

Europacable Position on the White Paper “How to master Europe’s digital infrastructure needs?” and the “Recommendation on the security and resilience of submarine cable infrastructures”

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Europacable welcomes Europe’s emphasis on enhancing the security and resilience of its telecommunication cable infrastructures, by recognizing the critical role of secured communication networks. Europacable member companies have the technology and the know how to contribute to enhancing the resilience and the sovereignty of Europe’s data infrastructures. This will be key to secure Europe’s strategic autonomy. Specifically, Europacable is committed to support the work of the Submarine Cable Infrastructure Expert Group.

With this paper Europacable contributes with the industry perspective on the White Paper “How to master Europe’s digital infrastructure needs?” and the “Recommendation on the security and resilience of submarine cable infrastructures”.

Europacable supports the vision set out in the White Paper “How to master Europe’s digital infrastructure needs?”. Specifically, measures to accelerate copper switch-off, promoting a full fibre environment able to meet the challenge of increasing connectivity while improving energy efficiency of the network.

Submarine cable infrastructures are the backbone of global intercontinental communication and are an essential element to improve EU’s digital autonomy and resilience. Europacable sides with the assessment of the European Commission described in the Whitepaper as well as the “Recommendation on the security and resilience of submarine cable infrastructures”.

Europacable encourages to pursue measure related to:

1. Comprehensive Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Europacable supports a Union-wide assessment of risks, vulnerabilities, and dependencies across the entire submarine cable supply chain. This assessment should lead to the development of a robust "Cable Security Toolbox" that provides actionable recommendations for mitigating identified risks not yet covered by ICPC (International Cable Protection Committee) rules.

2. Mapping and Stress Testing

Europacable welcomes EU efforts to coordinate mapping and stress tests at European level to evaluate today's resilience and security of submarine cable networks. This proactive approach will help to identify potential vulnerabilities and could serve as a basis to devise future security strategies.

3. High-Risk Vendors Management

Europacable highlights the importance of considering potential risks associated with suppliers during project development. Addressing supplier risks through comprehensive due diligence processes can contribute to the security and resilience of submarine infrastructure. Considering the potential dual use of submarine cable infrastructures, strict security requirements must be put in place.

Europacable call for improvements regarding:

1. Fast-tracking of Permitting

Europe is still fragmented when it comes to permit granting for installation and repairs of submarine cable infrastructures. In addition, in the last years member state have reinforced their requirement for Exclusive Economic Zone waters which are often in contradiction with Unclos agreement. Europacable believes that simplifying and harmonising procedures amongst member states would facilitate and speed up project implementation. Single points of contact should have the competence of streamlining planning and permitting processes. Classifying submarine cable infrastructure as being of overriding public interest would certainly facilitate deployment.

2. Improving Resilience through Redundancy and Monitoring

Resilience can best be achieved through physical redundancy. A stronger emphasis on redundancy, complemented by surveillance technologies, such as sensor and monitoring systems, would improve assets resilience.

3. European Maintenance and Repair Capacities

Europacable strongly recommends taking concrete steps towards developing a European maintenance fleet and repair capacity for submarine cable infrastructures. Development of collaboration between Marine Maintenance actors as well as financing would safeguard the health of the marine fleet.

Strengthening domestic maintenance and repair capabilities would contribute to network resilience, reduce dependence on external providers, and ensure shorter response to maintenance needs.

4. Coordinated Funding and Project Support

Europacable believes that securing financing and payment security for all participants in projects which have been awarded EU funds. We support the initiative of coordinated allocation of EU, national, and private funding towards strategic Cable Projects of European Interest (CPEIs).

5. Securing Europe's Technology Leadership and Industrial Competitiveness:

Europacable emphasises the need to secure a fair and level playing field in the telecommunication cables market. Globally, reciprocity and market access need to be equally guaranteed to preserve Europe's technology leadership and industrial competitiveness in the telecommunication cable industry. Competitiveness can also be supported through increased investment in R&I to drive development and uptake of new technologies such as combination of real time sensing technologies and automatic alert systems, remote controlled inspection robots or sensing technologies for natural events or marine life.

Europacable is committed to support the Submarine Cable Infrastructure Expert Group. We are ready to contribute with our industry expertise to enhance the security, resilience and sovereignty of Europe's submarine cable infrastructures. By implementing the above's recommendations collaboratively, Europe will strengthen its digital infrastructure resilience and ensure the continued reliability of submarine cable networks in an increasingly interconnected world.

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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.

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