

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

48th BEREC Plenary Meeting

The MCA participated in the meeting held in Dubrovnik on 30th September, 2021. During the plenary, the Board of Regulators discussed the three decisions of the European Court of Justice of 2nd September 2021 concerning “zero-tariff” options proposed by two German ISPs (Telekom Deutschland and Vodafone). BEREC plans to update its Guidelines on the Implementation of the Open Internet Regulation by June 2022, and will put forward a consultation containing its detailed view on zero-rating in March 2022. BEREC also decided to launch immediately a call for input to give stakeholders the opportunity for an early involvement and to contribute, on equal footing, to its ongoing analysis. Various reports were adopted during the Plenary and can be accessed on the BEREC website.

Four-lateral BEREC, EPeReg, REGULATEL and EMERG Summit

MCA attended the Summit organised by BEREC, held on 29th September, 2021. The Summit focused on the national/regional experiences put forward to deal with an increasingly interconnected world, due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, facing an exponential growing demand for high-quality digital connections, which put connectivity as a top priority in the agendas of many countries. The ITU representative presented all the activities they are undertaking around the world, whilst the European Commission presented its the Digital Decade programme policy, highlighting the digital principles and the need for future national strategic roadmaps to pursue the digital targets, at the national level. Earlier on, MCA also participated in bilateral talks between BEREC and EMERG that further discussed activities encompassed in the MoU signed in 2019 between the two organisations, with a special focus on international roaming regulation and digital platform regulation.

ERGP Consumers and Core Indicators Working Group Meetings

MCA officials attended the ERGP Consumers and Core Indicators Working Group meetings on the 22nd and 23rd September, 2021.

During the meeting on the 22nd September, the Quality of Service and Consumer Protection and Complaints handling reports were discussed. The co-chairs presented the document, and the drafters provided an overview of the sections that they wrote and the major comments received. The general feedback was very positive, with minor modifications or updates required.

On the 23rd September, during the morning meeting, the feedback obtained from the consultation regarding the ERGP Contract situation report was discussed. The feedback submitted was from PostEurop, CTT, Belgian Ombudsman of Postal Market, and an Irish business person. The co-chairs reviewed the four inputs and discussed them with the WG for any areas of improvement in the report. The proposal is to update Recommendation 8 text to cater to PostEurop feedback. In the afternoon meeting, the focus was on the Core Indicators report. The co-chair presented the document, and the drafters explained/reviewed their sections and the major comments received. Again, the general feedback was very positive, with minor modifications or updates required.

48th Meeting of the ECC Working Group NaN1

MCA representatives participated in a meeting of a project team within WG NaN which was held between the 22nd and 23rd September 2021. The project team held discussions on multiple aspects related to future numbering issues, including ongoing Report drafting, and emerging industry trends and their implications on numbering resources.

COCOM ad hoc Expert Meeting

The same officials represented the MCA in an ad hoc COCOM expert meeting, discussing the possibility of reserving two new Harmonised European Short Codes (HESC) intended for services related to gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, and for a senior citizen helpline respectively.

European Commission's 84th COCOM Meeting

A representative of the MCA participated in the European Commission's 84th Communications Committee (COCOM) meeting held on the 21st of September 2021. COCOM performs an advisory function to the European Commission. The meeting discussed the state of play of the transposition of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC) by the Member States into their national legislation. The meeting also discussed the state of implementation of Public Warning Systems in line with the provisions of the EECC. A presentation on the European Commission's proposed 'Path to the Digital Decade' was also delivered to the members of the COCOM.

RSPG Sub-Group of the 'Good Offices'

The MCA participated in this meeting on the 20th September 2021, which continued to assess cross-border coordination issues experienced by European Member States. In particular, the meeting considered:

- (i) progress made in the implementation of a coordinated solution (RSPG Opinion 21-029) in relation to cross-border interference problems between Italy and Croatia in the UHF band,
- (ii) progress made in the resolution of harmful interference caused by Italy to the sound broadcasting services of neighbouring countries; and (iii) progress made in the cross-border negotiations between EU and third countries.

BEREC Mini Board Study Trip

The MCA, which is serving as one of the BEREC Vice-Chairs for 2021, participated in a study trip of the Mini Board members held in Lichtenstein on 13-16 September. Apart from participating in workshops and technical discussions on the challenges that regulators face in the digital age where telco markets are shifting to digital markets, the Mini Board had the opportunity to learn about fibre rollout in Lichtenstein.

3rd BEREC/IRG Contact Network 2021

MCA participated in the 3rd BEREC /IRG Contact Network 2021 Meeting held on the 9th and 10th September 2021. The objective of the Meeting was to prepare for the 48th BoR Plenary. During the CN, the respective Expert Working Groups and BEREC Office presented to the CN members a number of documents (including Guidelines, Reports and Opinions) as well as Oral updates on ongoing/completed BEREC deliverables.

BEREC's Open Internet Working Group

The MCA has attended various meetings held by BEREC's Open Internet working group. These working groups are intended to share best practices and expert opinions related to various aspects arising from the supervision and enforcement of the Open Internet Regulation. Discussions were held concerning the recent judgements published by the CJEU concerning zero-rated offers within the context of Net Neutrality. Recognising the importance of the CJEU judgements and their implication in the local context, the MCA is participating in this debate.

PUBLICATIONS

Key Market Indicators for Electronic Communications and Post: Q1 2017 to Q2 2021

Published On: Sep 17th 2021 *Data Report Sheet*

Product and Price Developments Publication - May to August 2021

Published On: Sep 14th 2021 *Monthly Pricing Developments*

Consultation and Proposed Decision on GO plc's Application for Funding relating to Universal Service Obligations on

Electronic Communications Services during 2017

Published On: Sep 2nd 2021 Consultation

Assignment of Radio Spectrum in the 1800 MHz and 2.5 GHz Bands - Submissions to the Call for Expression of Interest

Published On: Aug 27th 2021 News

Consultation on the Assignment Process of Radio Spectrum in the VHF Band for Terrestrial Digital Audio Broadcasting Services in Malta

Published On: Aug 20th 2021 Consultation

Press Release - Recognition of Qualified Electronic Signatures ('QES')

Published On: Aug 17th 2021 News

Notice: Assignment of Radio Spectrum for Fixed Radio Links

Published On: Aug 16th 2021 News

Monthly Newsletter - July 2021

Published On: Aug 11th 2021 News

Press Release - MCA and FITA sign MoU

Published On: Aug 6th 2021 News

Insights into the Use of Digital: Internet & eCommerce Use by Business Survey 2021

Published On: Aug 4th 2021 Business Internet and Ecommerce Usage Study

MCA International News Week 19

Published On: Aug 4th 2021 News

EVENTS

Increased Efforts to strengthen the Monitoring of Public Sector Websites and Mobile Apps for greater Social Inclusion and Online Accessibility, particularly for People with Disabilities.



The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) and the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work cohesively towards ensuring that the public sector's electronic platforms, including mobile applications, are fully accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities as well as other disadvantaged groups.

In working together, these two entities will continue monitoring levels of accessibility for government websites, while also extending this practice to cover the monitoring of public sector mobile apps.

This joint effort will assist public entities in conforming to the European Union (EU)'s Website Accessibility Directive, which aims to provide people with disabilities with easier access to public sector services through the Internet. Apart from websites, as of June 2021, the obligations under the Directive have now extended to include mobile apps as well.

The MCA's CEO, Mr. Jesmond Bugeja, emphasised that the obligations charted under the Website Accessibility Directive compliment the MCA's own regulatory efforts, both in relation to the promotion of better digital services, as well as the ease of use of digital communication services across Malta.

On his part, FITA CEO, Carlo Stivala, stated that FITA will be solidifying its technical and administrative structures to better meet demands received from persons with disabilities, while intensifying supervision over websites and apps to work towards greater accessibility.

Minister for the Economy and Industry Silvio Schembri referred to the Government's ongoing efforts in making online government resources accessible to as many people as possible, making sure that each and every Maltese citizen is able to have an equal and active part in a digital economy and society.

He applauded the diligent monitoring carried out by the MCA, which was appointed as the designated entity to implement

and enforce the EU's Website Accessibility Directive, thereby being responsible to oversee that all public sector websites conform to it.

Minister Schembri noted how this project has the potential of bringing about significant benefits to everyone, not only persons with disabilities. One practical example is that when a user is accessing a website on a mobile device in direct sunlight, it could be difficult to decipher the website content due to low contrast in the design of the website. In this case, the Directive stipulates that the contrast ratio in websites needs to be high enough so that content can be easily read, which would allow the user to better view the website content in such an environment.

Owen Bonnici, Minister for Equality, Research and Innovation, mentioned that as FITA is currently in the process of strengthening and enhancing its operations, it will be able to extend its range of services available to vulnerable individuals, allowing them to live a higher quality of life with the help of technology. He stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has proven what a difference technology can make for the lives of many, reiterating the Government's belief that everyone should have the right to access digital services within our country.

He praised the many efforts on FITA's part in monitoring public sector websites – now also mobile apps – to ascertain can they can be easily accessed by all persons, including those with disabilities.

Dr Bonnici said that this digital transformation opens up many doors for our country's continued progress, and by the means of this partnership we will continue to work towards making great opportunities available to all of society.