

SECTORAL OVERVIEW

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Colombia's first telephone lines were installed in Santafé de Bogotá in 1884. In August 1943 the Colombian Congress approved a law to purchase Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co., established twenty years earlier, and to combine it with "Radio Nacional" to form the National Radiocommunications Company.

In May 1947 this company was renamed the National Telecommunications Company -TELECOM, and given a monopoly of long-distance telephone service. The Ministry of Mail and Telegraphs and the All America Cables and Radio Company continued delivering national and international telegraph services.

In 1948 Santafé de Bogotá's local telephone network was automated, and in 1949 the national government began to promote interconnection of local and long-distance telephone networks.

The year 1954 marked the establishment of the first telex offices in Medellín and Santafé de Bogotá, and the first television transmission in Colombia. A second TV channel began operation in Santafé de Bogotá in 1964.

By 1958 Empresas Públicas de Medellín initiated automatic telephone service with neighbouring municipalities, becoming the first metropolitan area with common rates and numbering and the first to inaugurate a TANDEM switch.

The All America Cables and Radio Company left the country in 1960 and as a result, the ownership of all national and international telecommunications was in Colombian hands for the first time. With this increased responsibility came a recognition of the need for highly-trained personnel, and the following year TELECOM created the Electronics and Communications Technical Institute -ITEC to train technicians.

In 1964 the responsibility for the telex system (Colombia had 8,000 telex subscribers in 1991) was transferred from the Ministry of Communications to TELECOM and in 1965 TELECOM joined INTELSAT (the International Satellite Communications Consortium).

The first stage of a high capacity national microwave network was inaugurated in 1968, and in the same year TELECOM telephone and telegraph networks were connected with Ecuador and Venezuela.

Telecom launched an experimental service in 1983 called DAPAQ to provide access to data banks from several countries. The success of this service led to