

Free Modem Choice Launches in Belgium

Users take their digital future into their own hands

28 October 2024 • Later this week (from 1 November 2024), all Belgian consumers will have the freedom to choose which telecommunications terminal equipment they want to use. Thanks to the new free modem choice regulation, customers will now be able to decide for themselves, whether they have a fibre optic, cable, or DSL connection. They will no longer be required to use the devices provided by their network operator. This marks an important step towards greater flexibility for users and boosts competition and innovation in the Belgian telecommunications market.



Decision by BIPT

The technology-independent free choice of terminal equipment was approved last autumn by the telecom regulator BIPT, through the 'Decision on the Identification of the Network Termination Point for Broadband Services'. The transition period ends on 1 November 2024. From this date, Belgian users can decide whether to use their own equipment that best meets their needs or continue using the device provided by their operator.

Benefits for End Users

- **More freedom and choice:** Users can choose devices that better suit their specific requirements, such as higher speeds, enhanced security features, or integration with smart home devices. They have access to a wider range of devices that cater to various needs and budgets.



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- **Cost savings and flexibility:** Since users no longer have to rent routers or modems from telecom providers, they can save money in the long term by purchasing their own equipment. Switching between providers also becomes easier, as they can continue using their own device.
- **Increased competition and innovation:** Free choice stimulates competition among manufacturers, leading to more innovation. Users benefit from a wider selection of advanced devices that make use of the latest technologies and better meet their needs.
- **Sustainability:** Consumers can use their devices for a longer period, even after switching providers, reducing electronic waste and saving money. By opting for energy-efficient devices, they also help reduce their ecological footprint.
- **Enhanced security and data protection:** Users have more control over the security and data protection settings of their own devices. They can manage updates and configurations, improving their digital safety.

“Thanks to this new regulation, Belgian users will have more control over their digital future,” explains a spokesperson for VTKE. “Free modem choice not only provides users with more freedom and flexibility but also fosters competition in the market for telecommunications terminal equipment, strengthening innovation in the sector.”

Belgium Follows European Example

With this measure, Belgium follows the lead of countries such as Finland (2014), Germany (2016), Italy (2018), and the Netherlands (2022), where free modem choice was introduced earlier. Research in these countries shows that consumers greatly appreciate this option. In the Netherlands, 68% of respondents considered free choice important, with more than a third (35%) stating they would purchase their own device the next time they switch providers. In Germany, half of the respondents already use a self-purchased device. In Italy, more than half (52%) plan to buy their own device at their next purchase.

**Research conducted by Kantar on behalf of VTKE, February 2022, representative sample of individuals aged 16 to 65.*

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