

EU defends 'free roaming' pledge despite 90-day limit

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The EU insisted Wednesday it had not scrapped its popular pledge to end roaming charges for mobile phone users despite unveiling a proposal to limit the measure to 90 days.

"Let me be very clear, we have put an end to roaming," European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas told a news briefing. "You will not have to pay as of June 2017."

The commission, the EU's executive arm, on Monday released its guidelines on how to implement a decision last year by Brussels and EU member states to "end roaming" in the 28-nation bloc.

The EU agreed to end [roaming fees](#), but after intense lobbying by mobile phone companies, also accepted to curb the ability of Europeans to seek out [mobile phone](#) contracts in cheaper countries for use at home.

"Roaming means travelling, means moving around the European Union, going on holiday. The Europeans who travel do so on an average of 12 days per year," Schinas said.

"The commission with our guidelines have gone much further by abolishing roaming charges for at least 90 days per year," he said.

It proposed capping fees above this level at 4 euro cents a minute for calls, 1 cent for an SMS and 0.85 cents per MB of internet data.

The end of [roaming charges](#) was a key element of the EU's effort to create a far more unified market in Europe, especially for digital and communication services.

"Roaming should be free all year-round, not just for 90 days. I urge the EU commission to revise its proposal," the influential liberal MEP Guy Verhofstadt said in a tweet.

The commission's proposal must now be debated and approved by regulators from the EU's member countries before adoption set for December 15.

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