

Satellite operators, Parliament and Commission commit to foster a policy dialogue that can bring certainty and continuity to the industry

Representatives from ESOA met with MEPs and other EU institution officials to explore the role and needs of satellite technology in delivering on key policy objectives.

Brussels, 12 November 2008 - Members of the European Parliament, Commission and other relevant stakeholders had the opportunity to learn about the range of services satellites can provide and their requirements to function effectively. European Satellite Operators used this meeting to highlight the crucial role that satellites play in the delivery of key policies related to space, environment, security, emergency and the Lisbon strategy. They also shared their views about the technical and regulatory needs, currently being debated under the review of the Telecoms Package, to accomplish the goals set in the most recent European Space Policy resolution,.

All participants agreed on the importance of maintaining a closer dialogue between the operators and the European institutions to guarantee the continuity of the services they offer. Satellites are considered to be a critical infrastructure and as stated by ESOA's secretary general, "A lot can be achieved by using commercial satellites, even for example in the field of security and border control or disaster management. It is important that EU institutions endorse satellite services for such purposes so that the European satellite operations continue to maintain the lead in this high-tech field".

In that context, satellite operators emphasized the importance of recognizing the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) regulation into any EU policies that affect satellites. As ESOA's vice-chairman Romain Bausch explained, "it would be an illusion to think that the EU can work without respecting the ITU" and he questioned how autonomous Europe can be from this United Nations agency responsible for the global allocation and coordination of orbital positions and radio frequencies. This is particularly relevant because satellites are blind to national boundaries and their services cannot be restricted or seen in European context only. Consistency between International and European spectrum policy is crucial if European satellites are to keep operating in and outside of the Union without harmful interference.

During the discussion, a lot of attention was given to the Galileo program and how to draw on the experience of commercial operators to generate synergies. ESOA's vice-chairman, Mr. Bausch noted that navigation was already an essential component of the mobile satellite services that Brussels plans to roll-out and would be vital in delivering on security, traffic management, road safety and other mobile applications.

Further, ESOA's representatives alerted the Parliament and the Commission about the risks of potential interference to existing satellite services in Europe and other parts of the world as for example Africa. The risk stems from the recent EU decision to open up the C-Band, an established satellite band, to the terrestrial mobile industry. The satellite industry has always been self-motivated to develop new applications for satellites but such decisions must be guarded against "to allow us to continue to grow and innovate based on long-term investment decisions", said ESOA's secretary general.

Other topics of discussion included the services currently offered by competing launchers from Russia and the EU as well as the development of new projects in the fields of border control, security and military interventions based on commercial communications satellites.

ESOA organized these presentations and debates as part of a breakfast roundtable at the EP sponsored by MEP Jan Hudacky and a working lunch entitled "Current Challenges and Developments for Satellite-Delivered Services". Attendees included MEPs, Council, Commission officials and other industry representatives interested in satellite and space applications in the European Union. Both events were hosted by Mr. Romain Bausch, Vice-Chairman of ESOA and CEO of SES, Cato Halsaa, Member of the ESOA Board & CEO of Telenor and Mrs. Aarti Holla-Maini, ESOA's secretary general.

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.

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