

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM ON THE CONVENTION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE (ECO), THE HAGUE ON 23<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 1993 AS AMENDED AT COPENHAGEN ON 9<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2002 AND AT COPENHAGEN ON 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2011**

**Title of Treaty**

Convention for the Establishment of the European Communications Office (ECO), The Hague on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1993 as amended at Copenhagen on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2002 and at Copenhagen on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011

Command Paper Number: 9335

**Subject Matter**

**Introduction**

The European Communications Office (ECO) is located in Copenhagen, Denmark, and provides a permanent bureau supporting the work of the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT), providing a forum for the discussion of regulatory issues in the field of posts and telecommunications. CEPT is not a body of the European Community, though it does liaise with the European Commission. With its 48 member countries, CEPT covers a geographical area that encompasses Iceland, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Malta, as well as the UK.

The Convention for the Establishment of the European Communications Office (ECO) as amended at Copenhagen on 9 April 2002, entered into force for the UK on 1 March 2013. Since then, the ECO Council has agreed, on the request of Turkey, to reduce their number of contributory units from 10 to 5. This is a 'substantial amendment' and therefore requires ratification, acceptance or approval from all Contracting Parties. A consolidated version of the Convention with the body text unchanged, but with a revised Annex A (with Turkey's contribution level at 5 units) is set out in the Command paper attached to this EM. The consolidated version of the text as amended at Copenhagen on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 was signed by the UK on 3 December 2014 subject to ratification, acceptance or approval.

**Detail**

The European Radiocommunications Office (ERO) was opened in 1991 to provide a permanent bureau supporting the work of the European

Radiocommunications Committee (ERC). The ERC was one of the three permanent committees of the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) which provides a forum for the discussion of regulatory issues in the field of posts and telecommunications. CEPT is not a body of the European Community, though it does liaise with the European Commission.

In order to reduce CEPT overheads and increase efficiency, the ERO's sister office - the European Telecommunications Office (ETO) - was merged with the ERO in January 2001. The ERO took over some of the functions previously carried out by ETO and now performs these tasks on behalf of the ETO Administrative Council.

In October 2001, the Electronic Communications Committee (ECC) was created to replace the ERC and the European Committee for Telecommunications Affairs (ECTRA). This change was made to reflect the convergence in radio and telecommunications technologies. It was agreed to re-name the ERO as the European Communications Office (ECO), providing support for the ECC's work. On 1 July 2009, the merger was formally recognised by a change of name.

On 23 November 2011, the ECO Council approved an amendment to Annex A of the ECO Convention to reduce the number of contributory units for Turkey from 10 to 5.

### **Ministerial Responsibility**

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for telecommunication and spectrum affairs and has overall oversight on international discussions and negotiations on such matters. Ofcom (the Office of Communication) in accordance with ministerial directions made under the Communications Act 2003 represents UK spectrum interests in a number of European and international bodies, and leads on the activities within the ECO.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has overall responsibility for the conclusion and implementation of treaty obligations and responsibility for their application in Overseas Territories.

### **Policy Considerations**

#### **i) General**

Since the ERO/ECO's foundation, the UK has played a leading role in its development, work and supervision. Such involvement has ensured that our interests are taken into account when it provides support for the formulation of radio spectrum management proposals at a European level.

Ratification/acceptance of the Amendment by the UK will allow this influence to be continued.

**ii) Financial**

Under the terms of the ECO Convention, the UK is one of the major (25-unit) financial contributors to the ECO. There are no other financial implications for the UK in ratifying/accepting the Amendment.

**iii) Reservations and Declarations**

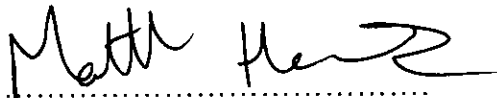
None.

**Implementation**

Ratification of the Amendment does not impose any additional obligations upon the UK. No further legislative measures will be necessary for its implementation by the UK. The Amendment shall enter into force for all Contracting Parties on the first day of the third month after the Government of Denmark, who are the depositary for the Convention, has notified the Contracting Parties of the receipt of notifications of ratification, acceptance or approval from all Contracting Parties.

**Consultations**

None.



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**Matthew Hancock**

Date: 23/8/16  
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**Minister of State for Digital and Culture  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport**