

EC to move on lowering phone roam rates

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The European Commission plans to announce legislative steps to lower the roaming charges wireless phones users pay for international calls.

The plan that will be outlined in Paris Wednesday by Telecom Commissioner Viviane Reding tackles a nagging problem with hefty charges levied on callers who travel frequently among European nations.

The Financial Times said Monday that Reding's plan would mandate that international roaming charges be in line with cheaper domestic roaming rates, a strategy the newspaper predicted could run afoul of business interests and conservative lawmakers who prefer to let the free market set rates.

Consumer groups, however, contend that high roaming charges are unfair to business travelers who frequently cross European borders as part of their job.

"We cannot accept that citizens are punished on mobile phone bills just because they cross a border," an unidentified European Union official told the Times. "We are convinced that this move will drive down prices."

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