



End-User Affairs: Half Yearly Report

January – June 2021

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1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of the Malta Communications Authority (“MCA”) is to safeguard the interests of end-users in the electronic communications (“ECS”), postal and e-commerce sectors.

In order to fulfil this function, the MCA provides assistance to those end-users who encounter difficulties while using any of the services within its remit. In this respect, when an end-user is not satisfied with the redress or response provided by his/her service provider, he/she may file a complaint with the MCA. The extent of the action the MCA can take in relation to a complaint, depends on the particulars of the issues involved and on the MCA's powers at law. There are instances where although the complaints received relate to the provision of a service regulated by the MCA, the Authority is not empowered at law to intervene and would therefore have to refer end-users to other competent entities.

The Authority also receives a number of enquiries, as distinct from complaints, from end-users in relation to the services it regulates. The MCA makes every effort to provide end-users with the requested information in a timely manner. Alternatively, when such requests do not fall directly within MCA’s remit, it assists end-users by directing them to the appropriate body. More information on MCA’s complaint and enquiry procedure is available at <https://www.mca.org.mt/consumer/help>.

In addition to the above, the MCA monitors the sectors it regulates, and carries out various mystery shopping exercises to identify areas of concern and undertakes the necessary regulatory action to address such issues. In so doing, the Authority ensures that service providers comply with their obligations at law and that end-users are provided with up to date information on their rights and obligations when using any communications services regulated by the MCA.

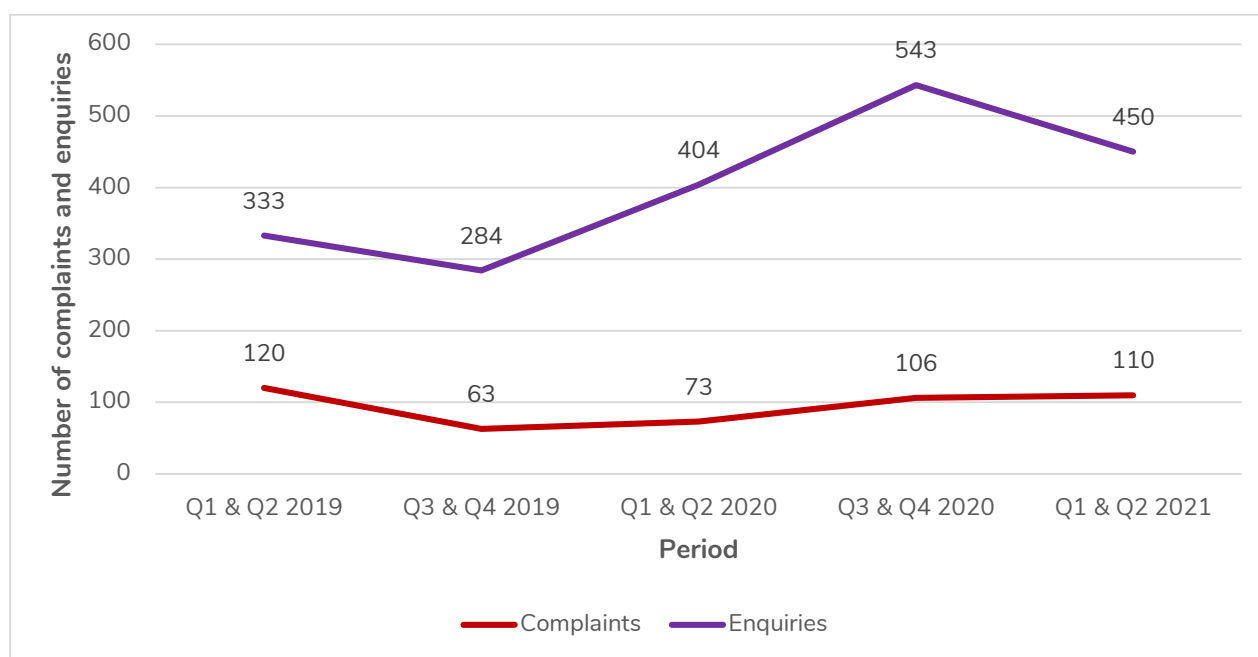
This report provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Authority during the first six months of 2021 and also provides information on enforcement actions and related monitoring activities undertaken by the MCA during this period.

2 Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received

Between the 1st of January and the 30th of June 2021, the MCA received 110 complaints, an increase of 4% when compared to the previous period (July to December 2020). During the period under review, the MCA also received 450 enquiries. Figure 1 below provides further details on the trends of complaints and enquiries received from Q1 and Q2 of 2019 till Q1 and Q2 of 2021.

Figure 1

Complaints and Enquiries (Q1 & Q2 2019 – Q1 & Q2 2021)

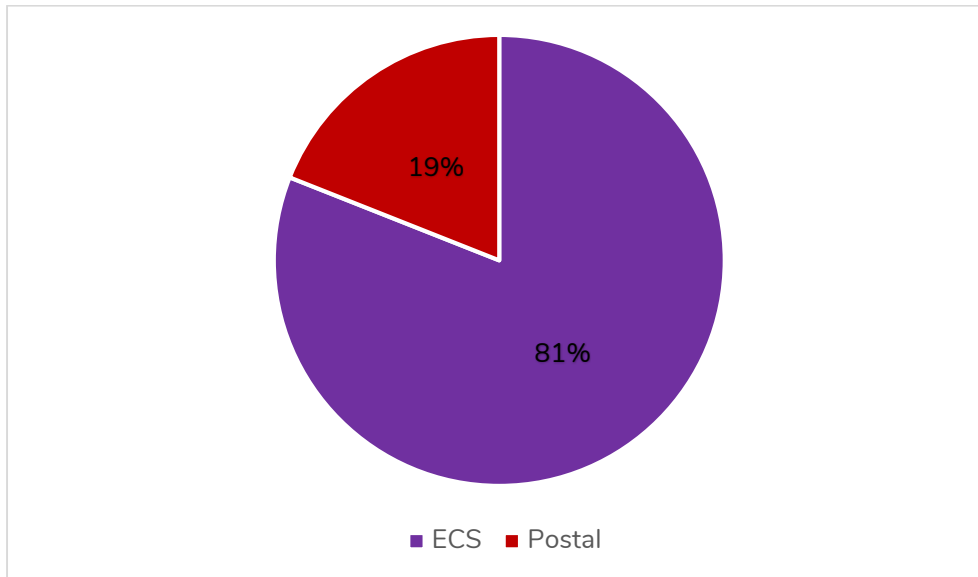


The MCA receives complaints from end-users about their landline, mobile, internet, TV and postal services. These complaints tend to be more complex in nature due to the fact that the MCA requires that end-users seek its intervention only after they have lodged a complaint with their service provider and should they still not be satisfied with the outcome of their claim.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the electronic communications services (ECS) and postal services complaints received by the MCA during the first 6 months of 2021.

Figure 2

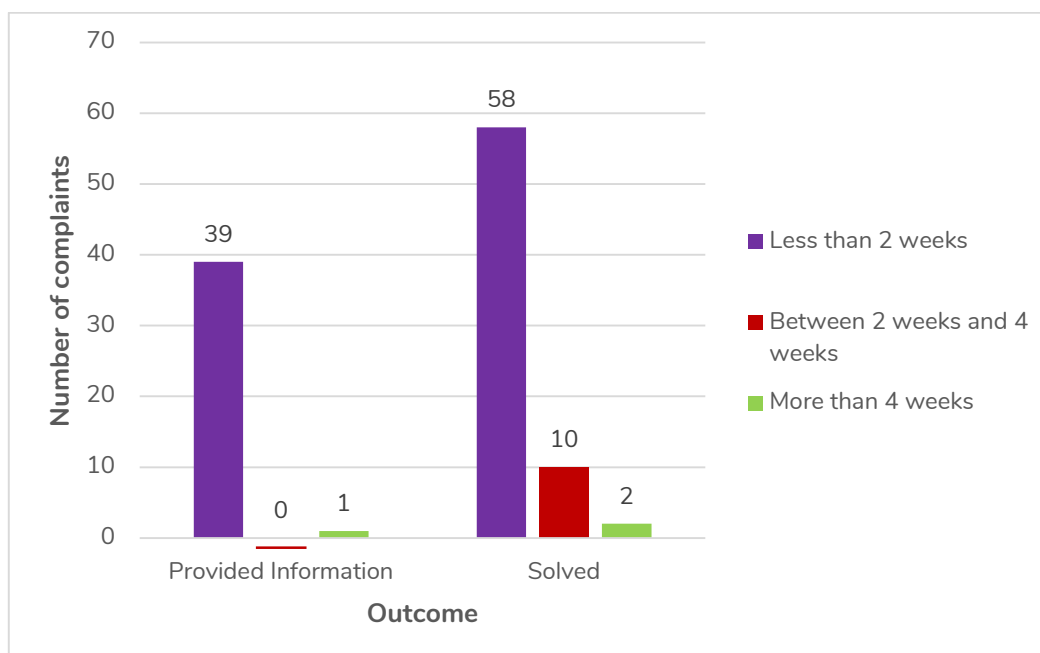
Complaints received by MCA (January – June 2021), classified by sector



The time required to address a complaint may vary from one instance to another depending on the nature of the particular case. The MCA commits to close complaints within the shortest timeframe possible. During the period under review 88% of all complaints received were addressed within 2 weeks. 97% were closed within 20 working days. There were no pending cases of complaints received during the first 6 months of 2021 by the time of the publication of this report.

Figure 3

Time taken by MCA to Handle Complaints (from receipt to closure), January - June 2021

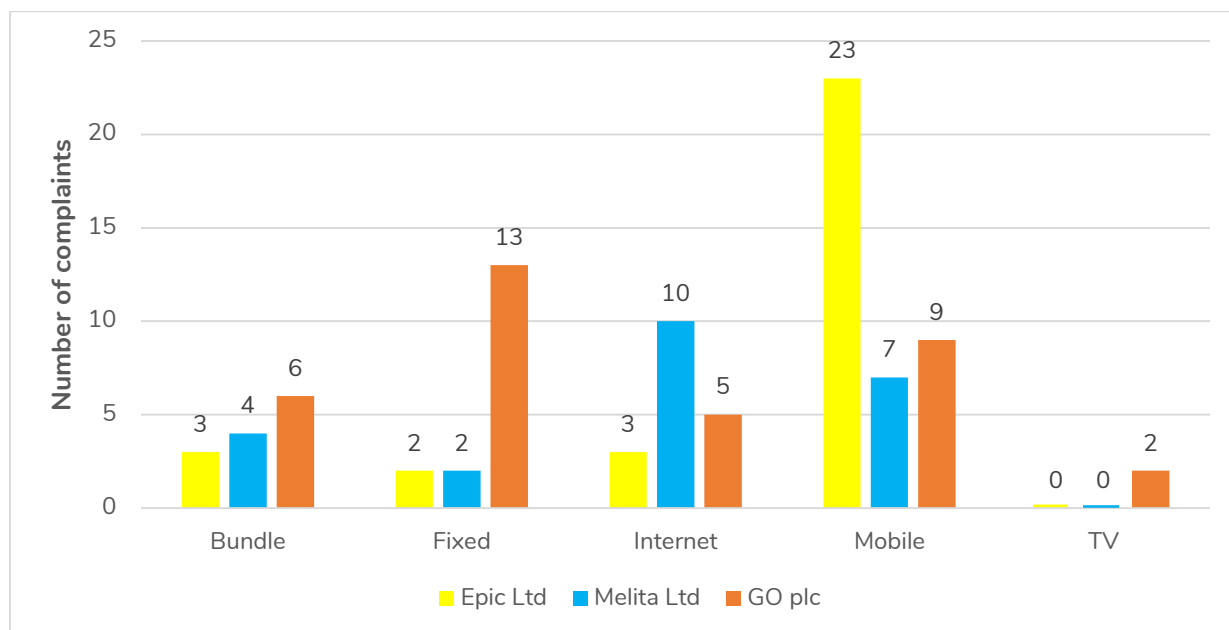


3 Electronic Communications

Figure 4 provides statistical information about the total number of electronic communication services complaints received by MCA during the first 6 months of 2021, classified in accordance with the complainant's ECS provider.

Figure 4


Complaints received by MCA (January – June 2021), classified by service and ECS Provider




46% of the ECS complaints received during the first half of 2021, related to quality of service (QoS) followed by termination and switching of services (27%). Other complaints received by the Authority related to billing issues (24%) and contractual issues (3%).

3.1 Quality of Service and Service Provision

- Complaints received which are classified in this category include complaints regarding faults (10), Customer care (10), Indoor Mobile reception (7), Internet speed (5), Installation (5), Mobile data (2), WiFi connection (1) and Email service (1).

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- The MCA received a total of 10 fault reports from the different end-users, in relation to fixed telephony, fixed internet or TV services. In the cases reported to the Authority, the MCA monitored the actions undertaken by the service providers to ensure that faults were repaired within the shortest time possible and where necessary impacted end-users were provided with compensation in line with their service provider's compensation scheme. In cases where the faults could not be repaired within a short timeframe, end-users were also provided with a temporary solution until the services were fully restored.
 - The MCA also received 10 complaints from end-users who were unable to reach their service provider customer support through telephone. In these cases, subscribers' details were forwarded to the respective service provider in order for these to be contacted and assisted accordingly. In order to assist end-user, the MCA published information of the different customer care support channels offered by local service providers in one comprehensive and easily accessible fact sheet. This can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.mca.org.mt/articles/telecoms-customer-care-support>.
 - The MCA received 7 complaints regarding mobile reception. The complaints referred to the MCA were related to lack of indoor mobile network penetration. In 2 of the cases referred to us remedial action was provided by the respective service providers. In those cases where no amicable solution was found, subscribers were informed of the option to seek legal redress from the Consumer Claims Tribunal whereby a claim for compensation for alleged damages suffered could be lodged.
 - The Authority received 5 complaints regarding internet performance. In such cases, subscribers were invited to provide screenshots of speed tests carried out through a wired connection. In 3 of the cases received, after the end-users provided the MCA with screenshots of speed tests showing lower speeds than that listed in their contract, the MCA contacted the respective service provider in order to ensure that the necessary actions are taken to address these issues. In the remaining 2 cases, the information provided by the subscribers indicated that the issues experienced were being caused by external factors beyond the service providers' control. In these instances, the MCA provided tips and other information which could help to improve the internet coverage range over Wi-Fi connections.
 - The installation complaints received by MCA, 5 in total, related to reports from end-users regarding delays in having their services connected when subscribing to a service/s. In the majority of these cases, service providers could not complete the installations by the date committed to with end-users, due to difficulties experienced in accessing third party properties. The MCA monitored the progress made in these



cases and ensured that all possible measures were taken by service providers to complete installations within the shortest timeframes possible.

3.2 Billing, Charges and Tariffs

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding incorrect billing or overcharging (12), refund (5), and Non-payment of bills (2) and purchase of pre-paid bundle services (2).
- Most of the complaints received related to incorrect billing or overcharging with a total of 12 complaints received. In 6 of these cases the MCA monitored the actions undertaken by the service providers to ensure that any incorrect charges are waived from the end-user's bill and where necessary the MCA ensured that any credit which was entitled to the end-users was refunded. In the other 6 cases the MCA provided the end-users with the necessary information and clarifications regarding disputed charges.

3.3 Termination and Switching

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding number portability (19) and termination of service/s (5).
- In total the MCA received 19 number portability complaints during the period under review. The MCA followed these complaints with the respective service providers to ensure that cases were addressed in the shortest timeframe possible. The MCA also provided the necessary information to subscribers when relevant to ensure they are aware of the procedures they are required to follow in such cases.
- During this period the MCA received 5 complaints regarding termination of service. In 3 of the cases, the Authority provided guidance to subscribers on the procedure they needed to follow to terminate the service/s. In the remaining 2 complaints the Authority was required to intervene to ensure that the services were effectively terminated in line with the subscriber's request.

3.4 Contractual

- During this period the MCA also received 3 complaints regarding alleged non-compliance with contract conditions.
- In 2 of these complaints, after agreeing with their service provider to upgrade their service, the subscribers did not benefit from the allowances promised as part of the upgrade. Both complaints were rectified immediately as soon as these were referred to the respective service providers.
- The other remaining complaint related to a migration from one mobile pre-paid plan to another. The issue related to a claim made by the subscriber according to which the service provider agreed to transfer the unused credit and allowances to the subscriber's new pre-paid plan. The service provider closed this matter after it agreed to transfer the unused credit and allowances the subscriber had previously accumulated to the new plan to which the subscriber switched.

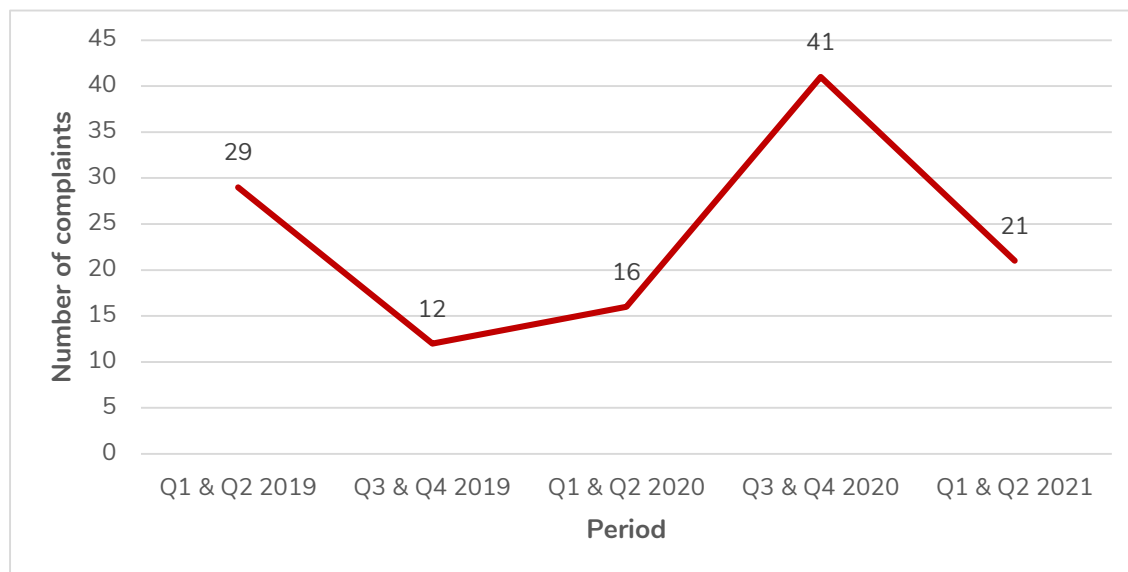
4 Postal Services and E-Commerce

The MCA registered 21 postal complaints during the first six months of 2021 with the majority relating to MaltaPost (15), 5 complaints relating to UPS and 1 complaint relating to Express Trailers Ltd.


Figure 6 shows the trends in postal complaints received by the MCA between Q1 & Q2 of 2019 and Q1 & Q2 of 2021. A substantial decrease was registered in the past six months with the number of complaints lodged with the Authority decreasing from 41 to 21 when compared to the previous period.

Figure 5

Postal Complaints (Q1 & Q2 2019 – Q1 & Q2 2021)



- The complaints received by the Authority related to undelivered mail (8), customer care (7), redirection of mail (2), delayed delivery (2), mis-delivered mail (1), unclear charge (1).
- 7 of these complaints, related to difficulties experienced by end-users when trying to get in touch with a customer care agent of the postal operator. In these cases, the MCA referred the matter to the respective postal operator and ensured that a customer care agent provided the necessary assistance to its customers.

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- 13 complaints received related to the quality of the delivery of postal items. Whilst different cases require different redress, in general, when investigating complaints which relate to mis-delivered or undelivered mail, the Authority refers the details of the cases to MaltaPost for it to monitor more closely the provision of the services provided in the affected areas being reported to ensure that any identified issues are addressed.
 - More information on postal services and the type of redress applicable in cases of lost or undelivered mail is available in the end-users' section on [MCA's website](#).
 - During the first six months of 2021, the MCA did not receive any complaints regarding e-Commerce services.

5 Customer Care Telephone Response Time

The MCA conducts an ongoing mystery shopping exercise aimed at measuring the time taken for a telephone call to be answered by a customer care agent of the main communications service providers.

Figure 6 (Electronic Communication Services Providers) and Figure 7 (MaltaPost) present a moving average trend line based on measurements recorded for each operator. Ongoing analysis of such metrics and relative trends, helps the MCA in carrying out its compliance monitoring function, especially when sudden shift in trends are recorded. The test calls made by MCA are terminated after a lapse of 5 minutes if no customer care agent attends to the call.

Electronic Communications Service Providers ('GO plc', 'Melita Ltd', 'Epic')

During the period under review the MCA carried out 685 calls to the customer care telephony support lines of the three main service providers. From this mystery shopping exercise 72% of the calls made were answered within 5 minutes, when compared to 81% of the calls made in the last 6 months of 2020. Furthermore, 62% of the calls made during the first six months of 2021 were answered within 2 minutes.

Figure 6

Electronic Communications Services Providers - Average Call Waiting Time (in seconds) to be answered by a Customer Care Agent

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Postal Universal Service Provider ('MaltaPost')

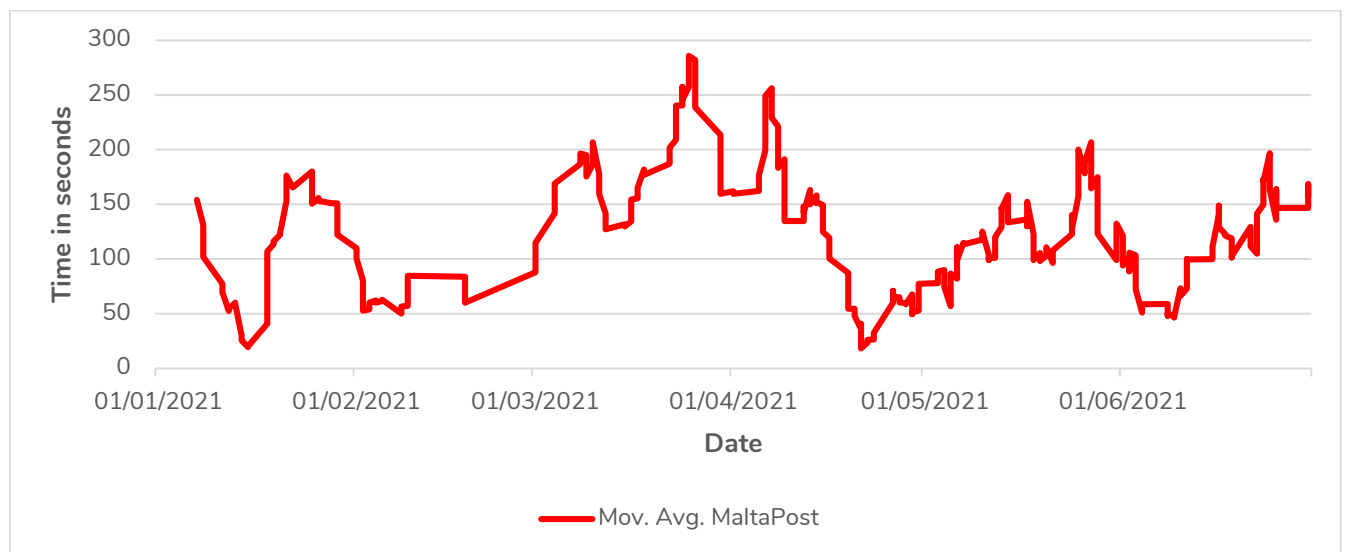
On the basis of 273 measurements taken at various times of the day between January and June 2021, 83% of the calls made to MaltaPost's customer care telephony service were answered within 5 minutes, when compared to 53% from calls made in the last 6 months of 2020 and 10% from the calls made in the first 6 months of 2020. Furthermore, 57% of the calls made were answered within 2 minutes.

Figure 7 provides details of these measurements. As previously stated, maximum call waiting time for the purpose of this exercise is capped at 300 seconds.

Figure 7

MaltaPost – Average Call Waiting Time (in seconds) to be answered by a Customer Care Agent

January – June 2021





6 Price Comparison Portal

In January 2021 the MCA launched 'Telecosts.com' a price comparison tool which assists consumers to select the most suitable service plan/s for their electronic communications needs by comparing the prices of various services offered by all the different local service providers.

When visiting the portal, consumers need to first choose the service (fixed telephony, mobile telephony, internet and bundles) and then they have to complete a short series of questions, allowing them to filter the choices given based on their preferences. Consumers are then provided with a list of service plans which fit their indicated preferences, sorted in accordance of the calculated monthly cost starting from the cheapest service plan available.

The portal includes more than 125 different types of plans amongst which to compare and since its launch, more than 10,000 users visited the portal. The portal is managed and updated regularly by the MCA to ensure it is accurately updated with the most relevant information.