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Galileo: the Commission proposes opening negotiations with Morocco

The European Commission today proposed negotiating directives to the Council on the conclusion of a cooperation agreement with Morocco on the development of Galileo, a civil satellite navigation system.

The Commission will start discussions with Morocco as soon as the Council has approved the negotiating directives. "The prospect of a new Galileo cooperation agreement, this time with Morocco, highlights the success of this European programme. Such an agreement will enable Galileo to become established in the western Mediterranean and West Africa", said Jacques Barrot, Vice-President with responsibility for Transport.

On 13 October, following several preparatory meetings with the Commission, Morocco formally announced its interest in opening negotiations and the prospect of an agreement on its participation in Galileo. This will involve industrial and scientific cooperation, particularly regarding standardisation issues, monitoring regional integrity and developing specific applications for Morocco and its geographic environment (the western Mediterranean and West Africa).

International cooperation in the Galileo Programme is expanding rapidly. Agreements have already been signed with China and Israel and discussions are underway with India, Russia, Ukraine, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico and Australia. Furthermore, the agreement between the European Union and the United States which was signed on 26 June confirmed the total interoperability between Galileo and GPS. This will considerably boost the world market for satellite radio-navigation, which involves some 3 billion receivers and is likely to be worth about €250 billion from 2010. The Commission expects over 150 000 highly qualified jobs to be created in Europe.

Background

Galileo is Europe's satellite radio-navigation programme. It was launched at the initiative of the Commission and the European Space Agency and is a technical revolution similar to that of mobile phones. It is also behind the development of a new generation of universal services in areas such as transport, telecommunications, agriculture and fisheries. At the moment, this technology, which has proved highly profitable, is only available through the United States' GPS or Russia's Glonass system, which were primarily developed and funded for military purposes. The Galileo programme will be administered and controlled by civilian authorities and will offer a guarantee of quality and service continuity. It will be complementary with current systems and will increase the reliability and availability of navigation and positioning services worldwide.

Further information on Galileo can be obtained from:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/galileo

<http://www.esa.int/export/esaSA/navigation.html>

<http://www.galileoju.com>