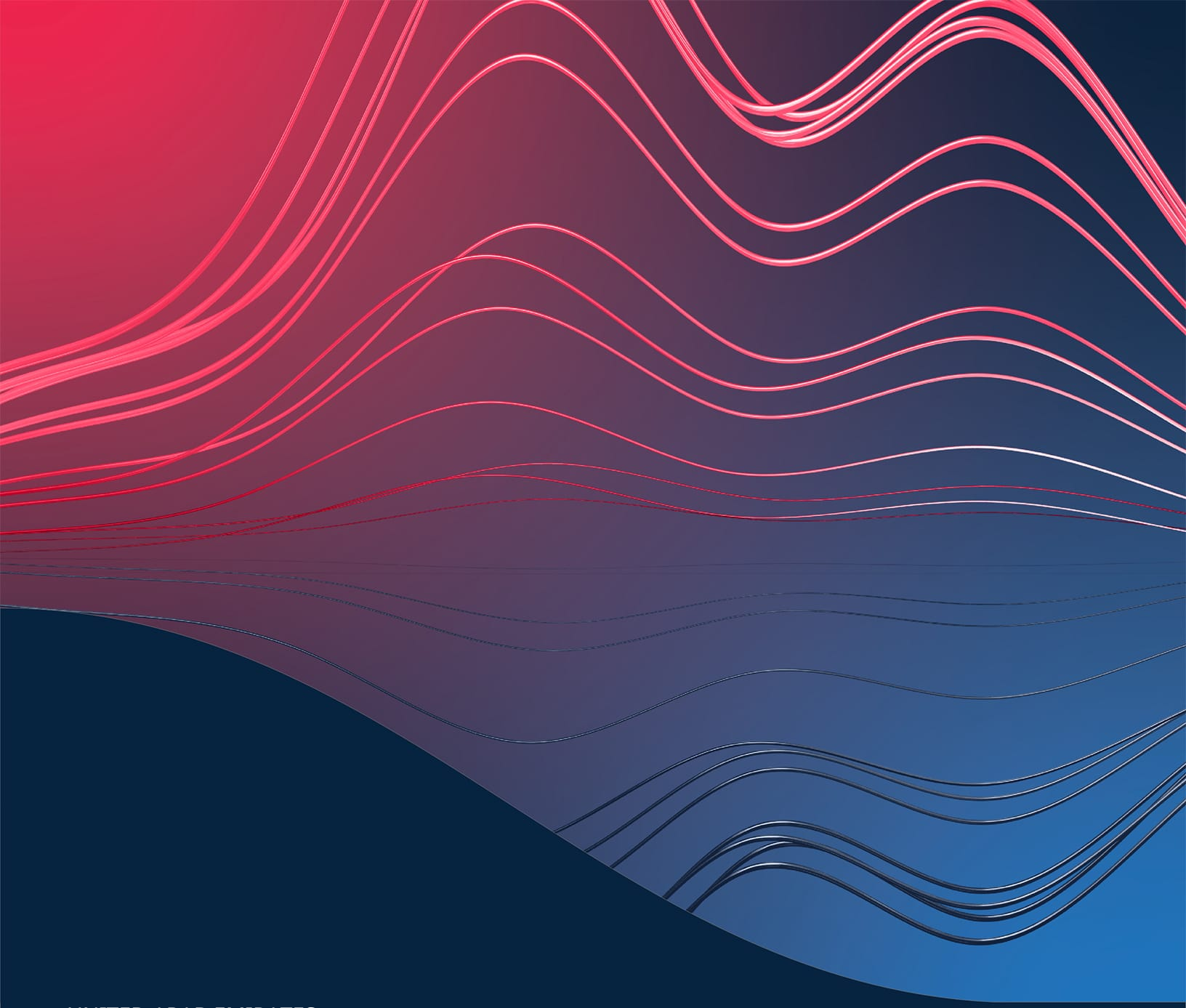


UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

# Telecommunications Laws of the World

DLA PIPER

# Introduction



Our team offers a global full-service business legal capability focusing on the telecommunications sector, founded on deep commercial, transactional and regulatory knowledge. We have telecoms regulatory advisers located in key jurisdictions around the world and have experience advising on business-critical regulatory matters globally.

Telecommunications infrastructure is at the heart of any global business in the modern age – supporting everything from data security and cloud connectivity to low-latency trading. Today, telecommunications operators are increasingly seeking to expand customer-specific and value-added services (such as combining connectivity with application services) to retain relevancy and protect against margin erosion. At the same time, the growth of OTT (over the top) applications raises novel regulatory questions because service providers, many of whom have no infrastructure and often no physical presence at all in a country, can nevertheless use licensed operators' infrastructure in that country to provide services. We hope that this handbook provides a useful resource for companies wherever they do business.

## Engineering capabilities

DLA Piper offers integrated engineering services, combining advanced spectrum modeling and complex data analytics with regulatory advocacy and international coordination. Using its proprietary tools, the team simulates interference scenarios across satellite, terrestrial, and wireline systems; distills large technical datasets into actionable market insights; and supports spectrum allocation, licensing, and market access strategies in the United States and worldwide. The team's representative work includes 5G spectrum sharing studies, 6 GHz coexistence analysis, FCC licensing data mining, NGSO/GSO interference modeling (including EPFD), technical analysis for ESIMs onboard aircraft, vessels, and vehicles, and negotiation of domestic and international satellite coordination agreements. With experience across the FCC, NTIA, ITU, ITSO, NOAA and participation in World Radiocommunication Conference processes, the practice aligns engineering evidence with policy objectives to protect client interests, enable device homologation, and optimize spectrum holdings, coverage, and competitive positioning.

Linked here is the Engineering Services brochure.

## Market access capabilities

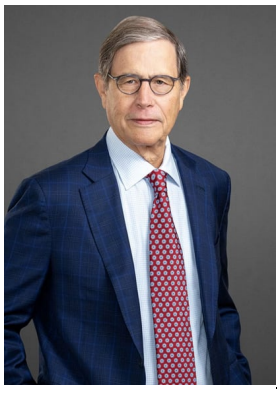
DLA Piper delivers an integrated blend of top-ranked legal, regulatory, and engineering capabilities to help telecom and technology companies scale internationally with confidence. With 160+ country coverage through its global footprint and relationship firms, the team advises on market entry, licensing, compliance, spectrum strategy, supply chain, national security, and cross-border commercial transactions. Our approach combines real-



time regulatory insight from former senior industry and government leaders with advanced engineering tools for spectrum modeling, interference analysis, and data-driven advocacy.  Recognized by directories for Telecom, Broadcast & Satellite and TMT, the practice supports next-generation initiatives including satellite-to-cell, global satellite deployment, drone connectivity, spectrum pipeline development, and space sustainability. The team delivers end-to-end guidance from policy monitoring and multi-jurisdictional surveys to technical studies and equipment homologation enabling efficient, compliant, and scalable global growth.

Link here is the Going Global brochure.

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# United Arab Emirates

LAST MODIFIED 29 OCTOBER 2025



## Overview of legal landscape

The United Arab Emirates ("UAE") is a regional business hub and, increasingly, a technology hub, for international telecommunications and information and communication technology (ICT) providers interested in the UAE and the wider Gulf region.

Many international telecommunications operators have established branches either " onshore" in the UAE, or in one of its purpose built "free zones," such as Dubai Internet City or Dubai Media City. However, such branches are limited in what they can do, particularly within the UAE. For example, they cannot offer public telecommunications services in the UAE, as the UAE is effectively a closed market, limited by a policy of duopoly regarding infrastructure based services. At the time of providing this update there is one MVNO service provider, Virgin Mobile UAE, currently offering services in the UAE through one of the existing network based operators, du. In order for international operators to provide services to entities in the UAE they will need to do so through contractual arrangements with one or both of the UAE's licensed operators in order to provide "last mile" services in the UAE.

## Key telecommunications laws, regulations and policies

The United Arab Emirates has a Federal Telecommunications Law.

The Telecommunications Law:

- Establishes a regulatory authority, now called the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority ("TDRA");
- Requires that a company hold a telecommunications license in order to provide public telecommunications services and operate public telecommunications networks;
- Makes the provision of unlicensed services punishable by fine or imprisonment.

Arabic language prevails, although the TDRA's website publishes an English translation of the Telecommunications Law and Regulations.

The UAE currently has a policy of a duopoly market for public telecommunications services.

## Regulatory bodies or authorities

The Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority ("TDRA") regulates the telecommunications sector in the UAE.

One of the TDRA's main prerogatives is to foster sustainable competition in the UAE's telecommunications sector. The UAE's TDRA is also involved in cyber security, and hosts the UAE's Computer Emergency Response Team, as well as managing an ICT development fund.

## Types of telecommunications activities and/or persons which are subject to legal and regulatory requirements

The UAE's Telecommunications Law defines "Telecommunications Services" as

the service of transmitting, broadcasting, switching, or receiving by means of a Telecommunications Network of any of the following:

- Wired and wireless telecommunications;
- Voice, music and other sounds;
- Visual images;
- Signals used in radio and TV broadcasting;
- Signals used to operate or control any machinery or apparatus;
- The installation, maintenance, adjustment, repair, replacement, moving, or removal of apparatus which is or will be connected to a Public Telecommunications Network;
- The construction maintenance and operation of networks for telegraph, telephone, telex, leased circuits, domestic and international data networks, Internet, and Wireless Transmission;
- Any other Telecommunications Services approved by the Board.

Entities that wish to provide Telecommunications Services in the UAE should be established in the UAE. However, apart from certain specific licenses that have been issued, and certain exceptions allowing the provision of certain limited "over the top" services (see our comments on VoIP in the "Key sanctions and penalties" section), the UAE government has a policy of duopoly for the provision of public telecommunications services, which means that in practice it is not possible to obtain such licenses.

## Overview of consents, licences and authorisations required prior to the

A license is required from the TDRA in order to provide public telecommunications services to and within the UAE.

## commencement of telecommunications activities

Currently there are only two operators licensed to provide public telecommunications services to and within the UAE via telecommunications networks. There is currently one MVNO operator in the UAE, however the TDRA does not otherwise appear to be currently issuing further licenses for public telecommunications services or networks.

A number of other licenses have been issued to specific entities for specific purposes (e.g., for certain satellite services and PAMR services).

In March 2018 the TDRA published a Regulatory Policy regulating the provision of Internet of Things. This requires that IOT Service Providers should register with the TDRA.

## Domicile restrictions preventing the operation of certain telecommunications activities by non-domiciled entities

Only entities that are established pursuant to a decision issued by the TDRA Board may hold a license to provide Public Telecommunications Services within the UAE.

A number of international telecommunications operators have established branch offices within free zones in the UAE in order to market their international services within the UAE, or to act as bases for their regional operations.

## Existence of relevant interconnection/roaming regulations

The TDRA does have powers to issue ex ante regulations and conduct ex post investigations.

The TDRA has conducted market reviews and has taken steps to issue ex ante regulation against the licensed operators.

## Telecommunication laws and regulations affecting consumers

The TDRA actively regulates consumer protection and has recently issued a consolidated and updated Consumer Protection Regulation, which can be found here.

## Regulatory taxes and fees

Licensees are required to pay license fees and royalties.

Corporate tax applies to “on shore” entities in the UAE since the introduction of the federal corporate tax, at the rate of 9 percent. Many free zones do not charge taxation for a specific period of time. Each company and individual should assess their tax obligations on a case-by-case basis.

On January 1, 2018, the UAE introduced a 5 percent Value Added Tax to goods and services in the UAE.

## Key sanctions and penalties in the case of contravention of telecommunications laws and regulations

Provision of illegal public telecommunications services, including the provision of IOT Services without being adequately certified by the TDRA, and possibly the provision of VoIP services, can carry a risk of criminal prosecution, resulting in fines and imprisonment of up to AED1 million.

The UAE's licensed operators may also take steps to block access to certain services they consider to be in breach of the Telecommunications Laws.

The TDRA has taken issue in the past with certain OTT services that were not susceptible to lawful interception. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the TDRA has relaxed its position on the provision of VoIP in the UAE to a degree, and has published a list of those service providers who may provide limited VoIP services here. These service providers have been provided an exemption from the TDRA.

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## About us

DLA Piper is a global law firm with lawyers located in more than 40 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific, positioning us to help companies with their legal needs around the world.

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