

Parliament votes to end roaming fees and safeguard net neutrality

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End roaming fees, safeguard net neutrality and extend broadband – these were the goals of the ALDE group for the latest EU roaming package. With today's Parliamentary vote this goal has been fully achieved, after the most controversial part on net neutrality has equally been adopted in the liberal direction.

From 15 December 2015 telecom providers in the EU will no longer be allowed to charge extra roaming costs to their customers. This is the main outcome of the telecom package which has been adopted today in a decisive vote by the European Parliament. This means that customers will pay - wherever they are in the EU - the same price for data, sms, mms and voice calls as they would pay at home.

"A year ago I went to Neelie Kroes and we agreed to end roaming fees in Europe. At that time there was no majority for this proposal in the Parliament. But, now, thanks to Neelie Kroes and today's vote in the European Parliament, it is likely that we can get rid of roaming charges in the EU by the end of next year", said ALDE rapporteur Jens ROHDE (Venstre, Denmark) after the vote.

Marietje SCHAAKE (D66, Netherlands), the ALDE expert on net neutrality, said: "It is important that blocking and throttling will now be illegal. Liberals have tabled amendments to safeguard net neutrality and to define specialised services. We don't want to block them, we just need good definitions. And by insuring clear rules of the road for the EU's digital single market and the open internet, competition, innovation and net users will benefit."

As a third major point a comprehensive spectrum package shall ensure that Europeans get more 4G mobile access and Wi-Fi. Mobile operators will be able to develop more efficient and cross-border investment plans.

ALDE president Guy VERHOFSTADT sums up: "This day marks an important step for mobile and internet users in Europe. Liberals have negotiated hard to push roaming premiums out of the market and to reshape Europe's telecoms landscape in a more competitive and more consumer-friendly way. We should try to seal the agreement with the Council before the European elections."