

Every Europe Digital
The Challenge of Bridging the Broadband Gap
31 May, European Parliament, Brussels

“Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here amongst this panel and on this important day. It is important, not only for Commissioner Kroes with her Digital Agenda Scoreboard going live, but also for the satellite sector and Europe’s broadband map. Today, the world’s most powerful satellite, Eutelsat’s KA-SAT went into full commercial service and is now ready to deliver broadband to the many users beyond range of terrestrial high-speed infrastructure.

We are discussing here today the EU objective of basic broadband for all EU citizens. We know that Internet has a real impact not only on economic growth – for individuals, small businesses, local administrations and so on but also on Europe as a whole – to ensure competitiveness and keep Europe in the world’s top tier of performers.

I was surprised, therefore, during last week’s e-G8 meeting in Paris, that assembled Internet executives from the world, that the issue of the digital divide was not given much more attention. This is all the more surprising considering that simply in the case of Europe, there are still 10 million households who have no Internet, plus even more whose connections are in some way unsatisfactory. This closes the door to media-rich applications that people now expect to access on a daily basis.

Can the EU still meet the objective of broadband for all in 2013? How do we get ‘digital oxygen’ to these homes in a way that’s fast and cost-effective? Satellite is one solution. Not the only one, but the one that reaches into the most rural regions where there is the lowest broadband penetration. Satellite technologies have evolved – satellite broadband is developing into a mass-market product, comparable to ADSL. Today they enable 10 Mbps and can do more thanks to the significant efforts and investments by companies like Avanti Communications, Eutelsat and SES Astra, who have worked to drive down bandwidth and user equipment costs. Eutelsat’s satellite KA-SAT is being switched on now with live demonstrations of 10 Mbps service in 7 European cities. It’s a wireless broadband infrastructure able to serve over 1 million households and the Mediterranean Basin. Speeds of up to 50 Mbps will also be possible for businesses.

Satellite operators are making long-term investments & broadband is anchored in our long-term strategy. For example, Eutelsat has:

- > Launched the world’s most powerful satellite (KA-SAT)
- > Built on-ground infrastructure of 10 gateways in European cities and fibre to connect to the Internet
- > Validated the user technology through a first-generation broadband service over last 3 years
- > Invested 350 million euros (into the KA-SAT programme)
- > Made a commitment for next 16 years

We believe it is possible to meet the EU objective of Broadband for All and valid technologies do exist but the process must be accelerated now. User access requires

terminals and public financing, especially in rural or under-populated areas, the required support or cost per user is very low. We must not miss the opportunity to channel financial support directly to the users who need them and not to homes passed who may not actually use the technologies.

To conclude, we at Eutelsat fully support the EU's commitment to investing in broadband for a Digital Single Market and we, alongside other satellite operators, continue to be creative in delivering new services. We now need EU Member States to be creative in helping connect their citizens to broadband Internet using all the possible solutions. Thank you."