



End-User Affairs: Half Yearly Report

July - December 2019

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1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of the Malta Communications Authority (“MCA”) is to safeguard the interests of end-users in the electronic communications, postal and e-commerce sectors.

In order to fulfil this function, the MCA provides assistance to those end-users who encounter difficulties while using any of the services within its remit. In this respect, when an end-user is not satisfied with the redress or response provided by his/her service provider, he/she may file a complaint with the MCA. The extent of the action the MCA can take in relation to a complaint, depends on the particulars of the issues involved and on the MCA's powers at law. There are instances where although the complaints received relate to the provision of a service regulated by the MCA, the Authority is not empowered at law to intervene and would therefore have to refer end-users to other competent entities.

The Authority also receives a number of enquiries, as distinct from complaints, from end-users in relation to the services it regulates. The MCA makes every effort to provide end-users with the requested information in a timely manner. Alternatively, when such requests do not fall directly within MCA's remit, it assists end-users by directing them to the appropriate body. More information on MCA's complaint and enquiry procedure is available at <https://www.mca.org.mt/consumer/help>.

In addition to the above, the MCA monitors the sectors it regulates, and carries out various mystery shopping exercises to identify areas of concern and undertakes the necessary regulatory action to address such issues. In so doing, the Authority ensures that service providers comply with their obligations at law and that end-users are provided with up to date information on their rights and obligations when using any communications services regulated by the MCA.

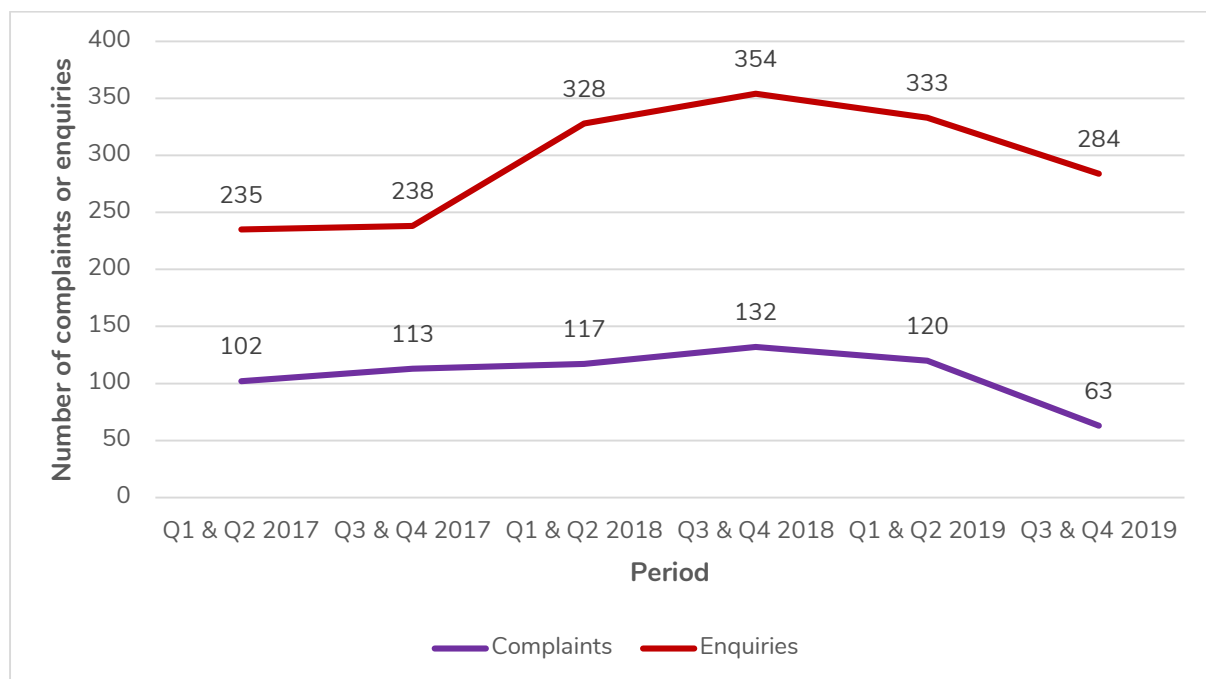
This report provides a statistical analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Authority during the last six months of 2019 and also provides information on enforcement actions and related monitoring activities undertaken by the MCA during this period.

2 Statistical Overview of Complaints and Enquiries received

Between the 1st of July and the 31st of December 2019, the MCA received 63 complaints, a decrease of 48% when compared to the complaints received during the first half of 2019. During the period under review, the MCA also received 284 requests for information on different matters it regulates. Figure 1 provides further details on complaints and enquiries received from 2017 to date.

Figure 1

Complaints and Enquiries by Q1 & Q2 2017 – Q3 & Q4 2019

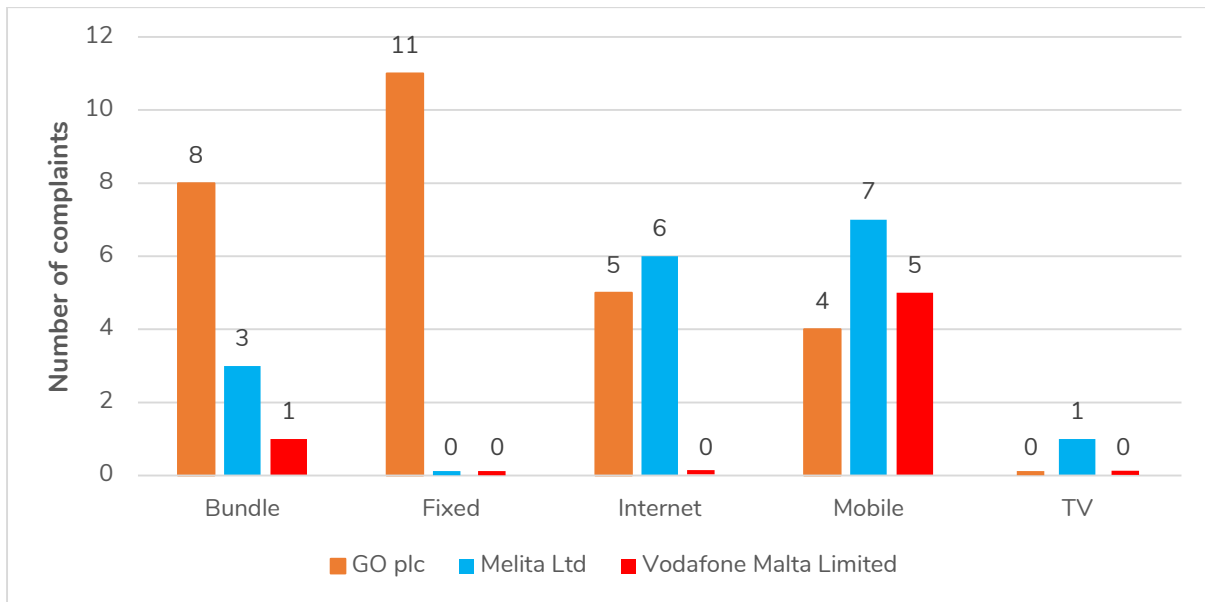


The MCA receives complaints from end-users about their landline, mobile, internet, TV and postal services. These complaints tend to be more complex in nature due to the fact that the MCA requires that end-users seek its intervention only if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the service provider's investigation of their complaint.

Figure 2 provides statistical information about the total number of electronic communication services complaints received by MCA during the last 6 months of 2019, and classified according to the complainant's provider.

Figure 2

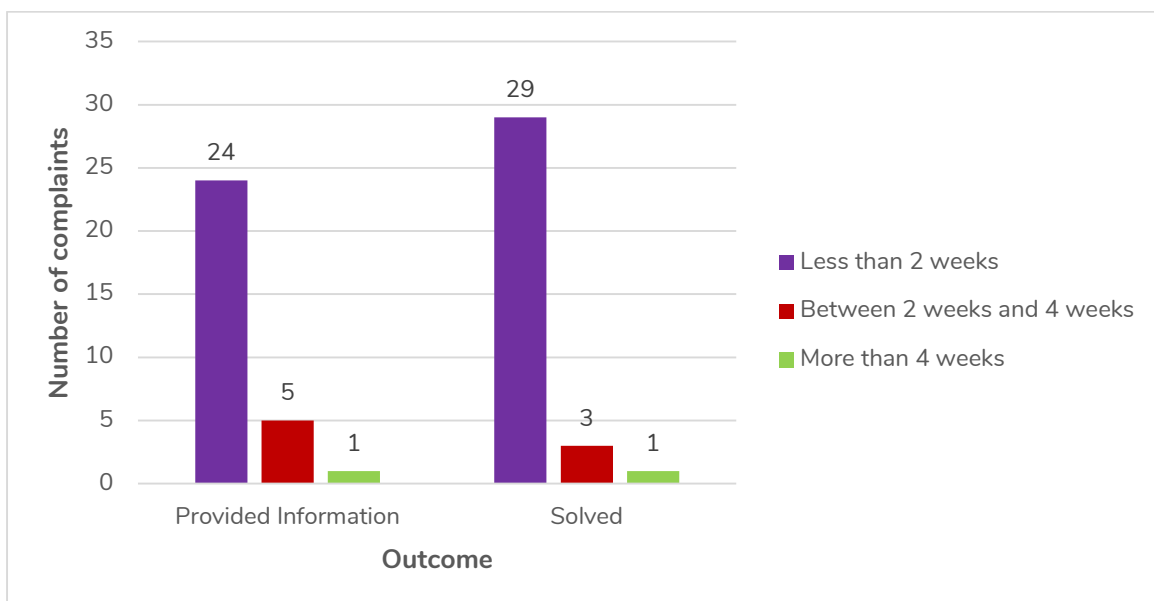
Complaints received by MCA (July – December 2019), classified by service and electronic communications services ('ECS') Provider



The time required to address a complaint may vary from one instance to another depending on the nature of the particular case. The MCA commits to close complaints within the shortest timeframe possible. During the period under review 84% of all complaints received were addressed within 2 weeks. 97% were closed within 20 working days.

Figure 3

Time taken by MCA to Handle Complaints (from receipt to closure), July - December 2019

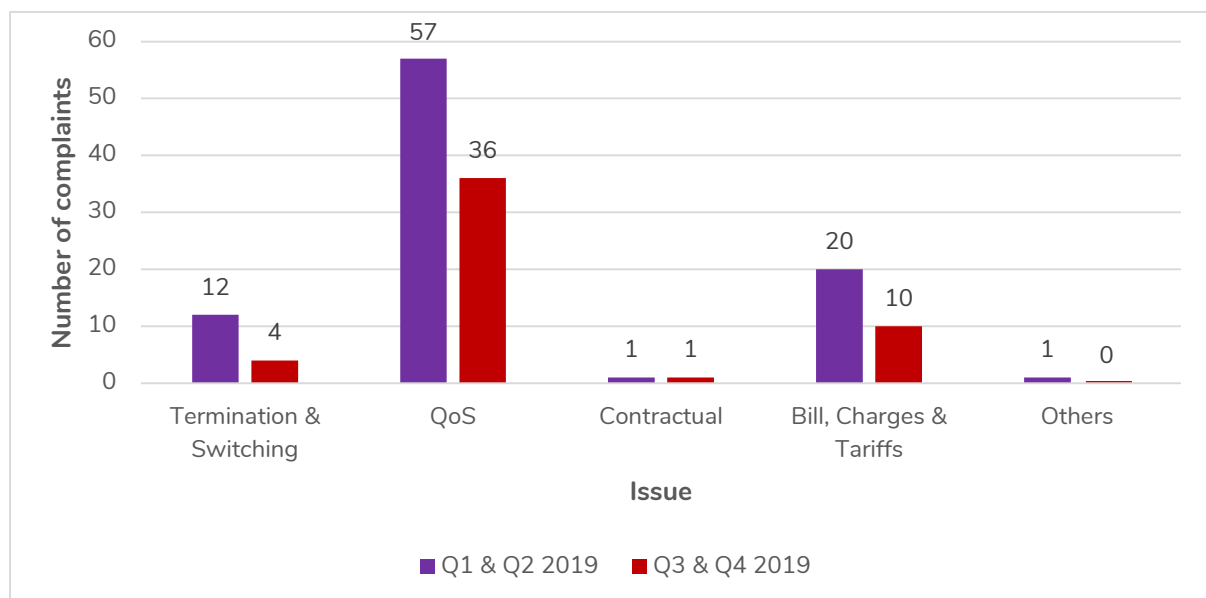


3 Electronic Communications

71% of the ECS complaints received during the second half of 2019, related to quality of service (QoS) followed by billing issues (20%). Other complaints received by the Authority related to termination and switching of services (8%) and contractual issues (1%). This report provides information on the main findings for the period covering July to December 2019.

Figure 4

Electronic Communications Complaints by Issue



3.1 Quality of Service and Service Provision

- Complaints received which are classified in this category include complaints regarding faults (15), internet speed (10), mobile reception (4), customer care (2), non-access of service/s (2), email account (1), installation (1), and devices (1).
- Whilst fault complaints remain the most common type of quality of service issues reported to the MCA, we positively note that fault reports decreased by 37% when compared to the previous 6 months. In total, the MCA received 15 complaints during the period under review and most commonly these related to fixed telephony and internet services.

- Faults are generally caused by damages to the operator's external network, damages to subscribers' equipment (e.g. Internet modem or TV set-top box), or damages to the subscribers' in-house wiring. A number of factors could cause faults including weather conditions, damages caused by third parties and/or by end-users. In the cases reported to the Authority, the MCA monitored the actions undertaken by the service providers to ensure that faults were repaired within the shortest time possible and where necessary impacted end-users were provided with a compensation in line with their service provider compensation scheme. In extreme cases, end-users were also provided with a temporary solution until the services were restored.
- The Authority received 10 complaints regarding internet performance. In such cases, subscribers were invited to provide suitable evidence to enable investigation, such as screenshots of speed tests carried out through a wired connection. In 4 of the cases received, after the end-users provided the MCA with screenshots of speed tests showing lower speeds than that listed in their contract, the MCA contacted the respective service provider to remedy the issue. In one instance where this was not possible, the customer agreed to the monetary compensation proposed by his service provider. In the remaining 5 cases, the issues raised by end-users related to the coverage of their residential internet Wi-Fi connection. In these cases end-users were provided with tips and other information on how to improve their coverage.
- The MCA also received 4 complaints regarding poor indoor mobile reception. In these cases, the MCA contacted the respective service providers in order to see whether an indoor mobile repeater can be installed to enhance the network strength within the premises where the end-user lives. In most of the cases an amicable solution was found.

3.2 Billing, Charges and Tariffs

- This category of complaints includes claims received regarding incorrect billing (5), non-payment of bills (4), and refund (1).
- The number of complaints recorded in this category decreased by 50% when compared to the previous six months which continues to confirm this positive trend registered in previous periods.
- Most of the complaints received related to incorrect billing with a total of 5 complaints received. In 3 of these cases the MCA determined that some of the charges included in the subscriber's bill were unjustified and it monitored the actions undertaken by the service providers to any incorrect charges are waived. In the other 2 cases, the MCA provided the end-user with the necessary information and clarifications regarding the disputed charges.



3.3 Other complaints

- The MCA received 4 complaints regarding issues encountered by subscribers when porting their number from one service provider to another or when terminating their service/s. The MCA ensured that the service providers intervened to address any shortcomings or to provide clarifications where necessary.
- During this period the MCA received 1 complaint regarding contract terms and conditions. MCA's investigations concluded that in this case the increase in subscriber's monthly rent after the expiry of his contract was not justified since no such conditions in the relevant contract were stipulated and no advance notice was provided to the client as mandated by law.



4 Postal Services and E-Commerce

- The MCA received 12 complaints regarding postal services during the last six months of 2019 from MaltaPost customers. There was a decrease of 58% in complaints when compared to the first half of 2019. Notwithstanding this decrease, the MCA will continue monitoring MaltaPost's complaint handling function until it is satisfied that the initiatives being undertaken by MaltaPost adequately meet customers' expectations.
- The complaints received by the Authority were related to mis-delivery of mail (5), delayed or undelivered mail (5), customer care (1) and compensation (1).
- The MCA referred these issues to the service provider and requested the provider to monitor the provision of the service in the affected area and to ensure that any possible issues identified are addressed.
- More information on postal services and the type of redress applicable in cases of lost or undelivered mail is available in the end-users section on [MCA's website](#).

During the last six months of 2019, the MCA did not receive any complaints regarding e-Commerce services.

5 Customer Care Telephone Response Time

Along the years, service providers have added new and innovative support tools in addition to the traditional contact channels to enable their customers to flag any issues they are facing when using their services. These include chat and social media support amongst others. A recent [survey](#) commissioned by the MCA, indicates however, that telephone still remains the most preferred customer contact channel amongst local users with more than 70% of respondents opting for this support tool.

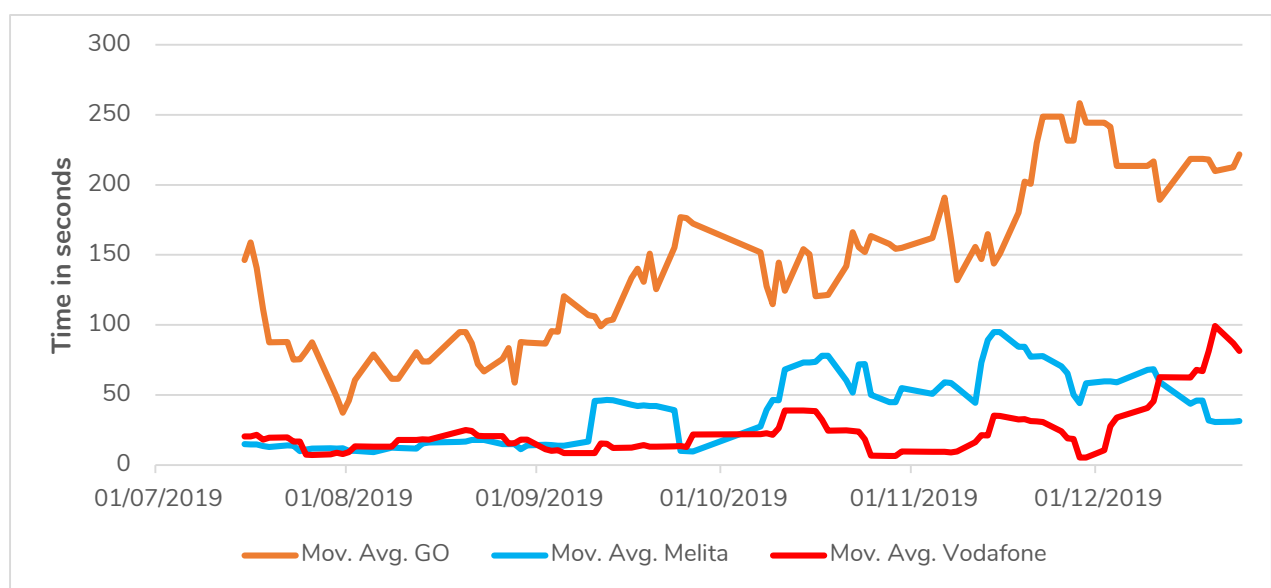
The MCA conducts an ongoing basic mystery shopping exercises aimed at measuring the time taken for a telephone call to be answered by a customer care agent of the 3 main electronic communications service providers.

From the information gathered, the MCA positively notes that the average time taken for a call to be answered was 69 seconds. The information gathered is based on 324 measurements taken at various times of the day between July and December 2019. 90% of the calls made were answered within 5 minutes.

Figure 5 below presents a moving average trend line based on measurements recorded for each operator. Ongoing analysis of such metrics and relative trends, helps the MCA in carrying out its compliance monitoring function, especially when sudden shift in trends are recorded.

Figure 5

Average Call Waiting Time (in seconds) to be answered by a Customer Care Agent





6 MCA Initiatives

MCA Consumer Seminar

In November 2019, the MCA held a seminar titled 'Placing Consumers at the Heart of Electronic Communications Services'. More than a 110 participants representing regulatory authorities, consumer bodies, professional bodies, and service providers were brought together to discuss the emerging issues being faced by consumers and the different initiatives that could be taken to empower consumers, meets their demands and protects their interests.

The seminar kicked off with the presentation of the results of a study commissioned by the MCA to gauge telecom consumers' experience and was followed by a panel discussion which featured the CEOs of GO plc, Melita Ltd and Vodafone Malta Ltd. Other high profile local and international speakers included representatives from the European Commission, University of Malta, BEUC (the European Consumer Organisation), OFCOM (the UK's Communications Regulator), and Cullen International which provides independent regulatory intelligence.

Full details about the presentations delivered during the seminar and other material is accessible from [MCA's website](#).