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Looking to the future



Written by GI Gobal

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Chris Holden, President of the FTTH Council Europe, takes a positive view at NextGen 11.



At the recent NextGen 11 conference in Bristol – the UK's premier platform for all those engaged in developing the UK's broadband infrastructure – Chris Holden gave an upbeat assessment of developments across the wider Europe but expressed concern at the slower progress with some of the major Western European countries. Some countries that you would expect to see on the league table such as UK, Germany and Spain have still not reached

the minimum target of 1% penetration by FTTH/B to enter the table.

From his EU-wide viewpoint he could point to a doubling of fibre connectivity to customers in the past year and slightly more in terms of homes and buildings passed. With the CIS countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan) added in, the figures of subscribers nearly double again to lift the total to 9.2 million.

This rapid growth has accelerated the Ukraine, Turkey and Romania into the league table of countries with more than 1% penetration of access fibre to either homes or buildings. The top of the table is still headed by the Far Eastern economies and a bright spot in the United Arab Emirates, but Lithuania, Norway and Sweden are hard on their heels.

In terms of take-up rates the Scandinavian countries led the field and Norway achieved 62% - ahead of South Korea at 59%. Even given some countries where take-up rates have been below par, the overall achievement of 18.3% represents a significant step towards the 2020 EU target of 50% household connectivity to at least a 100Mbps utility infrastructure.

Chris Holden was a little critical of the lack of a clear 'upload' target for 2020 – particularly because it is obvious that user-generated content and cloud applications demanding near symmetry were becoming ever more popular. But, in a spirit of optimism, he pointed out that the flexibility and future-proofing provided by a fully fibred network could not be equaled by any lesser technology – 'it was', he said, 'the end game'.

He was delighted to see a requirement set by the Commission for realistic national plans and sensibly linked-up government departments but in some cases the level of detail supporting the plans could be improved. He also looked at how incumbents might now be encouraged to move towards FTTH – the market share lost by incumbents to the 70% of metropolitan networks

developed by new market entrants reflected a livelier investment scene driven by the need for economic growth.

This and all presentations from the NextGen 11 conference can be found via the [NextGen](#) website.

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