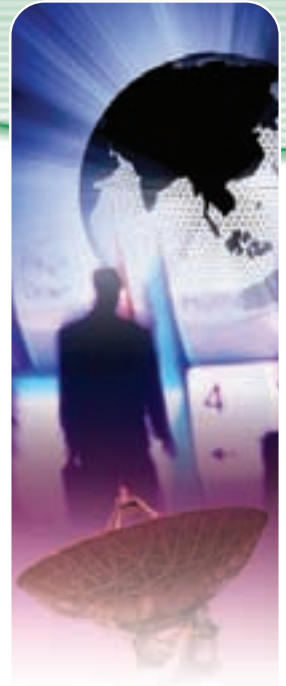


# A chance to grow



▶▶ **Good things come to those who wait**, the old saying goes. And good things seem to have finally come for Galileo, the satellite navigation system that is currently being developed by the European Space Agency (ESA) alongside the space industry of the Old Continent.

Just hours before going to press, *Satellite Evolution Asia (SEA)* received the news that the US Government and European Union (EU) have finally reached an agreement over Galileo, thus ending a four-year dispute that put considerable strain over transatlantic relations. In a joint-statement, the US Government and the European Commission (EC) stated that the two parties were 'able to reach agreement on most of the overall principles'. In a nutshell, the deal means that parts of the Galileo system will be compatible with Global Positioning System (GPS).

This latest development seems to suggest that real progress has been made in this area, and that we could finally be sitting at the edge of a new era for satellite-based navigation systems. As such, the news of the agreement should be welcome by the world's entire satellite community.

The problem for Galileo, as is well known, revolved around the issue of security. At present, a degraded GPS signal is available for free to civilian users such as commercial airliners, sea farers, car travellers and lone hikers. However, in case of conflict, the Pentagon has the possibility of switching the system off. But the development of Galileo threatened this ability. As reported by the *Financial Times*, the US did not want its future Military Code (M-Code) to overlay with Galileo's Public Regulated System (PRS), the system's most secure and precise signal. Had this happened, the Pentagon would have not been able to jam Galileo without jamming its own system. On this issue, the EU gave way by accepting the US-preferred signal.

As a counterpart, the US accepted not to restrict sales of the Galileo system in its market - some analysts feared that Galileo would gain an edge over GPS.

From a commercial point of view, the significance of the deal is in the fact that a regime of competition between the two systems has been avoided. It would have been a disaster for the development of a commercial market for location services if the two systems had resulted to be incompatible. And the 'poor relative' of satellite applications would have never taken off the ground. Now Europe's satellite navigation signals will become available alongside 'rival' GPS, and customers will be able to choose between non-exclusive systems, ie, without the need to restrict themselves to a single family of products and services. As a result, satellite navigation is likely to see more investments like the 200 million Euros China pledged to Galileo last year. Countries such as India and Russia have already expressed interest in Galileo, and, hopefully, the satellite navigation industry will finally thrive. ■

*The team at SEA and at DS Air Publications Ltd wishes to express its deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the personnel of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) who died in the fire at the Sriharikota space centre.* ■

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*Some applications of Galileo's signals. Photo courtesy of EADS-Astrium.*