



End of roaming charges for all travellers in the European Union: How does it work?

The EU will put an end to roaming charges for all EU travellers as of **15 June 2017**. Dismantling additional charges for travellers who call, send messages or surf the internet on their mobile devices while abroad, has been one of the biggest success stories of the EU.

As mobile contracts and data bundles offered in the European Union differ significantly between Member States, the European Commission has established safeguards in order to make **roaming at domestic prices** work for everyone, and to avoid harmful side effects on domestic markets.

WHAT IS ROAM LIKE AT HOME?

- ▶ **Roam like at home** is aimed at all people who travel in the EU for work or leisure from their 'home'. 'Home' means their **country of residence**, or a **country to which a person has 'stable links'**. It covers customers who spend substantial and recurring amounts of time in a country where they study, work, or have retired.
- ▶ When offering roaming, **telecom operators** operating in a given EU country **must include roam like at home by default in contracts they offer to people who live in that EU country**. Travellers can then call, text and surf on their mobile devices when abroad in the EU for no extra charge on top of the price they pay at home.
- ▶ **Roam like at home is not meant to be used for permanent roaming** (including permanent use of a SIM card from another country). The operator can question the residence / stable links of customers who, over any 4-month period, both spend more time abroad than at home, and make most of their calls and texts or use most of their data outside the operator's country.

WHAT ABOUT MOBILE DATA CONSUMPTION?

Some operators offer unlimited or very high data allowances for low unit prices. As those deals are available in some Member States but not in others, they are **open to higher risks of abuse**. To protect markets from distortions and consumers from adverse effects of an increase in domestic prices, the Commission has proposed specific solutions for such data packages.

For data, the eligible amount would be determined by operators in terms of the wholesale roaming data price cap. This is the maximum price operators can charge each other for the data their consumers use abroad. The exact amount of this cap is €7.7 per GB. As of 1 January 2018 it will be €6 per GB and will continue to decrease every year until 2022.

For the most competitive contracts offering unlimited data or data allowances at very low domestic unit prices (below the wholesale cap of €7.7/GB): When you go abroad you will continue to enjoy your full allowance of calls and texts. For data, you will have twice the volume of data that can be bought by the value of your monthly contract at the wholesale roaming data price cap (€7.7/GB in 2017). Beyond this threshold the operator may apply a small surcharge (no more than the wholesale data cap + VAT).

For pre-paid metered contracts without automatic monthly payments, and for which proof of residence has not been requested by the operator: When you go abroad, you can *roam like at home* up to the amount of credit remaining for that month, at the same prices you would pay at home. If you pay less per unit of data than the wholesale data price cap (€7.7/GB), you can use a roaming data volume equivalent to the value of your remaining monthly credit at the wholesale roaming data price cap. You can top up your credit while roaming if necessary.

Example: With his €70 (€57.85 excl. VAT) per month contract, Tim, living in the Netherlands, gets unlimited calls, texts and data for his smartphone. While travelling abroad, he will have unlimited calls and texts. For data, he will get, without roaming surcharge, **twice the equivalent of €57.85 worth of data** at the wholesale roaming price cap of €7.7/GB, meaning **more than 15 GB**.

Example: In the Czech Republic, Zoran has a €20 pay and go (pre-paid) card for data, calls and texts, and pays 0.5 cent/ MB for data. By the time he goes on holiday, Zoran has €13 (€10.74 excl. VAT) credit remaining on his card. While abroad, Zoran can enjoy a volume of data equivalent to the value of his credit. This means he gets **the equivalent of €10.74 worth** at the wholesale roaming data price cap of €7.7/GB, meaning **more than 1.4 GB**.

Such data thresholds for contracts that offer a lot of data for a low price should allow all users to meet their normal data needs while travelling. As of 1 January 2018, the wholesale roaming data price cap will already decrease to €6/GB, and then further decrease annually down to €2.5/GB in 2022 (the prices will be reviewed in 2019).

HOW IS THE COMMISSION PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND MARKETS?

- ▶ Operators can ask the consumers to provide evidence that they live or have stable links to the operator's country before including **roam like at home** in a new contract.
- ▶ Operators can only use the information they already gather for billing purposes to check to what extent customers are using mobile and data services abroad compared to their consumption at home.
- ▶ While avoiding excessive checks on consumers, operators need to be able to detect abuses, as these may harm domestic markets:
 - When checking whether consumers spend more time and consume more services abroad than at home, operators will need to look at a period of **at least four months**.
 - Frontier workers and others who regularly cross borders in the EU are protected: if they log on to their domestic network at any time in the day, this counts as a day of presence.
 - If billing data suggests that a consumer has been abroad more than at home, and has used more mobile services while travelling in the EU than at home:
 1. The operator **first** has to send a **warning message** to the customer.
 2. The customer would then have additional **two weeks** to inform the operator about his or her travel situation, or to log in their home country again to re-establish prevalent home presence or consumption.
 3. If a consumer continues to stay abroad, a **very small roaming charge** (no more than the wholesale roaming caps, i.e. €0.032/minute, €0.01/SMS, €7.7/GB in 2017) can be applied.

These are specific rules for highly exceptional cases (concerning less than 1% of customers). The vast majority of Europeans travel abroad far less than 30 days per year, so they will never have to think about these anti-abuse rules.