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PRESS RELEASE

**Contact:** Levi Nietvelt  
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## **Unblock the Internet for consumers: BEUC's fight for net neutrality**

Want to use make phone calls using a website such as Skype? It's impossible in many countries because Internet Service Providers simply block access to these websites. Even if they don't block access to certain websites, they still make life difficult for consumers, for example by slowing down access.

The Internet has proven to be the greatest engine of economic growth and democratic communication in modern memory. The revolution brought by Internet did not happen by accident; it happened because everyone could contribute, develop their own program or service and make it available. It happened because of Net Neutrality. This is now in danger.

Internet Service Providers, telecom operators and content providers are increasingly cooperating so that they are technically capable of limiting or prioritising access to content, to services or to applications – thus deciding on the type of content users can access. There is a growing risk that consumers have less choice and there can be less innovation.

Over the coming days, the European Parliament, Commission and the Council are holding informal Trialogue discussions on the third telecom package. We urge them to keep the principle of "net neutrality" in the final text, ensuring that consumers will still have access to an open Internet. Consumers should be able to choose their own content, application and services online – this right needs to be enforced by national telecom regulators.

Market research published today by Synovate<sup>1</sup> supports our position: Competition on its own will not be enough to solve this problem. Among others, the findings show that:

**Consumers need more, transparent information:** Only 3 to 10% of the online consumers have received information on how their Internet Service Provider manages access to content, applications and services.

**Many consumers are not aware that an Internet Service Provider can block their access to certain websites**

If consumers are not able to access an Internet site, 26% of those questioned will blame this on the site itself, and only 44% would attribute it to their Internet Service Provider

**Competition alone will not be enough to regulate the market:**

Only 7 to 15% of the online consumers would be willing to change to a more expensive Internet Service Provider if their own Internet Service Provider blocked their access to specific websites.

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General stated: "The control of the Internet and net neutrality are issues too important to take chances on. For this reason we expect the forthcoming decision on the Telecom Package to ensure that the fundamental principles of openness, inter-operability and neutrality are respected by Internet Service Providers."

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<sup>1</sup> Research done on behalf of Skype, Google and Yahoo: see <http://www.synovate.com/ispconsumerresearch/>