



VON Coalition Europe

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Leading Providers of Voice Solutions over the Internet Protest Against Blocking or Degrading of VoIP applications over mobile networks, after T-Mobile announcement

BRUSSELS - The VON Coalition Europe urges the European decision-makers to adopt principles to allow consumers to access the services, applications and content of their choice on any public network, regardless of the provider that offers them. Blocking of voice applications on mobile devices, such as the announcement of T-Mobile to block Skype on iPhones in Germany, is highly detrimental for consumer welfare in Europe.

"Consumers in Europe and across the world have been enjoying the benefits of Voice on the Net applications as an expected capability of their data service", said Caroline De Cock, Executive Director of the VON Coalition Europe. "This can only continue if these applications are not blocked or degraded by the network operators, and if the choice of application, service or content they wish to access is left to users instead of network providers. The European institutions have a unique opportunity to solve this problem in a timely manner by enshrining a set of principles in the Electronic communications framework to prohibit such behaviour, and going beyond mere statements on informing consumers of limitations"

T-Mobile's stance in Germany clearly illustrates that the fact that consumers are clearly informed of the limitations imposed by their network operator and that they can claim these limitations are due to traffic management policies are insufficient safeguards to the right to choice of end users, especially in mobile markets where the choice of providers is often limited.

VON strongly believes that, with the right public policies, Internet-enabled voice communications, such as VoIP, can increase competition, provide a platform for innovation, drive broadband deployment, enable economic growth and drive prices down.

The VON Coalition Europe therefore urges the European decision-makers to send a clear signal and adopt principles in their Review of the Electronic communications package that state, without any loopholes or loosely defined exceptions, that consumers should be able to access the services, applications and content of their choice on any public network, regardless of the provider that offers them.

BACKGROUND:

On Tuesday, the European Parliament voted on part of the Telecoms Package, one of the cornerstones in the Regulation of the Electronic Communications Sector. Many provisions adopted by the Committee leading on Universal service open the door to the blocking or degrading of content, services or applications by access operators for motives that extend beyond efficient traffic management. At the same time, T-Mobile, the largest German mobile network operator, has announced that it would block Skype on iPhones in Germany for reason of “efficient management” of its network, reasons that do not seem to affect the capacity of many other mobile networks to run Skype over their network! A typical Skype call normally uses 8 to 20 kbit/s, which can be compared to the download of an average web page and is considered as a low-bandwidth application.

ABOUT the VON Coalition Europe

The Voice on the Net (VON) Coalition Europe was launched in December 2007 by seven leading Internet communications and technology companies, on the cutting edge – iBasis, Intel, Google, Microsoft, Rebtel, Skype and Voxbone – to create an authoritative voice for the Internet-enabled communications industry.

The VON Coalition Europe notably focuses on educating and informing policymakers in the European Union in order to promote responsible government policies that enable innovation and the many benefits that Internet voice innovations can deliver.

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