



Press Release
Rueil-Malmaison, 5 February 2018

Covage is chosen to deploy optical fibre broadband to all Hérault Department inhabitants by 2022

The infrastructure operator Covage has today signed a public service concession contract for deployment and marketing of optical fibre broadband in the Hérault areas not covered by private superfast broadband operators. This partnership is the result of two years of studies and negotiations conducted by the Hérault Department to find an optimal solution to the challenges of a genuine public service. An initiative welcomed by Antoine Darodes, Director of the Digital Agency, present at the signing.

Hérault Numérique: the superfast broadband network for Hérault

Hérault Numérique is the name of the superfast broadband network, to cover the whole of the department, to be built by Covage through the dedicated company Hérault THD. This network will also support the digital needs of tomorrow's users. With Hérault Numérique, the department aims to restore equity on its territory so that everyone in Hérault can have superfast broadband over fibre connections.

A very ambitious project: more than 255,000 households and companies eligible in 5 years

Hérault has chosen Covage to deploy fibre to 255,000 homes and businesses in five years. The Covage subsidiary, Hérault THD, will be responsible for designing, building, marketing and operating the Hérault Numérique network for a period of 25 years.

The operator will contribute to provision of superfast broadband access for all – individuals, businesses and local authorities – and will allow the department to support the aims of the schedule of the French superfast broadband initiative.

Covage and its financial partners will invest more than 350 million euros, i.e. more than 90% of costs to carry out this particularly ambitious deployment project.

Hérault is renewing its confidence in Covage, the department's partner for the last ten years, through the network dedicated to num'hér@ult businesses.

"Covage is preparing to build and operate the fibre optic network needed for complete superfast broadband coverage of the department. The first Hérault residents will have optical fibre connections by the end of the year. We are delighted that the department has renewed its confidence in us so that we can work with it in this final phase of the planned complete coverage of the territory", said **Pascal Riolland, Chairman of the Covage Board of Directors.**

The public initiative network deployed by Hérault THD will be open to all national and alternative operators. Thirty carriers delivering services to residential and business customers already have a presence on the six networks operated by Covage in Occitania. Covage's expertise in network marketing will bring Hérault and its inhabitants a diversified and competitive offer.

Local employment combined with digital development

Covage will use its knowledge of the region and the resources of its local team and partners. Overall, up to 675 jobs will be mobilised for construction of the network and its maintenance as well as for the connections for the inhabitants. Covage will also invest 130,000 hours of professional integration.

"In 2018, Hérault is taking a new step into the future with superfast broadband. Many major projects will come to fruition with greater balance and territorial solidarity between cities and countryside, needs and services, quality of life and attractiveness. For the department, this represents an opportunity for economic development in rural areas with easy access to many "e-services" for all those living in Hérault. The highly anticipated work on the Hérault Numérique network, entrusted to the Covage company, has now been launched to bring optical fibre to the people of Hérault within the next 5 years", said **Kléber MESQUIDA, President of the Hérault Departmental Council.**

L'HÉRAULT, 100% FIBRE OPTIQUE



Key figures

- 255,000 connections deployed in 5 years (about 15,000 homes and businesses connectable to optical fibre in 2018, and 60,000 connections per year from 2019 to 2022)
- 286 towns with fibre connections
- More than 350 million euros investment for Covage and its financial partners
- Up to 675 direct jobs mobilised for network construction, maintenance and for the implementation of the fibre connections throughout the department
- 130,000 hours of professional integration

Hérault Numérique: the superfast broadband network for Hérault

In 2015, the **President of Hérault Department, Kléber MESQUIDA** made a commitment to developing a superfast broadband network intended to cover the whole territory and to provide an equitable service to the entire Hérault population by 2022.

Hérault Numérique is the name of the departmental superfast broadband network to be constructed by Covage via the dedicated company Hérault THD. They will provide the essential infrastructure for a balanced development of the departmental territory.

Kléber Mesquida is now ready and willing to lead this major project. An unprecedented adventure that will benefit present and future generations. The competitiveness of the region and its social cohesion are at stake. With this project, the department is hoping to restore equity so that the whole population of Hérault will be connected to superfast broadband, via optical fibre connection.

After a year and a half of negotiations, the company Covage has been chosen for this public service operation. Thanks to the public service concession, this negotiation has allowed for a beneficial distribution between public and private investment, with less than 10% public participation, i.e. 33.5M€ maximum. This funding will be provided by the State via the National Fund for the Digital Society, the Occitan Region, Europe (via FEDER) and finally CD 34.

With Hérault Numérique, towns and their communities can rely on a high-performance optical fibre network. In fact, within 5 years, the whole department will be connected to fibre optic (i.e. more than 8100 km of fibre deployed), which is currently the most sustainable and scalable technology.

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Covage and its company Hérault THD

Covage, a superfast infrastructure carrier, has specialised in deploying and operating fibre networks since 2006 in partnership with local authorities and service operators.

Hérault THD is the subsidiary of Covage responsible for the design, construction, marketing and operation of the Hérault Numérique network for a period of 25 years.

Covage currently operates 43 public and private initiative networks (PINs) serving residential customers, businesses and public services interconnected through its national transmission network. Covage's scope comprises two million connections, including 500,000 currently in service. Over 200 electronic communications carriers across France and abroad leverage Covage's networks to deliver services to their own customers.

Covage's development is fuelled by two powerful shareholders: Cube Infrastructure Fund (focusing on infrastructure investments and specialising in services to local authorities) and Partners Group (a global private markets investment manager that invests on behalf of its customers).

www.covage.com – Twitter [@Covage_News](https://twitter.com/Covage_News)

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