

MANIFESTO FOR A MORE COMMITTED EUROPE TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF GNSS APPLICATIONS

2009 and 2010 are very important years for EU GNSS programmes with the official launch of the EGNOS Open service on 1st October 2009, the award of several contracts as regards Galileo's infrastructure, such as the production of 14 satellites of the constellation, and the first 2 IOV satellites to be launched by end 2010.

Many new applications related to positioning, navigation and timing may now effectively emerge and use this infrastructure: All transport modes, precision agriculture, environment protection, assistance to people on the move, to disabled and elderly citizens, synchronisation of complex networks are some examples of the very wide domain of applications concerned. The GNSS global market of products and services which was worth €124 bn in 2008 is expected to double by 2030¹.

Nonetheless, Europe's GNSS market share is currently rather low (20%) compared to its usual share in other high-technology sectors (33%)¹. There is thus an imminent risk that Europe's industry misses a huge opportunity to develop, unless a substantial public funded support program to foster innovation, development and new business opportunities is in place. Being the owner of the Galileo and EGNOS assets, the European Union has a great responsibility in facilitating the utilisation of this opportunity to the best for Europe and Europe's citizens.

Research is proven to be the most favourable way to stimulate innovation and to develop cutting-edge applications and user segment. It is the key to success for European industry in a competitive world. In some countries like the US, China, and Russia, public funding support is driven largely by military and strategic aspects. US public funded programs are estimated to reach between 200 M€ and 500 M€ per year¹. In Europe though, EU GNSS programmes are driven by civilian purposes only and effectively the EU budget now is of around 15 M€ a year for two years. After that, there is no allocated funding at all.

Such a tiny EU research budget will have huge consequences for EU industry in the short term. Neither will it allow for sufficient support of the SMEs which have been recognized as one of the main forces of innovation. Foreign industries benefiting from ample public funding, a strong R&D advantage and established market positions will overtake EU's market. Moreover, EU's effort to gain its independence as regards GNSS, by building its own infrastructure, will be pointless if it is dependent on foreign applications, receivers and devices.

The present context of the economic crisis also gives a strong incentive not to lose this opportunity to develop new industrial activities in Europe. Galileo applications have the potential of creating some tens of thousands of new jobs in Europe in the ten coming years.

The EU and its Member States are therefore urged to consider increasing dramatically GNSS applications research funding to give European industry, SMEs, and all the stakeholders, a chance to increase their level of uptake in the GNSS global market and to ensure EU's independence in a sector on which more than 6% of the whole EU GDP relies.

Until 2013, and in addition to the national efforts of the Member States of the Union, EU's GNSS applications and user segment R&D funding should be raised to at least 100 M€ a year from 2010 on. Further, the level of EU's R&D funding through FP8 should increase to match the US public R&D investment in order to provide the European GNSS downstream industry with the means to be and to remain competitive.

The signatories of this manifesto urge the European Commission, the European Council and the Member States of the European Union to take action and achieve this aim already from 2010 on. They urge the European Parliament to bring support to this initiative.

¹ EC estimates

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