
Press release

MOBILE COVERAGE

Operators' mobile coverage maps: Arcep launches a public consultation to tighten its requirement thresholds

Paris, 29 January 2020

Arcep regularly publishes mobile operators' 2G, 3G and 4G coverage maps on its (My mobile network) website. Produced by operators themselves, these maps are based on modelling that factors in antennae's location, their transmission power, and the presence of geographical elements that could obstruct propagation. Arcep verifies the accuracy of these maps through field surveys (around 2 million measurements were taken in 2018). A map's accuracy level depends on the success rate of a given test carried out in areas that operators declare as being covered.

From the outset, Arcep recognised that the maps posted on the "[Mon réseau mobile](#)" site could always be improved. Criticisms have been made by consumer associations and local elected officials, pointing to disparities between the maps and their experienced reality in the field. In their [information report on mobile and digital coverage across the country](#), published on 23 January 2020, Deputies Eric Bothorel and Laure de La Raudière urge Arcep to increase mobile coverage maps' reliability threshold from 95% to 98%. Arcep has heard these messages loud and clear.

The average accuracy required will now be 98% with a minimum threshold of 95%

Up until now, Arcep considered a map to be reliable if it had an accuracy rate equal to or above 95%. The Authority wants to set that threshold at 98%, and is publishing a draft decision to that effect today for public consultation. This decision will be submitted for approval.

More specifically, the draft decision being published for consultation proposes setting an "overall" reliability threshold for maps of 98%. As an additional measure, to go beyond the "averaging effect" and provide relevant information that reflects users' reality, it is proposed that this accuracy requirement be applied locally. The reliability threshold will thus be set at 98% for every area of more than 1,000 square kilometres, and at 95% for all areas of more than 50 square kilometres¹. These thresholds apply as much to voice/SMS service maps as mobile data services maps.

For mobile coverage maps that represent reality more accurately and more locally

To more accurately reflect mobile network users' reality, for voice and texting services Arcep is also proposing to require operators to publish maps that combine 2G and 3G services, in addition to the "2G only" maps they publish today.

These new requirements will come into effect in Q3 2020.

Arcep's data-driven regulation: making information available to users, to steer the market in the right direction

Arcep initiated its data-driven approach to regulation with the creation of the "Mon réseau mobile" site in 2017. This site makes available the mobile coverage maps produced by the country's four main mobile

¹ An area of 50 square kilometres corresponds approximately to the surface area that a cell tower can cover under good conditions.

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operators, with a four-tier classification (from “very good coverage” to “no coverage”). These additional improvements seek to meet the expectations of citizens, businesses and local authorities who attach increasing importance to the availability of mobile services. Arcep is committed to improving accuracy and better aligning these imperfect representations of reality with users’ experience in the field. To this end, in December 2018 Arcep released a regulator’s toolkit and code of conduct, to open the way for hosting test results obtained by other players, including crowdsourcing apps, on “Mon réseau mobile”.

This tool will also be enhanced over the course of the coming year, for instance by providing the ability to cross-reference operators’ coverage data, and to provide improved base maps.

Stakeholders are invited to submit their contribution before 6 March 2020.

This consultation will be followed by an amendment to [Arcep Decision No. 2016-1678 of 6 December 2016](#), which governs operators’ publication of mobile coverage information (map content, manner of publication, verification protocols).

Associated documents:

[The public consultation \(in French\)](#)

[“Mon réseau mobile”](#)

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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