

# Europe Wants To Speed Up Galileo GPS Program

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Former European commissioner Karel Van Miert has been appointed mediator to accelerate Galileo, Europe 's satellite navigation program, said the European Commission on Tuesday.

Van Miert's mission will be to act as mediator between European Union (EU) member states and industry in order to facilitate decisions on the Galileo program, said the commission, the EU's executive body, in a press release.

"Over the past few weeks, some decisions at industrial level have been delayed for various reasons, partly because of the complexity of the industrial organization," it said.

Jacques Barrot, vice president of the European Commission in charge of transport, who made the appointment, asked for support to Van Miert.

"Galileo is a project that only a united Europe can accomplish. A divided Europe can only endanger the success of the project," said the press release.

"We want to see urgent progress, because teams of experts from the industry have been brought together and a truly European stock of scientific, economic and financial expertise on satellite navigation has emerged. These teams now have to get down to work in order to prepare the launching of the first four satellites of the Galileo constellation."

Galileo runs in three stages -- development, deployment and exploitation. By the end of the development phase (2003-2008), the first four of a total of 30 operational satellites should be launched. Two experimental satellites will be launched in 2006.

Costs for the development and deployment phases are estimated at 1.5 billion euros (1.8 billion US dollars) and 2.1 billion euros (2.5 billion dollars) respectively.

Source: Xinhua News Agency

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