



Covid-19 pandemic

25 March 2020

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Guidelines on traffic management measures/other measures in the event of networks being overloaded

I. Current situation

- To date there are no known cases of networks in Germany becoming overloaded as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The networks are currently stable. The network operators have put in place all the arrangements to maintain network operations as well as possible.
- Owing to the dynamics of the situation, however, it cannot be ruled out that a further increase in the use of telephony, video conferencing and streaming services will lead to networks becoming overloaded.
- The Bundesnetzagentur is in close contact with the telecommunications industry on possible measures to prevent networks from being overloaded. These guidelines will be continually updated and adapted to the situation in cooperation with the network operators.
- Technical problems currently experienced by internet users are frequently due primarily to causes outside the network (eg insufficient server capacities for home working, internet access capabilities).
(Potentially) overloaded networks are not the current cause.



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II. Permissible measures to prevent the possibility of networks being overloaded

- It is possible to **give priority to telephony services and other high-performance services** over general internet access services.
- Possibilities to **reduce the traffic load of data-intensive services** (such as, in particular, video streaming):
 - Content providers (in particular providers of video streaming services such as Netflix) can voluntarily lower the quality of their applications and content, for instance by switching from UHD to SD/HD, and thereby reduce the bit rates needed for their services.
 - Internet access providers can apply traffic management measures (such as throttling) to certain categories of data traffic (for example video streaming) for the period a network is overloaded. If traffic is throttled, the entire data traffic category –and not just individual providers – should be throttled equally. Throttling video streaming could enable video conferencing services to be prioritised.
- **Measures affecting internet access services as a whole** (such as limiting the maximum data transfer rate or other quality parameters) are permitted. Other conceivable options include suspending zero-rating offers and limiting volumes.