

Roam Like at Home: Frequently Asked Questions



Until now, when you travelled to another EU country, your mobile operator would bill you at a different, higher rate for your mobile communications (phone calls, SMS, data) in that country. Over the last 10 years, the EU has progressively required mobile operators to considerably reduce these roaming charges, in favour of consumers. If you travel regularly to other EU countries, you have probably already experienced the sharp decrease in roaming prices over the last decade.

As of 15 June 2017 the last roaming charges that you were still paying to your mobile operator will disappear when you travel to another EU country. Every existing or new contract that includes roaming services will, by default, become a *roam like at home* contract. The new EU rules cover data services, voice calls and SMS.

1. *Is it really true that I will not pay anything extra when I travel and use my smartphone in the EU?*

Yes. Your communications (phone calls, SMS, data) made from another EU country will be covered in your national bundle: the minutes, SMS and gigabytes of data that you consume abroad in the EU will be charged or deducted from the volumes of your national tariff plan exactly as if you were at home (in the country where you live, work or study). Contrary to the past, you will not have to pay anything extra. No *bill shock* anymore. Whether you use your mobile phone while periodically abroad in the EU or

in the country where you live will not make any difference. You will *roam like at home*.

2. *Are there any exceptions or hidden rules to this new right I have?*

You can *roam like at home* whenever you are in an EU country other than the country where you actually live (your effective home). If you move to and establish a durable residence in another EU country, you will no longer be able to benefit from *roam like at home* offers from an operator in the country you came from. You will be able to *roam like at home* with a mobile subscription of your new country of residence when you travel abroad in the EU.



3. How long can I roam like at home when I am abroad?

The general rule is that as long as you spend more time at home than abroad, or you use your mobile phone more at home than abroad, you can roam at domestic prices when travelling wherever in the EU. This is considered a fair use of roaming services.

If this is not the case, your mobile operator may contact you. Operators can detect possible abuses based on the balance of roaming and domestic activity over a four-month period: if you spend a majority of your time abroad and consume more abroad than at home over the four months, the operator can ask you to clarify the situation within 14 days. If you continue roaming more than you are at home, your operator may start applying a small charge to your roaming consumption. This will be capped at 3.2 cents per minute of voice call and 1 cent per SMS. For data, the maximum surcharge will be €7.7 per GB (as of 15 June 2017), falling to €6 per GB (as of 1 January 2018), €4.5 per GB (as of 1 January 2019), €3.5 per GB (as of 1 January 2020), €3 per GB (as of 1 January 2021) and finally €2.5 per GB (as of 1 January 2022).

4. Are there any volume limits to calling, sending SMS and using mobile data at domestic prices while I travel?

If at home you have unlimited calls and SMS, you will get unlimited calls and SMS when roaming in the EU.

If at home you have unlimited mobile data or very cheap mobile data, your operator may apply a safeguard (fair use) limit on data use while roaming. If this is the case, the operator will have to inform you in advance about such a limit and have to alert you in case you reach it. That safeguard limit will be high enough to cover most, if not all, of your roaming needs. Beyond this threshold, you can continue data roaming, subject to a small charge (maximum €7.70/GB + VAT; this will decline gradually to reach €2.50/GB as of 2022).

5. Is roam like at home automatic or do I have to do something to activate it?

You do not need to set anything up. Your operator will automatically cease to apply the roaming charge when you roam abroad in the EU after 15 June 2017.

6. I never travel abroad in the EU. Will the new roaming rules have any impact on me?

No. If you do not travel abroad in the EU, nothing will change for you. You may receive a notification of changes in your contract regarding the new roaming rules, but if you do not travel abroad, you do not need to pay any particular attention to those changes. If, on this occasion, your operator notifies you of changes in any other conditions of your contract, you have the right to terminate your contract without penalty if you do not accept these changes.



7. Will I get notified on June 15? If so, how?

Yes. Your operator should inform you about the end of roaming charges and how your particular tariff will be affected (e.g. by the fair use policy), and your contract will be adjusted accordingly.

The public information concerning your particular tariff (e.g. on your operator's website) will also be adapted as regards roaming. When you cross an EU border after 15 June 2017, you will continue to receive an SMS informing you that you are roaming. That SMS will remind you of any fair use policy on roaming applied by your operator.

8. I already have a particular roaming tariff plan which I have specifically chosen (for instance: I pay a bit more than the EU regulated roaming price in the EU, but I have very good prices when roaming in the US and Canada where I often travel). Can I keep it after 15 June 2017?

Yes. Your operator will contact you ahead of 15 June 2017 and ask you if you want to keep your specific roaming tariff. If you confirm, you will keep it. If you reply negatively or do not reply, you will be switched automatically to the new *roam like at home* rules.

9. What can I do if I go abroad and cannot use roam like at home and get charged extra?

You should first contest those extra charges with your operator, who should have a complaints procedure in place. If the operator persists, you should notify the relevant body in your country, usually your [national telecoms regulator](#), who will settle the case.

10. Do my new rights also cover the calls I make from home to friends abroad?

No. Calling from home is not roaming. The new rights cover communications (calls, SMS, data) made when roaming in the EU, which means when travelling abroad in the EU. The prices of calls from home to a foreign country, including in the EU, are not regulated.

For travellers

11. If I travel and call or text a friend, do I have to worry on which operator he/she is or whether it is a fixed or mobile?

No. When you are roaming in the EU, all calls to mobile and fixed numbers in the EU will be counted against your national volume of minutes (or will be unlimited if you have unlimited calls at home), exactly as if you were calling within your home country. If you have distinct so-called 'on-net' and 'off-



net' volumes in your national bundle, all the roaming minutes may be all deducted from the off-net volume, and also when you call another subscriber of the same domestic operator while roaming.

For example: If you have a Belgian card and you travel to France and call either a hotel in France, back home to Belgium, or to any other country in the EU and the EEA, you are [roaming](#), and you will pay Belgian internal [domestic prices](#).

On the other hand, if for example, a Belgian SIM card holder calls from Belgium to Spain, she/he will pay the international tariff. Calls from home to another EU country are not roaming and are not regulated.

12. How will I be able to identify roam like at home tariffs with my local providers?

Roam like at home will be the default roaming tariff on all plans that include roaming. If you currently have a tariff plan including regulated roaming, you will be switched automatically to *roam like at home*. If you want to buy a new tariff plan that includes roaming after 15 June 2017, your operator will present that tariff plan to you with *roam like at home* by default.

13. If I travel, how much do I pay when I receive a call?

If you travel abroad in the EU after 15 June 2017: nothing – just as at home!

14. In which countries can I roam like at home starting on 15th of June?

In all 28 countries of the EU: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and in the countries of the European Economic Area: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

15. Can I use roam like at home on ships within the EU?

As long as you are directly connected to a terrestrial mobile network (e.g. on rivers, lakes or along the coast) yes – otherwise no. EU roaming rules apply only to terrestrial mobile networks. As soon as the services are provided through other types of radio networks, via satellite systems on board of ships or aeroplanes for instance, they are not subject to the binding price caps of the EU.

16. Is it still a good idea to take a temporary local SIM when travelling abroad for a long period (more than 2 weeks)?

For a few weeks, probably no. The roaming 'fair use' rules are designed for people 'periodically travelling' in the EU. Therefore, if you plan to stay several months abroad without interruption, it is a good idea to check the *roam like at home* fair use policy applied by your operator to decide what is best in your particular case.



17. I often go abroad/I plan to stay a long time abroad. How do I know if I still get roam like at home?

The general rule is that as long as you spend more time at home than abroad or you use your mobile phone more at home than abroad you can roam at domestic prices when travelling anywhere in the EU. This is considered a “fair use” of roaming services. In order to determine if this is the case, your operator may check your roaming time and consumption over the last four consecutive months or longer.

If, during this time window, you have been more abroad in the EU than at home AND you have consumed mobile services more abroad in the EU than at home, your mobile operator can contact you and inform you that you may be subject to small charges if you continue to stay abroad. If, within two weeks from the moment you receive a warning, you re-establish prevalent home presence or consumption, no charge will apply. Otherwise, your operator may start applying the small charges (see also question 21) to your roaming consumption from the day of the alert onwards.

Therefore, as long as your operator has not contacted you while abroad, you can *roam like at home* without any worries.

18. I have unlimited voice calls and SMS at home. Do I get unlimited voice calls and SMS in roam like at home?

Yes. Any volume restrictions for voice calls and SMS while roaming are no longer allowed from 15 June 2017.

19. I have unlimited data at home. How do I know the volume of roam like at home data that I get?

If your national mobile bundle includes unlimited data, your operator must provide you with a large volume of *roam like at home* data depending on the price of your mobile bundle.

Your operator should clearly inform you of this *roam like at home* data allowance. In case you use more data while roaming than the data allowance foresees, you may have to pay a small charge (See also question 21).

If you want to check the operator’s calculation, here is how: the roaming data volume must be at least twice the volume obtained by dividing the price of your mobile bundle (excluding VAT) by €7.7. For your information, €7.7 is the maximum price that your operator has to pay the foreign operator for 1 GB of data when you are abroad in the EU during 2017. This means that you may get more *roam like at home* data than the volume your operator can purchase with your monthly subscription from the foreign operator whose network you are using abroad.

Example: At home, you have a mobile bundle including unlimited calls, SMS and data for €42 (€35 excluding 20% VAT). When travelling in the EU, you get *roam like*



at home for unlimited calls and SMS, and at least 9.1 GB of data ($2 \times (35 / 7.7) = 9.1$)

20. My data at home is not unlimited. How do I know if I get my full domestic volume of data in roam like at home?

If your operator has not explicitly informed you of a roaming data limit, you can benefit while abroad from the full amount of data under your domestic contract.

The operator is only entitled to apply a *roam like at home* data limit in 2017 in case you pay less than €3.85/GB of data used (in 2018 less than €3/GB, in 2019 less than €2.25/GB). The actual limit depends on the monthly amount you pay for your mobile contract. The limit is calculated as in question 19.

Example 1: At home you have a mobile bundle including unlimited calls, SMS and 3 GB of data for €30 (€25 excluding 20% VAT). In this case, $€25 / 3\text{GB} = €8.3/\text{GB}$. When travelling in the EU, you get *roam like at home* with unlimited calls and SMS, and 3 GB of data, exactly like at home.

Example 2: At home you have a mobile bundle including unlimited calls, SMS and 10 GB of data for €30 (€25 excluding 20% VAT). The calculation is $€25 / 10\text{GB} = €2.5/\text{GB}$. When travelling in the EU, you get *RLAH* with unlimited calls and SMS, and at least 6.5 GB of data ($2 \times (25/7.7) = 6.5$). If the operator wishes to apply such a data limit while roaming, they must clearly inform you

of the volume available and whenever you have consumed that volume while abroad.

21. If I do exceed the limits of roam like at home, what are the extra costs my operator can charge me with?

Beyond *roam like at home* fair use policy, your operator may apply a small charge on roaming consumption:

- 3.2 cents per minute of voice call made (+VAT)
- 1 cent per SMS (+VAT)
- €7.7 per GB of data (+VAT) (less than 1 cent per MB)

For data, this is 6.5 times less than today's roaming charge and 26 times less than the charge billed in 2015. For calls made, this is 36% less than today's charge and six times less than the charge in 2015. For SMS, this is 50% less than today's charge and six times less than the charge in 2015.

22. I work in another European country than the one where I reside; will I be able to roam like at home without any risks of exceeding my limits?

Yes. In your case, you can choose a provider in either country and roam at the domestic price of that country: you can roam at domestic price with a SIM from the country where you reside or with a SIM from the country where you work. In both cases the *roam like at home* fair use policy will



apply (as described in question 17), subject to the important additional point that any day when you log on at least once on the network of your domestic operator counts as a day of presence (even if you also go abroad that day).

23. I live near the border and my network often connects to the one of a neighbouring country, will I be able to roam like at home without any risks of exceeding my limits?

Yes. As long as your phone logs on to your domestic network once a day, you will be considered at home that day and not roaming. It does not matter whether your phone logs on to a network of the neighbouring country in the EU (be it from your country or because you spent part of the day in that foreign country). Roaming providers should also inform you on how to avoid inadvertent roaming.

24. If I only travel for 2-3 weeks abroad in the EU per year, can I use my national bundle without exceeding the limits of roam like at home?

Yes. You just need to keep in mind that, if you have unlimited data in your national bundle, your data may not be fully unlimited in roam like at home. Or if you have a large amount of data for a very low price in your national bundle, you may have slightly less data at your disposal while roaming. In both cases, the roam like at home volume of

data that you will get will be large enough to cover all, or at least most, of your needs (See also question 19 and question 20). In addition, the applicable roaming charge beyond the roam like at home volume will be small (see also question 21).

25. I have a pre-paid card. Do I get roam like at home?

Yes. If you pay per unit, and your domestic unit price of data is less than €7.7 per GB, your operator may apply a *roam like at home* volume limit on data. That limit should be at least the volume obtained by dividing the remaining credit on your pre-paid card when you start using data roaming services (excluding VAT) by €7.7. For instance if you have €13 (€10.8 excluding a 20% VAT) left on your SIM card when starting roaming data, you will have at least $10.8/7.7=1.4$ GB of roaming data. For your information, €7.7 is in 2017 the maximum price that your operator has to pay the foreign operator for 1 GB of data when you are abroad in the EU. This means that you get in *roam like at home* exactly the volume of roaming data you have paid for in advance. For voice and SMS, you will pay exactly the same unit price as at home.



As of 15 June 2017, goodbye roaming fees!

