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Date: 02/10/2017

European Parliament clears way to stop overpriced international calls within the EU

The European Parliament's industry committee today voted on a major overhaul of EU telecom law which lays down rules to protect consumers of communication services, defines how networks shall be shared between companies, and establishes basic principles for national authorities.

Now that the EU has put an end to high roaming costs, Members of the European Parliament's industry committee want to put an end to excessive prices for phone calls and SMS from your home to another EU country. Telecom companies often charge far more for these types of calls than for a domestic call without any justification.

Voting on a proposal to reform the EU's telecom legislation, MEPs also agreed on important measures to resolve problems posed by insufficient competition in national telecom markets. For example, oligopolies, where the market is dominated by a handful of big players, tend to stifle consumer choice and make telecom services more expensive and of lesser quality.

BEUC in particular welcomes that MEPs voted in favour of strengthening national regulators by giving them a minimum set of competences. This should allow them to work more efficiently together to provide adequate advice to EU policy-makers and check that telecom companies play by the rules.

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

"In a true Single Market, prices for phone calls and SMS should not be more expensive just because a consumer is contacting somebody who lives in another EU country. The European Parliament is right to address the other side of the roaming coin: now that consumers no longer pay high costs when using their smartphones when travelling, they also expect abusive prices of calls while they are home to disappear.

"The EU must prevent telecom markets from becoming a playground for only a handful of big, powerful players. It is good news for consumers' choice and their pockets that the European Parliament wants to give regulators the necessary tools to create more competition and prevent new oligopolies."

ENDS