

EU to curb phone costs, set up emergency alert system

November 14 2018, by Marie Julien



The price limits follow the EU move last year to end roaming charges for Europeans using mobile phones within the bloc—a public relations coup

The European Parliament voted Wednesday to limit prices for phone calls and text messages between EU countries and to set up an alert

system during natural disasters or terror attacks.

Under the new law, which still needs formal approval from member countries, telecom firms will be barred from charging more than 19 eurocents per minute for calls and six cents per text message.

Adopted by 584 votes to 42, the price ceilings are set to take effect on May 15, 2019, after the member states informally agreed to it back in June.

"There will be no more excessive fees on intra-EU calls and text messages," said Lambert van Nistelrooij, a Dutch member of parliament from the centre-right EPP group.

He said the price limits complement the EU move last year to end roaming charges for Europeans using mobile phones within the bloc—a public relations coup.

It meant Europeans calling, texting or using the internet when travelling in other EU nations will be charged the same as they are at home.

The measure adopted Wednesday also calls for member countries to introduce within 42 months an emergency system to send alerts by [text message](#) or mobile app to people near a natural disaster or terror attack.

"If there is an emergency situation, a warning message with instructions will be sent to all mobile phones in the geographic area of the emergency situation," van Nistelrooij said in a statement.

He said MEPs persuaded member states to introduce the system, which will contribute to saving lives in floods, forest fires and [terror attacks](#).

A spokesman for van Nistelrooij said the legislation is partly modelled

on the Dutch example NL-Alert.

Under the system introduced in 2012, authorities can alert [mobile phone](#) users in the area of an [emergency](#) via nearby cell towers.

The spokesman said Romania and Lithuania have implemented a similar system, but many other countries rely on television or radio to disseminate alerts.

The European Emergency Number Association, a non-government organisation based in Brussels, hailed the vote.

"Take any of the large emergencies in Europe and you will realise that in most cases modern public warning was not in place," EENA's Benoit Vivier said.

"We have the means and the technology but we have largely failed to put them to good use. The new legislation ensures that from now on we do."

The legislation also paved the way for investments in next generation mobile networks (5G) and very fast internet.

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