DIGI FIBER CHARTER

STATEMENT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR AN EFFICIENT ROLL-OUT OF FIBER NETWORKS IN BELGIUM

1 Introduction

Digital networks, with robust physical infrastructures as their foundation, are set to become the backbone of our modern economy and society. They enable communication and data exchange, and they stimulate innovation and economic growth in an increasingly digital world.

With the explosive growth of data traffic and the demand for ultra-fast and reliable connections, it is therefore essential to deploy fiber networks and build/use physical infrastructure (as the base support for the fiber networks), as also emphasized by Europe in its 2030 Digital Decade objectives. DIGI is actively rolling out its future-proof fiber network capable now of 10 Gigabit speeds and any speed in the future, based on physical infrastructure access (ducts, façade, poles, arial) to provide FTTH – Fiber to the Home services to consumers.

Our infrastructure project represents a valuable investment in a sustainable digital future, one that will provide stable, ultra-fast, and continuously competitive connections for decades to come. At the same time, the works bring temporary challenges for local authorities, who are confronted with the scale of these projects. DIGI acknowledges these challenges and works closely with local authorities and their partners to minimize the impact on public spaces and residents. This document is aimed at fostering even better cooperation between DIGI and local authorities.

The deployment it is very important and special moment for the communities nowadays, as the choices for the efficient deployment and for the presence of multiple fiber operators and open access to the physical infrastructure will affect on the long term the innovation, competitivity, resilience, stable and affordable prices and quality of services that the citizens in the community will benefit and pay for. The mere existence of parallel independent fiber networks is the key for these objectives to be accomplished and maintained for the long term.

2 Purpose of the DIGI Charter

With this declaration of intent, DIGI aims to strengthen its commitments and communicate clearly to local authorities and partners. This document clarifies DIGI's fiber deployment principles, so that local authorities know what to expect, how DIGI will meet their needs and regulations, and what standards DIGI offers when a construction site is launched.

In addition, through this charter we call for constructive cooperation between all telecom operators in general, and between DIGI and local authorities in particular for the deployment of fiber and usage of physical infrastructure access elements (ducts, for examples). They are, after

all, our most important partners in achieving the national connectivity objectives. By working together, we want processes to run efficiently and pragmatically, creating a win-win for local authorities, consumers, businesses and our company. We aim to achieve this through joint actions such as regular communication, transparency, and coordination—starting from the very first contact when presenting plans, through to follow-up and aftercare once the works are completed.

With clear agreements and a well-defined framework for the execution of works, DIGI and local authorities can make the rollout of fiber networks a success. We believe that such cooperation is the key to achieving top-level digital infrastructure—respecting public spaces and minimizing disruption with efficiency in deployment (exploring also new fiber deploying technics for the underground ducts, like mini / micro trenching) — while delivering better access to high-speed connectivity, improved digital services, a stronger local economy, and a long-term framework for a competitive offering.

It is essential also from the competition, innovation, security and resilience perspectives to have present in a commune multiple fiber operators with independent / separate fiber networks which will maintain on the long term a competitive and future proof local market for telecom services with very good quality and prices for the consumers.

The efficient deployment of the new fiber networks, through common usage of the physical infrastructure (ducts, façade, poles), new deployment technics (mini / micro trenching) and working with direct employees or a short chain of subcontractors (avoiding high cost / burden intermediaries) will bring stable and affordable pricing for the telecom services and less disturbance from the construction of the network for the citizens in the municipality.

3 European Regulation Gigabit Infrastructure Act (GIA) and potential effects for consumers

Europe recognizes the urgent need to accelerate, facilitate, and make more cost-efficient the rollout of fixed and wireless networks with very high capacity. In this context, the Regulation called the Gigabit Infrastructure Act [1](hereinafter GIA) was adopted. The GIA entered into force on 11 May 2024 and is aimed at facilitating the accelerated and efficient deployment of gigabit networks, so that citizens and businesses can gain faster access to these high-quality technologies. It is crucial that the outlined policy is effectively translated across all policy levels, from federal to regional and local.

The GIA covers various policy areas, including access to existing physical infrastructure (“ducts”) (Articles 3 and 4), coordination of civil works (Articles 5 and 6), the establishment of simplified and streamlined permitting procedures (Articles 7, 8 and 9), in-building physical infrastructure

[1] Verordening (EU) 2024/1309 van het Europees Parlement en de Raad van 29 april 2024 inzake maatregelen om de kosten van de uitrol van elektronischecommunicatienetwerken met gigabitsnelheden te verlagen, tot wijziging van Verordening (EU) 2015/2120 en tot intrekking van Richtlijn 2014/61/EU (gigabitinfrastructuurverordening), gepubliceerd in het Europees PublicatieBlad op *8.5.2024*

(Article 10), access to in-building physical infrastructure (Article 11), digitalization of central information points (Article 12), and efficient dispute resolution (Article 13).

As a result, it is clear that the GIA aims to further promote through access to physical infrastructure the cooperation between telecom operators and also other public utilities, with the main advantages being:

- Reduction of nuisance for municipalities and citizens,
- Lower investments for telecom operators,
- Stimulating competition with all the benefits for citizens.

The advantage of having multiple fiber networks by accessing physical infrastructure compared to the case where the is only one fiber network used by all operators are:

- Competition in the market leading to higher quality and better and stable prices;
- Innovation for existing services and also for new services, as each of the operators are trying to have a better portfolio than its competitors;
- Independence between the operators creating diversity of products and services, fast tracking the evolution of the telecom services for all consumers;
- Redundancy and resilience;
- Positive effects in other industries using telecom services, with the benefits related to quality, stable pricing and latest technologies available going to overspill with positive effects in almost every sector of the economy.

If the operators are not allowed to access the physical infrastructure for having each of them a separate fiber network, the old monopoly existing on copper networks will just be replaced with a fiber monopoly. All the advantages above will disappear, the availability of new technologies and the progress will be limited, the sole effect being the unbalanced benefits only in the favor of one dominant telecom network operator, not only compared with the other competing telecom operators, but also in the relation with all consumers. The citizens or businesses will pay higher unjustified prices, will benefit from average quality and wait for years for new technologies, upgrades or developments (including network in new areas) from the incumbent network operator.

The transition from service-based competition to infrastructure-based competition is now essential to substantially accelerate the roll-out of fiber in Belgium, as proven already in the very competitive markets in Europe which are benefitting of high coverage with fiber (above 80-90%), best quality and affordable and stable prices. Access to ducts radically reduces the cost of building a fiber network, by allowing the use of existing conduits and the installation of sub-ducts enabling each operator to blow in its own fiber. This solution reduces public nuisance, avoids redundant work and, above all, guarantees real and sustainable competition between operators.

This direct access to ducts (without the obligation to lease the fiber) is already at the heart of current regulatory policies: it is supported at both national and European level, notably by the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (BCRD), the Gigabit Infrastructure Act (GIA) and the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC).

Especially regarding access to physical infrastructure, Belgium has many opportunities to reduce the impact on municipalities while ensuring maximum competition for the long term. For years, the Electronic Communications Act (WEC) has included Articles 28/3 and 28/4 to allow access to existing passive (i.e., physical) infrastructures. The GIA urges that disruption for cities be minimized by maximizing the sharing of existing physical infrastructure (ducts) and ensuring

sufficient duct capacity when laying new networks. The GIA calls on all operators to promote transparency, cooperate in a central information point, and grant access to existing and newly built physical infrastructure (ducts) under fair and reasonable conditions. DIGI calls on all telecom operators and municipal authorities to make maximum use of ducts of the telecom operators and other utilities and to document them transparently and non-discriminatory.

In addition, the permitting policy remains a crucial link in the efficient rollout of this infrastructure. The GIA therefore contains provisions encouraging Member States to adopt stricter rules aimed at speeding up the permitting procedure for the deployment of fiber networks and the associated physical infrastructure. This should include, among other measures, reducing decision-making deadlines on permits to a maximum of four months, introducing additional permit exemptions, implementing other measures that contribute to a smoother and more efficient handling of permit applications and accepting new and efficient methods of constructions like mini/micro trenching.

Finally, the GIA also contains provisions regarding civil works themselves, in particular transparency requirements for planned civil works as well as the effective coordination of such works. The GIA encourages network operators to carry out works jointly with other network operators wherever possible, or to schedule them simultaneously with other planned civil works (such as road maintenance or construction). In Flanders, network operators use existing digital tools for this purpose. This coordination helps to reduce disruptions and inconveniences caused by the renewal of utilities and telecom networks, but unlike the sharing of physical infrastructure, it can only be applied jointly by all operators in limited cases. The GIA therefore calls on the regional authorities to implement all articles in parallel.

4 Explanation of the Legal Framework

Any operator wishing to roll out a public electronic communications network is required to register with the BIPT, as prescribed by the Law of 13 June 2005 on electronic communications. This means that every operator must comply with all legal obligations set out in this law and its implementing decrees. These obligations relate, among other things, to the coordination of civil engineering works and the provision of transparency regarding planned works.

In addition, the law on the reform of certain public economic enterprises requires operators to obtain approval from the competent authority for the installation of cables, overhead lines, and associated equipment in the public domain. The Municipal Roads Decree (Gemeentewegendecreet in Flanders/ Décret Voiries in Wallonia/ Ordonnance “Chantiers” in Brussels) likewise stipulates that operators need municipal approval to carry out works in municipal roads/the municipal public domain. Operators must also inform building owners in advance about the location and method of the works and seek to reach an agreement with the owner.

Since operators carry out works in the public domain, for which municipalities are responsible, they must also comply with municipal regulations and police authorization for works in their public domain.

The 3 Regions defined Codes for Utility and Infrastructure Works :

- In Flanders, more than 90% of municipalities have adopted the Code Nuts en infrastuctuurwerken as municipal regulation.
- In Wallonia, the Décret Impétrants and i
- n Brussels, the Ordonnance “Chantiers”.

The Municipal Roads Decree, the GIPOD Decree and traffic legislation (Verkeerwetgeving in Flanders) the POWALCO Decree in Wallonia and the Brussels Government Arrêté OSIRIS concerning signage are also legal obligations. Furthermore, the relevant Standard Specifications (provisions of SB 250 in Flanders / Qualiroute provisions in Wallonia / Brussels Technical CRR) must be followed in the execution of works.

In addition to obligations, operators also have certain rights. The same law on the reform of certain public economic enterprises stipulates that: “[...] every operator of a public electronic communications network is authorized, subject to their intended purpose and the legal and regulatory provisions governing their use, to use the public domain and properties to install cables, overhead lines, and associated equipment, and to carry out all necessary works thereto.” Moreover, every operator has the right to use the public domain and to rights of way for cables, overhead lines, and associated equipment in public or private buildings located in the public domain.

More information on the rights and obligations of operators, homeowners, property managers, project developers, and local authorities in the rollout of fiber networks can be found on the BIPT website www.infofibre.be / www.glasvezelinfo.be and the VVSG / UVCW websites.

5 Fiber: a future-proof network

Fiber is the driving force behind a digitally prosperous Belgium, where the demand for stable, ultra-fast connections continues to grow due to increasing data and internet needs. As the most sustainable technology for fixed internet, it offers unmatched speed and security, essential for households, local authorities, businesses, and numerous socio-economic actors such as hospitals and schools. Fiber enables seamless video conferencing, online lessons, and high-definition streaming. For local authorities and businesses, this means more efficient communication, faster access to cloud services, and improved connectivity for various applications, significantly accelerating digitalization.

Not only for fixed internet, but also for mobile connections, fiber is essential. It plays a crucial role in the rollout and operation of a 5G network, as it connects mobile telecom infrastructure to the rest of the network. These connections must provide massive bandwidth to handle large amounts of data and connected devices. With the growing demand for higher speeds and larger volumes, also for mobile services, fiber is indispensable to making 5G a success story.

In addition, fiber is a future-proof technology: it can easily support any higher speeds as demand for bandwidth grows. This is important for the further development of smart cities and Internet of

Things (IoT) applications. Equally, it will help bridge the digital divide by giving everyone access to the same high-quality internet services. Investing in fiber is therefore investing in the economic growth and prosperity of citizens, businesses, and local authorities.

This technological resilience for the coming century, combined with the growing demand for broadband, must also be accompanied by a sustainable competitive playing field. This is why, in addition to cost reduction, DIGI advocates that when new physical infrastructure is laid, additional duct capacity needs be provided during a one-time trench excavation.

6 DIGI's view for the implementation of fiber networks

6.1 Compliance with the GIA and Sharing of Physical Infrastructure

To avoid inconvenience for both local authorities and citizens, without hindering competition or innovation, DIGI is proposing —following good practices in other European countries—to make maximum use of existing infrastructure, such as ducts and poles. In places where such physical infrastructure is lacking, DIGI will install duct capacity. The available capacity will be shared under fair and reasonable conditions, with the aim of avoiding repeated and prolonged roadworks over a period of decades.

In the Belgian market, which is characterized by civil engineering infrastructure that has already been largely amortized and is owned almost exclusively by incumbent operators, the lack of access to ducts alone – historically financed for the most part by public funds – maintains a structural asymmetry that benefits the Proximus-Telenet duopoly in Flanders and part of Brussels and Proximus-Orange duopoly in Wallonia and the other part of Brussels.

This approach is fully in line with European guidelines (cf. GIA) and helps to reduce inconvenience and costs for all stakeholders: local governments, operators, and citizens. At the same time, it promotes a faster and broader rollout of connectivity across the country, ultimately leading to better services and sharper prices for both consumers and businesses, in the short and long term. We call on all other telecom operators to do the same and thus minimize inconvenience as much as possible.

Compliance with the Code for Utility Works

The agreements included in the Code for Utility Works are a good example of cooperation across municipalities to create a uniform framework within which infrastructure works can take place, thereby improving efficiency. In this sense, it is a very valuable document that establishes clear rules for utility companies and local authorities.

It also serves to streamline compliance with the Municipal Roads Decrees, traffic legislation on signage, GIPOD/POWALCO/OSIRIS, and the Standard Specifications. Operators commit themselves to complying with the Code for Utility Works and the relevant and applicable provisions of these laws and the Standard Specifications, and they also call on local authorities to ensure stricter enforcement of the Code for Utility Works.

At the same time, operators are also willing to collaborate in reviewing and proposing actions to make the Code for Utility Works more effective in practice.

6.2 GIPOD/POWALCO/OSIRIS and Synergies for Civil Works in the Public Domain

DIGI promotes both the maximum reuse of existing physical infrastructures and, where these are absent, the exploitation of synergies for works in the public domain in order to avoid multiple projects by different operators in the same street and to limit inconvenience for citizens.

Wherever its plans make this possible (as well as for a limited percentage of its network rollout), DIGI is complying with the GIPOD/POWALCO/OSIRIS coordination legislation and procedures, and to correctly entering the files into GIPOD/POWALCO/OSIRIS so that other utility companies can participate in the coordinated works.

6.3 Communication and Transparency

DIGI is consulting with representatives of local authorities prior to the start of works. During these consultations, the project (scope, duration, delivery deadline, synergies, etc.) as well as the working methods will be explained, and both parties will enter into dialogue. The goal is to make clear agreements and align expectations.

Throughout the project, DIGI will remain available for regular and scheduled progress meetings. DIGI will also ensure that a single contact person is always appointed to serve as the first point of contact for the local authority. Even after the project is completed, DIGI will remain available for aftercare and questions concerning (spot) works for customer connections. For this purpose, too, each municipality will have a clearly designated Single Point of Contact (SPOC).

In addition to consultations with the local authority, DIGI will, in accordance with legal requirements, proactively inform local residents living in the work area. DIGI and its on-site staff will act as the first point of contact for residents during the works. DIGI will organize itself so that at least one staff member on-site can communicate in Dutch with the residents. This way, they can also be directly addressed by the local authority regarding the agreements made. DIGI encourages its site staff to use modern digital tools to overcome potential language barriers.

DIGI therefore recognizes that strong communication with the municipality and its residents is a cornerstone of a respectful fiber rollout. DIGI will be:

- Sending a letter at least three months and no later than 10 days before the start of works to the owner of a building (house, apartment, business) to inform them about façade or excavation works. These letters will contain sufficiently detailed information so that the owner understands the scope of the works.
- Explaining the planned intervention to the owner concerned.
- Referring, where necessary, to the relevant legislation as well as the website of the telecom regulator BIPT (infofibre.be/Glasvezel.be), which explains the rights and obligations of the parties involved.
- Referring to a central contact point where residents can ask questions or raise concerns about the works. Residents can easily contact the responsible operator by phone or email for proper follow-up.

Smooth communication will also be ensured on and around the work site:

- For all interactions with the municipality and other utility companies, the project leader in a municipality will always speak the official language of the region, i.e., French or Dutch.
- For all interactions on-site, language use will comply with the regional regulatory requirements.

6.4 Maximum Respect for Public Space: Quality over Speed

DIGI ensures maximum respect for public space and putting this into practice. This means that the works must be carried out as efficiently as possible, limiting their duration to a minimum, but always with quality and safety as the priority. This applies to the quality and safety of the installation of its own utility lines, safety in public spaces, and the quality and safety of the restoration of public spaces.

Every construction site will be organized according to these principles. DIGI will take account of the concerns and requests of local authorities regarding minimizing disruption, quality restoration of public spaces, spatial planning, traffic interference, and protection of local biodiversity. This applies to site setup, execution, and delivery of the works.

In other words, this covers the full cycle of the works, from the start of the project to the closing of the last opening and the finishing of the road surface, including aftercare upon final delivery:

- Construction sites will be set up in accordance with applicable rules, with respect for public space. This means:
    - Sites will be organized according to best practices (regarding minimal disruption, safety, and signage as per traffic legislation) and as agreed with local authorities during the project's planning phase. DIGI will make its best efforts to offer solutions so that the continuous use of public space is minimally impacted.
    - Each site will respect the principle of causing as little inconvenience as possible for local residents (in terms of noise, waste or litter, storage of materials, etc.). At the end of each working day and upon project completion, the site will always be left in the best possible condition.
    - Each site will comply with safety regulations for workers and traffic safety, as also set out in legislation.
    - All teams will be informed of the rules and conditions to be respected from domain authorizations and signage permits, with a direct feedback loop in place if violations occur. In the event of complaints, operators will intervene to correct the situation.
    - Digi will strive to use the appropriate way of working also taking into consideration less pollution and carbon footprint.
- At project completion, the public space will be restored in accordance with best practices, regulatory requirements and municipal conditions.
- For excavation works, DIGI will always take photos to document the state of the surroundings both before and after the works.

6.5 Respect for Building Architecture in Façade Cabling

- When installing fiber on façades, DIGI always respects the aesthetic value of buildings and complies with applicable urban planning regulations. DIGI will consistently apply the following rules: Every telecom operator has the right to install its own fiber network and to make use of the façade right provided by the 1991 law.
- The infrastructure that DIGI installs on façades complies with market-standard specifications. When installing fiber boxes, DIGI will, whenever technically possible, take into account the existing infrastructure on the façade. Cables must be attached in places that minimize the impact on the building's typology, for example by following the architectural lines of the façade. DIGI will not leave cables hanging loose for longer than one month during installation works, except in necessary cases and in consultation with the municipality.

6.6 Less Disruption and More Control

Infrastructure works will always cause a certain degree of temporary disruption. This is inherent to the nature of the works—streets, roads, or sidewalks must be opened in order to carry out underground works. However, DIGI is striving to minimizing the impact of these works as much as possible. Together with local authorities, DIGI is prepared to explore preventive steps that can be taken to limit disruption.

Three concrete solutions DIGI proposes are:

- **Principle of "minimal disruption":** This principle will be integrated into the project from the planning phase onwards. DIGI and municipalities will, wherever possible and to the best of their ability, exchange their multi-year planning schedules. This enables partners to proactively identify overlapping projects, explore opportunities for reusing infrastructure, or establish cooperation between existing infrastructures within the legal framework and through synergies. This also means that DIGI will always proactively look for the most efficient execution of works to minimize inconvenience. This process includes direct alignment between local authorities and DIGI, translating the expectations of local authorities into an efficient project approach.
- **Site inspections**: To ensure that commitments concerning the quality of works (such as clean sites, minimal noise pollution, proper signage, and correct restoration) are respected in practice, DIGI will conduct unannounced inspections during works in municipalities.
- **More control over the quality of public space restoration**: Utility companies will conduct additional checks on the restoration of the public domain, in line with the standard specifications (including checks on compaction, etc.).

6.7 Respect for Social Legislation and Workplace Well-being

With regard to the teams that will ultimately carry out the works on site, DIGI will comply with federal social legislation, workplace well-being legislation, and their implementing decrees.

Particular attention is given to the principles included and recognized by the federal legislator in the guidelines concerning "Well-being at Work." This means, among other things, that DIGI will ensure:

- **Safety and health at work**: Workplaces will be organized to prevent accidents by actively identifying, preventing, and mitigating hazards and risks. For the rollout of telecom networks, DIGI uses quality equipment, such as ladders, lifts, and proper signage, and ensures that protective equipment is available and used. Safety instructions will be clearly displayed, proper guidelines provided, and workers trained accordingly.
- **Ergonomically responsible work**: Rolling out telecom networks is physically demanding. DIGI ensures that workers are well informed about preventive measures to reduce workload and that they have quality tools to perform their tasks efficiently.
- **Attention to occupational hygiene:** Preventive measures will be taken to avoid health risks caused by the work environment. This includes proactively organizing sites to prevent, identify, and control biological, physical, and chemical risks.

6.8 Ensuring the Safety of Employees, Contractors, and Third Parties

The safety of employees, subcontractors, and third parties is always central—both in the organization of construction sites and during the execution of works. DIGI actively coordinates safety and applies the strictest standards, constantly benchmarking against best practices. All works are carried out in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including relevant collective labor agreements, standards, and recognized codes of good practice, with DIGI taking responsibility for both compliance and enforcement.

DIGI therefore ensures to:

- Implementing a dynamic risk management system (DRMS) to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.
- Carrying out works in accordance with the general prevention principles.
- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) that meets regulatory requirements (helmets, high-visibility clothing, gloves, safety glasses, harnesses, etc.).
- Ensuring that all specialized works, such as underground drilling, are performed by trained personnel.
- Ensuring the presence of a safety coordinator at temporary and mobile construction sites (where more than one contractor is involved).
- Always coordinating with local authorities and installing the correct signage.

6.9 Respecting the Integrity of Other Operators' Networks

DIGI will install its fiber optic cables without affecting the network cables of the other operators.

7 Closer Cooperation Between Local Authorities and DIGI

7.1 Raising Awareness of the Importance of Fiber

The construction of the digital highway of the future creates enormous social value and deserves to be highlighted and communicated. The rollout and cooperation would be further enhanced if the importance of fiber for various economic and socio-cultural institutions were recognized and communicated by local authorities. When a new project is launched, DIGI seeks to work with the local authority to communicate the importance of gigabit connectivity to residents.

7.2 Compliance with the Codes for Utility Works and Existing Legislation & Pragmatic Application of Moratorium Periods

The Codes for Utility Works are valuable documents with strong principles for permitting policies and the execution of works. DIGI supports the Codes and wishes to work with local authorities to ensure the strictest possible application, while also proposing improvements to make the Codes more effective in practice. A uniform and consistent application of the Codes increase its effectiveness and avoids misunderstandings and fragmented policies.

The rules regarding moratorium periods are also clearly included in the document. Regarding these moratoriums, DIGI advocates for a pragmatic approach and the possibility of dialogue on the need for additional duct capacity, synergies, and potential exceptions. The goal is both to promote efficient rollout—which benefits local authorities, residents, businesses, and institutions—and to avoid reopening newly paved surfaces, which is also more costly for utility companies.

Municipalities retain the ability to deal pragmatically with moratoriums. In addition to the structural exceptions described in the Codes for Utility Works, each municipality can decide on a case-by-case basis whether to grant exemptions. DIGI also acknowledges that it is ultimately the municipality that decides and that works during a moratorium period can only take place with explicit municipal approval.

7.3 Non-Discriminatory Permitting Policy

DIGI will present its projects to local authorities in line with its economic model of infrastructure competition. To ensure a level playing field, it is essential that every telecom operator receives equal opportunities to build public networks and to offer commercial services. This requires local authorities to treat telecom operators in a non-discriminatory way in their permitting policies, ensuring equal treatment of every application.

7.4 Organizing Consultation Meetings

Good communication and alignment of expectations are important not only at the start, but also throughout the works. Communication and transparency remain essential during execution. To anticipate obstacles or unmet expectations in time, it is important that sufficient consultation moments are held throughout the process and after the works (for aftercare). DIGI is committed

to participating in such meetings, providing updates on progress, and sharing its own findings and on-site experiences.

These consultation moments are valuable, enabling both operators and local authorities to adjust where necessary based on exchanged information. In addition, such recurring meetings allow operators to coordinate projects in the long term and to work together more synergistically. DIGI therefore asks that local authorities schedule transparent consultation moments at regular intervals. DIGI also ensure to participating in municipal consultations on multi-year planning and sharing information on those plans—enhancing the chance of joint works and promoting solutions based on laying additional duct capacity in trenches.

7.5 Use of Regional IT Platforms and Processes

DIGI operates in many Belgian cities and municipalities. After the initial rollout of physical infrastructure and fiber—where, as described above, regular consultations with local authorities are provided—the phase of customer connections and network maintenance follows, spread over the entire lifecycle of the network. These interventions are usually small-scale, lasting from a few minutes to a few hours, and have limited impact on public space (e.g., spot openings, façade interventions).

However, these works require a high degree of flexibility. Internet connectivity has become an essential need in daily life. Operators must therefore be able to respond quickly to connect new customers or resolve outages.

To guarantee efficient service delivery, DIGI calls on municipalities to actively use the regional platforms (GIPOD, Osiris, Powalco) and to refrain from imposing additional local permitting procedures for these limited interventions. Today, we see a fragmentation of IT tools, processes, and timelines that differ per municipality and each impose their own requirements for lead times, documentation, and approvals.

DIGI therefore advocates greater uniformity, simplification, and a regional approach through these platforms, without municipal exceptions. This contributes to faster service delivery, reduced administrative burden, and better digital infrastructure for all citizens.

7.6 A Predictable and Legally Certain Investment Climate

Infrastructure works, and in particular the rollout of electronic communication networks, are highly capital-intensive endeavors. To commit to such investments, operators must be able to dedicate their resources fully to network deployment. This means that funds should not be drained by investment-discouraging fiscal measures such as levies, which cast uncertainty over investments, open the door to legal disputes, and ultimately only cause rollout delays. They may also mean that certain areas—typically those that are less economically attractive—can no longer be served.

DIGI therefore calls on local authorities to help make the rollout a success by providing a climate that encourages and values investments for the benefits of citizens and business in the community, rather than discourages them.