



PIDS backs telco ownership bill

By Elijah Felice Rosales – September 14, 2021

<https://www.philstar.com/business/2021/09/14/2126877/pids-backs-telco-ownership-bill>

MANILA, Philippines — The government should work on revising rules and regulations on telecommunication operations to improve internet penetration nationwide as daily activities and transactions are shifting online, the state think tank said.

In a policy note, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) said policymakers should simplify the market entry process for broadband network builders under the Open Access in Data Transmission Act.

The House of Representatives passed its version of the measure in July, but the Senate has yet to deliberate its counterpart bill at the committee level.

According to the study, the government can put up digital infrastructure in areas and segments where the private sector fails to deliver, particularly the Bangsamoro region, where only 4.5 percent of the population has access to the internet.

However, the study pointed out the government should speed up the introduction and enforcement of policies expanding access to the internet. It added laws should be amended to lift the restrictions on broadband network building to encourage the entry of new players.

“Therefore, the government should remove regulatory barriers and expand market opportunities to allow players to invest, build, and innovate, regardless of size, ownership and technology,” the PIDS note said.

In particular, the study identified the Radio Control Law and the Public Service Act as measures that require changes to accommodate the emergence of new technologies.

“The Radio Control Law and the Public Service Act [PSA] should also be amended to remove or ease market entry restrictions,” it said.

In amending the PSA, the government looks to define what are public utilities which, under the Constitution, can only be owned and operated by Filipinos. In turn, industries that fall outside the coverage of the law, particularly telcos, can soon be infiltrated by foreign investors.

Last year the House approved its proposed revisions to the PSA, limiting the definition of public utilities to just distribution of electricity; transmission of electricity; water pipeline distribution; and sewerage pipeline. The Senate has yet to pass its version of the bill.