

Making Internet Use Universal

Social Internet Tariff

The Decree Law No. 66/2021 of July 30 (Diploma) creates the social tariff for the provision of broadband Internet access services.

What is the context for the creation of the social tariff for the provision of Internet access services?

The social tariff for access to fixed or mobile broadband Internet services occurs in the context of the transformation and promotion of digital citizenship and is implemented with the aim of generalizing the use of this resource by the most deprived segments of the population.

The creation of the Internet social tariff is a measure that is foreseen in measure 4 of the Action Plan for Digital Transition, approved by the Council of Ministers Resolution no. 30/2020, of April 21st, in line with the capacity building initiatives included in this Plan and in the "National Initiative Digital Skills e.2030, Portugal INCoDe.2030", which promotes digital literacy and the use of basic digital services that require connectivity guarantee, namely at the level of consultation and use of digital public services, at the level of access to home banking and at the level of email account management."

What is the rationale for the creation of this tariff?

The importance of universal access to the Internet was reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made a decisive contribution to proving the growing indispensability and need for the Internet by the general population, particularly in terms of access to public and private services and in situations of remote work and distance learning.

The Decree creates the social tariff for supplying broadband Internet access services, to be applied to consumers with low incomes or special social needs, aligning eligibility with the criteria in force for social tariffs for other essential services, namely energy and water.

What are the broadband Internet access services provided under this social tariff?

The Internet access service encompasses the provision of a package of basic services, provided via fixed or mobile broadband, whenever there is installed infrastructure and/or mobile coverage that allows such provision, and must support the following minimum set of services:

- a) Electronic mail;
- b) Search engines, which allow searching and consulting all types of information;
- c) Online basic training and educational tools;
- d) Newspapers or online news;
- e) Buying or ordering goods or services online;
- f) Job search and job search tools;

- g) Professional networking;
- h) Internet banking services;
- i) Use of e-government services;
- j) Use of social networks and instant messaging;
- k) Calls and video calls (with standard quality).

Who defines the bandwidth necessary for the provision of this set of services?

The National Communications Authority (ANACOM) is the competent authority to "define the bandwidth necessary for the provision of this set of services, as well as the minimum quality parameters, namely download and upload speeds, considering, namely, the broadband Internet access service offers practiced in the national market, as well as the reports of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications on the best practices of Member States to support the definition of adequate broadband Internet access service."

What are consumers with low incomes or special social needs for the purpose of applying the social tariff for the provision of broadband Internet access services?

Consumers with low incomes or with special social needs are natural persons in the following situations:

- (a) The beneficiaries of the solidarity supplement for the elderly;
- b) Beneficiaries of the social insertion income;
- c) Beneficiaries of unemployment benefits;
- d) The beneficiaries of family allowance;
- e) Beneficiaries of the social disability pension of the special disability protection scheme or of the social allowance supplement for inclusion;
- f) Households with an annual income equal to or less than (euro) 5808,00, plus 50% for each member of the household with no income, including their own, up to a limit of 10 persons; and
- g) Beneficiaries of the old-age social pension.

How is the social tariff for broadband Internet access service provision determined?

It corresponds to a final price to be paid by the consumers above mentioned in exchange for the broadband Internet access service.

The social tariff for broadband Internet access service provision translates into a specific tariff and is "calculated taking into account the prices charged at the national level for broadband Internet access services".

How much is this tariff?

The value of the social tariff for broadband Internet access services is set by order of the member of the Government responsible for digital transition, to take effect on 1 January of the following year and is preceded by a reasoned and non-binding proposal from ANACOM by 20 September of each year.

ANACOM has disclosed the proposal for the social tariff for broadband Internet access, still to take effect this year, which is expected to be 6.15 euros per month, still at the public consultation stage.

What are the conditions for granting this tariff?

Each consumer with a low income or with special social needs, and cumulatively each household, can only benefit from one social tariff for broadband Internet access services at any one time.

Do university students benefit from this tariff?

University students from households with an annual income of 5808 euros or less, plus 50% for each member of the household - with no income including their own up to a maximum of 10 people - who travel to other municipalities in the country to study, can also benefit from the social tariff for broadband Internet access services.

How is the tariff assigned?

It is automatic, and the request must be made to the telecommunications company in question, which will have to confirm with ANACOM if the interested party is eligible to receive this support. If the interested party's eligibility is confirmed, the telecommunications company has 10 days to activate the social Internet tariff.

When does it come into effect?

The Decree will come into effect on the day after its publication, i.e., on July 31st, 2021. The value of the social tariff for the provision of Internet access services awaits publication of the respective decree by the member of the Government responsible for the digital transition.