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Feedback on potential inclusion of fiber-optic cables in EU countermeasure list

Dear Sir/Madam,

On behalf of NLconnect, the Dutch trade association for the broadband and telecom industry, we would like to respond to the consultation on possible rebalancing measures under Regulation (EU) No 654/2014, following the extension of US tariffs on steel and aluminium products.

We have noted that fiber-optic cables —specifically CN codes 90011010 and 90011090—are among the products listed as potential targets for countermeasures. While the volume of these specific products imported from the United States into the EU is relatively limited, we strongly advise against including them in the final list.

EU-based production already dominant

A substantial share of the fiber-optic cables used in Europe is produced within the EU by both European and non-European manufacturers. Notable European companies include Prysmian – an Italian manufacturer listed on Borsa Italiana (PRY) – and TKF / TKH Group – a Dutch manufacturer listed on Euronext Amsterdam (TWEKA).

These companies have significant manufacturing operations in Europe, underscoring the region's strong industrial base for optical cable production.

Strategic digital infrastructure at risk

Fiber-optic cables are essential to Europe's digital infrastructure and connectivity ambitions. Introducing tariffs on such products would directly undermine the objectives of the EU Digital Decade, as well as broader goals of digital sovereignty. This applies not

only to fiber for telecom networks but also to high-performance cabling used in data centres.

Limited imports from the US, risk to EU exports

While the EU imports fiber-optic cables from countries like China and India, imports from the United States are minimal. However, even limited exports from the EU to the US could be affected by potential retaliation. To our knowledge, fiber-optic cables and optical fibers are not included in the scope of the newly announced U.S. import tariffs as published in the Federal Register in February 2025. Introducing EU tariffs on these products increases the risk of retaliatory measures from the US, which could disproportionately hurt the European telecom supply chain.

The Commission rightly stresses in its Q&A and consultation notice that any countermeasures must be proportionate, minimise harm to EU interests, and respect the EU's strategic priorities. Including digital infrastructure components such as fiber-optic cables would not align with these principles. In short, we question the rationale and effectiveness of targeting products that are vital to Europe's own long-term competitiveness and strategic autonomy. We therefore urge the Commission not to include fiber-optic cables (CN codes 90011010 and 90011090) in the final list of countermeasure products.

Kind regards,

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Managing director

NLconnect