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Will Europe's telecoms market overhaul benefit consumers?

The telecoms sector in Europe is to get a regulatory shake up under wide ranging plans launched by the European Commission.

Aiming to reshape the sector, the Telecoms Single Market package will apply across the European Union, standardise a range of consumers' contractual rights, impact roaming charges and tackle the issue of net neutrality.

New measures include:

- Price limits on mobile calls and texts across EU national borders equal to the EU's roaming caps.
- Receiving phone calls while roaming in the EU will no longer cost.
- Dissatisfied consumers could sever telecoms contracts after 6 months, making switching between operators easier.
- Consumers will get more accurate and understandable information on internet speeds and data caps.

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation commented:

"When it comes to phone and internet, consumers are often faced with unfair contracts, overcharging or a limited choice of providers. It's essential that it becomes easier to switch operators and vote with your feet.

"This reform will only benefit consumers if it brings about healthier market competition meaning more consumer choice and keeping prices in check.

"Historically, the success of the internet has been built on its equal treatment of online content. Manipulating data traffic has become all too frequent among operators. This is why consumers need to have the neutrality of their internet strongly protected. Today's package finally opens the door to more robust action from the EU, but regrettably this initiative falls short. There are too many loopholes to the general protection which will allow operators to continue to discriminate among data traffic or unduly push their own services.

"Commissioner Kroes says 'the end of roaming is near', but near has been a long time coming. While roaming and cross-border surcharges exist, they will continue to run counter to the basic tenets of a Single Market."

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