

Thierry Breton
European Commissioner for Internal Market
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
Brussels
Belgium

Wednesday 20 July 2022

Lack of Voice over LTE (VoLTE) interoperability prevents people from calling emergency services

Dear Commissioner Thierry Breton,

The benefits of new generations of mobile networks have already been extensively demonstrated and the European Emergency Number Association (EENA) supports a soft transition to IP-based communications.

However, we would like to draw your attention to an issue which may prevent people from making voice calls, including calls to emergency services, once 2G and 3G networks are phased out. This problem is currently being experienced by some European citizens roaming on mobile networks in the US and it is now attracting some [media attention](#). The pace of 2G/3G phaseout is slower in Europe which means that the issue is not as evident here yet.

In August 2021, telecoms expert, Rudolf Van Der Berg, [had already warned](#) that current 4G standards do not ensure compatibility and interoperability between all devices and networks for VoLTE services. Consequently, users of these devices and networks are unable to make voice calls based on VoLTE, including voice calls to emergency services. This becomes particularly problematic when 2G and 3G networks are phased out and there is no fallback solution to provide a legacy voice service.

Over the last months, several mobile network operators have informed their customers travelling to the US (where some 2G and 3G networks have already been phased out) that their devices may not be compatible with VoLTE services offered by visited networks. In such cases, customers would receive a mobile data connection but would not be provided with a voice service, resulting in the impossibility to call emergency services if needed.

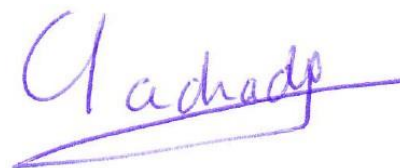
This problem could seriously harm the electronic communications market and put at risk the safety of its customers. It is hence necessary that mobile network operators, as well as mobile virtual network operators, handset and chipsets manufacturers, national

governments, national telecommunications regulatory authorities and competent standardisation bodies work together to address this problem and ensure compatibility and interoperability of VoLTE services between all networks and VoLTE-capable devices. Until this is addressed and resolved, we believe that the phaseout of both 2G and 3G should be put on hold, so as to guarantee continuity of access to emergency services. Otherwise lives will unnecessarily be put at risk.

The European Commission should play a leading role in addressing this matter. First of all, it should gather the necessary stakeholders to ensure VoLTE interoperability between all networks, devices and chipsets and prevent this issue from happening in the European Union. Furthermore, as the safety of Europeans travelling to the United States is also threatened by the impossibility to contact emergency services, the European Commission should also urgently bring this problem to its relevant counterparts in the United States.

My colleagues and I are looking forward to working with you, as well as other relevant stakeholders in addressing this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Gary MACHADO
Executive Director, EENA