

BIPT

BELGIAN INSTITUTE FOR POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

PRESS RELEASE

International call rates capped

Brussels, 9 May 2019 – On 15 May 2019, the international rates will be capped both for fixed and mobile services. From that time on it will be cheaper for residential users to call or text from Belgium to another EU country. In principle, operators will not be able to charge more than 19 euro cents per minute or 6 euro cents per SMS (exclusive of VAT).

Following the introduction of the Roam Like at Home rules on 15 June 2017, as a result of which calls, text messages or data use from another EU country within the European Union became much cheaper, calls and text messages from Belgium to other EU countries are capped as from 15 May 2019.

Today, calls made from a fixed or mobile number from Belgium to another country within the European Economic Area (EEA)¹ are expensive, sometimes even exceeding one euro a minute. Following the success of 'Roam Like at Home' the European legislator is now also curbing the excessive rates for international calls. Those caps only apply to residential customers but cover both fixed and mobile calls, and text messages. This should significantly reduce the anomaly that the price of a call made from a Belgian number from Belgium to Poland is (a lot) more expensive, than, say, a call made from a Belgian number from the Netherlands to Poland (roaming situation).

Exceptions

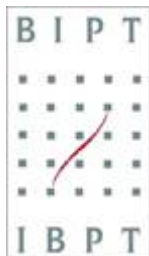
As a rule, operators have to offer regulated intra-EU rates. In addition however they may offer packages including intra-EU calls and text messages that do not fall within this new regulation's brief and are possibly more expensive than the regulated tariff caps. On the contrary, the call minutes, text messages or data which exceed the allowance ("out-of-bundle") and which are charged based on consumption, will be subject to the cap. It is also possible that operators offer an alternative rate including calls to different countries in the world (combination of calls to EU and non-EU countries). In that case intra-EU communication may be more expensive than the price caps imposed. E.g. a € 0.25 rate per minute for both intra-EU calls and calls to non-EEA countries. The customer must be able to choose an alternative rate but has to give his express consent to that effect. The operator is obliged to inform the customer about possible advantages he may lose (e.g. price caps) when he chooses such an alternative rate. However, BIPT stresses the fact that switching from or to a regulated tariff for international communications within a single working day should be free of charge.

Similar to 'Roam Like at Home', upon approval by BIPT, operators can obtain a derogation from the regulation so that they can continue to apply surcharges to their customers. To that end the operator does have to be able to prove that he is impacted significantly more than most other providers in the European Union and that this impact would weaken that provider's ability to

¹ I.e. apart from the 28 Member States of the European Union, also Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

sustain his charging model for domestic communications. If that is the case operators are allowed to charge a rate higher than 19 euro cents a minute or 6 euro cents per SMS.

For more detailed information (press):



Jimmy Smedts

Spokesman

f : +32 2 226 88 22, m : +32 478 63 91 82

BIPT - Ellipse Building - C Section- Koning Albert II-laan 35 - 1030 Brussels - Belgium

www.bipt.be

