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The Best of TelecomTV

13/02/2009

Green shoots: FTTH enthusiasts sense the time is right for a home fibre push

Europe is a laggard on Fibre To The Home (FTTH) with a growth rate now well behind both North America and Asia Pacific, according to a study released at the FTTH Council conference this week in Copenhagen.

Not only is Europe behind, but its relative position is getting worse as both the US and Asia Pacific continue to power ahead.

According to the report, South Korea has the highest penetration in its own market at 44 per cent, followed by Hong Kong at 28 per cent and Japan at 27 per cent. In sheer volume terms on a global basis Japan is overall leader with 13.2 million fibre-connected homes followed by the US with 6 million and China with just under 6 million.

European country totals are puny by comparison, but the problem with Europe is one of patchy performance, say observers.

Some countries, such as Sweden, are well ahead in terms of percentage penetration because of early municipal or competitive telco activity. But in other countries, where the regulatory and investment climate has been on the chilly side for the last two decades, progress has been slow dragging the average back down. As things currently stand Europe is fairly low-fibre.

However here at the FTTH Council Conference the fibre enthusiasts say they have two reasons to be cheerful. The looming recession is seeing increasing interest in cost-cutting and that means opportunities when companies look at fundamental policy changes over things like travel and home working in an effort to re-engineer the cost base - so expect to hear more about videoconferencing and collaboration tools again (just like in the last recession).

And it means that countries and regions start looking at ways of attracting businesses. It's possible to show that broadband in general and fibre in particular do great things to local economies and a study into the socio-economic impact of fibre was also released at the conference which showed the positive affect of the high fibre approach.

The slug-line for this conference was 'Building a sustainable future' so there was a pronounced 'green' agenda formulated as a reason for promoting FTTH - more than the usual home working and videoconferencing too. The concept of mining copper by extracting it from overhead cables and ducts and replacing it with fibre was advanced.

Telecomtv will report further on this and on the other themes over the next three weeks as we pull together our video reports from the Copenhagen FTTH Council Conference. Keep watching.

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11 February 2009 - 09:00
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