

## **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 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 the third information gathering exercise by BEREC on 31 March 2020, updating the data collected on 26 March 2020, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. At this point in time, a total of 28<sup>1</sup> national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on the telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far.

14 NRAs<sup>2</sup> have reported that they observed no changes compared to the previous gathering exercise.

The status report will be continuously updated based on the regular input from the NRAs, with the next update expected on 3 April 2020.

### **Status of network capacity**

General observations are still that the overall traffic on fixed and on mobile networks has increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but that no major congestion issues have occurred. Since last week, three NRAs (BE, PT and SK) explicitly reported a stabilisation in the overall traffic. Another NRA (SI) is still detecting a slow increase of the overall traffic since the last report. Two NRAs (HU and PT) reported a higher congestion in their fixed networks compared to their mobile networks due to the increase in traffic.

As stated in the previous report, traffic has stabilised and a decrease in peak traffic has been observed, since measures were put in place by some of the larger content providers, such as Netflix, YouTube and Facebook. Aside from this, two NRAs (IT, NL) have explicitly noted that content and application providers have reduced the bitrate transmission of their streaming services. A similar observation has been made by one NRA (HU), that the most popular video streaming platforms are limiting the bitrate of the delivered content.

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<sup>1</sup> The following NRAs have contributed so far to the information gathering exercises : AT, BE, BG, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK

<sup>2</sup> NRAs from the following Member States having mentioned that are no changes: AT, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, SE

**Actions taken by NRAs**

NRAs are monitoring the situation and are regularly collecting data from the ISPs and other market players about the status of their networks. The frequency of reporting varies from country to country. In this context, one NRA (BE) has mentioned that the operators' frequency of reporting data has been reduced from a daily basis to three times a week.

Several NRAs (AT, DE, DK, FI, HR, IT, LV, PL, SI, SK) have also informed the market players about the available exception for traffic management during congestion in Article 3(3) c) of Regulation (EU) 2015/2120. ISPs should notify their respective NRA if any such traffic management measure is applied.

Several NRAs (DE, RO) have explicitly reported that they are in constant dialogue with their ISPs, allowing the NRA to be immediately notified if special measures need to be taken. One NRA (HU) mentioned that they are closely monitoring the situation and that there has been no need so far for taking any decisions. One NRA (EL) advised their ISPs to consult first with the Authority before taking any measures. One NRA (CH) received information from an ISP about measures implemented for resolving traffic management problems.

One NRA (IT) adopted a first package of measures aimed at tackling the increase in the consumption of electronic communications services and of the traffic on the networks and required operators to make every effort to manage and overcome the state of emergency. One NRA (SI) reported that there has been no need so far for ISPs to change any traffic management practices. If need be, some ISPs have plans to stream VoD or CUTV in SD resolution.

Given the national state of emergency, one NRA (RO) requested the providers of electronic communications services not to disconnect the services in the event of non-payment by the customers.

**Actions taken by other public bodies**

No changes have been reported since the previous data gathering exercise. Thus, the information outlined hereafter is still valid.

Some NRAs mentioned that they are in close cooperation with other ministries and other authorities. Several governments (DE, FR) are reportedly also in contact with CAPs.

In one Member State (NO), the government has a local public warning system in place by sending SMS with relevant information.

In response to the crisis, a specific decree or governmental measures have been adopted in some Member States (IT, PL, PT, RO) with temporary measures intended also for the providers of electronic communications networks and services.

### **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 without any additional charge (BG, BE, DE, EE, EL, HR, HU, IT, PL, PT);
- zero-rating temporarily additional services or offering services free of charge, such as educational content (HR, HU) or official websites dedicated to information related to Covid-19 (CZ);
- distributing useful information to their customers (BE, BG, DE, DK, EL, FR, HR, HU, IE, LT, LV, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK);
- offering their services online due to closed retail shops (LT).

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

Although no EU Member State has faced a major traffic collapse (as explained in the section Status of network capacity), some operators have increased their network's capacity (EL, IT, LT, LV, PT and SI) to cope with the sustained traffic's growth. In the case of HU and SI, these network upgrades cover the links to the national exchange point.

Other operators have not taken any such measure but they are closely monitoring their network's capacity (as explicitly reported by EE, HR, HU, LV and PT) to check if a network's upgrade is necessary.

### **Further communication towards end-users**

Some entities<sup>3</sup> (NRAs, governments or ISPs) have advised their end-users a reasonable use of the internet access services. Additionally, a NRA (PT) has warned the end-users about an increase in fraud and in cyberattacks related to the current crisis. Another NRA (LT) issued guidance for operators on guaranteeing uninterrupted provision of e-communications services, as well recommendations for schools, teachers, and students on how to organize remote learning processes smoothly in order to avoid a "breakdown" of electronic communications networks.

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<sup>3</sup> CH, FR, LT, PT, RO