

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 a special reporting 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 an ongoing, weekly¹ information gathering exercise, and includes the most recent data provided to BEREC by its constituent NRAs as of 28 April 2020. 31² national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far in their respective Member States.

8 NRAs³ have provided updates on the situation in their Member State since the previous information gathering exercise (23 April 2020). The status report will continue to be updated based on regular input from NRAs, with the next summary report due to be published on 8 May 2020⁴.

Please refer to previous iterations of this summary report for further details on some of the early measures applied by NRAs during the crisis.

Key updates since previous report

- *One NRA (BG) has explicitly reported a slight increase in overall internet traffic compared to the previous week due to the Easter holiday period;*
- *One NRA (IT) has observed a slight decrease in mobile data traffic and confirmed a stabilisation of fixed data traffic;*
- *Another NRA (LV) has reported that the overall traffic situation remains stable. The same observation has explicitly been confirmed by three NRAs (LT, MT and SI). Of that group, one NRA (LT) has also highlighted that a good quality of service is provided;*
- *Two NRAs (PL, PT) have observed a slight decrease in data traffic since last week.*

¹ BEREC has now reverted to weekly summary reports, rather than twice-weekly reporting, on the internet capacity situation in Member States.

² 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.

³ NRAs from the following Member States having reported a change since the previous data gathering exercise: BG, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI.

⁴ Due to the public holiday in Latvia, a summary report will not be issued by BEREC on 1 May 2020.

Status of network capacity

In general, traffic on fixed and mobile networks has increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but no major congestion issues have occurred. For more than five weeks, a growing number of NRAs (AL, AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, PL and SK) have been reporting a stabilisation in overall traffic. In particular, one NRA (LT) has explicitly confirmed that internet traffic remains stable with good quality of service. A stable situation has also been explicitly confirmed by another two NRAs (MT and SI).

However, one NRA (BG) has explicitly reported a slight increase in fixed and mobile data compared to the previous week due to Easter (17-20 April 2020). Although another NRA (IT) has confirmed a stabilisation of fixed data traffic, it has observed a slight decrease in mobile data traffic during the period 13-19 April 2020 compared to the week 7-12 April 2020.

For more than one week, more and more NRAs (AT, BG, EL, PL, RO, SI) have been detecting a decrease in overall internet traffic from the peak that was reached after the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis. This trend suggests that there are three phases in the evolution of traffic during the crisis: sharp increase, stabilisation and a decrease from the peak. Consequently, overall internet traffic is beginning to revert to average levels more typical of the period before the start of the Covid-19 crisis.

Over the last fortnight, six NRAs (AT, DK, NL, PL, RO, SI) have explicitly reported an increase of traffic in the IXPs (Internet Exchange Points) since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis. Last week, one NRA (NL) reported a stabilisation of traffic in the national IXP, whereas another NRA (PT) has now reported a slight decrease in interconnection traffic.

Regulatory actions taken

NRAs are monitoring the situation and are regularly collecting data from ISPs and other market players about the status of their networks. The frequency of collecting data ranges from daily (ES, ME) to once (AT, BG, CY, DE, EL, HR, LT, IT, ME, MT, SI), twice (FR, HU, PL, SK) or three (BE, LU) times per week. One NRA (RO) reported that because of a relatively stable situation, ISPs are requested to report overall information once every fortnight. However, any major incidents must be reported as soon as possible.

Besides periodical reporting, ISPs are also asked to immediately notify NRAs about any exceptional measures that are put in place. This is particularly relevant for the application of any exceptional traffic management measures. One ISP reported to its NRA (NL) that a network freeze and exception process is in place.

One NRA (PT) has explicitly reported about the publication of statistics related to the use of their measurement tool. These statistics reveal a significant increase of the tests performed, during the Covid-19 pandemic, by end-users to check the speed of their internet access.

Actions taken and communication by operators

One NRA (PT) has reported that some operators reinforced the capacity of their networks.

In one Member State (LT), one mobile operator provided information about a temporary breach of network integrity in its network due to a server failure.

No new update has been provided to the customer-friendly measures implemented by operators. Please refer to the previous iteration of this summary report for further information.

Further communication towards end-users

No new information has been reported since the previous iteration of this summary report.