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HESC - Harmonised European Short Codes

Guide to the allocation of a short number for services of social value harmonised at European level

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1 General

1.1 Scope

This guide deals with the allocation and use of short numbers for services of social value harmonised at European level in accordance with Art. 31*b* of the ordinance on addressing resources in the telecommunications sector (ORAT) [1].

In accordance with the decision of the CEPT ECC/DEC/(07)03 [3] (identical to European Commission decision 2007/116/CE [5] amended by the decisions 2007/698/CE [6], 2009/884/CE [7] and (EU) 2023/468 [8]), the number series starting with "116" in national numbering plans is reserved for harmonised numbers for harmonised services of social value. The specific numbers belonging to this number series and the services for which each number is reserved are listed in the annex.

A "harmonised service of social value" is defined therein as a service conforming to a common description accessible to individuals via a free telephone number which is potentially useful to foreign visitors and which meets specific social needs, which contributes in particular to the well-being or security of citizens or specific groups of citizens, or which assists citizens in difficulty.

1.2 References

- [1] [SR 784.104](#) (only in German, French and Italian)
Ordinance of 6 October 1997 on addressing resources in the telecommunications sector ORAT
- [2] [SR 784.106](#) (only available in German, French and Italian)
Ordinance of 18 November 2020 on fees in the telecommunications sector
- [3] [Decision ECC/DEC/\(07\)03 of 6 July 2007, last amended on 8 March 2024](#)
- [4] [Recommendation ECC/REC/\(08\)03 of 16 October 2008](#)
- [5] [Decision of the Commission 2007/116/CE of 15 February 2007](#)
- [6] [Decision of the Commission 2007/698/CE of 29 October 2007 modifying decision 2007/116/CE](#)
- [7] [Decision of the Commission 2009/884/CE of 30 November 2009 modifying decision 2007/116/CE](#)
- [8] [Commission implementing Decision \(EU\) 2023/468 of 25 November 2022 modifying decision 2007/116/CE](#)

The decisions and recommendations of the CEPT/ECC may be obtained from the European Communications Office (ECO), Nyropsgade 37, 4th floor, DK-1602 Copenhagen (<https://docdb.cept.org/>)

The decisions of the European Commission are published in the Official Journal of the European Union (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/oj/direct-access.html?locale=en>).

1.3 Abbreviations

CEPT	European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations
ECC	Electronic Communications Committee

2 Conditions of use

Decision ECC/DEC/(07)03 [3] lays down the following general conditions of use:

- the service offers citizens information, assistance, a communication tool or any combination of these elements;
- the service is open to all citizens without prior registration being necessary;
- the service is of unlimited duration;
- no payment or promise of payment is demanded to use the service;
- the following activities are excluded during a call:
 - advertising,
 - entertainment,
 - marketing and selling,
 - use of the call for the future sale of commercial services.

With regard to the specific conditions attached to the use of a 116xyz short number, Art. 25, para. 1 ORAT [1] is applicable without exception. The service must be available in German, French and Italian, at all times and throughout Switzerland).

Furthermore, the following conditions of use are applicable taking into account recommendation ECC/REC/(08)03 [4] (cf. also the decision of the Commission (EU) 2023/468 [8]):

- sponsorship of the holder of a 116xyz short number is possible; the sponsor may appear in the literature related to the service but it shall in no case be mentioned during provision of the service;
- calls to 116xyz short numbers must be free of charge for the caller, whatever the origin of the call (fixed or mobile).

3 Allocation procedure

3.1 Provision of a 116xyz short number

OFCOM publishes information on the internet site <https://www.uvek.egov.swiss/en/shortnumbers/search-form> when a 116xyz short number is available to offer European harmonised services of social value.

Interested parties are allowed a period of 30 days from the date of publication to submit an allocation application.

3.2 Applications for allocation

Anyone intending to offer the public a harmonised European service of social value may apply for the allocation of a corresponding 116xyz number. The applicant must make a plausible case that it will comply with the conditions of use of the number concerned (cf. section 2).

The applicant must enclose with its application for allocation a copy of the agreement concluded with the other European service providers confirming its willingness to provide the harmonised European service in Switzerland (cf. Art. 31*b*, para. 2 ORAT [1]).

If the submitted dossier is incomplete, if the data provided are inadequate, or if it proves, in the course of evaluation, that additional clarifications are necessary, OFCOM shall specify a period for the applicant to rectify matters.

3.3 Evaluation of applications

The evaluation of applications for allocation may be conducted with the assistance of specialised institutions.

When a single applicant fulfils the conditions, the 116xyz short number is allocated to it.

When several applicants fulfil the conditions, the 116xyz short number is allocated jointly to the applicants (Art. 5 and 25, para. 2 ORAT [1]).

If no application is submitted within the specific period or if no application fulfils the conditions, the 116xyz short number will remain available and subsequent applications will be processed in the order in which they are received.

4 Putting into service

The service for the provision of which a 116xyz short number has been allocated must be made available to the public within 12 months of the date of allocation (cf. Art. 25, para. 4 ORAT [1]).

5 Fees

For the assignment, management and revocation of a 116xyz short number, OFCOM charges the fees provided for in Art. 6 and 46, para. 3 of the ordinance on fees and charges in the telecommunications sector [2].