

Harmonisation of a charging capability of common charger for mobile phones - frequently asked questions

(see also [IP/09/1049](#))

What's the issue?

Incompatibility of chargers for mobile phones is a major environmental problem and an inconvenience for users across the European Union. Currently specific chargers are sold together with specific mobile phones. A user who wants to change his/her mobile phone must usually acquire a new charger and dispose the current one, even if this is in perfect condition. This unnecessarily generates important amounts of electronic waste.

Which is the solution envisaged?

Harmonising mobile phone chargers will bring significant economic and environmental benefits. Following a request from the European Commission and in close co-operation with the Commission services, major producers of mobile phones have agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding ("MoU") to harmonise chargers for data-enabled mobile phones sold in the EU. Industry commits to provide chargers compatibility on the basis of the Micro-USB connector. Once the commitment becomes effective, it will be possible to charge data-enabled mobile phones from any charger compatible with the common specifications.

Who will benefit and how?

Consumers will not need to buy a new charger together with every mobile phone, and they should also benefit from more efficient and cheaper stand-alone chargers. Consumers will be able to charge their mobile phone from the new common charger.

The environmental benefits of harmonising chargers are expected to be very important: reducing the number of chargers unnecessarily sold will reduce the associated generated electronic waste, which currently amounts to thousands of tons. Harmonised chargers are also expected to improve energy-efficiency, thus reducing energy consumption.

What will be the impact of the MoU on prices?

Consumers will be able to purchase mobile phones without a charger, thus logically reducing their cost. They will also be able to purchase much more cost-effective stand-alone chargers than it is currently the case

Are all mobile phones covered by the MoU?

The MoU covers data-enabled mobile phones. The MoU excludes mobile phones which do not support USB data exchange and also certain unusual formats of phone, for example phones worn as wristwatches.

Which is the agreed common interface?

On the basis of the Micro USB interface, the companies have agreed to develop a common specification in order to allow for full compatibility and safety of chargers and mobile phones

Why does the MoU only apply to data-enabled mobile phones/equipment?

Mobile phones are short-life products. It is expected that from 2010 onwards most future mobile phones will be data-enabled.

When is the proposal likely to come into effect?

It is expected that the first generation of new inter-chargeable mobile phones will reach the EU market from 2010 onwards. The Commission will closely work with industry in order to facilitate an implementation of the agreement on the market as soon as possible.

Which companies have signed the MoU?

The following 10 companies have signed the MoU:

- Apple
- LG
- Motorola
- NEC
- Nokia
- Qualcomm
- Research In Motion
- Samsung
- Sony Ericsson
- Texas Instruments

Where does the MoU apply?

The MoU covers the territory of the EU. However, as the market for mobile phones is essentially global, the MoU should be seen as a good model for other geographical markets. The Commission is committed to sharing this approach with its trading partners, in order to extend its benefits world-wide.