



End-User Affairs: Half Yearly Report

January – June 2019

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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.

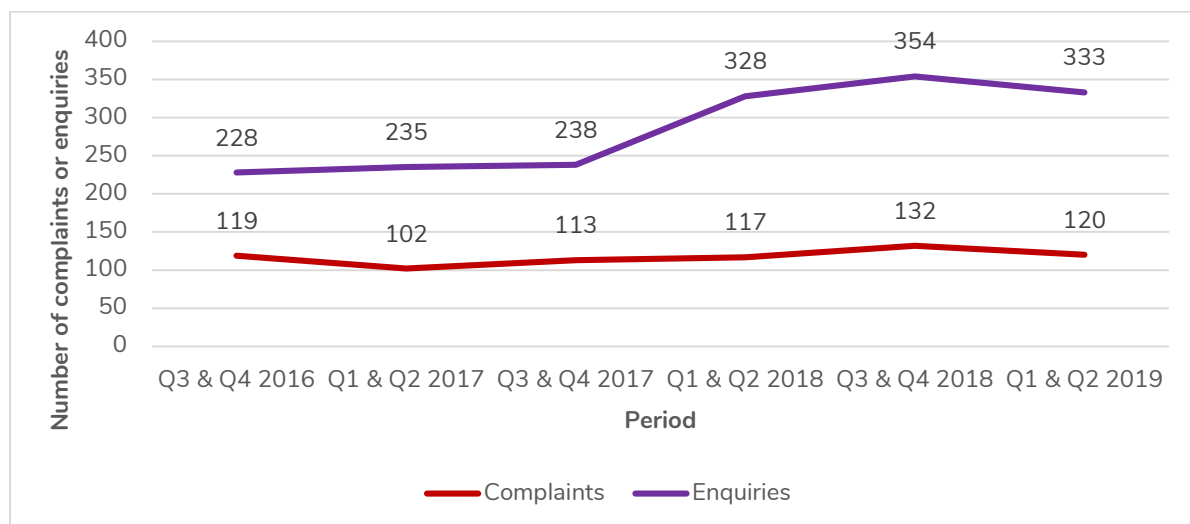
This report provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Authority during the first half of 2019 and also provides information on enforcement actions and related monitoring activities undertaken by the MCA during this period.

2 Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received

Between the 1st of January and the 30th June 2019, the MCA received 120 complaints, a decrease of 9% when compared to the complaints received during the second half of 2018. During the period under review, the MCA also received 333 requests for information on different matters it regulates. Figure 1 provides further details for the period Q3 & Q4 2016 – Q1 & Q2 2019.

Figure 1

Complaints and Enquiries by Q3 & Q4 2016 – Q1 & Q2 2019

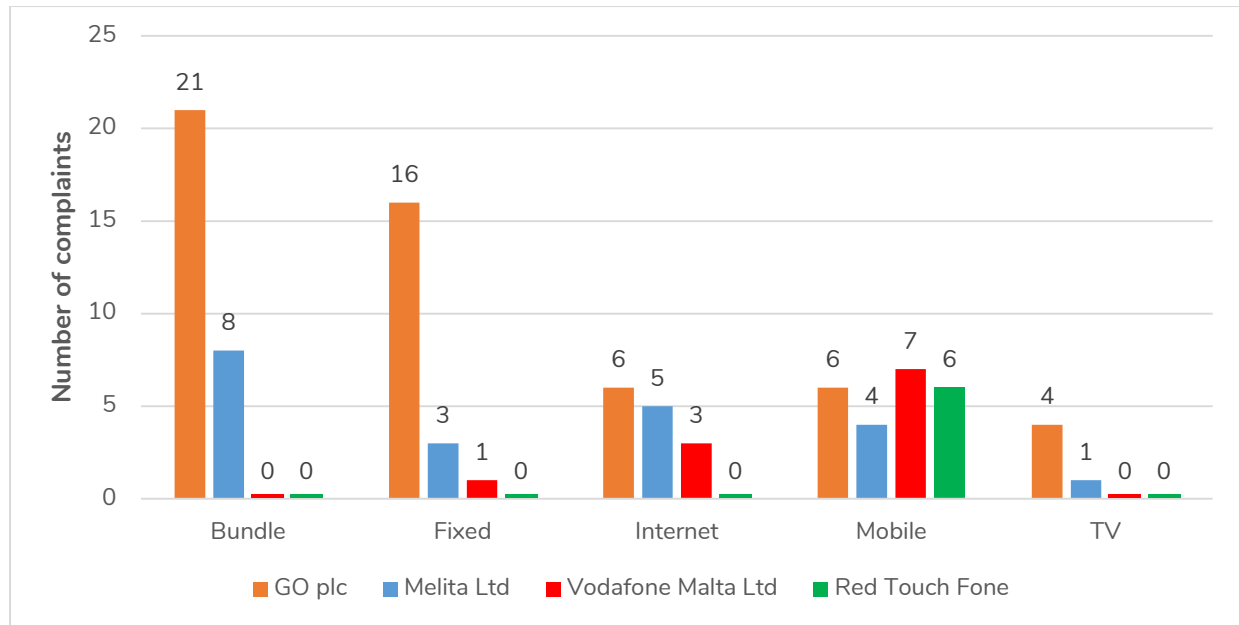


The MCA receives complaints from customers about their landline, mobile, internet, TV and postal services. These complaints tend to be more complex in nature due to the fact that the MCA requires that customers seek its intervention only after they have lodged a complaint with their service provider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

Figure 2 provides statistical information about the total number of electronic communication services complaints received by MCA during the first 6 months of 2019, and classified according to the complainant's ECS provider.

Figure 2

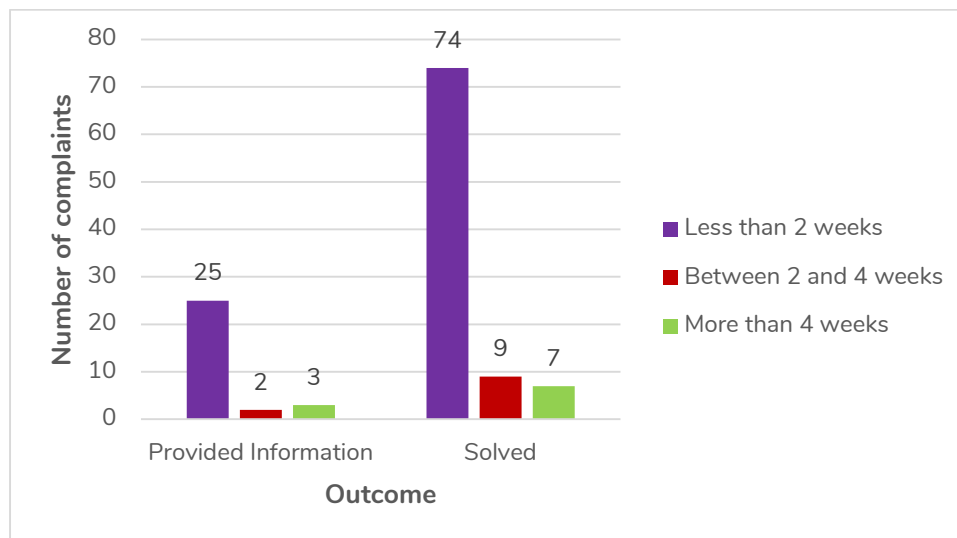
Complaints received by MCA (January - June 2019), classified by service and ECS Provider



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 83% of all complaints received were addressed within 2 weeks. 92% were closed within 20 working days.

Figure 3

Time taken by MCA to Handle Complaints (from receipt to closure), January - June 2019

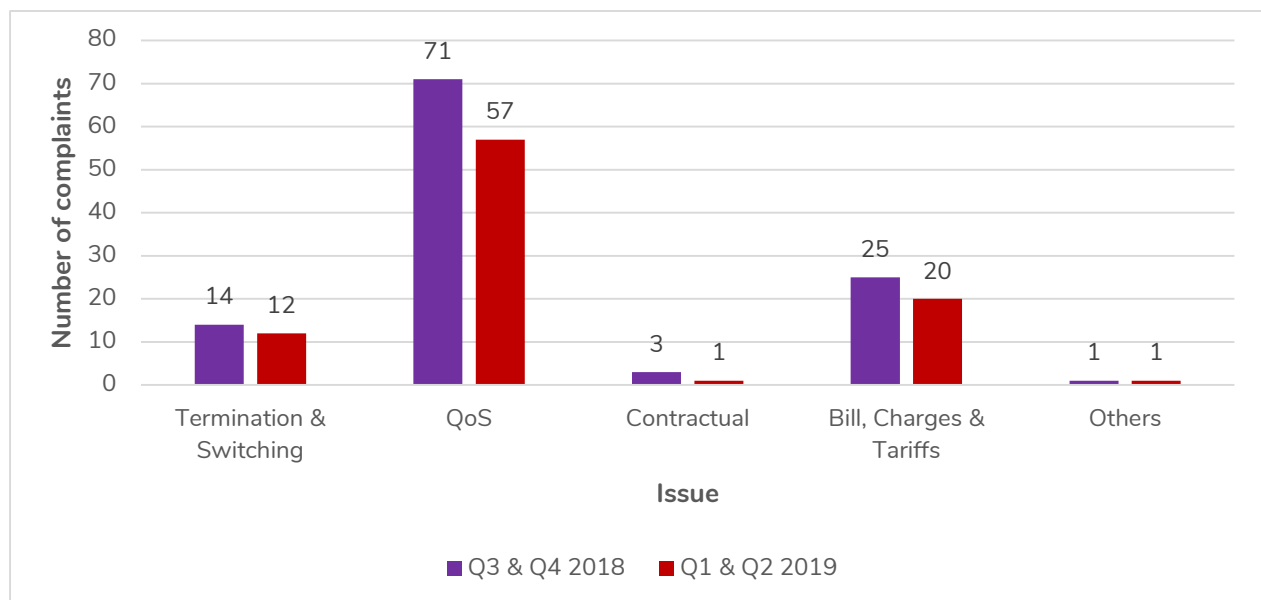


3 Electronic Communications

63% of the ECS complaints received during the first half of 2019, related to quality of service (QoS) followed by billing issues (22%). Other complaints received by the Authority related to termination and switching of services (13%), contractual issues (1%) and a few complaints on other matters (1%). This report provides information on the main findings for the period covering January to June 2019.

Figure 4

Electronic Communications Complaints by Issue



3.1 Quality of Service and Service Provision

- Complaints received which are classified in this category include complaints regarding faults (34), internet speed (7), installation (6), mobile reception (4), Customer care (4), Email account (1), non-access of service/s (1),
- Whilst fault complaints remain the most common type of quality of service issues reported to the MCA, we positively note that fault reports decreased by 25% when compared to the previous 6 months. In total, the MCA received 34 complaints during the period under review and most commonly these related to fixed telephony and internet services.
- Faults are generally caused by damages to the operator's external network, damages to subscribers' equipment (e.g. Internet modem or TV set-top box), or damages to the

subscribers' in-house wiring. A number of factors could cause faults including weather conditions, damages caused by third parties and/or by end-users. 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 a compensation in line with their service provider compensation scheme. In extreme cases, end-users were also provided with a temporary solution until the services were restored.

- The Authority received 7 complaints regarding internet performance. In such cases, subscribers were invited to provide suitable evidence to enable investigation, such as screenshots of speed tests carried out through a wired connection. In 6 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 case, the end-user was provided with tips and other information on how to improve the internet coverage range over Wi-Fi connections.

3.2 Billing, Charges and Tariffs

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding incorrect billing or overcharging (17), non-payment of bills (2), and refund (1).
- The number of complaints recorded in this category decreased by 20% when compared to the previous six months which continues to confirm this positive trend registered in previous periods.
- Most of the complaints received related to incorrect billing or overcharging with a total of 17 complaints received. In 9 of these cases the MCA monitored the actions undertaken by the service providers to ensure that any incorrect charges are waived from the end-users bill and any credit which was entitled to the end-users was refunded.
- In the other 8 cases the MCA provided the end-users with the necessary information and the necessary clarifications regarding disputed charges.

3.3 Other complaints

- The MCA received 12 complaints regarding issues encountered by subscribers when porting their number from one service provider to another or when terminating their service/s.
- During this period the MCA received 1 complaint regarding contract terms and conditions.
- The MCA intervened in these cases and ensured that the applicable redress and clarifications were provided as necessary.

4 Postal Services and E-Commerce

- The MCA registered an increase in the number of postal complaints received, with a total of 29 complaints lodged during the first six months of 2019.
- This increase was partially due to the increase in the number of complaints regarding parcels received from non-EU countries with a total of 24 complaints received on this matter. These items would require Customs clearance before they are dispatched for delivery. Customers are contacted by MaltaPost to provide sufficient proof of purchase in order for the Customs office to work out any duty which needs to be paid by the customer given that the item originates from a non-EU country such as China and US. On this matter, the MCA also received enquiries from consumers who were requested to pay a processing fee of €5 from MaltaPost when purchasing medical products and products of animal origin from abroad. According to information published on MaltaPost's website such postal items may need to be inspected by the Port Health Office or by the Border Inspection Post and MaltaPost applies a fee to recover the costs it incurs when processing these products (including the physical transportation to and from the aforementioned offices). More information is accessible from MCA's website through the following link: <https://www.mca.org.mt/articles/shopping-online-processing-fees>.
- The Authority also received 5 complaints regarding undelivered and mis-delivered mail. In dealing with these complaints, the MCA referred the issues to the service provider and requested the provider to monitor the provision of the service in the affected area and to ensure that any possible issues identified 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 2019, the MCA did not receive any complaints regarding e-Commerce services.

5 Customer Care Telephone Response Time

The MCA conducts an ongoing basic mystery shopping exercises aimed at measuring the time taken for a telephone call to be answered by a customer care agent of the 3 main electronic communications service providers.

From the information gathered, the MCA positively notes that the average time taken for a call to be answered was 45 seconds, a decrease when compared to the average time taken of 54 seconds as recorded by MCA during the last 6 months of 2018. The information gathered is based on 324 measurements taken at various times of the day between January and June 2019. 96% of the calls made were answered within 5 minutes.

Figure 5 below presents 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.

Figure 5

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

