

Enhancing the Security and Resilience of Subsea Telecommunication and Data Cables in European Seas

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Europacable, the voice of Europe's leading cable system manufacturers, recommends for the following aspects to be considered to further enhance the Security and Resilience of Europe's subsea telecommunication and data cable assets:

- ***Mandatory deployment of available monitoring technologies***
- ***Promotion of existing maintenance and repair agreements***
- ***Continuous fleet renewal***
- ***Creation of regional security policy response frameworks***
- ***Increased Accountability***

Based on the technical and operational experience of our European member companies, we urge for these to be accounted for when implementing the EU Action Plan on Cable Security as published by the European Commission in February.

In a regular operational context, Europe's subsea telecommunication and data cable assets are resilient and well protected: Telecom and data cable systems are redundant and established, well-functioning regional service agreements combined with modular technologies ensure fast repairs. However, recent intentional damages inflicted upon subsea telecommunication and data cable links require Europe and its member states to upgrade their security and repair capabilities.

Europacable recommends the following:

1) Mandatory deployment of available monitoring technologies

Mandating the use of advanced monitoring technologies for both new and existing subsea cables will enhance assets' security. Technologies such as Distributed Acoustic Sensing (DAS), Automatic Identification Systems (AIS), and real-time measurements can provide critical data for threat detection and response. Furthermore, engaging with ICPC (International Cable Protection Committee) to review whether and if so, how physical measures, such as additional armouring and burial requirements, may make cables more resilient against intentional damage.

- ***Europacable recommends introducing mandatory deployment of monitoring and sensing technologies for existing and future projects;***
- ***Europacable recommends reviewing with ICPC whether additional physical protection measures may be considered for future critical subsea telecommunication infrastructures.***

2) Promotion of existing maintenance and repair agreements

Long-term maintenance and repair agreements, such as APMA and MECMA, are well established and have demonstrated their effectiveness in ensuring rapid response and efficient repairs. Europacable firmly believes that these agreements should be promoted to facilitate additional investment decisions of service providers. Doing so will further enhance Europe's coordinated and timely response capabilities.

- ***Europacable recommends extending existing maintenance and repair agreements to new cable owners to share costs and resources, thereby fostering a collaborative approach to maintenance.***

3) Continuous fleet renewal

Europe's repair and maintenance fleet is aging. Medium to long-term, this will reduce Europe's available repair capacities. To continuously ensure Europe's current, effective and timely repairs, it is crucial to invest in renewing its privately operated repair and maintenance fleet. Newer vessels will provide enhanced and more sustainable repair capabilities hence accommodating the projected increase of subsea telecommunication and data cable deployment.

- ***Europacable recommends introducing financial support schemes to assist cable owners and/or maintenance providers to continuously renew Europe's repair and maintenance fleet. Doing so will ensure that Europe has at its disposal a state-of-the-art, more sustainable marine maintenance and repair ecosystem mid to long-term.***

4) Creation of regional security policy response frameworks

Recent intentional damages inflicted upon subsea cable assets require NATO, Europe and its member states to enhance their security strategies and coordinate possible political responses. The risk of multiple, simultaneous incidents creates the need to define response priorities at regional level and to guide response interventions according to regional supply priorities per sea basin.

- ***Europacable recommends creating regional security policy frameworks to coordinate and prioritise cable maintenance and repair within Europe's respective sea basins in addition to the existing market cable repair agreements to address critical multiple, simultaneous incidents.***

5) Increased Accountability

Accountability will reduce possible intentional damages inflicted upon subsea telecommunication infrastructures. If deterrence strategies combine physical protection measures and advanced surveillance they will not only better protect the assets. They will also allow to clearly attribute the source of damage. In doing so, they will increase the accountability of those that are inflicting damages on subsea cables and would deter future intentional damages.

- ***Europacable recommends making full use of existing technologies to enhance accountability and therewith enhance deterrence.***

Europacable and its members companies are fully committed to collaborate with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to implement these recommendations effectively and in the shortest possible timeframe.

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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 the 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 2024.

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