

Foreword from the Chairman

Eighteen years have passed since the Authority's creation; the technological and market scenario of the communications sector has changed a great deal in this period of time. Technological innovation processes have accelerated; networks with evolved protocols (ISO/OSI) have been developed; broadband access services have become widespread; established market balances have been overthrown; new players have broken into the value chain of the networks, services and communications applications; there has been an explosion of social networks and "user generated content". All this has radically changed, on one hand, the relationship between consumers and traditional communications related to telephone, postal and broadcasting services, and on the other, the relationship between individuals (freedom of expression and of information) and specific categories (children, political parties) and users and mass communication and information media. In this context, the Authority has extended its institutional mandate, which has been enriched with new duties, such as the regulation and supervision of the postal sector and the protection of copyright.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to make the Authority's action public and transparent, and therefore subject to judgement; to render each of the choices made in the exercise of its regulatory, supervisory and protective functions, measurable in terms of reasonableness, effectiveness and cost as well as legitimacy, obviously; and to give account of the strategic guidelines which will be followed in its regulatory activity in the forthcoming year.

The Authority operates in a complex and continuously changing world in which it is difficult but essential to maintain a coordinated vision of the markets. In this scenario, the regulator has to combine the user's right to access the networks and the electronic communications services with the guarantee of respect for people's individual freedoms and fundamental rights as well as the protection of the copyright of digital works; and it must also balance the promotion of competition and innovation with the right to active and passive information and the freedom of expression.

It is a challenging job which has at its centre the safeguarding of constitutional principles, the protection of which falls within the Authority's sphere of action, and which is expressed in the exercise of transparent regulatory powers that can allow the pursuit of set objectives, first and foremost the promotion of competition and innovation and the protection of citizens and the users of services, applications and communication content.

The report will satisfy the reader who wishes to be informed in details of the activity carried out by the Authority in the last year in all the regulated sectors. In the short space of this presentation, I will only recall the strategic issue of consumer protection, a key element of the Authority's action, which requires great efforts to make economy and the digital society grow. To this regard, we give an account of the volume of the constant activity in pursuit of improvement in the information on prices and the quality of the services, designed to increase the transparency of the offers and to help consumers in their choices. This is accompanied by a demanding supervisory action and the imposition of sanctions against operators' misconduct. In this respect, coordination with the Regional Communication Committees is essential, as they play an important role in resolving disputes at local level.

In conclusion, the report gives an account of the internal reorganization process that was completed last year, carried out in order to provide the Authority with a more efficient structure, closer to the deep changes affecting the markets of relevance. The process focussed essentially on goals of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the organisation and of the administrative action which are the basis of any good administration. However, it was also an opportunity to achieve significant decreases in expenditure, which were necessary in a context characterized by the imperative nature of the spending review for all public institutions.

Lastly, I wish to express sincere thanks to the Authority's staff who work with dedication and skill to achieve our objectives and to carry out our regulatory and supervisory duties, and I hope that the reader will also appreciate the new format and content that we propose, featuring greater synthesis and a layout that we consider more effective and clearer.

Angelo Marcello Cardani
The AGCOM Chairman