



DIGITAL *Belgium*

PLAN FOR ULTRAFAST INTERNET IN BELGIUM

2015-2020

At present, Belgium is doing pioneering work in rolling out new technologies for ultrafast Internet. The Belgian government must make every effort not to lose that pioneering role. It can do this by stimulating the operators to continue rolling out a high-speed and high-performance network.

Ultrafast internet is crucial for the growth of the digital economy and to allow the digital society to flourish. The digital economy is one of the most dynamic and promising economic sectors in terms of development potential. Mobile traffic doubles every year and Internet traffic every two to three years. Well over 4 million people work in the ICT sector in Europe, and their share is growing annually by 3% despite the crisis

The objective of the Digital Agenda for Europe is to ensure that by 2020 all Europeans have access to Internet speeds of at least 30 Mbps, and half of all households at least 100 Mbps.

Belgium wants to go further. By 2020 at least half of the connections in Belgium must achieve Internet speeds of up to 1 Gbps. Mobile broadband technologies, such as 4G and LTE Advanced, must be rolled out as soon as possible across the entire Belgian territory. Moreover, a proactive 5G framework needs to be created to ensure Belgium is in the lead when the Internet-of-everything is rolled out.

With 17 specific measures in 4 thematic areas of action, this plan will strongly stimulate the roll-out of Ultrafast internet in Belgium.

Alexander De Croo

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Digital Agenda and Telecom



AREA OF ACTION 1. COMMON STRATEGIC VISION OF THE ROLL-OUT OF ULTRAFAST INTERNET

Via this first area of action, the government wants to take stock of the roll-out of advanced networks in Belgium and at the same time provide a coherent, stable framework for encouraging continued network investment.



Measure 1: Map network coverage

The government will map the areas (per technology) where Internet access is available at a particular speed. This is based on a **visualisation using maps** by the end of 2015. In this way, the areas can be identified where a high-performance infrastructure is not yet present (white zones) and **additional measures** are necessary. The government will make these maps available **to everyone via a website**.

Measure 2: Encouraging communication and coordination

Meetings will be held **at regular intervals between all the stakeholders**: the authorities involved (federal government, regions and cities), the operators and other interested parties about the roll-out of ultrafast Internet. In this way, the status of progress can be determined and the measures of the different policy levels optimised and coordinated further.

Measure 3: A stable framework for network investment

The regulatory and statutory framework must give operators sufficient certainty and stimulus to invest in new network technologies without losing sight of competition in the market. The **evolutions regarding 5G** will also be monitored to proactively create a **forward-looking framework for this new mobile technology**.

Measure 4: Lowering the thresholds for rolling out mobile broadband

The tax on the use of masts and pylons and the radiation standards form an obstacle to **rolling out mobile networks**. Consultation on these subjects will be held between the federal government and the competent bodies in order to point out these investment obstacles to them.

AREA OF ACTION 2. BROADBAND FOR EVERYONE

Everyone has the right to access the Internet, also citizens and businesses currently situated in zones where no Internet access is available. By 2020, all Belgians must have access to Internet speeds of at least 30 Mbps via a mix of technologies.



Measure 5: Developing policy guidelines for the roll-out

Several options will be examined for the **collaboration between operators and authorities** prior to the roll-out of networks for ultrafast Internet in line with the European directives. It is likewise necessary to see whether European financing instruments could be used to finance the roll-out.

Measure 6: Mobile broadband as alternative to fixed

The government will stimulate the use of mobile broadband where no fixed broadband access is present. In the auction of the 800 MHz frequencies, 60 municipalities were already included which, as a licensing condition, had to be 98% covered by way of priority. Considered in the next auction of mobile frequencies will be which **additional licensing conditions** should be imposed to improve the cover of mobile broadband even further. Lastly, **rolling out microcells** is also essential for improving mobile cover.

Measure 7: Stimulating Wi-Fi roll-out

Wi-Fi is important as an additional technology, because many mobile devices only have Wi-Fi access and no 3G or 4G access. Furthermore, Wi-Fi is used to meet steeply rising data use (Wi-Fi offloading), so that the 3G or 4G networks become less loaded. The federal government will identify the thresholds for providing Wi-Fi in public buildings, on public transport (e.g. on the train) and in cities. Measures will be developed to simplify the **roll-out of Wi-Fi**. In addition, more transparency will be given to Wi-Fi providers about the obligations they must fulfil

Measure 8: Informing about broadband via satellite

In very thinly populated areas where no broadband is available, broadband access can also be obtained via satellite connection. The FPS Economy will **inform citizens better** about the **use of satellite** for establishing a broadband connection.

Measure 9: Giving priority to providing schools, libraries and hospitals with ultrafast Internet

The needs of schools, hospitals and libraries as regards Internet access will be identified. The most appropriate way of providing these **schools, libraries and hospitals** with ultrafast Internet will be studied together with the telecoms operators and the competent ministers.



AREA OF ACTION 3. LOWER COSTS OF BUILDING NETWORKS

Lowering costs has a positive effect on the business case and encourages operators to make network investments. This third area of action therefore focuses on the transposition of the European directive of 15 May 2014 with measures for reducing the costs of building ultrafast networks. The transposition mainly concerns regional issues, but the federal government plays a coordinating role given that prompt, correct transposition is in the interest of the telecoms sector.



Measure 10: Central counter for licences

The directive provides for one **central electronic counter** in each region for applying for licences for rolling out infrastructure and for granting licences swiftly.

Measure 11: Carrying out roadworks jointly

The directive seeks to further optimise the **co-ordination of roadworks** (by mapping planned works) **and the distribution of the costs** between the different network operators (telecoms companies, cable companies, power grid operators, water companies, transport, etc.) participating in the joint roadworks).

Measure 12: Using existing infrastructure

Operators can request access to **existing infrastructure** of other utility companies to make the roll-out of broadband **faster and less costly**. Information about this infrastructures can be requested via the central counter. The aim must be for integration in existing cartographic instruments (KLIP in Flanders, KLIM-CICC in Wallonia and in Brussels).

Measure 13: 'Fibre ready' construct and remodel

By publishing practical guides, the government aims to create awareness among citizens who have plans to build or renovate, so that, following transposition of the directive, they are urged to prepare their new residence for future broadband technologies (such as fibre optic). The possibility of issuing a 'fibre ready' label will be studied.

AREA OF ACTION 4. DYNAMIC ECOSYSTEM

Innovation, involvement, trust and competition are essential elements for fostering the dynamic in the digital ecosystem.



Measure 14: Innovative research projects

The government will stimulate academia **to launch innovative research projects** into the possibilities and benefits of ultrafast Internet in collaboration with the operators, the main Internet and IT companies, developers and suppliers of equipment.

Measure 15: Involving SMEs and the self-employed

Informing and involving SMEs and the self-employed in the development of new services which use the possibilities of ultrafast Internet. The government will also inform businesses **about the many benefits and possibilities** that ultrafast Internet offers.

Measure 16: Reinforcing the trust of users

The regulator will oversee actual delivery of the promised Internet speeds. Using a new **online measuring instrument** can reinforce the trust of the users (consumers, businesses and government bodies) in the promised service provision.

Measure 17: Stimulating competition

The government will pay attention to **balanced competition between all domestic and foreign service providers** in the telecoms sector in Belgium. Healthy competition will encourage operators to make further network investments