

BELGIAN INSTITUTE FOR POSTAL SERVICES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

PRESS RELEASE

The BIPT opens up the modem market

Brussel, 11 October 2023. In a new decision the BIPT has determined the network termination point (NTP) for fixed networks. The NTP means the point from where users have control over their Internet connection. The BIPT considers modems and routers to be a part of the end-user terminal equipment, so that they can be chosen freely for broadband and Internet telephony. As a consequence users are no longer forced to take their operator's modem/router when they conclude their Internet subscription.

For quite a while now, initiatives have been taken at the level of the European Union to improve competition in the telecommunications terminal equipment market. For instance, the principle that users should be able to freely choose their terminal equipment (e.g. modems, decoders or telephones) has been incorporated in several directives and regulations.

In order to put this into practice the location of the network termination point ("NTP") has to be determined, to stipulate at what point users become responsible for the telecommunications terminal equipment. To determine the NTP location the BIPT has relied on the directives established at the European level. According to the BIPT a free choice of the modem could enable end-customers to switch operators on the same network infrastructure more easily, which can increase competition on the telecoms market, and potentially to select deliberately a more durable device or a device that offers more functions, such as in terms of security or WiFi options.

The Belgian point of view is no exception: in about ten countries, including the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and Italy for instance, the same view exists and end-customers can already choose a modem freely.

As for connections to a copper and fibre network the NTP location can be represented as the wall socket to which the modem is connected. As for a connection to a coax network that location is the black network distributor to which the modem is connected.

However, as far as TV services are concerned, BIPT expects that no alternative TV set-top boxes will be developed (due to a lack of market demand and future network developments), making a similar decision in this regard of little use. One of the consequences is that the operator's TV set-top box still needs to be used. Classic telephone connections and services with high-quality level services (typical for business services) are also excluded from this decision.

For the sake of a smooth development of modems by interested parties, all operators must publish the NTP characteristics and the technical specifications of the modems and routers within six months after the coming into force of this decision. Within twelve months following the coming into force of this decision operators must carry out the necessary IT adaptations resulting from this decision. Therefore end-users must be able to connect their own terminal equipment to the network within twelve months following the coming into force of this decision, i.e. by 1 November 2024.

For more information:



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