

GALILEO, satellite radionavigation programme: development phase, joint undertaking

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The Commission has presented a progress report on the GALILEO research programme as at the beginning of 2004. The communication revolves round the following three points: - progress of the development phase; - development of international cooperation; - transition to the deployment and operating phases. As far as the programme is concerned, 2003 has been a decisive year marking, in particular, the setting-up of the Galileo Joint Undertaking (the Joint Undertaking) and the commencement of its work, the order of the first satellites, the promotion of international cooperation, the confirmation of frequencies allocated and preparations for the deployment and operating phases. Having weathered the storm associated with the difficulties linked to determining the financial scale within the European Space Agency, the development phase of the GALILEO programme is now at a very advanced stage. The Joint Undertaking has been fully operational since summer 2003. The technical studies and research work are actively going ahead, encouraged by the positive results achieved at the World Radiocommunication Conference held in June 2003. At the same time, the integration of the new Member States and candidate countries in the GALILEO programme is well under way. Since the last communication on the progress of the GALILEO programme, the advances made both in terms of the development of the system and its applications and in terms of international cooperation have been considerable. The programme is evolving as planned, and its international dimension is asserting itself more and more by the day, e.g. through the forthcoming conclusion of an Agreement with the United States. Exactly how much of the funding the private sector will declare itself ready to take on represents, in short, the only element of uncertainty remaining, even though the four offers submitted under the procedure for selecting the future concession holder actually provide for the substantial involvement of the undertakings concerned. With a view to obtaining a definite commitment from the private sector to finance two thirds of the deployment and operating phases, as recommended by the Council, it would be desirable if the latter could make an irrevocable commitment of its own in favour of the programme. The determining factors in this respect would appear to be the promotion of the system through the creation of supportive environments, as well as the adoption of a definitive political decision to go ahead with the GALILEO programme until the system enters into service in 2008. Against this background, it is essential that the legislative procedure regarding the rules on the future structures for managing the programme be achieved without delay, and that the European Parliament and the Council confirm the guidelines which they have previously issued - particularly with regard to the services which will be generated by the GALILEO system, so as to enable the European Space Agency to draw up once and for all the technical options adopted to date and to enable the Joint Undertaking to conduct negotiations aimed at selecting the system operator and the Supervisory Authority to conclude the concession contract.