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 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 an ongoing, twice-weekly information gathering exercise, and includes the most recent data provided to BEREC by its constituent NRAs as of 23 April 2020. 31[1] national regulatory authorities (NRAs) have shared their data about the impact of the crisis on telecommunications' networks and the actions taken so far in their respective Member States.

5 NRAs[2] have reported changes to the situation in their Member State since the previous information gathering exercise (21 April 2020). The status report will continue to be updated based on regular input from NRAs, with the next summary report to be published on 29 April 2020.

Please refer to previous iterations of this summary report for further details on some of the early measures applied by NRAs during the crisis.

Key updates since previous report

- *Another two NRAs (EL, FI) have now reported that the overall traffic in their Member State has stabilised.*

- *Another NRA (NL) has reported a stabilisation in the down- and upstream traffic at levels above normal, as well as a stabilisation of traffic at the national IXP.*

Status of network capacity

In general, traffic on fixed and mobile networks has increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but no major congestion issues have occurred. For more than three weeks, a growing number of NRAs (AL, AT, BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, and SK) have been reporting a stabilisation in overall traffic.

---

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, LV, LT, LU, ME, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, SE.
2 NRAs from the following Member States having reported a change since the previous data gathering exercise: CY, FI, GR, NL, SI.

One NRA (NL) has reported that both down- and upstream traffic is stable at levels above normal. Moreover, the same NRA was informed by one ISP about utilisations within thresholds, whereas another ISP reported that some redundancy thresholds were passed.

One NRA (CY) has reported that between 13-19 April, fixed network data volumes were 51% higher in comparison to the weekly average for the last three months before the Covid-19 crisis, while mobile network data volumes remained higher by 38%. This was slightly lower volumes than the week before. Other NRAs (AT, BG, EL, RO, SI) have since last week detected a decrease in overall internet traffic from the peak that was reached after the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis. This trend suggests that there are three phases in the evolution of traffic during the crisis: sharp increase, stabilisation and a decrease from the peak. Consequently, overall internet traffic is beginning to revert to average levels more typical of the period before the start of the Covid-19 crisis.

One NRA (DK) received reports from multiple operators that the decrease in overall internet traffic was significant, while another NRA (NL) reported the same decrease from the peak but only for mobile traffic. Since last week, six NRAs (AT, DK, NL, PL, RO, SI) have explicitly reported an increase of traffic in the IXPs (Internet Exchange Points) since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis. One NRA (DK) reported that multiple operators performed upgrades in the IXPs in order to cope with traffic increases. Another NRA (NL) has reported a stabilisation of traffic in the national IXP.

Following Commissioner Breton's initiative, measures to reduce traffic have been applied by both small and large content and application providers (CAPs) throughout Europe. Since these measures started to be applied, positive effects on network traffic have been explicitly reported by a number of NRAs (AL, BE, FR, HU, NL).

Regulatory actions taken

NRAs are monitoring the situation and are regularly collecting data from ISPs and other market players about the status of their networks. The frequency of collecting data ranges from daily (ES, ME) to once (AT, BG, CY, DE, EL, HR, LT, IT, ME, MT, SI), twice (FR, HU, PL, SK) or three (BE, LU) times per week. One NRA (RO) reported that because of a relatively stable situation, ISPs are requested to report overall information once every fortnight. However, any major incidents must be reported as soon as possible.

Besides periodical reporting, ISPs are also asked to immediately notify NRAs about any exceptional measures that are put in place. This is particularly relevant for the application of any exceptional traffic management measures. One ISP reported to its NRA (NL) that a network freeze and exception process is in place.

Actions taken and communication by operators

In several Member States, operators have implemented customer-friendly measures, for example:

Additional data and free-of-charge services:

- increasing the amount of mobile data in subscriptions for a limited period without any additional charge (AL, AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IT, ME, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK);

- zero-rating temporarily additional services or offering services free of charge, such as educational content and platforms (AL, BG, DE, EL, HR, HU, IT, LT, MT) or official websites dedicated to information related to Covid-19 (CZ, NO);

- providing free mobile bundles comprising of free data and minutes to front-line staff in the public health care sector and/or enforcement agencies (LT, MT, PT) as well as for people without internet access (FR);

- providing free mobile minutes and text messages (BE, DK, FR) and increasing the amount of mobile data (DK, FR) to customers who are currently outside the country;

- offering some TV content free of charge (AL, AT, BE, BG, DK, EE, EL, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, ME, MT, PT, SI).

No further information has been provided regarding the technical measures taken so far by operators. Please refer to previous iterations of this summary report for further information. :

Further communication towards end-users

No new information has been reported since the previous iteration of this summary report.