

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The 8th Meeting of the Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) - Shared Spectrum Subgroup

One of the subgroups of the Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) deals with sharing of the radio frequency spectrum and aims to develop an RSPG opinion. This opinion will explore different dynamic spectrum sharing options implemented and also advise on a possible roadmap to increase spectrum sharing in a number of frequency bands. During the past meeting which was held on the 18th of January 2021, the group managed to finalise the draft opinion to be presented to the RSPG Plenary in February 2021 for public consultation. The draft report on spectrum sharing is also in its final stages which only requires proof reading and some minor modifications. The next RSPG-SS meeting will be held on the 19th of April 2021, after the public consultation on the opinion.

46th Meeting of the ECC Working Group NaN1 – Future of Numbering Issues

Representatives of the MCA participated in this remote meeting which was held between the 13th and 14th January 2021. The agenda included updates on ongoing Report drafting, discussions on developing themes related to future numbering issues and on cooperation efforts with BEREC.

BEREC's End-User Working Group Meeting

In January 2021, MCA representatives participated in BEREC's virtual End-User Working Group. During this meeting representatives discussed and provided updates on recent consumer protection developments which occurred in their respective countries. The Working Group also discussed the several initiatives which the Group is responsible to execute during 2021.

PUBLICATIONS

MCA International News Week 37-42

Published On: Jan 22nd 2021 News

Key Market Indicators for Electronic Communications and Post: Q1 2016 to Q3 2020

Published On: Jan 18th 2021 Data Report Sheet

Monthly Newsletter - December 2020

Published On: Jan 14th 2021 News

MCA International News Week 33-36

Published On: Jan 8th 2021 News

LEGAL Updates

Legal Notices:

- L.N. 10 of 2021 - entitled "Electronic Communications Networks and Services (General) (Amendment) Regulations, 2021"
- Publication of consultation issued through Ministry for the Economy and Industry on the 11th January 2021 entitled: "[European Electronic Communications Framework: Transposition of the European Electronic Communications Code \(EECC\)](#)"
- Issue of final report on the 20th January 2021 – on the 'online consultation' website further to the submissions received by Government following the public consultation on remote identification procedures.

EVENTS

Telecosts.com launched – An Information Service on the best Market Rates to address the needs of Telecommunications Consumers

On the 26th January 2021, as part of its consumer-centered initiatives, the MCA launched a new online price-comparison platform, known as Telecosts. This is a free, up-to-date and independent comparison tool, which can be accessed via www.telecosts.com. The platform, which is called for in the new regulations under the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC), allows consumers to easily compare all the local electronic communication services, including the different prices and features. By utilizing this tool, consumers can be confident that they are indeed getting the best value out of their communications plan, or explore other options which better suit their specific needs and wants.



The availability of transparent, up-to-date, and comparable information is essential, and should not be underestimated, especially in a sector as competitive as this one. The Telecosts portal marks a significant step forward for the industry by undoubtedly offering a useful service for consumers, while continuing to promote healthy and sustainable market competition for the future.

To use the portal, consumers simply need to choose a service and complete a short series of questions specifying their needs and requirements for their ideal service plan. The results page then displays a list of service plans which fit the consumer's preferences, sorted in accordance of the calculated monthly cost starting from the cheapest service plan available.



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"We want to aspire towards a Malta Communications Authority (MCA) that is more focused on consumer needs." This was stated by Minister for the Economy and Industry Silvio Schembri during the launch of a new service by the Malta Communications Authority. Entitled TeleCosts, this will lead to a stronger telecom service for consumers, operators and the industry, with regards to information tools on the bundled packages available on the market, for a better-informed choice.



When visiting the website www.telecosts.com, consumers can conveniently compare all local tariff plans available for mobile telephony, fixed telephony, internet, as well as bundled services for telephony, internet and TV. When visiting the portal, consumers can filter the options in the telecommunication services in accordance with their personal needs. Consumers are then provided with a list of the cheapest services offered on the market, in accordance to their preferences and needs.

During this launch, Minister Schembri announced the government's vision for the MCA, which through proactive work should lead to our country having a more inclusive digital society, where the benefits of digital technology are felt by society at large. He mentioned the ongoing investment

in telecommunications. These include an investment by the Malta Communications Authority, in monitoring and training facilities in the field of telecommunications, including a state-of-the-art system with monitoring facilities strategically located around the island, over a period of three years.

Minister Schembri noted how Malta is currently benefiting from three mobile telephony network providers offering 4.5G services nationwide, with one of the operators already investing in 5G-ready infrastructure.



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He added that, following the success of the 'eBiznify' project in recent years through which almost 200 micro and SMEs have been trained, the MCA will continue to invest more in this e-commerce online training program and through an investment of €90 thousand, it will expand further over the coming year to attract an even wider audience.

Minister Silvio Schembri praised the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) for its reputation in the field of diligent regulation which promotes and facilitates continued investment and sustainable competition in the sector. He said that at Authority level, the government's vision in the regulatory field is for the MCA to continue to monitor the various services offered in the sector, including fixed and mobile telephony, internet services, as well as television distribution. When it comes to the regulation of digital services in the European Union, the journey towards intelligent connectivity is expected. This includes the introduction of the revision of roaming regulations, e-commerce rules, and the Postal Services Directive, as well as the Digital Services Act announced for Malta.

Minister Schembri stressed the importance of strong connectivity, especially for an island like Malta which depends on interaction with Europe and international

markets, for a country to remain competitive. In the words of Minister Schembri; "The success we have achieved in the Maltese economy would never have been possible if it were not for the advanced infrastructure of the telecommunications sector. I will give priority to the communications industry that supports any other industry. This is particularly true at a time when we are looking at the diversification of the Maltese economy into technologically advanced sectors."

He stressed how the telecommunications infrastructure in Malta is the most developed in Europe. In fact, in the "Digital Economy and Society Index 2020" issued by the European Commission, Malta ranks among the top five countries in Europe in terms of digital progress, in particular on the use of broadband, the internet capability, and the integration of digital technology by local businesses.



Photo - DOI - Jeremy Wannacott

Mr Jesmond Bugeja, Chief Executive of the MCA, highlighted how the TeleCosts service will be useful in helping consumers get the most value out of their chosen service plan, by providing transparent, up-to-date and comparable information by all local service providers. He added that, in view of the changing needs of consumers, the MCA regularly monitors electronic communications to identify the main trends shaping the market. In its most recent data collection exercise for Q3 2020, the MCA recorded a total of 211,060 fixed broadband subscriptions as of September 2020, which translates into a 5.4% increase over the year before. Meanwhile, with nearly 19,000 new takeovers from the previous quarter, mobile subscriptions reached 635,040 by the end of the reporting period.

European Economic Communications Code

Transposition of European Economic Communications Code (EECC) Directives into Maltese Law – Consultation Launched

The Ministry for the Economy and Industry proposed to amend the Malta Communications Authority Act ('Cap. 418'), the Utilities and Services (Regulation of Certain Works) Act ('Cap. 81'), the Electronic Communications (Regulation) Act ('Cap. 399') and the Single European Emergency Call Service ('112' number) and the European Harmonised Services of Social Value ('116' numbering range) Regulations ('S.L. 399.43'). The Ministry also proposed the making of new regulations entitled Electronic Communications Networks and Services (General) Regulations that will replace the current Electronic Communications Networks and Services (General) Regulations ('S.L. 399.28').

This set of laws seek to transpose the revised European Union ('EU') electronic communications framework now reflected in the EECC which came into force in December 2018. The EECC is a revision of the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications which underpins the regulation of the electronic communications sector in Malta.

Overview of the EECC:

The core objectives of the EECC are to:

- promote investment in very high capacity networks and services through sustainable competition;
- support efficient and effective use of radio spectrum;
- maintain the security of networks and services; and
- provide a high level of consumer protection.

The EECC also sets out the objectives and functions of the national regulatory authority ('NRA') - Malta's NRA is the Malta Communications Authority ('MCA') - and where applicable other competent authorities.

By way of background the EU had in 2002 agreed to a comprehensive regulatory framework which was subsequently revised in 2009. The EU regulatory framework was transposed under Maltese law in 2004 following amendments to the Malta Communications Authority Act, the Electronic Communications (Regulation) Act, and the making of various subsidiary laws. In 2011 the aforesaid laws were again substantially amended to reflect the changes introduced by the EU in 2009. These laws will now be amended to incorporate the changes made by the EECC. The EU regulatory framework consisted of five Directives:

- the Framework Directive (2002/21/EC);
- the Access Directive (2002/19/EC);
- the Authorisation Directive (2002/20/EC);
- the Universal Service Directive (2002/22/EC); and
- the ePrivacy Directive (2002/58/EC).