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 setting up a special monitoring 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 first information gathering exercise by BEREC on 24 March 2020 in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. At this point in time, a total of 18 national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on the telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far.

The status report will be updated based on regular input from NRAs, with the next update expected on 27 March 2020.

Status on the network capacity

General observations are that the overall traffic on fixed and mobile networks has significantly increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but that no major congestion issues have occurred. With most people staying at home, it is mainly an increase in daytime traffic that the higher volume of traffic has been attributed to. According to the information available, network operators have been able to cope well with this additional traffic load. Some targeted interventions have been reported that relate to adjusting the capacity of specific parts of the networks and national internet exchanges. Some local and temporary difficulties with the internet access have been observed and mitigated but has not been considered to be out of the normal.

Actions taken by NRAs

NRAs are monitoring the situation and regularly collecting data from the ISPs and other market players about the status in their networks.

Several NRAs have also informed the market players about the exception for traffic management during congestion in Article 3(3) c) of Regulation (EU) 2015/2120. Operators should notify the respective NRA if any such traffic management measure is applied. Currently, only one NRA has a pending assessment of how this exception has been applied, whereas others have not found reason for doing so.

Actions taken by other public bodies

Some NRAs mentioned that they are in close cooperation with other ministries and other authorities. The government of one Member State is in contact with the CAPs.

In one Member State, the government is considering to take further measures if required, whereas in another Member State, the government has a local public warning system in place by sending SMS with relevant information.

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,

- distributing useful information to their customers,

- offer their services online due to closed retail shops.

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

Further communication towards end-users

Some entities (NRAs, governments or ISPs) have published best practices for end-users about reasonable use of internet access services.