



European satellite operators can play a vital role in reaching the target of 100% broadband coverage for the EU over the next two years

ESOA welcomes the Commission's announcement to invest € 1 billion in broadband connectivity as part of the Economic Recovery Plan

Brussels, 29 January 2009 – As part of the Economic Recovery Plan approved at the end of 2008, the European Union has recently announced a provision of € 1 billion to help rural areas get online, create employment and help businesses grow. According to EC estimations, broadband connectivity is expected to create 1 million jobs and boost the EU's economy by €850 billion between 2006 and 2015. The process will be managed under existing Rural Development Programmes on the basis of rules established for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

Some parts of Europe remain and probably will remain unconnected to terrestrial broadband for quite some time as the lack of users in more remote locations makes it commercially unattractive to roll-out fibre Internet services to reach them. This geographical digital divide will only become more acute as already connected users gain access to increasingly bandwidth-intensive, high-speed services, while others remain far outside the so-called Information Society. Making broadband connectivity part of Europe's recovery plan can, if done correctly, resolve a long outstanding issue in a relatively short-term.

Satellites already provide an invisible global backbone upon which most of our current communications services rely. They are already capable of offering broadband access and triple-play that is fully independent of terrestrial networks, using a simple antenna installed on the roofs of our homes. An added advantage of satellite technology is that it does not require poles or cables to be rolled out across the European countryside. Moreover, satellites represent a remote and wireless technology that relies on solar power to reach users anywhere they live whether it is on mountains, valleys, islands or villages.

"They provide a universality of service that can be a real and complementary solution to Europe's geographical divide, cutting across borders and covering the entire continent. I hope the Commission will recognise this in any guidelines it issues to Member States" said Giuliano Berretta, Chairman of ESOA, after the announcement by the Commission.

Editors' Note

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 global communications.

For more information please contact:

Aarti Holla-Maini
Secretary General
European Satellite Operators Association,
Bastion Tower, 20th Floor, 5, Place du Champ de Mars,
1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.550.35.75
Fax: + 32.2.550.35.35
sg@esoa.net