

Section 2 Trends in Telecommunication Policy

1. Summary

(1) Initiatives so far

For over 35 years since the liberalization of telecommunications business and the enforcement of the Telecommunications Business Act in 1985, there have been a large number of new entries into the telecommunication market. Under the competition principle, price reduction and service diversification/upgrading have impressively advanced through the progress and introduction of a variety of communication technologies including IP/ digitalization and mobile broadband. In the past, MIC has constantly reviewed various policies and institutions in its approach to ensure provision of reliable telecommunication services while at the same time maintaining the innovations and dynamism of the telecommunication services.

For example, Japan's telecommunications market has experienced major environmental changes, including the popularization of mobile phones and the rollout of broadband, and the progress of competition between groups of players, mainly mobile carriers, in recent years. Considering these changes, MIC has developed rules to ensure a fair competition environment. Furthermore, to address the issue that mobile bills are high compared with other countries and price plans of carriers are too complex to understand, MIC has taken measures for enabling people to access the low-price and diverse mobile phone services that are daily necessities today.

MIC has also developed rules to cope with growing and diverse problems in the use of telecommunication services caused by information gaps between users and carriers, or inappropriate solicitation by business, and the growing global risks of complication and sophistication of cyber-attacks.

(2) Future challenges and direction

Telecommunication business provides services indispensable for people's daily lives and socio-economic activities. As the social structure of Japan is moving toward "rapid population decrease and extreme population aging," it is expected that the roles of ICT for regional revitalization will increase, which include strengthening of regional industrial infrastructure and promotion of migration to rural areas. It is thought that the roles ICT should play are also increasing in vitalization of economic activities including creation of new businesses and productivity improvement, in realization of safe and secure society and for solution of social challenges in medical, education, administration and other sectors. Importance of telecommunication services is further increasing.

In this context, it is extremely important for individuals and Japan's socio-economy to ensure the benefits for telecommunication service users and to develop digital infrastructure as the foundation to promote innovations in the entire society and to support digitalization/digital transformation.

It is expected that not only the telecommunications market, but even Japan's social structure will further drastically change and the existing social/economic models that have been assumed will no longer apply. There is an increasing need to solve social challenges and create values by using advanced information and communications technologies.

For this purpose, it is necessary to create an environment where all entities in Japan can use safe, secure and reliable information and communications services.

2. Development of a Fair Competitive Environment

(1) Analysis/validation of the telecommunications market

i Validation of the telecommunications market

Since fiscal 2016, MIC has conducted integrated market validation including analysis/validation of market trends and confirmation of adequateness of the operation of telecommunication businesses. With the aim of obtaining advice from objective and technical perspectives, MIC has held the Meeting for Telecommunications Market Validation consisting of experts and other members. Since December 2020, MIC has held a "study meeting on the ideal way of ensuring fair competition" under the Meeting for Telecommunications Market Validation to conduct a study from the perspective of ensuring fair competition in the telecommunications market.

Based on the recommendations concerning the need for strengthening market validation in the report of the study meeting, MIC released "Basic Policy on Market Validation in Telecommunications Business" in December

2021. Based on this policy, MIC will formulate an annual plan presenting implementation policy of market validation, etc. and implement market validation measures according to the plan.

ii Development of a fair competition environment in the mobile market

(i) Validation of the competition rules in the mobile market

In order to realize low-cost and diverse services through active competition among business operators, MIC has been taking measures for development of a fair competition environment in the mobile market. In 2019, the Telecommunications Business Act was amended for separation of communications charges and terminal device charges, prohibition of excessive customer retention and other purposes. Since 2020, effects of the measures taken based on the amendment and their impact on the mobile market have been continuously examined at the "Working Group (WG) on Verification of Competi-

tion Rules” set up under the “Meeting for Telecommunications Market Validation.”

(ii) Formulating and releasing an action plan

Based on the “2020 Report on Verification of Competition Rules” (October 2020) of the WG and others, MIC released “Action Plan for Creating a Fair Competitive Environment for the Mobile Market” which specifies the issues that should be addressed to improve the fair competition environment in the mobile market.

As part of the efforts in response to the action plan, in order to improve the environment toward lower mobile



Related data
Mobile Phone Portal Site
URL https://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_seisaku/ictseisaku/keitai_portal/

(iii) Prohibition of SIM lock in principle

In November 2020, MIC set up “Switching Facilitation Taskforce” under the Working Group (WG) on Verification of Competition Rules. The task force conducted intensive, specialized, and technical studies to facilitate switching between carriers.

Based on the report of the taskforce (May 2021) and the “2021 Report on Verification of Competition Rules” (September 2021) of the WG, MIC developed rules for in-principle prohibition of SIM lock and early dissolution of existing contracts. Mobile operators are also advancing their initiatives including abolition of penalty payment, start of portable carrier mail address service and introduction of eSIM. In this way, development of a fair competition environment in the mobile market is progressing.

(2) Development of interconnection rules

i Review of calculation method of mobile connection charge

Since February 2021, mobile operators have been sequentially offering new low-cost price plans for mobile communication. Competition among MNOs and MVNOs in the mobile market is expected to further lower charges and upgrade and diversify their services.

Based on the Fifth Report (September 2021) of the “Study Group on Calculation of Interconnection Charges, etc.,” MIC partially amended the Enforcement Regulation of the Telecommunications Business Act to request telecommunications carriers installing Category II designated telecommunications facilities for report on details of the calculation method of mobile interconnection charges and specific values of the basis of calculation.

ii Review of the system for wholesale telecommunications services

MNO’s voice call charges (measured rate) were not lowered for a long period of time. As a cause of the high voice call charges for a long time, ineffective negotiations between MNOs and MVNOs were suggested by the “2021 Report on Verification of Competition Rules,” the “Fifth Report” of the “Study Group on Calculation of

phone charges, MIC and the Consumer Affairs Agency jointly published “Reminder regarding display of ‘down payment’ and terminal selling prices in the mobile phone industry – to people considering purchase of a mobile phone terminal” in November 2020. In addition, MIC opened “Mobile Phone Portal Site (provisional version)” posting neutral information to help users in choosing the plan that meets their needs on the MIC website in December 2020, which was followed by an official version on April 2, 2021. Further in April 2022, MIC renewed its design and extensively expanded the content to promote further understanding of consumers.

Interconnection Charges, etc.” and others.

Based on the recommendation by the “Study Group on Calculation of Interconnection Charges, etc.” (February 2022), a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March of the same year and enacted in June. The bill newly provides obligations of wholesalers to provide wholesale telecommunications services using designated facilities and present information contributing to smooth negotiation at the request of their customers. MIC plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

iii Review of the interconnection system for fixed telephones

MIC consulted the Information and Communications Council on “Ideal State of Interconnection System with Consideration at Stage of Migration to IP Networks” on April 2020 and received its partial report in September of the same year and the final report in September 2021.

Based on the final report, a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March 2022 and enacted in June of the same year. The bill includes the change of the area for calculation of the share of subscriber lines installed by individual telecommunications carriers under the Category 1 designated telecommunications facilities system from prefecture to their service areas. MIC plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

Based on the final report, MIC amended the regulation for the Category 1 designated telecommunications facility interconnection charge (Ordinance of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications No. 64 of 2000) in order to establish provisions on voice connection charge of subscribed telephones at the stage of migration to IP networks. At the same time, concerning the right to set charges for calls from subscribed telephones to mobile phones, MIC amended the examination criteria related to the Telecommunications Business Act (MIC Official Directive No.75 of 2001) and formulated the ruling policy on the right to set user charges.

3. Development and Maintenance of Digital Infrastructure

(1) Promoting optical fiber development

Today when people's movement is restricted with the spread of COVID-19, the importance of using digital technologies is further increasing to enable non-face-to-face/non-contact lifestyle including telework, remote education and remote diagnosis. As a result, ultra-fast broadband using optical fiber has become indispensable for socioeconomic activities and people's lives. Furthermore, its need as the trunk circuit to support 5G, which was commercialized in 2020 and whose area development is advancing, is also rising. The early national deployment of 5G is expected, but the development is delayed in depopulated areas, remote islands and other geographically disadvantaged regions.³

In this context, since fiscal 2019 MIC has been implementing the "project to promote advanced wireless environment" to subsidize a part of operating expenses of optical fiber development by local governments, telecommunication carriers, or others as a premise of high-speed and large capacity wireless communications including 5G. In fiscal 2021, expenses of maintenance/management of optical fiber, etc. in isolated islands by local governments were added to the eligible expenses. In March 2022, MIC announced "Infrastructure Development Plan for a Digital Garden City Nation." Under the plan, MIC is working to increase the household coverage of optical fiber from 99.3% at the end of March 2021 to 99.9% by the end of March 2027.

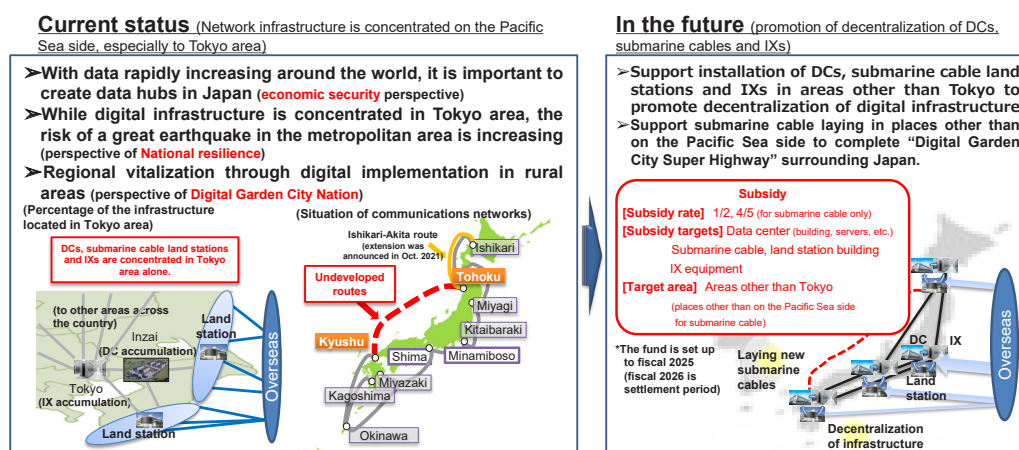
(2) Decentralization of data centers, submarine cables, etc.

While the data distribution amount through digital infrastructure (e.g., data centers, submarine cables) has

been increasing every year with the progress of digitalization, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a rapid increase of the data distribution amount. Because this increase is expected to continue globally, the importance of digital infrastructure is thought to further increase. In these circumstances, the majority of Japan's data centers are in the Tokyo area. In the event of an earthquake in the metropolitan area, there is a risk that breakdown of data centers would cause disturbance in the use of various services, information of which is managed by data centers, not only in Tokyo area but also in other regions. Furthermore, communications with overseas for use of services provided by foreign enterprises, for example, require optical fiber cables laid on the sea bed (submarine cables). If submarine cables are damaged due to natural disaster or other causes, there is a risk of disruption of communications with overseas.

To address this issue, MIC in cooperation with METI and other relevant government offices considered digital infrastructure development. As a result, MIC decided to provide financial support to contribute to the realization of "a Digital Garden City Nation Vision" by encouraging construction of regional data centers and submarine cables to develop resilient communication network locations toward improvement in resilience and communication network efficiency. Specifically, under the "Project on Strengthening Digital Infrastructure by Decentralizing Data Centers, Submarine Cables, and Other Facilities" (Figure 4-2-3-1), the "Digital Infrastructure Development Fund" is established to support private businesses who decentralize data centers, submarine cables, etc. under FY2021 supplementary budget.

Figure 4-2-3-1 Outline of the project for resilient digital infrastructure through decentralization of data centers, submarine cables, etc.



³ See Chapter 3, Section 2.

(3) Securing broadband services

Based on the Final Report on the “Comprehensive Review of Competition Rules in the Telecommunications Business Sector” (Information and Communication Council on December 17, 2019), MIC has held the “Study Group on Broadband Infrastructure” since April 2020 for technical and concentrated study on the desirable state of broadband infrastructure. With the shift from “development” to “maintenance” phase of communications infrastructure in mind, the study group discussed various issues including measures for securing broadband services and compiled its final report in February 2022.

Based on the recommendations of the final report, a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March 2022 and enacted in June of the same year. The bill includes positioning of certain broadband services as a new type of “universal telecommunication service” and establishing a grant system for telecommunication carriers providing broadband service in unprofitable areas. MIC plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

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4. Ensuring Safe and Reliable Telecommunications Infrastructure

(1) Establishing systems for technical standards on telecommunications facilities

Considering the advancement of communication networks and diversification of use forms with the penetration of IoT in recent years, and for the purpose of securing a network environment for secure and stable use of various IoT services, the IP Network Facilities Subcommittee of the Department on Information and Communications Technology under the Information and Communications Council has studied “technical requirements for telecommunications facilities in response to the spread of IoT” since December 2017.⁴ The partial report⁵ of the Information and Communication Council in September 2021 made the following recommendations on accident reporting/validation systems to ensure a safe, secure and reliable information and communication network:

- ① Regarding accidents in communication services that are provided to important infrastructure, establish necessary rules including clarification of the approach to prompt report to MIC and addition of report items pertaining to quarterly accident report,
- ② Regarding disturbance of cloud service provided to communication services, clarify in the current guidelines the approach to eligibility for communication accidents,
- ③ Separately from the communication accident report system, establish necessary rules for incidents (situation indicating a possible communication accident) including prompt reporting of serious incidents, and
- ④ Establish necessary rules including prompt reporting of serious incidents caused by cyber-attacks and more flexible reporting deadline of the detail of serious accidents.

Based on the partial report, a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March 2022 and enacted in June of the same year. The bill includes new provisions for obligation of prompt reporting of serious accidents. MIC

plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

Under the progress in introduction of virtualization technologies to and use of cloud services in communication networks and the further increase in diversity and complexity of the structure for providing communication services, since April 2022 the committee has studied “technical requirements of telecommunications facilities in response to increased diversity and complexity of networks associated with the development of virtualization technology.”

(2) Securing communication services in disasters

i Continuous information sharing, etc.

In recent years, natural disasters including earthquakes, typhoons, heavy rain, heavy snow, flooding, sediment disasters and volcano eruptions have occurred frequently in Japan. As a result, communication services have been disturbed due to power failure, communication equipment failure, cable breakage, etc.

In order to ensure more appropriate response by reviewing past responses to disasters and by confirming the systems among MIC, designated public corporations and other major telecommunication carriers at normal times to ensure communication services at a time of disaster, MIC has been holding the “Liaison Committee on Securing Communications Services in the Event of Disaster” since October 2018. The Liaison Committee shares information and exchange opinions on tasks including the system for immediate response and cooperation, prompt assessment of damage and restoration in order to ensure communication services in disasters.

ii MIC - Telecom Emergency Assistance Members (MIC-TEAM)

MIC launched a team named “MIC - Telecom Emergency Assistance Members (MIC-TEAM)” in June 2020 to provide supports to secure communication means in disasters. In times or in danger of a large-scale disaster, the team is dispatched to the local government of the afflicted area to assess the damage to information communication services and conduct liaison and coordination with relevant administrative organs, business opera-

⁴ The results of studies by the committee from 2017 to 2020 were submitted by the Information and Communication Council as the 1st report in September 2018, the 2nd report in May 2019, the 3rd report in March 2020 and the 4th report in November 2020.

⁵ Partial Report (September 28, 2021) on “technical requirements for telecommunications facilities in response to the spread of IoT” by the Information and Communications Council. https://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_news/s-news/01kiban05_02000230.html

tors and others. The team also provides local governments with technical advice and lends mobile power supply vehicles. At the time of heavy rain that started on July 1, 2021, the team was dispatched to Kagoshima, Kumamoto and Shizuoka Prefectures and Atami City.

In order to address challenges regarding cooperation for power supply, fuel supply and handling of fallen trees based on the experience of 2019 Boso Peninsula Typhoon and other disasters, MIC with Sapporo City (Hokkaido), Tanabe City (Wakayama) and Yatsushiro City (Kumamoto) implemented cooperation drills for initial response by relevant organizations including carriers and power/fuel-related businesses in fiscal 2021.

(3) Analysis and verification of telecommunication accidents

For prevention of telecommunication accidents, it is

necessary to take appropriate measures at the time and after the accident in addition to prior measures. In order to verify accident reports for effective utilization for various initiatives to prevent recurrence, MIC has been holding a “telecommunications accident verification meeting” since 2015. The meeting analyzes and verifies reports with focus on “serious accidents” as provided in the Telecommunications Business Act and reports falling under “accidents subject to quarterly report” provided in the Telecommunications Business Reporting Regulations. The meeting compiled the verification results of telecommunication accidents that occurred in fiscal 2020 and released the “2020 Verification Report on Telecommunications Accidents and its Outline” in September 2021.

5. Developing Safe and Secure Environments for Use of Telecommunications Services

(1) Ensuring governance of telecommunications businesses

Telecommunications business is indispensable for innovations in various sectors. In order to promote provision of innovative services by introducing digital technologies and to accelerate digital transformation of the whole society, it is necessary to ensure secure and highly reliable telecommunication services for users.

Toward securing of safe, secure and reliable communication service networks in the digital age, MIC set up “the Study Group on the Telecommunications Business Governance” in May 2021 to examine approaches to governance of cyber security measures and data management by telecommunications carriers and to discuss future measures. The study group compiled the examination result in a report in February 2022. The report recommends three specific measures: (1) measures against risks of information leak/improper management pertaining to telecommunications business; (2) measures against risks of telecommunication service suspension considering diversification of communication networks; and (3) provision of information to users regarding proper management of information and provision of telecommunication services.

Based on the recommendations, with the aim of promoting proper management of user information mostly by telecom carriers who acquire and handle a mass of information, while ensuring consistency with regulations in other countries, a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March 2022 and enacted in June of the same year. The bill includes: mandatory formulation and notification of information management rules and other new disciplines; and development of rules for cyber-attack countermeasures in coordination among businesses, accident reporting system and other measures for smooth provision of telecommunication services. MIC plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

(2) Developing consumer protection rules

i Summary

While advancement and diversification of telecommunications services have improved convenience and increased choices for many users, there are problems caused by information gaps between users and carriers, or inappropriate solicitation by business. In order to prevent these problems and help consumers enjoy the benefits of advancement and diversification of telecommunications services, MIC has developed rules for consumer protection pertaining to telecommunication services, and appropriately enforces and reviews the rules as needed.

ii Ensuring effectiveness of consumer protection rules

(i) Accepting complaints, providing consultation, cooperating with parties involved and implementing administrative guidance

MIC set up the Telecommunications Consumer Consultation Centers⁶ to receive information from consumers. In addition, the MIC has held the Liaison Meeting for Telecommunications Consumer Support⁷ for information sharing and opinion exchange among parties concerned in different regions across the country two times every year. Based on the information obtained through these initiatives, MIC is working to ensure effectiveness of consumer protection rules pertaining to telecommunications services through administrative guidance and responses in cooperation with the Consumer Affairs Agency as needed.

In addition, MIC promotes voluntary initiatives by concerned bodies for observance of the consumer protection rules.

(ii) Implementing monitoring

MIC formulated “basic policy for supervising the user protection discipline of telecommunications businesses.” Under the policy, MIC has been monitoring the im-

⁶ The centers received 18,331 complaints and requests for consultation by phone or Web in fiscal 2021.

⁷ This liaison meeting consisting of consumer centers, telecommunication carrier groups and other members is organized by MIC to exchange opinions on consumer support regarding telecommunications services.

plementation status of consumer protection rules and held "periodic meetings for monitoring the implementation status of consumer protection rules"⁸ participated in by experts and relevant trade associations to share and assess trends two times a year.

This meeting shares and assesses not only overall trends of complaints and consultations in the telecommunications sector, but also the analysis results of trends by service types including MNO, MVNO and FTTH. The sharing/assessment also covers the results of analysis and field surveys (mystery shopping) under individual themes⁹, results of occasional surveys of individual cases, analysis results of complaints/requests for consultations accepted by trade associations,¹⁰ and follow-up of improvement initiatives by businesses.

Based on the assessment at the meeting, MIC gives guidance on points to be improved to telecommunication carriers subject to the field survey and requests trade associations and others for industry-wide efforts and dissemination to members. Analysis results and assessment at the meeting are used for consideration of review of consumer protection rules and for promotion of voluntary efforts by businesses.

iii Review of consumer protection rules

Considering the changes in the telecommunications market and the state of consumer claims, MIC has successively reviewed and expanded the consumer protection rules. In June 2020, "Study Group on Consumer Protection Rules" started vigorous discussions on review of the system and compiled the "2021 Report of the Study Group on Consumer Protection Rules" in September 2021. Based on the report, MIC has expanded the consumer protection rules as follows and continues to enhance consumer protection through monitoring and other measures.

① Amendment of the Ordinance for Enforcement of the Telecommunications Business Act

In February 2022, the Ordinance for Enforcement of the Telecommunications Business Act was amended to provide: (1) mandatory explanation of service conditions by using written explanation when doing telemarketing; (2) mandatory measures for cancellation by users without delay, and; (3) restriction on the amount billed due to cancellation (enforced on July 1).

② Amendment of Guidelines

In the "Guidelines for Consumer Protection Rules for the Telecommunications Business Act," it is provided with specific examples that consignment contracts between mobile operators and their distributors may be subject to order for business improvement, if the contract might encourage violation to the consumer protection rules, and the description of actions desirable for consumer protection was expanded.

tection was expanded.

③ Study on complaint processing systems

In October 2021, the "Task Force on Complaint Processing System" was set up and it started to study systems for effective solving of consumer complaints that cannot be smoothly solved with individual businesses. The task force plans to reach a conclusion by summer of 2022.

(3) Protecting privacy of communications and user information

i Summary

Various people, things and organizations are connected to the internet through smartphones and IoT, which leads to rapid progress in generation and accumulation of a mass of digital data. At the same time, there is an orientation toward Society 5.0 where data analysis by AI and other results are fed back to the real world to solve various social issues.

In this context, platform operators who provide various free services have been increasing their presence and acquiring and accumulating user information more than before. In addition, as services necessary for daily life are provided by platform operators via smartphone, etc., their importance in daily life has been increasing and they have been acquiring and accumulating more confidential information.

In order to balance users' convenience and secrecy/privacy protection and to ensure full functioning of platforms, it is important to ensure proper management of user information so that platform operators increase attraction of their services and users can use services with a sense of security.

ii Study at the Working Group on the Handling of User Information for Platform Services

The "Study Group on Platform Services" held by MIC set up the "Working Group on the Handling of User Information for Platform Services" to discuss the matter. The "Interim Report" (September 2021) compiling the result of the discussions presented the following direction:

Regarding the content and scope of the disciplines under the Telecommunications Business Act, etc. it is appropriate to consider development of a specific system for handling of user information including cookie and location information, while considering the discussions on e-privacy rules (draft), and

It is desirable to compile the Guidelines for Protection of Personal Information in Telecommunications Business (MIC Public Notice No. 152 of 2017) as a document for unified reference for telecommunication carriers to ensure proper handling of secrecy of communication, personal information and privacy pertaining to user information.

Regarding "Issue 10: Concerns about acquisition/use

⁸ Periodic meetings for monitoring the implementation status of consumer protection rules: https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/kenkyu/shouhisha_hogorule/index.html

⁹ The 12th meeting held in February 2022 examined complaints/consultation: (1) regarding transmission speed; (2) from the elderly citizens; (3) regarding corporate contracts, and; (4) related to COVID-19.

¹⁰ Telecommunications Carriers Association and the National Association of Mobile-phone Distributors

of personal data” in the “Evaluation of Competition in the Digital Advertising Market - Final Report” released by the Digital Market Competition Council in April 2021, the interim report recommends review of the Guidelines for Protection of Personal Information in Telecommunications Business.

iii Establishing rules on transmitting user information to an external party

Based on the direction of the interim report, a bill for partial amendment of the Telecommunications Business Act was submitted to the Diet in March 2022 and enacted in June of the same year. The bill includes mandatory provision of an opportunity for confirmation (through notification, disclosure, etc.) by the user when a telecommunication carrier transmits a program that orders transmission of information on a user to an external party during provision of a telecommunication service. MIC plans to study details toward its smooth enforcement.

iv Review of the Guidelines for Protection of Personal Information in Telecommunications Business

Based on the interim report, etc. MIC amended the Guidelines for Protection of Personal Information in Telecommunications Business in line with the review of the guidelines of the Personal Information Protection Commission in March 2022 in time with the enforcement of the 2020/2021 acts to amend the Act on the protection of Personal Information.¹¹ At the same time, an additional amendment for proper securing of user information was made. In accordance with the amended guidelines, MIC plans to conduct regular monitoring of the status of handling by platform service providers and continue studies to ensure proper handling of user information.

(4) Dealing with illegal/harmful information

i Summary

Distribution of illegal/harmful information on the internet continues to be serious. MIC in cooperation with concerned parties has been continuously taking measures against a variety of illegal/harmful information including slander, pirated editions, fake news and false information.

ii Dealing with slander on the internet

Considering the increasingly serious problem of slander on the internet, especially on social networking services (SNS) and other platform services, MIC formulated and released a “policy package for dealing with slander on the internet” in September 2020. Based on the package, MIC in collaboration with concerned bodies is taking the following measures:

- ① Enlightenment activities for users to improve information ethics and ICT literacy
- ② Support for voluntary activities by platform opera-

tors and improvement of their transparency/accountability (through their continuous monitoring)

- ③ Measures for sender information disclosure (enactment of related governmental and ministerial ordinances toward enforcement of the amended Provider Liability Limitation Act and preparation for its smooth operation)
- ④ Enhancement of the consultation counter functions (strengthening the system of the Illegal/Harmful Information Hotline, strengthening of collaboration among consultation centers and dissemination of the information on multiple consultation centers).

In particular, as part of ①, MIC has been implementing educational activities through various media including government publicity. For example, MIC jointly with Social Media Association of Japan and Safer Internet Association opened a special website under the slogan of “#NoHeartNoSNS” to provide useful information including consulting services for people distressed by interaction on social network. Another special site was created in tie-up with the popular character of “Secret Society Eagle Talon.”

Under this policy package, the “Study Group on Platform Service” conducted hearing and other survey of platform operators. Based on the result, the study group compiled and released an “interim report” in September 2021. The report proposes the future direction of dealing with illegal/harmful information and stresses the importance of voluntary elimination, etc. by platform operators and ensuring of transparency and accountability in Japan. The study group conducted hearing of platform operators again in March 2022 and continues discussions.

iii Countermeasures against pirated editions on the Internet

MIC formulated “MIC's Policy Menu of Anti-piracy Measures on the Internet” in December 2021. Based on the policy menu, in addition to the amendment of the law pertaining to sender information disclosure, MIC has conducted enlightenment activities for users to improve information ethics and ICT literacy, promoted introduction of security software to inhibit access to pirated copies, and strengthened international coordination through discussions at ICANN and other international forums.

Since November 2021, the Study Group on Inhibiting Access to Pirated Websites on the Internet has been held to confirm the progress of the measures based on the policy menu and to discuss additional issues to be addressed and the direction of countermeasures.

iv Measures against fake news and disinformation

MIC at the Study Group on Platform Services has discussed fake news and disinformation that have become a problem in recent years. In February 2020, the study group compiled and released desirable specific measures including assessment of the actual situation in Ja-

¹¹ The parts on the amendment of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information, etc. of the Amendment Act of the Act on the Protection of Personal Information, etc. (Act No.44 of 2020) and Article 50 of the Act on the Arrangement of Related Laws for the Formation of a Digital Society (Act No. 37 of 2021)

pan, construction of cooperative relationships by diverse stakeholders, appropriate handling by platform operators and ensuring of transparency/accountability. Starting from the release of the survey on distorted or misleading information (false rumor, fake news) regarding COVID-19 in June of the same year, the study group has continuously surveyed people's contact with, reception and spread of fake news/disinformation and their attitude to information circulation.

The "Study Group on Platform Services" conducted hearing of platform operators in September 2021 and released an interim report that includes the desirable direction for dealing with disinformation and advises disinformation countermeasures based on voluntary efforts by platform operators and other parties in the private sector. The study group conducted hearing of platform operators again in March 2022 and continues discussions.

(5) Development of a secure internet usage environment for young people

i Summary

For safe and secure internet usage by youth today when the internet has become indispensable in the daily life of the people, MIC has been taking measures with a focus on promotion of use of filtering in mobile phone terminals and on educational activities. In addition, MIC holds the Taskforce on Safe and Secure Internet Use Environment for Youth¹² to share information on the current status of the measures among people involved and to discuss further efforts.

ii Promotion of filtering

With the spread of internet connection via smartphones, applications/public wireless LAN, there is a significant decrease in filtering utilization rate. To address this situation, the Act Partially Amending the Act on Establishment of Enhanced Environment for Youth's Safe and Secure Internet Use (Act No.75 of 2017) which includes mandatory setting (activating) of filtering function by mobile operators and their distributors when they sell a mobile phone terminal was enforced in February 2018. In response, MIC is promoting filtering activation by mobile operators and their distributors.

iii Promotion of educational activities

(i) Compiling and releasing "Case Study of the Internet Troubles"

In order to ensure safe and secure internet use by youth, not only youth but their guardians, teachers, etc. need to have sufficient media and information literacy. Every year since fiscal 2009, MIC has released updated version of "Case Study of the Internet Troubles" compiling means for preventing troubles relating to the Internet.

The 2022 updated version contains topics such as fil-

tering and time management functions of smartphones and environments for using the Internet that are appropriate to users' ages in addition to copyright issues, slander on the internet and other cases of trouble.

(ii) Production and release of educational videos

As an effective approach to youth and their guardians, MIC produces videos using popular characters and uses the videos for educational activities with cooperation of relevant business operators. For example, MIC produced an educational video on filtering and other topics in cooperation with a popular comic, "My Hero Academia." The video is posted on websites of relevant government offices and business operators, and also used at mobile phone shops and mobile retailers across the country as well as youth education sites.

(iii) Lecture on demand in schools

For the purpose of popularization and enlightenment for safe internet use by youth, since fiscal 2006, MIC in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Foundation for MultiMedia Communications, common carriers and other partners has provided free lectures on demand, "e-net Caravan," for students, guardians, school personnel and others in various places including schools.

Since autumn 2020, in response to the spread of COVID-19, the program has provided remote lectures in addition to the existing group lessons.

(iv) Period for concentrated efforts

Many young people acquire smartphones for the first time after their new enrollment or graduation in spring. With particular emphasis on this period, since 2014 MIC has been implementing "Spring Safety Net Campaign with Chain of Moves" in cooperation with related government agencies and businesses to intensively conduct awareness-raising activities for young people, guardians and school personnel to promote safe and secure use of smartphones and social media.

In 2022, the campaign focused on promotion of parental control and on educational activities contributing to improvement of youth's skills to use the internet appropriately.

iv Initiatives assuming internet use by youth

In recent years, while increasingly younger people use the internet, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered rapid progress of society-wide digitalization including progress in use of ICT terminals in school under the GIGA School Concept. In response to these environmental changes, the Taskforce on Safe and Secure Internet Use Environment for Youth compiled "New Issues and Measures to Establish Safe and Secure Internet Use Environment for Youth¹³" as future priorities.

¹² In order to establish environments for youth's safe and secure internet use, the task force was set up in April 2016 to conduct educational activities for appropriate utilization of the internet and to study filtering services that were effective means for protection of youth while considering respective roles of stakeholders including mobile carriers and other internet-related business operators and guardians. https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/kenkyu/ict_anshin/index_12.html

¹³ Taskforce on Safe and Secure Internet Use Environment for Youth, "New Issues and Measures to Establish Safe and Secure Internet Use Environment for Youth": https://www.soumu.go.jp/menu_news/s-news/01kiban08_03000356.html

Based on the above, MIC in public-private cooperation takes measures to prevent troubles triggered by youth's "sending" information and other measures assuming internet use by young people in addition to the existing

measures that have principal objectives to prevent youth from being in contact with illegal/harmful information.

6. Mediation and arbitration by the Telecommunications Dispute Settlement Commission

(1) Functions of the Telecommunications Dispute Resolution Commission

Commission

The Telecommunications Dispute Resolution Commission (hereinafter "Commission") is a specialized organization set up for prompt and fair processing of disputes that are increasingly diverse in the telecommunications sector where technological innovation and competition are rapidly progressing. Currently five members and eight extraordinary members who were appointed by the Minister of Internal Affairs and

Communications are processing disputes.

The Commission has three functions: (1) mediation and arbitration, (2) examination and report in response to request for consultation from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, and (3) recommendations to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications.

Consulting service is provided at the Commission's secretariat to accept inquiries and request for consultation regarding disputes between businesses.



Related data
Outline of the functions of the Telecommunications Dispute Resolution commission
URL https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/hunso/outline/about.html

i Mediation and arbitration

Mediation is a procedure that is made when there is a dispute between telecommunication carriers or broadcasters. Mediation members are appointed by the commission from among its members and extraordinary members to encourage compromise from the parties to solve the dispute promptly and fairly. Mediation members present mediation proposals, but the proposals are not forced because this is a procedure based on the agreement of the both parties.

Arbitration is a procedure where the commission appoints three "arbitration members" from among its members and extraordinary members in principle, based on the agreement of both parties. The procedure is made after the parties agree to follow the arbitral award. Arbitral award has the same effect as that of final judgment between the parties.

ii Examination and report in response to request for consultation from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications

When telecommunication carriers or broadcasters fail to reach an agreement, either party may file for an order for consultation or apply for ruling to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications based on the provisions of the Telecommunications Business Act or the

Broadcasting Act.

When issuing an order for consultation or ruling, the minister must consult the commission. When receiving a request for consultation, the commission discusses the case and submits a report.

iii Recommendations to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications

Regarding improvements in competition rules and other matters that emerged through mediation, arbitration or discussions/reporting in response to a request for consultation, the commission may make recommendations to the minister. When receiving such a recommendation, the minister publishes the content.

(2) Status of the commission activities

In fiscal 2021, there was no application for mediation/arbitration, but consultation was provided to seven cases at the secretariat.

From November 2001 when the commission was established to the end of March 2022, the commission processed 69 mediation cases and three arbitration cases, made 11 reports in response to requests for consultation from the minister and submitted 3 recommendations to the minister.



Related data
Mediation processing status
URL https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/hunso/case/number.html