



End-User Affairs: Half Yearly Report

July – December 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.

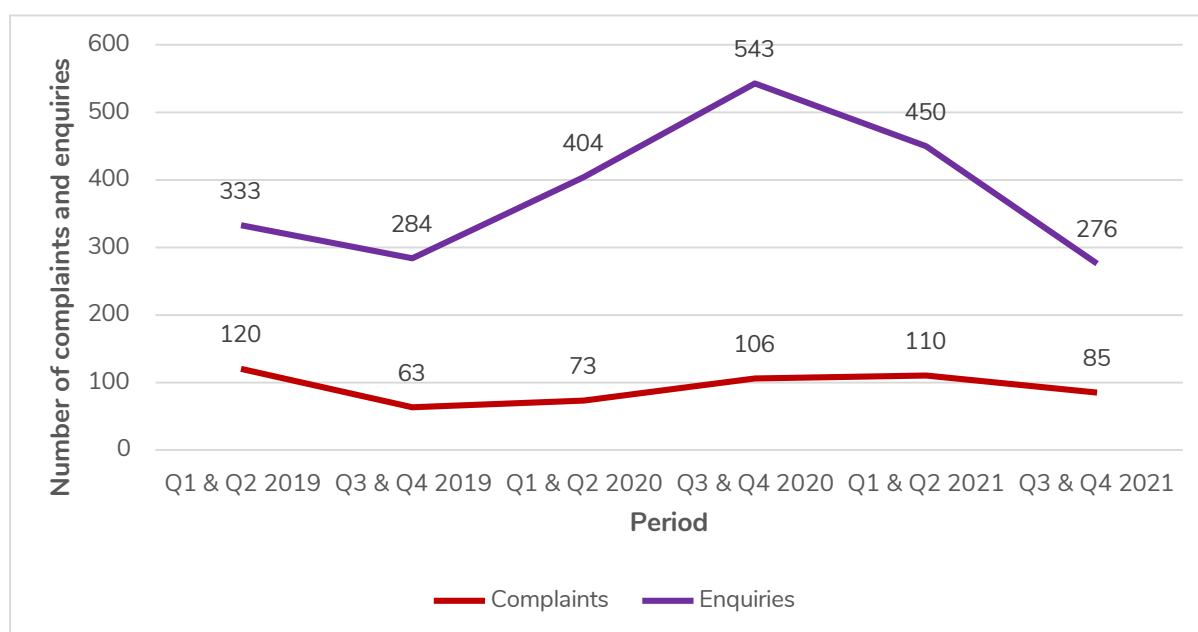
This report provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Authority during the last six months of 2021 and also provides information on enforcement actions and related monitoring activities undertaken by the MCA during this period.

2 Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received

Between the 1st of July and the 31st of December 2021, the MCA received eighty-five (85) complaints, a decrease of twenty-three percent (23%) when compared to the previous period (January to June 2021). During the period under review, the MCA also received two hundred seventy-six (276) enquiries, a decrease of thirty-nine percent (39%) when compared to the previous period. These figures for Q3 and Q4 2021 whilst significantly lower than those recorded for the same period in 2020, are comparable to the complaints/enquiries received in Q3 and Q4 2019. Figure 1 below provides further details on the trends of complaints and enquiries received from Q1 and Q2 of 2019 till Q3 and Q4 of 2021.

Figure 1

Complaints and Enquiries (Q1 & Q2 2019 – Q3 & Q4 2021)



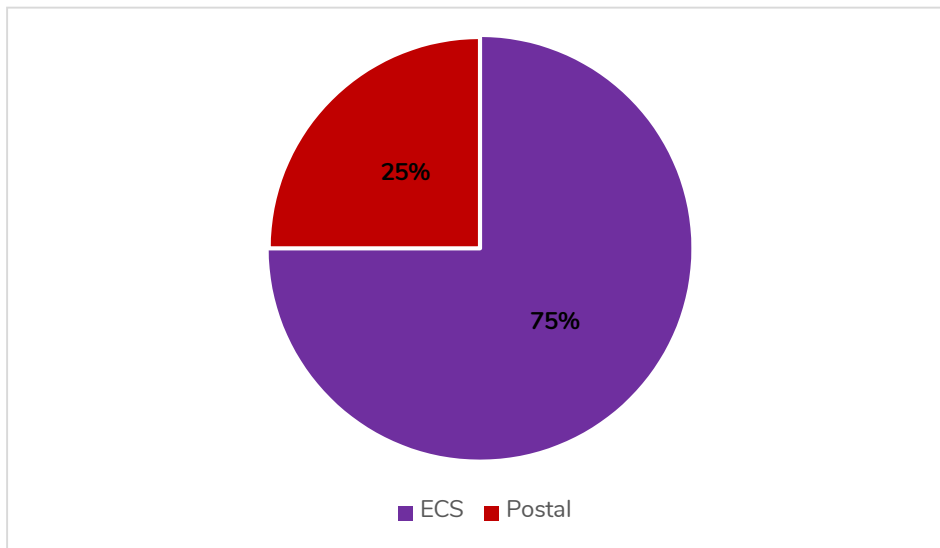
The MCA receives complaints from end-users about their landline, mobile, internet, TV and postal services. These complaints tend to be more complex in nature due to the fact that the MCA requires that end-users seek its intervention only after they have lodged a complaint with their service provider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

Figure 2 shows the proportion of the electronic communications services (ECS) to postal services complaints received by the MCA during the last six (6) months of 2021.



Figure 2

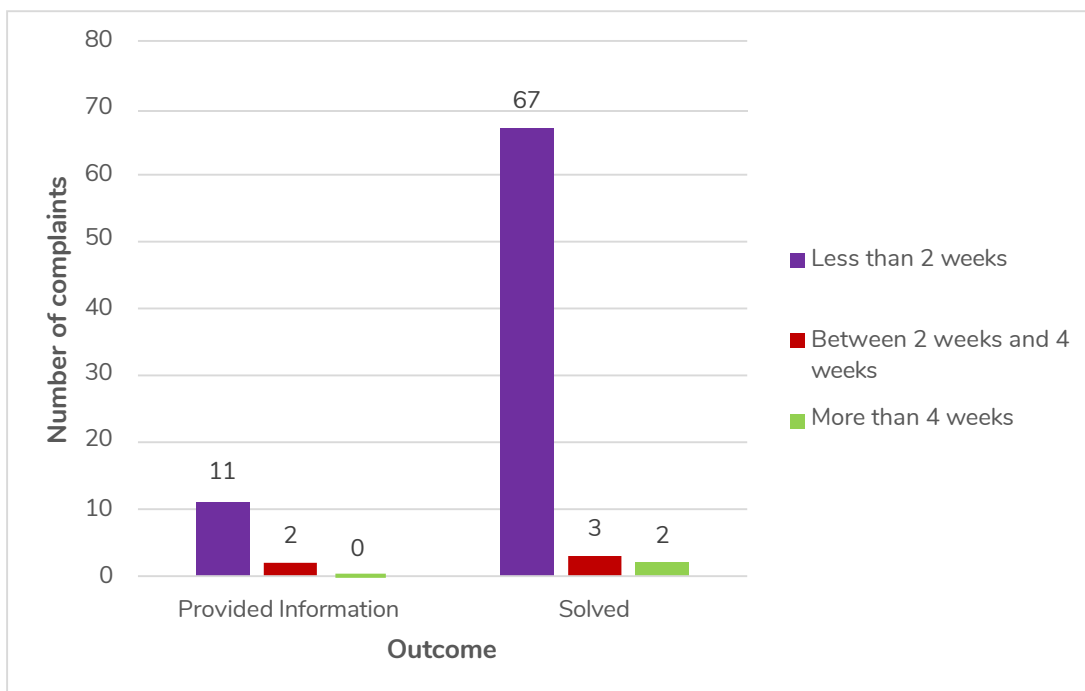
Complaints received by MCA (July – December 2021), classified by sector



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 ninety-two percent (92%) of all complaints received were addressed within two (2) weeks. Ninety-eight (98%) were closed within twenty (20) working days. There were no pending cases of complaints received during the last six (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), July - December 2021



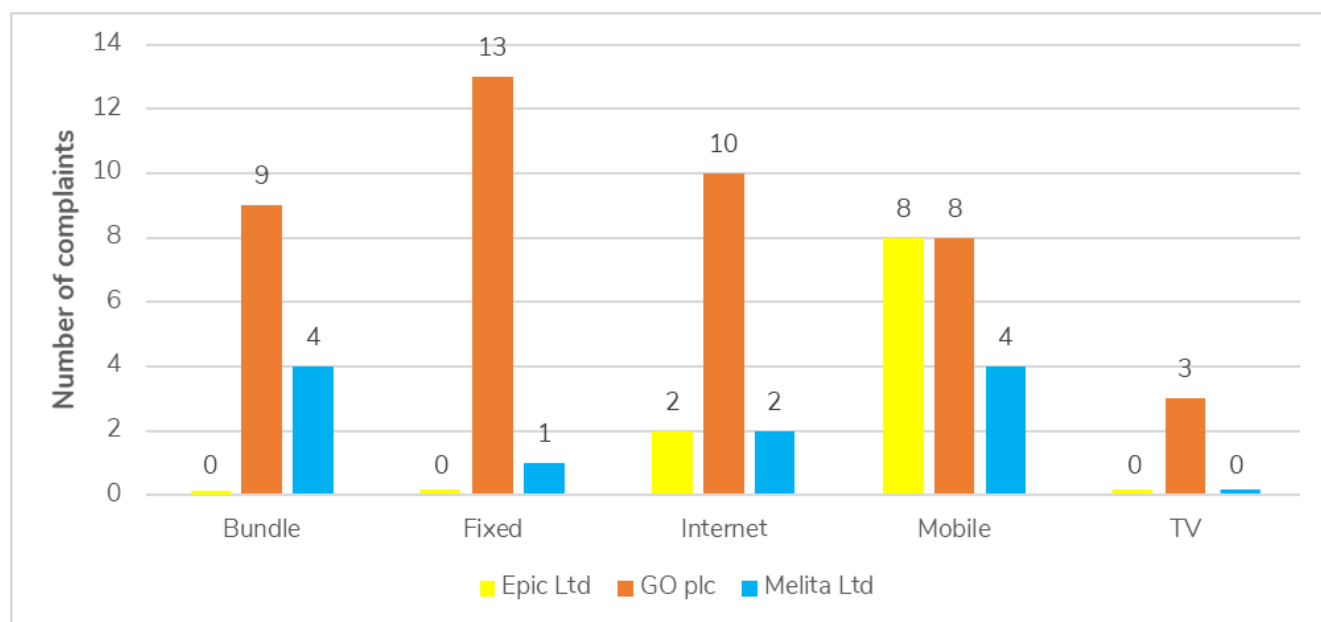


3 Electronic Communications

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

Figure 4

Complaints received by MCA (July – December 2021), classified by service and ECS Provider



Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the ECS complaints received during the second half of 2021, related to quality of service (QoS) followed by billing issues fourteen percent (14%), termination and switching of services eleven percent (11%) and contractual issues six percent (6%).

3.1 Quality of Service and Service Provision

- Complaints received which are classified in this category include complaints regarding Customer care twenty (20), faults twelve (12), difficulty with using the service whilst roaming two (2), internet speed two (2), installation two (2), non-access to service two (2), top-up two (2), email service one (1), and indoor mobile reception one (1).



- The MCA received twenty (20) complaints from end-users who were unable to reach their service provider's customer support through telephone. In these cases, the end-users' details were forwarded to the respective service provider in order for these to be contacted and assisted accordingly. In view that the majority of these complaints related to the same provider, the MCA held several meetings with the concerned provider to seek information about actions being taken to address any shortcomings. The concerned provider reassured the MCA that it is taking a number of measures to improve this service and the situation will continue to be closely monitored by the MCA. Section 5 of this report, provides more detailed information about monitoring activities conducted by the MCA to gather information about the time taken for a telephone call to be answered by a customer care agent of the main communications service providers.
- The MCA received a total of twelve (12) 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. In 11 of these cases, impacted end-users were provided 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.
- Two (2) of the complaints received by the MCA related to difficulties in using mobile services whilst roaming. The MCA followed these cases with the respective service providers, and after conducting the necessary troubleshooting, end-users were able to continue using their service.
- The Authority received two (2) complaints regarding internet performance. In these cases, end-users were invited to provide screenshots of speed tests carried out through a wired connection. In one of these cases, the provider could not provide a technical solution which would enable the end-user to achieve the promised internet speeds. The end-user however accepted the provider's amicable proposed solution which entailed a monthly discount for the remainder of his contractual duration. In the other case, the technical issue was successfully addressed by the provider and an amicable compensation was provided to the end-user.



3.2 Billing, Charges and Tariffs

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding incorrect billing or overcharging eight (8) and Non-payment of bills one (1).
- Most of the complaints received related to incorrect billing or overcharging with a total of eight (8) complaints received. In four (4) 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 or refunded to the end-user. In the other four (4) cases the MCA provided the end-users with the necessary information and clarifications regarding disputed charges.
- By way of example in one of the complaints investigated by the MCA, the service provider, failed to notify and cease the end-users' services when the consumption of roaming data services reached the financial limit which is set at €50 excluding VAT. In this particular case, the end-user was refunded the sum of €4,008.68, which is equivalent to the data usage made whilst roaming above the financial limit.

More information about end-user rights' when using mobile telephony services whilst roaming are available in the [FAQs](#) found on MCA's website.

3.3 Termination and Switching

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding termination of service/s four (4) and number portability two (2).
- During this period the MCA received four (4) complaints regarding termination of service. In the cases referred to the MCA, the Authority was required to intervene to ensure that the services were effectively terminated in line with the end-user's request.
- In total the MCA received two (2) 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.



3.4 Contractual

- During this period the MCA also received four (4) complaints regarding contractual related matters which varied from one another.
- In two (2) of these complaints, the MCA determined that the end-users' requests were justified and intervened by asking respective service providers to ensure that the end-users' requests were actioned in accordance with their contracts. In the other (2) complaints, the MCA found no grounds of non-compliance by the provider and hence the MCA provided the necessary clarifications to the concerned end-users and closed investigations of these two complaints.

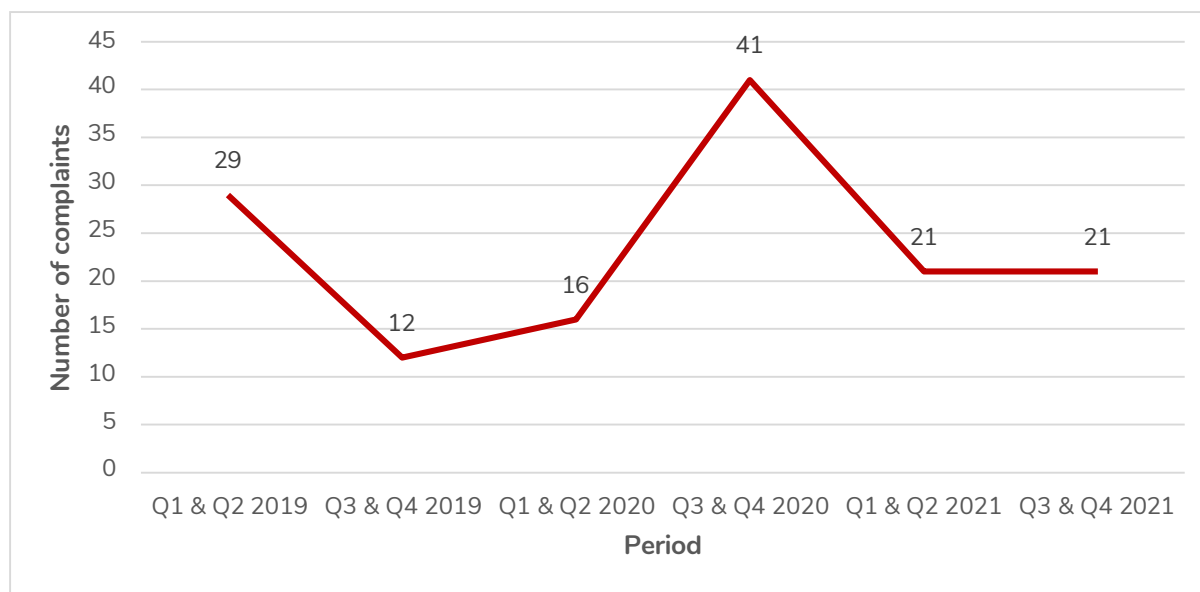
4 Postal Services and E-Commerce

The MCA registered twenty-one (21) postal complaints during the last six months of 2021 with the majority relating to UPS fifteen (15), and six (6) complaints relating to MaltaPost.

Figure 5 shows the trends in postal complaints received by the MCA between Q1 & Q2 of 2019 and Q3 & Q4 of 2021. A substantial decrease when comparing complaints received in Q3 and Q4 of 2021 to those received in the same period in 2020. These decreased by almost 50% from forty-one (41) to twenty-one (21), On a yearly basis, 2021 figures (42) are comparable to the ones recorded in 2019 (41) and inferior to the number of complaint recorded in 2020 (57).

Figure 5

Postal Complaints (Q1 & Q2 2019 – Q3 & Q4 2021)



- The complaints received by the Authority related to customer care sixteen (16), undelivered mail two (2), refund two (2), mis-delivered mail one (1).
- Sixteen (16) 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. Fourteen



(14) of the complaints received were from UPS customers. As a result of the increase in complaints, the MCA escalated the matter with UPS urging it to take remedial action. The Authority also started monitoring the response time of UPS's telephony support services by conducting daily mystery shopping calls. It is to be noted that during the first three (3) months of 2022, complaints received by the MCA on this matter had already started to decrease. The MCA will nevertheless continue monitoring developments on this matter on a daily basis.

- Three (3) 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 respective postal operator 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 last 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 five (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 eight hundred twenty-five (825) calls to the customer care telephony support lines of the three main service providers. From this mystery shopping exercise fifty-eight percent (58%) of the calls made were answered within 5 minutes, when compared to seventy-two percent (72%) of the calls made in the first 6 months of 2021. Furthermore, forty-three percent (43%) of the calls made during the last six months of 2021 were answered within two (2) minutes.

The following table shows the percentage of the calls answered within five (5) minutes and within two (2) minutes by the respective service provider.

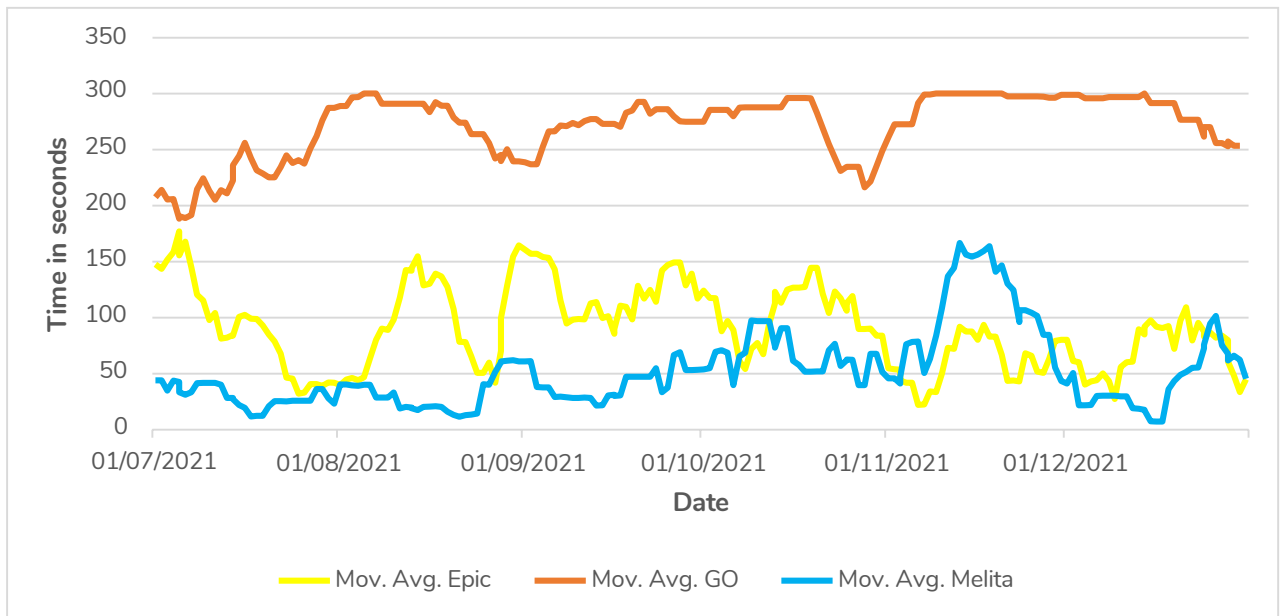
	GO	Epic	Melita
Calls answered within 5 minutes	22%	91%	95%
Calls answered within 2 minutes	8%	70%	86%



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')

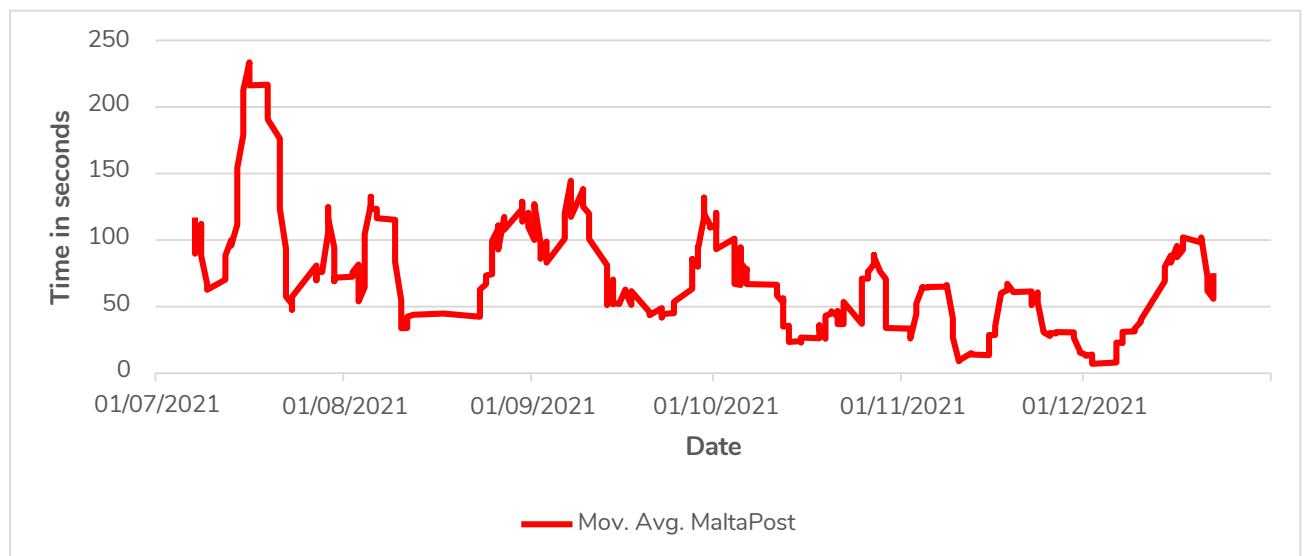
On the basis of two hundred seventy-six (276) measurements taken at various times of the day between July and December 2021, ninety-six percent (96%) of the calls made to MaltaPost's customer care telephony service were answered within five (5) minutes, when compared to eighty-three percent (83%) from calls made in the first six (6) months of 2021. Furthermore, seventy-six percent (76%) of the calls made were answered within two (2) minutes, when compared to fifty-seven percent (57%) from calls made in the first six (6) months of 2021.

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

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6 Price Comparison Portal

In January 2021 the MCA launched 'Telecosts.com' a price comparison tool which assists end-users 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, end-users 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. End-users 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 120 different types of plans amongst which to compare. The portal is managed and updated regularly by the MCA to ensure it is accurately updated with the most relevant information.

In the section 'Compare Promises', the portal also provides useful information about aspects that end-users should consider before subscribing to a service/s. These include amongst others, one off charges that could apply (e.g. installation charges), fault repair timeframes and compensation schemes offered by different service providers and different available customer care support channels offered by service providers.

During 2021, almost twelve thousand (12,000) users visited the portal.

Telecosts.com has attracted considerable interest from other European countries. The MCA responded to a number of requests from various public authorities that are looking at developing similar solutions in their jurisdiction.