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Rubrique :	Pge : 14	
Comment & Analysis	1/1	

Satellite potential in internet access

From Mr Fulvio Sansone.

Sir, I refer to the article "Telecoms dinosaurs prove surprisingly strong survivors" (February 28).

Telecoms regulators may be concerned by the status of competition especially in the growing market for high-speed internet access; nevertheless perhaps more can be done to spur competition.

Unbundling in last-mile delivery has proven to be more difficult to achieve in reality and has given limited results. As you hint in your article, competition comes also from alternative infrastructures and satellite delivery has a particularly important role to play. Regulators should be worried not only by the status of competition in broadband services but also by the increasing trend of concentration in urban regions.

Satellite broadband has the potential

today to provide high-speed internet access to wide and remote areas of European territory, just as satellite television has proven to be efficient at broadcasting television programmes across Europe. Reducing the digital divide at the time of European enlargement is in the interests of everyone, especially remote users, service providers and the downstream content industry.

Recent proposals for spectrum management included in the UK communications bill will not help to encourage the business plans of emerging satellite broadband companies and the additional "tax" on satellite spectrum being sought through these measures risks undermining UK broadband initiatives as well as opportunities for the business sector.

Like any other industry, satellite

operators need fair and predictable regulatory frameworks to stay in business. In addition, owing to their international nature, satellite services need harmonised regimes throughout their coverage area. This is the area where regulators are vital if harmonisation is to be achieved.

Only in such conditions will satellite operators have the best chance to compete in offering universal high-speed internet access and, more importantly, offer the same affordable services to people who would otherwise be on the wrong side of the digital divide, or at the very least be deprived of any competitive solution for broadband access.

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