



SSH Utrecht

Students in Utrecht phone home on the Internet



IP Access

WLAN

ITK

VoIP

IT Security

Students in Utrecht phone across the world with the VoIP phones elmeg IP290 from Funkwerk.

SSH Utrecht (SSHU) was set up in 1956 as a social housing organisation for young people and students in Utrecht. In total SSH Utrecht builds, manages and lets out about 9500 rooms and apartments, largely to foreign students at the City's University and colleges.

A part of SSHU's operations is Short Stay Solutions (SSS), that lets fully furnished apartments for an all-in price, which includes gas, water, electricity and even kitchen utensils. And importantly for today's travelling students they also provide an Internet connection and telephone.

For students coming from all over the world to the Netherlands on exchange initiatives or as part of study programmes, the telephone is a vital link to stay in touch with family and friends back home during term time. But with students struggling with high telephone bills, SSS decided to look for a cheaper but equally as effective solution.



The phone as the wire
to your home

The decision was made for VoIP

It decided on a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) system which uses the Internet for voice calls as well as data. They formed a task force to define a list of criteria which the new system had to meet, including quality, cost, reliability and customer service. And as the telephones are used intensively for short periods by students they had to be able to withstand some rough handling.

It was also essential for the system to be based on a pay-as-you-go credit scheme that required a minimum of extra administrative effort and gave the tenant more responsibility over the telephone and the costs.

Short Stay Solutions cooperated with the Budget Phone Company (BPC), which was chosen because of its reputation for quality of service. Any problems or queries from the students needed to be solved quickly and directly.

"The design and the quality of the elmeg telephones are excellent. And what is important for us is that the product has been well proven in the market. Funkwerk develops and tests all of its products extensively and the IP290 telephone is extremely reliable", states Alexander Blom from Budget Phone Company.

elmeg IP290 as first choice

For the phones themselves, after a lot of investigation, Funkwerk's elmeg IP290 telephone was chosen on the basis of its performance and reputation. It provides all the familiar functions of a conventional telephone with the ability to make calls to other Internet phones as well as analogue and mobile phones. Alexander Blom of Budget Phone Company stated, "The design and the quality of the elmeg telephones are excellent. And what is important for us is that the product has been well proven in the market. Funkwerk develops and tests all of its products extensively and the IP290 telephone is extremely reliable."



The system is very simple. Students receive an initial credit balance of 5 euros from Short Stay which must be topped up if they wish to call analogue or mobile phones. They can buy a Budget Phone Card at BPC sale points such as post offices and use it to top up the credit balance on BPC's web site. All telephones have been configured with a regular phone number so that the students can receive incoming calls as well as make outgoing calls.

Fast Return on Investment

BPC offers a very attractive package with surprisingly low costs. Students can call each other for free and calls to other Dutch numbers are charged at just 3 eurocents per minute. But the major savings are made on long distance calls, which can be as much as 80% cheaper than the nearest traditional analogue rival service from KPN. Furthermore, the students also save on subscription costs.

This internet telephone system is not only cheaper than traditional analogue lines, but also the quality is generally better, certainly for international conversations.

"Before we started with IP telephones we offered our international students analogue telephones. This resulted in paperwork for us and, moreover, the students had high telephone bills," says Annemiek van Vondel of Short Stay Solutions. "Although the elmeg IP telephones are more expensive than analogue telephones, they soon cover their cost. The difference in telephone costs per minute is significant."

In an initial roll out of the service, 140 foreign students who live at the Uithof, in Utrecht, are using elmeg IP290 telephones supplied by Funkwerk Enterprise Communications. The result is that students are already making longer calls to family and friends without worrying about high costs. Due to this early success it is planned to extend the project to the town of Zeist.

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