

BEREC Summary Report on the status of internet capacity in light of the Covid-19 crisis

In a joint statement with the European Commission on 19 March 2020 on how network operators can cope with the increased demand on network capacity, BEREC committed to setting up a special monitoring mechanism to ensure regular monitoring of the Internet traffic situation in each Member State in order to be able to respond swiftly to capacity issues.

This report summarises the main findings of the second information gathering exercise by BEREC on 26 March 2020, updating the data collected on 24 March 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. At this point in time, a total of 27¹ national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on the telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far. An additional nine NRAs have contributed to this exercise since the first data gathering exercise.

13 NRAs² have not reported any changes compared to the first data gathering exercise.

The status report will continue to be updated based on regular input from the NRAs, with the next update expected on 1 April 2020.

Status on the network capacity

General observations continue to be that overall traffic on fixed and on mobile networks has increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but that no major congestion issues have occurred. Since the previous information gathering exercise, one NRA (BE) explicitly reported a stabilisation in traffic as well as a decrease in the peak traffic after the measures put in place by some of the larger content providers, such as Netflix, YouTube and Facebook. Aside from this, two NRAs (IT, NL) have mentioned explicitly that content and application providers have reduced the bitrate transmission of their streaming services.

Actions taken by NRAs

NRAs are monitoring the situation and regularly collecting data from the ISPs and other market players about the status in their networks.

Some NRAs (AT, DE, DK, FI, HR, IT, PL, SK) have also informed the market players about the available exception for traffic management during congestion in Article 3(3) c) of

¹ The following NRAs have contributed to both information gathering exercises : AT, BE, BG, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK,

² No changes reported since the previous data collection by : AT, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LT, LU, NO, SI, SE

Regulation (EU) 2015/2120. Operators should notify their respective NRA if any such traffic management measure is applied. Currently, only one NRA (BE) assesses the compliance of the measures taken by the ISPs. Several NRAs (DE, HU, IT, RO) have mentioned explicitly that they are in constant dialogue with their ISPs, allowing the NRAs to be immediately notified if special measures need to be taken. One NRA (CZ) reported that they provided advice to their ISPs on special measures. One NRA (CH) received information from an ISP about measures implemented for resolving traffic management problems.

One NRA (HU) is considering alleviating regulatory measures during the crisis and another NRA (PT) has suspended some procedures related to the process of releasing frequency spectrum bands.

Given the national state of emergency, one NRA (RO) requested the providers of electronic communications services not to disconnect the services in the event of non-payment by the customers. One NRA (IT) has approved a first package of measures addressed to electronic communications networks and service providers aimed at tackling the increase in the consumption of electronic communications services and of traffic on the network, as well as meeting the needs of the different sectors, mainly the health sector.

Actions taken by other public bodies

Some NRAs mentioned that they are in close cooperation with other ministries and other authorities. There are also governments (DE, FR) in ongoing contact with the CAPs.

In one Member State (NO), the government has a local public warning system in place by sending SMS with relevant information.

In response to the crisis, a specific decree, a decree-law or governmental measures have been adopted in some Member States (IT, PL, PT, RO) with temporary measures intended also for the providers of electronic communications networks and services.

Actions taken and communication by operators

In some Member States, operators have implemented customer-friendly measures such as:

- increasing the amount of mobile data in the subscriptions for a limited period (BE, BG, DE, EE, HU, IT, PL, PT);
- supplied extra mobile data (and voice) to subscriptions without additional costs to citizens stuck abroad (DK);
- zero-rating temporarily additional services or offering services free of charge, such as educational content (HR, HU) or official websites dedicated to information related to Covid-19 (CZ);
- distributing useful information to their customers (BE, BG, DE, DK, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK);
- offering their services online due to closed retail shops (LT).

Some operators have raised uncertainties related to the supply of spare parts as well as to the limited availability of their staff.

Further communication towards end-users

Some entities³ (NRAs, government or ISPs) have advised their end-users a reasonable use of the internet access services. One NRA (LT) issued recommendations for schools, teachers, and students on how to organise remote learning processes smoothly in order to avoid a “breakdown” of electronic communications networks.

³ CH, FR, LT, PT, RO