

GALILEO continues against US competition

U Member States' unanimous agreement in late November 2007 to press on with the €3.4bn GALILEO satellite navigation project came amid evidence of strengthening US competition. Experts claim the rival GPS III system will have 500 times the transmitter power of the current array, dramatically enhancing resistance to jamming.

EU transport ministers have agreed that unused agricultural farm subsidy and administration funds can plug the financing gap caused by private-sector withdrawal from the delayed project. The plan is for the full 30-satellite GALILEO constellation to be built and launched by 2012, with work split into six segments and no single contractor allowed to lead on more than two.

On the commercial prospects, users (particularly businesses) will be more willing to pay for navigation than safety, the GNSS Supervisory Authority (GSA)'s Stefano Scarda said recently in Dublin, Ireland. Speaking at a Mapflow-hosted conference of the Active Road Management Assisted by Satellite (ARMAS) project, he said price sensitivity could make market segmentation possible.

The location-based services (LBS) sector is

moving forward, but needs further stimulation', John Hanley of global IT services consultancy LogicaCMG told a recent AGILE project workshop in Turin, Italy. 'We must keep stressing social benefits, to gain political and legislative support.' Hybridisation remains a key concept, continued the coordinator of AGILE (Application of Galileo in the Location-Based Services Environment). 'Both existing GPS and the new GALILEO will ultimately be parts of a larger multiple GNSS system. Being able to use them in combination, along with eg EGNOS, will add value.'

The workshop demonstrated a pre-commercial EGNOS-based LBS application developed by AGILE partners. Using handheld devices, delegates navigated around Turin, combining friend finding with user-generated content and location-based advertising.

The new application includes the first European implementation of Secure User Plane Location (SUPL) protocol version 2.0. (SUPL employs user plane data bearers to transfer eg GPS-based assistance data, and carry positioning technology-related protocols between mobile terminals and the network).

Location-based personal mobility services are

widely expected to be the largest GALILEO mass market, in terms of user numbers and revenue opportunities. The GSA has recently released a new invitation to tender for a follow-up project, which is required to build on the success of AGILE.

* The two-year GSA-supported MENTORE (implemENTation of GNSS tracking and tracing Technologies FOR EU-regulated domains) project is planning five real-life pilot demonstrations of GNSS-based animal and food transportation tracking and product monitoring. It aims to support EU 'farm-to-table' food safety policies.

MENTORE is an EC FP6-supported project coordinated by Italian satellite services specialist Telespazio. The project disseminator is the European Union Road Federation (ERF).

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