



End-User Affairs: Half Yearly Report

July – December 2020

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received	2
3	Electronic Communications	4
3.1	Quality of Service and Service Provision	5
3.2	Billing, Charges and Tariffs	7
3.3	Other complaints	7
4	Postal Services and E-Commerce	8
5	Customer Care Telephone Response Time	10



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.

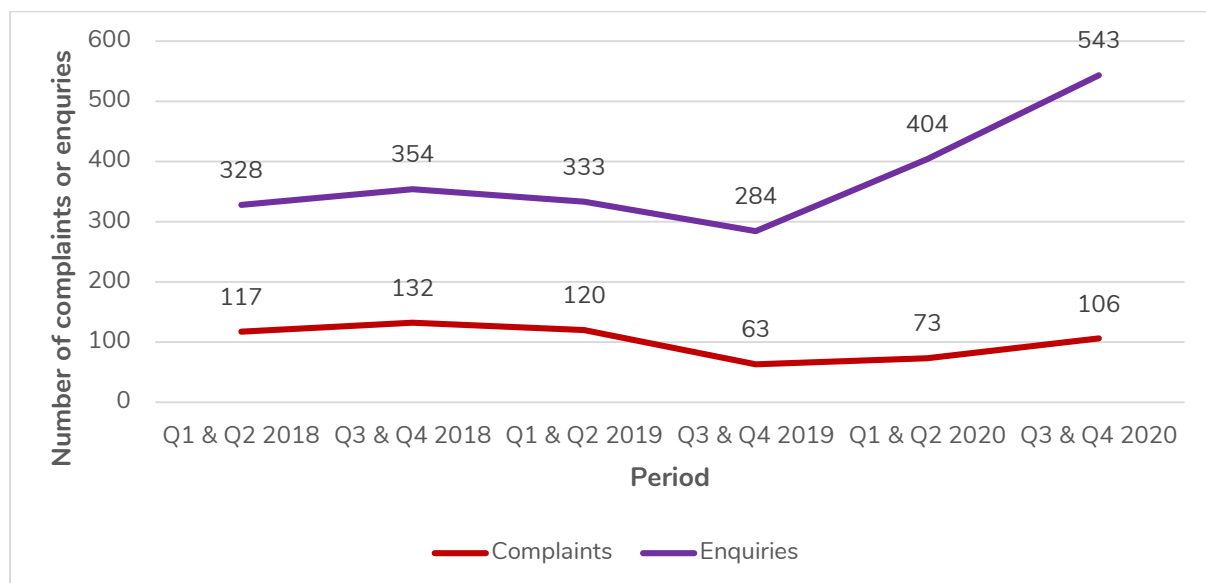
This report provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Authority during the second half of 2020 and also provides information on enforcement actions and related monitoring activities undertaken by the MCA during this period.

2 Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received

Between the 1st July and the 31st December 2020, the MCA received 106 complaints, an increase of 45% when compared to the period between January and June 2020. The MCA also recorded a surge of 34% in the number of enquiries received when compared to the previous 6 months, with a total of 543 requests for information handled. Figure 1 below provides further details on the trends of complaints and enquiries received between 2018 and 2020.

Figure 1

Complaints and Enquiries (2018 – 2020)

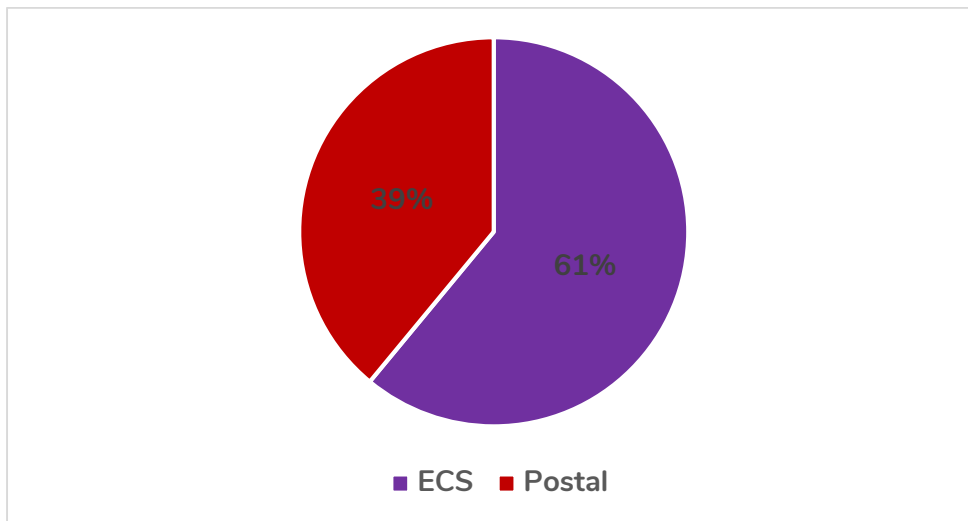


The MCA receives complaints from customers about their landline, mobile, internet, TV and postal services. These complaints tend to be more complex in nature due to the fact that the MCA requires that customers seek its intervention only after they have lodged a complaint with their service provider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

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the electronic communications services (ECS) and postal services complaints received by the MCA during the last 6 months of 2020.

Figure 2

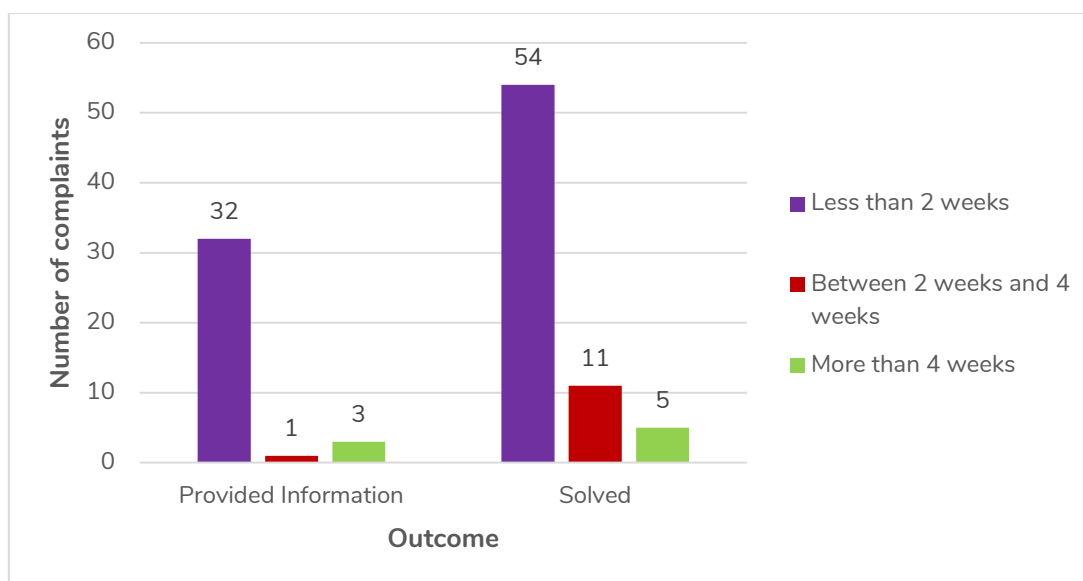
Complaints received by MCA (July – December 2020), classified by sector



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 81% of all complaints received were addressed within 2 weeks. 92% were closed within 20 working days. There were no pending cases of complaints received during the last 6 months of 2020 by the time of the publication of this report.

Figure 3

Time taken by MCA to Handle Complaints (from receipt to closure), July - December 2020

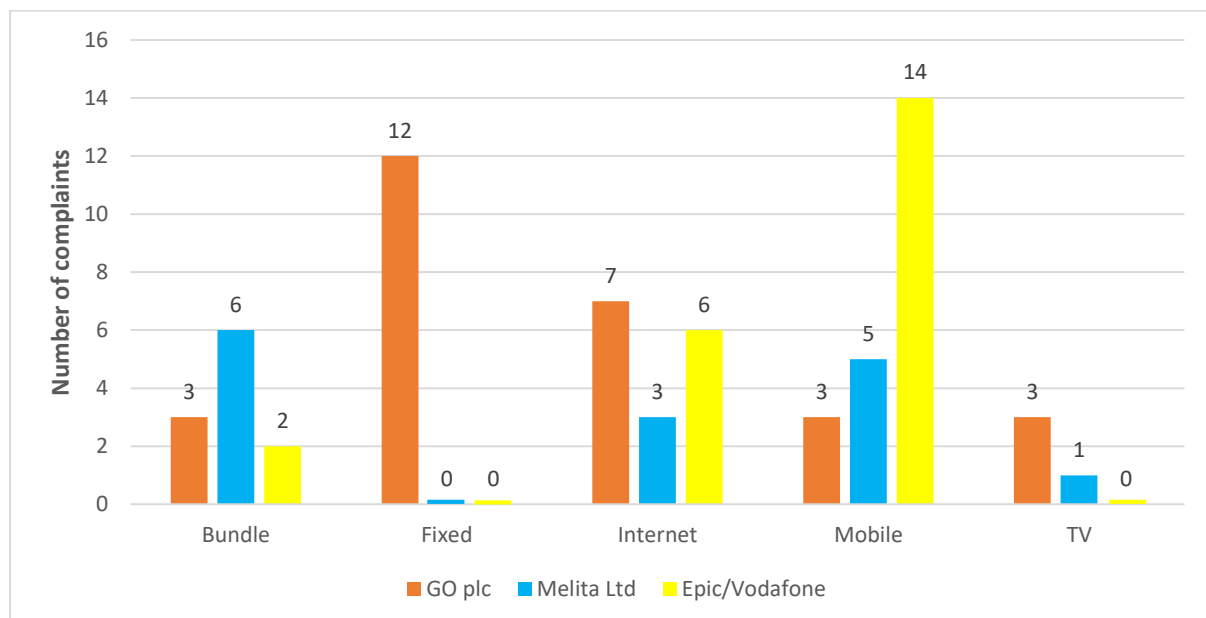


3 Electronic Communications

Figure 4 provides statistical information about the total number of electronic communication services complaints received by MCA during the last 6 months of 2020, classified in accordance with the complainant's ECS provider.

Figure 4

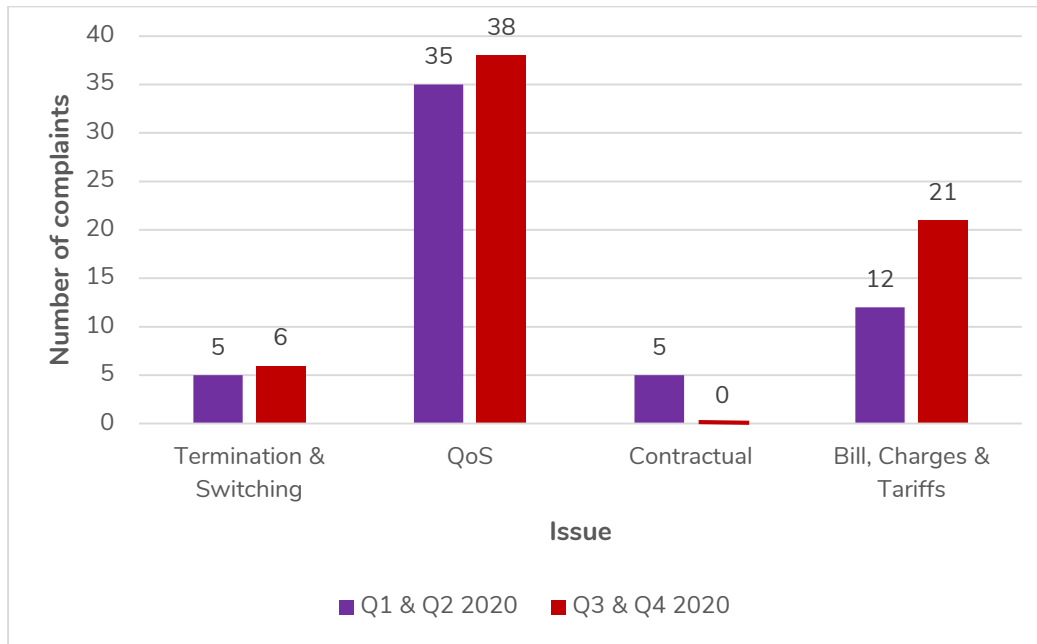
Complaints received by MCA (July – December 2020), classified by service and ECS Provider



58% of the ECS complaints received during the second half of 2020, related to quality of service (QoS) followed by billing issues (32%). Other complaints received by the Authority related to termination and switching of services (9%). Figure 5 provides information on the total number of ECS complaints classified according to the main issues for the both the first half and second half of 2020.

Figure 5

Electronic Communications Complaints by Issue – Year 2020




3.1 Quality of Service and Service Provision

- Quality of service (QoS) complaints remained the most common type of complaints received by the MCA. Nonetheless, the MCA positively notes that when compared to 2019 the number of QoS complaints received during 2020 have decreased by 21%.
- Complaints received which are classified in this category include complaints regarding faults (12), Customer care (9), Internet speed (8), Mobile reception (6), Installation (2), Compensation (1).
- Whilst complaints in relation to faults remain the most common type of QoS issues reported to the MCA, there was no increase in the number of fault complaints reported when compared with previous 6 months. The faults reported were related to fixed telephony and bundled services.

Faults are generally caused by either 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 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 9 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 an information of the different customer care support channels offered by local service providers in one comprehensive and easily accessible fact sheet that provides details of all service providers. This can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.mca.org.mt/articles/telecoms-customer-care-support>.
- The Authority received 8 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 5 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 3 cases, the end-users were provided with tips and other information on how to improve the internet coverage range over Wi-Fi connections.
- The MCA also received 6 complaints regarding mobile reception. The MCA positively notes that in 5 of these cases, after referring the matter to the respective service providers, remedial action was taken and the technical issue was addressed successfully by the service provider. In one case, the notwithstanding MCA's efforts, no amicable solution to the issue could be found and the MCA informed the customer of his/her option to seek legal redress from the Consumer Claims Tribunal whereby a claim for compensation for alleged damages suffered could be lodged.
- The installation complaints received by MCA, 2 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 (18), refund (2), and top-up (1).
- No major shift in trends regarding the number of these type of complaints received has been recorded.
- Most of the complaints received related to incorrect billing or overcharging with a total of 18 complaints received. In 12 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 Other complaints

- The MCA received 2 complaints regarding issues encountered by subscribers when porting their number from one service provider to another or when terminating their service/s. The MCA ensured that the service providers intervened to address any shortcomings or to provide clarifications where necessary.
- During this period the MCA received 4 complaints regarding termination of service. The MCA did not encounter any shortcomings from service providers in these claims and intervened by ensuring that clarifications were provided to subscribers to enable them to terminate their service/s effectively.

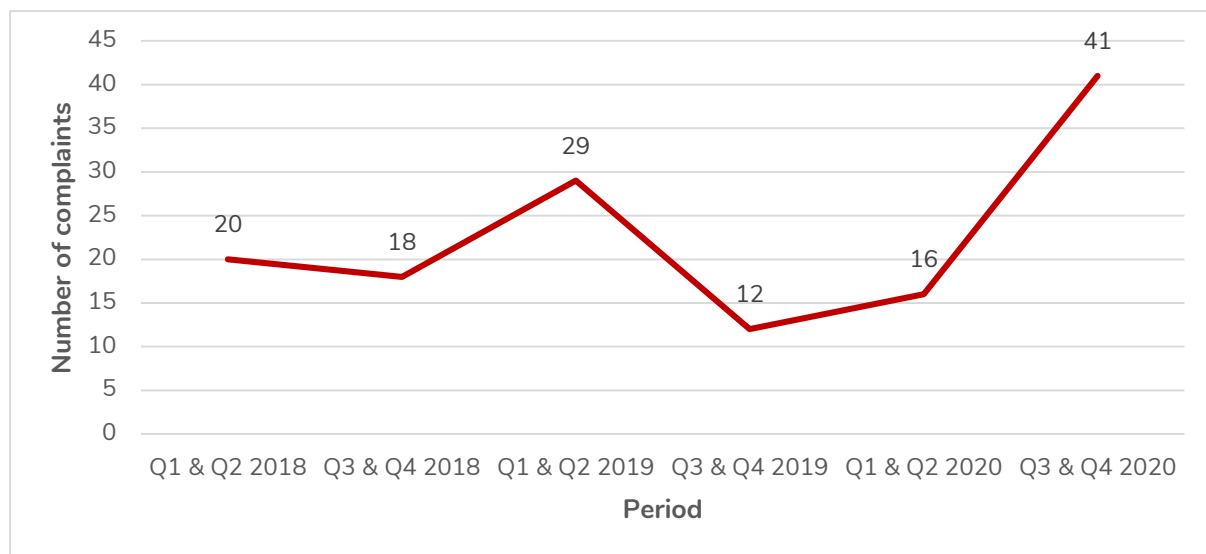
4 Postal Services and E-Commerce

The MCA registered 41 postal complaints during the last six months of 2020 with the majority relating to MaltaPost (37) and 4 complaints relating to UPS.

Figure 6 shows the trends in postal complaints received by the MCA between 2018 and 2020. A substantial increase was registered in the past six months with the number of complaints lodged with the Authority increasing from 16 to 41 when compared to the previous period.

Figure 6

Postal Complaints (2018 – 2020)



- The complaints received by the Authority related to customer care (14), undelivered mail (12), delayed delivery (7), mis-delivered mail (5), registered mail (2) and compensation (1).
- 14 of these complaints, related to difficulties experienced by customers 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.

- The other 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 last six months of 2020, the MCA did not receive any complaints regarding e-Commerce services.

5 Customer Care Telephone Response Time

The MCA conducts an ongoing mystery shopping exercises 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 7 (Electronic Communication Services Providers) and Figure 8 (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')

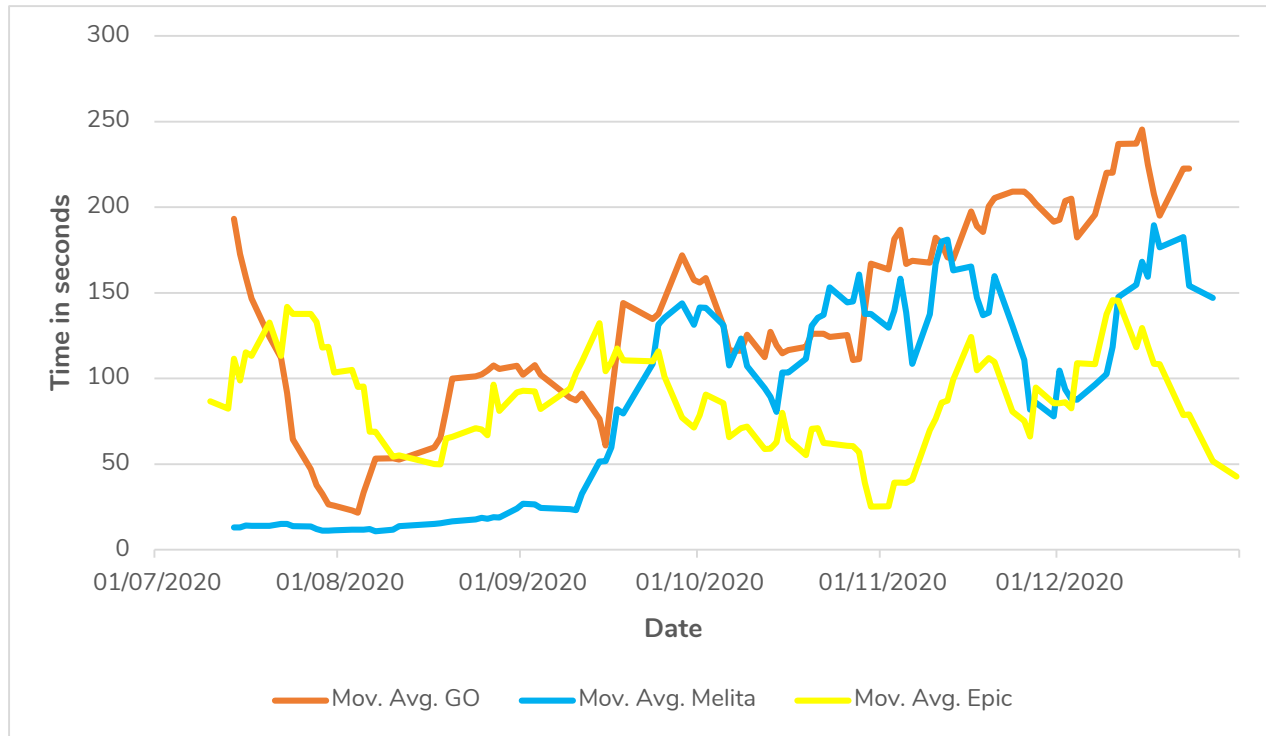
From the information gathered, the average time taken for a call to be answered by a telecoms operator support agent was 113 seconds. There was an improvement when compared to the previous six months of 2020 when the average time was 127 seconds. The information gathered is based on 428 measurements taken at various times of the day between July and December 2020.

81% of the calls made were answered within 5 minutes.

Figure 7

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

July – December 2020



Postal Universal Service Provider ('MaltaPost')

The MCA positively notes that the actions taken by MaltaPost to address concerns that had been previously highlighted by the Authority and that were discussed with the operator, led to a substantial improvement in the customer care response time when compared to first 6 months of 2020.

On the basis of 401 measurements taken at various times of the day between July and December 2020, 53% of the calls made to MaltaPost's customer care telephony service were answered within 5 minutes, when compared to 10% from the calls made in the first 6 months of 2020. Furthermore, 43% of the calls made were answered within 2 minutes.

Figure 8 provides details of these measurements. As previously stated, maximum call waiting time for the purpose of this exercise is capped at 300 seconds.

Figure 8

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

January – December 2020

