

National Numbering Conventions

Consultation and Proposed Decision

October 2009

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1 INTRODUCTION

The MCA introduced the Numbering Conventions in 2001 before liberalisation had really begun in the Maltese electronic communications market, apart from the launch of Go Mobile.

In December 2005 the MCA issued a consultative document on a revision and simplification of the Numbering Conventions in parallel with its consultative document on the Numbering Plan. In June 2006 the MCA published the decision 'National Numbering Conventions' which included comments on the responses it received during consultation.

Since the publication of the Conventions in June 2006, the market has seen the entry of a number of new entrants and new services requiring numbering resources. From this development it became evident that it would be desirable if the national numbering conventions are updated to include:

- a more detailed process to apply for numbering resources,
- different timeframes in the application process applicable to:
 - applications for new numbers in blocks from unallocated number ranges, and
 - applications for additional numbers/number blocks from within the same number range containing number blocks previously allocated to the same applicant operator with identical terms and conditions.
- a delineation of responsibilities of the various parties during a number application process
- requirements to ensure that all callers in Malta can reach new numbers when they are brought into service in a timely manner.
- the provision whereby unused number blocks may be recovered by the MCA.

The proposed procedures for the allocation of numbering resources contain the following provisions:

- Within the scope of the Numbering Plan, operators and service providers may apply for specific number blocks and the MCA will normally allocate the blocks according to their wishes from the unallocated space if it deems it appropriate;
- All new allocations of numbers are immediately added to the Numbering Allocation Table maintained on the MCA website;
- All operators have at most 10 working days to include additional number blocks with existing interconnection agreements, and identical terms and conditions pertaining to other blocks within the same numbering range to their routing tables,
- All operators have at most 30 working days to add new number blocks with new interconnection arrangements and termination rates to their routing tables.
- Provision is included for testing calls, within the set timeframes to do so, from other operators;

2 TEXT OF NATIONAL NUMBERING CONVENTIONS

Definitions

Activated

Activated is the status of a number when it is fully operational such that it is able to support the telecommunications service for which it is designated.

Allocation

An allocation is the granting of rights of use over numbers from designated number ranges to authorised providers. Allocation of numbers grants a right to use the allocated numbers in accordance with the Numbering Plan but it is not a property transfer.

Applicant

A service provider or operator that applies for numbers/number blocks.

National Numbering Conventions

The National Numbering Conventions is the set of 'rules' under which the Maltese National Numbering Plan is managed and administered.

National Numbering Plan

The national numbering plan specifies the subdivisions of the Maltese numbering space, the purposes for which each number range may be used and the conditions attaching to such use.

Originating Operator

An operator who originates calls to numbers that may be served on the networks of other operators.

Service Provider

An entity that offers telecommunications services to subscribers and/or other service providers, involving the use of telecommunication facilities provided by network operators.

Subscriber/Customer

A person or organisation that receives telecommunications services from a service provider or operator, usually against payment. The subscriber / customer is normally also an end-user of the relevant service.

3 GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 MCA Responsibilities

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) is responsible for managing the Maltese telecommunications Numbering Plan and issuing conventions for its administration. The MCA has a statutory obligation to put in place procedures to ensure that the allocation of numbers is carried out in an objective, transparent, equitable, non-discriminatory, and timely manner.

The MCA will maintain, develop and administer the Numbering Plan and its conditions to achieve the following objectives:

1. The Numbering Plan should provide a stable framework for the development of communications with sufficient capacity and flexibility to meet future demands of end-users, operators and service providers;
2. The Numbering Plan will, where appropriate, remain compatible with relevant international agreements, standards and recommendations;
3. Where changes to the Numbering Plan are necessary, they will be implemented in a way that minimises disruption, cost and inconvenience for customers, operators and service providers;
4. Publicity for changes will be co-ordinated and commence well in advance of the change taking place;
5. The Numbering Plan will be organised wherever possible and practicable to enable callers to gain from the number a reasonable indication of the tariff type that applies to a call.

The MCA will:

1. Aim to respond to applications for numbers within the timeframes stated in the Application Process section found below;
2. Treat all applications for numbering capacity in confidence unless they raise issues that require public consultation;
3. Not disclose information obtained during the course of managing the Numbering Plan about undertakings, their business relations or their cost components, provided that such information has been identified as confidential;
4. Take account of the need that operators may have for additional allocations in the future and where possible avoid the interleaving of allocations to different operators so that routing tables are not unnecessarily lengthened;
5. Advise the ITU-T Secretariat as necessary of the allocations in Malta;
6. Consult on any changes of substance to the Numbering Plan.

The MCA does not for the time being intend to make allocations of numbers itself direct to subscribers or end users.

The MCA may at any time and without notice withdraw an allocation at the request of the Government concerning a matter of national security or interest. The reason for the withdrawal will normally be given to the operator concerned.

3.2 Applicant's Responsibilities

Operators and service providers who apply for and are allocated numbers shall:

1. Recognise that the allocation of a number/number block is a grant of right of use and not a property transfer;
2. Use numbers allocated to them only in accordance with the purpose given in the Numbering Plan for the range containing the numbers concerned and with any conditions that attach to the numbering range, including the adoption of any changes made by the MCA;
3. Unless the MCA agrees otherwise, surrender any number block that has not been used at all within two years of its allocation;
4. Surrender any number block that has been used but where usage has ceased unless it needs the number block for other purposes that also conform to the plan. Unless the MCA agrees otherwise, this shall be done no later than 12 months after the last use of a number in the block;
5. Conform to any direction given by the MCA concerning the national numbering plan;
6. Maintain an up-to-date record of the numbers in use and any numbers they have ported to other operators;
7. Provide to the MCA upon request any information that it may reasonably require concerning their current and planned use of numbers or any other information relevant to the administration of the national numbering plan;
8. Not allocate network specific numbers that conflict with the Numbering Plan and keep the MCA informed of all internally allocated network specific numbers with the exception of numbers used for internal network purposes that may be changed or withdrawn without difficulty (eg temporary test numbers);
9. Where numbers are subject to individual number charging:
 - i. provide twice yearly, by 30 April and by 31 October, a statement of the number of numbers that were utilised on the last day of the previous month; 31 March and 30 September respectively;
 - ii. pay invoices for number charges within one calendar month;
10. Inform the MCA if they share a block of allocated numbers with another operator or service provider and ensure that such arrangements conform fully to the Numbering Plan;
11. Advise the MCA of the name and contact details of the person responsible for numbering issues;
12. Check that the numbering allocation table published on the MCA website contains a true representation of the numbers, and/or number blocks allocated to it by the MCA;
13. Whenever use of a number by a subscriber ceases, not re-allocate the number to another subscriber for a period of at least three months;
14. Whenever the MCA introduces changes to the national numbering plan, the applicant shall ensure that the following measures are in place wherever possible and appropriate:
 - i. a period of parallel running, at no extra charge to the number holder, during which both old and new numbers are available for use (typically 6 to 12 months);

- ii. after completion of the change, a period of call trapping during which announcements are made free of charge to callers to the old number to inform them of the change, (typically for 3 to 6 months after the end of the parallel running period).

4 THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The numbering plan provides a list of the available numbering ranges and the requirements and criteria that apply to them (including requirements on termination rates). The following applies for applications that fit into the current numbering plan. If an applicant wishes to obtain numbers for a service that does not fit into the existing numbering plan it should discuss with the MCA the possibility of changing or enhancing the numbering plan so that suitable numbering ranges become available. If and when these ranges have been made available the applicant can apply for numbers using the following process.

Applications for numbers fall under one of the following two application processes.

- **Applications for new numbers/number blocks.**

Applications for numbers/number blocks where the applicant has never been allocated numbers/number blocks within the same number range using the same terminating rate and interconnection arrangements as included in the application of the numbers applied for.

- **Applications for additional numbers/number blocks**

Applications for numbers/number blocks from the same number range containing number blocks previously allocated to the same applicant operator, using the same terminating rate and interconnection arrangements as included in the application of the numbers applied for.

The following application processes do not apply in the case of applications for short code numbers in the '1' range, which is treated separately in section 9 of the Development of the Number Plan decision.

The timeframes listed in this section shall not apply during an industry-wide network data freeze.

4.1 Applications for new numbers/number blocks

4.1.1 Description of the procedure

The application process is shown in the following figure.

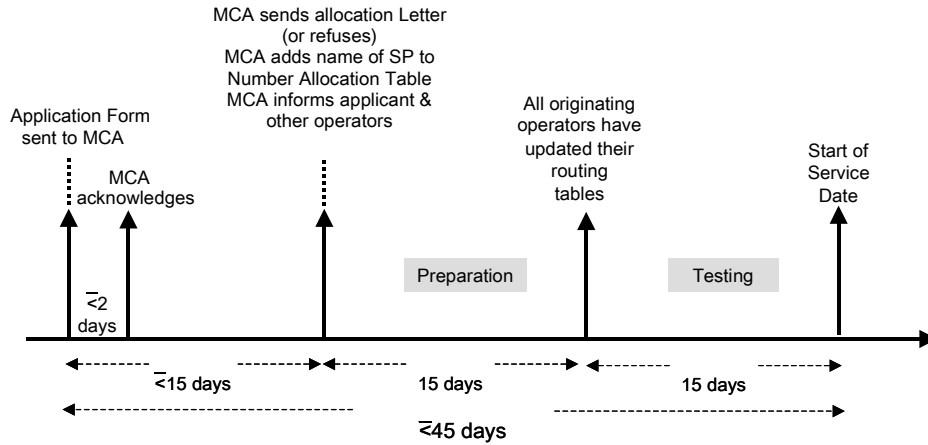


Figure 1: Number application process - new number blocks.

The following describes a summary of the process:

- a) The applicant sends the Application Form to the MCA .
- b) The MCA acknowledges the application within 2 working days.
- c) Whether the application is approved or not, the MCA replies to the applicant of its decision within 15 working days.
- d) If the application is approved, the MCA immediately informs all Originating Operators by e-mail, and publishes the Number/Number Block allocation and the identity of the Applicant in the Numbering Allocations Table.
- e) Within the 15 working days of the 'preparation phase', all Originating Operators should update their routing tables and billing information.
- f) This is followed by the 'testing phase' consisting of 15 working days to allow for test calls to be made to a test number, and any problems identified to be corrected.¹
- g) Following this timeframe, all telephony subscribers should be in a position to access the newly allocated number/s.

4.1.2 The MCA's Responsibilities

1. The MCA shall follow the principle of 'first come, first served' in respect of the choice of numbers or number blocks. Allocations shall be carried out in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. Applications for the same numbers received in the same postal delivery will be allocated by lottery.
2. The MCA shall send an acknowledgement letter to the applicant within 2 working days confirming that the application is being processed.
3. The MCA shall aim to process the allocation as soon as reasonably possible and not exceeding 15 working days from receipt of the application. This timeframe may be exceeded if such a process depends on third parties such as the ITU for particular number types.
4. The MCA may refuse an application for an allocation of numbers/number blocks. Alternatively, the MCA may attach specific conditions to the allocation that are consistent with the Numbering Plan and relate to the use and management of the numbering capacity allocated. Such specific conditions will be set out in the letter of allocation.
5. In the event of a refusal, the MCA shall inform the applicant, in writing, of its reasons.
6. If approved, the Allocation Letter shall include details on which number/number blocks have been allocated. Number/number blocks allocated may be different to those requested in the Application Form.
7. The MCA shall update the Numbering Allocation Table available on the MCA website with the new allocation when it sends the Allocation Letter to the applicant and its communication with the originating operators informing them on the allocation.

If it is requested specifically by the applicant providing valid reasons, the MCA may consider extending the immediate publishing of the allocated numbers/number blocks, and refrain from immediately informing the originating operators of the allocation. Such requests shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

¹ Both the originating and terminating operator should communicate information on test numbers and other testing related requirements prior to this phase.

The MCA may take appropriate steps to revoke or amend the additional numbers/number blocks granted to the applicant and/or the specific conditions attached thereto in line with the general responsibilities identified in Section 3.

4.1.3 The Applicant's Responsibilities

1. The applicant shall complete the Application Form found in Annex 1 in its entirety.
2. The applicant shall have the right to indicate its preference for specific numbers/number blocks. However, these preferences will not necessarily be agreed by the MCA.
3. Applications for new numbers/number blocks shall be submitted so as to allow 45 working days before the planned Start of Service Date.
4. The applicant shall ensure that, upon the MCA updating the Numbering Allocation Table available on the MCA website with the new allocation and the MCA communication with the originating operators informing them on the allocation, it sends a formal notification to all originating operators with all milestones according to these numbering conventions.
5. The applicant shall be responsible to ensure its own technical and commercial readiness to adhere with all milestones according to these numbering conventions.
6. The applicant shall ensure that any necessary contractual agreements with other operators are concluded so that the numbers can be brought into service on the Start of Service Date.
7. The applicant shall ensure that the test number is operational at least 15 days before the Start of Service Date and shall cooperate with other operators as necessary for testing and use its best efforts to resolve any technical issues with regards to terminating calls originating from other networks.
8. The applicant shall not be held responsible if subscribers of originating operators do not have access to these numbers within the stipulated timeframes provided that it has fulfilled all the points mentioned above.

4.1.4 The Originating Operator's Responsibilities

1. All originating operators who may originate calls to numbers that terminate on other networks must ensure that their subscribers may access the allocated numbers/number blocks by the Start of Service Date.
2. The originating operator shall use its best efforts to resolve any technical and administrative issues with regards to the conveyance and billing of calls and/or SMSs to these numbers/number blocks.
3. The originating operator shall be held responsible if its subscribers are not in a position to access the allocated numbers/number blocks within the stipulated timeframes provided that the applicant has fulfilled its obligations as specified in this section.
4. All originating operators shall take the utmost account of formal notifications that include milestones according to these numbering conventions which are received from applicants. Where the milestone are not or can not be adhered to, whether by the applicant or the originating operator, it shall be the Originating Operator's responsibility to inform the applicant at the earliest opportunity where this becomes apparent, giving details and reasonable

grounds for such communication. If the problem persists the originating operator is responsible to inform the MCA in writing.

4.2 Applications for additional number blocks

4.2.1 Description of the procedure

The application process is shown in the following figure.

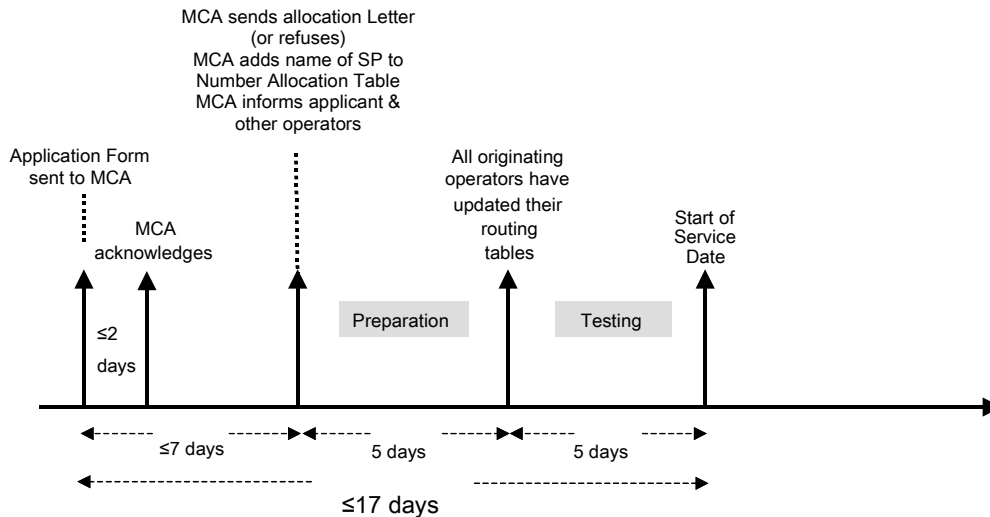


Figure 2: Number application process - additional number blocks.

The following describes a summary of the process:

- The applicant sends the Application Form to the MCA .
- The MCA acknowledges the application within 2 working days.
- Whether the application is approved or not, the MCA replies to the applicant of its decision within 7 working days.
- If the application is approved, the MCA immediately informs all Originating Operators by e-mail, and publishes the Number/Number Block allocation and the identity of the Applicant in the Numbering Allocations Table.
- Within the 5 working days of the 'preparation phase', all Originating Operators should update their routing tables and billing information.
- This is followed by the 'testing phase' consisting of 5 working days to allow for test calls to be made to a test number, and any problems identified to be corrected.²
- Following this timeframe, all telephony subscribers should be in a position to access the newly allocated number/s.

² Both the originating and terminating operator should communicate information on test numbers and other testing related requirements prior to this phase.

4.2.2 The MCA's Responsibilities

1. The MCA shall follow the principle of 'first come, first served' in respect of the choice of numbers or number blocks. Allocations shall be carried out in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. Applications for the same numbers received in the same postal delivery will be allocated by lottery.
2. The MCA shall send an acknowledgement letter to the applicant within 2 working days confirming that the application is being processed.
3. The MCA shall aim to process the allocation as soon as reasonably possible and not exceeding 7 working days from receipt of the application. This timeframe may be exceeded if such a process depends on third parties such as the ITU for particular number types.
4. The MCA may refuse an application for an allocation of numbers/number blocks. Alternatively, the MCA may attach specific conditions to the allocation that are consistent with the Numbering Plan and relate to the use and management of the numbering capacity allocated. Such specific conditions will be set out in the letter of allocation.
5. In the event of a refusal, the MCA shall inform the applicant, in writing, of its reasons.
6. If approved, the Allocation Letter shall include details on which number/number blocks have been allocated. Number/number blocks allocated may be different to those requested in the Application Form.
7. The MCA shall update the Numbering Allocation Table available on the MCA website with the new allocation when it sends the Allocation Letter to the applicant and inform all Originating Operators of the allocation.

If it is requested specifically by the applicant providing valid reasons, the MCA may consider extending the immediate publishing of the additional number block, and refrain from immediately informing the originating operators of the allocation. Such requests shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The MCA may take appropriate steps to revoke or amend the numbers numbers/number blocks granted to the applicant and/or the specific conditions attached thereto in line with the general responsibilities identified in Section 3.

4.2.3 The Applicant's Responsibilities

1. The applicant shall complete the Application Form found in Annex 2 in its entirety.
2. The applicant shall have the right to indicate its preference for specific numbers/number blocks. However, these preferences will not necessarily be agreed by the MCA.
3. Applications for additional numbers/number blocks shall be submitted so as to allow 17 working days before the planned Start of Service Date.
4. The applicant shall ensure that, upon the MCA updating the Numbering Allocation Table available on the MCA website with the additional allocation and the MCA communication with the originating operators informing them on the allocation, it sends a formal notification to all originating operators with all milestones according to these numbering conventions.
5. The applicant shall be responsible to ensure its own technical and commercial readiness to adhere with all milestones according to these numbering conventions.

6. The applicant shall ensure that any necessary contractual agreements with other operators are in place so that the numbers can be brought into service on the Start of Service Date.
7. The applicant shall ensure that the test number is operational at least 5 days before the Start of Service Date and shall cooperate with other operators as necessary for testing and use its best efforts to resolve any technical issues with regards to terminating calls originating from other networks.
8. The applicant shall not be held responsible if subscribers of originating operators do not have access to these numbers within the stipulated timeframes provided that it has fulfilled all the points mentioned above.

4.2.4 The Originating Operator's Responsibilities

1. All originating operators who may originate calls to numbers that terminate on other networks must ensure that their subscribers may access the allocated numbers/number blocks by the Start of Service Date.
2. The originating operator shall use its best efforts to resolve any technical and administrative issues with regards to the conveyance and billing of calls and/or SMSs to these numbers/number blocks.
3. The originating operator shall be held responsible if its subscribers are not in a position to access the allocated numbers/number blocks within the stipulated timeframes provided that the applicant has fulfilled its obligations as specified in this section.
4. All originating operators shall take the utmost account of formal notifications that include milestones according to these numbering conventions which are received from applicants. Where the milestone are not or can not be adhered to, whether by the applicant or the originating operator, it shall be the Originating Operator's responsibility to inform the applicant at the earliest opportunity where this becomes apparent, giving details and reasonable grounds for such communication. If the problem persists the originating operator is responsible to inform the MCA in writing.

4.3 Reservations and allocations

The MCA does not run a system of reservations for operators who are considering the possible introduction of services.

An operator or service provider who wishes to obtain the right to use a block of numbers shall make a formal application and if approved pay for the numbers from the date of allocation (if numbering fees apply).

4.4 Simplification for adding new blocks

Where practicable, the MCA will refrain from allocating 10k number blocks containing the same 3 digit prefix as other number blocks being used by another operator. This practice is designed to allow operators to choose to include only the first three digits of numbers in their routing tables, billing solutions etc so that they do not need to make further changes when another 10k block with the same value of the first 3 digits is allocated to the same operator.

In the unlikely event that other 10k number blocks from the range with the same first 3 digits have to be allocated to other operators due to numbering shortages, then this practice will no longer be possible and all operators will have to use 4-digit prefixes for routing.

4.5 Unused allocations

If after two years from allocation no subscriptions have been activated with numbers in the block concerned, the MCA may withdraw the allocation by issuing a Withdrawal of Allocation letter.

5 CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

The MCA invites comments from interested parties regarding this Consultation. The consultation period will run until 12.00pm 4th December 2009.

Comments should be sent to:

Chief of Operations
Malta Communications Authority
Valletta Waterfront
Pinto Wharf
Floriana FRN1913
MALTA

Tel: +356 2133 6840

Fax: +356 2133 6846

E-mail: coo.mca@mca.org.mt

Subject to MCA's Internal Guidelines on Confidentiality published on 16th December 2004, the Authority reserves the right to publicise written representations.

23rd October 2009

Annex 1: Application form for allocation of new numbers/number blocks

Application Date _____

COMPANY NAME	Company Reg. No. _____
Address and Contact Details	Contact Person Postal Address telephone: fax: e-mail:
Description of intended use	
Preferred numbering block or code and alternatives	
Proposed terminating rate for incoming calls/text if applicable	
The name of the operator the applicant plans to have direct interconnection with to transit calls to and/or from other operators if applicable.	
Additional Remarks; (including the special request to extend the publishing of the allocation table and the start of service date if applicable.) ³	

Signed: _____

³ Requests to extend the date of publishing and start of service date shall be considered by the MCA on a case by case basis.

ANNEX 2: APPLICATION FORM FOR ALLOCATION OF ADDITIONAL NUMBER BLOCKS

Application Date _____

COMPANY NAME	Company Reg. No. _____
Address and Contact Details	Contact Person Postal Address telephone: fax: e-mail:
Preferred numbering block :	
Additional Remarks; (including the special request to extend the publishing of the allocation table and the start of service date if applicable.) ⁴	

I declare that the intended use, terminating rate and interconnection arrangements are the same as for our existing number allocations from within the same number range.

Signed: _____

⁴ Requests to extend the date of publishing and start of service date shall be considered by the MCA on a case by case basis.