

REVISED NATIONAL NUMBERING CONVENTIONS

Consultation

December 2005

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1 INTRODUCTION

The MCA introduced the Numbering Conventions in 2001 before competition had really begun in the Maltese market, apart from the launch of Go Mobile.

The MCA is now receiving various proposals for new services and applications for authorisations from potential new entrants. It has also made arrangements for the introduction of number portability.

In parallel with this consultation the MCA is proposing to create a formal National Numbering Plan that will prescribe the conditions of use for each specific numbering range.

It is therefore appropriate for the MCA to review and revise the Numbering Conventions to ensure that they fit with these further developments. This is the purpose of this consultation.

2 CONSULTATION

The Numbering Conventions govern the practical application of the National Numbering Plan and the process of allocating numbers. They specify duties to be performed by the MCA in managing the plan and by organisations that are allocated numbers.

The text of the Numbering Conventions has been thoroughly revised and re-written but relatively few changes of substance have been made. The main changes are:

- The responsibilities of the MCA and of operators respectively have been grouped into lists.
- The term “Numbering Plan” replaces “Numbering Scheme” and the text is clarified to refer only to the National Numbering Plan and not plans of operators.
- Conditions on the use of numbers have been omitted where they will be included in the National Numbering Plan as there is no need for duplication.
- Clarification has been given for the system of reservation of number blocks. Some changes made so that operators will have to pay for the reservation of number blocks and their rights to renew reservations will be limited to one year, with only one year’s extension if the numbers are not brought into service. The MCA thinks that this is the fairest way to handle the increase in demand that is expected as new entrants enter the market.

All interested parties are requested to comment on the revised text and to make proposals for any changes that they think may be appropriate.

3 PROPOSED TEXT OF REVISED CONVENTIONS

DEFINITIONS

Activated

Activated is the status of a number when it is fully operational such that it is able to support the electronic communications service for which it is designated.

Allocation

An allocation is the granting of rights of use over numbers from designated number ranges to authorised providers. Allocation of numbers grants a right to use the allocated numbers in accordance with the Numbering Plan but it is not a property transfer.

National Numbering Conventions

The National Numbering Conventions is the set of 'rules' under which the Maltese National Numbering Plan is managed and administered.

National Numbering Plan

The national numbering plan specifies the subdivisions of the Maltese numbering space, the purposes for which each number range may be used and the conditions attaching to such use.

Service Provider

An entity that offers electronic communications services to subscribers and/or other service providers, involving the use of electronic communications facilities provided by network operators.

Subscriber/Customer

A person or organisation that receives electronic communications services from an operator, usually against payment. The subscriber / customer is normally also an end-user of the relevant service.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 MCA Responsibilities

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) is responsible for managing the Maltese electronic communications Numbering Plan and issuing conventions for its administration. The MCA has a statutory obligation to put in place procedures to ensure that the allocation of numbers is carried out in an objective, transparent, equitable, non-discriminatory, and timely manner.

The MCA will maintain, develop and administer the Numbering Plan and its conditions to achieve the following objectives:

1. The Numbering Plan should provide a stable framework for the development of communications with sufficient capacity and flexibility to meet future demands of end-users, operators and service providers;
2. The Numbering Plan will, where appropriate, remain compatible with relevant international agreements, standards and recommendations;
3. Where changes to the Numbering Plan are necessary, they will be implemented in a way that minimises disruption, cost and inconvenience for customers, operators and service providers;
4. Publicity for changes will be co-ordinated and commence well in advance of the change taking place;
5. The Numbering Plan will ensure that wherever practicable callers may gain from the number a reasonable indication of the maximum tariff that they are likely to have to pay for the call.

The MCA will:

1. Aim to respond to routine applications for numbers within one month;
2. Treat all applications for numbering capacity in confidence;
3. Not disclose information obtained during the course of managing the Numbering Plan about undertakings, their business relations or their cost components, provided that such information has been identified as confidential;
4. Advise the ITU-T Secretariat as necessary of the allocations in Malta.

The MCA does not for the time being intend to make allocations of numbers itself direct to subscribers or end users.

The MCA may at any time and without notice withdraw an allocation at the request of the Government concerning a matter of national security or interest.

4.2 Operators Responsibilities

Operators and service providers who are allocated numbers shall:

1. Recognise that the allocation of a number is a grant of right of use and not a property transfer
2. Use numbers allocated to them only in accordance with the purpose given in the Numbering Plan for the range containing the numbers concerned and with any conditions that attach to the numbering range, including the adoption of any changes made by the MCA;
3. Unless the MCA agrees otherwise, surrender any number block that has not been used within two years of its allocation;
4. Conform to any direction given by the MCA concerning the national numbering plan;
5. Not trade number blocks with other operators without the permission in writing of the MCA;
6. Maintain an up-to-date record of the numbers in use and any numbers they have ported to other operators;
7. Provide to the MCA upon request any information as it may reasonably require concerning their current and planned use of numbers or any other information relevant to the administration of the national numbering plan;
8. Inform the MCA whenever all use a number block ceases and relinquish the allocation unless it is needed for other purposes that also conform to the plan;
9. Not allocate network specific numbers that conflict with the Numbering Plan and keep the MCA informed of all internally allocated network specific numbers;
10. Where numbers are subject to individual number charging:
 - i. provide twice yearly, by 30 April and by 31 October, a statement of the number of numbers that were utilised on the last day of the previous month; 31 March and 30 September respectively;
 - ii. pay invoices for number charges within one calendar month;
11. Advise the MCA of the name and contact details for the person responsible for numbering issues;
12. Whenever use of a number by a subscriber ceases, not re-allocate the number to another subscriber for a period of six months;
13. Whenever the MCA changes the national numbering plan, ensure that the following measures are in place wherever possible and appropriate, when number changes are introduced:
 - i. a period of parallel running, at no extra charge to the number holder, during which both old and new numbers are available for use (typically 6 to 12 months);
 - ii. a period of call trapping when announcements are made free of charge to callers to the old number to inform them of the change, after completion of the change (typically for 3 to 6 months after end of parallel running period).

5 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

5.1 General

1. MCA will follow the principle of 'first come, first served' in respect of choice of numbers or number blocks, except when starting allocation from newly allocated number ranges. In either case, allocation shall be carried out in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. Simultaneous requests for the same numbers will be allocated by lottery;
2. Applicants will have the right to indicate their preference for specific telephone number blocks or short codes. However, these preferences will not necessarily be agreed by the MCA;
3. The MCA may refuse an application for an allocation or reservation of numbering capacity. Alternatively, the MCA may attach specific conditions to the allocation that are consistent with the Numbering Plan and relate to the use and management of the numbering capacity allocated. Such specific conditions will be set out in the letter of allocation.
4. In the event of a refusal, the MCA will inform the applicant, in writing, of its reasons.

5.2 Information required when submitting an application

When applying for an allocation of numbering capacity, the applicant shall provide the following information to the MCA:

1. Name and contact details and where relevant company registration number;
2. A description of the service for which the numbering allocation is required and its retail and interconnection charges;
3. Their preferred number block and, where appropriate, second and third preferences should be indicated.;
4. The date by which the allocation is required;
5. The date the service is planned to be operational;
6. The percentage utilisation of existing number allocations for similar services;
7. The interconnection termination rate for incoming calls to the proposed numbers.
8. Any other information that the applicant considers necessary or appropriate to justify the application;
9. Any other information requested by the MCA.

5.3 Reservations and allocations

The MCA will not run a system of reservations for operators who are considering the possible introduction of services.

An operator or service provider who wishes to obtain the right to use a block of numbers shall make a formal application and if approved pay for the allocation.

If after a year, an allocation remains unused, the operator will not have an automatic right to renew the allocation.

After two years if an allocation remains unused the allocation would normally be revoked.

6 PRESENTATION OF NUMBERS

Consistent presentation of telephone numbers helps to avoid dialling errors. The following presentation of telephone numbers is recommended for use on stationery, directories and other documentation, in respect of PSTN, ISDN and Mobile numbers.

Presentation of fixed or mobile numbers

Fixed Line	21 336 840
International Numbers	+356 21 336 840
Mobile	7912 3456
	9912 3456

Presentation of service numbers

4-digit numbers	118X
Paging Numbers	7117 7171
Freephone Numbers	800 12345
Premium Rate Numbers	500 12345

7 CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

The MCA invites comments from interested parties in relation to this consultation.

The consultation period will run until 12.00pm on Tuesday 15 February 2006.

Comments should be sent to:

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Written representations may be made public by the MCA subject to MCA’s Internal Guidelines on Confidentiality published on 16 December 2004.

19 December 2005

Annex 1: Application Form For Allocation Of Codes and Number Blocks

COMPANY NAME	Company Reg. No.	DATE
Address and Contact Details	Contact Person Postal Address telephone: fax: e-mail:	
Description of intended use		
Date when allocation is required		
Date of launching the service		
Preferred numbering block or code and alternatives		
Proposed terminating rate for incoming calls)		
Relationship with existing reservations or allocations		
Percentage utilisation of existing number allocations for similar services		
Additional Remarks		