PRESS RELEASE

New Alliance of Operators calls for the acceleration of fibre deployment in Europe

European Local Fibre Alliance (ELFA) showcases at FttH Council Conference

Warsaw, 11 February 2015. Today the European Local Fibre Alliance (ELFA) was launched at the FTTH Conference 2015 in Warsaw. ELFA is a new, shared voice of alternative public and private local fibre operators calling for a more ambitious European Digital Agenda and the acceleration of fibre deployment in Europe to power ultrafast broadband to citizens and businesses.

ELFA has launched with ten member associations from eight EU-countries. It has evidence from these members that competition is an absolute necessity for higher investments in European fibre networks and provides the greatest benefits for European citizens and businesses. ELFA's vision is to create sustainable all-fibre based infrastructures in both urban and rural areas across Europe.

From megabits to gigabits

ELFA supports the Digital Agenda for Europe 2020 (DAE2020) launched in 2010 – a vision for a digital economy that delivers sustainable economic and social benefits on modern online services and fast internet connection.

ELFA also supports the objectives in DAE2020 for broadband speeds and coverage; basic broadband to all Europeans, and ensure that, by 2020, all Europeans have access to much higher internet speeds of above 30 Mbps and 50% or more of Union households subscribe to internet connections above 100 Mbps.

However, as Pere Alemany from ELFA member Spanish Optixcat says: "the growth in IP traffic in the past years has been exponential and the expected growth in the next decade will continue this trend through real time applications etc. IP demand has outdated the ambitions set up in DAE 2020."

Proposals for the European Union

ELFA is making the following proposals to help the European Union to keep up with global competition in the ICT-arena:

- **By 2025** at least **50 percent** of European households and businesses should have access to broadband infrastructure capable of at least **1 Gbps downstream and 500 Mbps upstream**
- **All European households** and businesses should **by 2025** have access to broadband infrastructure capable of at least **100 Mbps downstream and 50 Mbps upstream**
- The European Union should bring its **current broadband definition** of 144 kbps in line with the US broadband definition of **25/3 Mbps** to reflect consumer demand and the steep increase in bandwidth-intensive applications

ELFA believes that revisiting these targets and the broadband definition will send an important message to Member States and industry to encourage rollout of ultra-fast speed networks and take-up of next-generation applications and services.

Different technologies for digital infrastructure

Christian Berg from ELFA member Dansk Energi, said; "The broadband evolution has only existed for 20 years, but we have already witnessed many phases; from dial-up to ISDN, ADSL, VDSL, 3G, 4G and FTTH. The same futile question is asked each and every time- "do we really need more?" and history has always proven that it is. Nevertheless, there is still a great deal of debate and confusion in Europe on the potential bandwidth and lifespan of the different fixed broadband technologies. Further, the principle of technology neutrality in broadband policy and the application of public subsidy, making all technologies equally valid, does not make it easier."

New technologies on copper telephone lines, e.g. vectoring, G.fast (FTTC), can deliver high (download) speeds depending on the length and quality of copper lines- but speeds drop off dramatically after a few hundred metres. New DOCSIS standards on coaxial copper lines can also deliver higher (download) speeds- but bandwidth is shared among many users and connection speed may drop significantly below advertised "up to" speeds.

FTTC, which depends on using the existing copper infrastructure should therefore only be considered as a useful bridge to a full fibre infrastructure, even in countries with a high share in unbundled copper lines (e.g. Germany, Italy, UK).

All-fibre networks can deliver download and upload speeds up to 1 Gbps – or even higher (ultra-fast broadband), making the technology future proof. Fibre is a largely distance-independent technology, making it more cost-effective the further it goes and suitable for overcoming the digital-divide, including hard-to-reach rural areas.

An all-fibre network also enables symmetrical connections (the same speed for upload as for download), which are essential for next generation services such as cloud computing, video presence, eHealth and e-education applications.

Time to act now

David Cullen from ELFA member INCA concluded: "Similar to the steam engine and industrial revolution, ELFA believes all-fibre networks to be the principle enabler of innovation and next generation applications and services, including cloud computing, 4K, video presence, and even as the foundation of future high-speed mobile and Wi-Fi networks. Regardless of the time horizon, we believe that every future Euro invested in fixed broadband networks should be allocated only to all-fibre deployments. The time to invest is now and the risks of inaction are too high for Europe."

We trust that the above is constructive and look forward to taking part in the discussion on how to deploy gigabit networks transforming Europe into a leading global digital economy.

Background Notes for Editors: About ELFA

ELFA officially launched on the 11th February 2015 as a European-wide Alliance of associations representing alternative public and private local fibre operators. Its membership already consists of:

- From Denmark, Dansk Energi
- the Estonian Broadband Development Foundation (ELA)
- the Finnish Regional Networks Assocation
- French Federation des Industriels des Réseaux d'initiative publique (FiRiP)
- French Federation nationale des collectivités concédantes et régies (FNCCR),
- German Bundesverband Breitbankkommunikation (BREKO)
- German Bundesverband Glasfaseranschluss (BUGLAS)
- Spanish Optixcat
- the Swedish Urban Network Association (SSnF)
- and the UK Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA).

It has interest from associations in other EU member states and anticipates rapid growth in membership.

ELFA's vision is to create sustainable fibre based infrastructures in both urban and rural areas across Europe. Its Members are committed to the use of these infrastructures for the economic and social development of communities for the benefit of European citizens and businesses. They support open access business models and technology neutral access networks.

For further information, contact:

Mikael Ek of the Swedish Urban Network Association (SSnF) on

Mikael.Ek@ssnf.org