BEREC Summary Report on the status of internet capacity, regulatory and other measures 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 of 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. Furthermore, BEREC is collecting information on other measures implemented by National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) as well as on other initiatives by public and private parties throughout Europe.

This report focuses on, and summarises, the main updates of an ongoing monthly information gathering exercise, and includes the most recent data provided to BEREC by its constituent NRAs as of 27 October 2020. This month's report includes a visualisation of new information collected by BEREC regarding the status of networks in Member States (see section 1.2 below) based on a 'traffic light' illustration. During the entire reporting period (i.e. since BEREC first published a report on how the Covid-19 crisis is impacting internet capacity etc.), 33[1] NRAs have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on electronic communications networks and the actions taken so far in their respective Member States.

Please refer to the previous iterations of this summary report[2] for further details on some of the early measures applied by NRAs during the crisis. The summary report will continue to be updated based on regular input from NRAs with the next iteration expected to be released on 27 November 2020.

1. Status of internet capacity

In general, while traffic on fixed and mobile networks have increased during the Covid-19 crisis, no major congestion issues have been reported by NRAs to BEREC.

For this report, 3 NRAs[3] have provided updates of substance (i.e. information highlighting changes in answers to the questions asked in BEREC's information gathering exercise) on the status of internet capacity in their Member State since the previous information gathering

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[1] 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, LT, LU, LV, ME, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, and SK.
[2] The previous iterations of the summary report can be found at: https://berec.europa.eu/eng/document_register/search/?reference_number=&title=summary+report&contents=&category_id=&date_from=&date_to=&search=1
[3] NRAs from the following Member States have provided substantive updates since the previous data gathering exercise: IE, PL, and PT.

exercise (29 September 2020), while 19 NRAs[4] have explicitly mentioned that either the situation remains stable or there is nothing new to report. Please refer to previous iterations of the internet capacity summary report for further details on some of the early measures applied by NRAs during the crisis.

Key updates since previous report

- *Data traffic trending higher in IE but, given sufficient capacity to meet demand, networks remain stable*

- *Most operators in PL have reported that their overall traffic flow remains stable compared to September – traffic has not gone beyond excessively high levels of capacity*

- *In PT, compared to the week before the pandemic was declared, overall (across fixed and mobile networks) data traffic has increased by more than 50%*

1.1. Network issues raised by NRAs

In general, three phases in the evolution of internet traffic have been observed during the crisis: an initial sharp increase, a period of stabilisation and a decrease from the peak.

The following updates on the status of internet traffic have been reported:

In IE, while both fixed and mobile networks remain stable, data traffic demand across all networks is trending higher. However, due to measures taken by operators, there is sufficient capacity to meet demand.

In October, most operators in PL have reported stabilisation in their overall traffic flow compared to last month. Traffic has not exceeded the 'alert states' (i.e. beyond excessively high levels of capacity) for telecommunications systems and no significant congestions have been reported by operators to the NRA. Operators have reported that thay are technically prepared to use mechanisms of counteracting overloads and congestions, including mechanisms limiting a particular type of traffic.

In PT, both mobile and fixed data traffic has increased through October[5]. Overall data traffic was 53%[6] above the data traffic registered the week before the pandemic was declared.

Both PL and PT informed BEREC that there continues to be no evidence of any breach to the Regulation (EU) 2015/2120.

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[4] NRAs from the following Member States having explicitly mentioned that there were no changes since the previous data gathering exercise: AT, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, LU, NL, NO, RO, SE, SI, SK.
[5] Data reported as of 18 October 2020.
[6] Mobile data traffic was 6% above the volume registered the week before the pandemic was declared, while fixed data traffic was 57% above the volume for the same period.

1.2. Status of networks

Figure 1 below illustrates the results of a new data collection exercise that BEREC has launched regarding the status of networks across Europe. NRAs were asked to provide a response on the overall status of telecommunications networks in their respective countries, based on the following categorisation:

- Green: Networks are working well, Covid-19 is not creating issues for the availability or general quality of IAS. No exceptional traffic management measures justified.

- Yellow: Covid-19 is causing limited congestion issues affecting the general quality of IAS (e.g. with 1 or 2 ISPs or networks). Exceptional traffic management measures might be possible, but would require close scrutiny of the NRA under OI Regulation.

- Red: Severe and/or widely spread network congestion issues due to Covid-19 affecting the general quality of IAS and exceptional traffic management measures are likely justified and/or used.

25 NRAs[7] have responded to this request (all indicating 'status green'). In the case where an NRA did not respond, the map appropriately shows 'no data' for such countries[8].

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[7] AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, LT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, PT, RK, RO, SE, and SK.
[8] The map also includes a number of non-BEREC countries, which are clearly indicated with a different colour.
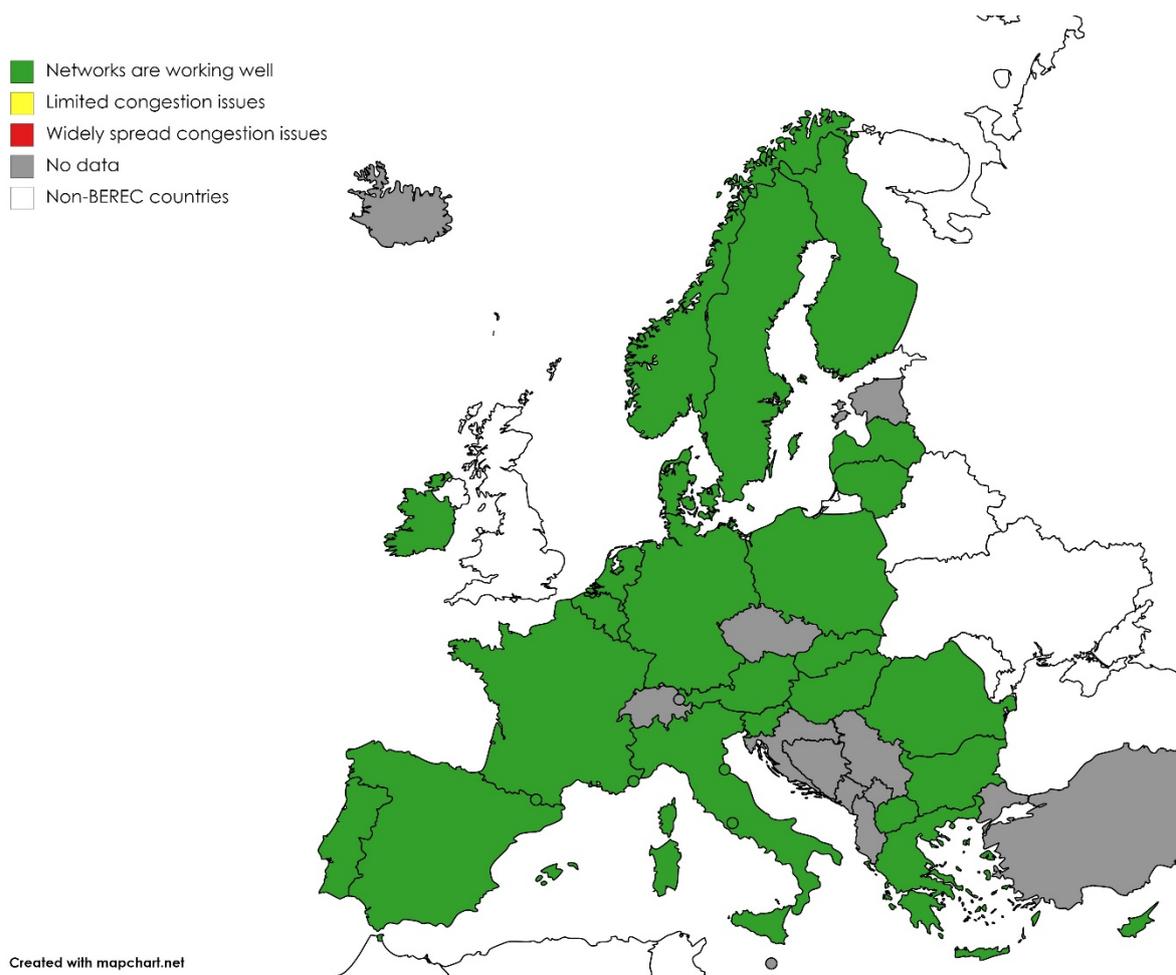
Figure 1: Status of networks (based on information submitted by NRAs up to, and including, 27 October 2020)

1.3. Regulatory actions taken

NRAs are monitoring the situation and are collecting data from ISPs and other market players about the status of their networks, but are doing so with different regularity.

IE has provided an update with respect to the implementation of a further Covid-19 temporary spectrum licensing framework. For a period of up to six months (like the previous framework) temporary spectrum licences were issued to operators in the 700 MHz, 2.1 GHz and 2.6 GHz bands. Information on ComReg's Decision and on the licences issued are available on ComReg's website[9][10].

1.4. Actions taken and communication by operators

No NRA has provided new information to be included in this section of the report.

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[9] Regarding the ComReg Decision, see ComReg document 20/88 - https://www.comreg.ie/publication/covid-19-further-temporary-spectrum-management-measures-response-to-consultation-and-decision-on-a-further-licensing-framework-for-spectrum-rights-in-the-700-mhz-2-1-ghz-and-2-6-ghz-bands

[10] Regarding information on the licences, see https://www.comreg.ie/industry/radio-spectrum/spectrum-awards/covid-19-temporary-spectrum-management-measures/

2. Other measures taken by NRAs, public institutions and market players

> ***Key updates since previous report***
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> - *AT, BE, DE, FR, IT and PT provided an update concerning their tracing applications*
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> - *EL provided data on a platform providing frequent status updates on the spread of Covid-19 at district level*

2.1. Measures to monitor the spread of Covid-19

BEREC has asked NRAs if there are any tracing applications/solutions in place in their Member States that monitor the spread of Covid-19. Information provided earlier to BEREC is available in the previous iterations of this summary report.

On 19 October the EU interoperability gateway went live[11] in order to exploit the full potential of contact tracing and warning apps to break the chain of Covid-19 infections across borders and save lives. Using the new European gateway, the Austrian, German, Irish and Italian national contact tracing apps can now exchange contact tracing data with each other. Apps of other Member States, which also use a decentralised approach, are likely to follow.

An update on the issue of tracing applications/solutions, as of 28 October, has been provided to BEREC by AT, BE, DE, FR, IE, IT and PT. EL has provided data on a platform providing frequent status updates on the spread of Covid-19 at district level

AT reported that as of 21 October, 1.1 million users have downloaded the Stopp Corona App.

DE provided that as of 23 October, 20.3 million downloads have been registered.

EL reported that covid19.gov.gr is a new platform made available by the government, which presents areas of Greece (on district level detail) rated according to the different number of Covid-19 incidents and split into four categories (Readiness/Surveillance/Increased Surveillance/Increased Risk). Depending on the category different protection measures are displayed. The platform is updated – at least – on a daily basis.

FR reported that the 'Stop Covid' application was updated on 22 October, the core principle of the app is the same as before (i.e. it is not using Apple and Google's "Exposure Notifications" system), but additionally it features information on the local curfew obligations (including application for potential derogations), on the nearby testing centres (including

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[11] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1904

waiting time) and other useful advice for people with symptoms. As of 26 October, the app was downloaded and activated exactly 4,173,714 times.

IE reported that the "Covid Tracker" app had been downloaded 2.1 million times by 27 October 2020, with 1.3 active users (representing 34% of over 16s in the country).

With the aim of making contact tracing more effective, IT reported that the recent Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers, of 18 October 2020, establishes that health workers at the local Health Authority Prevention Department shall upload the key code of every positive tested case, by accessing the central system of Immuni. Over 9 million users downloaded Immuni in Italy, a number which increases daily due to the recent awareness campaigns on the importance of the tracing application during the pandemic.

PT reported that as of 23 October there were more than 1 million downloads of the STAYAWAY COVID app in the Google Play Store.

Similar to the situation in PT, in BE the application Coronalert was already downloaded 1 million times by October 13.