

Contact: Johannes Kleis: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 30/08/2016
Reference: BEUC-PR-2016-014

Internet users better off as EU moves to protect net neutrality

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) welcomes today's decision to keep the internet free and able to innovate. The EU body gathering national telecom regulators (BEREC) is releasing rules¹ on net neutrality which will prevent internet providers from blocking or slowing down consumers who wish to access popular services such as Skype and Netflix or giving priority access to own programmes.

BEREC's guidelines stipulate that consumers must be able to choose the online content they want to access, whenever they want and using the applications of their choice. Companies offering online content will benefit from guaranteed access to European consumers without interference from internet providers.

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

"Net neutrality is crucial to make sure consumers can decide what to use the internet for by themselves. Consumers can celebrate that net neutrality is now a fact in the EU. It would be the end of the internet as we know it if commercial gatekeepers were allowed to determine who can access what and when for their own profit.

"In what constitutes a crucial decision, a common practice not to count traffic of specific apps against a customers' monthly data limit – named zero-rating – will now be forbidden. To restrict zero-rating is necessary to avoid that specific services are privileged at the expense of more innovative newcomers. Consumers might be happy to continue using Facebook even if they hit their subscription limit. But in the long run it will play against them because it prevents competitors from entering the market.

"We expect national telecom regulators to thoroughly apply these net neutrality rules and ensure companies swiftly update their practices."

ENDS

¹ On 27 October 2015, a Regulation on Roaming and Net Neutrality was adopted which tasked BEREC to develop guidelines on net neutrality