The Autorité de la concurrence issues its opinion to ARCEP on its draft decision to deregulate the market for wholesale central access provided at a fixed location for the mass market (“market 3b”)

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The French electronic communications, postal and print media distribution regulator (*Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques, des postes et de la distribution de la presse* – ARCEP) asked the *Autorité de la concurrence* for an opinion on its draft decision to deregulate the market for wholesale central access provided at a fixed location for the mass market. Like Opinion 23-A-14 of 5 October 2023, this opinion is part of the seventh cycle of analysis of the fixed broadband and superfast broadband wholesale markets for the five-year period to end-2028. As a reminder, these opinions come at a pivotal time, since this seventh cycle is marked in particular by the implementation of Orange’s plan to close the copper network.

In this opinion, which deals solely with market 3b (“bitstream” activated wholesale offers), the *Autorité* – while reiterating the importance of maintaining service-based competition within the market – supports ARCEP’s approach, in terms of both the definition of relevant markets and the reasons for deregulation. However, the *Autorité* invites ARCEP to monitor market developments closely, given the challenges posed by operators’ migration from copper to fibre.

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