

How coordinated, collaborative engagement with industry, regulators and stakeholders can help achieve the aims of promoting safety and protection of subsea cables

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ABSTRACT

The European Subsea Cables Association is an organisation of submarine cable owners, operators and suppliers. Throughout its history the organisation has been focussed upon promoting marine safety and protecting subsea cables in European waters. From its early days the organisation has recognised the benefits of collaboration and engagement to achieve its aims of promoting safety and protection of cables.

This paper will explore the approaches taken on collaboration and engagement to ensure its core aims continue to be achieved looking at the organisation's work with the fishing industry, regulators and stakeholders. It will examine examples of where ESCA has worked with other industries, regulators and conservation bodies in the development of working practices, marine planning and marine regulation to help safeguard current and future development of the industry and protect existing assets.

KEYWORDS

Poster paper; subsea cables; socioeconomics, stakeholder engagement, cable protection.

INTRODUCTION TO ESCA

The European Subsea Cables Association represents national and international companies which own, operate or service interconnectors, export power cables and telecommunication submarine cables in European and surrounding waters. From its early days the organisation has recognised the benefits of collaboration and engagement in achieving its aims of promoting safety and protection of cables. The organisation was formed in May 1999 as the UK Cable Protection Committee (UKCPC) and renamed Subsea Cables UK in 2011. In March 2016, reflecting its European membership, it was agreed that the organisation should become the European Subsea Cables Association.

Membership of the organisation has increased by more than 20% over the last 5 years. Now the organisation has more than 60 members from more than 10 different countries across Europe and the surrounding area. Member organisations include cable owners and operators, technology providers, installers, consultancies and survey companies. As such, the organisation benefits from a wealth of expertise, knowledge and experience and has range of differing interests and perspectives.

Figure 1: The ESCA region



ESCA supports its members by monitoring technological, regulatory and legal developments in the industry. This work is undertaken by a series of working groups (the Executive Committee, Maritime Subgroup; Technical and Regulatory Subgroup, Renewables and Power Cables Subgroup, and three regional subgroups) which are supported by a Liaison Officer.

With such extensive and ongoing marine development in the waters of Europe, the linkages between socio-economics, the environment and regulation are extensive and, as such, work has focused in each of these areas to ensure the ongoing protection of subsea cables and safety of other sea users. Specifically ESCA develop industry guidelines (<https://www.escaeu.org/guidelines/>) and work closely with the fishing industry, other marine industries and regulators and stakeholders to ensure the protection and safety of subsea cables and those that work in the vicinity of the them.

WORKING WITH THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Since 2001, ESCA has worked closely with Seafish (a UK public body set up by the Fisheries Act 1981 to improve efficiency and raise standards across the seafood industry) in order to provide fishermen with accurate, up-to-date and freely available information relating to subsea cables to help ensure safe working around cables through increased awareness of their presence. In 2012, in recognition of the growth of the offshore wind industry and the benefits of drawing together key marine industries, KISCA became KIS-ORCA and now includes details of oil and gas, subsea cables (power and telecoms) and offshore renewable energy structures. As well as working closely with Seafish, ESCA also retains the services of a Fisheries Liaison Officer to update members on developments in the fishing industry and visit ports providing details of KIS-ORCA data