Start-up of residential services offer

FastWeb expansion in Rome: historic centre and main residential areas to be cabled during 2001

TOTAL INVESTMENTS OF APPROXIMATELY 600 BILLION LIRE

Rome, 19 July 2001 – FastWeb, the company of the e.Biscom Group (e.Biscom S.p.A., Milan, *Nuovo Mercato*: EBI) that provides integrated telecommunications services on its own fibre optic network, announced the launch of fixed-telephone, high-speed Internet and TV on-demand services for residential users in Rome. The company began the commercial offer of its service for Rome's business users in June.

FastWeb is the only company to offer state-of-the-art broadband services for both business and residential users. The services announced today extend its operations to Italy's capital, the key city in FastWeb's cabling plans for central and southern Italy as part of its programme to gradually cover the entire national territory.

Home to the Italian State's main political, administrative and cultural institutions and a city that has always been attentive to the need for technological innovation, Rome is poised to become one of Europe's most advanced cities in the use of new-generation telecommunications deploying fibre optics, broadband communication systems and Internet Video. Resources that will have a huge social and economic impact, given the impressive volume of low-cost business ties they foster, and an invaluable tool in accelerating the convergence between transmission infrastructures and the media.

Network expansion. The extension of the offer to the residential market is the result of rapid progress on FastWeb's project for the cabling of the city and activation of telecommunications switching centres. In the first six months since work commenced, FastWeb has already laid 150 Km of network infrastructures and will complete more than 280 Km by the end of 2001, to reach for a complete network of 1.000 Km, well ahead of the original estimates laid out in the agreement signed with Rome city council.

Pneumatic post circuits to cable historic centre. To accelerate penetration of the Roman market, in December 2000 FastWeb placed a winning 18.3 million lire bid with the Italian Post Office for the rights to the pneumatic post system, 35 Km of unutilised circuits. The network covers Rome's historic centre, enabling FastWeb to overcome the architectural constraints limiting excavation work. It links institutions and government offices – the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Chamber of Deputies, the Senate, the Quirinale (official home of the President of the Republic), Ministries, Rome City Council, the Vatican City, Embassies – schools, universities and research bodies, hospitals, banks, insurance companies and many of Italy's leading industrial groups, covering the city's main business districts, including via del

Corso, v.le Trastevere, via Cola di Rienzo, P.zza Mazzini, via Veneto, P.zza Vittorio, P.zza San Giovanni, Stazione Termini, L.go di Torre Argentina, via Ottaviano, P.zza del Popolo.

In July, the company began marketing its residential services in the south Rome Torrino district. Throughout the rest of the year, services will be extended to the Prati, Trieste, Bologna and San Giovanni districts. These will be immediately followed by the residential areas of the historic centre: Parioli, Monteverde, Marconi and Gregorio VII, in line with the company's strategy of giving priority to the most densely populated districts.

In the meantime, like their counterparts in Genoa, Turin and Milan, Rome residents for whom fibre access is not yet available will be able to use FastWeb's innovative fixed-telephony and high-speed Internet services, prior to receiving the TV on-demand service.

Investment plan. The FastWeb project for Rome involves total investments of 600 billion lire, of which 185 in 2001.

The outlay is part of FastWeb's national plan to deploy its IP network in Italy's main cities, permitting simultaneous connection of all devices in homes, offices and businesses.

Job creation. The Rome network expansion plan provides not only for the direct creation of jobs, but also for approximately 700 new jobs in other fields in 2001, including 500 in plant engineering, civil building and telecommunications services marketing fields and 200 in materials provisioning.

Agreement with the library sites. With marketing of FastWeb's business services launched in June and a number of contracts already signed (for example with the library authority Biblioteche di Roma, for broadband integrated services to be available for employees and users in the city libraries), now Rome residents – like families in Genoa, Turin and Milan – will be able to enjoy a real alternative to the traditional services provided by copper cabling.

The high-speed FastWeb network enables implementation of new-generation Internet – Internet Video – combining digital video and audio with text and traditional images.

The residential offer includes a traditional telephone service, plus always-on Internet access – keeping the telephone line free – and TV on-demand.

TV on-demand is in fact the key innovation of the FastWeb residential offer. With this service, for the first time families can watch programs when they wish, without having to follow the broadcasting schedules of the traditional channels.

Via a special device complete with keyboard and infrared remote control, the TV set is linked directly to the network, where subscribers are offered a wide variety of programs (films, sports, music videos, news, etc.) to be viewed at the time that suits them best, creating a virtual video rental system.

FastWeb customers are offered a constantly growing choice of content, transmitted by the e.BisMedia channel (with the IlNuovoTG news program, box-office hits from the Universal film

studio, Discovery Channel documentaries), Rai Click (an e.Biscom/Rai joint venture for on-demand viewing of 10,000 hours of video archive material and Rai broadcasts from the previous 7 days) and Stream channels, available for the first time without requiring installation of a satellite dish.

The FastWeb business offer consists of advanced flexible broadband services for various types of organisations: small offices and retailers, small and medium businesses and large corporations. The potential of fibre optics and IP technology makes for advanced, modular affordable services. FastWeb offers business users a package of broadband telecommunications services – fixed-line telephony, high-speed Internet access and data transmission – for a fixed monthly fee, together with a series of innovative Internet consultancy services with turnkey packages that are viable only on broadband: web sites, applications, bandwidth on demand, virtual private networks, web hosting and web housing, audio-videostreaming, video conferencing, advanced e.commerce systems, tele-surveillance systems.

FastWeb services are available in Rome, Turin, Genoa and Milan. Cabling projects are underway in Naples, Grosseto, Reggio Emilia and the Milan hinterland.

For more information

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