

**Minister Grouwels and the BRIC launch the *Fiber to the School* project
Secondary schools in Brussels equipped with broadband Internet connection**

Ms Brigitte Grouwels, Brussels Region Minister for IT, unveiled the *Fiber to the School* regional project during a mission to Berlin led by the Brussels Regional Informatics Centre (BRIC). This project aims to provide every secondary school in Brussels with a broadband Internet connection. During an initial phase, 164 secondary schools in the region are to be equipped, given their growing needs in terms of bandwidth. The Minister makes the commitment that all secondary schools in Brussels will have a fibre optic connection by the end of 2019, at a rate of 28 schools a year. Equipping one school with a fibre optic connection involves an estimated investment of EUR 35,000.

At the invitation of the BRIC, Minister Grouwels is currently visiting Online Educa Berlin 2013, the largest global conference on technology-supported learning and training, which brings together over 400 speakers and more than 2,000 participants from over a hundred countries every year.

Opportunities

The integration of IT teaching media require the provision of broadband connections to meet a real and growing demand.

However, the current connections are inadequate: according to the [Survey of Schools: ICT in Education](#) (November 2012), just 30 % of secondary schools in Belgium have a connection with a bandwidth of over 30 Mbps. As Ms Grouwels stresses, "Being on the web", as they say, is no longer enough. The Internet is evolving in line with the fast pace of progress in IT technologies and their adoption by the general public."

The broadband technologies currently available, which use copper (VDSL) or cable, enable data transmission rates that are adequate for domestic use but are too limited for schools. The use of fibre optics makes it possible to exceed these bandwidth limits.

Opportunities for schools with the use of fibre optics

The integration of IT teaching media in Brussels schools will make the use of videos, interactive access to discussions led by teachers located abroad, etc., standard practice.

Brussels Multimedia Plan

The *Fiber to the School* project is a new stage in the Brussels Multimedia Plan developed and run by the BRIC. Since 1998, the Multimedia Plan has been providing ready-to-use IT equipment for schools (PCs, multimedia servers, printers, interactive boards, tablets), as well as an Internet connection via the IRISnet regional network.

The Multimedia Plan has given a boost in terms of IT equipment to almost 95 % of schools in the Brussels-Capital Region: around 400 schools now have an Internet connection and 557 (96 %) have been provided with IT equipment. This project has

enabled the installation of over 11,000 PCs and more than 550 servers. Since 1998, the Region has invested a total of over EUR 30 million in supporting the use of new technologies in education.

« Any 6 year old who is now entering primary school, 6 years from now will go to secondary school. The world will be his oyster and he will have the *Fiber to the School* connections to thank for that.”

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