

Europacable recommendations to increase efficiency in Europe's Transmission Grid build-out through harmonisation and standardisation in the context of "Action 13" of the EU Grid Action Plan

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Europacable, the voice of Europe's leading wire and cable producers, firmly believes that increasing the efficiency and streamlining project processes, technical specifications and sustainability requirements will contribute to speeding up Europe's power network build-out. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the current discussions on the EU Grid Action Plan, notably on "Action 13" relating to the "development of common technology specifications (...), to facilitate investments in manufacturing capacity and secure supply chains".

In current debates, "standardisation" is often presented as a possible "one-size-fits-all solution" to achieve efficiency gains. Europacable wishes to underline that such solutions would carry the risk of over- or undersizing project implementation. This would stand in contrast to the objective of a sustainable and cost-efficient grid expansion, which the European cable industry is fully committed to. This said, Europacable believes that in selected areas, streamlining, harmonising or even standardising certain elements may well contribute to an increased efficiency of supply chain procurement and grid deployment.

With this paper, we would like to offer recommendations on how to improve the efficiency of Europe's transmission grid build-out in the following three dimensions:

I. Common approaches to project processes

a) Leaner tendering processes

Project tendering processes considerably vary across Europe, requiring applicants to adjust to each call individually. This unduly prolongs the time required and binds scarce administrative resources, both for applicants and TSOs.

To reduce complexity and increase efficiency of tendering processes, Europacable recommends aligning:

- **General Terms & Conditions of contracts** e.g. introducing "Standard contract format" to serve as common starting point;
- **Transparent, harmonised tender evaluation criteria** e.g. a common approach to evaluating the weight of these criteria;
- **Transparent ex-ante project maturity level** e.g. defining a minimum set of requirements similar to technology readiness levels;
- **Quality requirements** e.g. introducing a uniform structure of documentation across tenders;
- **Non-technical pre-qualification requirements** e.g. project governance, programme management, and delivery process requirements.

b) Mutually recognised project execution criteria

Project execution criteria vary widely amongst member states and projects across Europe. These require suppliers to tailor their project execution tying up their scarce resources.

Europacable recommends defining mutually recognised execution criteria such as:

- *Introduce product ranges optimised per function group;*
- *Project qualifications including requirements on engineering and documentation;*
- *Project execution requirements including simplified processes, early project engagement and maximum possible upfront preparations.*

II. Harmonised technical specifications for cable systems

a) Consistent and binding (pre-)qualification testing

High and extra high-voltage (HV and EHV) cable systems undergo extensive qualification-testing procedures to guarantee the required levels of performance over the expected lifetime. These testing procedures which include type testing, extension of qualification testing, and pre-qualification testing are based on international standards and recommendations published by CIGRE, IEC or CENELEC.

To secure the reliability of Europe's transmission grids, Europacable recommends:

- *Recognition of and adherence to harmonised qualification requirements for cable systems via international standards and recommendations across Europe without additional testing to obtain project eligibility.*

b) Appropriate technical specifications based on cable systems function

The design of HV and EHV cable systems is required to meet technical specifications and standards as defined by CIGRE, IEC, CEN and CENELEC. For Europe's grid expansions to be viable, it is essential for technical specifications, levels of performance and quality as well as health and safety requirements to continue to be developed by these qualified, established bodies.

Accordingly, Europacable recommends to:

- *Continue active cooperation with established standardisation organisations*
- *Ensure that technical requirements for HV and EHV cable systems and applications remain appropriate to the use conditions, recognising that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to cable systems solution creates a risk of:*
 - *"oversizing" project implementation, i.e. undermining the sustainable use of materials and unduly increasing costs; or*
 - *"undersizing" project implementation, i.e. cable solution may not support the transfer of the requested power level so that an additional qualification and cable system may be required to ensure adequate transmission capacity. This would again, neither be sustainable nor cost-effective.*

III. Sustainability requirements for processes and products

Europe's future power grids should be as sustainable as possible during their entire life cycle, i.e. planning, execution, production (including components production), active running and end of life. In addition, their technology components should have as small an environmental footprint as possible. European grid technology providers are actively pushing high sustainability performances both in production and in their products. To ensure the future competitiveness of sustainable European production, these factors should be valued and accounted for.

Europacable is keen to work with all relevant stakeholders to develop and implement sustainability requirements covering both:

- *Sustainable (public) procurement and tendering processes; as well as*
- *Sustainable technical cable specifications.*

Concluding, Europacable firmly believes that applying the above recommendations will ultimately lead to a speeding up of Europe's transmission grid build-out, which is a critical path to reaching Europe's decarbonisation targets and securing our energy security and sovereignty.

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About Europacable

Europacable is the voice of Europe's leading wire and cable producers. High-quality, sustainable power and telecommunication cables, produced by our members in Europe, empower electrification and digitalisation of our societies. Founded in 1991, Europacable represents the largest cable makers in the world providing global technology leadership, as well as highly specialized small- and medium sized businesses from across Europe.

With our future being ever more electrified and digitalised, cable technology will be the core backbone of Europe's energy and telecommunication infrastructures. Sustainable, low-carbon manufacturing and high-performance cables are essential to achieve Europe's climate neutrality objectives by 2050. Europacable is committed to the principles of free enterprise and fair trade. Our members employ over 80.000 people of which more than 50% in Europe, generating a worldwide turnover over € 70 billion in 2023.

Europacable is a member of EuroFSA, FEEDS, Orgalim, RGI, WindEurope and a partner of CENELEC and EUEW. Europacable is listed in the European Commission's Transparency Register under 453103789-92. www.europacable.eu