Eurobites: O2 road-tests satellite 5G for connected cars

News Analysis - PAUL RAINFORD, Assistant Editor, Europe
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Also in today's EMEA regional roundup: Elisa goes with Nokia for 5G RAN; Colt chooses SSE for 100G action; Proximus fires up eSIMs; Enea acquires Aptilo.

▪ Telefónica UK (O2) is launching what it claims is the first laboratory in the UK dedicated to exploring "next-generation" connectivity technology for connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) based on both 5G and satellite communications. At the laboratory, named the Darwin SatCom Lab and located on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in Oxfordshire, companies will be able to test proofs of concept using two Renault Twizy electric cars (pictured below), which O2 has converted into CAVs and fitted with Lidar sensors to allow them to be controlled from the lab and driven around the Harwell Campus. O2 believes satellite communications will play a crucial role in extending 5G networks to provide connectivity to harder-to-reach areas for trains and road vehicles.

Not the car-chase scene from *Bullitt*
(Source: O2)

▪ Finland's Elisa is keeping it local for its 5G RAN needs, opting for Nokia, which will provide its AirScale range of gear to help deliver speedy mobile broadband to consumer and enterprise customers alike. The project, says Nokia, will also focus on mobile network technology migration, meaning new radios will serve both 5G and 4G subscribers across the country. Elisa plans to unplug its 3G network by 2023 to support its shift to 5G.

▪ Colt Technology Services has chosen SSE Enterprise Telecoms to deploy two 100Gbit/s network-to-network interfaces (NNIs) across its UK network. The move will allow a number of major UK cities, London and Manchester among them, to access multiple high-bandwidth 10Gbit/s Ethernet services. Last week SSE announced a major network expansion program that sees it "unbundling" another 259 BT exchanges by the end of 2021.

As from today (Thursday), enterprise customers of Belgium's Proximus will no longer need to insert a physical SIM card to access the network, as the operator is supporting eSIM technology. The same will apply to residential customers from October 19. Those wanting to join in the eSIM fun will, after a "thorough check of their identity," have to download their identification information by scanning a QR code to generate a specific user profile on their device and securely access the Proximus network.

 Vodafone Spain is getting a new boss, with current CEO Antonia Coimbra making way for Colman Deegan on November 1. Coimbra has been with Vodafone for 28 years, and has been CEO of the Spanish unit for last eight of them. Deegan joined Vodafone in 1998 and has held senior roles in group finance and M&A as well as CFO roles in Vodafone India and Vodafone Italy, before becoming CEO of Vodafone Turkey in 2016.

 Enea, the data analytics company based in Stockholm, has acquired fellow Swedish outfit Aptilo in a deal that values Aptilo at 150 million Swedish kroner (US$16.7 million). Aptilo provides policy and access control software for carrier Wi-Fi and the Internet of Things. Aptilo's flagship product is the its Service Management Platform (SMP), which is used in large-scale deployments of carrier Wi-Fi. It is expected to generate sales of approximately SEK88 million ($9.8 million) for the full year 2020.

 Working within the framework of Ericsson's IoT Accelerator platform, Telenor Connexion is to provide global connectivity for the "micro-factories" pioneered by craft brewing firm Wayout for the production of clean, filtered drinking water. The first such plants will appear in East Africa, before reaching the Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions. Each module can filter 70,000 liters of water a month and be managed by a smartphone app.

 EE, the mobile arm of BT, has teamed up with mobile payment specialist Square to offer its small business customers a secure way to accept cashless transactions. EE is offering customers a free Square Reader and fee-free processing on their first £1,000 ($1,285) of card transactions in person, online or over the phone. Once they've burned through that £1,000, payment-processing charges of 1.75% (on all in-person transactions) or 2.5% (on keyed-in and online transactions) kick in.

 Orange Business Services is tidying up its e-health interests, transferring its Orange Healthcare B2B activities to another of its entities, Enovacom, which became part of the Orange empire in 2018 and now boasts more than 1,600 public sector customers.

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