



Members of European Parliament have asked the European Commission to take action regarding toll-free 0800 numbers, which could be unreachable when calling from another country.

MEPs debated an [oral question](#) posed to Mariya Gabriel, European commissioner for the Digital Economy, during the Parliament plenary meeting on 28 November 2019 in Strasbourg, France.

Andreas Schwab (EPP, Germany) mentioned the case of a German citizen whose mother was hospitalised in Strasbourg, just across the border. It turned out not to be possible to reach the hospital for information through its toll-free 0800 number.

According to Mr Schwab, this situation presented a cross-border impediment to the single market, which ought to be addressed like the retail international mobile roaming surcharges and intra-EU retails calls before.

Others, like Angel Dzhambazki (ECR, Bulgaria) called for a “*reasonable solution*”, emphasising that companies and institutions paying for incoming 0800 calls could be subject to high costs.

EECC contains tools?

Mariya Gabriel, European Commission for the Digital Economy, acknowledged the importance of having access to 0800 toll-free numbers. She promised that the European Commission would look into the matter “*in some detail*”.

Ms Gabriel also highlighted that under the current EU legislation, it is “*not impossible*” for called parties to block incoming calls when they bear the costs of a call, as is the case with toll-free 0800 numbers. Especially smaller organisations might want to protect themselves against high costs or fraud, said Ms Gabriel.

Article 28 of the Universal Service Directive, which was carried over into article 97 of the European Electronic Communications Code ([EECC, Tracker](#)) end users should be able, “*where economically feasible*” to access and use non-geographic numbers and the services they support within the EU.

However, called parties are allowed to limit access “*for commercial reasons*”.

Ms Gabriel also mentioned the single EU-level fixed and mobile voice terminations rates, which should enter into force by end 2020 (art. 75 EECC). She expected the caps to result in lower termination rates.

Along with transit costs, wholesale termination makes up a significant part of the costs for paying called parties. Ms Gabriel expected that lower wholesale termination rates would help to diminish the costs for 0800 toll-free numbers over time, contributing to their cross-border accessibility.