



# ECC Recommendation (12)02

Number Portability – Best Practices

Approved 11 May 2012

## INTRODUCTION

Number portability (NP) plays an important role in a competitive telecommunications market. The possibility for a subscriber to continue using a specific telephone number when changing operators is a key facilitator of subscriber choice and effective competition. It reduces barriers to switching and makes it easier for new entrants to challenge existing market positions.

Today most European countries have implemented number portability. The wide-spread implementation of number portability emphasises the need to develop guidelines on number portability, and to develop 'best practice' recommendations in this area. These best practice recommendations should be beneficial to those countries which have not yet implemented number portability and are considering doing so in the future and to those countries which have implemented number portability and are planning to improve their current practices.

The EU/EEA obligation on operators to port a telephone number in the shortest time possible sets new standards for the subscriber right and possibilities regarding number portability, and imposes obligations on the operators, who henceforth will face technical and administrative challenges in complying with these requirements.

Most European countries offer the subscriber the ability to port his number even during an on-going contract period, including minimum contract period. Porting of the number may then legally terminate the contract, but this is not necessarily the case. Both cases in fact are a 'decoupling' of a right to port and the contractual obligations between the subscriber and the donor operator, and compensation from the subscriber to the donor operator may be a requirement. This increases competition and flexibility to subscribers. In a minority of European countries where it is not possible to port a number during an on-going contract period, there is a potential lock-in effect.

## ECC RECOMMENDATION OF 12(02) ON NUMBER PORTABILITY – BEST PRACTICES

“The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations,

### *considering*

- a) that number portability (NP) is a right for the subscriber and it cannot be refused by the donor operator;
- b) that NP is a key facilitator of subscriber choice and effective competition in a competitive telecommunications environment;
- c) that it is important to the subscriber that NP is fast, easy, reliable and inexpensive;
- d) that it is essential to have access to NP without being hindered unnecessarily by legal, technical or practical obstacles;
- e) that it is important to the subscriber that the loss of service during the process of porting, i.e. the time where the subscriber is not reachable or cannot place calls identified by the ported number, is as short as possible;
- f) that NP regulations and procedures can be subject to national variation;
- g) that a two-step donor operator led porting process has a risk of being stalled by the donor operator;
- h) that in many European countries the right to port is decoupled from any obligations between the subscriber and the donor operator, including minimum contract period, and that the experience with this is positive;
- i) that unsolicited porting seldom occurs in most countries and that this could be because there is a high risk of detection, low economic advantage, high marketing risk and because the porting scheme is based upon and dependent upon trust between market parties; and
- j) that porting is increasingly associated with bundled services and therefore the subscriber may need to switch a set of services in the same time frame;

### *recommends*

- 1) that NP process should be recipient operator led and be a ‘one stop shop’;
- 2) that subscribers should be able to port during on-going contract periods;
- 3) that the activation of porting should be regarded as an obligation for the donor operator to terminate delivering the service(s) corresponding to the ported number;
- 4) that operators should meet all reasonable requests to port a number on a specific date as requested by the subscriber;
- 5) that the NP process should be as short and efficient as possible:
  - i. Loss of service shall be as short as possible. The National Regulatory Authorities (NRA) should define the maximum time for loss of service which should be significantly shorter than one working day. This implies that donor operator disconnection, recipient operator activation and all other originating operators’ routing tables shall be coordinated within this certain time frame;
  - ii. The validation phase in the portability process (e.g. subscriber data verification by the donor operator) shall be as short and efficient as possible based on clear and stable parameters (e.g. by using porting codes or other forms of quick and reliable subscriber identification processes) and the validation should be automated as much as possible;
  - iii. Portability timescales should be reviewed regularly and, if possible, reduced;
  - iv. Reasons for rejecting a porting request should be clearly identified in NP rules (e.g. regulations or industry standards) and should fulfil the following main purposes:
    - a. to avoid invalid rejection by the donor operator or unsolicited porting, and
    - b. to guarantee the subscriber’s will;

- 6) that disruption of the switching process by the donor operator during the validation phase, or during the portability process, should be prevented, unless in case of slamming;
- 7) that the recipient operator should authenticate the porting request in an efficient manner, e.g. by collecting a written identification and/or authorisation (Short Message Service [SMS], e-mail or request on secured customer interface could be sufficient) from the subscriber before the porting is initiated. The donor operator may request the documentation of the authorisation only after he has accepted the porting, so that the donor operator would not be able to stall the process. This could be for a limited volume in case of random testing or a suspicious porting request;
- 8) that acceptance of a porting request by parties other than the donor operator, e.g. by the NRA or Central Reference Database (CRDB) entity, could be implemented as a last measure for the exceptional cases when the donor operator cannot answer the porting request;
- 9) that the NRA should aim to synchronise processes (e.g. fixed, mobile and/or local loop unbundling [LLU]) in order to facilitate the switching of bundled services (e.g. in case of a triple play) where number portability is included;
- 10) that the NRA should promote that multiple play offers or services using multiple numbers (e.g. multiple subscriber numbers [MSN] or direct dial-in [DDI]) should not prevent porting of all or some of the numbers assigned to the subscriber;
- 11) that the NRA should examine possibilities for more efficient NP processes together with relevant stake holders; and
- 12) that the technical NP implementation should be based on direct routing principles (e.g. All Call Query [ACQ] or equivalent routing method)."