

# Europe defends 'stupid' Galileo satellite

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A computer-generated image shows three satellites, part of the European Galileo navigation system network, in 2002. Europe stood by its much-delayed and over-budget Galileo satellite navigation system on Tuesday despite a rising price tag and a contractor's description of the project as "stupid."

Europe stood by its much-delayed and over-budget Galileo satellite navigation system on Tuesday despite a rising price tag and a contractor's [description of the project](#) as "stupid."

Previously estimated to cost 3.4 billion euros, the [European Commission](#) said an extra 1.9 billion euros was needed to complete the constellation of satellites, raising its price tag to 5.4 billion euros (\$7.2 billion).

Aimed at rivaling the US-built [Global Positioning System](#) (GPS) and Chinese and Russian projects, the system needs more cash due to the higher costs of the development phase and satellite launchers, the

commission said.

"We need to bear in mind that Russia is engaged in deploying its global system and China is continuing to increase its own systems too. Japan and India are also entering the scene," Tajani said.

"That means Europeans cannot lag behind," he told a news conference at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

Galileo is scheduled to go online in 2014 -- six years later than originally planned -- with an initial constellation of 18 satellites. The first two satellites will be launched in the third quarter of this year.

But the commission said in a policy paper that 3.4 billion euros was "not enough to complete the infrastructure."

An extra 1.9 billion euros is needed to launch the remaining 12 satellites by 2020 and offer the full services promised by the project.

In addition, the commission said the operating costs for Galileo and a sister system called EGNOS will amount to 800 million euros a year.

Europe wants to end its dependence on the US GPS system in a market the commission said would grow from 130 billion euros in 2010 to 240 billion euros in 2020.

"The Galileo project is going ahead, the commission has decided on this," Tajani said.

"It will improve the lives of citizens in sectors such as transport, agriculture, energy and combatting illegal immigration," he added.

A row erupted over the system after the whistleblower website

WikiLeaks published a US diplomatic cable quoting scathing criticism from the head of German firm OHB Technology, which was awarded a 566-million-euro to develop 14 Galileo satellites.

According to an October 2009 cable from the US embassy in Berlin, OHB Technology chief Berry Smutny said: "I think Galileo is a stupid idea that primarily serves French interests."

He went on to say that Galileo was "a waste of EU taxpayers' money championed by French interests," according to the cable.

The company announced Tuesday that it had suspended Smutny, who has denied making the comments.

Tajani dismissed the WikiLeaks report, saying he had met Smutny before the leak and that he had stated that he believed in Galileo. The company has since committed "wholeheartedly to delivering the Galileo system," Tajani said.

"WikiLeaks isn't the gospel," Tajani said.

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