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, weekly information gathering exercise, and includes the most recent data provided to BEREC by its constituent NRAs as of 19 May 2020. 32[1] NRAs 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 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 summary report due to be published on 29 May 2020.

1. Status of internet capacity

In general, traffic on fixed and mobile networks increased during the Covid-19 crisis, but no major congestion issues occurred.

6 NRAs[2] have provided updates on the status of internet capacity in their Member State since the previous information gathering exercise (12 May 2020). 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.

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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, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK.

[2] NRAs from the following Member States having provided updates since the previous data gathering exercise: BG, CY, IT, MT, PL, RO.

> ***Key updates since previous report***
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> - *BG, CY, IT, MT, PL and RO have provided updates on the evolution of internet traffic on fixed and mobile networks;*
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> - *MT has also reported about a reduction in the frequency of collecting data from operators;*
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> - *RO has also informed about additional measures taken by some operators.*

1.1. Network issues raised by NRAs

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

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

BG has reported that fixed and mobile data traffic decreased compared to the previous week. The level of fixed data traffic is still high compared to the period before the state of emergency, while the volume of mobile data is now tending more towards those levels of an "average week" of data usage before the state of emergency. In BG, interconnection traffic also dropped compared to the previous week.

CY has reported that data traffic on mobile networks slightly increased in the week of 4-10 May 2020 compared to the week of 27 April-3 May 2020, while fixed data traffic slightly decreased compared to the same period.

Similarly, RO has registered a slight decrease in overall data traffic on both fixed and mobile networks since the previous reporting at the beginning of May. The same applies for interconnection traffic.

IT has reported a significant decrease in both fixed and mobile data traffic in the week of 4-10 May 2020 compared to the week of 27 April-3 May 2020.

MT and PL have reported that overall traffic remained stable compared to the previous weeks.

1.2. 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.

CY has informed that they continue to assess operators' data on a weekly basis.

MT has reduced the frequency of collecting data from operators to once every fortnight, given the stability of the networks. However, the operators are still obliged to report any drastic changes to their network traffic behaviour immediately.

In BG, the NRA provides, on a weekly basis, information about the QoS of the internet access and voice services.

1.3. Actions taken and communication by operators

RO has reported that in addition to the previously reported actions, some providers have offered free-of-charge TV channels. While some MNOs are offering new extra free of charge data allowances or zero-rated access to certain educational websites, others withdraw the extra data allowance provided for free during the state of emergency situation.

1.4. Further communication towards end-users

No updates have been communicated since the previous reporting.

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

Key updates since previous report

- *HU reported that a tracing app was introduced on 13 May.*

- *IT reported on the main contents of the latest Coronavirus-focused Observatory released by AGCOM, according to which the attention given to the virus by disinformation sources remains high, although decreasing compared to March values.*

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 State in order to monitor the spread of Covid-19. Information provided to BEREC as of 12 May is available in the previous iteration of this summary report (BoR (20) 89[3]). New information on the issue of tracing applications/solutions, as of 19 May, has been provided to BEREC by HU and SE.

In HU, a contact tracing application was launched on 13 May. If a user of the application tests positive for Covid-19, they can indicate this through the application and data is validated by the public health authority. Use of such data is strictly limited to the purpose, and personal data will not be accessed by unauthorised persons or institutions.

In SE, the Public Health Agency has decided that it will currently not make use of any tracing application to monitor the spread of Covid-19 between individuals, citing questions over their efficiency and concerns about personal integrity. The use of tracing applications may however be reconsidered in a situation when Covid-19 contagion levels are lower. Other than this,

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[3] https://berec.europa.eu/eng/document_register/subject_matter/berec/reports/9260-berec-summary-report-on-the-status-of-internet-capacity-regulatory-and-other-measures-in-light-of-the-covid-19-crisis

aggregated geo-location data received by mobile operators has been used by the Public Health Agency to get an understanding of how well the stay-at-home recommendations have been respected.

In ES, a chat bot has been developed to cover public doubts about symptoms and where to treat the disease.

2.2. Measures relating to spectrum auctions

In AT the NRA rescheduled the interrupted spectrum auction for the 700 MHz, 1500 MHz and 2.1 GHz bands for the second half of August.

In FI the spectrum auction of the 26 GHz band will start at the beginning of June as it was planned.

2.3. Measures relating to attacks against telco facilities

Fortunately, only a limited number of NRAs reported attacks against telecommunication facilities such as BE, DE, HR, IE and IT.

In several countries NRAs are involved in awareness raising campaigns on mobile technologies. In some cases (e.g. DE) the background of these attacks are not clear, thus investigations of the causes and the motives are still ongoing.