Telephony, high-speed Internet, TV on-demand and "VideoRec"

FastWeb in Bologna: investments totalling approximately 130 million Euro and 500 km of network

Roll-out will provide access for around 250,000 homes

Bologna, 17 July 2002 – With 500 km of fibre optic network and investments totalling approximately 130 million Euro, FastWeb intends to provide users throughout the Bologna metropolitan area with access to the leading-edge telecommunications services already available to more than 100,000 customers in other major Italian cities, including Milan, Rome, Genoa, Naples and Turin. Part of the e.Biscom Group (e.Biscom S.p.A., Milan, Nuovo Mercato: EBI) FastWeb offers broadband telecommunications services over a proprietary fibre optic network infrastructure and has already been operating in Bologna for several months. Today it is presenting its plans to bring high-speed Internet, fixed telephony, interactive TV and its latest service, "VideoRec" (a TV recording service without a video recorder, which can be programmed via the Internet) to approximately 250,000 households. The FastWeb offer for businesses, offices and public administration includes video surveillance systems, virtual private networks to link remote sites, e-learning systems and teleworking systems.

Always receptive to innovation, Bologna now joins the list of major Italian cities equipped with the state-of-the-art technological infrastructures that are revolutionising traditional residential and business communications. In Bologna, too, FastWeb intends to create a hi-tech centre that will attract investment, create new jobs and deliver significant improvements in local standards of living.

Network development in Bologna and the advantages of "Socrate". FastWeb's development plans in Bologna, where the company began operating in January 2002, provide for the roll-out of approximately 500 km of fibre optic network infrastructure throughout the metropolitan area and to part of the outlying area. The speed of the roll-out – which will make the network available to much of the city by the end of the year – is guaranteed by access to the cable ducts built under the "Socrate" plan launched in the mid-1990s to introduce cable TV into Italy, and subsequently abandoned. Thanks to the Socrate network, which covers 65% of the metropolitan area and was unused until a few months ago, FastWeb will be able to speed up its service roll-out and achieve a significant reduction in the risks associated with excavation work, keeping disruption to the public to a minimum.

The districts involved and territorial coverage. The first areas to receive access to the FastWeb network are the city centre, the districts around the city walls from Porta Maggiore to Porta S. Felice (via Stazione Centrale) and the Bolognina; the roll-out will then gradually extend to the entire metropolitan area. Among Bologna's outlying districts, it will cover the municipalities of San Lazzaro di Savena and Casalecchio di Reno.

In the meantime, residents in Bologna – like their counterparts in Milan, Rome, Naples, Genoa and Turin – who do not yet have access to the fibre network will be able to use FastWeb's innovative fixed telephone and Mega Internet services with DSL technology, which supports access speeds of up to 1.28 Mbit/sec, far faster than the other offers currently on the market.

The FastWeb network will reach 250,000 households in Bologna and outlying districts, of which 110,000 with fibre links and 140,000 with DSL technology.

Investment plan and allied business. Investments totalling approximately 130 million Euro are planned to finance development of the Bologna metropolitan area and outlying districts, as part of the FastWeb development plan covering Italy's main cities. Directly and indirectly, expansion of the network will provide work for about 350 people by the end of 2002.

FastWeb broadband services for business and residential customers. FastWeb offers innovative broadband telecommunications services on a proprietary fibre optic network, as a complete alternative to the network of the former monopoly operator. The FastWeb infrastructure implements Internet Protocol technology (IP), for integration of a full range of transmission services on a single line: voice, data, Internet and video. In addition to fixed telephone services, which are available without having to retain previous subscriptions to other providers, the FastWeb network supports round-the-clock Internet access at speeds of up to 10 Mbit/sec and carries digital video and audio, while keeping telephone lines free. FastWeb is also the first to provide residential users with a TV on-demand service, for interactive use of television independently of broadcasters' programming schedules.

The **Video on-demand** service is available on the same network used for the fixed telephone service and Internet access. The content library, which is updated continually, currently offers more than 2,000 titles – films, plays, cartoons, sport, documentaries and music videos – thanks to the agreements reached by e.BisMedia, the e.Biscom Group's content provider, with Universal, Dreamworks, Discovery Channel, MTV, BIM, Mikado, United Features Syndicates, the BBC and the RAI, for on-demand viewing of programmes broadcast by public TV channels during the previous week, archive material and the latest TV news bulletin. The TV on-demand service also offers access to the pay and pay-per-view theme channels of **Stream** and **Tele+** without the need for a satellite dish and digital decoder. FastWeb's innovative services also include the recently launched "**VideoRec**" facility, which enables TV programmes broadcast by the main national channels to be recorded without videotapes or a video recorder. Recording can be programmed from the TV set or from a PC with Internet access, for example from an office PC. Worldwide, FastWeb is the only operator able to offer its subscribers such a technologically advanced service. FastWeb also supports Wireless-Fidelity (**Wi-Fi**) access to high-speed Internet, allowing the user to surf the net from anywhere in the home without cabling.

In the **business** category, FastWeb addresses small, medium and large enterprises with offers geared to their specific needs. Its most popular services are video surveillance systems for shops, the "One Solution" system giving SMBs unified management of fixed telephony, Internet access and hardware, disaster recovery systems for large and medium enterprises, virtual private networks over IP for links between remote sites and the "Business to Employee" (B2E) solution, which allows employees to work from home via a 10 Mbit/sec link to the corporate LAN.

Applications of public utility. Broadband offers endless opportunities for applications of public utility. FastWeb technology can be used for remote links between public authorities, institutions, schools and hospitals, to allow significant improvements in the quality of public services as well as greater cost-effectiveness. Applications include: teleworking, e-learning, distance learning, urban mobility services (integrated traffic monitoring, control and automation, remote control of public transport networks, etc.).

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