

Phone calls cost eight times more in some EU states

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File picture of Neelie Kroes talking on a mobile phone in Wassenaarseslag, Netherlands. The cost of making mobile phone calls remains a national lottery—up to eight times higher in the most expensive EU countries compared to the cheapest, European Commissioner Kroes said on Tuesday.

The cost of making mobile phone calls remains a national lottery—up to eight times higher in the most expensive EU countries compared to the cheapest, the European Commission said Tuesday.

The European Union executive, credited with bringing down high roaming rates over recent years, said the differences in prices were impossible to justify and it would bring forward fresh legislation in September.

EU data compiled for Digital Agenda Commissioner Neelie Kroes showed that the average cost per minute for national mobile calls in 2011 varied from 1.9 euro cents (2.5 US cents) in Lithuania, to 14.7 euro cents in The Netherlands.

Among the biggest national markets, the difference is also flagrant, the Commission figures showed.

It costs just 6.9 euro cents to place a national mobile call in Italy and 8.8 euro cents in the EU's biggest country, Germany.

That's broadly in line with the 9.7 euro cents across Britain—while France charges, on average, 12.7 euro cents and Spain 13.3 euro cents.

According to Kroes' office, such price differentials do not show up in other product or service markets.

A litre of milk, for instance, is usually under one euro no matter where it is bought in the EU—while the price of an iPad hardly varies at all.

"As these numbers clearly show, the 28 national telecoms markets in Europe today are not benefiting consumers like a single market" should, Kroes said.

She said a "truly connected continent" would require rapid action to turn the EU's fabled single market of half a billion consumers—the world's biggest—into a reality for individuals and households.

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