



The Consumer Voice in Europe

Telecommunications Council 12 June – European consumers call on ministers to stop roaming now and to ensure net neutrality in Europe

Letter sent to the Deputy Ambassadors on 11 June 2015

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Dear Deputy Ambassador,

I write on behalf of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) to express our grave concern regarding the approach that Council is taking on the Regulation to establish a Telecoms Single Market. In light of the upcoming Telecommunications Council of 12 June, we urge you to bear European consumer expectations in mind and take a more ambitious position on the issues of roaming and net neutrality.

European consumers expect you to abolish retail roaming now

Without a real Single Market in telecommunications on which it can be founded, the Digital Single Market will not become a reality. **Artificial geographic barriers like roaming must be brought down** so consumers do not need to worry about whether or not they have crossed a border.

European consumers want the EU to finally bring an end to roaming charges. In just a few days, a campaign launched by our Spanish and Portuguese member organisations, OCU and DECO respectively, supported by BEUC and consumer organisations from other countries has collected over **45.000 signatures from EU citizens** asking for roaming charges to be completely abolished, and the number of signatures is continually growing¹.

The mobile industry should also benefit from the end of roaming charges, as it will increase the use of telecoms services abroad, give access to untapped demand therefore potentially more revenue. According to estimates by the European Commission, this increased demand could mean up to 300 million new roaming customers².

We therefore call on you to:

- 1) Set an **early, clear cut off date** as of which retail roaming charges shall not be allowed. The European Parliament's Report of 2014 showed the necessary ambition to end roaming by December 2015. If this date is to be delayed, it should only happen due to legal procedural reasons.
- 2) Mandate a **rapid reform of the roaming wholesale market** in order to ensure that any market distortions can be adequately addressed.
- 3) Ensure that any **"fair use limitations"** only exist as a **transitory measure** while the wholesale market is adapted in the years to come, and that they adequately allow consumers to replicate their domestic use while abroad.

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/end-roaming-in-europe-by-december-2015-zero-roaming>

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-152_en.htm

The future of the internet in Europe is at stake

Developments in European telecoms markets such as changing economic flows and increased concentration of power are increasingly threatening the neutrality and openness of the internet. If these foundational principles are not urgently protected against unintended consequences of the aforementioned developments, **the future of the internet as we know it is at risk.**

Consumers are aware of this risk and demand a solution. A recent study published by BEREC shows that the **majority of consumers believe equal and unrestricted access to the Internet is a human right**, and would not accept the discriminatory prioritisation applications and content³.

We therefore strongly urge you to:

- 1) Protect consumers' **right to access the internet free of unjustified discriminatory practices.** This right shall entail **connectivity to all end points of the internet.**
- 2) Set a **clearly defined and enforceable general prohibition on discrimination** between different types of traffic, content or online services, including via the pricing scheme of the access service. To be justifiable, any exceptions must be mandated by law and always traffic-agnostic.
- 3) Establish **clear safeguards to prevent and immediately correct any undue impact that any broadband services that do not provide access to the internet** may have on the *best efforts* internet and the services that provide connectivity to it.

For more details on our concerns and suggestions we encourage you to consult our "Key Priorities" document⁴. I remain at your disposal for any further information you might require.

With kind regards,

Monique Goyens
Director General

³ BEREC BOR (15) 65 – "How do Consumers value net neutrality in an evolving marketplace? A report into ecosystem dynamics and demand-side forces"

⁴http://www.beuc.eu/publications/beuc-x-2015-028_gbe-telecom_single_market_trilogue-key_beuc_demands.pdf