

**Unitary enterprise A1**

Internatsionalnaya ul., 36-2, 220030, Minsk
Tel.: + 375 17 330 33 03, fax: +375 17 217 84 92
e-mail: info@A1.by
UNP 101528843, OKPO 37522963
b/a BY05PJCB30120002411000000933
in Priorbank JSC
Minsk, BSC 115, BIC PJCBBY2X

29.10.2020 № 3-4/10413

Reg. # _____ dated _____

October 29, 2020
Minsk, Belarus

Felicia Fauzia Anthonio, Campaigner, #KeepItOn Lead

Dear Felicia Fauzia Anthonio,

In respect to the joint letter urging telecom service providers in Belarus to be transparent and resist internet shutdowns, signed by member organizations of the #KeepItOn coalition and addressed to A1 Belarus, a subsidiary of A1 Telekom Austria Group, we are pleased to answer the following.

As A1 Telekom Austria Group we are deeply concerned by the recently reported and ongoing use of partial and complete Internet shutdowns, as well as targeted content blocking by the Government of Belarus in the aftermath of 2020 Belarusian presidential elections.

Nevertheless, our strong commitment towards legal compliance and establishment of transparency in governmental interventions on public internet access do not always include disclosure/publishment of all endeavors to limit or fade out such interventions.

A1 Belarus has publicly disclosed that the company is currently experiencing disruption of its services due to both the decisions of the Belarusian Government and Belarusian state owned providers, which are the sole operators of networks that carry the traffic from and to Belarus¹. To this effect, we would like to report here a further statement that A1 Telekom Austria Group released to the press². In this context, both earlier in August and more recently, the Austrian Government has issued public statements condemning any attempts to limit internet access for Belarusian citizens. Such attempts unfortunately affect, among others, also A1 Belarus.

In addition, for providing further insights as to your letter, A1 Telekom Austria Group has publicly commented on A1 Belarus' status towards the case, which was included in position paper of European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO)³ underlining that A1 Belarus is not able to provide communication services without monopolized services provided by the state. Both national and international, voice and data interconnectivity are under full control of state-owned institutions and outside of A1 Belarus control. Taking into account the fact that such a setup is unique for Europe, the state does not depend on

¹ Public statements of Belarusian state owned providers and A1 Belarus towards the disruption of network during August 9-12, 2020: <https://42.tut.by/695983>

² Public statement of A1 Telekom Austria Group on the Internet outages in Belarus from August 9-12, 2020 <https://newsroom.a1.group/news-a1-statement-on-the-internet-outages-in-belarus-from-august-9-12-2020?id=111222&menueid=14594&l=english>

³ ETNO EP letter on internet shutdowns: https://www.etno.eu/downloads/positionpapers/re_a1telekomaustria_belarus_16.9.2020.pdf

operators in its blackout initiative to preserve "national security". Liberalization of these gateways was escalated numerous times, however, unsuccessfully. Moreover, the World Trade Organization accession priorities towards Belarus include liberalization of said gateways.

In our regards, we welcome the work of ETNO Association, which openly explains the complexity of the current situation for telecom operators in Belarus and confirm the repeated intentions of A1 Telekom Austria Group aimed at demonopolization of the external gateway, which can lead to the development of a competitive environment among providers in favor of the consumers.

Clearly, the continuous countrywide Internet services blackouts or targeted filtering of Internet services by the Government of Belarus are not in our interest or in the interest of our customers. However, as in every country in which A1 Telekom Austria Group operates, we have to comply with the local legal and regulatory requirements and in this case, we had to implement them accordingly. In case of failing to comply with an order, blackouts are and have been implemented by state in a much larger scale and resulted in the disconnection of all internet services, both fixed and mobile, for our customers countrywide as it was already experienced by A1 Belarus on August 26, 2020 which was publicly reported⁴.

A1 Telekom Austria Group expresses its utmost regret that the telco industry is becoming a target of such massive interventions and hopes that the Government of Belarus will respect fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and opinion and internet access.

Looking forward to a potential personal call on this matter if you need further clarification.

Best regards,

Nikolay Bredelev
Corporate Communications Head
Unitary enterprise A1

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nikolay Bredelev', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

⁴ A1 Belarus public statement on Internet blackout: <https://www.a1.by/en/company/news/o-rabote-mobilnogo-interneta-v-minske-26-avgusta/p/rabota-mobilnogo-interneta-3g-26avgusta>