

A straightforward and systematically demonstrated positioning

From the very first days of 2019, Orange Belgium once again set the tone and imposed the rhythm on the Belgian telecommunications market by making several major promises to its customers: no price increase, a guarantee to pay only for the desired services via the launch of an offer without television, and total ease of mind notably via the guarantee of coverage within their home. A strong positioning that left its imprint on the entire strategy in 2019.

Orange Belgium disrupts the market

In 2019, Orange Belgium never stopped disrupting the Belgian telecom market by responding as well as possible to consumer expectations. By simplifying its offers, notably on the business market, but above all by offering ever more to its customers for the same price. The high point of this strategy, however, remains the launch of the Love Duo offer in July, combining a mobile subscription with a fixed internet service, without television and at a particularly attractive price. An offer destined to disrupt the status quo on the convergent market, and one that immediately connected with its public. Throughout the year, the convergent customer base in its entirety continued to grow, validating the group's decision and the efforts made to improve the regulations on wholesale access to the cable networks.

A few steps forward in terms of regulation

With regard to regulation, 2019 did not see any particularly significant evolution, but there was a certain continuity in the advances on the convergent market. That is how the Single Installer system, which enables Orange to handle the technical interventions for installing new customers without having to await a preliminary intervention by the cable operators, permits a much better customer experience and greater control over the process. Orange Belgium gave itself the means to profit from this new dynamic by training many technicians upstream. The fact remains that an evolution is necessary on the wholesale rates charged by the cable operators for access to their network: in this regard, a new rate proposal presented by the BIPT is clearly a step in the right direction, even if certain adjustments might produce further improvements. Orange Belgium responded to the consultation on the text and hopes for a rapid evolution of the framework in 2020. Notably in order to be able to launch a stand-alone fixed internet offer, something that is currently impossible to envisage from a financial perspective. However, 2019 was also marked by significant delay on the part of the Belgian authorities in the procedure for awarding and renewing the radio frequencies, notably for 5G. Orange Belgium would like to see real movement on this file in 2020, as well as on that of the emission standards for antenna sites, so that Belgium does not fall too far behind with regard to 5G.

A new dynamic on the B2B market

2019 was also marked by particular attention for the B2B market, with the key moment being the acquisition of the BKM company, an important Belgian player in unified communications, IT services and collaboration tools. An important investment that makes it possible to solidly reinforce Orange Belgium's position on this market, with an increase of more than 50% of the staff dedicated to the business market and an expanded range of services to be proposed, in order to position Orange Belgium as a genuine one-stop-shop for IT services. Moreover, the telecom operator is investing big on innovation and partnerships, as attested by the interest taken, in March, in the scale-up CommuniThings, a nugget specialised in smart parking solutions that went through the Orange Fab acceleration programme.

With regard to innovation, in December Orange Belgium inaugurated an ambitious 5G test hub intended for companies in the zone of the Port of Antwerp, and recruited a series of important industrial players to participate in it. The test hub, characterised by the installation of a stand-alone 5G network (all of the infrastructure is in 5G, something unique in Belgium), should make it possible to pinpoint relevant business cases for developing industry 4.0.

An ambitious partnership was also concluded with Liège Airport, centred on developing solutions deriving from the Internet of Things and smart services for the logistics sector.

Audacious decisions

Aware of the importance of the coming 5G worksite and the responsibility of the operators with regard to operational and thus energy performances, in July Orange Belgium announced the establishment of a partnership with the operator Proximus, centred on sharing the mobile access network of their respective networks. An agreement taking the form of a joint venture held equally by the operators, and one which will assume responsibility for the deployment and maintenance of these infrastructures. A sharing of infrastructures that nevertheless does not touch the network core and by no means prevents the operators from remaining competitors and differentiating themselves on the basis of customer experience, strategy with regard to spectrum, etc. Objective: permit a faster and more extensive deployment of 5G in Belgium, improve the general mobile experience, the operational effectiveness and reduce the energy consumption of these infrastructures.

2020, the moment of realisation

2020 will above all be marked by the important steps to be taken with regard to regulation: new wholesale rates for access to the cable networks, organisation of the award procedure for telecom licences and potential evolution of the emission standards. All necessary steps for maintaining a positive dynamic on the market. Necessary steps, above all, for the commercial deployment of 5G and - this is a strong ambition for Orange Belgium - the launch of a stand-alone fixed internet offer at an attractive price, in order to respond even better to the evolutions of the Belgian market.

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