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Documentation on the migration of 01 numbers to 044 within the framework of the March 2000 Numbering Plan

Widespread discussions on changing the numbering plan began back in 1996. The interested parties, including consumers' associations, were consulted at all stages of this process. The common goal was to keep costs to a minimum. The total package decided by the Federal Communications Commission (ComCom) in March 2000 is a compromise solution which also takes into account international developments in this area.

The March 2000 numbering plan comprises several steps as part of the overall solution: the most important phase in the implementation of this plan was the closing of the numbering plan, i.e. the integration of the area code (national destination code) into numbers. This stage was completed by 29 March 2002 according to plan and without any technical hitches. The network groups 043 and 044 have been open and accessible for national and international calls since April 2001. The first users in the Zurich area (e.g. the cantonal administration) have already started using numbers in these two ranges (043 and 044). Still to be implemented is the migration of 01 numbers to the same 044 numbers (there will therefore be no change to subscriber numbers); this will mean that the length of telephone numbers will be uniform throughout Switzerland.

The new numbering plan represents a step towards the future. The closed numbering plan is providing considerable flexibility in the allocation of number blocks and is laying the foundations for introducing geographical number portability. The aim of this kind of number portability is to achieve future cost savings for both businesses and private individuals throughout Switzerland. The plan is also preventing the feared shortage of numbers in the future; the number reserves are now sufficient in all regions of Switzerland.

ComCom's concern has always been to minimise costs

To keep costs down to a minimum, a conscious decision was made to allow 7 years for the migration of 01 numbers to 044. Originally a long parallel operation from 2005 to 2007 was planned, but it has now been possible, by agreement with the telecommunication services providers, to even extend this period of parallel operation from two to three years. So it will be possible to call numbers with the 01 code using the 044 code from March 2004 to March 2007. Within this period, the consumer will therefore be able to choose when to switch over. This means that the required changeovers can take place cost-effectively, at the same time as regular technical maintenance work or when printing new letterheads, for example. This is a much more generous timespan than is customary abroad, where 3-6 months are generally allowed for such changeovers.

No criticism of the changeover until 2 years after the adoption of the numbering plan

No objections of any kind to the March 2000 numbering plan or the changeover from 01 numbers to the 044 code were received for two years. However, since May 2002 there has been

criticism of this change. The “Zürich bleibt 01” committee alleges that the changeover will cost “far more” than CHF 500 million and that new technological developments in the next few years will make the changeover superfluous. ComCom has carefully analysed all arguments. With regard to these criticisms, ComCom’s position is as follows:

- **Costs:** the costs of “far more” than CHF 500 million alleged by the “Zürich bleibt 01” committee are not comprehensible and are greatly exaggerated.
- **Technological development:** at present there are no indications of technological developments which in the foreseeable future would lead to further renumbering or which would make the current numbering plan totally superfluous.

Reasons for migrating from 01 numbers to 044

The following are the main material advantages to telecommunications users throughout Switzerland for migrating from 01 numbers to 044:

Geographical number portability without confusing consumers

With a closed numbering plan the preconditions are met for people to be able to take their numbers with them if they move anywhere within Switzerland, which represents a notable saving in terms of associated costs. This option is termed “geographical number portability”. In order to ensure that there will be no confusion among consumers caused by having telephone numbers of different lengths – for example when 01 numbers are taken to other parts of Switzerland – ComCom concluded that it would be extremely advantageous to have a harmonised number format, with numbers of the same length, throughout Switzerland. It is up to telecommunication services providers to decide when they want to offer this service to their customers.

Reducing misdialled calls to the emergency services

The abolition of the 01 network group will eliminate a considerable proportion of misdialled short numbers, especially for the emergency services (e.g. 144, 143, etc.). Misdialled calls currently cause unwelcome delays and considerable extra cost, especially for emergency numbers. Thus misdialling to the important emergency ambulance service number 144 is a real problem and may have serious consequences if it delays the answering of emergency calls. An example of misdialling: 144 instead of 01 44x xx xx. This happens in particular with calls through switchboards.

Calls from abroad to short numbers will be possible

With the abolition of the 01 network group it will also be possible to dial short numbers from abroad. Up to now this was not permitted because of possible clashes with other numbers (e.g. 00 41 163 ⇔ 0041 1 63x xx xx). It is not just telephone customers who will benefit: Swiss tourism, for example, could also take advantage of this (e.g. 163: road conditions, traffic news; 162: weather forecast; 164: sport news; 187: Alpen-Info, snow conditions).