

## **BEREC Summary Report on the status of internet capacity in light of 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 reporting mechanism to ensure regular monitoring of the Internet traffic situation in each Member State to be able to respond swiftly to capacity issues.

This report summarises the main findings of the ongoing, twice-weekly information gathering exercise, and includes the most recent data provided to BEREC by its constituent NRAs as of 7 April 2020. At this point in time, a total of 31<sup>1</sup> national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on the telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far.

15 NRAs<sup>2</sup> reported that they have observed no changes compared to the previous information gathering exercise (as of 2 April 2020).

The status report will be continuously updated based on regular input from the NRAs, with the next summary report to be issued 15 April 2020<sup>3</sup>.

### **The key updates since the previous report**

- In RO, all CAP ports at one internet exchange point reached more than 80% of transmission capacity during peak hours, and mobile network operators requested the NRA to take into account an ease of the application of the Regulation (EU) 2015/2120;
- In MT, there has been a reduction in the reporting frequency of ISPs from three times per week to once each week;
- In PT, exceptional measures have been proposed to the government in order to protect consumers of electronic communications services;
- Additional customer-friendly actions taken by operators included in the list.

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<sup>1</sup> The following NRAs have contributed so far to the information gathering exercises: AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, ME, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE.

<sup>2</sup> NRAs from the following Member States having mentioned that there are no changes: CY, CZ, DK, EE, FI, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, NL, NO, PL, SE, SK

<sup>3</sup> Due to public holidays a summary report will not be issued by BEREC on 10 April 2020, as would have been the case otherwise.

## Status on the network capacity

Generally, overall traffic on fixed and mobile networks has increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but no major congestion issues have occurred. For more than one week, more and more NRAs (AL, BE, DE, ES, FR, HU, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT and SK) are reporting a stabilisation in overall traffic. Another two NRAs (IT<sup>4</sup>, SI) still observe an increase of overall traffic. One NRA (IE) still observes that the increase in data usage continues and confirms that voice traffic is stabilising.

One NRA (ES) initially reported that occasional problems occurred for completing calls in very dense areas.

One NRA (RO) has reported that all CAP ports at one internet exchange point reached more than 80% of transmission capacity during peak hours.

Following Commissioner Breton's initiative, measures had been applied throughout Europe by some of the larger content providers, such as Netflix, YouTube, Amazon Prime and Facebook. Aside from this, two NRAs (FR, HU) explicitly stated that content and application providers are limiting the bitrate transmission of their streaming services. Additionally, three NRAs explicitly observe the effects of the applied measures in a stabilisation of the traffic (AL, FR, NL). Moreover, the launch of Disney's video streaming platform in FR was delayed by two weeks (7 April 2020).

## Regulatory actions taken

NRAs are monitoring the situation and are regularly collecting data from the ISPs and other market players about the status of their networks. The frequency of collecting data ranges from once (DE, ES, HR, ME) per day to once (BG, CY, EL, LT, IT, MT), twice (FR, HU) or three (BE, LU) times a week. .

Besides the periodical reporting, ISPs are also asked to immediately notify the NRAs about any exceptional measure that are put in place. This is particularly relevant for the application of any exceptional traffic management measure and some NRAs (AT, DE HR, DK, FI, IT, LT, LV, SK) have informed the market players about the available exception for traffic management during congestion in Article 3(3) c) of Regulation (EU) 2015/2120 as well as about their duties in such an event.

Currently, only one NRA (BE) has assessed the compliance of the measures taken by the ISPs with Article 3(3) of Regulation (EU) 2015/2120. Four NRAs (BG, DE, FR, LU and RO) have explicitly reported that they are in close dialogue with their ISPs, allowing the NRA to be immediately notified if special measures need to be taken. Similar to this, one NRA (HU) has mentioned they are closely monitoring the situation but that there has been no need for taking any decisions so far. Another NRA (EL) has advised their ISPs to first consult with the authority before taking any measures and yet another NRA (CH) has reported receiving information from an ISP about measures implemented for resolving traffic management problems.

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<sup>4</sup> Update as of 2 April 2020

One NRA (PT) has proposed exceptional measures consideration to the government to protect the consumers of electronic communications services, namely:

- Flexibility in terminating or changing contracts;
- Prevention of interruption of electronic communications services in the event of non-payment;
- Exemption from interests and other penalties and relief debt settlement.

One NRA (IT) adopted a first package of measures aimed at tackling the increase in the consumption of electronic communications services and of the traffic on the networks and required operators to make every effort to manage and overcome the state of emergency. Two NRAs (AL, SI) explicitly reported that there has been no need so far for ISPs to change any traffic management practices, but ISPs are prepared to do so if need be (further elaborated under *Actions taken and communication by operators*).

One NRA (IE) proposed a mechanism for a temporary assignment of specific frequency spectrum bands as a measure to increase capacity for mobile networks.

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. Another NRA (ES) reported that such a measure was adopted by a governmental decision.

In the case of CY, the NRA will evaluate the ISPs' data and determine if any further measures are required.

### **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 without any additional charge (AL, AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, HR, IT, ME, PL, PT, RO);
- applying temporary zero-rating for additional services or offering services free of charge, such as educational content and platforms (AL, EL, HR, HU, BG) or official websites dedicated to information related to Covid-19 (CZ);
- increasing the bandwidth once the data cap is reached on mobile services (FR);
- increasing the upload speed to facilitate studying and working from home (ME);
- offering some TV content free of charge (AL, EL, FR, HR, LT, ME);
- distributing useful information to their customers by using different channels, such as updates on their websites, newsletters, press releases or SMS (AL, BE, BG, DE, ES, HR, DK, EL, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, ME, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI);
- offering their services online due to closed retail shops (AL, LT) or having a limited number of shops opened (BE);

- allowing online payment settlements (AL, IT, ME) .

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

Although no EU Member State has faced a major traffic collapse (as explained in the section *Status on the network capacity*), some operators have increased their network's capacity (EL, IT, LT, LV, ME, MT, PT and SI) to cope with the sustained traffic growth. In the case of some Member States, these network upgrades cover the links to the national exchange point (HU, IT and SI) or to the international exchange point (ME). One NRA (IE) reported that operators re-assigned network resources to deal with capacity issues. In CY, the ISPs have upgraded the speeds provided to their subscribers.

Other operators have not taken any such measure but they are closely monitoring their network's capacity (as explicitly reported by EE, FR, HU, HR, LU, LV, PT and RO) to check if an increase in the network's capacity is necessary.

If need be, some ISPs have plans to stream VoD or CUTV in SD resolution (SI) or to allow a smooth and swift resolution with minimal throttling (AL).

In RO, an association of mobile network operators requested the NRA to take into account an ease of the application of the Regulation (EU) 2015/2120 during the national state of emergency, such as for addressing congestions or for delaying the transposition of the EECC.

#### **Further communication towards end-users**

Some entities<sup>5</sup> (NRAs, governments or ISPs) have advised their end-users a reasonable use of the internet access services. One NRA (FR) informed that they have released an updated version of their guidance to teleworkers. Additionally, two NRAs (AL and PT) reported that they warned end-users about an increase in fraud and in cyberattacks related to the current crisis. One NRA (LT) issued guidance for operators on guaranteeing uninterrupted provision of e-communications services, as well recommendations for schools, teachers, and students on how to organize remote learning processes smoothly in order to avoid a "breakdown" of electronic communications networks.

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<sup>5</sup> AL, AT, CH, ES, FR, IT, PT, RO