GSR13 Consultation

Contribution from the Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania (RRT)

The communications sector is currently undergoing rapid changes with advance of new technologies, online services and reliance on the internet. Today we see a totally different picture of communications markets, business models and usage habits than a decade ago. If we take a look at what is most important behind all these changes, and that is people, we have a new generation of communications users. This generation can be characterised as an impatient generation, which needs to reap all the benefits from the technology right here and right now. A demand for watching a live sports event on a mobile device has become a reality. Such demand for online, on-the-move-services translates into the need for high capacity networks and is reflected in the development of new technologies, applications, mobile and broadband networks. Amount of data flow on the networks constantly increases, therefore traditional networks are being transformed into new-generation networks and convergence of technologies, services and networks has become imminent. Recently, the importance of new market players, content and application providers has grown significantly in the communications landscape. The regulator needs to take into account these changes. In particular, in our view, the regulator should draw attention to:

• fostering broadband development,

• mobile networks and access to networks,

• network security, trust in cyberspace, and trust services for electronic transactions,

• network neutrality.

In a world context, Lithuania is one of the leading countries in terms of new-generation network deployment. According to the data of IDATE provided for FTTH Council Europe, in 2012, Lithuania ranked the first in Europe in terms of fibre penetration. As regards broadband network development, our task as a regulator is to foster network roll-out, by ensuring equal non-discriminatory conditions for market players. The dominating providers of broadband networks are obliged to provide access to their networks and essential facilities on non-discriminatory terms. Also, the rules enabling access to the dominant market players' infrastructure, including network and facility sharing are the regulator's responsibility to ensure a fair play on the market.

In fostering broadband roll-out, soft measures encouraging network and facility sharing, such as cross-sector infrastructure mapping, enabling coordination of civil works are gaining importance. In Lithuania, RRT is in a process of developing a web-page allowing access to infrastructure maps.

In an attempt to enable the user to make a well-informed choice, and to promote transparency, RRT has developed measures allowing the users to assess the quality of internet access services provided to them, as well as to compare the measurement results of different wireless internet access service providers.

Mobile and wireless access and networks play an important role in today's connected environment. In Lithuania, the second most popular way to access internet is by mobile communication (26,7 per cent of internet subsribers in 2012), and the number of subscribers using mobile and wireless access is constantly growing. Mobile broadband access is extended by releasing the digital dividend spectrum, and effective spectrum use should be given due attention.

For end-users it is very important to feel trust in cyberspace. With a rapid network development and growth in the number of virtual media users all over the world, the network and information security problem is increasing on various levels. Reports about computer viruses, data theft, electronic network break-ins, unsolicited electronic mail, harmful content in public networks raise concerns among the users, service providers and state institutions. RRT is an active player in the network and information security. CERT-LT has been established within RRT, which is the Lithuanian national Computer Emergency Response Team with the task to promote security in the information society by preventing, observing, and solving information security incidents and disseminating information on threats to information security. CERT-LT also gives a lot of attention to informing the users about the potential threats in online environment and the ways to avoid them. The relevant information is provided on a special web-page.

RRT is an electronic signature supervision body and is responsible for quality of providing qualified electronic signature services. Electronic signature is a very important solution to enable secure and seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens and public authorities.

Generally regulators are committed to the open Internet and have to respond swiftly and effectively to future net neutrality related developments to ensure low barriers to entry and fertile ground for innovation, in particular the development of new content and applications. It is our task (under the EU Regulatory Framework) to promote end-users' freedom to access for the distribution of content and running applications of their choice online, to promote competition (including in the delivery of content), and to promote innovation. Therefore, consumers should have the ability to get the internet service they desire. Network neutrality and trust in cyberspace balance is a challenge for the regulator, and this topic must be discussed. Analysing the effects of differentiation practices, such as blocking or prioritisation of traffic, on competition and innovation is very important in order to ensure quality of service of internet to the user (according to the quality that was promised by the contract). As a regulator, we should continue to monitor the quality of internet access service offers (including traffic management practices and the availability of unrestricted offers), as well as market trends (including complaints from Internet users) and the evolution of specialised services.