

Competition inquiry on data costs start next month

The Competition Commission will next month hold public hearings for the Data Services Market Inquiry.



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The Commission initiated the Market Inquiry following numerous complaints relating to data services in the country.

“The Market Inquiry seeks to understand features in the market and the value chain that may cause or lead to high prices for data services. It also seeks to make recommendations that would result in lower prices for data services,” the Commission said.

In August last year, the Commission launched a Market Inquiry into data services with the release of the terms of reference and call for submissions.

A number of stakeholders in the data services sector made submissions in response to the call for submissions.

These stakeholders include the Internet Service Providers' Association, Media Monitoring Africa, MTN, the Right2Know Campaign, Tarifica, Telkom, the Alliance for Affordable Internet, amandla.mobi, Broadband Infraco, Cell C, DG Murray Trust, Electronic Communications Network and Vodacom.

The Market Inquiry will be held on 17 and 18 October 2018 in Gauteng, following the extension of the Market Inquiry's deadline to 31 March 2019.

"The Market Inquiry will cover all market participants involved at any point in the value chain for data services that are provided to customers such as government, businesses, trade associations, public entities, regulatory authorities and end-consumers in South Africa," the Commission said.

Non-confidential versions of these submissions are available on the Commission's website on www.compcom.co.za/data-market-inquiry.

The Market Inquiry is being conducted in response to a request from Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel.

The concerns of Minister Patel relate to high data costs in South Africa and the importance of data affordability for the South African economy and consumers.

Stakeholders who wish to participate in the public hearings by making oral submissions should communicate their interest by no later than 21 September 2018.

Expressions of interest must be sent to the Commission's Inquiry team on datainquiry@compcom.co.za.

The Commission will require participating stakeholders to make written submissions prior to the oral submissions.

Written submissions should be received by the Commission by no later than 11 October 2018.

Submissions in respect of the public hearings should focus on the following key questions:

- Are data prices in South Africa (whether mobile, fixed or other) higher than they ought to be?
- To the extent that data prices in South Africa are higher than they ought to be, what are the factors that drive these outcomes?
- How can these factors be effectively remedied?
- What is the impact of data prices and access to data more broadly on lower-income customers, rural customers, small businesses and the unemployed?
- How important are affordable data prices for these customers?

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