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FTTH Council Europe: FTTH is rising
 Council president sees continued uptick

by Sean Buckley

Tues. March 25, 2008

While it may be behind the rest of the world in terms of deployments, Europe continues to make progress on the fiber-to-the-home front.

Following the lead of utilities and municipalities, a growing number of Tier 1 European operators such as France Telecom are making serious inroads into the European FTTH market. In this interview,



Telecommunications Editor in Chief Sean Buckley talks with Joeri Van Bogaert, president of the FTTH Council Europe, about his perceptions of the FTTH market.

TM: While there clearly are differences in regions adopting FTTH, what is making FTTH more of a reality in Europe?

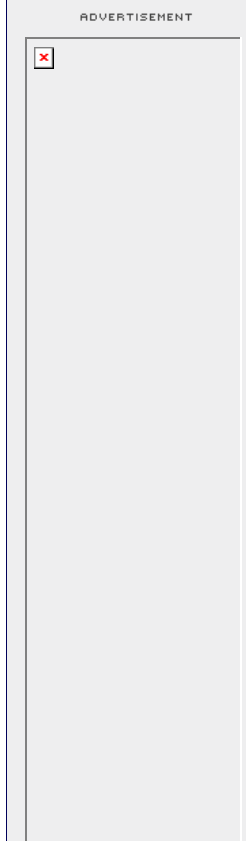


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"I see a large advantage that in Europe we have point to point and PON, which are supported by two well-respected companies. The utility company or the operator can choose from these two solutions and choose what the best fit for his specific requirements is."

Jori van Bogaert, President, FTTH Council Europe

Van Bogaert: I do believe it is a reality in Europe. Just look, for example, at the reports that point out there are 1 million subscribers in Europe [and] seven countries [with] subscriber rates of 1 percent. [We] even have two of the Scandinavian countries (i.e., Sweden and Norway), [with] a penetration rate of 5 percent. What's also reassuring is that at the beginning, fiber-to-the-home rollouts were being done mainly by municipalities and utility companies. Today, you're seeing the Tier 1 operators [such as France Telecom] rolling out fiber to the home.

TM: *What do you believe were the highlights of the FTTH Council Europe show?*

Van Bogaert: The No. 1 highlight for me was we had almost 2,200 attendees at this conference, which made [it] the meeting place for fiber to the home in Europe. [Then] the keynote speakers such as Bret Swanson with his Exaflood presentation. Of course, it was in Paris so there was a French perspective, followed by the four operators rolling out FTTH in Paris and one operator building FTTH outside Paris. Certainly, we can't forget our SUDEFIB study that showed FTTH has a positive impact on the environment. Then, certainly the market data and forecasts we presented.

TM: *Besides the outside plant discussions, there was a fair amount of talk around penetrating the home network. Do you see that as a major point of discussion and challenge for service providers going out with FTTH?*

Van Bogaert: I don't know if I see it as a challenge. There was a session related to technical issues to resolve bringing fiber to MDUs. Certainly, from a technical point of view, these solutions are available. The OFCOMs and ARCEPTs are looking into how they can regulate and make these infrastructures more efficient.

TM: *Like every other telecom industry segment, FTTH has had its fair share of debate over two main architectural approaches: point-to-point Active Ethernet and PON. Do you believe there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach?*

Van Bogaert: I see a large advantage that in Europe we have point to point and PON, which are supported by two well-respected companies. The utility company or the operator can choose from these two solutions and choose what the best fit for his specific requirements is. One operator in Paris (Neuf Cegetel) is mixing the two technologies because in one part of his network one technology makes more sense, while in other parts the other technology makes more sense.

TM: *While targeting single-family homes with FTTH has enough of its own challenges, going into an MDU is even more challenging because you have to deal with existing wiring and older construction. Do you see continued interest in service providers targeting the MDU environment, and what are the real challenges of bringing FTTH to MDUs?*

Van Bogaert: If you look at the single-family houses, a lot of that has been done in Scandinavian countries. If you look at the developments in Germany with Net Cologne, today they are mainly connecting buildings. Then, in Paris, they are mainly connecting MDUs. You get both single-family homes and MDUs in Europe being connected. They are both being equipped with FTTH.

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