
Press release

BUSINESS MARKETS

Arcep issues a call for expressions of interest, to bolster the development of multi-network mobile plans geared to the specific needs of businesses and public sector players

Paris, 14 May 2020

Multi-network mobile plans, which combine the networks of operators present in France, are not terribly prevalent in the French market today, despite the existence of certain specific needs. To help foster their development, Arcep wants to perform an inventory of businesses' and public sector players' needs in this area, and of available and planned offerings. To this end, it is launching a call for expressions of interest (CEI) that is aimed at both:

- **businesses and public sector entities** wanting to have access to multi-network mobile plans to satisfy certain specific needs, be they for human use or machine-to-machine (M2M) communications;
- **operators** who already sell or want to sell multi-network mobile plans, and their partner operators.

What is a multi-network mobile plan?

A multi-network (or multi-network roaming) plan is a plan that allows the customer **to access several mobile networks in France, using the same telephone number and a single SIM card** and, when necessary, to switch from one mobile network to another. This handover between networks, which can be either manual or automatic, typically results in a brief interruption of service¹.

This handover capacity is currently offered to customers of foreign operators when travelling in France, thanks to the roaming agreements that those foreign operators have with several national operators. **The call for expressions of interest being issued today is focused, on the contrary, on multi-network mobile needs and solutions based on French identifiers² and on contracts between only French mobile operators.**

Multi-network mobile plans can satisfy some of businesses' and public sector players' specific needs

For several years now, Arcep has noticed that there is a demand amongst public sector players and private enterprises for high-availability mobile products, which include the ability to be handed over to another network when necessary, be it for human use or machine-to-machine (M2M) applications, using resources in France.

For some enterprises and public entities, the advantages of a multi-network plan could be vital to their operations: highly resilient mobile communications, continuity of mobile services over a vast geographical expanse, minimising the impact of network failures, etc.

This demand for multi-network plan is particular prevalent amongst entities tasked with ensuring public safety and security, or with protecting a company's critical goods and interests.

¹ This type of plan differs from other multi-network connectivity solutions that do not deliver the same customer experience. One example is installing several SIM cards in a compatible mobile device (each of which has its own phone line and number) or the plans that some mobile virtual network operators (MVNO) sell that offer customers the ability to choose their mobile network when subscribing, but do not allow them to later switch over to other networks.

² Notably mobile phone numbers and mobile network codes (MNC)

Despite which, today's market does not appear able to fully satisfy this demand. Which is why Arcep wants to perform the most thorough inventory possible, to achieve a detailed understanding of the needs of the players in questions, and to develop this market's potential.

As part of this CEI which is focused on the business market, Arcep is also querying stakeholders on the terms and conditions that should be attached to the sale and use of these products. The hypothetical situation where these plans would be available to every enterprise in France could threaten existing regular plans, and dampen French operators' incentive to invest in mobile networks to gain an edge in terms of coverage and quality of service. This is also the reason why Arcep has confined the call for expressions of interest to business markets.

How to respond to the CEI

[The call for expressions of interest](#) will run from 14 May 2020 to 17 July 2020:

- Enterprises and public sector entities who are interested in multi-network plans are invited to make themselves known, and to detail their operational needs on the dedicated platform: [contribute](#)
- Mobile operators wanting to market multi-network plans using technical resources in France, and wanting to promote this market, as well as mobile operators capable of positioning themselves as partners, are invited to complete the following form: [contribute](#)
- Enterprises who believe that the existence of multi-network plans would enable them to develop new services and innovative applications can also contact Arcep, at the following address: partage-reseaux@arcep.fr
- All additional contributions can also be sent to this address: partage-reseaux@arcep.fr

Given the current public health crisis, anyone who believes they will be unable to answer the call before the July deadline is invited to contact Arcep via the abovementioned e-mail address.

Arcep at a glance

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Postal Affairs and Print Media Distribution (Arcep), a neutral and expert arbitrator with the status of independent administrative authority (IAA), is the architect and guardian of internet, fixed and mobile telecoms and postal networks in France.

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