Certified WiMAX deployed in Croatia

Taking WiMAX for a test drive in Cakovec, Croatia

Certified WiMAX products have made their European debut in the Croatian city of Cakovec.

Hrvatske Telekomunikacije (HT) deployed Redline WiMAX Forum certified RedMAX base stations with the support of Micro-Link to provide fast internet, video and VoIP for customers in the region.

HT intends to offer triple play services but was previously hindered by the limited copper and optical infrastructure in the area. Using WiMAX, the company bypassed the need to spend money on expensive cabling and saved time by not having to physically lay cables underground.

The system will form part of a larger broadband wireless access network once the IEEE 802.16e standard has been finalised. Working towards this, Redline's next generation of WiMAX equipment will include solutions based on the IEEE 802.16e standard. It will also support

mobility in WiMAX networks, says the vendor.

Jure Brkljacic, HT's Head of Section for Account Networks and BB access nodes, says that deployment of the network across Croatia was being

carried out in accordance with the technical requirements put forward by the Croatian regulator.

During configuration of the system, Micro-Link engineers conducted successful drive tests

and radio coverage measurements to 'further assure performance'. The systems integrator reported positive results from the network, especially in non line-of-sight communications near the city centre.

Redline Communications received the WiMAX Forum Certified mark for its RedMAX Base Station (AN-100U) in mid-January. The company says that its WiMAX-certified products have already been chosen by more than fifteen carriers for trials and nationwide deployments in several international markets.

At the time of the certification announcement, Ron Resnick, President of the WiMAX Forum, said he believed that more robust fixed WiMAX systems would come to market soon, and emphasised the rigorous conformance and interoperability testing that WiMAX Forum certified products go through. ∎

SMBs are 66 per cent of CEE IT

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) account for nearly two-thirds of IT spending in central and eastern Europe (CEE). But educating and counselling the sector's users will be a fact of life for ventures going forward.

Those are the key findings of a study by market-watchers IDC. *Central and Eastern European Opportunities in the SMB Market* says that although SMBs employ about two-thirds of the total workforce in CEE and account for a vast majority of businesses, many still suffer from commercial backwardness, little horizontal organisation through associations and partnerships, and a lack of modern business tools.

"Education is vital to helping small and medium-sized businesses step fully into the information age," says Roman Maceska, a research director at IDC. "As a result, vendors are going to be essential in leading the spread of IT rather than letting businesses adopt it at their own pace. They must also act as impromptu teachers and even counsellors, helping SMBs understand the importance of IT in doing business." ∎

SIM authentication service set to debut

Orange Romania plans to launch a two-factor SIM authentication package to enable subscriber access to third party offerings.

The service, a partnership between the operator, smart-card provider Sagem Orga and software provider Simartis, will use the first release of the latter's *SIM Signature* application.

Simartis' product, which premiered at December's GSM Americas Congress, will be hosted by a 128k SIM card provided by Sagem Orga. The service gives subscribers the ability to use their mobile

number to authenticate themselves and to sign incoming signatures requested by third parties. Central to the software provider's future plans are links between its product and a payment processor.

"This is a first step. Once we have feedback on the adoption of this tool, we will extend the range of usage and also use a more advanced version of *SIM Signature*," explains Bogdan Ciubotaru, of Orange Romania."We see the high potential of this type of service and our intention is to promote

this method so it can cover various domains of activity.

Lucian Ungurean, Simartis' VP adds: We see every SIM card in the world as a strategic asset for networks and our goal is to stimulate operators to realise that. Although we've started with a lighter version at Orange Romania, the solution has the potential to evolve into a fully professional authentication tool, to be used to sign and to require authentication for bank transactions, intranet authentications, payments and various services subscriptions." ∎

Bulgarian WiMAX licence awarded

The Bulgarian regulator has awarded a WiMAX license to Cablenet.

The company, which will trade under the brand name Max Telecom, plans to focus initially on the provision of fixed wireless broadband for domestic and business customers. It claims that a combination of low overhead costs, a small team, and value for money equipment will mean that it will be able to substantially undercut present fixed network access fees and line rental charges.

In addition to 'supporting

existing businesses at lower prices' the company also aims to develop as a telecommunications operator in its own right. It sees the Bulgarian market as being ready for the consolidation of a lot of the smaller operators into entities that have economies of scale. A WiMAX licensed company, it claims, is in an ideal position to act as a consolidator, and it says it will be 'looking hard' at ways of assuming that role.

The company has already completed the first round of its equipment tender process and is

now selecting a shortlist from 10 suppliers.

John Munnery, Max Telecom's newly appointed Executive Director comments: "Finally, we can introduce to the Bulgarian telecommunications market the sort of competition which is now driving tariffs downwards all over Europe. We will bring to the Bulgarian market a new dimension in fast data access, whether it is in replacing expensive links, or allowing a cheap upgrade for dial-up internet customers to broadband." ∎