



BELGIAN INSTITUTE FOR POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

BIPT

PRESS RELEASE

BIPT publishes the results of its annual survey on the telecom users' perception

Brussels, 31 August 2016 - BIPT publishes the results of its annual survey on the users' perception of the Belgian electronic communications market. Even though consumers experience some problems regarding service quality, they are rather satisfied. The service quality barometer soon to be published by BIPT on its website will allow to better know the performance quality offered by operators.

The survey published by BIPT gives a picture of the Belgian telecommunications market seen through the eyes of Belgian consumers in 2016. It is based on the results of a written and online survey carried out among users aged between 15 and 74. By way of this survey BIPT collects the answers to questions such as "What is the degree of satisfaction of users?", "Do they compare offers?", "Do they switch offer?", "Do Belgian users have the tools necessary to make an informed choice about telecom services?", "Are users sufficiently aware of their rights?".

Usage of telecommunications services and satisfaction

Regarding the **usage** of services, the survey notes an increase of the television over the internet (15.3% in 2014 and 18.3% in 2016) and a decrease of the fixed telephony (70.5% in 2012 and 61.3% in 2016). The survey also shows that alternative services such as Facebook Messenger (39.8%), Skype (35.9%) and Whatsapp (34.9%) are extensively used to make calls and/or send messages.

A large number of respondents (78%-84%) are **rather satisfied** with the service provided by their operator and a bit less satisfied with the prices charged; on the whole they trust the quality of billing, the information received from their operator as well as the respect of their rights. Yet, among the respondents, 42% experienced a problem with an operator over the last three years. This number was higher from 2013 to 2015 (48% to 53%). The problems experienced mainly relate to fixed Internet (64%) and television (51%). Most of the time, these are due to insufficient service quality (64%) or service interruptions of varying lengths (39%).

The service quality barometer soon to be published by BIPT on its website will allow to improve the transparency of the performance quality offered by operators and, by doing so, to better inform the users. The existence of this barometer will also create a spirit of competition among operators wishing to differentiate themselves regarding quality.

To choose an offer

The price of an offer remains the main criterion (44%) to choose an offer, but consumers make little use of tariff comparison tools to choose an operator. Therefore, a tool such as the tariff simulator (www.besttariff.be), which was put in place by BIPT and allows to compare the offers available on the market, is still relevant, even though it turns out that it remains otherwise rather little known (67% do not know the tool) and little used (7%), whereas respondents consider it is not very easy to compare prices and services on the market. However, 54% of respondents having tried the tariff simulator find it easy to use and 53% find its results relevant. Among the respondents having used the simulator, 35% have changed their tariff plan after

having used it. Moreover, BIPT performs a national price comparison every year, which should also encourage the consumer to compare prices. Standardised information sheets are another offer comparison tool but remain little known.

The content of an offer is the second criterion selected by respondents (36%) to choose an operator, but, surprisingly, the reputation of an operator and habits have become more and more important criteria over the years, whereas the technical reliability is virtually no longer a reason to choose an operator over another.

The percentage of respondents considering **Internet speed** as an important criterion to choose an operator has remained stable on the whole over the years, but few of them have chosen an offer depending on the internet connection speed (33%). Irrespective of their age category, the majority of respondents find it useful to very useful to know the actual speed of their internet connection at home, but 63% of respondents do not know how they can measure the actual speed of their connection. To this end, BIPT will soon publish an updated decision in order to enable the users to control the actual speed of their connection.

More specifically regarding **bundled offers**, respondents indicate they have switched operator in order to benefit from a more advantageous offer (58%), but also because the quality/price ratio no longer was satisfactory (27%) or because they experienced problems (19%). Among the respondents having switched operator, 15% think that this change was not easy and, generally, 48% consider it is not so easy to switch bundled offer, 45% to switch landline provider and 40% to switch Internet provider. The implementation of the Easy Switch project, which simplifies the process to switch fixed operator, should in principle improve this situation for the consumer.

Knowledge of the consumer rights

Six respondents out of ten consider they are badly informed of their rights regarding telecommunications. **They are generally rather broadly unaware of their rights and of the tools** put at their disposal to help them take the utmost benefit from market competition.

Here are some examples:

- They don't know where to find their consumption profile (in the client area of their operator's website) and wish to be informed of the most advantageous tariff plan for them.
- Only one respondent with a fixed-term contract out of ten knows that the date on which the contract ends can be found on every bill.
- The three conditions under which an ongoing contract can be terminated free of charge are not well known by the respondents (in the event of price increase, the modification of the contract terms by the operator and without notice after six months).
- They recognise certain premium rate numbers but don't know these can be blocked for free.

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