



هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات  
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

*News Release*

## **TRA unleashes consumers' freedom of choice**

**Number Portability becomes a reality, from July 17, 2011**

**Number portability can be conducted an endless number of times and through a convenient consumer-oriented process**

Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain - Saturday 16 July 2011

### **Number Portability Now a Reality**

With the aim of providing consumers more flexibility in choosing a telecommunications service provider that suits their requirements, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority's (TRA) much anticipated Number Portability service (the ability to move between operators and keep the same phone number) becomes a reality starting from tomorrow for mobile telephony (and for fixed telephony from 4 October 2011).

Number Portability is one of the initiatives that helps deliver the TRA vision of a communications environment that enriches the social and commercial fabric of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and enables innovative competition between service providers to improve quality of service as well as innovative service offerings and enhanced consumer experience.

During the press conference, TRA Chairman Dr. Mohammed Al Amer said, "Starting from tomorrow, NP becomes a reality and the shift towards a consumer-centric telecom industry in Bahrain is born. The initiative was created to end any obstacles that consumers face when making decisions on competitive telecom operators. They will now enjoy the freedom to transfer their numbers freely, through a convenient process. Moreover, this service will help stimulate competition among telecommunications companies, breaking any form of monopoly, and serving the development of the local market.

In this context, we expect the percentage of participants wishing to transfer their numbers up to 20% of the total number of mobile subscribers in the Kingdom of Bahrain."

TRA's General Director Mr. Mohamed Bubashait said, "Offering flexibility and choice for consumers in selecting their telecommunications operators will drive competition, as operators focus on building loyalty as well as implementing truly customer-centric approaches to their business. This is a very important step for Bahrain that will boost competition in the mobile and fixed telephony markets."

Mr. Bubashait went on to say, "We have taken into consideration international best practices in terms of both technical implementations as well as appointing the right partners through both transparent and objective processes. We are very excited about this significant milestone and expect a positive response from consumers."

## **Details of Number Portability Process:**

- Numbers can be moved as many times as a subscriber wishes, and at any time, including minutes after creating a new account or after already transferring to a different provider.
- Number portability is 'recipient-led', where subscribers only need to contact the new operator.
- Once a subscriber decides to move, the old operator may not directly contact the subscriber, with the purpose of trying to convince the subscriber to return, for a period of 3 months.
- Subscribers are still liable for outstanding dues and financial obligations, including subsidies and installments, to their old operator.
- Porting takes place within 1-3 days for mobile, and 1-6 days for fixed telephony.
- Mobile subscribers are given a new SIM card upon transferring to a new operator.
- Maximum porting charges will be BHD 4 for mobile, and BHD 6 for fixed telephony.

Commenting on the implemented system for Number Portability, TRA's ICT Director Mr. Ahmed Aldoseri said "We have created a system that prioritises 'convenience' for consumers. Numbers can be ported with ease and freedom. We look forward to creating a ripple effect of increased competition throughout the telecommunications market in Bahrain."

Mr. Aldoseri also praised the hard work and efforts of the team that has made number portability a reality in Bahrain, and reiterated, "The Authority has certainly designed an award-winning framework for portability in the Kingdom of Bahrain".

## **History of Number Portability Project**

In February 2008, following a comprehensive strategic and retail market review, Number Portability was highlighted as a measure required to boost competition in the telecommunications market. The TRA then appointed, through a competitive tender, Mott-MacDonald and Horrocks Technology to assist in the development of Number Portability Regulation.

Following a public consultation with the industry and the general public, TRA published its final Number Portability regulation on April 27, 2010 with a mandate for mobile licensed operators to implement Mobile Number Portability within 6 months from issuing number portability technical specifications. Fixed licensed operators are mandated to implement fixed Number Portability within 8 months.

The main technical specifications developed and implemented include the Number Portability Process Specification, the Central System Specification and the Routing and Charging Specification. All the Specifications were issued on 31 October 2010.

Systor Intereurope Systems was chosen as a solution provider for the implementation and operation of the Number Portability Central System, which is a key component of the process responsible for coordinating the exchange of messages between Licensed Operators as well as maintaining the authoritative database of ported numbers and performance metrics of all Licensed Operators. This system allows TRA to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of all parties affected by number portability are upheld.

The Number Portability central system is being hosted by the Bahrain Internet Exchange (BIX), which facilitates the ease of access by all operators.



From left Ahmed Aldoseri, Dr. Mohammed Al Amer and Mohamed Bubshait

### **About TRA**

Since its establishment in 2002, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of the Kingdom of Bahrain (TRA) has been working with government, consumers, operators and investors to develop a communications environment that enriches the social and commercial fabric of the Kingdom of Bahrain. As an exemplary Regulator for the region, TRA independently carries out its duties in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. More information about TRA can be viewed at [www.tra.org.bh](http://www.tra.org.bh)