



BELGIAN INSTITUTE FOR POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

B I P T

PRESS RELEASE

Belgian user rather satisfied with telecommunications services

Brussels, 28 October 2015 - BIPT publishes the results of its annual survey on the users' perception of the Belgian electronic communications market. Overall consumers are rather satisfied. Problems they experience regard Internet and television for the most part. They state that it is not always as easy to switch telecom services bundles as it is for mobile telephony. Users want to be well informed, for instance about the tariff plan most advantageous for them or about the actual Internet speed of their connection.

The study published by BIPT gives a picture of the Belgian telecommunications market seen through the eyes of Belgian households in 2015. It is based on the results from the written and online survey of users older than 15 (1,292 out of 5,421 questionnaires having been answered). By way of the survey BIPT hopes to get an answer from the users to questions like: what is the degree of user satisfaction, how do users behave on the Belgian telecom market, do they switch operators, do they compare offers, do Belgian users have the tools necessary to make an informed choice about telecom services, are users sufficiently aware about the possibilities offered by the market and about their rights?

Use of mobile Internet - General satisfaction about telecom services

Users state **to be rather satisfied in general** about the tariffs available on the market, the tariffs offered by their operators and about the operator services they use. It is remarkable that consumers are increasingly using mobile Internet over their smartphones, e.g. by using apps such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Whereas the 2012 enquiry showed that 18% of the population claimed to use mobile Internet, 3 years later, in 2015, this number has risen to 40%. The respondents feel that they clearly make less use of fixed Internet and call less over the landline or with the mobile telephone. In reality according to BIPT's official figures this regression is not as strong.

Slight decreases in the number of problems involving telecommunications services

The proportion of users having experienced problems with their operators has decreased lightly in recent years (46% in 2015 against 50% the year before). Most problems relate to Internet at home (62%) and television (58%). These are mainly problems with the quality of service such as (long) interruptions, the speed of the connection, a saturated network. In such cases most users (92%) contact their operators by telephone, mail or by way of the website. A minority does not report anything, mostly because they are afraid that they will not be put in the right anyway, because it is only a minor problem or because they fear it would take too long. Although 9% has received damages 43% does not know that it is actually possible to receive damages in case of service interruption.

Comparing services and prices is difficult

Consumers feel it is very difficult to compare the services and prices offered by the operators. However, a quarter of the respondents is familiar with the official BIPT tariff simulator www.besttariff.be, but only 6% has used it once or several times (in 2012, this was only 3.4%). Yet, those who have visited the website find it easy or very easy to use and over

70% of the visitors finds the results to be relevant up to very relevant. Afterwards 12% actually changes the tariff plan and more than 6% switches to another operator.

Switching fixed operators goes less smoothly than switching mobile operators

One in 5 users has changed the telecom services bundle in the past 3 years. The main reasons for changing are more interesting tariffs and problems with the previous operator. The vast majority of the consumers having switched bundles over the past three years (85.6%) finds it relatively easy or even very easy to switch operators but **overall switching bundles receives a score of only 5.76/10**. There is some dissatisfaction in case of incomplete technical information about the change and delay when providing the service. 35% would like a simple technical and administrative treatment of the switch.

Proportionally speaking people have changed more as regards mobile telephony: 1 in 4 switched during the past 3 years. They do it even a lot more (71.5%) because of the more interesting tariffs and to a lesser extent due to problems with the previous operator. Here, change goes also more smoothly than with bundles: 1 in 2 finds it very easy to switch mobile operators. In general, switching mobile operators gets a score of 7.18/10.

Users want to be well informed

45.1% of the respondents is of the opinion that they are informed of their rights rather badly or even not at all.

For instance, more than 90% finds it rather to very **useful to be informed about the tariff plan most advantageous for them**, but more than half says not to have received such a tariff plan proposal including an average user profile at any time. Users prefer to get this annually and automatically. Some of them preferably by way of their bill, others prefer by letter or e-mail.

Only 10% knows that their **subscription can be cancelled free of charge after 6 months**. Many think there is no minimum period, others think it can only be cancelled free of charge after 1 year.

67% does not know how **to find out the actual speed of the fixed Internet connection** (in the contract). Yet, 38.4 % would find it useful to know the actual speed. At the same time consumers do not really know what Internet speed they need. 67.5% does not know that the minimum connection speed to surf at home is only 2 Mbps. Many (35%) have a specific Internet speed because it is included in a bundle.

Almost 8 in 10 finds it very useful to **receive a text message when the consumption of the allowance of the mobile subscription has been exceeded**. Only 11.6% of the respondents knows that it is actually mandatory for their operator to send an SMS to warn that they have exceeded their allowance when the consumption has reached € 50 or another amount agreed with the operator.

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