

Brussels, 8 June 2009

EU Roaming Regulation clears final hurdle: Council paves way for cheaper roaming prices as of 1 July

Today the ministers of the 27 EU Member States formally adopted the new EU roaming rules proposed by the European Commission last September ([IP/08/1386](#)) and approved by the European Parliament in April ([IP/09/620](#)). The new EU roaming rules will lead to further reductions of up to 60% on consumers' roaming bills as of 1 July – just in time for this year's summer holidays. The new EU Roaming Regulation in particular makes sure that consumers do not pay more than €0.11 (excl. VAT) for sending a text message while abroad in the EU. Consumers will also be able to surf the web, download movies or send holiday pictures with their mobile without experiencing 'bill shocks' back home for having roamed this summer. Under the new rules, mobile operators must also bill their customers for roaming calls by the second after the first 30 seconds – instead of on a per minute basis –, which is expected to cut phone bills by as much as 24%. Following the approval by the EU's Council of Ministers today, the new EU roaming rules will now become effective as of 1 July in all 27 EU Member States.

"Today's unanimous adoption by the Council of Ministers means that the new roaming rules have passed the very last procedural hurdle and will now bring instant benefits to consumers as of 1 July. The Council thereby follows the example set by the European Parliament that voted in favour of the new rules with an overwhelming majority in April. This is great news for European citizens who will be able to go on holiday this summer and roam with peace of mind and without the fear of 'bill shocks'," said EU Telecoms Commissioner Viviane Reding (who returned to her office today following a three week electoral leave from the European Commission).

After a political agreement was reached earlier this year between the European Parliament and Council, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly (646 votes in favour, 22 against and 9 abstentions) in favour of the Regulation at its April plenary session ([IP/09/620](#)).

To speed up the process and make sure that the new roaming rules enter into force in time for the summer holidays, the ministers of the Member States have adopted the EU Roaming Regulation at today's Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council formation after the Telecommunications ministers of the 27 Member States had given their informal political support to the Commission's proposal in November last year.

With today's adoption by the Council, the final step in the approval process has been taken which will enable the President of the European Parliament and the Council Presidency to formally sign the Regulation on 18 June. It can then be published in the EU's [Official Journal](#) a few days later. As the new roaming rules are included in an EU Regulation, they will become effective immediately on 1 July 2009 in all 27 EU Member States.

Background

The new EU roaming rules formally approved by the Council today will:

- **cap the price** that consumers can be charged **for sending a text message while abroad at €0.11** (excluding VAT), compared to a current average of €0.28 (with customers from the Netherlands and Portugal paying more than €0.35 for each roamed SMS).
- substantially reduce **data roaming charges** (the cost of surfing the web or downloading movies with a mobile phone while abroad) by introducing a **wholesale cap of €1 per megabyte downloaded**, compared to an average EU wholesale price of € 1.68 per megabyte, with peaks in Ireland (€6.82), Greece (€5.30) and in Estonia (€5.10). The wholesale price cap will fall to €0.80 in 2010 and to €0.50 in 2011 and should lead to further cuts in customers' bills.
- **protect consumers from "bill shocks"** by allowing customers to choose a **cut-off mechanism once the bill reaches €50**, unless the consumer opts for a higher limit. Operators have until March 2010 to put these transparency measures in place.
- **further reduce prices for mobile roaming calls**. Now capped at €0.46 for calls made and €0.22 for calls received abroad, the caps will go down to €0.43 for calls made and €0.19 for calls received abroad on 1 July 2009, to €0.39 and €0.15 on 1 July 2010, falling to €0.35 and €0.11 by 1 July 2011 (all prices per minute, excluding VAT).
- **introduce the principle of per-second billing** after the first 30 seconds for roamed calls made and from the first second for calls received while abroad. At present, under per-minute billing methods consumers are paying around 20% more than the time they actually consume when making or receiving calls.

See also [MEMO/08/578](#)