

Americans Talk, Surf More than Europeans on Cells

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NEW YORK (AP) — Americans pay more for their cell service than Europeans, but they're getting a lot more use out of their phones, a global wireless trade group said Wednesday.

In releasing the report, GSM Association urged European regulators to take cues from the U.S. The group pointed out that U.S. consumers talk five times as much as Europeans on their cellphones and use twice as much data.

AT&T and Verizon Wireless also have the lead in introducing the latest network technology, which means average data downloads are 75 percent faster in the U.S., the GSMA found.

Europe led the world in wireless technology a decade ago, pioneering the shift from analog phone networks to digital ones. But the continent has lagged behind as cellphones have become data devices, the GSMA said.

The trade group said European carriers are lagging because they're smaller, meaning they can't capture savings from efficiency the way U.S. carriers can. It's urging regulators to make it easier to build cross-border businesses. In the U.S., the allocation of space on the airwaves is controlled by the federal government, but each of the 27 EU countries controls its own radio spectrum, making it difficult to coordinate the use of radio frequencies across borders.

The four largest U.S. wireless carriers — Verizon, AT&T, Sprint and T-Mobile USA — are each larger than the largest European carrier.

Americans paid an average of \$69 per month last year for cellphone service, compared with \$38 in the European Union, the study found. For their monthly fees, Americans got 901 minutes of calls and 480 megabytes of data traffic, compared with Europeans' 170 minutes of calls and 273 megabytes of data.

The continents are diverging further, the study found. Although increased use of data-intensive devices such as tablets is encouraging Americans to pay more and consume more, Europeans are scrimping, cutting their monthly rates. The higher monthly fees in the U.S. encourage investment in networks, pushing data speeds higher, the study found.

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