

Joint Statement by EU and Ukrainian operators on connectivity in support of refugees from Ukraine



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The Russian war against Ukraine has disrupted the lives of millions of Ukrainians. An estimated 4,2 million refugees have left Ukraine to neighbouring countries, from where they are progressively moving also to other European Union countries. In the face of this immediate and growing humanitarian crisis, EU and Ukrainian operators share the conviction that Ukrainian refugees should continue to have affordable access to connectivity to stay in touch with family and friends and to access the Internet and reliable sources of information.

The signatories of this Joint Statement have taken, as of the first days of this crisis, many different actions to help ensure connectivity across the board. EU operators have distributed and will continue distributing millions of SIM cards free of charge to allow Ukrainians to stay connected in the EU. Furthermore, EU operators have offered free or heavily discounted international calls and SMS to Ukraine, have enabled free outbound roaming for EU customers in Ukraine, have provided connectivity and charging at central points where refugees gather, have offered donation of essential equipment to Ukrainian operators and maintained essential international connection nodes. In parallel, Ukrainian operators continue to keep the connectivity within Ukraine functioning, despite military aggressions. From the early days of this crisis, Ukrainian operators also ensured resilience of their networks within the country and offered free roaming to Ukrainian people that fled the war.

In light of this devastating war, the signatories of this Joint Statement from the EU side stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Recognising the importance of connectivity, in particular in times of crisis and under these exceptional circumstances, EU and Ukrainian operators stand ready to continue making these

unprecedented voluntary efforts to alleviate the consequences of the humanitarian crisis by providing connectivity support on a collaborative basis to those fleeing their home to safety in the European Union. At the same time, the Ukrainian signatories of this Joint Statement commit to pass on the full benefits of the voluntary measures applied by their EU counterparts to Ukrainian end users.

In this context, the signatories underline that, for EU operators free or heavily discounted international calls to Ukraine can be very costly, and so can free international calls for Ukrainian operators to EU countries, due to high unregulated international termination fees charged at wholesale level. At the same time, the Ukrainian operators, operating under war conditions have limited other revenue sources to maintain their networks and services, and are exposed to growing wholesale roaming out-payments for their subscribers now displaced to the EU.

The signatories of this Joint Statement seek to ensure that parties work to establish a coordinated approach involving efforts on both sides, facilitated by BEREC and the Ukrainian National Regulatory Authority NCEC. Operators in EU and Ukraine, including those providing transit where relevant, would agree to voluntarily and bilaterally lower wholesale roaming charges and lower the wholesale charges for terminating international calls through commercial agreements, to enable the sustained provision of affordable connectivity to refugees from Ukraine. That coordinated approach would minimise additional costs for both EU and Ukrainian operators, while enabling each to cover their respective costs, in order to enable as best possible communication for those fleeing the horrors of war. In this respect, it is important that operators on both sides of the border do their utmost to ensure that charges for Ukrainian consumers are kept at the minimum.

For this coordinated approach to be efficient, as many EU and Ukrainian operators as possible, should be part of this joint initiative. This Joint Statement remains open for all operators willing to sign at any time in solidarity with Ukraine.

Facing this emergency situation and with the common aim of solidarity to ensure that Ukrainians seeking refuge can communicate freely

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