

Results of the Satellite broadband for schools study

The European Commission has published a study on the satellite-based broadband services in schools. The study concludes that the satellite broadband could be an efficient option for poorly connected schools. It also suggests that a voucher scheme could be used as a tool to close the broadband gap for schools.

Digital learning is gaining ground but without broadband access in schools its vast potential is left unexplored. Schools in rural areas, not covered by fixed or mobile broadband, are especially disadvantaged. These schools and local authorities are not familiar with the available options for broadband services, there is a limited number of dedicated, large national institutional support programmes, and there is lack of knowledge of possible funding options, including voucher schemes.

In order to close the gap, this study identified satellite-based broadband services as an efficient option for poorly connected schools.

Even though satellite-based broadband may have some limitations compared to fibre-based broadband on the maximum speed and on data allowance, it has some inherent advantages:

- predictable and stable quality of service everywhere, regardless of geographic location
- simple and quick deployment of satellite broadband at the customer premises
- favourable deployment costs
- high reliability and security

An efficient solution is vouchers: public grants to an eligible school to stimulate demand for priority services. A basic voucher scheme for satellite-based broadband should cover fixed fee for terminal equipment and installation and recurring monthly fee for a limited period (e.g. 24 months) in order to kick off the actual use. Satellite voucher schemes can provide a simpler, quicker and more competitive process compared to traditional purchasing. Case studies show that a voucher scheme should be programmed for a limited period of time and be renewed several times: a short window of subsidy creates an incentive for schools to really use the voucher.

For details of the study, check out the Final Report. The findings will feed into discussions within the Commission.

See also:

-announcement of the call for tenders

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