



European Satellite Operators welcome the Economic Recovery Package and Highlight the contribution of satellite broadband to a rapid stimulus

Brussels, 20 March 2009 – The European Satellite Operators Association (ESOA) welcomed the decision on 19th March by European Heads of State on the EU Economic Recovery Package. €1.020bn has been allocated to promote access to broadband, reflecting the Commission's desire to give coverage to all 500 million European citizens. In its communication "Better access for rural areas to modern ICT" the European Commission reaffirms the 2010 "broadband for all" objective as set out in the context of the EERP and recalls that "30% of the EU's rural population is currently excluded from broadband access." ESOA is convinced the EERP will pave the way for providing broadband access to 100% of the European population, based on a non-discriminatory assessment at national and local level of the different technological options available. These funds must filter down quickly through the Member States to connect farmers, rural businesses and households to the web and create greater access to European and global markets.

Emphasising the huge potential of satellite broadband in the Package, Mr Giuliano Berretta, Chairman of ESOA said: "Satellite capacity is already in place to enable a sizeable and rapid roll-out of satellite broadband services throughout Europe. By investing in an antenna, modem and installation, farmers, local communities and rural businesses can already connect to the internet, with the immediate benefit of greater competitiveness. This point of access equipment can also be used in homes, schools and libraries to ensure that European citizens benefit in both the short and long term. With the right application of funds, satellites can connect at least a million farmers, local residents and rural businesses to the Internet by the end of 2010."

Mrs. Aarti Holla-Maini, Secretary General of ESOA, commented: "European leaders have recognised that broadband access can be instrumental in stimulating economic activity in rural areas, especially in the 30% of rural communities that currently enjoy no broadband access at all. To make sure this acts as a real stimulus, the funds need to deliver access quickly to these communities. Satellite broadband is already a reality for some European regions. It can be deployed quickly, delivering access to markets and e-services that are often denied to rural communities."

Satellite broadband is an immediately available resource, with no new infrastructure needed to connect European citizens. Through the installation of simple equipment in households, businesses, educational establishments and community centres, satellite broadband can provide immediate access to the vast resources of the Internet. Satellites are an invisible infrastructure, that fly above us using solar power. Besides broadband connectivity, other uses include agricultural applications, crisis communications and disaster preparedness, e-government services, tele-education, tele-medicine as well as advanced mobile communications for personal and professional users.

Commenting on the dispersal of the funds and the implementation of the package, Mr Berretta called on all parties to work together: "European leaders have stressed that funds must be allocated on a non-discriminatory basis. ESOA strongly encourages the Member States to place satellite broadband on an equal basis with all other broadband technologies to ensure that the rural population has the opportunity to obtain quickly the best possible broadband solutions. ESOA is reaching out to rural communities, businesses and administrations to work together to



provide Europe's citizens with the maximum benefit out of satellite broadband, including immediate and affordable access throughout the continent.”

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