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Strategic Corridors Series – Volume III: Cable, Port and Energy Resilience

A connected research volume on the infrastructure that carries European power and prosperity.

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Strategic Corridors Series – Volume III: Cable, Port and Energy Resilience

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EXECUTIVE JUDGEMENT

European resilience depends on corridors as systems: ports, subsea cables, pipelines, grids, data centres and repair capacity must be governed together because disruption moves across them faster than institutional responsibility.

Key findings

- Corridor risk is produced by interdependence between physical, digital and energy infrastructure.
- Ownership and routing data remain fragmented across regulators and private operators.
- Repair time and spare-component access are often more decisive than nominal redundancy.
- International corridor partnerships can combine investment with shared security and continuity standards.

Corridors as strategic systems

A port is not resilient if its power connection, customs platform, rail access or nearby data links can be disabled. A subsea cable is not secure if repair vessels, landing stations and permits are unavailable. Policy should therefore move from asset lists to service maps that show which combinations of infrastructure deliver an essential function and how quickly each can be restored.

The information deficit

Public authorities often lack a common picture of ownership, dependencies, maintenance contracts and cross-border consequences. Private operators possess detailed information but face commercial and security constraints on sharing it. Trusted reporting environments are required to combine operational detail with public responsibility and to distinguish ordinary commercial failure from coercive or hostile disruption.

Repair as deterrence

Resilience is frequently discussed in terms of redundancy. Redundancy without tested switching and repair capacity can create false confidence. Governments should map specialised vessels, engineers, spare parts, security clearances and emergency permissions. Visible capacity to restore a service quickly reduces the leverage created by disruption and can therefore contribute to deterrence.

A corridor partnership model

Europe should offer partner regions a package that links infrastructure finance, digital and environmental standards, skills, maintenance and crisis coordination. Such partnerships are stronger when they improve local economic value and institutional capability rather than treating partner territory only as a route to European markets.

Corridor-level operating pictures

Authorities need to see ports, cables, power links, repair assets and regulatory permissions as one operating system.

A corridor picture should identify critical nodes, owners, jurisdictions, repair routes, specialised vessels, spare components and the public services that depend on them. It should also map the administrative sequence for access and restoration. A physical repair can be delayed by customs, permits, evidence preservation or uncertainty over cost allocation as easily as by lack of equipment.

The operating picture should be tested through exercises that combine technical failure, security uncertainty and commercial congestion. Operators should retain responsibility for normal resilience, while public authorities define the threshold at which cross-border coordination, diplomatic access or emergency finance becomes necessary. The aim is to shorten recovery time without turning routine commercial risk into an unlimited public liability.

- Create corridor maps that connect assets to essential services and responsible authorities.
- Pre-negotiate evidence, access, customs and cost-allocation procedures for repair.
- Exercise compound disruption with operators and affected partner governments.

Investment and accountability

Resilience investment should be prioritised by avoided service loss and recovery time, not visibility.

Public support should favour redundancy, repair capacity, secure communications and interoperable monitoring where market incentives are insufficient. Funding agreements should identify the capability purchased, the services protected and the expected reduction in recovery time. Aggregate progress can be published while sensitive asset details remain protected.

- Tie funding to tested recovery outcomes and maintenance obligations.
- Review corridor exposure annually with operators and international partners.

Policy recommendations

- Develop cross-sector maps of essential corridor services and recovery dependencies.
- Create secure data-sharing arrangements with infrastructure operators.
- Pre-negotiate access, repair and customs procedures for major disruptions.
- Exercise simultaneous failures across cable, port and energy systems.
- Embed maintenance and local capacity in external connectivity finance.

Indicators to watch

- Subsea cable repair time
- Port-power dependencies
- Availability of specialised vessels
- Cross-border permit delays

Scope and analytical method

A connected research volume on the infrastructure that carries European power and prosperity. The paper tests the issue against institutional authority, delivery capacity, political sustainability and the interests of affected partners. It separates confirmed developments from interpretation and identifies the conditions under which recommendations would need to change.

The analysis is based on a structured review of official institutional material and current primary sources. It distinguishes formal decisions and verified facts from institutional assessment and forward-looking judgement. Recommendations are tested against authority, delivery capacity, timing, political sustainability and the interests of external partners.

Public sources cannot capture classified readiness data, commercially sensitive contracting information or confidential diplomatic exchanges. Time-sensitive figures and legal developments should therefore be refreshed by responsible authorities before an operational decision is taken.

Sources and method

The sources below establish the public evidentiary basis for this paper. Interpretation and recommendations remain the responsibility of the Research Directorate. Principal public sources:

- European Commission, Critical Raw Materials Act

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EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR STRATEGIC POLICY

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