

Fucino, 20 December 2010

Galileo Control Centre Inaugurated in Fucino

Telespazio (a Finmeccanica/Thales company) plays leading role in managing the European satellite navigation system

The Control Centre, which will manage the 30 satellites and operational assets of Galileo, Europe's satellite navigation and positioning system, was opened today by Antonio Tajani, Vice President of the European Commission. The Control Centre was built by Telespazio, a Finmeccanica/Thales company, at the Fucino Space Centre near L'Aquila (Italy).

The ceremony was attended by Gianni Letta, Undersecretary of State, Giovanni Chiodi, President of the Abruzzo Region, Jean-Jacques Dordain, Director General of the European Space Agency, Enrico Saggese, President of the Italian Space Agency, Johann-Dietrich Woerner, Executive Chairman of the German Aerospace Centre, Pier Francesco Guarguaglini, Chairman and CEO of Finmeccanica, Carlo Gualdaroni, Chief Executive of Telespazio, and Francesco D'Amore, Chief Executive of Spaceopal.

The Galileo Control Centre (GCC), part-financed by the Abruzzo region, covers an area of more than 5,000 m², and once fully operational, will host more than 100 specialist operators and engineers. The GCC will handle the transmission of the navigation signal to the Galileo satellites, guaranteeing the quality of service provided to end users. From the main control room, it will be possible to control the orbit of all the satellites in the constellation and operate and manage a network of about 40 ground stations spread across the globe.

Following today's inauguration of the new infrastructure, Telespazio - which already controls, from the Fucino Space Centre, the in-orbit operation of GIOVE-B, the second test satellite of the Galileo programme launched in 2008 - will play a full and leading role in Europe's largest space programme, which has strategic significance for the entire continent.

The operations of the Galileo Control Centre at Fucino – and those of a second centre built by the German Aerospace Centre in Oberpfaffenhofen in Germany – will be managed by Spaceopal, a joint venture between Telespazio and DLR-GfR, the company set up by the German Aerospace Centre. Spaceopal was awarded the EUR 194 million contract by the European Space Agency to manage the operations leading to full operational capacity of the Galileo system on 25 October.

Spaceopal will be responsible for supplying in-orbit test (IOT) services, the operational and logistics services necessary to manage and control the Galileo satellite constellation and mission, and services for the launch and early orbit phase (LEOP). All these activities will be carried out from the initial in-orbit validation (IOV) phase with the first four operational satellites until the system reaches its full operational capability.

Telespazio, a joint venture between Finmeccanica (67%) and Thales (33%), is one of the world's leading operators in satellite management services, Earth observation and satellite navigation, as well as in the field of integrated communications and scientific programmes. Telespazio plays a leading role in the reference markets harnessing technological experience acquired over the years and through its participation in major European space programmes such as: Galileo, EGNOS, GMES and COSMO-SkyMed. The company in 2009 generated sales of EUR 372 million, and employed around 2,000 staff.

The Galileo programme is Europe's initiative for a state-of-the-art global satellite navigation system. It is jointly developed by the European Union and the European Space Agency. The European Commission has the role of Programme Manager. The European Space Agency has the role of procurement agent established under a delegation agreement with the European Commission. Galileo should provide 3 initial services as of 2014: an initial Open Service, an initial Search and Rescue Service and an initial Public Regulated Service. The Safety-of-Life Service and the Commercial Service will be tested as of 2014 and provided as the system reaches full operational capability with 30 satellites. A wide range of applications for various sectors will be based on Galileo. These include road, air, rail and sea transport, precision agriculture, telecommunications, Earth mapping and cartography, gas/oil exploration and mining.