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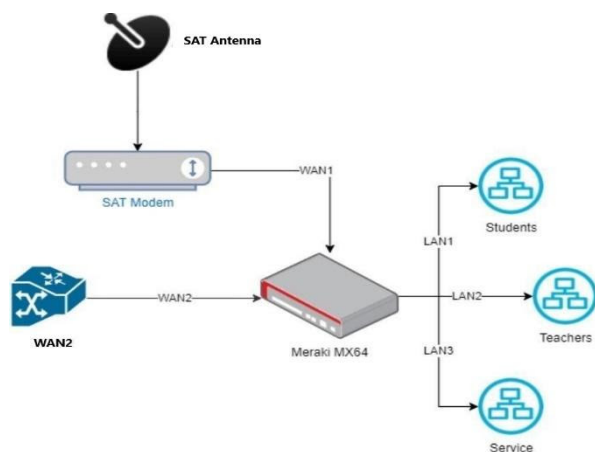
SAT4EDU Satellite Broadband Internet Access for Unconnected Schools

Information for the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions

Despite extensive efforts in the application of Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband access for all – meaning citizens, entrepreneurs, public administration, and educational institutions – in the EU, there are still so called *white areas*, where no provider of broadband access services currently operates and no such services are expected within the near future. Formally, investors in such areas may obtain public support if no NGA access is expected within a three year period, but in many cases these areas remain without high speed access due to the sparse density of housing, and demographic or geographic factors (e.g., small islands, or small villages in the mountains). But even in these areas of digital divide, citizens' rights still exist, as does demand for appropriate education, especially in the area of primary education in schools. This is so even in small schools in remote areas where there is not only insufficient demand for deploying a network (even with the support of public funds), but also not enough purchasing power for private investors and providers of broadband access to maintain profitable operations. For such schools, satellite access may be a solution. The use of satellite-based broadband access may be an efficient solution for providing educational multimedia content to schools that currently, and for the near future, have poor connectivity due to local conditions.

The European Commission has decided to launch a pilot project that investigates the practical aspects of satellite access for schools in areas of poor connectivity. The pilot project (Satellite Broadband Internet Access for Educational Multimedia Contents to Unconnected Schools – BBSat4Edu – 2019, Agreement Number S12.8356665, signed December 2020) covers the deployment of satellite broadband access for these schools. The project is being implemented by the international SAT4EDU consortium, and the coordinator and the leader is SoftCream Software Ltd, an IT company from Poland.

Since the launch of the project in December 2020, the consortium has chosen the schools, signed agreements with them (or their owners, operators, or managing local authorities – depending on local circumstances), and provided satellite broadband access.



Providing access means the installation of hardware: satellite dish and modem, and a special device that acts as router and security/firewall – as needed for a two-way connection. The SAT4EDU consortium provides access through a contract with the satellite broadband operator along with connections to school the school's local network. The SAT4EDU router/hardware firewall device, together with the special diagnostics device and appropriate software system provides security against

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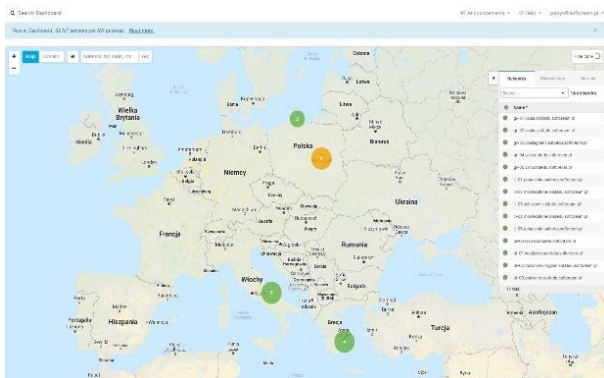
malware, and prevents pupils accessing harmful content. The technical support and security system is centrally managed by SAT4EDU IT specialists.

The cost of connectivity (providing or renting hardware, subscription costs for the broadband transmission channel) is fully covered by the consortium running the project for a minimum period of 12 months. At the end of the project, each school will need to decide whether satellite access is a viable solution for the forthcoming years, and if it is, the school is able to take over the contract with the satellite access operator and bear the cost of further subscription; or if it is not viable, the satellite access will be terminated without further obligation or charges for the school.

The school is expected to use the satellite access in its day-to-day educational activities, to cooperate (i.e. by recording the use, benefits, and problems or difficulties) with the consortium in formulating the final report that will contain the results and conclusions, and to allow the consortium to monitor and use transmission logs (recorded automatically by the equipment or access provider).

The consortium supports the schools with technical services, ensuring continuous and safe access both during the initial configuration and during operational activities. Depending on the needs of any given school, basic training is provided free of charge by SAT4EDU specialists to the person appointed by the school as its network administrator. These administrators have access to a basic guidebook describing the satellite broadband connection and support procedures.

The project framework does not include the supply of multimedia or any other educational content – the schools involved in the project have complete freedom to choose the content according to their educational programmes and preferences, legal obligations etc. Teachers and pupils have access to an educational guidebook covering the basic areas of Internet use in everyday life. Both the guidebook for administrators and the educational guidebook are available in four languages: Greek, English, Italian, and Polish.



By the beginning of October 2021, all 13 schools participating in the project had been connected: 5 in Greece, 5 in Italy, and 3 in Poland.

The end of the pilot project is planned for September 2022.

Chairman of the board

Robert Śmietanka

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