



ECC Recommendation (16)01

3rd party access to Number Portability Data (NP Data)

Approved 28 April 2016

INTRODUCTION

Number Portability (NP) has proven to be a key competition enabler since market liberalisation by allowing end-users to retain their numbers while switching from one service provider to another. NP obligations are enshrined in the European Regulatory Framework and national NP Central Reference Databases (NP CRDBs), where they are available, were originally established to facilitate providers of services and operators of networks, both fixed and mobile, to meet their respective obligations.

In recent years, evolving technology and service innovation has facilitated new business models for the provision of electronic communications services. NRAs in many CEPT countries have been approached by market actors who believe that they have legitimate reasons for accessing the NP Data. This type of 3rd party access may lead to greater cost efficiency through more efficient traffic routing.

ECC Report 238 defines 3rd party access as *“access to NP Data by entities other than those who have obligations to implement NP at the national level for the sole purposes of implementing more efficient routing and increasing tariff transparency”*.

The information contained in NP CRDBs, where they are available, may also be important for end-users who are price sensitive about the calls that they make. In the past, end-users were able to determine, by the leading digits of the number, the identity of the terminating network or service provider and the anticipated cost of making a call. Since the introduction of NP end-users may no longer be able to rely on the leading digits of the number to determine call costs thus lowering tariff transparency and increasing the possibility of unexpected call charges. However, given the gradual reduction of wholesale mobile termination rates and the sometimes marginal difference in retail charges between on-net and off-net calls, the extent of the problem of tariff transparency for end-users in most countries is decreasing.

In order to promote more efficient routing and preserve tariff transparency, this Recommendation provides a framework for authorities competent for number portability policy in CEPT countries to develop national policies to facilitate access to NP Data by 3rd Parties.

ECC RECOMMENDATION OF (16)01 ON 3RD PARTY ACCESS TO NUMBER PORTABILITY DATA (NP DATA)¹

“The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations,

considering

- a) that, for the purposes of this Recommendation, Number Portability Data (NP Data) is defined as numbers and their associated service provider identifiers as they are stored in and retrieved from the Number Portability Central Reference Database (NP CRDB) or Administrative Number Portability Database (NP DB (Adm)). These data could be provided in a format which requires further processing in order to render routing information;
- b) that, for the purposes of this Recommendation, 3rd party access is defined as access to NP Data by entities other than those who have obligations to implement number portability at the national level for the purposes of implementing more efficient routing, to facilitate complaints handling and/or to increase tariff transparency;
- c) that, since the introduction of number portability, entities can no longer rely on the information contained in the leading digits of the E.164 number for the efficient routing of electronic communication services;
- d) that, since the introduction of number portability, end-users can no longer rely on the information contained in the leading digits of the E.164 number to determine if calls are on-net, which can have a negative impact on tariff transparency;
- e) that not all stakeholders have access to NP Data;
- f) that in some cases (e.g. misuse of premium rate numbers or international numbers), end-users, network and service providers and others may need to know which operator serves a specific number in order to identify, for instance, also other entities in the supply chain, e.g. the content provider;
- g) the analysis and conclusions of ECC Report 238 on 3rd party access to Number Portability Data (NP Data);
- h) that access to NP Data by NRAs, operators of emergency services or other relevant authorities for regulatory or legal purposes is outside the scope of this Recommendation;

recommends

1. that access to national NP Data should be provided to 3rd parties for the purposes of implementing more efficient routing, to facilitate complaints handling and/or to increase tariff transparency;
2. that the authorities competent for number portability policy in CEPT countries ensure that:
 - a. 3rd party access to NP Data is provided for the purposes of implementing more efficient routing based on a contract with the entity, or one of the entities, responsible for the administration of the national NP Data. If fees are imposed for 3rd party access to NP Data, the fee should be based on a cost recovery model.
 - b. information on the provider serving a specific number is made available free of charge to end-users for the purposes of tariff transparency and complaints handling with appropriate mechanisms to limit access to single number search queries.
3. that terms and conditions of access should specify that NP Data is not used by 3rd parties for sales, marketing, promotional or other commercial activities or resold to any other entity.

¹ The concept of this recommendation could also apply to distributed NP architectures where appropriate.