

Digital Single Market

Users' rights

Consumers need to know their rights and be protected from the unfair practices of the companies providing these services. Therefore, the EU has a specific consumer protection policy in telecoms' services which includes the right of access to services and their fair pricing as well as the protection and privacy of personal information.

Good competition in the telecoms sector does not necessarily guarantee the people's needs and protect their rights. Safeguards are, therefore, necessary to ensure consumer privacy and the citizens' access to all essential telecoms' services, independently of where they are, or, of their social or economic position.

The development of the internal market in goods and services has led the EU to adopt legislation to protect consumers and this is fully applicable to telecoms' services. In particular, specific rules on consumer protection are included in the [Roaming Regulation](#) [1], the [Misleading Advertising Directive](#) [2], the [Distance Selling Directive](#) [3], the [Unfair Commercial Practices Directive](#) [4] and the Regulation on [co-operation in consumer protection](#) [5].

The EU telecoms rules include these parts on consumers:

- To ensure reasonable quality of service at affordable prices, regardless of geographical location: it includes the access to the emergency telephone call, free of charge, such as the single European emergency number 112 and also to enable people with disabilities or specific needs to access telecoms' services;
- To receive a written contract including specific details, in particular on tariffs and costs, with the possibility to break the contract if the supplier changes the terms. In addition, the maximum initial duration of a contract shall be no longer than 24 months. Operators must also offer consumers the 12 months contract;
- To give information on what services consumers subscribe to and, in particular, what they can do with those communications services. Consumer contracts must specify the minimum service quality levels, as well as on compensation and refunds if these levels are not met;
- High standards of data protection for personal data stored or transmitted over the telecommunication network;
- To protect user identity, if required;
- To change telecom operator without changing phone number in one day;
- Fair [roaming](#) [6] prices in Europe.

In this section, you will find more information on the principles and scope of [Universal Service](#) [7], the

[Code of EU Online Rights](#) [8] and [Number Portability](#) [9].

Consumer rights within the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications are based on three principal directives and some additional decisions and regulations (such as the [Roaming Regulation](#) [1])

- [Framework Directive](#) [10] (unofficially consolidated version)
- Directive is based on these legal texts:
 - [Framework Directive 2002/21/EC](#) [11]
 - [Better Regulation Directive 2009/140/EC](#) [12]
 - [Regulation 544/2009](#) [13]
- [Universal Service Directive](#) [14] (unofficially consolidated version)
- Directive is based on these legal texts:
 - [Universal Service Directive 2002/22/EC](#) [15]
 - [Citizens' Rights Directive 2009/136/EC](#) [16]
- [Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications](#) [17] (unofficially consolidated version)
- Directive is based on these legal texts:
 - [Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications 2002/58/EC](#) [18]
 - [Amending Directive 2006/24/EC](#) [19]
 - [Citizens' Rights Directive 2009/136/EC](#) [16]
- [National Regulatory Authorities](#) [20]

Published:

Thursday, 20 December, 2012

Last update:

Tuesday, 9 May, 2017

Team responsible

[DG CONNECT](#) [21]

Share this page

Source URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/users-rights>

Links

- [1] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32007R0717:EN:NOT>
- [2] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31984L0450:EN:NOT>
- [3] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31997L0007:EN:NOT>
- [4] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32005L0029:EN:NOT>
- [5] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004R2006:EN:NOT>
- [6] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/telecoms-internet/roaming>
- [7] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/universal-service>
- [8] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/code-eu-online-rights>
- [9] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/number-portability>
- [10] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/140framework_5.pdf
- [11] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0021:en:NOT>
- [12] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009L0140:en:NOT>
- [13] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009R0544:en:NOT>
- [14] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/Directive%202002%2022%20EC_0.pdf
- [15] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0022:en:NOT>
- [16] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32009L0136:en:NOT>
- [17] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/24eprivacy_2.pdf
- [18] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002L0058:en:NOT>
- [19] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006L0024:en:NOT>
- [20] <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/national-regulatory-authorities>

[21] https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/communications-networks-content-and-technology_en