Council of the European Union

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	5353/25
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on reliable and resilient connectivity

INTRODUCTION

1. The <u>PL Presidency</u> presented the first draft of the Council Conclusions on reliable and resilient connectivity during the meeting of WP TELECOM of 21 January 2025, where delegations provided their initial comments orally.

2. Based on the written submissions received from the delegations afterwards, the <u>PL Presidency</u> drafted the first compromise proposal, which was discussed at the meeting of WP TELECOM of 11 February.

3. In the light of delegations' additional comments, the PL Presidency has drafted the second compromise proposal, which can be found in the annex of this document.

4. The <u>PL Presidency</u> invites delegations to analyse the text and prepare their inputs for the WP TELECOM meeting **of 18 March 2025**, when this compromise text will be discussed.

5. The changes in the document compared to the initial text are <u>underlined</u>: additions are marked with **bold text**, deletions with ~~strikethrough~~.

II. MAIN CHANGES

6. The amendments made in the Preamble aim to complement it with references to other relevant documents, including the recently adopted "EU Action Plan on Cable Security", which is referred to also in paragraph **18**.

7. The amendments in paragraph **1** aim at clarifying the nature of the challenges the EU's connectivity infrastructure is facing, and their link to the Union's foreign policy.

8. In paragraph **2**, submarine cables are now clearly distinguished from terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks.

9. The reference to the revision of the existing legal framework is now softer in paragraph **3**.

10. In paragraph **4**, as well as in all other relevant paragraphs (6, 9, 22, 25, 26, 29 and 30), the technical nature of the integration of various networks/network types has been clarified, to avoid any confusion.

11. A new paragraph **9a** was added to highlight the importance of research projects, and of the effective coordination of different – ongoing and future funding programmes.

12. Regarding risk assessments and mitigating measures, an explicit reference to the NIS2 and CER directives was added in paragraph **11**.

13. To avoid redundancies and streamline the text, paragraph **21** was deleted.

14. Paragraph **24** was slightly amended to better reflect the common understanding about possible further harmonisation.

15. Paragraph **32a** was partially redrafted to explain what kind of projects the TEN-D instrument would embody.

16. A number of clarifications, editorial changes and minor modifications have been proposed throughout the text to improve its quality and readability.

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Draft Council Conclusions on reliable and resilient connectivity

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING

- The Directive (EU) 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on establishing the European Electronic Communications Code,

- **The** Directive (EU) 2022/2555 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (NIS 2 Directive),

- **The Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the resilience of critical entities and repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC,**

- **The Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the update of the EU Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan "An enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy for evolving maritime threats" of 10 March 2023;**

- **The Council Conclusions of 24 October 2023 on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan;**

- The Letta Report "Much more than a market – Speed, Security, Solidarity. Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU Citizens" of 17 April 2024,

- The Draghi Report "The future of European competitiveness" of 9 September 2024,

- The Niinistö Report "Safer Together: Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness" of 30 October 2024,

- **The Radio Spectrum Policy Group Report "6G Strategic vision" of 12 February 2025,**

- **The Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "EU Action Plan on Cable Security" of 21 February 2025,**

BUILDING ON:

− The Commission White Paper on "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?" of 21 February 2024,

− The Commission Recommendation of 26 February 2024 on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures,

− The Council Conclusions of 21 May 2024 on "The Future of EU Digital Policy"

− The Council Conclusions of 6 December 2024 on the Commission White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?".

General framework

1. NOTES that the European Union's connectivity infrastructure faces new and unprecedented challenges arising from an increasingly complex geopolitical situation, as underscored by the impact of ~~the~~ Russian**'s** ~~Federation's military~~ **war of** aggression against Ukraine, ~~and~~ **as well as** from the growing ~~frequency~~ **number of** **physical, cyber and** hybrid attacks **and occurrences** of natural disasters due to global climate change. **EMPHASISES that threats to connectivity infrastructure have far reaching geopolitical implications on the EU's foreign policy as well as on the overall security environment of the EU.**

2. ACKNOWLEDGES that these pressures expose the vulnerabilities of terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, **and of submarine cables,** thus requiring a **redefinition of the EU's** strategic ~~redefinition~~ **approach** ~~of~~ **to the** communications network development in light of the critical dependence of our society and economy on electronic communications **and digital infrastructure**, to safeguard the EU's ~~strategic autonomy~~ **digital sovereignty in an open manner** and economic prosperity, with particular attention to technological **leadership** and economic resilience~~, together with digital sovereignty~~.

3. STRESSES that a comprehensive approach to the development of a reliable and resilient network infrastructure is essential for addressing new challenges related to more frequent natural disasters, ~~unintentional~~ **damaging incidents,** cyber-attacks and geopolitical related threats. This approach should be **taken into account and integrated into the** **possible** **revision of the existing legal framework** ~~enabled within the new, legal and strategic framework~~ **without prejudice to Member States' sole responsibility for national security**.

4. RECOGNISES that the large majority of intercontinental **and** **parts of** **intra-European** internet traffic run~~s~~ over submarine cable infrastructures, which form **parts of** ~~the~~ **a** critical backbone network, being ~~at~~ increasingly **at** risk, as demonstrated by various incidents notably in the Baltic Sea. WELCOMES in this regard the measures in the Commission Recommendation on "Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures" and AGREES ~~with the Commission's White Paper on "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?"~~ on the importance of a higher level of resilience and **technical** integration of all communication channels - terrestrial, non-terrestrial and, importantly, submarine - as a precondition for **reliable, resilient and** secure communications**, as stated in the Commission's White Paper on "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?"**.

5. ~~ENDORSES~~ **NOTES** the vision of the Connected Collaborative Computing Network ("3C Network") set out in the Commission White Paper mentioned above, which is of strategic importance to safeguard and advance the EU's digital ~~technological~~ sovereignty **in an open manner** and ~~can~~ ~~RECOGNISES the 3C Network as a key concept to~~ enhance European innovations ~~and~~ ~~create~~ **whilst strengthening** an ecosystem of connectivity and computational capacity in support of data and AI-based applications.

6. RECALLS that reliable and resilient connectivity through ~~network~~ **technical** integration **of different network types** and diversification has emerged as one of the key priorities, requiring multi-layered, interoperable and redundant networks. NOTES the need to mitigate communication disruptions by improving the **physical and geographic** redundancy **of networks as well as** of the power supply for **connectivity** ~~mobile network~~ infrastructure ~~and land corridors~~ for **all** the backbone network**s**. **RECOGNIZES the importance of diversification of infrastructure in emergency situations**.

7. CALLS FOR the establishment of a ~~new~~ strategic approach **for a reliable and resilient connectivity** that takes into account current and emerging technologies ~~like~~ **especially AI, 6G and quantum communications**, with a focus on the convergence of diverse network elements such as fixed, mobile and satellite (and other non-terrestrial elements) into a cohesive~~, integrated,~~ European digital ecosystem and market **for companies of all sizes**. ~~CALLS FURTHER FOR coordination with ongoing research and piloting initiatives on connectivity, such as the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking, as well as other relevant connectivity infrastructure projects supported by EU funds like~~ **Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and** ~~Connecting Europe Facility~~ **(CEF2 Digital)**~~, including submarine cables, backbone connectivity infrastructures, as well as~~ **possible** ~~large-scale pilots for 3C Network projects.~~

8. NOTES that this strategic approach ~~for integrated and resilient communication networks,~~ should **take into account the convergence of different network** ~~lead to the~~ **technical** ~~integration of various~~ **types** ~~of communication networks~~ ~~types~~ — including terrestrial, non-terrestrial, and submarine cables — while considering diverse business models and current trends, **thus** ~~. This holistic approach aims to unify different network types into a cohesive, reliable, and resilient system,~~ fostering ubiquitous and seamless connectivity across Europe enhancing competitiveness and reinforcing the European Single Market.

9. EMPHASISES that the convergence of ~~3GPP and non-3GPP~~ **different network** types ~~of networks~~ **providing access** presents a unique opportunity to take advantage of the strengths of different technologies and combine the best of their characteristics. NOTES that further development of **technically** integrated architecture will potentially create ~~a unified~~ **robust** network**s** that deliver~~s~~ a superior user **connectivity** experience.

9a. CALLS FOR coordination with ongoing research and piloting initiatives on connectivity, such as the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking, as well as other relevant connectivity infrastructure projects supported by EU funds like Horizon Europe, Digital Europe and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF2 Digital), including submarine cables, backbone connectivity infrastructures, as well as possible large scale pilots for 3C Network projects. STRESSES the importance of future funding programmes that could contribute to the Union's strategic priorities.

10. RECOGNISES the critical importance of international cooperation in enhancing global digital infrastructure resilience and reliability **while promoting a multi-stakeholder, human-centric and human rights-based approach to digital transformation**. HIGHLIGHTS the need for supporting EU candidate countries and other ~~like-minded~~ partner countries through the existing platforms **and EU initiatives**, like ~~the~~ Global Gateway, **and within the relevant international fora such as the ITU,** providing **inter alia** technical assistance, capacity-building and financial support, while collaborating with ~~like-minded~~ partner~~s~~ **countries** to search convergence on **policy** approaches **and regulatory and normative examples,** ~~to move towards joint criteria for reliable and resilient networks as well as digital infrastructures~~ and promote European solutions.

Resilience by network type diversification and interoperability

11. EMPHASISES that reliable and resilient connectivity can be improved through network type diversification by relying on multi-layered, interoperable terrestrial and non-terrestrial communication means supported by a robust backbone infrastructure, as well as risk assessments and good practices on mitigating measures **in line with the NIS2 and CER directives**.

12. ACKNOWLEDGES **that** the rapid development of ~~next-generation~~ satellite communication systems, including multi-constellation networks, a large number of which are ~~registered~~ **operated** and developed ~~outside the~~ **by non-**EU **actors**, ~~which~~ puts pressure on access to Earth's orbits and spectrum. RECOGNISES at the same time the complementary roles of satellite **communication**

systems ~~(~~and other non-terrestrial capabilities~~)~~, for uninterrupted availability of **communication** service**, in particular** ~~under all circumstances~~ to remote and underserved regions, providing critical redundancy and resilience against ground-based disruptions**,** ~~**and enabling communications especially for**~~ **which are particularly important for the provision of safety and disaster relief** services **in all circumstances**.

13. ~~HIGHLIGHTS~~ **EMPHASISES** the strategic importance of ~~the~~ IRIS² ~~EU satellite constellation~~ **which will integrate** ~~**and its integral part**~~ EuroQCI**,** for addressing long-term challenges in satellite communications security, safety, and **resilience** ~~**and bridging the connectivity gaps across the Union**~~. Stresses ~~it's~~ **the** role **of IRIS²** in ~~**building upon and**~~ underpinning **the existing European satellite communication technological and industrial base, bridging the connectivity gaps across the Union and** ~~Europe's economic development, strategic autonomy and technological leadership also increasing~~ **improving** the EU's independence from non-European providers for ~~**secured**~~ communication services **- particularly secure ones, and** ~~thus~~ **contributing to the reinforcement of the Union's digital sovereignty in an open manner.** EMPHASISES therefore the need for a timely rollout of ~~the~~ IRIS² ~~constellation~~ ~~**based on**~~ **complementing and integrating** the GOVSATCOM space programme component, consistent with international and national regulatory **frameworks** ~~**policies,**~~ ~~and developing Europe's capacities in satellite communications from industrial as well as regulatory point of view as a necessary step forward~~ to ~~achieve advanced~~ **provide resilient** ~~connectivity~~ **communication** services for governmental users ~~and bridge connectivity gaps across the Union, and ultimately, for Europe's security and resilience~~.

14. ~~UNDERLINES~~ **EMPHASISES** ~~that~~ **the importance of** ~~The Union should therefore ensure~~ **ensuring** sufficient, safe, reliable, **resilient** and secure access to geostationary, medium and low earth orbits and to radio spectrum capacity **and compliance with ITU Radio Regulations,** ~~in line with international law, and better control of~~ **a more transparent** ~~access to its market by~~ **of** satellite constellations ~~registered~~ ~~**operating**~~ **accessing EU market, including those registered under** ~~**non-EU**~~ **regulatory frameworks outside of the EU in order to guarantee a level playing field for all operators.** ~~outside the EU~~. ACKNOWLEDGES the ongoing evolution towards ~~integrating~~ **converging** mobile and satellite technologies including the recent 5G standardisation and 6G development, which ~~promotes convergence and~~ ensures seamless availability of electronic communication services regardless of the location **while supporting the**

development of __European__ innovation __capabilities__ and competition in the EU for the benefit of end users.

15. FURTHER RECOGNISES the transformative potential **of complementary** ~~of~~ Direct-to-Device (D2D) satellite services, which extend beyond consumer smartphone applications to address mobility-related vertical markets such as ~~automotive~~ **transport**, aeronautical, and maritime sectors. NOTES the critical role **that** D2D services can play in improving public services, including civil protection, with far-reaching benefits across multiple domains. ACKNOWLEDGES that further ~~integration~~ **convergence** of satellite and mobile technologies ~~will~~ **has the potential to** drive socio-economic growth, improve network resilience, bridge the digital divide**s** and address global connectivity challenges. **CALLS for the early __integration of__ D2D services into the IRIS² __global__ communication __system__ ~~structure from the outset~~ in order to ensure ~~global~~ __EU's__ competitiveness.**

16. HIGHLIGHTS the growing challenge of intentional Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) jamming and spoofing impacting a wide range of critical infrastructure and services. ACKNOWLEDGES the work of the EU GNSS Interference Task Force. CALLS FOR a coordinated EU effort to establish a robust mechanism for managing information related to GNSS disruptions, ensuring timely reporting, data sharing **within the limits of national security requirements __and Member States' competences__**, ~~and as well as~~ coordinated response measures across Member States. UNDERLINES that precise time synchronisation provided by GNSS is essential for many strategic **and critical** industries, including **aviation,** finance and electronic communications, **as well as energy, transportation and commerce,** and therefore any kind of disruption to these systems may have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. **CALLS for actions to provide alternative solutions to the continuous functionality ~~of__ __provided by__ GNSS.**

17. NOTES that investments in sustainable technologies such as renewable energy supply, energy storage and smart metering contribute not only to the reduction of the carbon footprint but also to strengthen the resilience of **connectivity** infrastructure, ensuring uninterrupted access to **a source of** power at a time of emergency.

18. CALLS FOR **the mobilisation of** strategic investments to enhance digital infrastructure **protection and** resilience, with a particular focus on critical cables for backbone networks**, to protect vital strategic interests of the EU in the Atlantic Ocean as well as Baltic, Black**

Mediterranean and North seas. STRESSES the **urgent** need for comprehensive support for submarine cable infrastructure, **as indicated in the EU Action Plan on Cable Security**, including threat prevention, risk detection, **rapid** incident response, **recovery and repair capacities,** and deterrence. **UNDERSCORES the importance of increased capabilities in order to recover from unintended incidents or sabotage. EMPHASISES the need to ensure redundancy** ~~NOTES the vulnerability~~ of cross-border terrestrial fibre-optic connections ~~basing on the lack of redundancy for physical routes.~~ **and submarine cable infrastructures within Europe, for global connectivity.**

19. RECOGNISES ongoing initiatives on fostering resilience such as in the framework of Council Recommendation 2023/C 20/01 on a Union-wide coordinated approach to strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure and the NIS **Cooperation Group Report** ~~report~~ on ~~Cybersecurity~~ **cybersecurity** and resilience of Europe's communications infrastructures and networks as follow-up to the Nevers Call of 9 March 2022 ~~as well as the Commission Recommendation of 26 February 2024 on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures~~.

20. UNDERSCORES the critical importance of cybersecurity in developing reliable and resilient connectivity infrastructure, as well as ~~security~~ **reducing the risks** of technological and trade interdependencies. UNDERLINES the importance of transposing and implementing the NIS 2 **and CER** Directive**s** to ensure that the digital infrastructures and **essential** services are ~~cyber~~ secure. STRESSES the need to mitigate risks associated with supply chain security for all types of networks **and information systems**. In this context, CALLS to accelerate the full implementation ~~and enforcement~~ of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox, as well as **of** ~~other~~ **the** measures on supply chain security in line with the NIS 2 **and CER** Directive**s**, **and encourages discussions about a more harmonised approach to address emerging cybersecurity threats in electronic communications**. ~~NOTES that working towards connecting the different protocols and communication channels, notably through standardisation, will require ensuring a high level of cybersecurity in each of the networks.~~

~~21. HIGHLIGHTS the necessity of creating a holistic approach to electronic communications infrastructure that breaks down historical silos in the development of different network types (e.g., submarine, satellite, fibre, 5G/6G). CALLS FOR strengthening interoperability at the core of any new strategic approach when it comes to network architecture and infrastructure.~~

22. RECOGNISES the strategic importance of developing ~~a~~ European **technically** integrated resilient communication~~s~~ network~~s~~ that ensure~~s~~ ubiquitous coverage~~,~~ ~~provides seamless interoperability,~~ and maximise~~s~~ resilience across ~~its~~ **their** various elements ~~and~~ ~~holistically~~ through network type diversification **and redundancy**. EMPHASISES that the development of such ~~a~~ network~~s~~ should **take into account Member-States' specificities and** be driven by market dynamics accompanied by targeted EU support, including through guidelines and funding for strategic connectivity projects.

Single market for reliable and resilient connectivity

23. ACKNOWLEDGES **that reliable and resilient connectivity infrastructure constitutes the backbone and a fundamental building block of the Single Market,** ~~that the Single Market~~ **which** is a main driver for EU competitiveness and innovation, positioning the Union as a global leader in the digital economy, strengthening its ~~strategic autonomy and~~ digital sovereignty **in an open manner**~~, which results in providing prosperity to its businesses and citizens~~.

24. UNDERLINES that the Single Market for electronic communications should be deepened~~,~~ ~~where necessary,~~ through further harmonisation~~,~~ **where necessary, and improved cross-border connectivity** ~~and a simplified regulatory framework~~**,** while recognising different business models of service providers**, regional circumstances and the national competence of Member States in the application of harmonised rules**. EMPHASISES that the improvements of the Single Market for electronic communications will reinforce the Union's ~~digital~~ ~~sovereignty~~ ~~and~~ competitiveness and **digital sovereignty in an open manner**, ~~and~~ **as well as** contribute to ubiquitous coverage by reliable and resilient networks, for the benefit of EU citizens and businesses.

25. NOTES that fostering ~~a~~ ~~European~~ **technically** integrated **and** resilient **European** communication~~s~~ network~~s~~ can open new market possibilities within the electronic communications sector, as well as horizontally in the digital economy, enhancing the Union's global competitiveness by driving technological innovation.

26. UNDERSCORES that the radio spectrum plays a key role for the benefit of the Single Market, EU economy and society as a whole. STRESSES that the efficient and coordinated use of radio spectrum supports EU policies, while maximising societal value, and serves to reach the objective of the improvement of the Single Market. NOTES that the **emergence** ~~creation~~ of ~~a~~ **European**

technically integrated resilient communications networks requires timely access to appropriate ~~convergence of the networks requires efficient~~ spectrum ~~sharing between different networks, including~~ for terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, ~~the prioritisation of new band allocations~~ and support to emerging technologies, with a cross-border dimension.

27. ACKNOWLEDGES the successful European model of gradual spectrum harmonisation and the role of the ~~International Telecommunication Union~~ **ITU** in radio spectrum management. CALLS **on the Commission** ~~FOR the~~ to enhanc~~ement of~~ the EU-level support mechanism for the Member States, which will provide a constructive framework, allowing **the Member States** to respond to encountered cross-border interferences cases within the EU and with third countries, not limited to purely technical issues.

28. ENCOURAGES the deployment and further development of futureproof, secure, and trustworthy standards as a baseline for technological developments, maintaining the EU's ~~technological~~ **digital** sovereignty **in an open manner**, and driving innovation and cohesion of the EU electronic communications sector. INVITES the European Commission, **the European External Action Service** and Member States to enhance the Team Europe approach in international fora by actively participating in global standard-setting processes, promoting European-developed standards **based on core** ~~EU~~ **values shared by the EU such as human rights,** and ensuring a coordinated European digital infrastructure strategy that includes all communication layers.

29. CALLS FOR a higher level of resilience by diversification and seamless, ubiquitous connectivity through further developing ~~an~~ **technically** integrated and resilient European communication~~s~~ network**s** in a multilayered approach encompassing **among others**: standardisation activities ~~advancing integrated networks~~, targeted financial mechanisms supporting the development of **such** ~~interoperable~~ network**s**, and guidelines facilitating market-driven deployment.

30. INVITES the European Commission to report to the Council on significant developments regarding **technically** integrated and resilient European communication networks. This should contribute to exchanging information and monitoring progress in achieving seamless and ubiquitous connectivity~~, as well as to warning against risks and threats to reliable and resilient connectivity across the EU and within Member States, especially those exposed to major civil and non-civil risks~~.

31. INVITES the Commission to build on the work of the Submarine Cable Infrastructure informal Expert Group **under the strategic policy approach laid out in the Recommendation on Secure and Resilient Submarine Cable Infrastructures as well as in the EU Action Plan on Cable Security,** and reflect on concrete proposals to further promote the reliability and resilience of these infrastructures as a crucial part of European communication networks**, whilst recalling that national security is the sole responsibility of Member States.** ~~FURTHER CALLS FOR developing the comprehensive approach to security and resilience of submarine cable infrastructures laid out in Recommendation (EU) 2024/779, for instance, with regards to enhanced monitoring and rapid response capacities to limit the vulnerability of key digital infrastructure.~~

32. RECOGNISES that continuous and uninterrupted connectivity is essential for a secure and properly functioning Union. TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION the more frequent natural disasters and other threats, which make the redundancy of **the supply of power for** networks ~~power supply~~ an urgent challenge. CALLS **on** the European Commission to analyse and propose appropriate measures, including financial support ~~(~~without pre-empting the negotiations of the next Multiannual Financial Framework MFF~~)~~.

32a. CALLS on the European Commission to ~~**investigate**~~ **assess the possibility for a coordinated initiative for planning and developing a reliable and resilient network of digital infrastructures across the Union and with international partner countries, for example by using the Trans-European Networks framework and establishing a TEN-D (Trans-European Networks - Digital) instrument.** ~~**UNDERLINES that**~~ **WELCOMES the Commission's** ~~**leadership of**~~ **approach to the Arctic Connectivity Initiative as well as ongoing efforts to reinforce digital infrastructure**~~s~~ **resilience of EU maritime** ~~**in the Baltic and Central and Eastern Europe**~~ **regions, which are** ~~**could be**~~ **valuable examples** ~~**of**~~ **that can become Cable Projects of European Interest, along with other strategic projects** ~~**for such an**~~ **that could be embodied in the TEN-D instrument.**

33. COMMITS to continuously monitor and adapt the EU's **strategic approach to** communication infrastructure ~~strategies~~ to address emerging technological, geopolitical, and environmental challenges, ensuring reliable and resilient connectivity across the Union.

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