

End in sight for mobile phone “roaming” fees and unequal internet access

Plenary sessions [27-10-2015 - 13:47]

A complete ban on roaming charges for using mobile phones abroad in the EU will take effect in June 2017 and clear rules on the right to internet access will become law following Parliament's final approval of the new telecoms package on Tuesday.

"This abolition of roaming surcharges has been long awaited by everybody: ordinary people, start-ups, SMEs and all kinds of organisations" said the rapporteur, Pilar del Castillo (EPP, ES), in the debate before the vote. "Thanks to this agreement, Europe will also become the only region in world which legally guarantees open internet and net neutrality. The principle of net neutrality will be applied directly in the 28 member states. It also ensures that we will not have a two-speed internet."

By not accepting any amendments to the Council's position in first reading, MEPs adopted the new law.

Roaming fees for calling, sending text messages and using the mobile internet abroad in the EU (and in EEA countries) will be banned from 15 June 2017.

From 30 April 2016 roaming surcharges (added to the price paid at home) must not exceed:

- €0.05 per minute for outgoing voice calls
- €0.02 for text messages (SMS), or
- €0.05 per megabyte of mobile internet use.

The cap on charges for incoming voice calls will be determined later this year and is expected to be considerably lower than for outgoing calls.

Recovering costs and preventing abuse

If operators can prove that they cannot recover their costs and that this affects domestic prices, [national regulatory authorities](#) onal regulatory authorities may authorize them to impose minimal surcharges in exceptional circumstances to recover these costs. MEPs won guarantees that national regulatory authorities will have the means to amend or reject the surcharges.

To protect the industry against abuses such as “permanent roaming”, operators could in certain circumstances be allowed to charge a small fee, lower than current caps, according to a “fair use” policy. The exact details for this will be defined by the Commission and telecoms regulators.

Open access to internet

The new law will oblige firms offering internet access to treat all traffic equally, i.e. not to block or slow delivery of content, applications or services from selected senders or to selected receivers, unless this is necessary to obey court orders, comply with laws,

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prevent network congestion or combat cyber-attacks. If such traffic management measures are needed, they will have to be "transparent, non-discriminatory and proportionate" and may not last for longer than necessary.

An operator will nonetheless be able to offer specialized services (such as the improved internet quality needed for certain services), but only on condition that this does not have an impact on general internet quality.

Performance speed: deliver or compensate

MEPs ensured that internet providers will have to give users who are about to sign fixed or mobile internet contracts a clear explanation of what download and upload speeds (compared to the advertised speed) they can usually expect. Any significant discrepancy that is continuous or occurs regularly will trigger a right to remedies such as terminating the contract or getting compensation. The national regulatory authorities will be responsible for verifying whether the difference is a breach of contract or not.

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Procedure: Co-decision, 1st reading

Current roaming caps are:

- €0.19 per minute for outgoing voice calls,
- €0.05 per minute for incoming voice calls
- €0.06 for text messages (SMS) and
- €0.20 per megabyte of mobile internet use
(for domestic price plus roaming surcharge, excluding VAT)

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 27.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 27.10.2015)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Video of press conference
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/other-events/schedule>
- EbS+ (27.10.2015)
: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/ebs/schedule.cfm?sitelang=en&page=3&institution=0&date=10/27/2015>
- Audiovisual material for professionals
: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/Page.aspx?id=2428>
- EP Research: European single market for electronic communications :
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2015/569027/EPRS_ATA%282015%29569027_EN.pdf

Political groups

- Press release by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press-release/Telecoms%3A-end-of-roaming-charges-shows-added-value-of-EU>
- Press release by the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/after-long-fight-sds-welcome-end-roaming-charges-and-guarantee-net-neutrality>
- News pages of the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/>
- Press release by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/nc/press/press-and-release-news/press-release/article/roaming-charges-eu-deal-approved-46187/>
- Press release by the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/article/gue-ngl-news/too-many-loopholes-in-proposal-for-eu-single-market-for-electronic-communic>
- Press release by the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/eu-e-comms-rules-14680.html>
- News pages of the EFDD group: <http://www.efddgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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