

JOINT STATEMENT

Europe's technological sovereignty is built on future-proof connectivity

Europe's technological sovereignty depends on its digital infrastructure. The Digital Networks Act (DNA) is about more than modernising the telecom sector's regulatory framework: it is about giving Europe the networks it needs to develop, deploy and scale the technologies and services (including vital services of general interest) of the future. From AI, cloud services and data centres to smart cities, digital healthcare and education, Europe's ambitions require connectivity that is resilient, reliable and built to last. Widespread fibre coverage, combined with long-term ownership and operation of fibre networks, is the foundation for that future.

To do so, the regulatory framework must be as clear and predictable as possible. A fragmented and inconsistent framework can create regulatory uncertainty, increase administrative burdens and slow down investment decisions, ultimately delaying fibre rollout across the Union as well as the transition from copper to fibre networks. For infrastructure investors, a predictable and proportionate regulatory framework is essential to provide the necessary visibility over long-term investments and their expected returns.

The European Commission's DNA proposal rightly recognises this by setting a common direction towards full fibre connectivity with national plans for transition to fibre.¹ The transition from copper to fibre is not simply about retiring legacy networks. It is about creating the high-capacity infrastructure that businesses and citizens increasingly depend on. Thus, by enabling new digital services and business models, fibre supports investment, innovation and employment across the economy.

Modern data centres rely on highly resilient, high-capacity and low-latency connectivity to process, store, and exchange vast volumes of data. The Commission aims to triple the Union's data centre capacity in the next five to seven years. Widespread fibre coverage is the prerequisite for this exponential growth. Fibre networks provide the bandwidth and reliability to meet these demands, supporting Europe's growing digital ecosystem and competitiveness in strategic digital technologies.

Beyond capacity, fibre-optic networks offer structural security and resilience advantages that copper networks cannot match. Fibre is inherently less susceptible to physical degradation, electromagnetic interference, and service disruptions, resulting in more stable and reliable connectivity for consumers, businesses, and public services when handling sensitive data. As critical sectors increasingly depend on secure digital connectivity, the migration to fibre represents an important investment in Europe's technological resilience and the robustness of its communications infrastructure.

¹ COM(2026) 16 final.

Fibre can also improve how people access services, learn, work and participate in their communities. It supports digital education, more responsive healthcare, flexible ways of working and smarter, more connected cities. By widening access to employment, markets and essential services, it can also reduce the disadvantages of distance. Especially in rural areas, fibre is an essential backbone for conditions for people to live, work and build a future in the places they call home, building on the Commission's 'Right to Stay' Strategy.² The availability of high-capacity networks can attract new businesses, boost and innovate established ones, support local economic activity and offer new opportunities for employment. Evidence indicates that greater fibre availability can lead to greater participation in the labour market and higher levels of employment, including through the creation of new jobs.³ In this way, fibre can strengthen Europe's competitiveness as well as social and territorial cohesion.

A joint call for a timely and predictable transition to full fibre

A timely, fair and well-managed transition to fibre will help ensure that these opportunities can be realised at scale. It will also send a clear signal to investors, providing the regulatory certainty needed to support sustained investment in fibre deployment.

We call on European policymakers to maintain and advance the DNA's positive direction towards a full-fibre future through an objective, rule-based copper switch-off framework.

The Commission's impact assessment estimates that a conditional transition from copper to fibre could generate an accumulated GDP increase of EUR 327 billion between 2025 and 2035, compared with the baseline scenario, while reducing CO2 emissions by 5.1% over the same period due to fibre's higher efficiency rate.⁴ Without further action, however, full fibre to the premises coverage across the EU may not be achieved before 2051, well beyond the European Union's objective of Gigabit connectivity for all by 2030.⁵

As the Commission itself acknowledges in its impact assessment report, the continued existence of copper networks is a key "problem driver" behind the slow roll-out and low uptake of fibre networks.⁶ Rather than waiting until 2035 to initiate the final criteria-based phase, the Commission should already develop the technical details for implementation in parallel. This should include the definition of copper switch-off areas at an appropriately granular technical level. The process should be triggered by the availability of fibre infrastructure, measured by homes passed.

² European Commission, 'European Commission launches landmark "Right to Stay" Strategy', 5 May 2026, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/whats-new/newsroom/05-05-2026-european-commission-launches-landmark-right-to-stay-strategy_en (accessed 9 September 2026)

³ Ipsos MORI (2018), 'Evaluation of the Economic Impact and Public Value of the Superfast Broadband Programme – Final report', prepared for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, August; and OECD (2015), 'Development of High Speed Networks and the role of municipal networks', 9 November.

⁴ European Commission, Impact Assessment Report accompanying the Digital Networks Act, SWD(2026) 13 final, 21 January 2026, part 1/3, p. 96.

⁵ European Commission, Impact Assessment Report, SWD(2026) 13 final, 21 January 2026, Part 1/3, p. 55.

⁶ European Commission, Impact Assessment Report, 21 January 2026, SWD(2026) 13 final, Part 1/3, pp. 34 et seq.

Setting an ambitious and workable threshold for homes passed, as well as prioritising premises already passed by fibre that still have active copper services, would allow the process to begin gradually in areas already served by fibre and to expand gradually as fibre becomes available. A clear, predictable and timely process would demonstrate Europe's commitment to the transition to fibre. It would provide the regulatory certainty needed to unlock and sustain investment in fibre while expanding access to fast, reliable connectivity across Europe.

Europe should use this moment to prepare early and manage the transition in a predictable, socially responsible way that focuses on the opportunities it unlocks. We call on the institutions to uphold the ambition of the Commission's proposal and send a clear signal that Europe is committed to a full-fibre future. Fibre is not simply a telecommunications technology. It is strategic infrastructure for Europe's technological sovereignty, competitiveness and inclusion. By enabling businesses and citizens to make full use of digital technologies, fibre can help Europe build a stronger and more inclusive Digital Union.

