EU pushes for more control over telecoms

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STRASBOURG, France - The European Commission presented plans Tuesday to create a body with the power to separate telecom networks and access providers in order to foster competition and reduce costs for customers.

Under the proposal, which telecommunications companies have criticized, the European Telecom Market Authority would be able to push national regulators to tackle large telecom companies and challenge their control over national markets.

"Dominant telecoms operators, often still protected by government authorities, remain in control of critical market segments, especially of the broadband market. This restricts consumers' freedom of choice," said EU Telecom Commissioner Viviane Reding.

The "functional separation" plan has triggered divisions within the EU's executive arm. Neelie Kroes and Guenter Verheugen, the EU antitrust and industry commissioners, respectively, have expressed concern that parts of the plan could harm investment and add to red tape.

The proposal follows another regulatory measure pushed through by the Commission, which tackled the high costs of cross-border mobile phone use by imposing a price ceiling on roaming charges.
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