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Unlocked iPhones for Everyone

Sensing that customers like choosing their network, Apple is set to widen the distribution of unlocked devices

Numerous reports claim that Apple is set remove some of the restrictions surrounding its iPhone, particularly the one tying it to one carrier per country. In what seems like an attempt to boost Wall Street's confidence in Apple's meeting its goal of selling 10 million iPhone units, Belgium, Italy and other multi-network-fancy countries are now on track to receive unlocked iPhones. Carriers in Italy and Belgium will be selling the unlocked iPhone starting this June, CNN Money reports adding that, while Belgium's local laws were the reason for Apple's move in this territory, it was the Cupertino folks' consent to go the "unlocked" way in Italy. France local laws also require operators to offer phones that work on any network. There's a bit of a catch, though, surrounding the whole unlocked-iPhones deal. Whether Apple does see increased interest in the device that offers both smartphone and media player capabilities by offering unlocked devices or not, a big question mark hovers over the amount of money it could have made by keeping the iPhone tied to exclusive deals: "For every 1 million iPhones sold, revenue and earnings per share change about \$400 million or 12 cents if you assume a revenue agreement with a carrier, and \$200 million or 2 cents a share without an agreement," Bank of America equity research analyst Scott Craig estimated on Tuesday. Analyst Shaw Wu predicted recently that, "In addition to a 3G version... the 2.5G model could see a minor casing change and lower price point closer to \$299-349 vs. its \$399 price today," American Technology Research sources indicate. Belgium publication Astel also reported last week that a new iPhone model would be released in June by carrier Mobistar. Future buyers of the respective model will (allegedly) be able to use it on any carrier's network. Adding all this to the huge array of iPhone apps set to make their debut at this year's WDCC and the introduction of the 3G iPhone (along with two possibly lower-specced models, according to recent rumors), Apple stands a pretty good chance of reaching its goal of selling 10M iPhone units.