

# CONSUMER PROTECTION

A guide to telecom consumers' rights protection



## A little bit about the TRA

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Lebanon (TRA) is an independent public institution established by Law 431/2002. It is legally mandated to liberalize, regulate, and develop telecommunications in Lebanon and to protect telecommunications consumers' rights.

The TRA's mission is to establish a regulatory environment that enables a competitive telecommunications market to deliver state-of-the-art services at affordable prices to the broadest spectrum of the Lebanese population.

**This is a guide to the TRA's  
work within Consumers' rights  
protection.**



# CONSUMER PROTECTION

## ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS' RIGHTS VIS-À-VIS TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE PROVIDERS

Consumers of telecommunications services are a priority for the TRA. In addition to promoting state-of-the-art services at affordable prices and acceptable levels of quality of service, the Authority is also equally concerned about protecting consumers and their rights.



The TRA works towards ensuring the respect of consumers' personal information, their right to be informed and their right to submit their complaints and find a fair solution with their Service Provider.

Since its establishment, the TRA has been working on several fronts towards consumer protection:

### AT THE STRATEGIC AND REGULATORY LEVEL

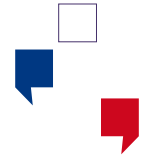
The TRA worked on setting the appropriate regulations to develop the Lebanese telecommunications market in the best interest of consumers.

### AT THE FIELD LEVEL

The TRA undertook various measures relating to:

- Improving the quality of telecom services;
- Decreasing rates and tariffs;
- Resolving consumers complaints;
- Protecting children in the cyberspace;
- Ensuring the access of vulnerable groups to telecommunications services, and
- Creating awareness.

# STRATEGIC AND REGULATORY PROJECTS



The TRA has worked on regulatory guidelines across a number of sectors to ensure that the rights of telecommunications services' consumers are protected.

## CONSUMER AFFAIRS REGULATION (CAR)

The CAR provides guidance and adequate information to consumers of telecommunications services so they make informed choices while choosing the services they wish to subscribe to. The CAR also sets processes to ensure that all Service Providers treat consumers fairly and provide info in a transparent manner.

The CAR requires from Service Providers to:

- Provide clear contact details (address, telephone number & e-mail);
- Make available detailed information about all offered services;
- Ensure confidentiality of consumers' information;
- Have clear and checkable bills;
- Give consumers rights to call barring of VAS numbers, and
- Resolve consumers complaints timely and inform consumers about the TRA's role in case not resolved.



## CODE OF PRACTICE FOR VALUE ADDED SERVICES (VAS)

This Code protects users of Value Added Services and emphasizes the providers' responsibility in ensuring that the content, promotion and operation of all their VAS (whether provided by themselves or by their Content Providers) comply with all conditions of this Code.

The Code requires from Service Providers to:

- Clearly mention the VAS provider's name in the service welcome vocal message & any promotional or advertising material of audio services;
- Be precise in providing information about products, services, offers, promotions and tariffs;
- Ensure that service content does not contain anything in breach of existing laws and does not promote services that are: violent, pornographic, demeaning, discriminating, misleading, and/or religiously clashing;
- Refrain from providing reverse look-up directory services, services intended for under age persons and/or advisory services without a qualified practitioner, and
- Abide by the Directorate of the National Lottery (decision 373/1) for the promotion and advertisement of games, lotteries and gambles.



## HUMAN ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD EXPOSURE LIMIT REGULATION (EMF)

The EMF Regulation protects the public and workers from adverse health effects arising from exposure to EMF in the living and working environments through establishing limits on human exposure to EMF in the frequency range 0 to 300 GHz. This regulation also ensures that telecom equipment does not cause any damage to the telecommunications networks, safety and public health.



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## **QUALITY OF SERVICE REGULATION (QoS)**

The QoS Regulation reflects the TRA's commitment to ensure that all Service Providers (SPs) meet minimum required international indicators standards in terms of service availability, QoS and network performance. It assures consumers quality of service, fairness in tariffs and transparency in billing. Through this regulation, the TRA imposes that all SPs take measures to provide accurate & detailed billing as well as to put in place a proper procedure to resolve customer complaints.



# FIELD WORK PROJECTS

Alongside its ongoing involvement in numerous regulatory projects, the TRA is striving to protect telecom consumers through a number of tangible field activities.



## IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TELECOM SERVICES

The TRA has been working on various levels to ensure that high standards of QoS are applied, mainly through:

- Monitoring the quality of service, detecting interference and stopping several operators from using unlicensed frequencies;
- Assuring service quality while holding Service Providers accountable should they not abide by the issued Quality of Service Regulation, and
- Allocating frequencies to mobile operators to allow the necessary network upgrades that will lead to the improvement of the quality of service.

## DECREASING RATES AND TARIFFS

The TRA took various steps and measures in line with its mission and legal mandate to decrease rates and tariffs such as:

- Stopping telecommunications black market activities and gaps in the voucher distribution process resulting in high prices for end users, and
- Monitoring the implementation of mobile tariff reductions on postpaid and prepaid SIM and recharge cards as well as the accuracy of the billing and pricing of mobile services by conducting market surveys.





## RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

The TRA's first involvement in resolving consumers' complaints resides in the creation of a clear process for receiving all types of telecommunications complaints as defined in the Consumer Affairs Regulation.

The TRA has also joined forces with the Ministry of Economy and Trade (MoET) by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and setting a joint hotline **(1739)** with the Consumer Protection Directorate (CPD) to receive and timely handle telecom consumers' complaints.

The TRA is doing its utmost to resolve complaints stemming from many regions in the Lebanese territory and revolving around interference, deteriorating Quality of Service, invasion of privacy and consumer rights, pricing and billing.



### DO YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT?

**CONTACT YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER**

**NO ANSWER? DELAY? NOT RESOLVED ?**

**YOU CAN CALL US NOW AT  
1739 HOTLINE**



## PROTECTING CHILDREN IN THE CYBERSPACE

Children are vulnerable, and the cyberspace which they surf daily should be safe. When accessing the Internet, children could be targets of pedophiles, cyber bandits, hackers and online predators. The TRA has taken various measures to protect children in the cyberspace, in line with its mission to protect telecommunications consumers, by:

- Providing parents with monitoring tools to protect their children while surfing the Internet;
- Taking an active role with concerned stakeholders in issuing a code of conduct for Internet Service Providers and Internet cafés to ensure the safest environment on the Net, and
- Making various contributions to local, regional and international conferences and workshops dedicated to all aspects of online child protection in Lebanon, such as legislative, technical, and regulatory issues.



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## ENSURING THE ACCESS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

The TRA's mission is to promote the access to telecommunications services by the broadest spectrum of the Lebanese population. With its mission, the TRA worked on facilitating the access for people with disabilities to telecommunications services by encouraging Service Providers to:

- Ensure ease of access to the Internet of ICT services for persons with special needs;
- Provide information in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner at no additional cost or at a reduced price, and
- Agree on a charter for the right of disabled persons to telecommunications.





## CREATING AWARENESS

The TRA has been regularly informing consumers of telecommunications services about their rights through the publication of exhaustive information on the TRA website, intensive press coverage, and the organization of numerous workshops, and the airing of a specific TV and radio announcement.

In addition, the TRA dedicated a section for consumers in the upper menu of its website which is also available in audio format. It includes a glossary and definitions of telecom terms, a directory of existing Lebanese Service Providers with their contacts, a step by step

complaints resolution section, and numerous awareness dedicated sections relating to children protection, existing telecom services offers and tariffs along with actions undertaken at international levels in the interest of consumer protection.

Finally, the TRA developed an awareness brochure destined to consumers and displayed it in various Service Providers' locations. It includes all the TRA actions towards consumer protection and complaints handling.



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