Navigation by satellite: trans-European positioning network GNSS

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The Commission is calling on the member states to agree by early 1999 on the strategy which the EU should adopt with regard to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS). This is an expanding world market which could be worth $50 bn within 7 years, with many applications in the transport sector as well as in agriculture and oil and gas exploration. The Commission considers that in the long term the ideal would be to cooperate with all the EU's international partners. To this end it is calling on the member states to start consultations with the main international operators with a view to studying the possibility of achieving an acceptable joint system. It considers that if this is not possible, the EU should opt for the establishment of an independent European GNSS, taking into account the technological developments which might substantially reduce the cost of development of such a system. The financing of a European GNSS system (which should cost between EUR 400m and EUR 400bn, depending on quality) could be undertaken through a public/private partnership. Any delay in deciding on its strategy could impair the prospect of Europe achieving a competitive position in this market. Brigitte Langenhagen (D, EPP) for the Transport Committee will be welcoming the Commission's proposed action plan. Amoing other requests she wants the member states to convene a European Space Council at Head of State or Government level to give clear decisions on the strategic, technical and budgetary guidelines, and considers that Council should assess the desirability of holding a World Conference on the issue. She is also calling on the Commission to take all necessary meaures to promote international cooperation in the field of GNSS.