

The Consumer Voice in Europe

BEUC's feedback to outline BEREC work programme 2026



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Why it matters to consumers

The independence and technical expertise of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) is extremely important for the monitoring of market developments, a consistent application of EU rules, the promotion of competition and the protection of consumers in electronic communications' markets. BEREC's consultation to provide early feedback to its 2026 work programme shows the willingness of regulators to hear and cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, including consumer organisations. Consumer groups are rightly concerned with the current push for deregulation and consolidation in the telecoms markets. In this context, the role of BEREC in the coming year is crucial for ensuring that consumers have access to quality and competitive services.

Summary

BEUC welcomes the opportunity to provide early input to the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC)'s 2026 work programme¹.

We welcome BEREC's continued commitment to upholding the four strategic objectives of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) across its workstreams. It is essential that BEREC pursue its high-level strategic priorities of promoting full connectivity, supporting sustainable and open digital markets, and more importantly, empowering end-users. In addition, in line with Article 3(2)(d) EECC we recommend BEREC include consumer protection (the protection of end-users) as part of its high-level strategic priorities. Consumers cannot be empowered without protection and without respect of the code's end-user rights chapter.

BEUC supports the independent, expert role of BEREC and its National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) in the context of the EU telecoms regulatory framework review. We also welcome BEREC's commitment to actively contribute to this process. We call on BEREC and its NRAs to ensure that this review does not compromise the primary objectives of the EECC of promoting competition, the internal market and the safeguarding of end-user interests.

BEUC recommends BEREC to include the following activities in its 2026 work programme:

- **A BEREC – BEUC joint workshop on end-users' rights** to assess any progress since the BEREC workshop held in 2024 and identify recommendations to solve consumers' pressing needs and concerns in electronic communications markets. This workshop can also be useful in the context of the upcoming EU telecoms regulatory framework review.
- An external stakeholder workshop on the upcoming "Digital Networks Act" proposal and its potential impact on **net neutrality and IP interconnection**.
- An external stakeholder workshop on the **review process of the Recommendation on relevant markets susceptible to ex ante regulation**.

¹ BEREC, *Outline BEREC Work Programme 2026*, 30 January 2025.

- An external workshop on **roaming and intra-EU communications** to assess the implementation of EU rules and how to ensure a single market for electronic communications in the EU.
- A report about how well **consumer rights are respected in electronic communications markets** based on a survey of NRAs and evidence gathering from consumer associations, NRA decisions and case law.

1. General comments

BEUC welcomes BEREC’s express commitment to **uphold the four strategic objectives of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC)** established in Article 3 (2) and that these “remain the foundation of the assignments set out in BEREC’s annual work programmes” and “continue to be the guiding force of the proposed Work Programme.”²

Given the intention of the European Commission to present a new legislative proposal by December 2025, its “Digital Networks Act” (DNA), which includes the objective of conducting a review of the EECC, BEUC would like to underline the critical importance that any new proposed policy measure **does not compromise the primary objectives of the EECC which are to promote competition, the internal market and safeguard end-user interests**³, as well as the principle of net neutrality safeguarded in the Open Internet Regulation. BEUC supports the **independent, expert role of BEREC and its NRAs** and its valuable contributions throughout the years and therefore welcomes its commitment to actively contribute to this review process.

2. Comments on high-level strategic priorities and related activities

BEUC welcomes BEREC’s continued commitment to its high-level strategic priorities of i) promoting full connectivity, ii) supporting sustainable and open digital markets, and iii) empowering end-users. Considering the coming adoption of a new BEREC Strategy 2026-2030 by the end of this year, BEUC considers this a key opportunity to adapt BEREC’s strategic priorities to more adequately reflect the primary objectives of the EECC. Thus, in line with Article 3(2)(d) EECC, BEUC recommends amending priority three to **include consumer protection (the protection of end-users)** as consumers cannot be empowered without protection and respect of the EECC and other regulatory requirements under EU and national laws.

2.1. Promoting full connectivity

BEUC welcomes **BEREC’s continued commitment to full connectivity of the EU as a strategic priority for 2026** and its commitment to prioritising the expansion and take-up of very high-capacity networks (VHCNs) while ensuring the interests of consumers. In principle, BEUC supports the commitment to facilitate the roll-out of VHCNs as a contribution to help **addressing the digital divide**. The improvement of network infrastructure should go hand-in-hand with providing accessible and affordable high-quality connectivity to all consumers, with a special focus on those who are most vulnerable.

However, the deployment of network infrastructure to deliver better, high-quality **connectivity to consumers must go together with the objectives of promoting competition and ensuring consumer protection**. We support BEREC’s considerations in its 2025 Work Programme that **“[c]losing the digital divide entails more than just the roll-out of VHCNs. It also requires providing end-users with the kind of access that matches their needs.”**⁴

BEUC therefore recommends BEREC to include similar wording in its 2026 work programme. We recommend NRAs to **remain prudent during the upcoming review of the EU telecoms rules**,

² Ibid., p.3.

³ Directive (EU) 2018/1972 (European Electronic Communications Code), Article 3 and recital 23.

⁴ BEREC 2025 Work Programme, p. 4.

particularly regarding any potential proposals towards meeting the Digital Decade connectivity targets for 2030. Any potential regulatory intervention based solely on self-imposed numerical targets, without an objective justification, proven necessity or consideration of unintended consequences, carries risks for consumers and the market which must be carefully analysed to avoid counterproductive effects. **Connectivity targets should not be ends in themselves.** They cannot justify going against or trading off the fundamental regulatory objectives of promoting competition and consumers' interests and (real) needs.

2.2. Supporting sustainable and open digital markets

Regarding **sustainable and open digital markets**, BEUC strongly welcomes BEREC's work on net neutrality and supports its efforts to ensure an open and non-discriminatory internet for all consumers. We especially welcome BEREC's independent contribution to the latest policy debates on potential regulatory intervention on IP interconnection, including its important assessment on the IP interconnection ecosystem.

BEUC proposes BEREC to consider adding to its 2026 Work Programme the organisation of a **dedicated external workshop** on this issue with the participation of relevant stakeholders, especially civil society representatives, including digital rights and consumer organisations.

2.3. Empowering and protecting end-users

BEUC welcomes BEREC's commitment to continue to prioritise workstreams aimed at **"strengthening the empowerment of end-users"** and the critical consideration that this "strategic priority relies on a regular dialogue with consumers' associations, civil society representatives and other relevant stakeholders".⁵ As mentioned above, we recommend BEREC to explicitly acknowledge the need to protect end-users by amending this strategic priority in line with Article 3(2) EECC.

BEUC especially values and appreciates the cooperation with BEREC over the years. For example, our members appreciated the recent opportunity to contribute to BEREC's work regarding the review on end-user rights following Article 123 of the EECC. We recall the successful experience of a BEUC-BEREC joint workshop in November 2022 and welcome the idea of scheduling a new workshop in Q4 2025 as an extremely timely discussion on the application of rights of end-users of the EECC, to be focused on the **identification of best practices, potential legislative and enforcement gaps and suggested ways forward.**

The recent experience of Member States struggling to transpose this essential piece of legislation has resulted in a lack of uniform implementation of consumer rights across the EU. The high number of consumer complaints received by BEUC members against telecom providers clearly demonstrates that much remains to be done to ensure adequate protection of end-user rights across the EU. It is therefore critical that **consistent implementation of the EECC continue to be at the forefront of BEREC's work** in the coming mandate.

BEUC takes note that, despite the announcements of the European Commission to present a new DNA proposal that reviews the EECC before the end of 2025, the issue of non-respect of **end-user rights has been conspicuously absent** in these policy discussions. We would like to thank

⁵ BEREC, *Outline BEREC Work Programme 2026*, 30 January 2025, p. 8.

BEREC for its recent attempts to return consumer rights to the centre of the policy discussion⁶. We would like to further suggest **BEREC to continue its cooperation with BEUC in this regard by organising a BEUC-BEREC joint workshop in 2026**, dedicated to the consumer perspective and the rights of end-users.

3. Comments on potential work for 2026 and beyond

Looking ahead to 2026, BEUC especially appreciates **BEREC's commitment to actively contribute to the process of the upcoming EU telecoms regulatory framework review**. BEUC would like to encourage BEREC and the NRAs to actively engage and contribute to this discussion to ensure that any new legislative proposal does not question the primary objectives of the EU regulatory framework of promoting competition, the internal market and protection of end-user rights and needs. We call on BEREC to contribute to a broad and inclusive discussion on the upcoming DNA proposal and the EECC review, including by organising dedicated workshops which bring together all relevant stakeholders.

We especially welcome BEREC's intention to contribute to the **review process of the Recommendation on relevant markets susceptible to ex ante regulation**, considering the potential impact of the EU telecoms rules review to the current national regulatory approaches of NRAs and the potential negative consequences for consumers. We welcome BEREC's intention to conduct an inclusive consultation of relevant stakeholders ahead of its opinion and recommend holding an **external stakeholder workshop dedicated to assessing the impact of potential changes to this Recommendation**, allowing all interested stakeholders to actively participate in this process.

Furthermore, we appreciate BEREC's continued work on **facilitating copper network switch-offs** and highlight the importance that BEREC and its NRAs continue to ensure that competitive dynamics are maintained, and the interests of consumers are protected during the switch-off and migration processes.

BEUC also welcomes the consideration of further discussions over the **potential role for NRAs under the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act)** and on the **impact of AI on user experiences on the internet**. We suggest BEREC to hold an external workshop instead to allow NRAs to engage with other competent regulators and relevant stakeholders. Consumer organisations remain available to engage with regulators on this important topic for consumers.

We also invite BEREC to organise a workshop on **roaming and intra-EU communications**, following the upcoming Roaming Regulation review and the coming into force of the Gigabit Infrastructure Act (GIA) rules on intra-EU communications, including the upcoming **European Commission Implementing Act on Fair Use Policy**. BEREC's work will be essential to ensure an adequate interpretation of the EU rules and legal certainty for both consumers and operators. We encourage BEREC to engage with relevant stakeholders on this matter, including consumer organisations.

Furthermore, BEUC also recommends BEREC to carry out a study about whether **consumer rights in electronic communications markets** are respected and related providers' legal

⁶ For example, at the BEREC Stakeholder Forum 2026, Panel Discussion on the role of end-user rights in digital markets, 1 April 2025; BEREC Workshop on end-user rights, 7 April 2024.

obligations. This can include the number of complaints received by NRAs and consumer organisations per country, the insights from NRAs on market practices, the topics subject to most concerns, enforcement actions taken, relevant case law as well as potential legislative gaps should be filled.

