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BELNET and FEDICT make European data exchange cheaper

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All institutions that want to consult applications using the TESTA network now do so through the federal government network FedMAN or the Belgian research network, both under the control of BELNET. So separate, expensive and slow leased lines have become a thing of the past. Moreover, in comparison with the earlier setup an extra level of security is added by the encryption of the data to and from TESTA. This happens by means of separate IPsec tunnels. FEDICT estimates that over a period of three years cost savings will amount to at least 35,000 euros per linked-up government service. The TESTA network (Trans-European Service for Telematics between Administrations) ensures that the administrations can work together on all sorts of European e-government applications. A few examples are CARE for statistics on accidents; FIUNET for information on money-laundering operations; PROCIVNET-CESIS for the exchange of information on protecting citizens against natural and technological disasters; and SAFESEANET for pollution and accidents at sea. In a subsequent phase TESTA will be updated and expanded with additional applications. Then access to the updated version of TESTA (called s-TESTA, s stands for security) will be able to take place through IPsec tunnels as standard, if necessary, depending on the feedback of the accreditation committees of the member states. Belgium is one of the first countries within the Union that is already using this method of working. "At FEDICT we don't just take care of new e-government applications - our task is also to make existing applications simpler. Access to TESTA is a good example of this. Working with TESTA is now faster, more flexible, more secure and what's more plainly cheaper than before," according to Jan Deprest, chairman of FEDICT. "By choosing IPsec tunnels all the Belgian administrations can cut the cost of their leased lines." IPsec or IP Security ensures the secure exchange of data packets over the Internet. IPsec was developed and certified by the IETF (Internet Engineering Task Force), the international standards organisation for the Internet. About BELNET - "A network of knowledge" The government agency BELNET, part of the federal Science Policy Office, supplies Internet access with very high bandwidth to Belgian educational institutions, research centres and government services. More than 550,000 end users utilise bandwidths up to 2.5 gigabits per second; some thousand times faster than the Internet access for consumers. References include all the universities and most schools of higher education in Belgium, the computer network of the Federal Government Services (FedMAN), all federal scientific institutions, the biggest public research centres and all kinds of government administrations. BELNET offers high-quality Internet access with security checks by means of the CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team) and a direct connection with worldwide research networks, including the American Internet2 and the European Géant. Internet pioneer BELNET was set up in 1993 on the initiative of the Federal Science Policy Office. The network promotes research, education and scientific collaboration. More information at <http://www.belnet.be> and <http://cert.belnet.be/>