EUROPEAN WIRELESS INFRASTRUCTURE ASSOCIATION

Contact

Av. des Arts 47,
1000 Brussels,
Belgium
secretariat@ewia.org

15 June 2026

EWIA Response to the European Commission on the Digital Networks Act (DNA)

1. Introduction

EWIA welcomes the opportunity to share some feedback on the DNA proposal. As the voice of the European neutral host tower companies (TowerCos) sector, we look forward to continuing to support the EU's digital decade by efficiently and sustainably enabling connectivity and bridging the digital divide in rural, hard-to-reach areas.

Relevant empirical evidence underpins the positive contributions of our sector, rooted in passive wireless infrastructure sharing and open access, has made to the EU's digital decade and beyond. The key findings of the EY Parthenon economic and sustainability reports[1] demonstrate that Neutral Host TowerCos contribute to:

- Enabling improved coverage and service quality by having already released more than €53 billion in capital to MNOs between 2019 and 2024, thereby strengthening their capacity to invest in network deployment and upgrades across Europe, including in rural areas where coverage expansion is most challenging.
- Projected economic savings of €31 billion between 2019 and 2029 from increased sharing and operating efficiency, providing a strong basis for investments and higher quality services.
- Improved competition and innovation by facilitating market entry and promoting infrastructure-based competition, and thus enabling more consumer choice.
- Avoiding 4 million tonnes of CO2 emissions until 2030, which is the equivalent of taking almost 200,000 cars off the road each year.

These findings result from the neutral-host TowerCo model being inherently pro-competitive, efficient, and sustainable. It has directly supported the European Electronic Communications Code's objectives and will continue to do so under the Digital Networks Act (DNA), through lower barriers to entry, enhanced infrastructure competition, more cost-efficient and faster deployment and consumer benefits through better coverage, quality and pricing.

Crucially, the evidence points to a well-functioning market without indications of systematic denial of access, suggesting that additional ex-ante, symmetric or asymmetric regulation of TowerCos is not warranted.

In EWIA's view, the proposed DNA broadly acknowledges this reality. In particular, the move towards a proportionate approach is welcome and should be preserved. This can be achieved by ensuring that any framework reflects the existing functioning and competitive infrastructure market, which by design promotes infrastructure competition and enables efficient and sustainable 5G rollout.

Moreover, we would like to point out the recognition of the need for a simplified and more investment-friendly regulatory framework. In particular, its emphasis on proportionality and targeting actual bottlenecks is welcome, as reflected in Recitals 19 and 20, which stress that intervention **should be limited to situations of market failure.**

However, several blind spots and implementation risks remain, notably regarding EMF transparency, access to electricity grids, and the increasing reliance on implementing acts, which risk undermining regulatory clarity and investment certainty. These issues could be addressed to ensure that the DNA effectively supports deployment and long-term investment.

---

1) June 2025, "**How neutral host TowerCos strengthen Europe's wireless connectivity and competitiveness**" ;
URL:https://ewia.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_EYP-EWIA-report-2025.pdf

2) March 2023, "**The sustainability contribution of the European TowerCo sector**" ;
URL:https://ewia.org/wp-content/uploads/EY-P-EWIA-2023-Sustainability-report_-EYG-no.-002230-23Gbl_V2.pdf

2. Key provisions addressed by EWIA

2.1 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) transparency and deployment optimisation

The DNA (re)introduces provisions on EMF technical regulations under Article 35, supported by Recital 74, which calls for greater consistency and transparency across Member States.

EWIA supports these objectives. However the current regulatory landscape remains fragmented and often relies on overly conservative or purely theoretical exposure calculations, which can create unnecessary constraints on infrastructure sharing and network densification.

EWIA's recommendations:

- Promote harmonised and accessible EMF information frameworks across Member States.
- Encourage the use of real-life exposure data and standardised methodologies, enabling more efficient infrastructure utilisation.
- Facilitate colocation and densification within existing limits, in line with sustainability and resource efficiency objectives.

At the same time, EWIA does **not advocate revisiting EMF limits or public health thresholds**, which remain the competence of health authorities and should not be reopened in this context.

2.2 Spectrum provisions (Articles 24–25)

EWIA supports in principle the Commission's proposal for an unlimited duration of spectrum rights as it provides predictability to the license holders.

However, EWIA believes that any spectrum policy reform should stimulate investments across the connectivity value chain to improve coverage and quality, and to enable consumer choice, thereby supporting the achievement of the EU's digital targets (and beyond).

The proposed evolution of the spectrum regime - notably through Articles 24–25 on licence duration and renewal - has the potential to contribute to that but needs to strike the right balance between predictability and openness with regard to investment.

The objective of enhancing investment predictability is duly recognised and supported – particularly in Recitals 101–102. However, the medium-to-long-term implications for market dynamics remain uncertain.

This underscores the need for carefully calibrated measures that trigger robust investment incentives, including in physical infrastructure, while preserving effective competition, as explicitly acknowledged in Recital 117.

EWIA's recommendations:

- **Unlimited spectrum usage rights (Art. 24)** should be designed such that they:
  - Protect past investments while continuing to incentivise new ones.
  - Remain conditional on clear, proportionate and enforceable infrastructure investment, coverage and quality commitments.
- **Automatic renewal mechanisms (Art. 25)** should be contingent on:
  - Technical capacity to fulfil the coverage obligations.
  - The technical and economic capacity to maintain service levels, including through densification investments.
  - The preservation of competitive dynamics in upstream and downstream markets.
  - Measurable and verifiable investment commitments.

2.3 Small-area wireless access points (small cells)

EWIA supports the objective of facilitating the deployment of small-area wireless access points under Article 34, which are essential for 5G densification and capacity. This is recognised in Recitals 119–122, which emphasise their role in improving capacity, limiting deployment restrictions and facilitating access to public infrastructure.

However, experience across Member States shows that the main barriers are not legislative, but implementation-related, including restrictive local conditions, fragmented permitting frameworks and inconsistent application of EU rules.

Based on this, EWIA considers that the issue does not lie in the DNA provision itself, but in the related implementing framework (notably existing implementing acts and national/local practices), which has not been reviewed for a long time.

EWIA's recommendations:

- Article 34 is overall fit for purpose at the legislative level, but the corresponding implementing acts are outdated.
- The main problem is inconsistent and overly restrictive implementation across Member States.
- The EU might therefore focus on:
  - Reviewing and improving the implementing framework, in particular Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1070, to make it fit for purpose and adapted to the technical realities of modern small cell network deployment.
  - Ensuring consistent and effective application across Member States.
  - Clarifying technical and administrative conditions.
  - Guaranteeing access to public infrastructure on fair and reasonable terms, in line with the DNA and complementary instruments such as the Gigabit Infrastructure Act.

3. Blind spots and implementation risks

3.1 Access to electricity grids

While the DNA rightly emphasises infrastructure deployment, resilience and capacity - as reflected in its general objectives under Article 1 and related recitals on digital infrastructure - it fails to address one of the key practical constraints and prerequisites for rollout: **access to electricity networks.**

In practice, electricity is a **precondition for connectivity deployment**, particularly for 5G and network densification. Without timely and reliable access to the grid, new sites simply cannot be activated, regardless of the regulatory framework for telecom deployment.

Experience from TowerCos across Europe shows that access to electricity is increasingly a critical bottleneck, due to:

- lengthy timelines for connection offers and realisation.
- unsuitable or suboptimal technical connection proposals.
- lack of transparency on costs and connection points.
- fragmented permitting and coordination processes.
- and insufficient prioritisation of connectivity infrastructure compared to other sectors.

These constraints have a direct impact on rollout timelines, especially in rural areas and along transport corridors, where achieving Digital Decade connectivity targets remains most challenging.

EWIA's recommendations:

- While this issue might be considered as falling partially outside the scope of the DNA, it is crucial, as it represents a structural gap that risks undermining its objectives and thus delivering on the digital targets.
- Connectivity infrastructure should be recognised, in practice, as dependent on timely grid access, with stronger coordination between energy and digital policies.
- Addressing this gap requires:
  - More predictable and timely grid connection processes.
  - Improved transparency on costs and technical conditions.
  - Better coordination between TowerCos and distribution system operators (DSOs), including at the planning stage.

The effectiveness of the DNA will ultimately depend not only on telecom regulation but also on the ability to resolve cross-sector bottlenecks such as electricity access. Without timely grid connections, deployment objectives, including 5G densification and coverage expansion, cannot be achieved.

3.2 Regulatory uncertainty linked to implementing acts

While the DNA aims to simplify and harmonise the regulatory framework and to provide regulatory certainty, its effectiveness may be undermined by the extensive reliance on implementing and delegated acts, which creates uncertainty for investors and market actors.

This reliance is not limited to one provision but is embedded across several areas of particular relevance:

- **Spectrum (Part IV – incl. Articles 24–25):**

The framework foresees further specification through EU spectrum strategies, roadmaps and authorisation conditions, to be adopted via implementing acts. This introduces uncertainty regarding how long-term rights (including under Articles 24–25) will be concretely applied and conditioned in practice.

- **Small-area wireless access points (Article 34):**

While the legislative provision is broadly fit for purpose, its application depends heavily on technical implementing measures and national execution, including specifications at the EU level. Experience shows that these secondary layers are the main source of deployment barriers.

- **Resilience and operational frameworks:**

The DNA foresees instruments such as the Union Preparedness Plan for Digital Infrastructures, whose scope, governance and operational implications remain to be defined through secondary measures.

More broadly, service-related obligations and technical parameters (e.g. quality, affordability, specialised services) are also left open to future implementing acts in Part VI, further reinforcing the open-ended nature of the framework.

EWIA's recommendations:

- Increase regulatory certainty for investors by ensuring that core elements of the framework - particularly those related to spectrum rights (Part IV) and deployment conditions in Article 34 - are defined at the legislative level, rather than left to future implementing acts.

- Prioritise the clarification and improvement of existing implementing frameworks (e.g. those underpinning Article 34) while limiting the introduction of additional secondary measures that could further delay or fragment implementation.

EWIA EUROPEAN WIRELESS INFRASTRUCTURE ASSOCIATION

4. Conclusion

The DNA represents a key opportunity to establish a more coherent, proportionate and investment-friendly framework for Europe's connectivity infrastructure, one that recognises the positive contribution of competitive, infrastructure-sharing models such as TowerCos.

To fully deliver on its objectives, however, the Regulation should:

- **Take into account cross-sector dependencies**, in particular **access to electricity**, which remains a critical prerequisite for network rollout.
- **Preserve a light-touch and evidence-based regulatory approach**, avoiding additional obligations in a market where no failure has been demonstrated.
- **Focus on practical deployment enablers** by addressing implementation gaps, notably in small-cell deployment and EMF transparency.
- And **ensure regulatory predictability**, by limiting reliance on open-ended implementing and delegated acts in areas that directly affect investment decisions.

Addressing these elements is essential to ensure that the DNA effectively supports timely, cost-efficient and large-scale deployment, in line with the Digital Decade objectives.

EWIA stands ready to engage constructively with the EU institutions to ensure that the final framework effectively enables competitive, sustainable and investment-driven connectivity across Europe.

About EWIA

EWIA is the European Wireless Infrastructure Association, the European trade association of neutral host TowerCos which provide open access to their shared wireless infrastructure. Our members invest in and operate wireless infrastructure essential to the delivery of mobile voice, wireless broadband, and other wireless networks. This 'neutral host' model is now the prevalent model in Europe, where our 13 members operate over 270,000 wireless infrastructure assets in 23 countries. We serve all mobile network operators (MNOs) and hundreds of other wireless operators enabling better communications for end users in the communities we cover. For more information, contact us at secretariat@ewia.org