

## **Open Fiber's reply to the consultation on BEREC Guidelines on Geographical surveys of network deployments**

### **Introduction**

Open Fiber ('OF') is a leading FTTH wholesale operator in Italy and among the leaders in Europe. OF has covered more than 16 million households with FTTH across the country, employing, directly and indirectly, more than 10.000 employees. OF is particularly focused on contributing to reduce the *digital divide* through significant investments in rural and remote areas.

Due to the above, geographical surveys play an important role in planning the investments to accelerate the deployment of FTTH networks. Therefore, we would like to provide the following feedback and recommendations on the updated draft guidelines:

### **Premises activated and switch-off**

We welcome the introduction of the definition of premises activated to ensure the possibility to NRAs to collect data from operators both retailer and wholesaler. We believe that such possibility should not be only optional, but mandatory. More, the information should give NRAs the possibility to understand how many premises are activated with FTTH services, how many with legacy ones and how many with wireless services. This would be indeed coherent with the indication provided by the proposal of the Digital Networks Act ("DNA") which intends to introduce a new switch-off policy entrusting NRAs with new powers and tasks. Indeed, the cornerstone of the proposal is the publication by 2029 of geographical areas that will be subject to the switch-off process.

It appears clear that in order to do a proper assessment of such area it will be necessary to understand the local take-up of VHCN services, and consequently which are the premises that still relies on copper services as well as where an FTTH connection has been activated.

We acknowledge that the DNA proposal might be subject to changes during the co-decision process, however, irrespectively to the proposal, the collection of data regarding activated premises divided into different technologies remains fundamental to provide clear indications to investors and operators incentivising a better coordination of the deployment plans through a clear understanding of the technologies available in a certain area as well as to incentivise the autonomous adoption of switch-off plans by SMP operators. Furthermore, this could be important for decisions related to state aid.

In collecting data regarding the premises activated we recommend having separate database for copper, FTTH and other VHCN services.

Moreover, USOs should be interpreted in reasonable terms for operators, and cannot be construed as a requirement to provide "service-at-any-cost". Where objective or disproportionate impediments arise in meeting end-user activation requests with a specific access solution, such obligations may be fulfilled

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through complementary technologies capable of delivering an equivalent VHCN service and the same level of QoS, in line with the principle of technological neutrality.

## **Common database with geocoded addresses**

We welcome the proposal of a common geocoded DB that should be used.

This proposal must be further stressed since it represents the basis for comparable data among MS reports and more important a unique DB makes more effective the declarations of all the Operators. Different approaches, different DB used by operators have the effect of waste of public funds in coverage of fake premises or premises that are already covered under different coding.

## **Speed classes and alignment with VHCN Guidelines**

We also welcome the possibility for NRAs/OCAs to require maximum upload speed and expected peak-time download and upload speeds, in addition to maximum download speed. These indicators bring the survey framework closer to the performance dimensions relevant for VHCN definition, State-Aid control and user experience, especially in an FTTH environment where symmetric or near-symmetric services are a key differentiator.

In this perspective, the QoS should be systematically measured at the time-of-service activation by the Operator through standardized speed tests, regardless of the underlying access technology, whether FTTH, FWA, or other equivalent networks capable of delivering VHCN services. The results of these measures could be formally documented and communicated to the NRA, in order to ensure transparency, verify compliance with declared performance levels; however, OF recommends that the speed classification be limited to either 1Gbps and above, or less than 1 Gbps.

In this regard, we also welcome the clarification made regarding FWA and the distinction made between FWA in licensed spectrum and in unlicensed spectrum as well as the need to consider network capacity for FWA networks when determining their coverage.

The inclusion of a specific definition for docsis 4.0 does also reflect the technological evolution if it is maintained in a different class from FTTH as proposed.

## **Communication to end-users and policy makers**

The updated guidance on publication and information tools for end-users (section 2.8, including changes in paras 115 and 122) reflects the growing importance of broadband maps as decision-support tools for households, businesses and public authorities. For FTTH, accurate representation of both availability and performance differences compared with other technologies is essential to avoid confusion and to support an informed migration to fibre.

## **Conclusions**

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**In conclusion, we support the approach proposed for the guidelines and we recommend to further strengthening the indications for gathering the data on the premises activated to ensure better alignment with the DNA proposal as well as to improve the quality of the information for private and public decisions regarding the deployment of FTTH and to sustain its take-up.**

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