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Baltic Sea backbone telecommunications cable: international request for comments

The Ministry of Transport and Communications of Finland has explored the opportunity of implementing a new, direct telecommunications connection between Finland and Germany via the Baltic Sea. By establishing a new route which provides an alternative to the current link running through Sweden, the purpose is to improve the operational reliability of Finland's international data traffic connections. A more detailed description of the project is attached.

The opportunities of implementing the Baltic Sea backbone cable have been examined for the past two years. A feasibility study on the technical and financial perspectives of the project was completed in summer 2012, indicating that the construction of the cable would cost some EUR 50 million. According to preliminary plans, the cable would comprise 6–8 fibre optic pairs. No decision has yet been made on the implementation of the cable or its construction timetable; however, the aim would be to build it in 2014–2015.

At the end of March 2013, the Finnish Government stated that it was in favour of continuing the studies so that a possible implementation decision could be made this year. A business plan is currently under preparation, looking into different ways of financing the project. No option has yet been excluded. One possibility is that the cable would be owned and operated by a state-owned company, and the Finnish Government would contribute to the project by providing a capital injection to this state-owned submarine cable company.

By making use of the existing connection running through Finland, the Baltic Sea backbone cable could, with minor additional investment, be interconnected with the Northern Sea Route cable under preparation in Russia, which is to provide a link between Europe and Asia. The Baltic Sea cable and the Northern Sea Route cable together would open up a new route between mainland Europe and Asia, considerably shorter than the present one.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications invites comments on the Baltic Sea submarine cable project from all interested parties. This request for comments is open to all, including telecommunications operators, data centre operators, cable suppliers, investors and the authorities. Finland is making preparations to notify the submarine cable project to the European Commission. We therefore hope that those submitting comments could provide us with information on other similar projects, if any, in the Baltic Sea area. We would also like to know if you are interested in contributing to the funding of the project, or in cooperating in the project in some other way. All comments will be

treated as confidential. If necessary, a bilateral meeting to discuss the issue can also be arranged.

Please send your comments by email to juha.parantainen@lvm.fi by **Wednesday 22 May 2013** at the latest. For further information, please contact Mr Juha Parantainen (email the same as above, tel. +358 295 34 2383).



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Attachments

Description of the Baltic Sea backbone telecommunications cable