GSMA

GSMA response to BEREC's public consultation the draft BEREC Guidelines detailing Quality of Service Parameters (BoR (23) 179)

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About the GSMA

The GSMA is a global organisation unifying the mobile ecosystem to discover, develop and deliver innovation foundational to positive business environments and societal change. Our vision is to unlock the full power of connectivity so that people, industry, and society thrive. Representing mobile operators and organisations across the mobile ecosystem and adjacent industries, the GSMA delivers for its members across three broad pillars: Connectivity for Good, Industry Services and Solutions, and Outreach. This activity includes advancing policy, tackling today's biggest societal challenges, underpinning the technology and interoperability that make mobile work, and providing the world's largest platform to convene the mobile ecosystem at the MWC and M360 series of events.

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Introduction

The GSMA thanks BEREC for the the opportunity to comment on BEREC's draft Guidelines detailing Quality of Service Parameters. Below we provide GSMA's general comments to the guidelines and our feedback to the specific questions raised by BEREC. We hope our contribution will be helpful and serve as a constructive contribution to BEREC's deliberations on its final guidelines.

General comments to BEREC's guidelines

Whilst we appreciate that BEREC leaves it open to the member states to select the best mechanisms for assessing QoS based on market specifics, we note this has led to significant fragmentation across the member states in terms of approach to QoS (measurement, publication / transparency). We therefore ask BEREC whether they would consider highlighting what they consider to be 'best practices' to support further alignment on approach to QoS?

We continue to be concerned about the interlock between QoS and the open internet rules. For example:

There is a growing concern that the excessive usage of a small group of exceptionally heavy users are having negative ramifications on the QoE of normal end-users, due to congestion on the network. They may impact QoS outcomes. Yet – it is very difficult to implement 'controls' on these parties, as a consequence of OIR (and related rules). E.g.,

(i)   Prohibiting tethering, due to device neutrality.
(ii)   Inability to apply reasonable traffic management measures to groups of exceptionally heavy users, as unclear if within reasonable traffic management.

We would also highlight that the issue of establishing that so-called 'specialised services' do not impact on general quality of internet access (undefined), remains a challenge, and will be an increasing issue as use cases relaying on differentiation proliferate.

To avoid regulatory over-burden, it should therefore be made clear that operators are only required to apply QoS parameters to the core services they offer, and not to services that are marginal.

As a macro comment, we note that many of the parameters listed are barely perceptible to the customer, and have no meaningful impact on their quality of experience. These therefore simply risk becoming a further administrative burden on the operators without bringing a benefit to customers (also further detailed below). We would thus ask BEREC to consider whether each parameter is material to determining the quality of experience for end-users.

Feedback to BEREC's specific question

1. **Do the existing Guidelines detailing Quality of Service (QoS) parameters assist stakeholders? Are there any challenges to implementing the Guidelines?**

Article 104 of the EECC is aimed at ensuring the transparency and comparability of reliable, user-friendly, and up-to-date information for end-users on the quality of internet access and publicly available interpersonal communications services. To facilitate comparability across the European Union and to reduce compliance costs, BEREC is empowered to adopt a unified framework in the form of guidelines on relevant measurable quality of service (QoS) parameters and the applicable methodology which NRAs in coordination with other competent authorities should take utmost account of. The European harmonization of QoS parameters for data collection and publication practices should result in substantive benefits, such as enabling comparability among Member States and providing better information on the European electronic communications market, while at the same time promoting the consistent application of regulatory obligations and improving transparency for end-users and public authorities in relation to QoS.

However, in our view, the goals of harmonization and transparency provided by Article 104 of the EECC are not realized in practice for the reasons stated below.

Firstly, so far, there are different practices in countries across the EU as far as the implementation of transparency of QoS is concerned - some countries, for example, Lithuania, has established extensive and burdensome mandatory requirements in national legislation that are difficult to follow in practice, while in other countries there is no legal framework, and the scope of publicly announced information varies significantly. It should be noted that when national NRAs establish the mandatory obligations on operators to assess all parameters specified in Article 104 of the EECC (Annex X) according to the methodology provided for in the BEREC guidelines (for example, the principle of measurement (protocols, measurement points), statistical processing, formulas), they do not take into account the potential complexity and additional administrative burden imposed on operators and do not provide for specific measurement conditions (e.g. how to manage the variety of connection conditions (good, poor coverage, movement), time (distribution over time of hour, day, week, month, year), diversity of technologies) to ensure

comparability. All major methodology assumptions that should assure result comparability are left for each operator to decide individually. As a result, variation from country to country is so significant that it requires specific burdensome and costly implementation per country operation creating an incomparable scope of parameters that cannot be used on a daily basis to improve quality and results in no practical value neither for end-user nor operator.

Secondly, the relevance and comparability of QoS parameter metrics are key in fulfilling the aim of BEREC guidelines. Parameter metrics for one end-user are only relevant to the relevant geographical place and per technology (mobile data vs XDSL vs Fibre, etc.) and if the metrics provided are comparable. However, in our view, this important element is missing in the current guidelines and their application practices e.g.

- We believe that the measurements of the general experience in the network are of limited relevance for one end-user within a specific geographical position.
- Some parameters, for example, call signalling delays - CSD/CASD/CRD (Table 1 QoS Parameters as set out in Annex X of the EECC) have no feasible measurement method available when traffic cases are produced by several operators and necessary measuring points are not available for on.
- Some parameters, for example, unsuccessful call ratio (Table 1 QoS Parameters as set out in Annex X of the EECC) do not provide any possibility for the end-user to compare one service provider to another, i.e., when voice traffic cases are produced by several operators.
- When there are several measurement methods implemented by service providers, for example, data transmission speed (upload and download) (Table 2 QoS Parameters not set out in Annex X of the EECC), it gives significantly different metrics for one parameter, which makes comparison between service providers almost impossible.
- One measuring method with one tool, for example, dropped call ratio (Table 1 QoS Parameters as set out in Annex X of the EECC) gives different results pending mobile handset and/or network vendor due to signalling or counters being differently implemented, which makes comparison between service providers almost impossible.
- Some technical metrics, for example, data transmission speed (upload and download) (Table 2 QoS Parameters not set out in Annex X of the EECC), depend on the end-user behaviour i.e. different data applications require different data transmission speeds (for example, end-user A uses a service that works well with 5 Mbps and will only use 5 Mbps even if 10 Mbps speed is available in the network and end-user B uses a service that works well with 10 Mbps and uses 10 Mbps, in these cases metrics will show end-user A using 5 Mbps and end-user B using 10 Mbps, which makes it impossible to distinguish which end-user has got the best service quality.

- Some of the parameters, for example, call signalling delays - CSD/CASD/CRD (Table 1 QoS Parameters as set out in Annex X of the EECC) are of a highly technical nature and require special expert knowledge to be understood therefore, are incomprehensible to the average end-user.

2. Which points in the Guidelines could be more detailed or clarified?

In our view, detailing and clarification of QoS parameters in an extensive way does not solve any of the challenges to fulfill the aim of harmonization and transparency as provided by Article 104 of the EECC and to assist service providers, where relevance and comparability are key, as mentioned above.

We believe that guidelines could rather specify subjective service quality measurements and highlight the need for common NRA measurements to be officially compatible between service providers in the respective country and between member states.

3. Which parameters, listed, or even not listed, in Annex X of EECC, mostly assist end-users in evaluating the quality of service?

There is a rather limited scope of parameters (for example, data transmission speed for internet access service and call set-up failure probability for interpersonal communications services) per service which could assist end-user in distinguishing service quality and the current extensive set of nearly all possible parameters can be minimized, in our view.

4. Do you have any other relevant comment?

The currently identified parameters for benchmarking and comparison derail the established market competition, which has been very positive for the markets historically, and shift focus onto minute and tech-centric parameters lacking relevancy for the larger public and the individual end-user. This is specifically severe as practice easily turns into comparing technically not equivalent solutions that despite differences can still meet the end-user demands. Thereby there is a risk of this benchmarking creating unmanageable expectation discrepancy and thereby dissatisfaction amongst the end-users. Benchmarking of this type negatively impacts larger operators, geographically and technically, vs more technically focused, e.g., fiber only, or geographically/segment-limiting actors of the market.

We believe that objectivity and comparability of service quality parameters can only be achieved when NRAs measure and publish the relevant parameters.