

## Press Release

# 45 rural schools in Uruguay now have access to electricity and internet

Montevideo, 29 May 2014.- Thanks to the *Luces para Aprender Uruguay* (Lighting up Learning Uruguay) project developed by the Elecnor Foundation and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), 45 rural state schools in the country now have access to the internet and to electricity generated by photovoltaic solar power.

These schools represent the first phase of the *Lighting up Learning Uruguay* project, which will benefit 80 schools in total. The second phase will kick off this month and run through to October, after which all the selected schools will have access to energy. As a result, by the end of 2014, Uruguay will be the first country in Ibero-America where all its schools have access to power and internet connectivity.

The Elecnor Foundation was responsible for designing the technical project and installing the photovoltaic arrays at the schools. It will also carry out preventive and corrective maintenance work during the warranty period of these systems. Moreover, the foundation is training appointed people in each of the communities benefitting from the project to use and maintain the photovoltaic arrays to keep them in good working order and prolong their useful life.

The presentation of the results of the first phase was attended by: Fernando Azaola, Chairman of Elecnor and its foundation; Ricardo Ehrlich, Uruguay's Culture and Education Minister; Roberto Varela, Spanish Ambassador to Uruguay; and Álvaro Marchesi, Secretary General of the OEI, along with other dignitaries.

This milestone was also marked by connecting School 77, Tapes Grandes, in the Department of Lavalleja to the new power supply and the internet. Arable and livestock farmers and their families live in this village, and the school consists of a teacher/headteacher and a teaching assistant who give classes to just four pupils. Although this is a small number, it has not impeded efforts to enable them to benefit from the project.

The ***Lighting up Learning Uruguay*** project aims to improve the quality of life and education of thousands of girls and boys in the region by installing photovoltaic solar arrays at schools. These renewable energy systems are sustainable and environmentally friendly, and will power interior and exterior lighting for the schools. The project also provides them with power for devices such as

computers, televisions and mobile phones. By providing electricity and internet access, Elecnor is helping to bridge the digital gap between rural and urban areas, offering pupils in rural parts of Uruguay more opportunities to develop culturally and receive an education.

During the opening ceremony, the Chairman of Elecnor and its foundation, Fernando Azaola, highlighted that: *“the Lighting up Learning project and the Elecnor Foundation's mission are a perfect fit, since the goal of both is to develop the communities in which they work”*.

In part, the project's success is also down to the contribution and support of: **Uruguay's Culture and Education Ministry** through the **CEIBAL Plan** (aimed at providing schools with access to basic IT equipment for online learning); the Uruguayan company **UTE**; and the companies **Montes del Plata**, which adopted four schools, and **Prosegur**, which also adopted a school.

The Lighting up Learning Uruguay project was also recently named by Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation as an initiative of **interest to Spain's international development cooperation policy**.

### **Electricity and Internet for 66,000 schools in Ibero-America**

The **Lighting up Learning Uruguay** initiative is part of the wider Ibero-American **Lighting up Learning** project approved at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Ibero-American Education Ministers Conference held in Paraguay in September 2011 and originating from the “2021 Educational Goals” approved by the Heads of State and Government at the 20<sup>th</sup> Ibero-American Summit in December 2012.

Coordinated by the OEI, the project aims to tackle unresolved challenges, such as access to quality state education, to address poverty and inequality, as well as to contribute to the development and wellbeing of the communities targeted by the project. To this end, the project will include information and communication technologies (ICTs) in teaching to try and put an end to the isolation of rural communities which have historically been left behind in terms of access to technology for learning. Over 66,000 schools in Ibero-America will be equipped with photovoltaic arrays, providing them with an electricity supply, and computers with internet access.

In addition to Uruguay, the Ibero-American countries participating in the **Lighting up Learning** project are: Colombia, Paraguay, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Ecuador and Bolivia.

### **About the Elecnor Foundation**



The **Elecnor Foundation** is a private, non-profit entity that extends the company's reach into the social arena in two areas: social infrastructure and training and research. The Foundation is closely linked to Elecnor, one of the leading Spanish companies and a benchmark player in the infrastructure, renewable energies and new technologies sectors, present in over 40 countries and with 12,500 employees. The foundation's aim is to demonstrate the commitment the engineering community has to human beings and society.

**More information:**

[www.lucesparaaprender.org](http://www.lucesparaaprender.org)

[www.fundacionelecnor.com](http://www.fundacionelecnor.com)

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