



Electronic Communications Committee (ECC)
within the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT)

ECC RECOMMENDATION (08)03

SERVICES USING HARMONISED EUROPEAN SHORT CODES IN THE NATIONAL NUMBERING RANGE BEGINNING WITH '116'

Recommendation by the Working Group Numbering, Naming and Addressing (WG NNA)

INTRODUCTION

Following the adoption of the ECC/REC/(04)07 "Designation of <116> numbering range for possible future Europe wide harmonized short-numbers (28th December 2004), the European Commission has adopted a Decision on reserving the national numbering range beginning with '116' for harmonised short codes to access services of social value. The code 116000 has already been reserved for Hotlines for missing children and reservations for other services are being decided. CEPT has supported the initiative of the European Commission by adopting ECC/DEC/(07)03 on Reserving the National Numbering Range Beginning with '116' for Harmonised Numbers for Harmonised Services of Social Value on 6 July 2007.

The objective of these services is that citizens of the CEPT countries, including travellers and disabled users, should be able to reach certain services that have a social value by using the same recognisable numbers in all CEPT countries. At present there is a patchwork of numbering and dialling schemes in the CEPT countries and no common numbering scheme is in operation to reserve the same telephone numbers for such services in the CEPT countries. Harmonisation is needed to allow these services provided in different CEPT countries to be accessed by end-users using the same number.

The introduction to the Commission Decision says that "In order to reflect the social function of the services in question, the harmonized numbers should be freephone numbers, without this meaning that operators would be obliged to carry calls to 116 numbers at their own expense. The freephone nature of the numbers is therefore an essential component of the harmonisation being carried out."

Where the call is freephone, this means that the organisations who will receive the calls will have to pay for them and normally the cost of receiving a freephone call is significantly higher than the tariff for calling a geographic number. It may be possible for organisations whose work is of a charitable nature to find sponsors to pay for the calls and the purpose of this recommendation is to confirm that sponsorship is permissible and desirable as a solution to the funding problem. The only constraint is that advertising and marketing may not take place during the call in accordance with Article 4e): "The following activities are excluded during a call: advertisement, entertainment, marketing and selling, using the call for the future selling of commercial services." ECC/DEC/(07)03 also provides that "Advertising or marketing of the service in general is not precluded, but this should not take the form of advertising during the call e.g. by way of voice announcements".

It is however permissible for sponsors to be identified and to advertise on advertisements and notices about the services in question.

In practice it is likely that many calls to these numbers will be made from mobiles, for either of the following reasons:

- The callers are not near to a fixed phone that they can use;
- The callers prefer to use a mobile phone for privacy reasons so that they can make the call where they will not be overheard.

Furthermore, many calls will be made by people who are travelling in a foreign country. In some countries calls to freephone numbers are not free from mobile phones and it is unclear exactly what the mobile operators will charge in

these circumstances, especially in the case where the caller is roaming. It is desirable that this situation is minimised to ensure that callers do not have problems in reaching these essential services when away from home and that calls are free to the caller wherever possible. Callers may expect the calls to be free from mobiles because they are free in their own country and therefore it is important that there is a tariff warning at the start of the call in circumstances where call charges will apply. This is needed not only to advise the caller of the charge but in the case of callers with pre-pay account to warn them that they may have limited time to make their call if their credit is low. The tariff warning will provide valuable protection against callers inadvertently running up high bills on long calls where they may be encouraged to keep talking, eg calls of a counselling nature.

“The Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations,

considering

- a) that in many European countries harmonised short codes will be introduced in the near future to access services of social value using the number range 116;
- b) that where the calls are provided on a freephone basis the organisation that receives the calls will have to pay for them and that some organisations may be charities with limited budgets;
- c) that the organisation(s) providing a social service under a HESC number may approach commercial organisations to assist objectives in these services in helping paying costs associated with receiving the calls, in effect sponsoring the organisation concerned;
- d) that many calls to these services will be made from mobile phones and a significant proportion will be made when the caller is roaming;
- e) that in some countries calls to “freephone numbers” from mobiles are not free but are charged, and that callers may expect the calls to be free because calls to the same services are free in their own country;
- f) that in consequence callers may run up large bills or may exhaust pre-pay credit before they expect to and that this problem may affect the achievement of the objectives for which the services were created and give these services a bad reputation with the public;
- g) that the amended ECC/DEC/(07)03 of 26 February 2008 on reserving the national numbering range beginning with 116 for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value extends the scope of this work to include all the CEPT countries and not just the EU countries;
- h) that in this recommendation a tariff announcement may be an indication of a tariff or an indication that a call is being charged;

recommends

- 1) that CEPT countries should explain to organizations that provide harmonized services of social value that they may use sponsorship to fund the cost of their calls and that the sponsors may be identified in literature and advertisements but not in the course of the calls;
- 2) that CEPT countries should take all practicable measures to make calls to 116 numbers free to the caller;
- 3) that where it is not practicable for calls to be free to the caller a tariff announcement should be made at the start of the call and this announcement should be free of charge, where technically feasible.”

Note:

Please check the Office web site (<http://www.ero.dk>) for the up to date position on the implementation of this and other ECC Recommendations