

Travel with your digital subscriptions: Joint statement by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU

From 1 April 2018 onwards, Europeans will be able to access the online content that they have subscribed to at home, wherever they are in the EU. European Commission Vice-President Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioner Mariya **Gabriel**, Bulgarian Minister of Transport, Information Technology and Communications Ivaylo **Moskovski** and Members of the European Parliament Pavel **Svoboda** and Jean-Marie **Cavada** issued the following statement:

“Citizens are at the core of all our digital initiatives. As of 1 April, wherever you are travelling to in the EU, you will no longer miss out on your favourite films, TV series, sports broadcasts, games or e-books, that you have digitally subscribed to at home. The rules will apply to paid-for services, but providers of free content may opt in. Providers of online content will also benefit from the new rules. They will no longer have to acquire licences for other territories where their subscribers are travelling to.

Removing the boundaries that prevented Europeans from travelling with digital media and content subscriptions is yet another success of the Digital Single Market for our citizens, following the effective abolition of roaming charges that consumers all over Europe have enjoyed since June 2017.

Our new rules directly respond to new behaviours and habits amongst European citizens using new technologies. For example, consumer spending on video subscription services rose by 113% per year between 2010 and 2014, and the number of users by 56% between 2014 and 2015. It is also estimated that at least 29 million people, or 5.7% of consumers in the EU, could make use of cross-border portability, and many more in the future – up to 72 million people by 2020.

In addition, almost 60% of young Europeans say that being able to travel with their subscriptions is an important factor in choosing to subscribe to online services. Making portability a reality addresses this concern, and in turn, will help service providers increase the numbers of subscribers.

Reaching an agreement on portability is a great result of close collaboration between the EU institutions and European companies and stakeholders; and we have full confidence that broadcasters and platforms will take this as an opportunity to enhance the user experience. Today we have taken another concrete step towards building a true Digital Single Market and a united European digital society, accessible for all our citizens and profitable for

our businesses.”

For More Information

[Q&A](#)

[Factsheet](#)

[Statement by Vice-President Ansip after the vote in the European Parliament](#)

Digital Single Market – Portability of online content services

What is the objective of the Regulation?

The aim is to ensure that Europeans who buy or subscribe to films, sports broadcasts, music, e-books and games in their home Member State are able to access this content when they travel or stay temporarily in another EU country. The Regulation comes into force on 1 April 2018 in all EU Member States.

Who benefits from the new rules?

- Consumers who reside in the EU: new rules enable them to watch films or sporting events, listen to music, download e-books or play games – when visiting or staying temporarily in other EU countries.
- Providers of online content services: they will be able to provide cross-border portability of online content to their subscribers without having to acquire licences for other territories where the subscribers stay temporarily.

The interests of right holders are safeguarded to avoid abuses.

Do providers have to offer the same service wherever the subscriber is travelling? How will it work for video-on-demand services like Netflix, which is active in more than one country in the EU?

Yes, providers of paid-for online content services (such as online movie, TV or music streaming services) have to provide their subscribers with the same service wherever the subscriber is in the EU. The service needs to be provided in the same way in other Member States, as in the Member State of residence. So for Netflix for example, you will have access to the same selection (or catalogue) anywhere in the EU, if you are temporarily abroad, just as if you were at home.

The new rules do not prevent service providers to offer additional options to their users when they are abroad, such as access to the content which is available in the country they travel in. Whether the service provider in question will allow or maintain access to the local content in addition to their obligation under the regulation will therefore depend entirely on the service provider.

Is there a limitation in time? What will happen if a person lives in one country and works in another on a daily basis?

The portability regulation covers situations in which subscribers are temporarily abroad. This term is not defined in the Regulation. However, what is meant by this is to be present in a Member State other than the Member State of residence. It covers various scenarios including holidays and business trips.

The new rules do not set any limits for the use of the portability feature, as long as the user resides in another Member State. Service providers should inform their subscribers of the exact conditions of their portability offers. For example, if you live in Belgium and subscribe to a paid music streaming service there, you will have access to the same selection of music in other Member States, as at home in Belgium.

This portability of your online content will be available if you commute daily to other Member States, like France or Luxembourg for example.

How will the content service providers verify the country of residence of their users?

The service provider will have to verify the subscriber's country of residence. This will be done at the conclusion and renewal of the contract.

Service providers will be able to verify the country of residence through different information provided by the subscriber. The Regulation provides for a closed list of such verification means to limit interference with consumers' privacy. The means listed include for example payment details, payment of a licence fee for broadcasting services, the existence of a contract for internet or telephone connection, IP checks or the subscriber's declaration of their address of residence. The service provider will be able to apply not more than two means of verification from this list. Any processing of personal data will have to be carried out in accordance with EU data protection rules.

Does the Regulation also apply to online services that are free of charge?

Providers of online content services that are free of charge are able to choose whether they want to benefit from these new rules. Once they opt-in and allow portability under the Regulation, all rules will apply to them in the same manner as for the paid services. This means that the subscribers will have to log-in to be able to access and use content when temporarily abroad, and service providers will have to verify the Member State of residence of the subscriber.

How can a consumer know which online services provided free of charge have opted-in?

If providers of free of charge online content services decide to make use of the new portability rules, they are required to inform their subscribers about this decision prior to providing the service. Such information could, for example, be announced on the providers' websites.

Are public broadcasters covered? Can I watch BBC, Arte or other services?

Online content services covered by the Regulation may also include services offered by public broadcasters. The question whether a particular broadcaster is covered by the scope of the Regulation depends on whether the following conditions are fulfilled:

- Consumer can already access the services on different devices and not limited to a specific infrastructure only,
- The TV programmes are provided to subscribers whose Member State of residence is verified by the provider and,
- The online content services are either provided against payment or the provider has decided to make use of the new portability rules on a voluntary basis.

Can I watch films from the broadcasters in another country online, such as movies from Spanish or Estonian TV in Belgium?

If a broadcaster of online content in your home Member State is covered by the new portability rules, you will be able to watch your content when you are temporarily abroad in another Member State.

On the contrary, accessing content that is offered in another Member State from your home country is not covered by the new portability rules. Consumers would, however, for certain TV and radio programmes benefit from the proposed [Regulation on broadcasters' online transmissions and retransmissions of radio and TV programmes](#) currently under negotiations. This will give the broadcasters and producers the additional choice to give cross-border access to more programmes (see [factsheet](#)).

Do you have examples of problems that the Regulation solves?

People travelling or staying temporarily in other EU countries have often faced restrictions: they can be cut off from their online content services or have only limited access. Many people – especially when they leave for short trips – will not find it convenient to buy a subscription to a local service, or may find that their favourite films and series are not available or only in a foreign language.

- A subscriber trying to watch films using his Home Box Office (HBO) Nordic account when on holiday in Italy sees a message saying that the service "is only available in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland".
- A French user of the MyTF1 film and series service is not able to rent a new film while on business trip to the UK.

Users may have been able to, for example, only view the content that they have already downloaded onto their portable device.

- Users of the Belgian film service Universciné must remember to download a film they have rented before leaving for a trip in another EU country. They are not able to use the Universciné streaming feature when away from their home country or download films when they are abroad.

These issues will be resolved by the new portability rules. The restrictions concerning the portability of subscriptions to online music services (like Spotify or Deezer) or e-books seem to be less significant. But restrictions in the future cannot be excluded, that is why today's rules are also important for such services.

Is the portability of sports online subscriptions covered by the new rules?

Yes, various online sports content services will be covered. This includes services where sports are part of a paid-for TV online content service (for example, streaming services such as Zattoo in Germany), or where sports are part of the overall online services package (for example Sky Go), as well as where a sports organiser sets up a dedicated online content service.

Will the service provider be able to charge for portability?

No, under the new rules, online content services will not be allowed to impose additional charges on subscribers for providing cross-border portability of their content.

What are the new rules saying if a service provider starts to limit the titles of music, films or games available when travelling abroad?

Subscribers to paid-for online content services and free online content services that have opted-in will have the same access to these services when they travel as in their Member State. This means that when accessing the service in another Member State, it will be like at home: offering the same content on the same range and number of devices, and with the same range of functionalities.

Any action taken by a provider that would prevent subscribers from accessing or using the service while temporarily present in another Member State: for example, restrictions to the functionalities of the service are contrary to the Regulation. This means that the provider cannot limit the catalogues of music, films or TV series available when you travel to another Member State.

Are the main providers of online content technically ready to apply the new Regulation from 1 April?

The Commission has been in close contact with the main providers of online content services (like platforms for TV shows, movies, music, sports, etc.) and has received positive feedback from them that the roll out of the new portability rules has been going smoothly and on time. Where service providers had encountered issues, we understood that they were in the process of overcoming them. The Commission has been monitoring closely the process

and will continue to do so.

The regulation is binding for paid-for services. Providers of free content may opt in to benefit from the new rules, but do not have to do so. Some service providers have already announced to opt in (YLE in Finland, RTBF in Belgium), and the Commission expects that others will follow now that the new rules have become applicable.

For more information

[Factsheet](#)

[Press Release](#)

[Travel with your digital subscriptions: Joint statement by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU](#)

[**News story: UK side by side with Allies a year on from NATO deterrence deployment**](#)

In his first visit to the Baltic ally, the Defence Secretary reaffirmed to the Estonian President and Defence Minister the UK's unwavering commitment to Euro-Atlantic security, a year after UK forces first arrived in country.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

For nearly 70 years, NATO has been the guarantee of mutual security. The threats and dangers we face are evolving, intensifying and increasingly challenging – our commitment to our Allies has seldom been more important.

I've seen first-hand the vital role our brave Armed Forces are playing on NATO's eastern border, standing shoulder to shoulder with our Allies to deter Russian aggression.

Nearly 2000 British troops, across two rotations, have led a multinational battlegroup in Estonia as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) deployment since it officially began just under a year ago in April 2017.

In an address, alongside his Estonian counterpart, Defence Minister Jüri Luik, to the 800 British troops and their NATO colleagues, stationed there now Mr Williamson said this reflected Britain's global outlook and commitment to the defence of our friends and Allies across the Baltic region.

The 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh are currently based in Tapa to enhance NATO's deterrence posture and the Defence Secretary confirmed that the 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment will take over from them in June as the UK's enduring presence in Estonia continues.

The UK's battlegroup forms part of the wider NATO eFP, with four multinational battlegroups deployed across the Baltic States and Poland, led by the UK, US, Canada and Germany. The UK has a further 150 soldiers based in Poland, part of the US led battlegroup, and RAF Typhoons are due to deploy to Romania in May, patrolling the Black Sea skies.

In addition to the 800 personnel, the UK has committed more than 150 vehicles to support Estonia during this deployment, including Warrior infantry fighting vehicles and Challenger 2 tanks.

The Defence Secretary also held meetings in Tallinn with the President Kersti Kaljulaid, Prime Minister Jüri Ratas and Defence Minister Jüri Luik.

[News story: £400m deal signed for battle-winning Brimstone missile for RAF Typhoons](#)

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has signed a £400 million deal to launch battle-winning Brimstone missiles from RAF Typhoon jets, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has announced.

The ultra-accurate Brimstone already has a successful track record, playing a critical role from Tornado fighter jets in the fight against Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and the deal will now see the missile upgraded to become compatible with Typhoons.

The £400 million Brimstone 2 Capability Sustainment Programme with MBDA UK will also build new equipment to support the capability and develop a stockpile of weapons available for operations, creating around 130 brand new jobs and sustaining hundreds more across the country.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our world-class defence industry is a key foundation on which our great military is built, and the weapons it produces like the pinpoint Brimstone missiles have been crucial in helping our fighter pilots on missions such as driving down Daesh territory in the Middle East. This massive £400m investment is a huge boost to the proud workforce equipping our Armed Forces and will create and

protect hundreds of jobs across the country, bolstering both the power of the Typhoon jet and British prosperity.

The new variation is being developed through the Brimstone 2 Capability Sustainment Programme will replace all earlier variants in 2022 and have an upgraded seeker, rocket motor, warhead and guidance system, making it an even more effective weapon.

The new missile will arm Typhoon when it takes over as the RAF's principal ground-attack aircraft in 2019.

The work has created around 130 new jobs and sustains a further 270 existing jobs at MBDA's sites in Stevenage, Bolton and across the company's significant UK supply chain.

Brimstone is currently in use by the UK's Tornado squadrons in Iraq and Syria as part of Operation Shader and has also been used on operations in Afghanistan and Libya.

Chief of Material Land at the MOD's procurement organisation, Lieutenant General Paul Jaques said:

The Brimstone 2 CSP contract enables us to continue to deliver a world class air to surface missile in support of the RAF's Typhoon Squadrons on operations worldwide.

It is excellent news not only for our troops but also for the UK economy, with jobs and skills being sustained across the country.

The programme will also allow the weapon to be further developed for use on future aircraft. Brimstone is among weapons being considered for use by the British Army's new AH-64E Apache attack helicopters and the RAF's next-generation Protector unmanned aerial system.

[Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident in Happy Valley today](#)

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about the work accident that happened at a building renovation site in Happy Valley this afternoon (March 27), in which workers fell to the ground together with a partly collapsed bamboo scaffold. One worker died while another was injured. The LD is saddened by the accident and expresses its deepest sympathy to the deceased's family and the injured worker.

The LD's spokesman said, "We commenced immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors concerned to suspend the use of the scaffold involved for any work activity. The contractor cannot resume the work process until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risks have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, safe plant and safe systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.