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Satellite broadband is available now to provide fast internet connectivity throughout every European Member State.
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Satellite Broadband, also referred to as internet-by-satellite, is a high-speed bi-directional Internet connection made via communications satellites instead of a telephone landline or other terrestrials means. Today satellite broadband is completely comparable with DSL [1] broadband in terms of both performance and cost, with commercial offerings of 20 Mbps often with triple play (internet, TV and voice with the same internet).

While fibre offers superior performance, it takes more time and is more expensive to roll out and so will not be available to all users within a reasonable time frame. On the contrary, satellite solutions are available immediately. This is the only broadband solution for those who live in areas without or with slow terrestrial or wireless / mobile broadband access.

Affordable and easy to install

Satellite broadband is extremely cost effective, with monthly subscriptions comparable with and often better than equivalent performance ADSL [2] offers. Users receive a dish and modem and can either install these themselves, or call on a the expertise of a vast network of highly trained engineers. The average purchase price across the EU for consumer equipment is 350€. This initial cost is eligible for European public funding, and some Member States/regions have used this opportunity to close their digital divides cost-effectively & quickly. Some examples are Auvergne [3] in France, Piemonte [4] in Italy, Scotland [5] in the UK and Galicia [6] in Spain.

About the technology

Connecting to the Internet via satellite means installing a small satellite dish outside your house, flat, school or other building. As long as the dish can see the sky, you should easily be able to connect to the Internet. The satellite modem needs to be plugged into your computer and no telephone connection is required. The dish can be installed by homeowners directly or by a professional installer. The quality of service is comparable to DSL [1]and users can access a full range of Internet applications such as surfing the web, emailing, VOIP, downloading music or watching videos.

European Funding for Satellite broadband access

Our aim is to maximise broadband connectivity for all citizens regardless of their location throughout the EU. Satellite broadband is often the only broadband solution for those who live in areas with no or very poor connectivity. A Voucher Scheme [7] has been successfully implemented in some Member

States to connect remote communities using satellite broadband. Under such a scheme, a public authority provides financial aid (a voucher) to eligible end users with which they can ‘pay’ a registered service provider of their choice for the purchase, installation and activation of satellite user equipment. The service provider seeks reimbursement of his costs from the public authority implementing the scheme.

Satellite Technology projects in Europe

The aim of the SABER [8] network is to bring together regional authorities and stakeholders in order to tackle the Digital Divide in EU-28 as to ensure broadband coverage for all. The initiative specifically establishes the conditions for the most efficient and effective contribution of satellite systems to support the achievement of the objectives set in the Digital Agenda for Europe (DAE).

The BRESAT [9] project is producing information on the broadband coverage by regional case studies of previous satellite broadband deployments, key criteria and best practices for successful deployments, potential sources of funding, cost-benefit analysis guidelines to help business case development and implements workshops and dissemination events across Europe.

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