

briefing

European Parliamentary Labour Party

New Mobile Phone Roaming Charges

Mobile operators have been charging consumers up to 5 times the real cost of making or receiving a call in another EU country. As a result of these rip-off charges we, as Labour Euro MPs, have been campaigning since 2005 to cut costs for mobile phone users when travelling or on holiday in Europe.

After a two year campaign we have won the day in persuading the European Parliament to back our plan to reduce costs for consumers. Our demands to cut prices and give people information about the charges they face have been supported by a majority of Euro MPs.

Q: How much will it cost to make a call?

The law introduces a new European Consumer Protection Tariff - The Euro Tariff. Costs will be reduced annually over a three year period and to protect the consumer the operator will not be able to charge more than the following rates:

Maximum cost of making a call per minute from another EU country:

Year 1: 0.49 eurocents.
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.39p
Year 2: 0.46 eurocents.
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.37p
Year 3: 0.43 eurocents.
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.34p

Q: How much will it cost to receive a call?

Maximum cost of receiving a call per minute from another EU country:

Year 1: 0.24 eurocents
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.19p
Year 2: 0.22 eurocents
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.18p
Year 3: 0.19 eurocents
.....
 GBP with UK VAT: c. 0.15p

Q: How will I know exactly what I am paying per minute to make and receive calls when in another EU country?

Under the new rules once you arrive in another EU member state you will automatically receive a text message telling you how much you will be paying per minute to make and receive calls in that country.

Q: How do I find out about the Euro Tariff?

Under this law your mobile operator had to inform you about the deals on offer by the end of July. You may choose to take the Euro Tariff but you still have the right to negotiate a different scheme with your operator. Unless you have actively opted for another scheme all users on standard contracts or pre-pay will automatically be put on the new Euro Tariff by the end of September.

Q: How do I qualify for the cheaper prices?

You can opt in to the new offers from your operator at any time, and they must transfer you to the new tariff within one month. Otherwise, if you have a standard



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mobile contract or are a pre-pay user, you will automatically be put on the Euro Tariff by the end of September.

Q: What if I already have a special European roaming deal with my operator?

Your operator should have informed you about the new Euro Tariff at the end of July, if not, you can opt-in to the Euro Tariff at any time. If you have a better deal you will stay on your current deal and not be automatically covered by the Euro Tariff.

Q: Will it be cheaper to text from Europe, or to use data services on my mobile when roaming?

Texting or data charges will not be covered. These charges continue to be too high and we are putting the industry under pressure to reduce these costs. If they don't we will extend the law to cover texting and data services. We have asked the European Commission to undertake a study on the excessive costs of texting and data services.

Q: Will the cost of using my mobile in the UK go up?

No, this law will end the excess profits mobile operators have been making from roaming, not stop them making a decent return, so there is no excuse for them to push up domestic charges. We have asked OFCOM, the regulator, to monitor closely to ensure no operators attempt to do so, but consumers should also be vigilant that no charges rise elsewhere, and let OFCOM and us know if they do.

Q: For how long will the law be in place?

The law will be in place for 3 years to force operators to compete and give consumers better European roaming deals and prices. Labour Euro MPs will continue to demand big and sustained reductions in roaming prices. We will continue to work with consumer groups to monitor this and if there is any return to rip-off prices we will be arguing for the law to be kept in place to protect consumers.

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