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Date: 27/06/2022
Reference: BEUC-PR-2022-029

Consumers to benefit from improved roaming experience from 1 July

Thanks to new EU roaming rules entering into force on 1 July, consumers should experience a better quality of service from telecom operators when they travel to another EU country. Until now, it was common for telecom companies to place consumers on a lower speed network when they are roaming than the network speed they get at home.¹ From 1 July, that will no longer be possible with the new EU rules, unless it is technically impossible for the operator to provide the same quality of service.

Beyond extending the existing ban on roaming charges, which is one of the EU's most recognised successes in consumers' eyes, the new rules will also provide consumers with greater protection against bill shocks that are caused by connecting inadvertently to a non-EU mobile or a satellite network – for example, when travelling on boats and planes or close to the border with a non-EU country.

Ursula Pachi, Deputy Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said:

"Renewing the ban on roaming charges is a no-brainer because it has been a real success for consumers. Gone are the days when consumers didn't use their phones in another EU country for fear of a bill shock when they get home. These new rules will bring in additional improvements, like tackling the lower quality service that consumers sometimes experience when they roam because an operator places them on a 3G network instead of a 4G one. Consumers will also be warned about possible high costs when they travel near a border with a non-EU country, or are on a boat or plane, and the consumer's phone connects to a non-EU mobile or a satellite network."

There is still one outstanding element left untouched in this legislative update and which the EU needs to tackle next – the cost of 'intra-EU calls'. Consumers still face disproportionate surcharges when they call or text somebody living in another EU country.

Ursula Pachi added:

"Consumers still pay hefty prices when they call somebody who lives in another EU country from home. In a European Single Market, there is no justification for these disproportionate costs. The price consumers pay should be more closely aligned with the cost of domestic calls and reflect the actual costs for telecom operators of connecting an intra-EU call."

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¹ For example, some telecom operators have admitted to lowering their services for roaming customers. See The Register, '[O2 admits to throttling network bandwidth for EU data roamers](#)', (July 2017).