



**(Embargoed until 18/03/09)**

***New Study Suggests Consumers Want European Lawmakers to Preserve and Protect an Open Internet***

Internet companies Dailymotion, eBay, Skype, Google, YouTube, PriceMinister, and Yahoo! today called on the European Parliament to keep the Internet lanes open, pointing to a new study showing that consumers expect Internet Service Providers to allow open, unrestricted access to the Internet.

The European Parliament and EU governments are considering a major telecoms reform package. Certain proposed amendments could erode end-users' rights by allowing Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to limit access to websites or applications, or to prioritize some Internet traffic in favour of their own or their partners' traffic. Parliament is expected to adopt legislation at its second reading in April of this year. (See the European Commission [website](#) for details).

International market research firm Synovate polled 944 consumers in France, Germany and the United Kingdom on their Internet needs and service. Commissioned by Google, Skype, and Yahoo!, the firm conducted the study independently, with no influence of the companies on the methodology, interviews or results. Synovate's survey is available at: <http://www.synovate.com/ispconsumerresearch/>.

Synovate presented its study at an event held this morning at the European Parliament and hosted by MEP Karin Riis-Jorgensen. Levi Nietvelt of Europe's consumer organization BEUC and Benoit Tabaka of PriceMinister also spoke. Synovate's key findings include:

- An overwhelming 91% of consumers expect their Internet service provider to avoid blocking or limiting their service. This overwhelming majority expects all legitimate websites and applications to receive similar treatment.
- Among those who have recently switched ISP, the research shows that gaining access to more advanced services was a key consideration for many online consumers (ie. watching or downloading movies, making calls online). This suggests strong demand exists if high speed networks are built out allowing Internet companies to innovate and mount new, exciting services. Already, more than two-thirds of respondents regularly use online banking, online shopping, video streaming and various forms of online communication. On average, consumers undertake about 8 different online activities.
- Only a minority of 7 to 15% would actually consider changing their ISPs, especially if the Internet connection would cost them more. If unable to access certain websites or online services, more than a quarter of users blame the website - even if it is not responsible.

“The study highlights the importance of consumer views and experiences in formulating policy on important topics such as access to online services and websites. Consumers clearly think that they should have access to all legitimate sites and services online. They do not want their access blocked or limited. However, most are unaware that their ISP may be restricting access to such services in any way,” Synovate head Nigel Jackson commented.

Mrs Riis-Jorgensen, who hosted today's event in the European Parliament, comments: "The study shows that the current EU legislative approach relying on transparency for consumers may not be sufficient. If access to certain websites is limited or degraded, consumers may actually not vote with their wallets and switch providers, especially if there's a lack of cheaper Internet access packages. Additional safeguards are necessary that should include a level playing field where an ISP does not favour its own or affiliated services or applications. "

The leading Internet companies urge European lawmakers to ensure that the necessary safeguards exist to protect end-users rights and to preserve the open Internet. "Enabling Europeans to access and distribute the information, services and applications of their choice, using whatever device they want, is central to maintaining and

encouraging the innovation that the Internet has become famous for. EU lawmakers should make sure that national authorities have the powers they need to act in cases where traffic management by telecommunication companies constitute unnecessary, discriminatory and/or anti-competitive behaviour."

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## CONTACTS

### SYNOVATE

Nigel Jackson, +44 203 059 5231

### COMPANIES

Dailymotion, Giuseppe de Martino, +33 1 77 35 11 00

Google, Bill Echikson, +32 475 66 97 36

PriceMinister, Benoit Tabaka +33 1 42 78 88 40

Skype: Paul de Lara, +44 7974 161211.

More at:

[http://share.skype.com/sites/en/2009/03/open\\_internet.html](http://share.skype.com/sites/en/2009/03/open_internet.html).

Yahoo!, Rose Davidson, +44 207 131 1644

### PARLIAMENT

Ms. Karin Riis-Jorgensen +32 2 284 5794