

1 FROM DNS.be TO EURid

For historical reasons, KU Leuven had the task of registering domain names for the domain “.be”. In February 1999, BELTUG, the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) and Agoria established a new non-profit association, **DNS.be**, which aims to liberalise the “.be” domain, through a “first come, first served” registration of urls. By May 2008, almost 800,000 names had been registered in the “.be” domain

BELTUG continues to be part of the Management Board and the Strategic Committee of DNS.be.

In 2003, DNS.be, together with Swedish and Italian registrars, submitted a proposal for operating the domain name “.eu”, establishing the non-profit organisation **EURid** for this purpose. That same year, the European Commission awarded the operation of the “.eu” domain name to EURid. More than 2,720,000 names were registered in the “.eu” domain as of May 2008.

www.dns.be
www.eurid.eu

2 INTUG, THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS USERS GROUP

BELTUG is an active member of INTUG (International Telecom Users Group) INTUG not only provides BELTUG with a channel to European decision-makers, but also acts as an umbrella under which various national telecommunications user groups discuss concerns and items of interest relating to the development of telecommunication regulations, technologies and business applications. These discussions help BELTUG formulate its point of view on national issues.

Thanks to a BELTUG initiative, national user groups can now exchange views and experiences at INTUG meetings. It is very useful to learn from the other user groups, in order to improve how we work and to test our positions and viewpoints in Belgium against developments elsewhere.

Common positions have recently been taken regarding GSM roaming, the high cost of fixed-to-mobile calls, IP telephony and proposals for a new European framework.

In May 2008, INTUG published a well-received study titled “Productivity, Growth and Jobs: How Telecoms Regulation Can Support European Businesses”

The INTUG site covers international news relevant to telecommunication specialists. All BELTUG members can have access to the Members-Only part of the INTUG website.

www.intug.org

3 AMENDMENT OF THE LAW ON ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

One of the major goals of the telecoms law of 2005 was to facilitate increased competition by lowering the threshold for new service providers to access the telecommunications market. However, the initial text would have grouped together several corporations and interest groups managing private networks for their own internal usage with operators of electronic communication services, creating a counterproductive effect.

BELTUG proposed an amendment to the telecoms law, aiming to restrict the scope of the statute on operators. This amendment ensures that organisations such as banks, government departments, distribution companies, universities, hospitals, etc, will not be defined as operators, and therefore will not be subject to significant regulatory duties/restrictions.

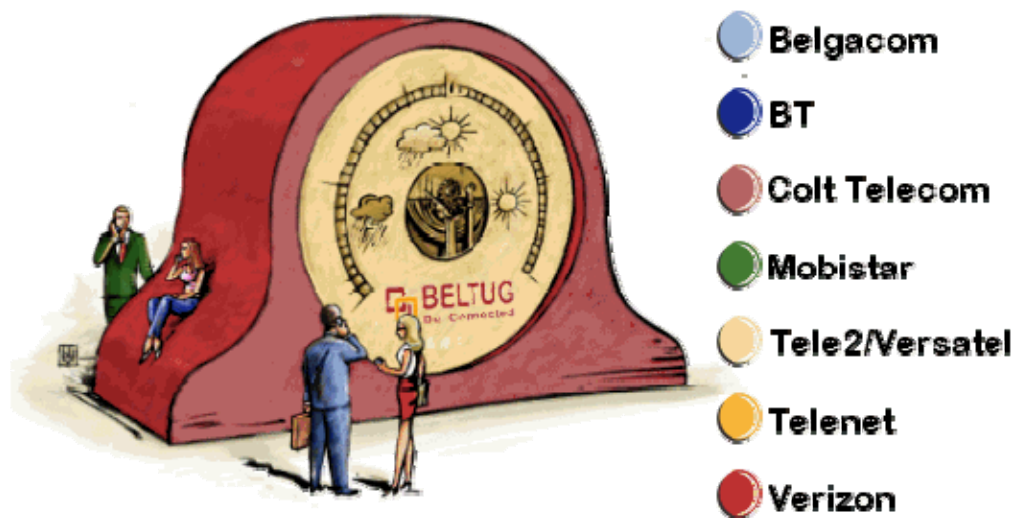
This amendment was approved and the telecoms law modified accordingly.

By proposing this amendment, BELTUG saved a lot of effort and money for a large segment of its members. Furthermore, by harmonising the application of the law with current practices, the amendment contributes to a significant administrative simplification, enabling the supervisory body to fulfil its mission more efficiently.

4 BELTUG FIXED-TO-MOBILE BAROMETER

Companies and public services have complained for years about the elevated costs for calls from fixed to mobile networks (F2M). High tariffs for these calls are a direct result of the expensive mobile termination rates charged by Mobile Operators to Fixed Telecom Services Providers (= the rates mobile operators charge to terminate calls on their networks).

Since November 2006, the regulator BIPT enforces a termination rate decrease, meaning that all operators now pay less for terminating calls to Base, Mobistar and Proximus. However, it **appears that the fixed operators rarely pass this decrease on to their customers**. BELTUG has launched a recurring survey in order to collect users' input and to monitor and report the real changes in the market. BELTUG plans to update and publish this barometer regularly.



5 BUSINESS CONTINUITY – A FINANCE INDUSTRY PROJECT

The Financial Stability Committee (FSC) established a number of recommendations regarding Business Continuity Planning, with which banking institutions in Belgium must comply.

(ref. http://www.cbfa.be/nl/publications/cfs/pdf/business_continuity_planning.pdf)

Within this context, the Banking, Finance and Insurance Committee (CBFA) responsible for supervising the finance industry, requested proof from the financial institutions that their critical telecommunication network connections and applications aren't at risk from any "single point of failure". In particular, CBFA invited the largest banking institutions (i.e. KBC, Dexia, Fortis and ING) to question their telecom operators, in order develop an accurate risk analysis for their critical network operations. The banking institutions were asked to:

- collect any relevant information that demonstrates if the Business Continuity Planning aims are met;
- register the appropriate guaranties as part of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) contracted with their telecom operators.

These 4 largest banks, joined later by Euroclear, invited BELTUG to coordinate this survey, as an extension to its recurring and performing activities around Business Continuity. This methodology offered a much more structured and simple process for collecting the relevant data from the telecom operators, without forcing them to respond to several separate but similar demands from their various customers.

BELTUG put together a three-part questionnaire:

- Part 1 : Common questions from the 4 banks + Euroclear based on the information requested by CBFA
- Part 2: Specific questions each institution according to its specific situation, but still based on the information requested by CBFA.
- Part 3: Common questions from the 4 banks + Euroclear completing the information requested by CBFA. In fact, for certain issues, the financial institutions wished to go deeper in their analyses than required by CBFA, in order to establish their BCPs.

All of the telecom operators approached efficiently contributed to the project, and the final documentation presented by the banks involved and Euroclear exceeded the requirements of the CBFA.

6 THE DAILY BELTUG ICT PRESS MONITOR & CLIPPING - IN CO-OPERATION WITH ARMADA

The BELTUG ICT Press Monitor & Clipping service (pay service) has grown to be a much appreciated tool for many companies. It provides a much more thorough media search than most individuals can take care of on their own.

Every day, Armada monitors the complete ICT news from more than 20 national and international media titles. From Monday to Friday, subscribers receive an overview with English abstracts of all ICT news available in the media, all before 11 a.m.

With the added clipping service, BELTUG members can also receive complete copies of the articles that interest them. Each subscribing company can request up to 100 articles per year.

BELTUG members receive preferential rates for the BELTUG ICT Press Monitor & Clipping service.

http://www.beltug.be/page/51/BELTUG_ICT_Press_Monitor_subscription/

7 ELECTRONIC INVOICING

In the early stages of the telecoms market liberalisation, BELTUG advocated the introduction of electronic invoicing by the various operators, including a standardised layout for all relevant billing data across the industry. The purpose was to enable businesses to consolidate the invoice records of different suppliers as well as to easily integrate telecom bills details into internal accounting applications.

BELTUG, Belgacom and the Platform of Telecom Operators presented an exhaustive file to the Ministry of Finance, asking that it be approved for all interested telecoms companies. This was granted in January 2003, meaning that operators could start implementing the “electronic invoice, without a paper copy” on a legal basis. Belgacom and MCI (Verizon) pioneered this methodology. As mobile communications became increasingly important for companies, BELTUG convinced Proximus and Mobistar to implement the solution, too.

In the meantime, the technology has evolved favourably, introducing a wide range of tools and applications for data exchange across multiple formats, e.g. transferring billing information from a specific operator to Excel or XML, etc.

8 BELTUG STUDY: THE ROLE & PERFORMANCE OF ICT - PERCEPTIONS OF THE BUSINESS LINES

As part of its mission to facilitate the exchange of best practices, experiences and knowledge between its members, in May 2006 BELTUG conducted a survey to provide an objective view of the perceptions and expectations of the “internal clients” of IT and telecoms managers, e.g. the heads of business lines and functional departments supported by IT.

The research findings help IT and telecoms departments improve their working relationships with these internal customers, organise themselves towards internal customers’ demands and, ultimately, increase the added value of ICT.

The research method entailed 24 face-to-face interviews with senior managers of business units and functional departments. The respondents included top managers (CEOs, Chairman), Sales and Marketing Directors, Finance Directors, HR Directors, Operations Directors (COOs, COAs), Sourcing Managers and a number of other senior profiles.

The study is available on the BELTUG website:

http://www.beltug.be/news/431/beltug_study_The_role_performance_of_IC_T_-_Perceptions_of_the_business/

9 BELTUG SURVEY ON TELECOMS OPERATORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS – DETAILED RESULTS

When the telecoms market was liberalised in 1998, businesses and public organisations were neither familiar with, nor had trust in, all the new players suddenly operating alongside Belgacom. To address this knowledge gap, BELTUG conducted a yearly survey among professional users to get a clear view of their evaluations of their fixed and mobile operators and Internet providers.

The aim of the survey was to point out strength and weaknesses of the different market players. Since many companies were interested in detailed results, BELTUG published annually a detailed, +-120 page report evaluating:

- Fixed operators: Belgacom, BT, Codenet, COLT Telecom, Equant, KPN Belgium, WorldCom, Telenet and Versatel
- Mobile operators: Proximus, Mobistar and Base
- Internet service providers: UUnet, EUNET, Telenet and Skynet

Each player was screened on 23 different criteria.

The survey was carried out until 2003, when it was felt that the operators had developed an adequate familiarity with the liberalised marketplace.

10 THE BELTUG INDICES FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

In the early years of the telecoms market liberalisation, it wasn't easy for business and public organisations to assess the competitiveness of the tariffs charged by telecom providers. In order to provide its member with an effective benchmarking tool, BELTUG created indices to monitor the price evolution for telecoms services in Belgium, including:

- Fixed telephony
- Clear channel (leased lines and alternatives)
- Virtual private networks (VPNs)

The indices addressed communication costs for small, medium and large-sized enterprises. Every six months, telecoms operators were provided with a set of fictitious business cases, and invited to provide a realistic cost quotation for the telecoms services.

The outcome of all inputs was averaged into indices which were set at value "100" in May 2002, the starting year of the initiative. By following up every six months, BELTUG was able to track, and publish, the evolution of prices.

By 2004, the original cases were outdated. BELTUG had to make a choice: update the cases or terminate the initiative. It was determined that the market had become more mature and users had more experience in dealing with different telecom operators. BELTUG therefore decided to suspend the indices.

