

News release

3 Group shares EU concern over wholesale international roaming charges

Wholesale International roaming charges should not exceed €0.25 per minute

London 30 May 2006

3 Group, the global leader in 3G mobile telephony, today announced its support for the approach proposed by the European Regulators Group ('ERG') for the regulation of wholesale international roaming charges within the EU.

The 3 Group agrees with EU Commissioner Reding that international roaming prices for customers are too high. The 3 Group believes retail rates for international roaming are high as the direct result of the unjustifiably high level of wholesale international roaming rates. The larger, incumbent operators continue to charge excessive wholesale international roaming rates, which leads to higher charges for customers when they travel abroad.

The 3 Group has championed a fairer call rate for consumers throughout Europe since launching the '3' brand in 2003. Since mid-2005 the 3 Group in Europe has been offering an international wholesale roaming charge of €0.25 per minute (about 17p) to European network operators on a reciprocal basis. In every case except two this reciprocal offer has been rejected. In light of this, recent announcements by some other operators, offering limited reductions in wholesale rates, are still far off the mark.

Christian Salbaing, Managing Director Europe Telecommunications at 3 Group, commented: "3 customers can roam to over 150 countries around the world, they can roam to both 3G and the older GSM networks, but when our customers roam internationally outside of the 3 Group footprint, we have to base our retail prices on the unjustifiably high wholesale rates charged by the majority of our roaming partners. We believe the industry should address consumer and EU concerns by dramatically lowering wholesale prices, which will lead to fair retail price competition and much lower retail prices for customers. We also believe the same should apply to data services."

While 3 would prefer a more competitive wholesale roaming market without the need for regulation, given the insufficient movement on wholesale prices, 3 agrees with the recent report from the ERG that the first step towards a more competitive market should be the regulation of wholesale prices. 3 believes that a cap on wholesale prices at €0.25 per minute would quickly translate into lower retail prices for consumers.

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About 3 Group

A division of Hutchison Whampoa, the 3 Group together with Hutchison Telecommunications International, is the leading global player in the 3G arena, holding licences in 10 markets with total population coverage of approximately 175 million.

In less than three years, the 3 Group has built an entirely new broadband mobile network, achieving probably the fastest rollout of a radio network in the entire telecom industry. The 3 Group now has close to 12 million 3G customers worldwide, as at the end of March 2006.

Marketed globally under the 3 brand, the group is also the first operator in the world to provide dual-mode 3G services.

To date, commercial 3G services has been launched in Italy, the UK, Australia, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Hong Kong, Israel and the Republic of Ireland. For more information about 3, please visit www.three.com

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