
EU ANSWERS CALL TO SCRAP 'NO ROAMING FEES' TIME LIMIT

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22.09.2016

21.09.2016

EuroNews

Consumers should be exempt from roaming fees no matter how long they spend abroad, the European Commission said on Wednesday.

The EU executive unveiled a new draft proposal to end roaming fees in 2017.

It comes two weeks after officials put forward a plan that would have set a 90-day time limit for consumers to be able to call abroad but pay domestic prices.

But that has now been scrapped, with new safeguards suggested by the commission after protests by consumer groups.

They say users will be unable to buy a cheap SIM card or contract in one EU country and use it permanently elsewhere.

If someone has his place of residence in Frankfurt or in Paris, and for a whole year uses a SIM card bought in Tallinn to make calls, but has never been to Estonia, then its quite easy to detect that kind of abuse, said Günther Oettinger, the EUs digital commissioner.

Operators will be able to check up on irregular usage and ask customers to justify that usage in some cases.

if you ask him what is happening, and if he doesnt come up with a satisfactory answer, then you can charge him more in the future, said Oettinger.

The idea will still need the approval of the European Parliament and EU governments.

Roaming fees are surcharges added to mobile phone bills by telecom operators when a user calls, texts or connects to the internet outside the country where they bought the contract.

Major firms had lobbied hard against them because they represent an important part of their profits.