

# ACCESS

## Guide

# Telephone, Internet and Television

**Zeestraat 100 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**2518 AD The Hague**  
**Tel: 0900 2 ACCESS**  
**(0900 2 222377)**  
**10am-4pm, Mon-Fri**  
**[helpdesk@access-nl.org](mailto:helpdesk@access-nl.org)**  
**[www.access-nl.org](http://www.access-nl.org)**

# Telephone, internet and television

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Author : Genoveva Geppaart  
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# Telephone, internet and television

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## Introduction

Telephoning your family, watching television, sending emails and other messages, reading the news on the internet. whatever your needs may be, the Netherlands has many opportunities to offer you high quality telecommunications. This overview is a brief summary of the options available to you in the Netherlands.

Telecommunications are a constantly growing and changing and therefore this guide can only be a snapshot view at the date of publication. Most websites mentioned in this booklet are in the Dutch language. Good free translation websites are [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) and [www.babelfish.altavista.com](http://www.babelfish.altavista.com).

## Telephone

Generally, there are two kinds of telephones: fixed (landline) and mobile.

### Fixed telephone (landline)

#### KPN or Carrier Pre Select

KPN (*Koninklijke PTT Nederland*) is the national Dutch telephone company, although it no longer has a monopoly on providing telephone lines in the Netherlands. Other companies have bought the rights to a number of KPN lines and offer cheaper rates (also when phoning abroad) if you make your calls using their lines. However, bear in mind that you need to pay bi-monthly a subscription to KPN. If you wish, you may use service called Carrier Pre Select (CPS) to route your calls via a separate telephone company. The calls you make using this service are billed separately by the company you have registered with, and will not be shown on your KPN bill.

The existence of these companies has forced KPN to be more competitive with their call rates. You might want to compare the various rates available before choosing whether let KPN handle all your calls (the default situation) or whether you want to register with one of the other companies. Check the website [www.bellen.com](http://www.bellen.com) for more information about cheap ways of making telephone calls and for a comparison of prices of a number of providers.

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### ISDN

If several people within a household or family regularly use the telephone, ISDN could be a solution. This is a digital telephone system with four telephone numbers, two ISDN lines, and a separate voice mail for each number. It is therefore possible for the members of a household to make or receive two telephone calls at the same time. ISDN requires a special ISDN home exchange to enable you to use your current telephone equipment.

An ISDN line rental subscription is cheaper than the combined cost of two individual subscriptions.

For prices and installation, please check [www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com) or call KPN Customer Service on 0900-0244.

For those who have an ADSL/broadband connection for internet and want to use their own ISDN equipment, KPN offers a so-called ISDN1 connection. It has the same characteristics as a normal ISDN connection, but it is cheaper to use. With this option you will be allocated two telephone numbers instead of four.

For prices and installation costs, please check [www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com) or call KPN Customer Service on 0900-0244. Note that ISDN is a telephone service designed before broadband was common .

### Telephone connection through the internet

Telephone connection through the Internet , also called IP telephony or VOIP, is also a digital telephone system. With this system you have both your telephone and internet connection provided through one company. Calls are made via the internet connection using the ordinary telephone, but the technique used is different than when making a traditional call: the so-called “ Voice over IP” technique. You will need a special modem that is suitable for both telephony and internet. This will be supplied as part of your subscription. A separate subscription with KPN is no longer required. The new provider will charge you for your line rental and for the calls you make.

The main advantage over traditional landlines is that the cost of calls through the internet is much cheaper, and has the added benefit that if you do switch over, you can continue to use your existing telephone number.

However, this technology is still in its infancy and there are often problems, especially at start-up, e.g. your telephone or internet connection may not work properly. It would be wise to try it out before giving up your traditional landline. Bear in mind that, if your

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ADSL/broadband connection is not available (for example a power cut) you cannot make or receive an IP telephone call.

Check [www.bellen.com](http://www.bellen.com) for a comparison of prices from several providers.

### Telephone via cable

In many parts of the Netherlands, it is possible to take out a telephone subscription with a cable TV provider. In this case, you do not need a subscription with KPN, but pay for everything through the cable TV provider in your region, for example Ziggo or UPC. A subscription to the company's standard television and radio package is required in order to sign up to a telephone subscription.

Contact your cable television provider for information on pricing. If you do not know which company provides cable television in your region, check [www.overdekabel.nl/mijn-kabelbedrijf/](http://www.overdekabel.nl/mijn-kabelbedrijf/).

When you enter the name of your city (*gemeente*) where you live, the name of the cable operator in your region will be shown.

### Cheap international calls

There are several ways to make your international calls cheaper:

using Skype

using 0900 numbers

using bel1649

using discount telephone cards

### Skype

Skype is a free –to download computer program for making free calls to anyone else who is using Skype on their computer at that time, anywhere in the world. If you and the person you are calling both have a webcam attached to the computer, you can also see each other while you are calling. The quality of the calls can be less than with traditional telephone, but is normally at an acceptable level. It is also possible to make calls from

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Skype to fixed landlines and to mobile telephone at cheap rates using SkypeOut. Note that a monthly subscription to SkypeOut (currently about EUR 3 per month for free calls every day, all day, to the country where you live, slightly more for international calls) also gives a free SkypeIn telephone number for others to reach you from conventional landlines. Pre-paid Pay As You Go accounts for SkypeOut and SkypeIn are also possible. Using this service requires either a microphone and speakers on your computer, or, better, a USB / VoIP / Skype telephone handset described above.

For more information about Skype, see [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

Please note that there are other companies providing a similar service.

### 0900 numbers

There are several companies that use 0900 numbers to provide cheap international calls. These 0900 numbers are paid service numbers and prices for using them can vary. You pay an initial connection charge and then the costs for the call (normally per minute or per second).

An example: if you want to call to the US, you would dial the 0900 number reserved for that country (in this case 0900-0900), followed by the international code 00 and then the official country code (in this case 1) and finally the number of the person you want to call (such as 202-4561414). In this example you would dial: 0900-0900—wait for a connection— and then dial 00- 1-202-4561414.

Examples of country codes used for 0900 numbers:

Australia 0900 1521

India 0900 1525

US 0900 0900

The codes mentioned here, are used by Telediscount. Other companies, for example Teledump, will use a different set of codes.

The costs of the 0900 calls you make will be charged on your regular telephone bill.

You can make international calls by this method regardless of the company where you have your subscription, including cable or internet telephone.

Check [www.bellen.com](http://www.bellen.com) for a comparison of prices from a number of providers.

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### Bel1649

Bel1649 is a Dutch telephone discounter offering the low rates for international calls. Before you can use bel1649, you need to register without cost at [www.bel1649.nl](http://www.bel1649.nl).

You can use 1649 immediately after registration. To profit from the low rates, you dial “1649”b before each number. For example: to call Germany dial 1649-0049-211-1234567.

Bel1649 can only be used if you have a traditional analogue telephone subscription with KPN.

### Discount telephone cards

In the Netherlands there are many discount telephone cards (*belkaarten* or *telefoonkaarten* ; also known as “ calling cards” ) available. They can be purchased at telephone shops, post offices and tobacco shops. They have a fixed purchase price, but call costs may vary depending on the destination being called and the method of access used. Some cards offer special rates to a particular world region – such as the Americas, Europe, Africa or Asia. It therefore pays to purchase a card which offers the cheapest rate to the destinations you most frequently call. Most cards have an expiry date, and a limited period of use once activated. The cards can be used with domestic landlines, mobile phones, and with public pay-phones.

When using the card you must first call an access number, and when prompted, enter the unique PIN number that is concealed under a scratch layer on the card. The card will show different options for access numbers, either for free (*gratis*) or for local rate (*lokaal*) calls. Using the local rate means the call will cost the same as if you were making a local call but there will be more minutes available on your card than if you use the free access number. There is usually also an access number for user instructions in English.

Unfortunately not all companies offering these cards are reliable. Some charge additional, unannounced costs or the card expires before the official expiry date. Cards from Budget Phone Card ([www.budgetphone.nl](http://www.budgetphone.nl)) and IDT ([www.idteurope.net/phonecards](http://www.idteurope.net/phonecards)) are among the most reliable.

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### Public telephones

In the Netherlands, the majority of public telephones only take telephone cards (and often credit cards as well). Telephone cards can be bought at many outlets including post offices, tobacco shops, supermarkets, bookshops and *VVV* (tourist information) offices.

Most public telephones also accept bankcards with a *chipknip* facility, a direct cash deposit that can be loaded onto your bankcard at special ATM-type machines, normally used for smaller payments.

### **Mobile telephone**

Buying a mobile telephone in the Netherlands is reasonably straightforward. There is a wide range of packages offered by different companies, to suit different needs and often there are special offers available in their stores.

There are three network operators: KPN, T-Mobile and Vodafone. There are at least 50 providers, for example HEMA, Rabo Mobiel, Debitel and Albert Heijn (AH). Check [www.bellen.com](http://www.bellen.com) for a comparison of price packages from several providers.

### Pre-pay phones

If you to make few calls but find it important to be reachable at any time, pre-pay phones are a good alternative. Pre-pay phones do not need a subscription and are able to receive calls with no credit balance left. In addition, they are easier to obtain without a Dutch passport. You buy the telephone outright and pre-pay for any calls you make, so it is not necessary to produce a passport or other means of identification at the store as guarantee against future payments. The phone can normally be used immediately after purchase. The only drawback is with making international calls, as the possibilities may be limited, and the call charges expensive. Top-up cards can be bought at most telephone stores, retail stores and supermarkets. It is also possible to top-up your credit on the internet and by telephone.

### Subscription phones

Despite the red tape, having a subscription for a mobile telephone has its advantages. Most of the companies offer free calling minutes and good discounts for buying the latest accessories, including a range of free, simple handsets. In addition, there are packages designed to meet different needs, such as calling to and from overseas. For someone who uses the telephone frequently, a subscription is definitely the best option.

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To subscribe the shop will make a copy of your passport and a recent bank statement with your current address, together with your residence (or work) permit. If you have not received your residence permit, some companies may accept your housing rental contract. Some companies may ask non-Dutch citizens for high deposits. There are plenty of options to fit your needs, for business or personal use. The number of companies offering mobile services continues to grow in the Netherlands.

### Using your mobile phone abroad

As in many other European countries, when you buy a mobile telephone in the Netherlands, there is a SIM Card inside the unit. This card contains information relevant to your telephone and with both pre-pay services and subscription the telephone is usually “locked” to the SIM for a fixed period.

However, once you have chosen a particular mobile telephone company for your subscription, you are not obliged to remain with them. You can switch companies and even keep your own telephone number. The same applies to pre-pay phones; you can switch from pre-pay to subscription and vice versa. In most cases, the telephone company you are planning to switch to will arrange the change-over. They will send you a message that the switch has been completed and that your contract with your former provider has been terminated.

For many members of the international community, it may be important to be able to make and receive calls while travelling in other countries. Through international “roaming” agreements, cellular operators allow foreign operators to use their networks so that they have broader international coverage. However, mobile phone providers charge rather high costs for making phone calls abroad. Even when somebody calls you when you are abroad, you have to pay for the call. This is also true for listening to your voice mail.

The best alternative is to buy a local prepaid SIM card once you are abroad (on the condition that your mobile phone is simlock free). You now have a local mobile number that you can pass on to family and friends. If they live in the Netherlands they can make cheaper calls by using special 0900 numbers such as mentioned on [www.hallobuitenland.nl](http://www.hallobuitenland.nl) or [www.belkampioen.nl](http://www.belkampioen.nl). They are only charged for the costs of calling the 0900 number. It works in a similar way as making cheap international calls on with your landline.

Unfortunately, not all mobile telephone handsets are compatible with networks in different parts of the world. The US, Canada, Latin American and African countries use a different network to the Netherlands, so generally you cannot use your Dutch mobile

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telephone there. However, there are exceptions to this general rule. Please contact your Dutch mobile telephone provider for more information.

Some mobile telephone companies offer the possibility of placing the SIM card from your Dutch telephone in a telephone that will work in other countries. If you travel often to countries where your Dutch mobile phone is not working, an alternative can be to buy a so called dual-band, tri-band or quad-band telephone. This is a telephone that can be used in two (dual-band), three (tri-band) or four (quad-band) different mobile networks.

### Replacement SIM Cards

An alternative to subscribing to a Dutch mobile telephone provider is to use a temporary replacement SIM in your own phone. This is a good option if you want to maintain your home country telephone subscription while you are away, or if you normally use a pre-pay service in your home country.

You may have to contact your home country provider to ask them to “unlock” the SIM supplied in your phone when the subscription was taken out. An alternative is to visit one of the many Dutch shops or market stalls willing to unlock your SIM for a small price. There are European laws limiting the period a phone operator may keep a telephone SIM-locked, but not all telephone shops cooperate with that requirement. Once your telephone is unlocked you may then remove the existing SIM and replace it temporarily with a SIM from a company such as Lebara ([www.lebara-mobile.nl](http://www.lebara-mobile.nl)). This will not affect your home country subscription; the original SIM card can be put back into your phone whenever you return to your home country. The new SIM card will have a new telephone number and a new PIN number to operate your phone. When the original SIM is replaced in the phone you will then go back to using your original telephone and PIN numbers.

(Note: when changing over the SIM cards, care should be taken never to touch the gold-coloured contacts on the SIM and once removed the SIM should be carefully stored for future use. )

The SIM cards can be purchased at tobacco shops and some telephone shops. They are a fixed price to purchase and include a certain amount of credit. They can be topped up at any time by means of top-up cards purchased at the same outlets, on the internet or by telephone.

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### Mobile telephone use in the car

Drivers and riders of motorized vehicles, mopeds and vehicles for people with disabilities are not allowed to make or receive telephone calls without an aid, such as a headset or “hands-free” car kit. Sending and receiving SMS and e-mail messages is also not permitted. You are not even allowed to hold your telephone in your hand when on the move. If you need to make or receive a telephone call while driving and you have no hands-free car kit, you must stop your vehicle.

This law applies not only during actual driving, but also while moving slowly in a traffic jam. You may use a mobile telephone while being parked or otherwise stationary. Violation of this law carries a fine of €130 and your mobile telephone may be confiscated. A wide choice of “hands-free” car kits is available for less than the cost of the fine; it is therefore advisable to purchase a plug-in car kit with loudspeakers and microphone if you think you will need to communicate while driving.

## Internet

Connecting to the internet via telephone or television cable is not a problem in the Netherlands. There are more than 100 internet service providers (ISPs) operating in the Dutch market and the country has an enviable infrastructure which is capable of supporting the most recent technologies.

The first step to getting internet access at home is to decide which type of connection best suits your needs and budget. You can choose between having an ADSL/broadband connection, which is faster but more expensive, or a dial-up one, which is slower but cheaper. Remember to always read the small print! What may appear to be a good deal is often too good to be true. Be sure to compare all the aspects of what companies are offering as some limits may be applied, such as size of the mailbox or the amount of data you are allowed to download. Check [www.internetten.nl](http://www.internetten.nl) for a comparison of prices of a number of providers.

### **Broadband connection**

More than 80% of Dutch internet-connected households choose this option and this figure is expected to grow. Broadband offers the fastest type of connection to the internet and normally allows you access to the internet at any time of day. Broadband subscriptions cost the same amount per month whether your computer is connected

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permanently or not. There are two types of broadband services: ADSL and Cable. Both types can be either wired or wireless. In case you have a wired connection, you can only work from one place in your house.

When you have wireless connection (usually referred to as wireless internet) on your laptop, you can use internet at any place in or around your house. You can also take your laptop with you to a public place where wi-fi is available. Wi-fi is wireless internet for public places, such as restaurants, libraries, cafes, hotels. Usually you have to ask a username and password before you can start using internet.

### ADSL

ADSL is sometimes called DSL in other parts of the world. Check [www.internetten.nl](http://www.internetten.nl) for an overview and a comparison of prices from a number of providers.

### Cable

In many parts of the Netherlands, it is possible to access the internet via a cable TV provider. In this case, the TV provider in your region, for example Ziggo or UPC, provides your internet connection. A subscription to the standard television and radio package is required in order to sign up to an internet subscription.

### Dial-in connection

If you are on a restricted budget or simply do not need dedicated access to the internet at home, the dial-in option (via a modem) may be a better solution. With dial-in you pay the telephone costs for the period you are on-line and while connected your telephone line will be unavailable, both for incoming and outgoing telephone calls. Access to the internet is much slower than with broadband. This might present problems if you need to download large software programs, browse complex websites or play games on-line where information has to be downloaded quickly to your computer. Also, the number of providers offering this service is decreasing.

### Mobile internet

It is even possible to read your emails and surf the internet from your mobile telephone or personal digital assistant (PDA). Prices can differ from pay per minute to a flat fee subscription. At the moment coverage is limited to densely populated areas. Once you have a subscription you can use Skype, for example, to make cheap calls from your mobile telephone or PDA to other Skype users or conventional telephones throughout the world .

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You can also have mobile internet on your laptop using a dongle. A dongle (in the Netherlands called *Dongel*) is a USB stick that is acting as a modem. Once plugged into your computer, it installs itself. This offers you internet access almost everywhere (usually at every place where you can make calls with your mobile phone). In the Netherlands the speed of mobile internet can be compared with the speed of a regular ADSL connection. In your subscription a download maximum is included. Once you exceed this maximum, you have to pay extra costs.

It is possible to use mobile internet abroad, but prices are very high. In order to keep your costs low, it is better to use wifi or go to a cybercafe when you are abroad.

### Cyber cafes

In The Netherlands, it is easy to find somewhere to check your e-mail or read the news on-line even if you do not have your own computer. There are many cyber cafes located throughout the country, especially in the larger cities. Their locations can be found using a search engine on the internet, for example: [www.cybercaptive.com](http://www.cybercaptive.com) and [/www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com) (both in English) or your local tourist office (*VVV*) will be able to provide information about cyber cafes in your area. In larger cities, copy shops and libraries may provide computers for public use.

## Television

In the Netherlands analogue cable television is wide-spread but the number of households with digital television is growing. A minority of people receive satellite television.

### Cable television

Cable television is a major part of most Dutch households. The Netherlands is one of the most densely cabled countries in the world. There is a cable supply to nine out of ten households. This is largely due to the low cost resulting from small geographic areas and advanced technology. Check [www.nlkabel.nl/uwkabelbedrijf.php](http://www.nlkabel.nl/uwkabelbedrijf.php) to find which companies provide cable television in your region. Enter your postcode and the name of the cable operator in your region will be shown.

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Approximately 30 different analogue television stations, many broadcast from outside the Netherlands, can be accessed via cable by paying a moderate monthly fee. Many foreign radio stations are normally included in the standard packages. Some of the foreign stations received are :

BBC 1 and BBC2. BBC World, CNN, TV5 (France), TVE (Spain), RAI Uno (Italy), ARD/ZDF/WRD (Germany).

The stations you will be able to receive depend on where you live and which cable company is serving your region. It normally only takes a couple of days to get everything working after the application has been made.

### Digital television

Many cable television operators offer digital television as well as standard analogue television. The number of households with digital television is growing quickly. In March 2009, 56% of households had digital television. In March 2010 this percentage had risen to 66% and it continues to grow.

Note that existing analogue television sets can receive the newer digital channels by making use of a special converter device, sometimes called a set-top box or a digibox, available from all cable companies and other sources. Most new digital television sets can also receive analogue channels directly without any converter device. Digital technology offers greatly superior picture quality, more “services” per channel such as comprehensive news and weather reports in the style of the old analogue Teletext but with more content and easier to select, and (when the analogue channels have finally been switched off) many more channels for the same cable capacity.

Some of the companies which offer digital television packages are:

Tele 2 Vision – digital television with some extras, such as “video-on-demand”. You will need to subscribe to a combined internet and telephone package called “*Tele 2 Compleet*”. For more information check [www.tele2.nl](http://www.tele2.nl)

Digitenne (KPN) - wireless digital television. For more information check [www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com)

Interactieve TV van KPN - more than 70 stations and many extra facilities

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such as interactive television. You will need an ADSL subscription from KPN. For more information [check www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com)

### Satellite television

An alternative to cable television and digital television is satellite television. In the Netherlands almost 6% of households have access to satellite television. You need a satellite dish and, since this the signal is digital, a decoder with a smart card which allows the satellite signal to be received by your analogue television.

The Dutch public stations (Nederland 1, Nederland 2 and Nederland 3), the Dutch regional stations and about 200 international stations are free of charge, but you need to register at CanalDigitaal ([www.canaldigitaal.nl](http://www.canaldigitaal.nl)).

To receive other stations, you will usually need a subscription and Canal Digitaal is the only company in the Netherlands to offer this service. There is a wide choice of packages available at various prices, including packages for films and for sports events that may not be broadcast elsewhere.

Check the Canal Digitaal website ([www.canaldigitaal.nl](http://www.canaldigitaal.nl)) for more information on prices and choice of packages available.

Users with a digital television set should consult the satellite company for details of what equipment is needed.

The Dutch public stations (Nederland 1, Nederland 2 and Nederland 3), the Dutch regional stations and about 200 international stations are free of charge, but you need to register at Canal Digitaal ([www.canaldigitaal.nl](http://www.canaldigitaal.nl)). Satellite reception is especially popular with expatriates who wish to view channels not normally available in the packages offered by cable companies, such as in Arabic, Asian or other non-northern European languages.

If you rent a house, ask your property owner if there are any special conditions for installing a satellite dish. Some property owners do not allow you to erect a satellite dish on their building. Installing a satellite dish on your balcony is usually permitted.

### Useful Websites

Most websites listed here are in Dutch. Good free translation websites are [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) and <http://www.babelfish.altavista.com/>

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### Telephone directories

[www.detelefoongids.com](http://www.detelefoongids.com) - telephone directory of KPN

[www.nationaletelefoongids.nl](http://www.nationaletelefoongids.nl) - quick on-line telephone book with links to directories in other countries

[www.goudengids.nl](http://www.goudengids.nl) - yellow pages directory

[www.faxgids.nl](http://www.faxgids.nl) - directory for fax numbers

### Comparison of telephone and internet rates

[www.bellen.com](http://www.bellen.com) - telephone rates, discount providers

[www.internetten.nl](http://www.internetten.nl) - internet providers cost comparisons

[www.vakantiebellen.nl](http://www.vakantiebellen.nl) - costs within Europe for mobile “vacation” calls

### Discount telephone cards

[www.idteurope.net](http://www.idteurope.net) (in English) - IDT

[www.budgetphone.nl](http://www.budgetphone.nl) (in English) - Budget Phone Cards

### Mobile telephone operators

KPN - [www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com)

Vodafone - [www.vodafone.nl](http://www.vodafone.nl)

T-mobile - [www.t-mobile.nl](http://www.t-mobile.nl)

### Cyber cafes

[www.cybercaptive.com](http://www.cybercaptive.com) (in English) – 5763 internet cafes in 161 countries

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com) (in English) - 4208 internet cafes in 141 countries

### Television

[www.nlkabel.nl/uwkabelbedrijf.php](http://www.nlkabel.nl/uwkabelbedrijf.php) – information about cable television companies

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[www.vergelijkdigitv.nl](http://www.vergelijkdigitv.nl) – compares providers of digital television and costs

[www.tele2.nl/shop/TV/index.htm](http://www.tele2.nl/shop/TV/index.htm) - Tele 2 digital television

[www.kpn.com](http://www.kpn.com) KPN Digtenne or Interactive TV from KPN

[www.canaldigitaal.nl](http://www.canaldigitaal.nl) – Canal Digitaal (satellite television)

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ACCESS guides available for downloading, free of charge, from the ACCESS website:

- Banking
- Childcare and playgroups
- Food from home
- Having a baby in the Netherlands
- Health care
- Housing and accommodation
- Inheritance and wills
- International primary and secondary education
- Learning the Dutch language
- Marriage , registered partnership, cohabitation and ending a relationship
- Obtaining a driving license in the Netherlands
- Post Office
- Public Transport
- Social Security
- Starting your own business
- Studying in the Netherlands
- Telephone, internet and television
- What to do when leaving the Netherlands
- Working in the Netherlands

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ACCESS did everything possible to ensure correct and up-to-date information. ACCESS cannot accept responsibility for any information that may have changed. If you need more information about this subject, please contact the organisations listed or look at the websites mentioned.