

**Press Statement by  
RCC Secretary General, Majlinda Bregu  
on the occasion of the signing of Roaming Declaration between  
EU and WB telecommunications operators  
on 6 December 2022 in Tirana**

Deputy Prime Minister Baluku, Commissioner Varhelyi, operators' representatives, media,

The first EU-WB Summit in our region, not least in my very hometown Tirana, is significant in so many ways - **embracing all the good the EU has to offer, bringing in a fresh breeze to its dynamics** between decision makers and decision shapers.

Since societies and humans cannot survive without some degree of anticipation, and regulation, **I'm glad that after Berlin and the three mobility agreements signed, we started the day with one more implementation success in creation of the Western Balkans Common Regional Market, and that is the signature of the Roaming Declaration which enables regulation of roaming prices reduction between our region and EU.**

This was the first question we were asked after the Roam Like at Home has come to action in July 2021 – when the roaming prices with the EU will be lowered. **And that is the first thing we have started working on after that 1 July. So here it is, the roaming prices between Western Balkans and EU are going down with the leaves next fall.**

In practical terms, this challenging self-regulatory and voluntary reduction process means that every WB and EU telecommunications operator, signatory of the Declaration, will consider introducing retail rate plans and options with lower charges for their roaming users in other mobile networks and the first significant reduction of data roaming prices will take effect as of 1 October 2023. **This is just the start of the process until the final objective of roaming prices at the level nearing domestic ones is attained in 2027.**

You might have noticed this phrase “phasing in into the EU” in almost all of my speeches in the past years. And you might have wondered what does it mean. So **this is what phasing in means. While doing our best to prepare for the EU accession, phasing in to the EU practices and policies is necessary. And reducing the roaming prices to the level of domestic ones is part of it.**

Roaming prices reduction is **not only money saving, but it means simplifying the connection between people, businesses, travellers, tourists and at the end blurring the borders.**

The Roaming Free Western Balkans introduced some exciting changes. According to the statistics from the draft roaming data report traffic, **a number of roaming users in the**

**Western Balkans increased by 100%. When comparing the second half of 2021 to the first half of the same year, a number of minutes made in outgoing voice calls increased up to 237%, while incoming voice calls increased up to 173%. At the same time, volume of data traffic increased up to 459%.** These are remarkable figures that go in favour of not only regional cooperation as a whole, but speak volumes about better climate in the region overall. In terms of economic outlook, according to the World Bank report, **the region is estimated to register an economic growth of 3.4% this year.**

**Every achievement and deliverable that is accomplished under the Common Regional Market agenda is a step forward towards establishing a welcoming investment climate that can attract high quality and durable investments.**

Therefore, the reduction of roaming charges between the EU and our region will be an important achievement and changes it will make will be no less remarkable, I'm sure.

In the coming months telecommunications operators will have to enter into commercial negotiations with each other and decide on the models they will use through which the reductions at the retail level are to be implemented in practice, e.g. via discounts, special options, packages, bundles, or new or updated tariff plans, etc.

On the other hand, policy-makers in the Western Balkans are to expedite implementation of policy reforms in the telecom sector no later than the end of 2023.

**Negotiations to reach an agreement are never easy. Sometimes they are tooth and claw. But this Declaration is a result of strong engagement of the EU and WB telecommunications operators and support of the European Commission, Regional Cooperation Council,** as well as commitment of region's authorities since the entry into force of the Western Balkans Regional Roaming Agreement, making WB region roaming free in July 2021. This is the unequivocal testament of the continuous and unwavering European Union's support in political, economic and social integration of the Western Balkans. We invite other telecommunication operators from both the EU and the Western Balkans to join the initiative.

I hope that my bursting and vibrant Tirana spirit positively spills over to our future joint work, as we have to work harder together: as a region, as a European family and as the international community.