OFAA Position on the Draft Digital Networks Act (DNA)

Austria is among the laggards in Europe with regard to the availability of VHCN and in particular, FTTH networks. At the same time, the Austrian broadband market is characterized by excellent mobile coverage, the extensive use of mobile broadband as a substitute for fixed networks, the significant role of hybrid solutions, and the widespread use of copper-based networks. In OFAA's view, these specific market conditions must be considered when discussing the Copper Switch-Off (CSO) in order to strengthen Austria's digital competitiveness in the long term.

1. Timeline for Nationwide Fiber Availability

Critics of the copper switch-off argue that the proposed timelines are too ambitious for Austria. Any extension of these timelines can only be justified if it is linked to a binding roadmap for nationwide fiber availability. Otherwise, there is a risk of delaying the technology transition without advancing the deployment of modern infrastructure.

2. Reliable Transition for End Users

The copper switch-off must be implemented in a transparent and socially responsible manner. This requires early communication, adequate migration periods, and simple transition offer. Full nationwide fiber coverage is not a prerequisite for this. Pilot projects should be implemented in the 400 municipalities that have already reached 95% fiber availability in order to gain experience for a gradual nationwide rollout. Regardless of which technology replaces the copper network, it must be ensured that end users receive a level of service quality comparable to fiber, particularly regarding stability, availability, and performance.

3. Accelerating Nationwide Deployment

The proposed 95% threshold for copper switch-off creates a strong incentive to achieve near-complete fiber deployment. Higher connection rates improve network economics and increase the attractiveness of investments, particularly in rural areas. This helps prevent a small number of difficult-to-connect premises from delaying the modernization of entire service areas.

4. Clear and Predictable Framework Conditions for Fiber Investments

International developments demonstrate that fiber is the key infrastructure for both current and future digital applications, ranging from high-speed internet access and mobile network connectivity to AI applications, distributed data centers, and quantum communications.

At the same time, fiber networks create resilient transmission paths and strengthen digital sovereignty. In recent years, Austria has invested substantial public and private resources in the deployment of open-access fiber networks. These investments require a binding transition plan as well as clear and predictable regulatory conditions.

As fiber deployment is increasingly financed by institutional infrastructure investors with long investment horizons, fair competitive conditions and investment certainly are of central importance. The technology transition should therefore support the further expansion of open-access fiber networks and create additional investment incentives.

5. Consistent Implementation in Austria

OFAA expects the copper switch-off to be implemented in a predictable and investment-friendly manner, based on a binding transition plan, clear framework conditions, and close coordination among all stakeholders.

The copper switch-off should be seen as a means rather than an end, supporting fibre deployment, protecting existing investments, and strengthening Austria’s digital competitiveness.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the expansion of open-access networks, as their non-discriminatory access model enables multiple service providers to compete on the same infrastructure, thereby fostering competition, innovation, and consumer choice while maximizing benefits for end users.