-out system. The parties were unable to reach a compromise at an initial meeting on 24 April. A further meeting is scheduled for 2 May. The EU Parliament plenary vote expected on 9 May and following that, EU Ministers are due to vote on the proposal on 7 June. The EU Commission wants the legislation in place for the summer, but if the institutions fail to reach an agreement there will have to be a second reading in the EU Parliament which would mean several months delay. The cheapest was to say 'wish you were here' this summer may still be a postcard!

EU MARITIME POLICY – the EU Commission consultation on EU maritime policy is due to close on 30 June 2007. The consultation, launched in June 2006 with the publication of the EU Commission's Green Paper 'Towards a future maritime policy for the Union' aims to develop an EU-wide maritime policy to address the overlapping and sometimes contradictory rules which currently exist in the Member States. GMB has responded to the EU Commission on the issue of shipbuilding and off-shore and is supporting the European Transport Federation's (ETF) position on the wider issues of transport, shipping, trade, coastal and port-based industries, fisheries, aquaculture, marine research and tourism. Ports are likely to be affected by changes to practically all policy areas covered in the Green Paper and the consultation document lists them as one of the EU maritime sectors with the greatest potential for economic growth. ETF is monitoring any possible

attempts to revive the unpopular Ports Services Directive which trade unions successfully scuppered last year. A major conference on 'The future maritime policy of the EU', attended by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso, will take place in Bremen, Germany on 2-4 May. Following the consultation, the EU Commission intends to produce a follow up report and Communication based on the consultation, to be adopted during the Portuguese Presidency in the second half of 2007. For the consultation http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy_en.html

VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT – a framework agreement to combat harassment and violence in the workplace was signed by the European Social Partners (ETUC, Business Europe, CEE and UEAPME) on 26 April. The text commits the members of the signatory parties to combat unacceptable behaviour that can lead to harassment and violence at the workplace. Though GMB supports this European initiative to tackle aspects of workplace violence, UK legislation already provides higher levels of protection than presented in the agreement. GMB is concerned that the agreement does not explicitly cover the issue of third party violence. GMB will continue to press for this issue to be addressed at EU level. For the framework agreement <http://www.tradeunionpress.eu/Agreement%20Violence/Framework%20Agreement%20Harassment%20and%20Violence%20at%20Work2.pdf>

PAYMENT SERVICES DIRECTIVE – MEPs have adopted a legal framework to make cross-border cashless payments easier and cheaper. The vote took place during the EU Parliament plenary session on 25 April. The Payment Services Directive proposes a common framework to harmonise national laws governing payments by 2010. This will mean that bank transfers, direct debits and similar payments will be made through a new European system. GMB has concerns about protecting jobs in cash handling and urgent amendments excluding cash payments from the Directive and supporting a neutral approach towards all payment systems, including cash, these are included in the final text. Governments had already reached an informal political agreement when they met on 27 March. MEPs approved the compromise text agreed

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