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Member States adopt disappointing position on extension of EU roaming rules

EU Member States have reached a position to be able to start negotiations with the European Parliament on an extension of the EU's roaming rules.

The existing rules expire at the end of June 2022 and are one of the EU's most recognised successes by consumers. The rules ensure people can use their mobile phones to make calls, send SMS and use data when travelling in the EU for the same price as at home.

However, Member States have weakened important provisions in the Commission's proposal to extend the rules and improve the situation further for consumers. Most notably, they have weakened the requirement for telecoms operators to provide consumers with the same quality of service abroad as at home, for example in providing the same data speed. Member States have also increased the price caps telecom providers can charge each other when their customers use their phones abroad, and delayed when they would apply, compared to the Commission proposal. This could lead to consumers paying higher mobile phone subscriptions and squeezing smaller operators out of the market.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said: "The abolition of roaming fees is a signature dish that the EU produced in 2017 which has been very popular. Few people know these rules have an expiry date and it is essential they are extended. It is disappointing that Member States prefer to see weak improvements to these rules rather than to go the full mile and turn a successful policy into an out-and-out winner."

The Member States at least support providing more transparency to consumers when they are travelling on boats and planes. People have unknowingly been incurring additional charges when on these modes of transport [1].

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[1] For example, the German consumer federation vzbv received a complaint from a consumer who had received an €11,000 bill: <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/kostenfalle-telefonica-kunden-gefaehrdet>.

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