Introduction

This book is about the emergence of a European Union (EU) telecommunications policy.¹ The foundation of the EU's policy was laid in 1987, when the European Commission published its seminal Green Paper on Telecommunications. The Green Paper put forth a two-pronged strategy of liberalisation and harmonisation, which set the future course of policy development in the sector. This book concentrates on the Commission's two-pronged strategy, which culminated in an important milestone on 1 January 1998, when the EU Member States fully opened their telecommunications markets to competition. Another milestone was achieved on 1 July 2003, when the EU Member States implemented one of the most sophisticated regulatory frameworks in the world, which is adapted to the liberalised environment and the convergence of electronic communications networks and services.

Political scientists dispute whether the Commission has led the Member States throughout this process (Sandholtz 1998; Sandholtz and Sweet 1998) or partnered and cooperated with them (Thatcher 2001). In fact, both tendencies have been evident. Indeed, beginning in the late 1970s, the Commission has served as a policy entrepreneur in telecommunications. It institutionalised the consultation of affected interests at the EC level; marshalled political consensus in favour of reform; and coordinated the EC-wide liberalisation of the sector. At the same time, however, policy development has been highly sensitive to national preferences. Policy output on important issues has generally reflected the preferences of the UK, French and German governments and, in key areas, the Member States have been able to resist the transfer of authority to the EU.

This book is the product of six years of research as a doctoral student at Oxford University. Eighteen months were spent in Brussels, in and around the Community institutions and Brussels-based organisations, where I collected archive materials and conducted more than 150 interviews with European policy makers. Interviews were also conducted with national policy makers in three national capitals. The panel included representatives from: the European Parliament (EP), and within the EP, the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (EMAC); the European Commission, and within the Commission, the Information Society Directorate-General

(formerly DG XIII) and the Competition Directorate-General (formerly DG IV) and the cabinets of the Competition and Telecommunications Commissioners; the Council of Ministers, including national representatives; the Economic and Social Committee; the Committee of the Regions; the *Conférence Européenne des Administrations des Postes et des Télécommunications*; user interest groups; national regulators and government officials; telecommunications operators and independent consulting firms.

In the process of researching and writing this book, thanks are due to many. First and foremost, the completion of this book would not have been possible without the support of my parents, Allan and Barbara Goodman. They did more than they realise to ensure its success. The Weiner-Anspach foundation funded a profitable year at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles*. During this time, Kjell Eliassen provided me with useful information and advice, particularly with regard to collecting data and conducting interviews in Brussels. Mark Thatcher, at the London School of Economics, gave me helpful advice on telecommunications issues towards the beginning of this project, which helped to get my research off in the right direction. John Peterson, at the University of Glasgow, gave a number of important criticisms in my early attempts at synthesising a theoretical framework. David Goldey, at Lincoln College, Oxford University, also provided me with helpful advice in revising my theoretical approach. The BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University and the Washington DC office of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP provided valuable support and assistance in the final stages of this book.

At Oxford University, I was supervised by Sonia Mazey. Sonia gave unceasingly in her time, assistance and expertise and I owe her an enormous debt. My D. Phil examiners, David Hine and Eleanor Ritchie, offered valuable criticism as well as encouragement. Finally, I am eternally grateful to Vincent Wright. This project would never have gotten underway without his support. As my initial supervisor at Oxford, he shared with me a wealth of knowledge and insight into European politics and helped to narrow the focus of my research – his enthusiasm for the subject matter inspired me to finish this project. I learned a tremendous amount from him and am extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him.

Despite these acknowledgements, I take full responsibility for the contents of, and any errors contained within, the book. The book puts forward a series of ‘snapshots’ of the telecommunications policy-making process in Europe from 1957 to 2003 and is divided into four Parts. Part I puts forth the theoretical approaches relied on in the book (chapter one); the historical background of telecommunications policy development in

the Member States (chapter two) and early Commission involvement in the sector (chapter three). Parts II and III examine the Commission's two-pronged strategy of liberalisation and harmonisation, as first set forth in its 1987 Green Paper on Telecommunications. Different institutional settings are analysed, including the EU's normal legislative procedures used to re-regulate or harmonise telecommunications legislation (Part II) and the EU's competition rules used to liberalise the telecommunications sector (Part III). Part IV discusses the development of a new regulatory framework, the 2003 electronic communications framework (chapter nine), and then concludes with a discussion of the wider implications of the findings of the book and how the book contributes to the development of a theoretical approach for EU policy making (chapter ten).

This book is directed to those actively involved in, and those interested in learning about, the regulatory environment of the European telecommunications sector. It is also directed to students of European integration who would like to understand how policy has developed in one of the most important sectors in the global economy. New institutionalism is argued to be a useful starting point for analysing the EU policy-making process, but it is further argued that, on its own, it does not adequately account for how policy developed in the sector. In applying multiple policy-making theories to an in-depth analysis of a single sector, this book is meant to contribute to the discussion of the best way to analyse European policy making. In this regard, this book hopes to shed light on the utility of a synthesis of theoretical approaches, applied to various stages, or levels, of analysis, for understanding and explaining the many dimensions of EU policy making.

NOTES

1. Because the analytical focus of the book is on European Community (EC) policy making, the book refers to the EC interchangeably with the EU.