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Change in Definition of Active Mobile Users, the experience of APEK, Slovenija

APEK is a Post and Electronic Communications Agency of the Republic of Slovenia. As an NRA works on a market regulation for telecommunications and for that issue collects data from operators for market analysis needed.

APEK started with data gathering in 2004 for the past period (2002- 2004). In that first analysis the problem with operators perception of mobile users occurred, when they presented sold SIM cards in different manners. Most common manner was that the number of active mobile users, no matter prepaid or post paid, was the number of SIM cards ever sold. The number of active mobile subscribers was much above the reality.

The changing methodology procedure was developed through gathering descriptions of active mobile subscribers counting from operators presenting their methodology, opinion on how it should be, what became wider debate interested public.

APEK gave the proposition of new methodology and On June 2005 after public consideration the conclusion was the definition as follows:

- Mobile User is every resident or corporation, included in subscribers or SIM register of the operator, and is:
 - Subscriber of mobile network, which means every resident or corporation with the contract with an operator.
 - Pre-paid user of mobile network, that is every resident or corporation which uses pre paid SIM card from the operator.
- Active Mobile User is every user of mobile network (subscriber or pre-paid) with the possibility of use of services and is:
 - Active subscriber: each user - subscriber of mobile network, who paid the subscription fee at least once in the last 90 days or did use any service in mobile network
 - Active user – pre-paid: each user- prepaid of mobile network, which used at least one payable service in last 90 days with his SIM card.

We also meet several issues of limitations in the availability of data. The problem was that operators were unwilling of giving punctual and exact data. There are two possible arguments for that behavior, the first is that operators did not recognize the need for data gathering and the second they did not recognize the regulator as an authority.

For better screening of telecommunications market development APEK with general act for collecting, use and giving data established quarterly data collecting. Because of starting this year, many changes in questionnaires and definitions are needed and the problem is that each change requests public discussion and so the minimum time for that is at least one month and a half.

Next limitation in data availability is that we are collecting data also for other state bodies, like National Statistics office and also others, so we need to adjust definitions to their needs and the amount of data not to present unreasonable burden.

The most important issue in the change of definition was in the comparability of data between operators. There are some problems in the timeline observation, because there is a significant difference between first and the second half of 2005. On the other hand timeline comparability gives us possibility of logical control and validation of data. Since quarterly collecting, the data is more precise and also operators mostly already adjusted their system to ours.

Comparability by the contents has been done by adjustments regarding questionnaires from the European Commission bodies, by revising annual reports from other NRA's, on the basis of elementary reports and international benchmarking. Aimed to achieve proper balance between all, there are many issues to deal with.

At data collection we assure the confidentiality with Legal act for Telecommunications and also with above mentioned General Act for collection, use and giving data. That results in giving and publishing only aggregates and percents, but no absolute numbers, which operators' perceive as confidential.

From this experience, we learned some lessons; all of them can also be projected to other problems we meet in dealing with operators.

First of all, NRA must show the assurance to become trustful and respectful organization in which operators and investors can trust and depend on its output. To gain the respect, the authoritative way is not proper, because dealing with soft skills needs also a lot of conversation with people working with operators to make them understand the system of data collection.

Definitions are the result of above described comparisons and technical support, and after the time operators tailored definitions of NRA to their own needs, we need to rearrange large number of them. In this case, we keep the influence of incumbent as low as possible, holding neutral position also to alternative operators.

Regarding all it is very important to make operator understand, why we need data, why their punctuality and preciseness is important and give them proper feedback.

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