

NATIONAL REGULATOR DECISION ON THE CONTENT OF UNIVERSAL SERVICE, GREECE

On July 12, 2002, the National Telecommunications and Post Commission (EETT), the NRA for telecoms in Greece, announced a decision specifying the content of Universal Service (US). In formulating policy, EETT relied on the extensive consultation it carried out on this issue in the Fall of 2001. The consultation document is available in English at: <http://www.eett.gr/eng_pages/index2.htm>.

The main elements included in the content of US are:

- Connection to the fixed public phone network and access to fixed public telephone services. The requirement is limited to a single narrowband network connection, and does not extend to the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN). All TOs, both fixed and mobile, should be providing access to phone operator services as well as free access to emergency numbers.
- Phone directories, in printed and/or electronic form, and directory enquiry services. Both phone directories and directory enquiry services will be comprehensive, i.e. they are to cover the fixed, mobile and personal phone numbers of all subscribers, other than those who have expressed opposition to being listed. The US provider of phone directories and directory enquiry services has to sign a confidentiality agreement with the TOs in order to be able to receive information about their subscriber data. The US provider may chose to include e-mail addresses as well as personal homepage addresses, upon request on the part of subscribers. The US provider's phone directories are to be updated at least once a year. Blind and visually impaired persons can make up to 20 calls per month to the directory enquiry services, toll free. This measure is necessary, as this class of persons with special needs cannot make use of the printed phone directory. The phone directory that the US provider makes available in CD-ROM as well as the one on its website will also be made available in text only format, in order to facilitate access and use by the blind and visually impaired.

- Public payphones. The US provider has to ensure:
 - a) that it is possible to make emergency calls from public payphones, free of charge and without having to use coins or cards, and
 - b) access to the directory enquiry service.

It should be possible to use various means of payment such as coins, debit and credit cards, as well as prepaid cards. The US provider is required to meet the target of 0.7 payphones per 200 inhabitants by the year 2003, as well as to provide adequate payphone service to railway stations, ports, airports and other transport facility sites. The US provider has to ensure that 60% of the public payphones which it installs from now on are accessible to wheelchair users. EETT has to give its approval for the removal of public payphones from hospitals or sites used by persons with special needs.

- Services specifically for persons with special needs.
 - a) Persons with visual, hearing or motor impairment, as well as families of persons with mental or motor impairment are entitled to a EURO 16/month discount on data transfer services.
 - b) The provision of SMS access to emergency numbers. This measure is necessary for providing access to emergency numbers to speech impaired persons.
 - c) The provision of a discount on the phone bill of renal patients, equal to the value of one thousand minutes of local calls a month.
 - d) The provision of priority connection and fault repair services to persons with special needs, as well as to those who are vulnerable to loss of phone connection, as for example, the elderly, persons with heart disease, etc.
 - e) Blind and visually impaired persons can be informed about the balance of their phone bill by calling a short code, toll free.
 - f) The provision of itemised billing for blind and visually impaired persons.
 - g) It should be possible for a person with special needs to pay his phone bill without moving from his home.
 - h) Subscribers with debts to the US provider who happen to have special needs or be vulnerable to loss of phone connection, do not lose the capacity to receive incoming calls and call emergency numbers.

- Quality of service.

EETT has set the following quality of service standards:

1. Supply time for initial connection: 1 week, for 95% of applications.
2. Fault rate per 100 lines per year: 13.5
3. Unsuccessful call ratio: 2%
4. Fault repair rate by the next working day: 85%
5. Response time for operator services: 20 sec (mean)
6. Response time for directory services: 15 sec (mean)
7. Proportion of coin and card operated public payphones in working order: 93%
8. Complaints about billing accuracy: 0.2%

These targets may be revised over time. The US provider will be providing information to EETT about the quality of his services within three months of the end of each year.

- Affordability.

EETT has set an affordability rule according to which tariffs are geographically averaged throughout the country. Criteria of economic affordability will be set in the future. In case of disagreement about the billing of value added services, the subscriber will go on having access to basic telephony services, until the disagreement is resolved. Upon request, the US provider informs the subscriber every month about the charges he has incurred.