



National Communications Authority
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الهيئة الوطنية للاتصالات

NUMBER PORTABILITY GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

These Number Portability Guidelines are issued by the National Communications Authority pursuant to its mandate under the National Communications Law, 2017, and in accordance with the National Numbering Regulation (2020) and the National Telephone Numbering Plan (2024).

The Guidelines are an integral part of Somalia's numbering management framework and complement the existing regulatory instruments governing the planning, allocation, assignment, and use of national numbering resources. In particular, they operationalize number portability within the national E.164 numbering structure while preserving the principles that numbering resources are a national asset managed by the Authority and granted to licensees strictly as rights of use.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to establish a clear, transparent, and pro-competitive framework that enables subscribers to retain their telephone numbers when changing service providers without disrupting the integrity of the National Numbering Plan or the orderly administration of numbering resources. Number portability is recognized as a key consumer protection and competition-enhancing measure that reduces switching barriers, promotes service innovation, and improves quality of service across the telecommunications market.

2. Objectives

The objectives of these Number Portability Guidelines are to:

- a) Enable subscribers to retain their telephone numbers when changing telecommunications service providers, in accordance with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan, while ensuring service continuity.
- b) Promote effective and sustainable competition in the telecommunications market by reducing switching barriers and preventing anti-competitive practices related to the use of numbering resources.
- c) Strengthen consumer protection by ensuring that number portability is implemented in a transparent, non-discriminatory, and user-friendly manner.
- d) Ensure the efficient, orderly, and integrity-preserving use of national numbering resources, recognizing that numbering resources are a national asset managed by the National Communications Authority.
- e) Establish a clear institutional, technical, and procedural framework for number portability that is consistent with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan.
- f) Safeguard network reliability, quality of service, and accurate call routing during and after the porting process.
- g) Align the implementation of number portability in Somalia with relevant international standards and best practices, while accounting for the national market structure and regulatory environment.

3. Legal Basis

Based on the National Communication Act, 2017, the National Communication Authority (the “Authority”) has the power to issue regulations, orders, procedures and resolutions for the allocation of telephone numbers and numbering plans.

4. Scope and Application

These Number Portability Guidelines shall apply as follows:

- a) To all licensed telecommunications operators authorized by the National Communications Authority to provide public electronic communications services using national numbering resources.
- b) To all telephone numbers assigned in accordance with the National Numbering Regulation (2020) and the National Telephone Numbering Plan (2024) that are designated by the Authority as eligible for number portability.
- c) To support number portability between licensed service providers, including portability resulting from changes in service provider, network technology, or service offering, where the subscriber retains the same telephone number.
- d) To the institutional, technical, and procedural arrangements required for the implementation and operation of number portability, including routing, database management, and inter-operator coordination.
- e) To all subscribers of licensed telecommunications services, including prepaid, postpaid, personal, and non-personal accounts, subject to the eligibility conditions set out in these Guidelines.
- f) To all activities related to the request, processing, execution, and completion of number portability, including consumer information, tariff transparency, quality of service, and complaint handling.
- g) These Guidelines shall not apply to the allocation, assignment, or withdrawal of numbering resources.

5. Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines, unless the context otherwise requires:

- Authority means the National Communications Authority established under the National Communications Law, 2017.
- All Call Query (ACQ) is a call routing method in which the originating network determines the recipient network for a ported number by querying a centralized or synchronized database before routing the call.
- Clearing House / Central Reference Database (CRDB) means the centralized system designated or approved by the Authority to support number portability, including the administration of porting processes and the maintenance of reference data for ported numbers.
- Donor Operator means the licensed telecommunications operator from whose network a subscriber ports a telephone number.

- **Recipient Operator** means the licensed telecommunications operator to whose network a subscriber ports a telephone number.
- **Number Portability** means the ability of a subscriber to retain the same telephone number when changing from one licensed telecommunications operator to another, in accordance with these Guidelines.
- **Ported Number** means a telephone number that has been successfully transferred from a donor operator to a recipient operator under the number portability process.
- **Porting** is the technical and administrative process by which a telephone number is transferred from one operator's network to another while remaining with the subscriber.
- **Porting Request** means a request initiated by a subscriber, through the recipient operator, to transfer a telephone number under the number portability process.
- **Subscriber** means a natural or legal person who is lawfully assigned a telephone number by a licensed telecommunications operator.
- **Telephone Number** means a number assigned in accordance with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan for the purpose of providing electronic communications services.
- **Unified Licensing Framework** means the licensing framework adopted by the Authority that governs the authorization of telecommunications operators and services in Somalia.

6. General Principles of Number Portability

The implementation and operation of number portability in Somalia shall be governed by the following principles:

- a) Number portability is intended to support subscriber choice by enabling subscribers, where feasible, to retain their telephone numbers when changing licensed telecommunications service providers.
- b) Operators are encouraged to adopt a recipient-led, "one-stop-shop" approach, in which the recipient operator facilitates the porting process on behalf of the subscriber in a simple and efficient manner.
- c) Operators are expected to handle number portability requests in a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory way, and to avoid practices that may unnecessarily delay or discourage porting.
- d) Number portability is intended to operate independently of commercial disputes or contractual matters between subscribers and donor operators, without prejudice to operators' rights to pursue such matters through lawful means.
- e) Number portability should be implemented in a manner that supports the efficient, orderly, and sustainable use of national numbering resources, consistent with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan.
- f) Operators are encouraged to take reasonable measures to maintain service continuity, accurate call routing, and network reliability during and after the porting process.
- g) Subscribers should be provided with clear, accurate information about the porting process, its expected timeframes, and any implications for existing services or balances.
- h) The National Communications Authority should provide guidance, monitor market practices, and engage with operators to promote adherence to these principles and the effective implementation of number portability.

- i) Subscribers shall be provided with clear, accurate, and timely information regarding the porting process, its implications, applicable timeframes, and any loss of services or balances associated with porting.

7. Eligibility and Account Treatment

The following eligibility and account treatment principles shall apply to number portability:

- a) Number portability shall apply to active telephone numbers assigned in accordance with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan, as determined by the Authority.
- b) Both prepaid and postpaid subscribers, including personal and non-personal (corporate or institutional) subscribers, may request number portability, subject to verification requirements.
- c) Number portability may be supported across different account types, including:
 - prepaid to prepaid;
 - postpaid to postpaid; and
 - prepaid to postpaid, or vice versa.
- d) For non-personal or corporate accounts, operators may require appropriate authorization from the account holder or designated representative before processing a porting request.
- e) Where multiple numbers are associated with a single account, portability may be requested for individual numbers or groups of numbers, subject to coordination between the donor and recipient operators.
- f) Number portability shall not include the portability of SIM cards, value-added services, or prepaid balances remaining, unless otherwise agreed between operators or specified by the Authority.

8. Technical Framework and Routing

The technical implementation of number portability shall be guided by the following framework:

- a) Number portability shall be supported by a centralized reference database or clearing mechanism designated or approved by the Authority to manage ported number information.
- b) Operators are expected to implement efficient and reliable routing mechanisms, including All Call Query (ACQ) or equivalent methods, to ensure accurate call and message delivery to ported numbers.
- c) Operators shall ensure interoperability between networks to support seamless routing, signaling, and service continuity for ported numbers.
- d) Ported number data shall be maintained in a secure, accurate, and up-to-date manner, with appropriate safeguards to protect network integrity and subscriber information.
- e) The technical framework for number portability shall remain technology-neutral and adaptable to future network evolutions, subject to guidance from the Authority.

9. Number Porting Procedures

Number portability shall be facilitated through a transparent and coordinated process, guided by the following procedural principles:

- a) Porting requests shall normally be initiated by the subscriber through the recipient operator, which shall coordinate the process on the subscriber's behalf.
- b) Operators may apply reasonable verification measures to confirm the subscriber's identity and the validity of the porting request.
- c) Donor and recipient operators shall cooperate in good faith to process porting requests efficiently and resolve any issues that arise during the process.
- d) Operators shall coordinate the activation of the number on the recipient network and the deactivation on the donor network to minimize service disruption.
- e) Subscribers may request deferred porting or subsequent porting, subject to conditions and safeguards established by operators or the Authority.
- f) Subscribers should be informed of the status of their porting request and any issues that may affect its completion.

10. Porting Timeframes and Service Levels

The following principles shall guide porting timeframes and service quality:

- a) Number portability should be completed within reasonable and predictable timeframes, consistent with operational capabilities and international best practices.
- b) Operators are encouraged to minimize service interruptions during the porting process and ensure the continuity of essential services.
- c) The Authority may define or approve service level benchmarks, performance indicators, or reporting requirements to monitor the effectiveness of number portability.
- d) Operators may be required to provide information or reports on porting performance, including volumes, completion times, and failure rates.
- e) Operators are encouraged to review and improve porting processes over time to enhance efficiency, reliability, and subscriber experience.

11. Status of Ported Numbers and Number Lifecycle

The management of ported numbers and their lifecycle shall be guided by the following principles:

- a) A ported number shall remain part of the national numbering resources and shall continue to be subject to the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan.
- b) Upon successful porting, the recipient operator shall have the right to use the ported number to provide services to the subscriber, subject to the conditions of use established by the Authority.
- c) Where service to a ported number is terminated, the number shall be returned to the control of the original or block operator, in accordance with the number lifecycle rules established under the national numbering framework.

- d) Returned numbers should be subject to an appropriate quarantine period before reassignment to protect consumers and ensure orderly numbering management.
- e) Subscribers may request subsequent porting of a number, subject to reasonable safeguards intended to prevent abuse of the porting process and to ensure operational stability.

12. Costs, Charges, and Tariff Transparency

The financial aspects of number portability shall be guided by the following principles:

- a) Operators are expected to bear their own costs associated with enabling number portability within their networks, subject to any cost-sharing or settlement arrangements approved by the Authority.
- b) Number portability is intended to be provided to subscribers without direct charges, unless otherwise authorized by the Authority.
- c) Any costs related to centralized database administration or clearing mechanisms shall be allocated in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, as determined or approved by the Authority.
- d) Operators should ensure that subscribers can identify when they are calling or messaging a ported number, where such information is relevant for tariff or charging purposes.
- e) Operators are expected to avoid imposing indirect, hidden, or discriminatory charges that may discourage or undermine the use of number portability.

13. Quality of Service, Reporting, and Data Management

The following principles shall apply to quality, reporting, and data handling in relation to number portability:

- a) Operators should ensure that services provided to ported numbers meet applicable quality of service standards and are not inferior to those provided to non-porting numbers.
- b) Number portability processes should be designed and operated in a manner that minimizes errors, delays, and service disruptions.
- c) The Authority may require operators and any designated clearing entity to submit periodic reports on number portability performance, including volumes, processing times, and failure rates.
- d) Operators and clearing entities shall maintain accurate, up-to-date, and consistent records of ported numbers and shall take reasonable steps to correct discrepancies.
- e) Subscriber and porting data shall be handled in accordance with applicable data protection, confidentiality, and security requirements.

14. Consumer Complaints and Dispute Resolution

Consumer protection and dispute resolution in relation to number portability shall be guided by the following:

- a) Subscribers should initially direct complaints related to number portability to the recipient operator, which is expected to coordinate with the donor operator as necessary.
- b) Donor and recipient operators are expected to cooperate in good faith to resolve complaints efficiently and fairly.
- c) Where a complaint or dispute cannot be resolved between the subscriber and the operator, the matter may be escalated to the National Communications Authority for review and determination.
- d) Disputes between operators regarding number portability may be referred to the Authority, which may request relevant information and issue guidance or determinations as appropriate.
- e) Any party aggrieved by a decision of the Authority regarding number portability may seek redress under applicable laws and procedures.

15. Transitional and Final Provisions

The following transitional and final provisions shall apply:

- a) The Authority may provide for a phased or staged implementation of number portability, including pilot phases or transitional arrangements, to allow operators sufficient time to adapt their technical and operational systems.
- b) These Guidelines shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the National Numbering Regulation and the National Telephone Numbering Plan, and shall not affect existing rights and obligations relating to numbering resources except as necessary to enable number portability.
- c) The Authority may issue supplementary procedures, technical specifications, templates, or explanatory notes to support the implementation of these Guidelines.
- d) The Authority may review and amend these Guidelines from time to time to reflect market developments, technological evolution, or policy objectives, following appropriate consultation where necessary.
- e) These Guidelines shall take effect on the date of issuance by the National Communications Authority.