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FIRST EVENT FOR 'MENTORE' TRACKING AND TRACING

November 28, 2008

The EU-funded MENTORE project brought together a range of stakeholders to discuss 'public interest services' in Brussels on 25 November 2008. Topics included new EGNOS- and Galileo-based tracking and tracing applications.

Today's European regulations call for precise and reliable information on the location of sensitive materials and goods. Satellite navigation is a key tool for these 'tracking and tracing' requirements, allowing the localisation and monitoring of both material assets and people.

Representing the European GNSS Supervisory Authority (GSA), Stefano Scarda said, "We are convinced that EGNOS today and Galileo in the near future can be wonderful tools for the monitoring of sensitive materials. By supporting this project, we, the GSA along with the European Commission, are building new services for citizens, businesses and public authorities."

The project

MENTORE is a two-year project funded under the Commission's Sixth Research Framework Programme (FP6), aimed at analysing technologies, service platforms, market scenarios and provision schemes for EGNOS- and Galileo-based tracking and tracing services.

"We are implementing five real-life pilot service demonstrations in various application domains," said project coordinator Antonella Di Fazio of Italy's Telespazio. "Areas of particular interest to us are transport of radioactive materials, tracing and monitoring of containers and city logistics.

"The important thing to remember is that EGNOS and Galileo regulated services will be driven by public interest requirements. The MENTORE project will deliver guidelines for the creation of best practices in regulated tracking and tracing services."

Potential applications

Invited speakers outlined several ideas for new tracking and tracing applications, some of which are already being implemented. Gianmarco Baldini and Johann Hofherr of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) discussed ongoing work in support of EU animal welfare policy.

"New regulations call for increased traceability of animals in transit," explained Hofherr. "We are expected to provide specific information on lengths of trips and rest periods, but also qualitative data on such things as temperature inside animal containers. These regulations go into effect very soon, as of 2009, so we cannot wait until Galileo is fully operational in 2013, we have to implement now."

The JRC, he said, is already developing applications aimed at satisfying the new requirements, based on existing GPS and EGNOS technologies. "Once Galileo is operational, we will see further improvements on any systems already in place," said Baldini. "The MENTORE team is investigating a number of important aspects related to things like animal welfare but also European security, another key priority for the JRC."

High-level support

The MENTORE event drew a cross-section of satnav stakeholders, including high-level representatives of EU institutions. MEP Etelka Barsi-Pataky, a key member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, has been an active supporter of the European satellite radionavigation programmes.

Placing EGNOS and Galileo in the context of a larger comprehensive European Space Policy, she said, "Galileo and EGNOS are strategic priorities for the European Parliament. European GNSS programmes will strengthen our competitiveness, help make Europe a real global space power and increase our influence around the world. At the same time, we have to be sure to provide equal access to these benefits for all our Member States."

Also speaking was the GSA's Gian Gherardo Calini, who said "These programmes are good value propositions. We will offer

competitive services. There is no question about that. The value of new EGNOS applications have already been demonstrated in the aviation sector, for example, but the time is now to move from trials to real usage. One very important step will be getting local authorities to adopt these new services. From there, I believe we will see a real snowball effect."

Finally, Philippe Hamet of the European Commission's Transport and Energy DG invited all conference participants to the second FP7 GNSS call for proposals 'Information Day', set to take place in Brussels on 27-28 January 2009.

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Institute of Resource Information Technologies, Chinese Academe of forestry.

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