



What Mobile Operators are doing to Improve Transparency around Data Roaming Services

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The use of mobile data services, which enable people to access the Internet, email and other multimedia while on the move, is growing rapidly as mobile broadband networks proliferate and prices fall. Operators are increasing efforts to better inform their customers of the price options available to them, the amount of data they are using, and the costs of data roaming services. This document highlights some of the transparency measures that operators have developed for these purposes, which fall into three broad categories:

1. Data use monitoring tools for laptop computers and mobile handsets
2. Data volume consumption warnings and volume caps
3. Better information and communication on data roaming services

1. Data use monitoring tools for laptop computers and mobile handsets

The GSMA and its member operators have been working on developing tools that allow customers to check the amount of data they use when accessing mobile services on their laptop computers. The GSMA has defined a set of common requirements to assist mobile operators and device manufacturers with the implementation of monitoring tools. At the same time, individual operators across the European Union have been introducing their own mechanisms to better allow customers to monitor their data usage.

Depending on their network's capabilities, some operators are offering an indication of the data volume usage, while others are able to provide real-time monitoring that shows customers how much data they are using, as they use it. Adding similar capabilities to handsets is more complex and not possible in all cases. However, some operators have incorporated monitoring software into the handsets they distribute and a number of handset manufacturers have begun including this feature in their newer models. These are the types of tools being offered by some operators to their customers:

- "Dashboard" software that provide customers with an indication (not real time) of how much data they are using in their current session and their cumulative usage over a given period
- Interactive displays that provide customers with an indication of how much data they have downloaded and uploaded
- A tool that is accessible from the customers' handset or laptop that provides indicative information on total data usage as well as total bill charge.
- Data usage information available online, via SMS, or via automated call information services (While some operators are able to provide real-time information, exact information is generally available 24 hours after usage))

Operators offering these types of services include: Cyta Cyprus, Elisa Estonia, Mobikom Austria, Mobiltel Bulgaria, Simobil, Teliasonera Sweden and Vodafone UK.

2. Data volume consumption notifications and volume caps

To avoid surprise bills a number of operators are also introducing systems that notify customers when they have used a certain volume of data. Some operators offer to cap customer data use at set levels to avoid unexpectedly high bills. The introduction of these solutions and their specific features depend upon the capabilities of operators' networks. These initiatives all have one objective in mind: to empower the customer to better control his or her data roaming account. For example:

- Customers can request an SMS update on the volume of data they are using and can ask to be notified when they reach agreed data usage limits.
- Subscribers are notified once a limit is reached and then asked to contact a customer hotline to continue using the service.
- Overall caps for total monthly expenditure.

Operators providing these types of services include Cosmote Romanian Mobile Telecommunications, EMT Estonia, GoMobile, Mobilkom Austria, Mobiltel Bulgaria, Mobitel Slovenia, Pannon Hungary, One GmbH Austria, Simobil, Telenor, TMN Portugal, T-Mobile and Vodafone.

3. Better information and communication on data roaming services

Operators are introducing roaming-focused communication campaigns, clearer billing for roaming services and more visibility for roaming information on their websites. Operators are also launching notification systems that alert customers when a roaming service is activated, and others are providing data roaming services only once customers have specifically 'opted in ' to receiving them. Here are some of the services being offered by certain mobile operators in the EU:

- Customers can request information on their total current bill via SMS, call centres or accessing online bills.
- Subscribers receive a message when they start a data roaming session with notification that the session is not included in the national tariff plans.
- Customers can check their bill total and data volume usages via a free customer care hotline.
- Customers can access an online billing portal that gives detailed information on mobile phone usage in near real time

Operators providing these types of services include: Go Mobile, Omnitel Lituania, LMT Latvia, Mobilkom Austria, Mobiltel Bulgaria and One GmbH Austria.

For more specific details on the types of transparency measures being deployed by operators please consult the following web link. Operators regularly update this site with their latest efforts to improve transparency and help their customers make the most of roaming services.

http://www.gsmworld.com/roaming/data_docs.shtml