



EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR STRATEGIC POLICY

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Europe's Subsea Lifelines: A Cable Security and Repair Compact

Protecting communications and energy interconnectors from accident, sabotage and prolonged service disruption.

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Protecting communications and energy interconnectors from accident, sabotage and prolonged service disruption.

EXECUTIVE JUDGEMENT

Europe requires a cable-security doctrine that treats detection, attribution, repair capacity, route diversity and public-private crisis command as one system; protection without rapid restoration is not resilience.

KEY FINDINGS

- Subsea cables carry critical communications and electricity flows while remaining difficult to monitor continuously.
- Repair vessels, specialised components and permits can become the binding constraint after an incident.
- Commercial operators hold essential data but need trusted legal channels for rapid sharing with public authorities.
- Route diversity must be assessed by real landing points and repair dependencies, not only by the number of cables on a map.

A strategic infrastructure system

Communications cables and electricity interconnectors connect European economies, islands, data centres and partner regions. Damage can be accidental, criminal or part of a hybrid campaign; the immediate policy requirement is therefore evidence, continuity and restoration rather than premature attribution. A common operating picture should integrate operator alarms, maritime tracking, seabed monitoring and intelligence under strict access rules.

Repair is deterrence

An adversary gains leverage when service restoration is slow or politically contested. Europe should map repair ships, cable depots, specialised personnel, insurance, customs procedures and access permissions across sea basins. Pre-arranged contracts and priority protocols can shorten disruption while signalling that physical damage will not produce a durable strategic effect.

A compact with operators and partners

Public authorities cannot manage cable resilience without owners, landing-station operators, shipping companies and trusted external partners. A European compact should define incident notification, protected information exchange, mutual assistance and exercises. It should also support alternative routes across the Mediterranean, Arctic and Black Sea where commercially and strategically viable.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 01 Create a protected European cable incident and repair coordination cell.
- 02 Maintain a verified inventory of repair vessels, depots, permits and critical spares.
- 03 Exercise multi-cable disruption scenarios across communications and energy networks.
- 04 Use EU funding to support genuinely diverse routes and landing points.
- 05 Agree rapid public-private evidence preservation and attribution protocols.

DECISION AND MONITORING MATRIX

Priority	Decision horizon	Evidence of progress
Create a protected European cable incident and repair coordination cell.	0-90 days	Repair mobilisation time
Maintain a verified inventory of repair vessels, depots, permits and critical spares.	3-12 months	Diversity of landing points
Exercise multi-cable disruption scenarios across communications and energy networks.	12-36 months	Shared incident reporting
Use EU funding to support genuinely diverse routes and landing points.	Continuous	Availability of specialised components
Agree rapid public-private evidence preservation and attribution protocols.	Annual review	Repair mobilisation time

INDICATORS TO WATCH

- Repair mobilisation time
- Diversity of landing points
- Shared incident reporting
- Availability of specialised components

SOURCES AND METHOD

This publication distinguishes verified institutional evidence from CERAX interpretation and forward-looking judgement. Principal public sources are listed below; all recommendations are the institutional judgement of CERAX.

- European Union, EU Action Plan on Cable Security



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Independent analysis. Diplomatic judgement. European perspective.