



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

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

As mobile contracts and data bundles offered in the European Union differ significantly between Member States, the European Commission is setting some safeguards in order to make **roaming at domestic prices** work for everyone and to avoid 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»**. This includes 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**. The operator can question the residence / stable links of customers who spend more time abroad than at home, and who make most of their calls and texts and use most of their data outside the country where they live in.

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 distortion and consumers from possible increases in domestic prices, the Commission proposes specific solutions for such data packages.

The volume of data roaming for each package is determined by operators on the basis of wholesale roaming data price caps. This is the maximum price operators can charge each other for the data their consumers use abroad.

Data wholesale prices will be reduced step by step over 5 years: €7.7/GB (15/06/2017), €6/GB (01/01/2018), €4.5/GB (01/01/2019), €3.5/GB (01/01/2020), €3/GB (01/01/2021) and €2.5/GB (01/01/2022).

For pre-paid metered contracts: 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, you can use a data volume equivalent to the value of your remaining monthly credit at the wholesale roaming data price cap. You can top up your credit if necessary.

Example: Zoran has a €20 pay and go (pre-paid) card for data, calls and texts. By the time he goes on holiday, Zoran has €13 credit remaining on his card. While being abroad, Zoran can enjoy a volume of data equivalent to the value of his credit. This means he gets the equivalent of €13 worth at the wholesale roaming data price cap. Based on the caps agreed by the European Parliament and Member States, this would give Zoran almost **1.7 GB of data roaming in as of 15 June 2017** and **5.2 GB of data roaming as of January 2022**.

For the most competitive contracts offering data allowances at very low domestic unit prices (below the wholesale cap): 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 equivalent to the value of your monthly contract in terms of the wholesale roaming data price cap.

Example: with his €70 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 text. For data, he will get twice the equivalent of €70 worth at the wholesale roaming data price cap. Based on caps agreed by the European Parliament and Member States, this would give Tim **over 18 GB of data roaming as of 15 June 2017** and **56 GB of data roaming as of January 2022**.

Such data limits for low-price contracts should allow all users to meet their normal needs while travelling.

HOW DOES THE COMMISSION PROTECT CONSUMERS AND MARKETS?

- ▶ Operators **can ask the consumers to provide evidence** that they live or have stable links to the 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 of free roaming for travellers:**
 - 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**.
 - If billing data suggests that a consumer has been more abroad than at home, and also consumed more mobile services while travelling in the EU than at home, the operator **first** has to send a **warning message** to the customer.
 - 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.
 - If a consumer continues to stay abroad, a **very small roaming charge** (no more than the wholesale roaming charges, currently debated between the European Parliament and Council) can be applied.

These are specific rules for highly exceptional cases. The vast majority of Europeans travel abroad for less than 30 days per year, so they will never have to think about the anti-abuse rules.