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Starting tomorrow, consumers will benefit from cheaper intra-EU phone calls

People making phone calls from their home country to someone living in another EU country will see their phone bill drop thanks to a new EU measure¹ which will apply from tomorrow.

Since the abolition of roaming charges two years ago, consumers faced a somewhat absurd situation. They could use their mobile phones when making calls outside their home country without fear of price hikes. However, the cost for consumers calling from their home country to another EU country could still be very high. As of 15 May, an EU law will cap the price for calls to another EU country at 19 cents and at 6 cents for SMS².

This cap will bring substantial cost savings to consumers. Belgian consumer group Test Aankoop/Test Achats³ has calculated that the average price reduction (in Belgium) will be 332% for a mobile phone minute and 543% for SMS. According to Slovenian consumer organisation ZPS, operators currently charge up to €0.49 per minute for calls to other countries and up to €0.22 per SMS – substantially above the foreseen cap. In Germany, consumer association vzbv⁴ reported in 2018 that some operators were charging up to €1.49 for a mobile phone call to someone living in another EU country.

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

“It is excellent that European consumers will pay less when making a phone call from their home country to another EU Member State. The price of these calls is very often still needlessly high. We applaud that the EU has taken this decision in favour of consumers.

“Two years ago, the EU ensured that consumers do not have to pay more for using mobile internet and making phone calls just because they travelled in another EU country. We welcome this move to the next stage which curbs excessive prices for making a phone call to another Member State. There is no place for such confusing and artificial price differences in the single market.”

ENDS

¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2018.321.01.0001.01.ENG

² Excluding VAT

³ <https://www.test-aankoop.be/hightech/gsms-en-smartphones/dossier/gsm-gebruiken-in-buitenland>

⁴ https://www.marktwaechter.de/sites/default/files/downloads/marktwaechter_telekommunikation_chartbericht_international_calls_2018.pdf

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