

Building presence across countries

As the world of telecom is evolving as the women in this field are making a considerable presence. Telecom Review interviewed **Christine Beylouni, director general, FTTH Council MENA**, to talk about her significant experience starting from mobile operators to NGO telecom and her role in this advanced world of connections.

Could you tell us about your career history, such as how you reached your current role at FTTH?

I have been in the telecommunications world for more than 15 years, starting in the mobile sector with the launch of the first mobile operator in Lebanon.

Back then, I handled the GSM international services and company

relations based on my previous experience in international environments. In the latter years, I was expanding their regional and global business which increased revenues through the development of services such as international roaming and interconnection.

Afterwards, I started to move from GSM to broadband, heading strategic regional and international affairs within telecom organizations and creating broadband partnerships

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and agreements with other global organizations.

This led me to the current position at Fiber to the Home Council MENA, which I helped create and have been helping to grow since 2011.

As the General Director of FTTH MENA, how are you contributing through FTTH to benefit the MENA region?

In my role as managing council activities, we focus on lobbying governments and regulators in the MENA region by creating awareness about FTTH technology and its benefits to every nation and home. In addition, since the start of 2015, I have been chairing the FCGA FTTH Council's Global Alliance which includes our sister councils in America, Europe, LATAM, Africa and APAC. Together, we have created a platform for technology where we exchange worldwide experience, education and studies which will benefit the MENA and other regions.

Is the promotion of FTTH deployment in the MENA successful so far, and how do you see the spread of FTTH happening globally?

The promotion of FTTH is always important as fiber is simply the ultimate broadband technology.

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The fast broadband market is changing quickly and transforming the way we live every day

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The region has made some big strides forward in FTTH deployment, especially with the UAE ranked number one in FTTH global penetration rate for the third year running in 2014.

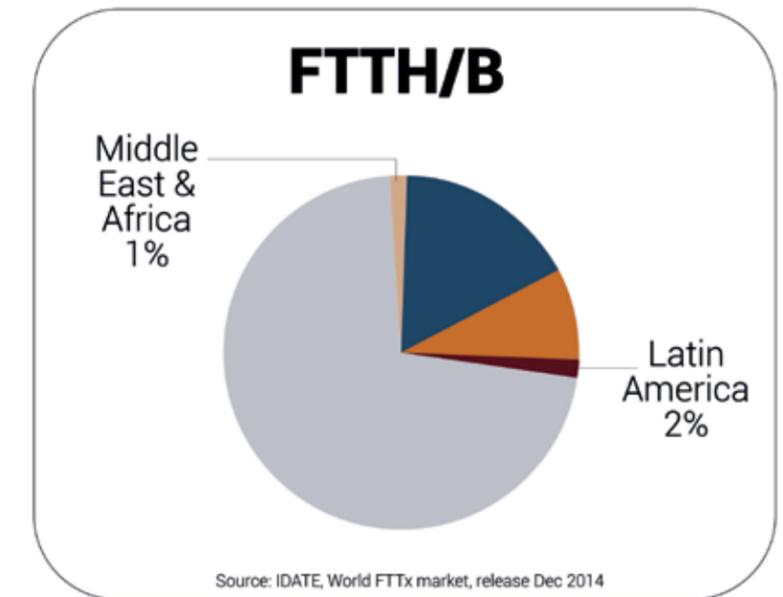
Based on our yearly study: UAE is the leading FTTH/B market at 70 percent take rate (subscribers /homes passed), in Qatar 60 percent and 27 percent in Saudi Arabia.

At the end of 2014, MENA represented around 1 percent of the total number of FTTH/B subscribers worldwide with 130.4 million FTTH/B subscribers globally. North America is at 8 percent, Asia-Pacific 71 percent and Europe 18 percent.

The council studies shows new change and progress in the industry every year. What is the biggest change over the last couple of years in the fiber industry? What do you think will change the most in the coming few years with FTTH?

The progress of FTTH is mainly related to the drivers behind its success and deployment. There are new drivers every year stimulating the demand for fiber infrastructure, and most importantly, for national fiber deployment.

During the last two years, we witnessed new drivers such as exciting new housing development projects built around world-class fiber infrastructures, and mobile backhauling over fiber becoming widespread with the growth of 4G (and eventually 5G) deployments in mobile networks.



With the rise of smart city development projects, the fiber industry and deployments will evolve even faster in the coming years.

The rise of smart cities has been the focus of the Gulf countries and the world since last year.

This is an interesting drive for fiber deployment as there is a need for every city to have a solid fiber infrastructure with national and international connectivity to cope with the huge amount of bandwidth generated by the internet of things and applications.

Has anything surprising happened in the industry during your time at FTTH until now?

What has surprised me is how genuinely fast broadband is supporting the rapid growth in other business models. Netflix is now around a third of broadband traffic in the US, and YouTube is supporting high resolution and frame rate videos. These types of evolution are really supported by fiber and we'll see more and more of this as FTTH's speed becomes more common.

If you could change something about the broadband market, what would it be?

The fast broadband market is changing quickly and transforming the way we

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live every day. Every home requires super fast connectivity to use today's trendy services with the internet of things, connected machines and security monitoring systems. In order to connect every home, new investments and broadband plans have to be in place to allow it.

For that I can say the only change needed is that the investments made for fiber infrastructure should be at the national level to serve both urban and rural areas. ■