

Political go-ahead for Galileo

1. After long discussions with the Member States over the last 3 months, the Transport Council reached historical conclusions at its session of 29/30 November 2007 on the future developments of Galileo, more specifically on the procurement and governance aspects. Together with the ECOFIN Council and European Parliament decision of 23 November 2007 on the financing of the programme, the European Commission has now the basis to implement the next phase of the European GNSS programmes. As proposed by the Commission on 19 September, this next phase – the deployment of Galileo – will be carried out and financed by the Community.

The next phase includes the operational availability of EGNOS¹ within the next 1-2 years as well as the procurement of Galileo and leading to a Galileo operational system by 2013.

2. The Council conclusions:
 - confirm the importance of the European GNSS programmes EGNOS and Galileo as a key project for the European Union,
 - support, as an overall programme objective for Galileo, the deployment by 2013 of a European satellite navigation system providing five navigation services,
 - confirm the need for an additional public funding of 2.400 million euros, bringing the total to 3.4 B€
 - acknowledge the need for a streamlined and effective public sector governance and define the general principles to be implemented,
 - outline the structure, the principles and the objectives of the public procurement of the GNSS programmes.
3. The next phase of the programme will see the Commission in a new role namely that of programme manager. As a matter of fact, contrary to almost all other domains where the Commission provides subventions and verifies the proper use of Community funds, Galileo will be one of the first large programmes where the Commission assumes direct programme management responsibility.

In this role, the Commission will have to oversee the procurement and deployment of a politically, legally and technically complex programme, probably one of the most complex undertakings in Europe at this moment, and manage, together the on-going (development phase) activities, a total volume of 5 B€ during the period 2008-2013.

This means that the Commission will have to be able to act as an 'intelligent buyer' vis-à-vis European Space Agency (ESA), determine on the basis of user needs the technical and performance characteristics of Galileo as well as their continuous evolution, perform the trade-off between technical and programmatic changes on the one hand and possible costs and delays on the other, oversee ESA and the GNSS Supervisory Authority (GSA), and report to Council and European Parliament.

¹ EGNOS is a so-called augmentation system that is based on GPS signals and that transmits additional correction signals in order to allow terrestrial receivers to calculate their location with much higher accuracy than possible with GPS only. EGNOS is foreseen in particular for aviation and will be the initial backbone of the European Air Traffic Management system (SESAR) before Galileo becomes operational.

In addition, the Commission must develop new regulatory initiatives and a range of detailed measures (see below) like: access policy to governmental services, concept of operations, pricing policy, IPR policy, liability policy, a European Radio Navigation Plan, a specific Galileo technology export control regime. Finally, the global dimension of the programme will require negotiations and direct contacts with international partners all along the implementation phase.

4. Although early in the year there was considerable doubts with regard to Galileo, there is now broad public and political support for the programme. As evidenced by the press reactions around the world, the European Union is seen to be able to decide on truly strategic, high technology projects.