2. Licensing and qualification procedures shall be as simple as possible and shall not in themselves be a restriction on the supply of a service or the pursuit of any other economic activity. Any authorisation fee[1] which the applicants may incur from their application should be reasonable and transparent, will be made publicly available prior to such applications to the extent possible, and shall not in itself restrict the supply of a service or the pursuit of any other economic activity. Having regard to the cost and administrative burden, each Party is encouraged to accept payment of authorisation fees by electronic means.

3. A Party shall, to the extent practicable, avoid requiring an applicant to approach more than one competent authority for each application. However, if the application is within the jurisdiction of multiple competent authorities, multiple applications may be required.

4. The procedures used by, and the decisions of, the competent authority in the authorisation process shall be impartial with respect to all applicants. The competent authority should reach its decision in an independent manner and should not be accountable to any person supplying the services or carrying out the economic activities for which the authorisation is required.

5. If a Party requires authorisation, it shall, to the extent practicable, ensure that its competent authorities permit the submission of an application at any time throughout the year. If a specific period of time for applications exists, the competent authority shall allow an applicant a reasonable period of time for the submission of an application. The competent authority shall initiate the processing of an application without undue delay. If possible, the competent authority should accept an application in electronic format under the same conditions of authenticity as an application in paper format.

[1] Authorisation fees do not include fees for the use of natural resources, payments for auction, tendering or other non-discriminatory means of awarding concessions or mandated contributions to universal service provision.

6. If a Party requires an examination for authorisation, that Party shall ensure that its competent authorities schedule such an examination at reasonably frequent intervals and provide a reasonable period of time to enable applicants to request to take the examination. Having regard to the cost, administrative burden and the integrity of the procedures involved, each Party is encouraged to accept requests in electronic format to take such examinations, and to consider, to the extent practicable, the use of electronic means in other aspects of examination processes.

7. In assessing whether the applicant has met the relevant requirements for authorisation, a Party shall, to the extent possible and if appropriate, encourage its competent authorities to give due consideration to the relevant professional experience of an applicant, where the competent authority considers such relevant professional experience to be indicative of the level of competence or experience of the applicant.

8. The competent authority shall complete the processing of an application, including reaching a final decision, within a reasonable period of time from the submission of a complete application, and inform the applicant of the decision concerning the application[1], to the extent possible in writing[2]. Each Party shall endeavour to establish an indicative timeframe for the processing of an application and shall make publicly available that timeframe, when established. The competent authority of a Party shall, at the request of the applicant and without undue delay, provide information concerning the status of the application, and, to the extent practicable, ascertain the completeness of an application for processing under the domestic laws and regulations of the Party.

9. The competent authority shall, within a reasonable period of time after the receipt of an application which it considers incomplete:

(a) inform the applicant, and, to the extent feasible, identify the additional information required to complete the application, including through providing its rationale where appropriate; and

[1] Competent authorities may meet this requirement by informing an applicant in advance in writing that a lack of response from the competent authorities after a specified period of time from the date of submission of the application indicates acceptance of the application or rejection of the application.

[2] For the purposes of this Article, "in writing" may include in electronic format.