



# Press release

Bonn, 28 December 2017

## Around 290,000 consumer queries and complaints about telecoms issues

**Jochen Homann: "Number of consumer complaints has hit a new high"**

The Bundesnetzagentur received around 290,000 consumer complaints about telecommunications in the period up to December 2017. In 2016, it received 220,000 complaints.

*"More consumers than ever before have complained to the Bundesnetzagentur this year," said Jochen Homann, Bundesnetzagentur President. "The high number of queries shows that the Bundesnetzagentur is recognised as being the agency for consumers to go to for telecommunications issues and that consumers also have confidence in us. We can often provide direct assistance, for instance if there is a problem when changing provider. We are consistent in taking action against cases of number misuse and nuisance calls."*

### Number misuse

In 2017 more than 160,000 written complaints and queries about number misuse were received. As part of its efforts to combat this problem, the Bundesnetzagentur cut off about 700 telephone numbers in 2017 and issued bans on billing and collection in 69 cases.

The number of complaints about missed call scams was particularly high towards the end of the year. Since October 2017, 60,000 written complaints have been received so far on that subject. From the beginning of the year to the end of September there were approximately 15,000 such complaints. To protect consumers from incurring large charges by calling back such numbers, in December the Bundesnetzagentur ordered that a price message must operate free-of-charge for certain international area codes in the mobile communications networks.

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### **Unsolicited marketing calls**

The number of complaints about unsolicited marketing calls rose significantly again, as in previous years. By the end of November 2017, over 52,000 written complaints had been received, compared to around 29,000 cases last year. Total fines of nearly €1.2m were imposed for cold calling during the year. In 2016 the sum was €900,000 and in 2015, about €460,000.

In 2017 for the first time, the Bundesnetzagentur also had to impose the highest possible fine of €300,000 for unsolicited marketing calls on an energy company that had seriously disturbed several thousand consumers in a highly manipulative way over a long period. Moreover, the Bundesnetzagentur was able to take successful action against a company that had particularly targeted older people to offer them a home alert system.

### **Consumer queries**

The Bundesnetzagentur's consumer advice service for telecommunications issues received about 78,000 queries and complaints in 2017. Queries were largely related to faults on subscriber lines, problems when moving house or the initial provision of connections. In 2017 it was also noted that complaints were frequently received about the difficulty of reaching providers' customer service.

### **Provider switching**

There was a slight drop to about 17,000 in the number of complaints dealing with switching provider. As part of its escalation procedure, the Bundesnetzagentur has had to ensure in about 3,000 cases that the companies involved completed the provider switch as quickly as possible because the service had been interrupted for more than one calendar day. The number of cases that had to be escalated was stable compared to the year before.

The proportion of switches that go wrong and are escalated at the Bundesnetzagentur is well under 1% for fixed lines, with over 99% of switches proceeding smoothly.



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The Bundesnetzagentur consumer advice service can be contacted at [www.bundesnetzagentur.de/tk-formular](http://www.bundesnetzagentur.de/tk-formular).

The Bundesnetzagentur recommends that consumers who are affected by unsolicited marketing calls or number misuse should report any incidents to the Bundesnetzagentur. They can do so using online complaint forms at [www.bundesnetzagentur.de/tk-beschwerde](http://www.bundesnetzagentur.de/tk-beschwerde). The agency relies upon receiving the most accurate information possible from consumers to assist it in its investigations.

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The Bundesnetzagentur is an authority under the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. Its core tasks include supervising the energy, telecommunications, postal and railway markets.

As part of its mandate, the Bundesnetzagentur ensures that as many undertakings as possible can use the infrastructure in these sectors so that consumers benefit from competition and favourable prices.

The authority employs over 2,900 people at its headquarters in Bonn and Mainz and its 46 regional offices.