

EU invests millions in 'ultra high-speed' mobile internet

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A girl reads an online news portal on her mobile phone. The European Union on Tuesday announced an 18 million euro (25 million dollar) investment in an "ultra high-speed" internet system to underpin the next generation of mobile services.

The European Union announced Tuesday an 18 million euro (25 million dollar) investment in an "ultra high-speed" internet system to underpin the next generation of mobile services.

"Europe's research know-how will continue to set the tone for the development of mobile services and devices around the globe, just as we did in the past decades with the GSM standard," promised EU Telecoms Commissioner Viviane Reding.

The funding will be released on January 1 next year for research on what is known as Long Term Evolution (LTE) Advanced technology, the high end of the fourth generation of mobile technology which should offer

users "[mobile internet](#) speeds up to a hundred times faster than current 3G networks," according to the European Commission.

The new LTE technology, not the advanced version which the EU will fund, is currently being trialled by mobile operators in Finland, Germany, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Britain and is expected to be commercially available in Sweden and Norway in the first half of next year.

That will provide mobile internet speeds of up to 100 megabits per second, 10 times faster than the 3G mobile networks.

"LTE technologies will turn mobile phones into powerful mobile computers. Millions of new users will get ultra high-speed [internet](#) access on their portable devices, wherever they are," Reding enthused.

LTE Advanced promises lower prices and mobile broadband speeds up to one gigabit (thousand megabits) per second.

This would allow excellent mobile access to televisions and video-on-demand systems for example.

Between 2004 and 2007, the EU gave 25 million euros to LTE development, leading to the first blueprint for an LTE-based network infrastructure.

The 18 million euros will go to the enhanced version, LTE Advanced.

Next month the commission will open negotiations on the details with project consortia, including the flagship ARTIST4G which united 4G industry and researchers from Britain, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The new projects are expected to begin in January.

LTE uses radio spectrum more efficiently, enabling mobile networks to benefit from the "digital dividend" and use frequencies freed by the switchover from analogue to digital TV.

Overall, from 2007-2013 the EU will invest more than 700 million euros on researching future networks.

Leading mobile operators and manufacturers around the world such as Orange, T-Mobile, Ericsson, and Nokia have already committed to using the LTE standard. By 2013, operators worldwide are expected to invest nearly six billion euros in LTE equipment, according to market analysts.

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