



Friday 26 June 2020 - Joint press release of Fluvius and Telenet

Fluvius and Telenet starting talks about the realisation of a data network of the future

Network company Fluvius is starting talks with Telenet about the realisation of a data network of the future in Flanders. The Board of Directors of Fluvius System Operator has today given its green light for these talks. Telenet has been chosen following a prior market survey. The aim of these talks in the context of this market survey, is to realise a data network of the future for everyone in Flanders in the coming years.

The current network infrastructure will continue to meet the expectations of families and businesses in the coming years. But the demand for more and faster data networks will also continue to increase. During this past Corona-related lockdown, the importance of high-quality internet connections in our country has once again been confirmed.

For some time now, Fluvius has been concerned that in the long run a new digital divide may arise in Flanders, with certain regions and customers gaining access to new, faster data connections and others completely lagging behind. The network company has been probing current market players for several years with the aim of working together and avoiding that scenario. Access to good data connections for everyone is crucial in tomorrow's Flanders.

Since early 2019, Fluvius set up a pilot project in which in 15,000 homes in five cities and municipalities (Antwerp, Diksmuide, Ghent, Genk and Poperinge) an open Fiber-To-The-Home (or FTTH) network is installed. For this network, Fluvius only provides the open fiber infrastructure without offering any services. Telecom players wishing to do so can then use this same technical network to offer potential customers their services. Customers can more easily change their telecom supplier, without the need for any technical work in their home.

Telenet shares Fluvius's ambition to continue building the network of the future. Thanks to Telenet's continuous investments years over the years to modernise and upgrade the entire cable network, Telenet can already offer Internet speeds of 1 Gbps to everyone in Flanders.

The talks that Fluvius will start with Telenet are the starting point of a process to see whether the parties can come to an agreement to also roll out FTTH technology. This is in line with the strategy Telenet has developed in recent years, with the company making the most of a combination of HFC and fibre-optic technology.

An ambitious FTTH project could be a logical next step to build a next generation network, guaranteeing Flanders a leading position for data infrastructure in the coming decades.

Fluvius's main aims for the realisation of a data network of the future are:

1. that this data network of the future is available to all Flemish families and companies, both in urban and rural areas;
2. that it will be an open network; that the network has an open structure with non-discriminatory conditions allowing in full free competition between service companies;
3. that the new data network will, in the long term, allow even higher data speeds than today;
4. that the roll-out can take place at the lowest social cost and in a sustainable way. At Fluvius, this activity is carried out completely independently of its regulated energy distribution activities.

It is expected that the discussions between Fluvius and Telenet will last until the beginning of 2021. Until such time, no further statements about the project will be made by either party.

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