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PRESS RELEASE

GSA Inaugurates New Prague Headquarters

Today the European GNSS* Agency (GSA) officially opened its new Headquarters Office in Prague. The ceremony, presided by Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the European Commission and Pavel Dobeš, Czech Minister of Transport, follows several years of coordinated efforts by the Czech government, the European Commission and the GSA to establish the official seat of the Agency - the future focal point of Galileo programme management - in the fourteenth largest city of the European Union.

'This inauguration marks an important new chapter for the EU GNSS Programmes,' said Carlo des Dorides, Executive Director of the GSA, 'opening the seat in Prague is the first achievement; the next challenge will be for the Agency to take over responsibility for EGNOS program management from Jan 2014 and Galileo from 2016.'

An important milestone

The opening of the GSA's head office in Prague is also a significant success for the Czech Republic, which has invested a great deal in the achievement of its goal of establishing the Czech capital as a key centre of gravity for space activities in Europe.

'The Czech Republic sees the space sector as a great opportunity for economic growth. I strongly believe that involvement of our state in space activities will help citizens to be more successful in the competitive international environment,' said Pavel Dobeš, Czech Minister of Transport. 'Today's ribbon-cutting ceremony is only the first step. Now, we have to aim on utilizing the huge economic, strategic and security potential of this sector in an effective way.'

The next phase for Galileo

Over the past 18 months, the EU has undertaken a thorough assessment of the EU GNSS Programmes in order to establish the best foundations for their future governance structure, which will be based on the proven expertise of the European Space Agency and the GSA. The governance structure will be outlined in a new EU GNSS Regulation that will confirm the vision outlined in the Lisbon Treaty, which gave increased competence to the European Union in the space domain.

"The transfer of the GSA to Prague is a key facet in the new governance scheme of Galileo and the important role the Agency will play as the programme manager of the European GNSS systems, said Sabine Dannelke, Chair of the GSA Administrative

* GNSS: Global Navigation Satellite Systems (in Europe this includes both the Galileo and EGNOS programmes)

Board, the Agency's governing body composed of representatives from EU Member States and the European Commission.

The GSA will now be charged with steering an essential paradigm shift for Galileo and EGNOS, moving the systems from a 'technology push' phase centred on development and deployment, to a 'user-oriented' phase focussed on providing valuable services.

'Our aim is to become an efficient organisation capable of mastering the complexities of a large scale operational space program, while effectively leveraging the decision making/regulatory context of a European machine driven by 27 Member States,' added des Dorides. 'It's a challenging task, but one in which I am confident the GSA is now well positioned to take on successfully.'

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