



European operators recall the 50th anniversary of satellite communications offering their support to the EU plans to boost broadband connectivity

ESOA welcomes the provision included in the new Economic Recovery Plan to contribute €5 billion for the improvement of energy links and broadband access

Brussels, 18 December 2008 - When the first communications satellite was being launched on December 18th 1958, it was very hard to imagine how significant that new technical invention would be to shape society as we know it. Fifty years have passed and although the idea behind this critical infrastructure remains unaltered, to connect distant points through a radio transmitter orbiting in space, the services and the reach of satellites has revolutionised global communications thanks to high definition TV, wireless internet, emergency communications or mobile phones just to name a few examples.

Today, satellites provide an invisible safety net, a global backbone, upon which most of our current communications services rely. And they may become even more relevant in the near future if the EU wants to accomplish the objectives set in the Recovery Plan that will be launched next year to stimulate our economies and mitigate the effects of the global financial crisis.

The plan calls for a timely, targeted and temporary fiscal stimulus of around €200 billion, approximately 1.5% of the EU GDP, including many “smart investments” to generate long-term growth through entrepreneurship, research, innovation and access to technology. One of those concrete measures is the mobilisation of €5 billion to improve energy connections and broadband infrastructure all across Europe.

Broadband internet has gradually turned into an essential commodity to strengthen competitiveness and economic growth in the EU. The aim is to cover 100% of Europe by 2010. To do so, Commission and Member States will work with stakeholders to accelerate the upgrade and extension of networks. They are also planning to support that strategy with public funds in under-served and high cost areas where the market cannot and will not deliver.

The roll-out of DSL and cable has steadily grown in cities but in the remotest parts of the EU the deployment of those technologies is at best not commercially attractive, and at worst, substantially more expensive than other alternatives. According to the last i2010 mid-term review published in April, DSL for example, is now available in 89% of all the telephone lines in EU25 but this percentage has started to plateau while other alternative technologies still remain marginal. In the case of rural areas in countries such as Greece, Czech Republic, Malta, or Cyprus there is no DSL coverage at all.

That is why Giuliano Berretta, chairman of ESOA, in a letter recently submitted to President Barroso, reminded him that existing satellites in orbit can help achieve this goal, either as a stand-alone technology or by contributing to the deployment and performance of other land-based communication systems “to reach those citizens otherwise forgotten and unconnected due to their remote or rural location”.

In this sense, he encouraged Mr. Barroso to acknowledge the pivotal role that satellite communication can play in the Recovery Plan. “It is in the public interest to draw on a technological solution that achieves this objective in the most cost and time efficient way, satellites are already up in sky and able to offer those services, and in an ecologically friendly manner, satellites use solar energy for their entire lifetime of over 15 years”, Mr. Berretta wrote.



Note to the editor:

Project **SCORE** (Signal Communication by Orbiting Relay Equipment), the world's first communications satellite, was launched from Cape Canaveral using an Atlas rocket on 18 December, 1958. This experiment was design to test the feasibility of transmitting messages though outer space from one ground station to one or more other receiving centres. The satellite, which was in orbit for only 12 days, was loaded with a tape recorder containing a Christmas message from the U.S. president Dwight D. Eisenhower. His voice transmission wishing for "peace on Earth and goodwill toward men everywhere" was successfully broadcasted to the entire planet on a short-wave frequency.

Access to the complete message can be found in: <http://www.fas.org/spp/military/program/com/score.htm>