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Europe makes the Galileo dream a reality Satellite navigation system enters service

The European Commission has announced the entry into service of the Galileo satellite navigation system. Jean-Yves Le Gall, CNES President, interministerial coordinator for European satellite navigation programmes and Chair of the GSA Administrative Board, hailed this key milestone before detailing the advantages the system is set to offer over its competitors.

Galileo is now operational and ready to give Europe strategic and economic independence from other satellite navigation systems. With 18 satellites now in orbit out of the final constellation of 26 that will be in place by 2018, Galileo is today capable of delivering initial services with signal reliability and availability guaranteed by the European Commission, and the assurance that the satellites and ground infrastructure are fully operational.

The Commission's announcement marks the real start for Galileo and is the signal that entrepreneurs were waiting for to develop a whole range of applications. From today, Galileo is offering the following services and features free of charge:

- **Open Service (OS), meaning more-accurate navigation** for users whose smartphone or vehicle is already equipped with a Galileo chip.
- **Support for emergency operations with the SAR (Search & Rescue) service**, shortening the time needed to locate an emergency call to less than 10 minutes.
- **Better synchronization for critical infrastructures**, enabling better management of financial transactions, telecommunications and power transmission grids.
- **Public Regulated Service (PRS), bringing greater security** and new, more-precise tools for civil protection agencies, humanitarian aid teams and customs and police officers.

This is obviously only a first step toward full services in 2020 that will offer completely autonomous and enhanced positioning, timing and signal security performance.

Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "Today is the culmination of a project of major import for Europe. Beyond everyday navigation-type uses, Galileo is opening up a whole range of private-sector applications for citizens. The real challenge now is to get Galileo into every citizen's pocket and vehicle, to benefit from the major advances it offers. I am ready to bet the already digital- and application-savvy next generation will in future be talking about GPS as the US equivalent of Galileo."

In terms of organization, the European Commission has overall responsibility for satellite navigation programmes, relying for programme management on the European Space Agency's expertise in developing and deploying systems, and on GSA, the European GNSS Agency based in Prague, for system operation. In France, satellite navigation programmes are under the responsibility of an interministerial coordinator.

The Toulouse Space Centre (CST) plans and conducts satellite positioning operations in partnership with ESA's European Space Operations Centre (ESOC). CNES is also central to operations for Galileo's Search & Rescue (SAR) service, which relies on resources at the CST. Lastly, Galileo satellite signals were designed by CNES engineers. One of their unique features is that they are more robust than GPS signals in so-called constrained environments such as urban canyons.

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