Press Release

New study on copper switch-off shows accelerated migration to fibre benefits the entire economy and society

The updated study on Copper switch-off released at the FTTH virtual Conference 2020 highlights:

- *Estonia and Sweden are the most active countries heading to copper switch-off;*
- *Copper switch-off provides significant environmental and societal benefits;*
- *Transition to fibre is a win-win for consumers, operators and fibre investors;*
- *Member States and regulators are instrumental in fostering this transition.*

3 December 2020 – Today the FTTH Council Europe released a [follow-up to its study on copper switch-off](#) prepared by WIK. The new study builds on the outcomes of [last year's report](#) with additional questionnaires and interviews with selected stakeholders. It further highlights the benefits of copper switch off to the environment, society, consumers, investors and operators, as well as possible implications for policy-makers and regulators and calls attention to the challenges and potential solutions that will ease the transition to fibre infrastructures across Europe.

Main findings:

Copper switch off in Europe is still fragmented - Estonia and Sweden are the most active countries

Since last year, Estonia has made the most progress of the ten European countries analysed[1] with up to 80% of copper exchanges switched-off in 2020. Sweden has also made significant progress towards migration. Concrete plans to shut copper off have been put in place in France and the Netherlands and discussions are currently taking place in the UK.

In the meantime, despite high FTTH/B penetration levels, the pace of copper switch-off has been slow in Spain and Portugal. Countries such as Germany and Poland have not announced concrete plan yet however the completion of PSTN[2] switch-off in Germany is likely to facilitate migration when fibre is widespread.

Copper switch-off: a win-win for the environment, society, consumers and telcos

Research found that copper switch-off and transition to fibre allow for significant environmental, societal and economic benefits:

- **Reduced CO2 emissions and more energy efficiency:** fibre networks emit 88% less greenhouse gas emissions per Gigabit compared to legacy technologies;
- **Economic boost:** full FTTP deployment can positively impact the rate of employment (in Canada, 2.9 %) and increase the number of start-ups (5% in France);
- **Reliability:** fibre is 70-80% more reliable than copper, reducing considerably operational expenses such as maintenance and fault repair;
- **Benefits to consumers:** In a representative survey of consumers in the Swedish market[3], it was found that more FTTH customers were happy with their service compared with DSL customers (82% versus 50%). In addition, 87% of the FTTH users highlighted the high

---

[1] Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK
[2] PSTN: public switched telephone network
[3] The socio-economic impact of FTTH by WIK for the FTTH Council Europe (2018) available [here](#)

bandwidth as a benefit of FTTH based services, 62% the wider range of services available and 51% a better value for money

- **A better deal for investors:** evidence from the Netherlands and Portugal suggests that clarity on copper switch-off can improve the business case for fibre;

Key new challenges identified

Notwithstanding the many benefits of fibre, the progress towards copper switch-off in Europe remains fragmented. The reluctance of former incumbent operators to invest in fibre access networks has been a key constraint in some cases, while challenges in persuading customers and access seekers to migrate has hampered progress in others. Regulatory factors including long notice periods for legacy network operators to switch off copper and associated wholesaling requirements for the closure of copper exchanges may have further contributed to delays and complexity in some countries which are otherwise ready to make the transition.

"*These regulatory and market factors holding back the migration to fibre can be tackled, and we would encourage Member States and regulators to intensify support to copper and PSTN switch-off and consumer migration to FTTH. Some of the key steps towards success are: fostering the roll-out of fibre networks in areas where the footprint is still limited, consider ways in which copper pricing can be used as a mechanism to create 100% FTTH coverage and take up and set up labelling or rules on advertising standards to signal benefits of FTTH vs other technologies when consumers are confused or unconvinced of the benefits[4]*" highlighted **Vincent Garnier, Director General of the FTTH Council Europe.**

"*The shutoff of legacy networks and transition to fibre has the potential to bring a major contribution towards the achievement of the objectives of the Green Deal and to serve as an enabler of the digital transformation towards a sustainable economy. Full fibre is the only future-proof, robust and environementally friendly network infrastructure that will enable the new generations of innovative technologies and services for years to come.*" highlights **President of the FTTH Council Europe Eric Festraets.**

The study **Copper switch-off - European experience and practical considerations** by WIK for the FTTH Council Europe can be found here.

Contact:

Aurélie Bladocha Coelho
Director Communications & Public Affairs
aurelie.bladocha-coelho@ftthcouncil.eu Tel: +32 478 78 61 00

Sergejs Mikaeljans
Communications and Public Affairs Officer
sergejs.mikaeljans@ftthcouncil.eu Tel: +32 474 81 04 54

About the FTTH Council Europe

The FTTH Council Europe's vision is that fibre connectivity will transform and enhance the way we live, do business and interact, connecting everyone and everything, everywhere.

---

[4] See report on Identifying European Best Practice in Fibre Advertising by WiK for the FTTH Council Europe (2020) available here

Fibre is the future-proof, climate-friendly infrastructure which enables an unparalleled fixed and wireless experience as well as new innovative digital technologies and services, empowering a leading Digital Society in Europe. This is a crucial prerequisite for safeguarding Europe's global competitiveness while playing a leading global role in sustainability

The FTTH Council Europe consists of more than 160 member companies. www.ftthcouncil.eu