

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Circuit-to-number Ratio for Public Non-exclusive Public Telecommunications Services (PNETS)

Introduction

In the NAC Paper No 2/2002, the Telecommunications Authority (the TA) proposed that the criterion of circuit-to-number ratio of 1:12.5 for the assignment of the PNETS numbers in the number level “305-309” could be increased to 1:25 in order to meet the operational requirements of all PNETS operators providing the Group 2 services. In the 45th NAC Meeting, members had different views on the proposal. Some members opined that the existing circuit-to-number ratio should be able to cope with the development of the ETS. Some members opined that the existing practice for assignment of “30” numbers under special circumstances stated in the Code of Practice Relating to the Use of Numbers and Codes in the Hong Kong Number Plan (“the CoP”) was already effective and should be maintained whereas some members envisaged that the remaining PNETS numbers under the “30x” range would not be sufficient to meet the future demand.

2. Further to the discussion in the 45th NAC Meeting, the Society of Hong Kong External Telecommunications Service Providers (“the Society”) submitted a letter to the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (“OFTA”) requesting to increase the circuit-to-number ratio. The Society cited the following reasons to support their view. Firstly, the concern of misuse of the numbers with numerous ETS operators was not justified because the total number of operators offering this service was limited. Secondly, with the introduction of Original Called Number (“OCN”) services in 2003, the Society anticipated that some PNETS operators would relinquish the assigned PNETS numbers. Thirdly, according to the statistics of the major ETS operator, the average holding time of the call was below one minute which was much lower than the assumption of 8 minutes used in the study conducted in 1998. As such, the Society requested OFTA to take a more realistic approach for the calculation of the circuit-to-number ratio.

3. OFTA had met the representatives of the Society and exchange views on the proposed modification of the circuit-to-number ratio. OFTA had also explained how the 1:12.5 circuit-to-number ratio was derived and worked out.

4. Recently, OFTA received some applications from the PNETS operators for the assignment of “30” numbers to exceed the 1:12.5 circuit-to-number ratio. From the submissions, it is noted that the operating environment of different operators varies.

Current Practice for Assignment of “30” Numbers

5. In the CoP, it is stated that Group 2 PNETS operators can request for the assignment of up to a maximum of 300 numbers from the FTNS operator for every installed T1 trunk. The maximum ratio of circuit-to-number ratio is 1:12.5. If PNETS operators have operational needs, they may submit applications for assignment of “30” numbers to PNETS operators under special circumstances with their reasons and justifications to the TA. Each application will be considered on its own merits and will be evaluated based on the operational requirements, service nature, traffic demand and the existing utilization of “30” numbers already assigned to the applicant.

TA’s Considerations

6. Having considered members’ view and submission from the Society, the TA’s initial view is that it would be advisable at this stage to maintain the above existing practice given in the CoP. Instead of generally increasing the ratio, the TA would still consider the merits of each application and also take any other relevant factors into account such as those affecting operators’ operating environment. If approvals were given to successful applications, the minimum circuit-to-number ratio to be approved would be 1:25 i.e. depending on justifications of operators, the TA may approve higher ratio than 1:25. Therefore, the existing assignment principles as given in the CoP would remain unchanged. Having said that, the assignment principles may be reviewed in future when the situation warrants.

Advice Sought

7. Members are invited to give their views and comments on this paper.

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