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BELGIAN INSTITUTE FOR POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

PRESS RELEASE

Investments in the telecom sector reach record height in 2016

Brussels, 27 June 2017 - Today BIPT published the annual statistics relating to the telecom sector in 2016. Investments from the telecom sector amply exceeded 1.5 billion euro in 2016. The total turnover from the telecom sector, including TV, continued to soar, reaching 8.39 billion euro. The increasing use of mobile data played an important role in this growth and digital television turned out to be a major driver as well.

In 2016 the turnover from the fixed and mobile communications sector attains more than 7.2 billion euro: +1%. When TV is included, the turnover climbs to 8.39 billion euro (+1.4%). Investments (excluding licences) reach a record height of 21.9% of the turnover generated on the electronic communications market (compared to 19.6% in 2015). Nominally these investment expenses went up to 1.586 billion euro.

Consumers and companies continue to relinquish the traditional telephone line (access channels decrease by 2.6%, reaching 4.3 million) but purchase increasingly more fixed broadband lines (+3.5%, reaching 4.27 million).

On the residential broadband market they make good use of the increased freedom of choice resulting from the regulated opening up of the cable: as a result the market share of operators who do not possess their own network increases by 0.5 percentage points, to 2.7%. On the business market the cable operators show a higher profit than Proximus (+0.5% compared to +0.1%).

Increasingly more households enjoy a superfast fixed broadband line. 81 of 100 fixed broadband lines attain a speed of 30 Mbps or more, thus ranking first at an EU level, well above the EU average of 37%.

On the mobile market, the number of active SIM cards increases: +2.5% to 14.572 million active SIM cards, 2.021 of which are machine-to-machine SIM cards. The remaining 12.5 million SIM cards for voice and data are divided among the 3 mobile network operators (77.3%) and the MVNOs (22.7%). Their volume decreases by 1.7% while the M2M segment grows substantially: +39.7% in 2016.

The data SIM card penetration rate goes up from 61.6% to 66.3% of the Belgian population. 65% of the number of active SIM cards of the mobile network operators (MNOs) is used for mobile data and 64% generates 4G traffic (compared to 54% in 2015). Per data card of the 3 MNOs an average of 827 megabytes of mobile data is used, which is 345 of megabytes more than in 2015. 58.2% of the mobile data traffic comes from smartphones, the remaining 41.2% from PCs and tablets.

4-play won ground in 2016 owing to the introduction of new convergence bundles combining fixed and mobile. In total there were a 100,384 of new 4-play subscriptions. Yet competition still mainly takes place at the level of 3-play offers, representing 54% of the total number of bundles (3,058,175).

TV remains an important driver for the growth of the number of bundles as well. At the end of 2016 digital TV was included in 2.86 million residential bundles: 106,260 bundles more than the previous year. The total number of digital TV subscribers reaches the line of 4 million and now represents 90% of the total number of TV connections.

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