



## **Operators call for consistency between EU space and telecoms policies recognizing the requirements of satellite communications**

During ESOA's annual board meeting, industry representatives highlighted the uniqueness of satellite technology as a critical infrastructure for European citizens and urged the EU not to overlook the international telecommunications regulation in the ongoing review of the Telecoms Package.

*Brussels, 16 October 2008* – The European Satellite Operators Association (ESOA) gathered in Brussels for its annual board meeting with issues regarding the impact of EU regulation high in its agenda. Specifically, the operators analyzed the possible consequences of the proposed Telecoms Package that will be voted in Council at the end of November and the latest EU declaration on the future of a common space policy.

All European operators welcomed the resolution "Taking forward the European space policy" adopted during the Fifth Space Council held in September. Participating ministers committed to strengthen Europe's strategic approach to space and set their priorities in the field of security, earth observation, space exploration and the achievement of the Lisbon strategy goals using space applications such as satellite telecoms.

ESOA's board members agreed on the fact that "the inclusion of space policy at the highest political level in the EU is a major opportunity to highlight how European satellite operators are at the forefront of a broad range of highly beneficial civil and public services". In that sense, Space ministers recognised the substantial contribution of space to attaining the EU's economic, educational, and social objectives. But to achieve that, they clearly asked for "an appropriate regulatory framework and the sustained access to radio-spectrum for space applications."

The same favourable recognition is precisely what European operators would like to see included in the review of Telecommunications Package. All ESOA members agreed that "satellites provide an invisible safety net, a global backbone, upon which most of today's communications services rely on. But they do so in a very unique way that must be acknowledged by policy-makers to guarantee the continuity of the services we provide."

First of all, satellites are intrinsically global cutting across continents and countries. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is the UN agency responsible for the allocation and coordination of orbital positions and the different frequency bands. However, some are still questioning the need to include in the Telecoms Package specific obligations to respect the international regulation adopted by the ITU.

As the chairman of ESOA and CEO of Eutelsat, Giuliano Berretta, explained during the board meeting, "inadequate recognition of the role and nature of the ITU, poses a fundamental threat to the future of satellite services, whose business plans depend first and foremost on securing coverage of a certain geographic area through a specific orbital slot, and the ability to serve that area over the long term with spectrum associated with that slot. Therefore, satellite services need adequate protection"

ESOA's board meeting also questioned the unrestricted principle of "technology neutrality" included in the review of the Telecoms policy, which aims at maintaining a competitive level-playing field by not favouring any particular technology. ESOA's chairman stated that "policy-makers should not be held back, in the name of "technology neutrality," from promoting technologies, such as satellites, that are not only optimally suited to respond to public sector requirements, such as emergency response, but are also a proven technology that already brings TV to tens of millions of households everywhere in Europe and that can quickly bridge the digital divide in a cost-effective way providing connectivity to all European citizens."

## Editors' Note

**About ESOA:** ESOA is a Brussels-based trade association whose membership brings together all European satellite operators and supporting members including service providers, manufacturers and launch service providers. Set up in 2002, the association goals include raising awareness of commercial satellite technologies and ensuring that satellites benefit from the appropriate political, industrial and regulatory environment to fulfil their vital role in the delivery of communications. [www.esoa.net](http://www.esoa.net)

## ESOA members:



## ESOA supporting members:



## The Telecommunications Package

The Telecommunications package will set the new regulatory framework for electronic communication in Europe including some key issues such as principles for spectrum management, access networks, competition, licensing conditions and fees etc. The adoption of this legislation is ongoing through a co-decision procedure. Substantial changes to the original Commission proposal were introduced by the ITRE Parliamentary Committee and approved by plenary on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. National governments will have to decide if they support this reform during the next Telecoms Council scheduled for November the 27. Many issues such as ITU regulation, potential interference and technology neutrality still remain open to debate.