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EU reforms telecom markets – better deal for consumers

Last night, negotiators of the European Parliament and Member States agreed on a sweeping reform of the EU's telecom market. It includes updated rules to protect consumers when they contract telephone, digital TV or internet access services. It also lowers prices when consumers make a phone call from their home country to another EU-country.

The new law would allow consumers to terminate their telecom contract early without incurring additional termination costs. To prevent people from being trapped in bundled contracts, consumers will now also be able to get rid of individual parts of a service package (e.g. a multiple combination of different telecommunication services contracts).

The new telecom rules update the powers of national regulators to act against dominant players, for instance through imposing access to their network.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

On intra-EU calls:

“Consumers should no longer have to worry about excessive costs when calling another EU country from home. The end of roaming charges was a big first step, but it did not deal with the high costs of phone calls to another EU country when at home. The agreed cap on intra-EU calls is a good next step towards a real single market for consumers.”

On consumer rights:

“Telecom services regularly rank among the top most complained-about markets. This new law upgrades some important consumer protection measures. Telecom clients will for instance be able to end their contract early and choose a better deal.”

On competition in the telecoms market:

“Market concentration is bad for prices and consumer choice. A small group of players should not be able to take control of the market. Thanks to what has been agreed, national regulators can take measures to intervene and maintain a healthy level of competition.”

END