



HSDPA Launch to Accelerate in 2006

The path to mobile broadband with HSDPA (High Speed Downlink Packet Access) is gaining momentum. **O2** was the first UK operator to announce the launch of commercial HSDPA network in October 2005. Following the same footsteps, Mobilkom Austria, the wireless subsidiary of **Telekom Austria** Group will introduce the first HSDPA network in Austria by the end of January 2006. It began the sales of its HSDPA data cards on January 23rd, 2006.

Swisscom Mobile and 3 Italia are the latest European operators to announce the rollout of HSDPA services. Both firms will use technology provided by Ericsson to upgrade their current 3G WCDMA networks. Swisscom is hoping that its network will cover around 20% of Switzerland's population, by mid-2006. The firm is banking on HSDPA services appealing to business travelers, since they will initially be available only for laptop users. It has also announced collaborations with computer manufacturers Acer and Fujitsu Siemens Computers, who are due to start producing laptops with integrated SIM cards.

3 Italia's HSDPA rollout will begin in Rome on 1 March before extending to Milan and 1,500 other towns and cities by the end of the year. The firm, owned by Hutchison Whampoa, will also begin by offering a PC data card. Telecom Italia Mobile (TIM) has already announced plans to launch HSDPA services in May 2006. Italy currently has one of Europe's most developed 3G markets and BMI figures predict that users will top 10mn by the end of 2006.

Germany's T-Mobile also has plans of launching HSDPA by mid-2006. Speeds of 1.8Mbps will be available at the launch, which will then be increased to between 3.6Mbps and 7.2Mbps. T-Mobile will not offer customers an HSDPA-branded service but rather automatically connect them where service is available. Initially, users will only be able to connect to the network using an HSDPA card inserted in their notebooks, according to Ulli Gritzuhn, chief marketing director at T-Mobile. They will "have to wait most likely until the third quarter" for mobile handsets based on the higher-speed 3G (third-generation) technology, he said.

In Spain, **Telefonica and Amena** have also signalled their intention to start offering HSDPA services. Belgium's **Mobistar** has said that it plans to launch HSDPA services in Q1 2006.

South Africa's second-ranked mobile operator **MTN Group** has announced that it is on target to deliver commercial HSDPA services to its users during 2006. The operator launched 3G services

in June 2005, has now identified pilot sites for the roll out of its HSDPA services, with Gauteng, where MTN's headquarters are based, being seen as a key market. Furthermore, the operator has said that work regarding the acquisition process for the sites and the award of infrastructure contracts has already commenced. Moreover, MTN has begun selling its Sierra Wireless AC850 datacards and a variety of other quad cards required for use of its HSDPA services, ahead of launch.

Vodafone will launch HSDPA products in Ireland before the end of the year. Teresa Elder, the chief executive officer of Vodafone Ireland said that the introduction of HSDPA in the Irish market would quadruple existing 3G data speeds from 384kbps to 1.2Mbps and ensure nationwide wireless broadband availability.

Looking at the rapid growth of HSDPA, the UMTS Forum forecasts that there will be almost one billion active users of High Speed Packet Access (HSPA) networks by 2012. HSPA will significantly stimulate data ARPUs, generating 56bn in annual revenues for mobile operators by 2012. 3G HSPA subscribers will be generating average traffic per user seven to nine times that of non-HSPA 3G subscribers as a result of higher quality user experience and lower tariffs.

Source: Business Monitor International & UMTS Forum