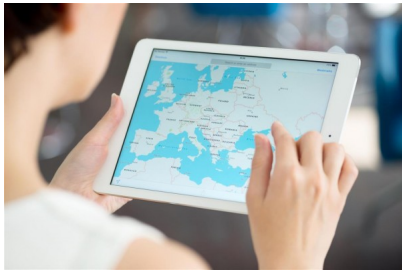


EU: MOBILE INTERNET ROAMING FEES SET TO DROP BY MORE THAN HALF



The roaming fee to use mobile Internet in another EU Member State will drop 55%, from the current 45 cents per MB to at most 20 cents (excluding VAT). This change was brought about by the Regulatory Commission which has established maximum roaming charges.

Since Tuesday, the price of mobile calls made abroad has also been reduced to 19 cents per minute (a 21% reduction); incoming calls may cost no more than 5 cents per minute (28% reduction); and outgoing text messages no more than 6 cents (25% reduction).

“The finish line is in sight, and I hope that before Christmas 2015 surcharges disappear forever,” Neelie Kroes, Vice President of the Commission leading the Digital Agenda, said Monday. She went on to say that this year, “finally we can say that the telecommunications industry is getting the message about the 'roaming’”, because of the number of companies offering plans and rates already below the maximum allowed by the EU. What's more, in six Member States, carriers offer plans without roaming charges.

“But it's not enough. It is ridiculous that companies in the US offer their customers free roaming in over 100 countries, including the EU, but European customers do not enjoy even the same opportunities,” the VP denounced.

The European Parliament has approved a ban on roaming fees beginning December 15, 2015, as reported by rapporteur MEP PP, Pilar del Castillo. However, Member States have not yet reached full agreement on this regulation.

The existing rules conflict with the policies of major European carriers, such as Telefonica, France Telecom, and Deutsche Telekom, which argue that removing the roaming fees will reduce their profit, which will in turn lead to a reduction in the investment capital needed to deploy new fiber optic networks.

Since Tuesday, mobile carriers in Europe may allow customers to select a roaming plan before initiating travel, and even choose a local operator for data services in the country visited.

Thanks to EU legislation, roaming fees have fallen 80-90% from 2007 to 2014.

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