



BELTUG Paper

Indoor coverage Astrid

Status update

August 2014



On 4 February, the Royal Decree defining the criteria for buildings and infrastructures in which ASTRID¹ indoor coverage needs to be assured, was published in the Belgische Staatsblad/Moniteur Belge. This Royal Decree also contains a number of clarifications on the objectives and operations of the ASTRID Safety Commission). The Royal Decree² is active from 1 May 2014 on.

In response to the publication of this royal Decree a number of BELTUG members expressed a number of concerns over the actual content of the Royal Decree. In addition to this a number of clarifications were requested in relation to the actual implementation of the actions described in the Royal Decree.

To respond to the demands and concerns of the BELTUG members, a meeting was arranged at the “FOD Binnenlandse Zaken”. The meeting was attended by representatives from the ASTRID Safety Commission, the NV ASTRID, BELTUG and the FOD Binnenlandse Zaken,

After discussing the issues raised by BELTUG members in relation to the mandatory indoor ASTRID coverage with both Marc Looze (head of the ASTRID Safety Commission) and Christophe Grégoire (technical & operations director NV ASTRID), BELTUG was able to obtain a number of positive clarifications and remarks:

1. Toelooop van meer dan 150 mensen (ref .art. 1 Royal Decree of 15 December 2013): this expression is to be interpreted as an expected simultaneous attendance of at least 151 persons on the busiest day (normal operations) of the year. If the expected maximum simultaneous attendance is less than 151 persons the building is not required to have ASTRID indoor coverage.
2. The ASTRID Safety Commission not only decides if indoor ASTRID coverage has to be made available in a building but also decides in what parts of the building the coverage needs to be assured. So the coverage does not necessarily need to cover the complete building or infrastructure.
3. The NV ASTRID has published a revised version of the contract between NV ASTRID and the infrastructure owner (bouwheer). The fees mentioned in this revised version are considerably lower than the fees mentioned in previous versions. An example: a Phase 1 - RF Design check by NV ASTRID carries a fee of 2.302,15 € while in a previous version the fee was considerably higher at 3.951,49 €.
4. Monitoring of operational repeaters by NV ASTRID is now optional and is priced at 349,09 € per year per monitored repeater.
5. The requirements concerning acceptable repeaters have been relaxed somewhat in the sense that the monitoring specification only mentions full SNMP³ protocol support. The optional support for the proprietary Axell Wireless AEM3 monitoring and control system has been dropped.
6. The core of the ASTRID network has very recently been upgraded and NV ASTRID estimates it will keep using the current technology in at least the next 10 years.
7. According to the NV ASTRID the large majority of installations requiring indoor ASTRID coverage will not need a base station but their infrastructure will be based on a less expensive repeater topology. Time will tell if this assumption is correct.

¹ ASTRID is the Belgian digital radio communications network designed for and used by the emergency services.

² The full text of the Royal Decree can be obtained via the [FOD Justice web site](#).

³ SNMP or the “Simple Network Management Protocol” is a Internet standard protocol for managing devices connected to IP networks.



Unfortunately a number of less desirable remarks and clarifications were also made:

1. The TETRA standard only covers the (external) interface between end user equipment such as handsets and the ASTRID network. The TETRA standard does not cover the (internal) interface between the ASTRID base stations and the ASTRID switches in the core of the ASTRID network. This internal interface is proprietary and therefore the base stations have to be of the brand and type specified in the contract i.e. Airbus Defence and Space TB3. Because of the proprietary nature of the interconnection with the switches there can be no free choice of base station.
2. Interconnection of base stations to the ASTRID core is only possible via the Belgacom Explore network since the ASTRID network exclusively uses Belgacom Explore connectivity. However, NV ASTRID also states it was able to negotiate a heavy discount with Belgacom for the links interconnecting base station installations with the ASTRID core.
3. There are no changes on the level of the distribution of responsibilities concerning the proper operation of the indoor coverage equipment: the owner of the building remains the sole responsible to assure the proper operation of the equipment and speedy access to the infrastructure remains a requirement to ensure the short repair times mentioned in the agreement.

On the 21st of October BELTUG is organising an [ASTRID workshop](#) allowing its members to get additional information and to interact with the principal parties involved in the implementation of the ASTRID indoor coverage legislation.

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