6GSNS

SMART NETWORKS AND SERVICES

JOINT UNDERTAKING (SNS JU)

2026 - 2027

WORK PROGRAMME

This work programme covers 2026 and 2027. It is therefore referred to interchangeably as the 'annual work programme' and the 'bi-annual work programme'

In accordance with Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 and with Article 33.4(e) of the Financial Rules of the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking.

The work programme is made publicly available after its adoption by the Governing Board. The information contained in this work programme (including the list of topics, budget and planning of calls) may be subject to updates. Any further amendments to the work programme will also be made publicly available after its adoption by the Governing Board

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LIST OF ACRONYMS, DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
3C Network	Connected Collaborative Computing Network
3GPP	Third Generation Partnership Project
5G-ACIA	5G Alliance for Connected Industries and Automation
5GAA	5G Automotive Association
6G-IA	6G Industry Association
AAR	Annual Activity Report
AENEAS	Association for European NanoElectronics Activities
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIOTI	Alliance for AI, IoT and Edge Continuum Innovation
AWP	Annual Work Programme
BAWP	Bi-annual Work Programme
BOA	Back Office Arrangement
CAM	Connected and Automated Mobility
CEF Digital	Connecting Europe Facility Digital
CoA	Collaboration Agreement
CSA	Coordination and Support Actions
DEP	Digital Europe Programme
EC	European Commission
ECA	European Court of Auditors
ECSO	European Cyber Security Organisation
ED	Executive Director
ESA	European Space Agency
ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards Institute
EU	European Union
EUAN	EU Agency Network
FP	Framework Programme
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GB	Governing Board
HE	Horizon Europe
IA	Innovation Action
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ICF	Internal Control Framework
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IKOP	In-Kind Contributions to Operational Activities
IP	Intellectual Property Rights
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
KVI	Key Value Indicators
MGA	Model Grant Agreement
ML	Machine Learning
MoI	Memorandum of Intent
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NESSI	Networked European Software and Services Initiative

Acronym/ Abbreviation	Definition
NetWorldEurope	NetWorldEurope
NTN	Non-Terrestrial Networks
PoC	Proof of Concept
PSCE	Public Safety Communication Europe
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RIA	Research and Innovation Action
SBA	Single Basic Act
SB	Steering Board
SDA	Strategic Deployment Agenda
SDO	Standards Development Organisation
SG	Stakeholders Group
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SNS JU	Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking
SRG	States' Representatives Group
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
TB	Technology Board
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
TTC	Trade and Technology Council
WG	Working Group
WP	Work Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mission statement of the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking

The Smart Networks Joint Undertaking (SNS JU), set up under the Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe – also referred to as the Single Basic Act (SBA) [1], plays a pivotal role in reinforcing Europe's leadership in next-generation digital infrastructure and technologies. Its mission is to strengthen European research and innovation capabilities to develop advanced connectivity systems that will power the digital transformation towards 2030 and beyond.

By focusing on technological breakthroughs in connectivity, sustainability, artificial intelligence, and intelligent systems, the SNS JU aims to position Europe at the forefront of global innovation in digital networks and services. SNS JU work supports the deployment of 5G and development of 6G technologies, enabling transformative applications across industry, public services, and society.

Through targeted investments and coordinated R&I actions, the SNS JU fosters inclusive growth, secure and seamless communications, and a resilient digital ecosystem. These efforts are fully aligned with the EU's policy priorities, including strengthening technological sovereignty, ensuring ethical and secure digital environments, promoting sustainable innovation, transparency and openness and safeguarding robust, transparent supply chains.

As we move into the next phase of the programme, the SNS JU will continue to serve as a catalyst for European leadership in smart networks and services, empowering societies, driving industrial competitiveness, and laying the groundwork for strategic autonomy in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

1.2 Background and link with the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

The years 2026 and 2027 will mark a strategic inflection point for the SNS JU, as the **programme transitions from Phase 2 to Phase 3 of its roadmap[2]** while in 2027 the last call of SNS JU will be launched under Horizon Europe programme**. This period is critical for consolidating the research and innovation achievements of previous phases while laying the groundwork for the European influence in the industrial and societal impact of 6G worldwide. As such, the revised SNS JU Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), scheduled for 2025 is now foreseen in 2026-2027, will act as a bridge between cutting-edge R&D and early deployment pathways, with a forward-looking focus on Europe's global impact in future connectivity systems.

In November 2023, the SNS JU GB adopted its second edition of the SRIA The SNS JU SRIA technical content is based on the NetWorldEurope SRIA, a European Technology Platform (ETP), representing more than 1000 entities. The NetWorldEurope SRIA includes contributions from multiple parties, including stakeholders such as the 6G industry association (6GIA), the Alliance for Internet of Things Innovation (AIoTI) and the Networked European Software and Services Initiative (NESSI) and Satellite Communications (SATCOM) community. The revised Technical Annex of the NetWorldEurope SRIA was published in May 2025[3]. Other external organisations provided inputs at different stages of the revision of the NetWorldEurope SRIA. The NetWorld Europe SRIA 2024 provides a summary of the key areas that the European R&D Community believes relevant for the future of communications technology to meet the objectives of the SNS JU, including discussing some

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[1] Regulation - 2021/2085 - EN - EUR-Lex
[2] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/sns-ju-sria-2021-2027-second-edition-2023.pdf
[3] https://www.networldeurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ta-sria-2024-final-published-pdf.pdf

components also relevant to other EU initiatives. This analysis has been anchored in the challenges identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and in the current policies inside the European Union, notably the Path to the Digital Decade[4], the European Green Deal[5] and the recent reports on European Competitiveness [6]. It has identified research and innovation directions for the communications technologies and systems, to realize these high-level societal objectives. The SNS JU SRIA remains a "living document" to be periodically revised as technologies, markets, and policies evolve. The SNS JU SRIA has several objectives:

1. **Establish a shared roadmap and vision for 6G.** The SRIA articulates a comprehensive European R&I roadmap for smart networks and services, aligning a diverse set of stakeholders, ranging from telecom operators and equipment providers to microelectronics suppliers, cloud and IoT players, SMEs, academic institutions, and vertical industry sectors.

2. **Foster Europe's technological sovereignty.** The SRIA emphasizes the need to strengthen European leadership in developing core 6G technologies, standards, essential patents, and enabling supply chains.

3. **Drive sustainability and industrial readiness.** The SRIA promotes energy-smart, resource-efficient network technologies aiming to minimise the environmental footprint of digital infrastructure. It also supports strategies that enable market adoption, especially in emerging verticals and across European funding frameworks like Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Digital, InvestEU, and the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

4. **Advance deployment and large-scale validation.** Building on earlier SNS JU Work Programmes, the SRIA sets the stage for large-scale experimentation, pre-commercial trials, and infrastructure deployment targeting use cases ranging from automated mobility to immersive services.

5. **Anchor trust, security, and ethical values.** Aligning with EU legislation and values, it underlines the integration of security, privacy, ethics, and transparency into future network and service architectures, including microelectronics, AI and cloud platforms.

6. **Support international alignment and standardisation.** The SRIA is explicitly designed to position European players in global standard-setting bodies (e.g., ITU, 3GPP) and promote consistent participation in shaping 6G interoperability and innovation.

This strategic direction of the SNS JU aligns closely with broader EU ambitions to restore and strengthen technological leadership in key areas of digital infrastructure. The European Commission (EC) White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs[7]?" outlined a transformative vision aimed at building a new generation of integrated connectivity and computing systems. Central to this vision is the creation of a Connected Collaborative Computing Network (3C Network), which would enable end-to-end orchestration of telco cloud, edge infrastructure, and AI capabilities to serve next generation use cases. SNS JU strategic priorities are also aligned with several on-going EC policy initiatives in the broader digital domain namely the

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[4] European Parliament & Council, Decision (EU) 2022/2481 establishing the 2030 policy programme "Path to the Digital Decade": https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/PE-50-2022-INIT/en/pdf

[5] European Commission, "Communication on The European Green Deal", Brussels, 11 December 2019: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

[6] EU ("Competitiveness Compass", January 2025) European Commission, "A Competitiveness Compass for the EU", January 2025: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/10017eb1-4722-4333-add2-e0ed18105a34_en

[7] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/white-paper-how-master-europes-digital-infrastructure-needs

Digital Networks Act (DNA)[8], the Cloud and AI Development Act[9] the AI Continent Action Plan[10] and the Apply AI strategy[11].

The SNS JU strategic direction also aligns with the private side vision of the industry on 6G as it is reflected in the white paper of the 6G Industry Association (6G-IA)'s white paper "European vision for the 6G network ecosystem".[12]

This evolving digital ecosystem calls for a profound rethinking of both technological architectures and institutional coordination. A critical element of success will be the establishment of a synergistic innovation ecosystem that bridges connectivity, computing, and microelectronics, as well as a more **coherent alignment of funding instruments across EU programmes** such as Horizon Europe (HE), DEP and CEF Digital. The SNS JU is uniquely positioned to help operationalise this convergence, particularly as the foundations for the 6G computing continuum are laid.

This agenda also resonates with the key findings of major strategic reports such as the Draghi Report on EU Competitiveness[13] that highlighted the urgent need to develop Europe's capacity to compete globally in critical digital infrastructure, including advanced connectivity and computing. Its recommendations underline the importance of creating scale, removing fragmentation, and leveraging public-private partnerships to rebuild Europe's leadership in key enabling technologies. The EU Competitiveness Compass[14] also provides a clear framework for identifying structural gaps and setting collective benchmarks for Europe's digital performance, many of which the SNS JU is already contributing to.

Within this context, the SNS JU not only drives R&I excellence but also serves a strategic coordination function under its founding regulation. It plays a vital role in aligning 5G infrastructure deployment with CEF Digital by supporting lead markets and cross-border initiatives such as Connected and Automated Mobility (CAM). The SNS JU supports the continuous refinement of the Strategic Deployment Agenda (SDA), ensuring that Europe's investments in 5G and beyond are targeted, interoperable, and globally competitive.

Moreover, the European Green Deal[15] and the Digital Decade[16] Policy Programmes clearly identify connectivity as a foundational enabler for the digital transformation. It sets the objective of ensuring that all populated areas in Europe are covered by 5G by 2030. The SNS JU contributes directly to this ambition by funding the technological development that enables wide-scale and efficient deployment, particularly through advanced R&I on AI-native networks, energy efficiency, open architectures, and integration with edge-cloud platforms.

While the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 will be limited in scope, in line with its transitional nature and the need to prepare for the next Framework Programme for Research & Innovation (FP10), the SNS JU R&I WP 2027 will

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[8] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14709-Digital-Networks-Act_en

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14628-AI-Continent-new-cloud-and-AI-development-act_en

[10] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ai-continent-action-plan

[11] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14625-Apply-AI-Strategy-strengthening-the-AI-continent_en

[12] https://6g-ia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/european-vision-for-the-6g-network-ecosystem.pdf

[13] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en

[14] https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/10017eb1-4722-4333-add2-e0ed18105a34_en?filename=Communication_1.pdf

[15] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[16] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en

reflect a much more ambitious scope. Not all SRIA pillars will be equally addressed in this Phase III. Instead, the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 will focus on a set of five carefully selected projects that reinforce Europe's global positioning in 6G and prepare the ground for a robust Advanced Connectivity pillar in the next FP. These projects support international cooperation, strategic device capabilities, experimental infrastructures, and foundational AI systems and they are structured to generate maximum impact despite the streamlined scope of the WP.

In conclusion, the BAWP 2026-27 is a critical milestone in Europe's broader digital and industrial strategy. It supports both technological excellence and strategic autonomy while responding to the high-level priorities set out by EU institutions and thought leaders. By fostering innovation, coordination, and strategic foresight, the SNS JU ensures that Europe remains a leading force in shaping the digital infrastructure of the future.

This leaner programme will sustain momentum, while enabling the partnership to concentrate its resources on designing a strong and impactful SNS JU R&I WP 2027 which will mark the final major SNS call under Horizon Europe and the end of the current budgetary cycle of the SNS JU.

1.3   Strategy for the implementation of the programme

This Bi-Annual Work Programme (BAWP) is a strategic milestone in the implementation of the SNS JU, building on the achievements of Phases 1 and 2 and preparing the ground for the two final calls for projects (2026-2027) of the current SNS JU under HE while setting the strategic trajectory for the post-2027 era.

Structured around four interlinked pillars at the intersection of research, policy, and industry, the SNS JU BAWP 2026-27 aims at delivering a coherent programme structure anchored in both ambition and realism. These strategic priorities help us shape research investments, guide stakeholder cooperation, and translate policy objectives into action, ensuring that Europe leads in the development of a trusted, inclusive, and future-proof digital infrastructure.

Pillar 1: Innovation and infrastructure development
This pillar is central to the 2026 programme, driving the development, validation, and large-scale integration of advanced 6G technologies. The BAWP prioritises for 2026 the consolidation of key technical building blocks such as datasets for AI-native network architectures and capabilities. It also supports the construction of large-scale experimental platforms and pilots that serve as testbeds for innovation, pan European use cases, and public-private collaboration. In addition, SNS JU will continue supporting the development of a 5G Strategic Deployment Agenda (SDA) for CAM services, including cross-border use cases.

Building on the research outcomes of the previous phases, the BAWP will accelerate technology maturation and system-level integration. This includes support for vertical industries applications and services designed to meet emerging needs in sectors such as health, mobility, energy, and manufacturing. Infrastructure development under this pillar contributes directly to Europe's competitiveness and technology leadership by strengthening 6G readiness towards pre-commercial and commercial deployment by 2030.

Pillar 2: Sustainability
Sustainability remains a core horizontal objective, and the BAWP continues to embed energy and resource efficiency into all layers of 6G systems. This includes promoting AI-enabled energy optimisation. Beyond its environmental impact, sustainability also covers digital inclusion and accessibility. The SNS JU research will

continue contributing to a responsible digital transition by designing networks that are not only energy-efficient, but also equitable and adaptable to the needs of all citizens. This reinforces the broader EU vision for a human-centric digital decade.

Pillar 3: Technological sovereignty, security and resilience

The BAWP reinforces the EU's strategic autonomy and economic security by supporting the development of secure, trusted, and resilient smart systems from devices to networks. The SNS JU also invests in reducing technological dependencies through the promotion of EU value chains in key areas such as hardware components and semiconductor design. These efforts will be pursued in coordination with other EU instruments and initiatives like the Apply AI Strategy, ensuring complementarities and synergies with existing partnerships, including the Chips JU and the EU Rail JU.

Pillar 4: Competitiveness, standardisation and international collaboration

To secure long-term influence in the global 6G landscape, the BAWP puts strong emphasis on European leadership in competitiveness, standardisation, and international cooperation. This includes actions to promote the visibility and uptake of EU project outcomes in global standards bodies, including indicatively SDOs such as 3GPP, ITU, IETF and ETSI. A dedicated support action will identify the standardisation opportunities and maintain a strong and coordinated European presence and impact in the definition of globally relevant 6G specifications..

The SNS JU also continues to strengthen cooperation with international partners, aligning with EU foreign policy objectives and industrial interests. The BAWP will support targeted international dialogues and research collaboration with like-minded relevant countries, including India, focusing on opportunities with reciprocal benefits and shared values. This includes expanding cooperation while maintaining EU leadership on ethical, secure, and open digital infrastructures.

In parallel, the programme will continue investing in the European innovation ecosystem by fostering SME participation and promoting joint innovation across Member States. These synergies not only enhance technological integration but also build a resilient, globally competitive EU industrial base.

Implementation strategy

The 2026-2027 implementation strategy of the SNS JU will consolidate past achievements, support targeted impact through standardisation activities, and prepare the transition toward large-scale deployments. It will reinforce Europe's leadership in sustainable, resilient, and secure 6G networks, while building the strategic foundation for the next chapter of European digital innovation.

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 incorporates a robust coordination and support structure to ensure effective programme execution, fostering cross-project synergies, working group (WG) organisation, and through the implementation of the collaboration agreement (CoA)[17] to facilitate effective programme-level coordination of the SNS portfolio. The cross-project synergy bodies such as the Technology Board (TB) and Steering Board (SB) will also be supported with dedicated secretariat functions to ensure strategic alignment, while Europe-wide cartography of national and regional smart network initiatives will support decision-making.

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[17] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/collaboration-agreement/

A new round of strategic dissemination and outreach activities, aligned with the JU's communication policy, will amplify the programme's impact, support stakeholder engagement, and increase visibility of EU research achievements.

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 will therefore support the objectives of the Horizon Europe Regulation[18]. It combines research excellence, cross-sector collaboration, and industrial relevance to ensure that technological breakthroughs are translated into real societal and economic impact. The SNS JU programme focusses on enabling the early implementation of integrated pre-6G systems and fostering innovation across the full technology stack, from microelectronics and devices to networks and services.

Finally, the 2026 implementation strategy must also look ahead. As the SNS JU enters the final years of its current mandate, preparatory work for the next FP will be initiated. This includes a forward-looking analysis of future research needs, the identification of long-term investment priorities, and structured stakeholder engagement to shape the future of European connectivity policy beyond 2027. In parallel, a gap analysis of current project portfolios and an update of the SRIA itself, within 2026, will be essential to develop the 2027 R&I work programme and define the long-term vision for Europe's leadership in digital infrastructure.

Planned Timeline and key milestones

The 2026 Call will follow a structured implementation schedule:
- Call launch and Information Day: January 2026
- Proposal submission deadline: April 2026
- Evaluation phase: June 2026
- Funding results announcement: July 2026
- Grant agreement preparation: August to November 2026
- Project kick-off: January 2027

This timeline is designed to ensure a seamless transition from planning to execution, allowing projects to start before the end of the year and maximise their contribution to the SNS JU goals.

The 2027 Call will be further elaborated in an amendment of the SNS JU BAWP 2026-27 foreseen for Q4 2026.

Types of instruments

The SNS JU will deploy a balanced mix of instruments tailored to different maturity levels and implementation needs:
1. **Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)** will ensure ecosystem-wide impact by facilitating stakeholder coordination, international cooperation, skills development, dissemination, and alignment with standardisation roadmaps.
2. **Research and Innovation Actions (RIAs)** will support medium TRL research focused on new concepts, foundational technologies, and long-term scientific advances.
3. **Innovation Actions (IAs)** will back higher TRL activities, including system integration, large-scale experimentation, and vertical-specific pilots, with a view to pre-commercial validation.

This mix of instruments will enable the SNS JU to address both short-term objectives and long-term strategic challenges.

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[18] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj/eng

Governance

The successful delivery of this BAWP relies on the coordinated efforts of a diverse group of actors:

- **The EC**, the public member of the SNS JU Governing Board, plays a key role in ensuring that the programme is fully aligned with the Union's strategic priorities, including Europe's global digital agenda, overseeing programme implementation and contributing to the strategic orientation of the partnership.
- **The 6G-IA,** the private member of the SNS JU Governing Board, plays a pivotal role in anchoring the programme in industrial and research realities, mobilising a broad ecosystem of stakeholders, co-defining strategic priorities, and ensuring co-investment to drive innovation and address Europe's long-term connectivity needs.
- **Member States and Associated Countries associated to HE, through the States Representatives Group (SRG)**, provide strategic advice to the SNS JU GB, support alignment with national and regional policies, and facilitate synergies, including potential co-financing and integration into national deployment and investment strategies.
- **The Stakeholders Group (SG)**, an advisory body that brings together public and private stakeholders in the field of the SNS JU. It must be regularly informed of the activities of the joint undertaking, can be invited to provide comments on the joint undertaking's planned initiatives and may be consulted on specific questions, at the request of the Executive Director, to advise the JU's Governing Board.

Key challenges in 2026-2027

To deliver on its strategic objectives, the SNS JU must address several critical challenges in 2026-2027. These challenges reflect both technological bottlenecks and systemic needs that will shape the impact and relevance of the programme in its final years and beyond.

- **Reinforced actions on the AI for Networks and Networks for AI**: targeting a curated collection of high-quality real-world datasets to secure a better European position in the AI-native 6G networks and AIaaS domain and engage with standardisation bodies.

- **Implementing end-to-end 6G systems for research and validation**: Delivering system-wide experimentation capabilities that reflect real-world complexity remains a critical milestone for 2026. Projects will be encouraged to develop interoperable, open platforms across different layers and domains.

- **Strengthening vertical sector engagement**: Deepening collaboration with industries such as manufacturing, mobility, health, and public safety (not exhaustive list) will be key to ensuring relevance and scaling impact.

- **Securing Europe's standardisation leadership**: Enhancing Europe's global influence through early input into international standards bodies remains a strategic goal.

- **Reinforcing cooperation with other critical technologies for the future competitiveness of Europe**. Establishing strategic partnerships with other entities such as the Chips JU, EuroHPC JU, Rail JU, the Alliance for Industrial Data, Edge and Cloud and European Space Agency (ESA).

Overview of the SNS JU ecosystem

The SNS JU is a strategic European partnership that brings together a dynamic and diverse ecosystem of public and private stakeholders committed to shaping the future of 6G networks and services. This ecosystem is central to ensuring that Europe maintains global leadership in next-generation digital infrastructure. Through coordinated investment, strategic guidance, and deep collaboration, the SNS JU drives forward the EU's ambition to lead the digital transformation, secure technological sovereignty, and enhance economic competitiveness.

This collaborative ecosystem is structured around seven interlinked pillars of engagement—each representing a core dimension of the programme's strength and impact.

1. **Industrial leadership and private sector engagement**. At the core of the SNS JU is a strong industrial backbone. Industry stakeholders, particularly those represented through the 6G-IA with over 400 members play a pivotal role in co-defining the strategic direction of the programme. These actors not only guide the development of the WP but also co-invest in its implementation, matching public funding with private capital and expertise. Their contributions ensure that the programme remains focused on market-relevant outcomes, while advancing Europe's competitiveness across critical value chains, including microelectronics, cloud infrastructure, network systems, and AI-enabled applications.

2. **Member States and national ecosystem integration**. The SNS JU promotes alignment with Member States through the active participation of the SRG, which anchors national priorities within the broader EU strategic framework. This coordination strengthens synergies between European and national funding instruments, maximising the efficiency and relevance of investments. The SNS JU with the help of the SRG members promotes the co-creation of initiatives that reflect national innovation ecosystems, policy goals, and industrial strengths, ensuring that no region in Europe is left behind in the race toward next-generation networks.

3. **International cooperation and global outreach**. Global collaboration is essential for the development of interoperable, secure, and sustainable 6G networks. The SNS JU actively cultivates strategic partnerships with international organisations and third countries, reinforcing Europe's leadership in shaping global standards, value chains, and technology governance. The foreseen cooperation with India, in the context of SNS JU R&I WP2026, and the ongoing cooperation with partners from the USA, Japan and the Republic of Korea exemplify how the SNS JU fosters mutual exchange, standards alignment, and joint strategic foresight and contribute to the objectives of the Trade and Technology Council (EU-India, EU-US) and the Digital partnerships with the Republic of Korea and Japan. This global dimension is vital to strengthening Europe's open strategic autonomy and to building resilient supply chains for digital infrastructure.

4. **Cross-sectoral engagement and synergies with European initiatives**. To deliver on its mission, the SNS JU collaborates closely with other European partnerships and platforms. This includes leveraging synergies with complementary R&I initiatives with Chips JU, EuroHPC JU, and EU Rail JU, as well as domain-specific platforms including Photonics 21 and the European Alliance for Industrial Data, Edge and Cloud. These collaborations are critical to integrating capabilities across sectors, spanning microelectronics, high-performance computing, optical technologies, and mobility, thus enabling an end-to-end innovation ecosystem for 6G. The engagement with strategic organisations will be reinforced through a revamped **SNS stakeholders' group in 2026**, bringing structured insights and coordination across technology and vertical domains. A call for expression of interest to stakeholders will be launched in Q4 2025 with final selection results announced in Q2 2026.

5. **Collaboration with vertical industries**. One of the distinguishing features of the SNS JU is its strong focus on vertical sector integration. 6G is not just a technological upgrade, it is a societal enabler. Its programme is designed to support key industries including automotive, health, manufacturing,

agriculture, energy, and public safety. These sectors benefit from next-generation capabilities such as ultra-reliable low-latency communications, massive IoT, advanced cloud/edge computing, and network slicing. To maximise impact, the SNS JU fosters co-design with end-users, accelerating the development of tailored solutions that address both economic competitiveness and societal challenges. This approach supports the wider goals of the European Green Deal, the Digital Decade, and the EU Industrial Strategy.

6. **Value chain integration and technology platforms**. The SNS JU is committed to a full value chain approach that spans research, development, and early deployment. In 2026, particular emphasis will be placed on integrating actors across the supply chain, from component manufacturers to system integrators and service providers. This will enable the development of interoperable platforms, ensure technology readiness, and bridge the gap between innovation and market deployment. This systemic integration is key to enabling the emerging "3C Networks" paradigm envisioned by the EC, where advanced telco cloud and edge platforms support intelligent services and orchestrate distributed computing resources across Europe.

7. **Building a resilient and competitive European ecosystem**. The SNS JU ecosystem is also shaped by the broader policy landscape, including the EC's White Paper "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?", the "Path to the Digital Decade"[19], the Draghi Report on EU Competitiveness and Letta's Report on the Future of the Single Market[20]. These documents underscore the urgency of enhancing Europe's competitiveness through strategic investment, standardisation leadership, and infrastructure integration. The SNS JU responds to these priorities by embedding strategic support for the deployment of 5G (including via CEF Digital and the SDA), while simultaneously laying the foundations for Europe's leadership in 6G. By 2026, the **SNS JU is expected to contribute to the implementation of the EU Competitiveness compass"**, consolidating public-private investments, standardisation efforts, and advanced R&I capacities to boost European productivity and sovereignty in the digital age.

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[19] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/digital-decade/
[20] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/enrico-lettas-report-future-single-market-2024-04-10_en

2. WORK PROGRAMME 2026 - 2027

2.1   Executive summary

In 2026-2027, the SNS JU is committed to advancing its implementation programme to achieve the ambitions set out in the SNS JU SRIA. Building on the success of the implementation of the previous Work Programmes, the SNS JU proposes a streamlined BAWP 2026-2027, focusing on key priorities and activities for optimal success. The JU will concentrate on delivering on its programmatic KPIs reflecting the main achievements expected at operational and organisational levels during these two years.

Operational activities

The years 2026-2027 mark a strategic inflection point for the SNS JU, as the programme transitions from Phase 2 to Phase 3 of its roadmap. It is also the fifth year of operation of the SNS JU, a critical juncture for consolidating the research and innovation achievements of previous phases while laying the groundwork for the industrial and societal impact of 6G in Europe.

The BAWP 2026-2027 includes the last two calls of the SNS JU under the MFF 2021-2027. The establishment of two calls in 2026 and 2027 under one bi-annual work programme accommodates the operational and budgetary needs that resulted from the unexpected delays in the calls of 2025 due to the implementation of eligibility restrictions and the need to introduce a very small call in 2026 to address urgent R&I priorities and operational aspects of the SNS JU.

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 will be smaller in scale and more targeted, with an indicative EU budget of EUR 22 million. This leaner programme will sustain momentum, while enabling the partnership to concentrate its resources on designing a strong and impactful SNS JU R&I WP 2027. The 2027 Work Programme will mark the final major SNS JU call under Horizon Europe and the end of the current budgetary cycle of the SNS JU.

The evolving digital ecosystem calls for a rethinking of technological architectures and institutional coordination. A critical success factor will be the establishment of a synergistic innovation ecosystem that bridges connectivity, computing, and microelectronics, while ensuring coherent alignment across EU programmes such as HE, DEP and CEF Digital.

The next 18 months will be decisive for global 6G standardisation, as international bodies progress towards early technical specifications. The SNS JU, in cooperation with the 6G-IA and European stakeholders, must play a central role in shaping Europe's contributions to secure technological sovereignty and industrial leadership.

At the same time, preparations for the next European Framework Programme (FP10) are expected to intensify. In this context, 6G-IA has already published a position paper on "FP10 and Beyond SNS"[21]. The BAWP 2026-27 therefore also acts as a strategic bridge between the current SNS JU mandate and future R&I policy in advanced connectivity and digital infrastructures.

Within this context, the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 consolidates work along three strategic pillars:
- Consolidation and visibility of SNS JU results.
- Groundwork for future industrial capabilities, including devices, AI, and testbeds.

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[21] https://6g-ia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/sns-in-fp10-position-papervfinal.pdf

- Global positioning and partnerships, with emphasis on standards and new international collaboration with India.

Communication

In 2026, the SNS JU will be engaging in implementing a carefully planned communication strategy, which has been outlined in the comprehensive Communication Policy and Plan 2025, adopted by the Governing Board on 22 November 2024, with the target to further raise its profile and visibility online as well as its presence, at key moments where the future of smart networks and services is discussed and shaped (e.g. session organiser at MWC, EuCNC and Techritory Events etc.). In 2026, the SNS JU aims at stepping up its communication efforts, continuing growing the online presence (fast growing community), coordinating resources between existing CSAs for a maximum impact, and broadening the communities to which its messages are addressed. Specific attention will be paid to highlight programme achievements with strong impact, scientific advancements, and their market uptake potential as well as on key programme priorities such as security, societal and sustainability aspects. Moreover, the SNS JU will place increased emphasis on engaging different communities beyond the technological, research, and innovation sectors.

Administration and finance

For the period **2026–2027**, the SNS JU will continue consolidating its administrative and corporate management capacity, building on the progress achieved in 2025. The JU reached its full staffing level in 2025, as foreseen in the Legal Financial Statement, with a total of 17 full-time employees. The HR policies will continue to be developed and aligned in line with other JUs and in the framework of the HR Back Office Arrangements.

In 2025 the SNS JU has consolidated its working methodology in terms of finance and accounting refining workflows and issuing relevant policies (e.g. policy controls). On the basis of these ex-ante policy controls, a risk-based monitoring approach will follow, which will contribute to further reducing the risk of failing projects and/or loss of funding in the final stage of the SNS JU programme. In terms of procurement, SNS JU will further strengthen its participation in the Inter-JUs BOA procurement reducing further its administration workload while eventually benefitting from advantages derived from a higher demand of services. The SNS JU will also complete its digital transition within 2026. The conclusion of the SLA BOA IT in 2025 enhanced synergies in the area of IT and further synergies, namely in the area of cybersecurity and IT service management are foreseen in 2026.

2.2 Operational activities of the SNS JU for 2026-2027

2.2.1 Objectives, indicators and Risks

The table below indicates the actual achievements (2025 figures) under the Comments section, while it also represents target figures for the whole duration of the Horizon Europe Programme[22].

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[22] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj/eng

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
Resources (input), processes and activities								
R1. SME innovation & participation	**% of SMEs participation (EU funding)**	**~18%**	**20%**	**20%**	**20%**	**20%**	For the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 a similar approach has been followed as in 2025. Although the SNS JU R&I WP provides explicit hints for supporting the participation of SMEs in some Streams, dedicated webinars for SMEs (e.g., through NetworldEurope's SME WG, or open Information days) will be used to further mobilize European SMEs.	On aggregated figures from Call 1, Call 2 and Call 3, SMEs represent 33,25 % of beneficiaries and 24 % of EU funding received. This figure does not include EU funding received by SMEs through Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) which, in most cases, favours the SME participation.
R2. Rapid diffusion	**#of end-user workshops & webinars [cumulative]**	**0**	**25**	**60**	**90**	**125**		The SNS JU projects started in 2023 and 2024 (Calls 1 and 2) have reported the organisation of 194 events and workshops. This figure clearly outscores the target of 60 workshops for 2025. Additionally, projects have reported participation to 733 industry events (workshops, webinars, exhibitions etc.)
R3. High risk research funding	**% of total funding**	**~68%**	**>=50%**	**>=50%**	**>=50%**	**>=40%**	Even though in the 2026 not many high-risk R&I activities are foreseen, the risk for not meeting this objective in 2026 is limited since the SNS JU 2026 Call will be small	Low TRL activities are considered as High risk. They represented 59,53% of total funding of Call 1, Call 2 and Call 3 projects.

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
							compared to the already funded activities. This means that the % of high-risk funding of the whole SNS JU project portfolio is expected to be lower than in 2025 but higher than the target value for 2027 (50%) following the foreseen trend of reducing the high-risk funding.	
R4. Standardization contributions	Contributions to SDOs [cumulative]	0	50	350	750	1000		1135 contributions to standards were made by Call 1 and Call 2 projects until end of 2024.
R5. Share on family patents	% of patent families	0	15%	15%	15%	15%		SNS JU projects from Call 1 and Call 2 have submitted 59 patents/IPR applications in 2024 and 8 of them have already been accepted.
	Patent grant rate	0	60%	60%	60%	60%		
R6. Scientific excellence	# of publications [cumulative]	0	100	400	700	1000		Up to December 2024, the SNS JU projects produced and disseminated quality knowledge in 1284 publications including 926 peer reviewed articles and journals. These figures are way above the target of 400 publications in 2025.
R7. Reach an appropriate balance between research,	% RIA	RIA 78% IA 20% CSA 2%	78% RIA 20% IA 2% CSA	RIA 78% IA 22%	RIA 70% IA 30%	RIA 60% IA 40%	Based on the structure of the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 which is small but focussed on coordination & support	During Phase 1 and Phase 2, the SNS JU R&I WPs were designed to focus mostly on research activities during initial phases and
	% IA							
	%CSA							

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
innovation, and deployment							actions and less on RIAs/IAs the expected balance among the different kind of actions will not be achieved. Nevertheless, the overall SNS JU project portfolio will maintain the foreseen balance even after the SNS 2026 Call due to the limited number of projects and the low budget foreseen in the WP 2026.	rebalancing towards large-scale trials in the final ones. Until 2024, 77% of funding was allocated to RIA and 21.5% to IA.
R.8 Accelerate the development of energy efficient networks	# of related projects investigating to a significant extent energy efficiency topics: >=3	0	>=3	>=10	>=20	>=30	The sustainability lighthouse project (started in 2025) will continue its activities in 2026 and will aggregate the efforts from Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects to achieve a higher impact on energy efficiency and on sustainability in general.	Until 2024, 17 projects were working specifically on energy efficient RAN while almost all of them were working on different aspects of energy consumption of networks.
R.9 Ensure research on secure future digital services	# of related projects:	0	>=3	>=10	>=15	>=20	In 2026, a new project on Reliable Services and Smart Security will be added in the portfolio of projects focussing on secure digital services. Furthermore, in several other projects activities related to security and privacy support have a prominent place.	Up to 2024, 20 projects working on security aspects have been launched.

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
R.10 Collaboration and synergies with other Partnerships	# collaborations	**0**	**2**	**5**	**6**	**6**	6G-IA has engaged in discussions and MoUs with other Partnerships on SNS related topics. This activity will be further strengthened via the SNS JU and 6G-IA and through the SNS JU CSA projects.	In 2024, the SNS JU has established a strong collaboration with Chips JU, Europe's Rail JU and Photonics 21, which will be further strengthened during the following years. As an outcome of the collaboration with the Europe's Rail JU was the EU RAIL JU–SNS JU Synergy call on Digital & Automated testing and operational validation of the next EU rail communication system. Out of this call the project FP2-MORANE-2 will be co-funded by both JUs with EUR 13,5 million.
Outcomes (SO)								
O.1 Development of energy efficient networks	White papers [cumulative]	**GeSI report on Energy consumption by 2030**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**>3**		The SNS JU Technology Board Sustainability Task force has published the first White Paper addressing sustainability aspects in in June 2025. This publication titled "Sustainability in SNS JU Projects[23]" provides a comprehensive analysis based on inputs from over 27 SNS JU-funded projects that incorporate sustainability considerations in

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[23] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/sns_ju_sustainabilitytf_whp_june2025_v1.0-1.pdf

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
								their research on next-generation communication technologies. Overall 35 SNS JU projects, which makes up 44% of the SNS JU portfolio, are working on broad sustainability-related issues, spanning NTN and IoT, the intertwine of security and sustainability, and consolidating a view of possible end to end sustainable system design. In 2024, 17 projects were actively researching and validating energy-efficient technologies in different domains (from architectures, to RAN, core, optical networks). In 2026, as a follow-up of the Sustainability Task Force, a Sustainability Working Group will be launched, including all relevant SNS JU projects.
O.2 Technological solutions consensus building	**White papers** **[cumulative]**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**>3**		In 2025, there was an acceleration of the collaboration activities among SNS JU project towards building consensus on the technology solutions. In this context, the SNS JU Projects WGs prepared several white papers: The WG on 6G Architecture worked toward the preparation of a white

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
								paper on 6G Architectures which presents current architectural considerations explored by the SNS-JU projects. In addition, the Test, Measurement and KPIs Validation WGs (TMV WG) published a white paper focussing on the formalisation and validation to the greatest possible extent, of 6G KPI & KVI (societal key value indicators) to ensure a unique European vision on 6G networks. Furthermore the SNS JU Technology Board (TB) produced a white paper on AI/ML as a key enabler of 6G Networks and the SNS Technology Board – Sustainability Task Force published another white paper presenting a comprehensive analysis of how 27 projects funded by the SNS JU address sustainability in the context of 6G.[24] Finally, the SNS JU Policy WG on standardization will organise a workshop to discuss the priorities for the use cases from the

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[24] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/sns-publications/

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
								European stakeholders' perspective and facilitate their possible collaboration.
O.3 Advanced 6G solutions for verticals[25]	#of different vertical types engaged [cumulative]	0	3	6	10	10	In 2026, the key engagement of verticals will happen again in Stream D where it is expected that 4 new trials and pilots (on different priorities) with verticals selected from the 2025 SNS Call 2, with tangible results for environmental, societal and economic aspects by the end of the project. Vertical industries are expected to be engaged in other SNS JU R&I WP Stream projects that will demonstrate the results of 6G solutions.	57 Call 1 and Call 2 SNS JU projects are implementing use cases involving vertical industries.These use cases are covering a large set of vertical sectors including Industry 4.0, Media/xR, Security/PPDR, health, smart cities, farming, education and automotive (not exhaustive list).Furthermore, the Vertical Engagement Tracker (VET) tool[25] launched in 2025. VET aims to map, analyse, and align SNS JU project use cases with industry needs, providing up to date information on the engagement with the vertical industries.
O.4 Foster emergence of new actors in the 6G supply chain	KPI7: # of related projects or cross-projects WGs	0	>=2	>=10	>=15	>=20	Through 2025 SNS Call 1 and Call 2 several projects that will start in 2026 are addressing topics related to disaggregated	In 2024 the SNS JU projects (Call 1 and Call 2) had in total 64 contributions to relevant open-source communities[26.]

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[25] SNS JU Vertical Engagement Tracker

[26] SNS OPS 2025 Questionnaire on SNS projects

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
	dealing with the investigation and potential adoption of open ecosystem principles in B5G and 6G networks						architectures, especially under Stream C - 6G Telco Cloud and Service Provision Enablers.	
Impacts (GO)								
I.1 A competitive data economy	**% Market share for the communication network**	**~ 40%**	**40%**	**40%**	**40%**	**40%**		Based on data from Dell'Oro report in 1H24, on telecom equipment market[27] NOKIA's share was 14 % and Ericsson's share was 13%. Overall, the telecom equipment market declined 11% in 2024 (YoY) from around 94 billion $ in 2023 to 84 billion $ in 2024.[28]
I.2 Reach Programme level consensus on 6G KPIs	**white papers**	**Networld Europe SRIA**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**N/A**	Working towards this direction, activities are planned for 2026 to compile results from Call 1, Call 2 and Call 3 projects, SNS Policy WGs, SNS Projects WGs, as well as supporting organisations (e.g.	The IMT-2030 KPIs[29] are acknowledged as the starting point for SNS work towards a common vision on 6G KPIs (key performance indicators).
	[cumulative]							

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[27] Telecom equipment market includes 6 market segments: Broadband Access, Microwave & Optical Transport, Mobile Core Network (MCN), Radio Access Network (RAN), and SP Router & Switch

[28] Based on the data analysis carried out by SNS JU on Dell'Oro's report

[29] IMT-2030, Framework and overall objectives of the future development of IMT for 2030 and beyond.

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
							NetworldEurope) and 6G-IA WGs.	Furthermore, the Test, Measurement and KPIs Validation WGs (TMV WG) published in 2025 a white paper focussing on the formalisation and validation to the greatest possible extent, of 6G KPI & KVI (societal key value indicators) to ensure a unique European vision on 6G networks.

In addition, the Hexa-X-II project was responsible until 2025 for the definition of KPIs and KVIS for the main 6G use cases, while the SNS-OPS initially and currently SNS CO-OP projects were monitoring and analysing all SNS JU project KPIs & KVIs in 2025 through a dedicated questionnaire, which will be addressed to all SNS projects on an annual basis. Finally, the SNS JU projects, several EU National Initiatives and EU associations created a common European front regarding 6G Use Cases and they submitted their joint proposal in the 3GPP SA1 meeting in May |

KPI Name	Unit of measurement	Baseline (2022)	Target 2023	Target 2025	Target 2027	Ambition >2027	Risk and action plan (if relevant)	Comments
								2024, maximizing the standardization impact of SNS JU activities.
I.3 Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	**Number of large-scale trials** **[cumulative]**	0	3	6	10	>10	In 2026 a set of 4 new projects under Stream D targets will be launched. They are expected to prioritize use cases for a set of 4 verticals to ensure that they engage key vertical stakeholders and provide solutions of high monetization prospects, e.g. according to the European vision and orientations, as presented in the 3GPP SA1 Workshop that took place in May 2024.	In 2025, 8 Stream D projects are running and engaging with verticals to develop large-scale trials.
I.4 Energy efficiency of telecommunication networks	**% increase of energy efficiency of cellular communications**	**Legacy cellular systems (4G)**	**50%**	**50%**	**50%**	**50%**		Several SNS JU projects are working towards reducing overall the average energy consumption by 50% and to improve the bits/joule metric by five to ten times at peak load, as compared to 5G. According to the reference figure of the SNS JU project portfolio prepared by the SNS JU TB, 44% of the SNS Research & Innovation actions are working on energy efficient technologies for 5G and 6G.

Table 1: Target SNS JU KPIs

Other operational risks:

Risk	Action Plan
Risk 1 – Mobilisation of the right stakeholders (especially in the cloud/edge and microelectronics domains, as well as key verticals in the identified priority areas, and ensuring proper understanding of the JU requirements such as strong impact on standardisation, operational model, programmatic objectives and call conditions).	Mitigation: This risk can be mitigated through ongoing information days, targeted thematic workshops, and synergy activities with the 6G-IA and other partnerships. Building on the actions already conducted during 2023–2025, these activities will be reinforced in 2026–2027, including through the new Call for Expression of Interest for the SNS JU Stakeholders Group, and through SRG-supported awareness efforts at national level.
Risk 2 – Operational-related delays in launching calls and in evaluation/GAP workflows. Operational-related delays in launching calls and in evaluation/GAP workflows due to complex implementation modalities, including specific provisions under Article 22(5) (security/ownership checks and coordination procedures), and additional programme-specific conditions.	Mitigation: This risk is addressed through structured coordination with the Commission services and the SRG, strict milestone planning, and proactive monitoring of workflows. Where necessary, the Work Programme may be adjusted to ensure timely funding implementation and optimal budget execution..

The SNS JU conducted a risk assessment covering the achievement of the objectives set out in this SNS JU BAWP 2026-27. Based on the results, with the complementary assessment, no critical risks have been identified that would warrant public disclosure or reservations by the management concerning the effective achievement of the 2026 and 2027 objectives.

The main risks remain consistent with those identified in previous years, notably the mobilisation of the right stakeholders and potential operational delays linked to the implementation of Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Internal support-to-operations risks, such as staffing constraints or IT dependencies, are regularly monitored under the JU's Internal Control Framework and currently assessed as non-critical for 2026-2027 implementation.

To control the risks identified, the Programme Office continuously monitors and reviews them, considering the corresponding mitigating measures identified and taking further actions where necessary to ensure controls remain effective. Relevant SNS JU financial needs and the budget for 2026 have also been appropriately estimated. The staff is regularly informed on the objectives, activities and new planning.

2.2.2 Scientific priorities, challenges and expected impacts

Building on a streamlined set of priorities, the 2026 SNS R&I Work Programme marks a strategic milestone in delivering the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan for 2025–2027 in the area of Smart Networks and Services. The scope of the SNS JU R&I WP2026 (annexed to this BAWP) is based on the NetworldEurope's SRIA 2024, the SNS JU SRIA[30] adopted in 2023, the analysis of the coverage gaps resulting from the previous SNS calls, and on the identification of specific policy priorities and operational needs, notably related to technology sovereignty and international collaboration and covering key areas such as AI, connectivity and devices as well as experimentation platforms. It comes at a time when the SNS JU programme is moving from Phase 2 into Phase 3, consolidating programmatic work in SNS Phase 1 and Phase 2 and preparing for the final major SNS JU call, under HE to be launched in 2027.

According to Article 17 of the SBA establishing the JUs under HE, the GB adopts the SRIA at the beginning of the initiative and amends it throughout the duration of HE, where necessary. The SRIA identifies the partnership's targeted impact, foreseen portfolio of activities, measurable expected outcomes, resources, deliverables, and milestones within a defined timeframe. It shall also identify the other European partnerships with which the SNS JU shall establish a formal and regular collaboration and the possibilities for synergies between the SNS JU's actions and national or regional initiatives and policies based on information received by the participating states or the States' Representatives Group (SRG as well as synergies with other Union programmes). Against this background, the revised SNS JU SRIA foreseen in 2026-2027 will use as a basis the new version of the NetworldEurope's SRIA.

The 2026 call covers multiple 6G objectives, notably:

Objective 1 – Strategic continuity from SNS Phase 2 to Phase 3
- Maintain cross-project coordination and collaboration to achieve the SNS JU programmatic KPIs.
- Enhance dissemination, exploitation of project results and stakeholder engagement in critical scientific areas and vertical sectors.
- Continue the organisation and execution of the European Conference on Networks and Communications & 6G Summit, as a cornerstone Event for the connectivity community.
- Further test/validate early Standards and Systems and provide further input to future standardisation phases and releases.
- The validation of KPIs, considering the ITU KPIs detailed definition expected in 2026 as well as progressing on KVIs qualification/quantification.
- To consolidate programmatic lessons and prepare strategic input for the next Framework Programme.

Objective 2 – Policy aspects
To foster the development and adoption of technologies and solutions that will help to address policy and societal challenges that can directly or indirectly contribute to:

- Work towards the HE strategic orientations: the green transition, the digital transition and a more resilient, competitive, inclusive and democratic Europe in the context of 6G networks.
- Deliver on the key goals of the Competitiveness Compass, the upcoming Digital networks Act and the Cloud and AI Act
- Enable Europe to reach strategic autonomy and technology sovereignty.

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[30] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/sns-ju-sria-2021-2027-second-edition-2023.pdf

- Ensure that digitalisation of our society will be done in a secure way to retain Europe's leading position in trust and privacy.
- Create high-skill jobs and social inclusive technologies.

Objective 3 – Business aspects – Europe's share on the global market
- Reinforce European leadership in the smart networks domain, to seize opportunities to stimulate EU ICT capabilities in domains where the EU industry is less prominent (e.g. on Devices) and mobilise cross-disciplinary private sector forces to build AI solutions that will improve the operation of European service platforms and vertical industries.
- Support Networks as the infrastructure foundational pillar as recommended in the Draghi report on competitiveness focussing on AI, microelectronics and experimental facilities.
- Further work towards a unified consensus framework promoting a European approach towards 6G that takes into consideration national specificities (e.g. current infrastructures, economic power, societal needs), facilitating international cooperation.
- Enhance and use European experimental platforms to validate emerging 6G technologies and service scenarios, offering low-barrier access for SMEs, startups, and researchers.

Objective 4 – International collaboration
- Contribute to the implementation of the International Digital Strategy for the EU and to focus on boosting the EU's tech competitiveness through economic and business cooperation.
- Promote a high level of security for the EU and its partners, namely India for WP2026, and shape global digital governance and standards with a network of partners.

The proposed R&I WP2026 proposes to continue working on its previous complementary streams:
- **Stream B**: it covers research for revolutionary and evolutionary technology advancements. In preparation for 6G and more specifically in the AI domain, the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 Stream B targets a Topic with high-level TRL leveraging also previous SNS programmatic results with the objective of delivering innovative solutions towards real-life networks in a short-term period. The target is to further explore the role of AI in network platforms, as a tool for 6G network optimisation and by ensuring the availability, curation and validation of high-quality real and synthetic data sets needed to train AI models in AI-native 6G systems. Development of data sets for AI solutions for 6G services and applications for verticals (AIaaS) are also included.
- **Stream C**: it focuses on further development and consolidation of experimental infrastructure(s), in support of the various phases of the SNS JU. Stream C developments in WP 2026 have a particular focus on the availability of an evolvable experimental infrastructure to engage the 6G community to run experimentations, by continue offering of EU-wide technology experimentation platforms to innovators (SMEs, start-ups, Researchers etc.) that can test and incorporate candidate 6G technologies in an E2E way for their further validation.
- **Stream CSA**: A first CSA targets an operational and output-optimisation CSA to facilitate the activities of the European SNS JU community and undertake various activities to maximise the impact of the SNS JU programme. Furthermore, a second CSA will support EU deep bilateral cooperation with India, towards identification of potential synergies and alignment of European and India's standardisation agendas. Lastly, a third CSA will continue the previous SNS developments on massive IoT and device integration, targeting a shared European roadmap and a strategy for a renewed European industrial

capability around simplified, lower-cost 6G-enabled devices, and ultimately rebuild European industrial capabilities in this critical sector.

An extensive description of the R&I WP 2026 is detailed in the Annex 2 of this document.

To help steer the future R&I efforts of the SNS JU, an amendment of the BAWP 2026-2027 will be prepared to reflect the new R&I priorities planned for adoption in December 2026.

2.2.3   Calls

The SNS JU is set up for a period ending on 31 December 2031 and it can launch calls until 31 December 2027 (in duly justified cases this can be extended to 31 December 2028 and based on availability of remaining budget stemming from the MFF 2021-2027).

As part of the SNS JU BAWP 2026-2027, two Calls for Proposals are foreseen in 2026 and in 2027 respectively.

2.2.3.1   Calls for proposals

The R&I SNS WP2026 (Annex 2 of the present document) details **one Call for 2026, which is planned to open in January 2026 and will close in April 2026** with selected proposals to be contracted by the end of 2026. It covers the following topics:

Streams / Topics	Call 2026 Indicative Topic Budget (in M€)
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B (IA)	
01: Collection, Generation and Validation of Datasets suitable for training AI models for 6G Networks	8.0
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C (RIA)	
01: SNS experimental Infrastructure	8.0
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA (CSA)	
01: SNS Operations and Output optimisation	3.0
02: 6G Devices	2.0
03: EU-IND International Collaboration	1.0
Total (M€)	**22**

For 2027, one additional, larger Call is foreseen. The 2027 Call will be financed with the remaining budget of 2026 (corresponding to EUR 105 million approx.) and with the budget of 2027, provided that the budget 2027 is approved by the European Commission and by the Governing Board of the SNS JU in 2026[31]. An

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[31] According to Recital 78 and Article 110.2 of the Financial Regulation 2024

amendment of the BAWP 2026-2027, planned for adoption in December 2026, will be prepared in the course of 2026 to reflect the new R&I priorities for 2027 and the description of the 2027 Call topics.

2.2.3.2 Conditions of the calls and calls management rules

The General Annexes to HE for the WP 2026[32] generally apply with a few exceptions that are specific to the SNS JU. These exceptions are detailed in Appendix 1 to the R&I WP of Annex 2.

Openness: In line with HE principles, all above R&I topics for 2026 are fully open (with IKOP generation incentives) with the exception of the topics HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B-01 & HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C-01 (up to half of the budget fully open). These exceptions are in line with Recital 21 and Article 5.2.(a) of the SBA. Proposals that do not fulfil the above conditions, including the provision of a mandatory table of compliance, at the time of the proposal submission, will be considered ineligible and, therefore, will not be evaluated.
Restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation and restrictions for the protection of European communication networks: Detailed measures of the SNS 2026 Call are included in the Appendix 1 to the R&I WP of Annex 2 (SNS 2026 Call overview and General call conditions).

IKOP: In Kind Contribution to Operational Activities (IKOP are an important tool to stimulate private investments in addition to public investments for achieving the SNS JU's objectives. IKOP can only be generated by private members of the 6G-Infrastructure Association (6G-IA). For this WP, the estimated value of IKOP by the members other than the Union or their constituent entities shall be a minimum of EUR 1.5 million. A minimum programme level IKOP contribution[33] of 6.7 % is targeted and proposals are expected to significantly contribute to this target, which is reflected in the impact section of the evaluation procedure.

SMEs: Target for SME participation is at 20% at programme level, also reflected in the impact section of the evaluation procedure.

Collaboration: Participants of selected projects will be requested to cooperate in the SNS JU programme for topics of common interests by signing the CoA referred to in the specific provisions of the Model Grant Agreement (MGA).

Procedure: Specific rules apply related to the procedure to rank proposals with equal scores.

Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP): Financial support to third parties (FSTP) is planned for HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C-01. Up to 20% of the budget of proposals submitted under this topic may be reserved for Third Party Financing. For these actions, the third party financing contractual clause of Articles 6.2.D.1 and 9.4 of the AGA[34] will apply, as well as some complementary conditions detailed in Appendix 1 to the SNS JU R&I Work Programme (Annex 2 to this document).

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[32] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/horizon-europe-work-programmes_en
[33] According to Article 11 and Article 2(10) of the SBA, IKOP are generated exclusively at the level of individual actions (projects) funded by the Joint Undertaking. The programme-level IKOP figure refers to the aggregated target across all projects funded under this Work Programme and does not represent a separate legal or financial instrument.
[34] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf

2.2.4 Follow-up activities linked to past calls: monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

The SNS JU programme and its projects are steadily making outstanding progress and a concrete impact, as regularly highlighted on the SNS JU website and on the projects' websites as well as in their newsletters. All impactful achievements are reflected in the significant SNS programmatic KPIs (highlighted in Section 2.2.1). 35 Projects from the first call of the SNS JU R&I Work Programme 2021-2022 (total budget of EUR 239 million) started at the beginning of 2023; 28 Projects from the second call of the SNS JU R&I Work Programme 2023 (total budget of around EUR 133 million) started beginning 2024. All 16 projects from the third SNS Call (total budget of around EUR 127 million) started in the beginning of 2025. The fourth and fifth Call (SNS JU R&I Work Programme 2025) is implemented with an indicative total budget of EUR 128 million. Around 21 projects from the 2025 SNS JU Calls are expected to start mid-2026 following the Grant Agreement preparation procedure, which is expected to start beginning 2026.

During the past years of the SNS JU projects implementation, a number of collaborative actions have been undertaken among projects and with the 6G-IA, under the framework of the SNS Initiative Collaboration Agreement (CoA). The CoA establishes its own governance structures (Steering Board, Technology Board, Working Groups, Communications Task Force), separate from the governance of the SNS JU. Although the SNS JU is not a party to the CoA and does not take part in its governance, the CoA has been endorsed by the SNS JU GB and is a key instrument for maximising the impact of SNS JU fundings. By fostering structured cooperation between projects, it ensures consistency, efficiency and visibility of results across the SNS portfolio, directly contributing to the fulfilment of the SNS JU objectives as defined in the SBA. This is why the signature of the CoA is mandatory for SNS JU beneficiaries, as set out in Annex 5 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement[35].

The SNS JU programme has gained significant momentum, driving dynamic collaboration across projects. This is reflected in the latest Annual Activity Report and relevant infographics[36], numerous[37] such as the 1st SNS Trials & Pilots brochure[38], cross-project workshops and active participation in major international conferences. This significant progress and impact was also evident in the Key Achievements exercise that took place in 2025, aiming to identify and promote the most promising technological, experimental, and market-oriented innovations driven by SNS JU-funded projects. In total, 188 Key Achievements[39] were submitted, highlighting the most significant results from 63 SNS JU-funded projects under Call 1 and Call 2 and reflecting the diversity and dynamism of the SNS ecosystem. Through an extensive evaluation, a list of Top-10 Key Achievements were selected, representing the innovation of Europe's efforts to shape the future of connectivity.

The continuation and strengthening of the above programmatic activities are expected within 2026; the activities of multiple SNS JU projects will continue in all SNS collaborative bodies in order to converge and create positive synergies. Main activities foreseen in 2026 will include follow-up exercises (e.g. new edition of the interactive SNS Reference Figure[40], 2nd round of SNS Key Achievements and Trials & Pilot brochure, continuous improvements of the SNS dataset repository, FSTP/Open Call project reporting, update of the Vertical Engagement and standards trackers, KPI Radar[41] etc.) as well as new areas of activities (e.g. AI data and model sharing and reuse, standardisation guidelines & support to all SNS JU

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[35] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/collaboration-agreement/

[36] sns-caar-2024-apr25_v8.2_web_hq.pdf

[37] SNS Publications - SNS JU

[38] sns_tps_brochure_may25_final.pdf

[39] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/sns-ju-projects-key-achievements-2025/

[40] Interactive map of SNS projects - SNS JU

[41] 6G SNS Tracker

projects, FSTP journal, preparation of joint workshops & demos etc.). An important series of white papers is also expected in 2026, indicatively on AI/ML SNS landscape (updated version), on key verticals (health, industry & manufacturing, Media & entertainment, PPDR), on Security enablers for 6G, on data quality, 6G KPIs estimation and measurement results (updated version) etc.

Moreover, throughout 2026, SNS JU will continue to carry out all the necessary activities for the management, control and monitoring of all ongoing projects coming from previous calls for proposals, including project reviews, reporting and payment workflows and Grant Agreement amendments. It has to be noted that most of the 35 projects under SNS JU Call 1 have ended their activities in 2025 (14 exceptional project extensions have been approved) and a number of final reviews and payments is planned within 2026.

All new Call 4 (streams B, C) and Call 5 (stream D) projects will be invited to sign the CoA within 2 months after the project start date, so that they are fully onboarded into the above programmatic activities, where ongoing SNS JU projects are very active with well-planned anticipated results within 2026 .

While the SNS JU will pursue all its planned R&I activities, further findings, pursuant to a gap analysis and the current policy context, highlighted the need to strengthen links (established or intended) with targeted stakeholders (e.g. verticals, experimenters/developers of 6G technologies) and Partnerships (e.g. on Chips JU), national initiatives and international partnerships (with India, following already established collaboration with USA, Japan and Republic of Korea), focus on AI for 6G networks and experimental infrastructures to serve the SNS Community and further enhance collaboration with the micro-electronics community in the context of the European Chips Act and towards a European strategy and roadmap on 6G devices. During 2026, SNS JU will build on the results of various workshops on key topics: Microelectronics, Photonics, NTN, AI, Security, Wireless and Cloud/Service Provision, Media, PPDR, Smart factories, etc. and will further organise new ones with the purpose to identify future strategic directions for the SNS JU for the final 2027 extended Call. This is an ongoing process that is expected to produce results to be considered for the SNS JU R&I WP 2027 and to prepare the ground for dedicated R&I activities in the context of FP10.

2.2.5   Cooperation, synergies and cross-cutting themes and activities

The SNS JU continuously assesses opportunities for synergetic actions with other JUs as well as potential coordinated calls and topics.

Cooperation with Chips JU
Further to the European Chips Act[42], and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between AENEAS and 6G-IA, the SNS JU has established close links with the Chips JU by aligning on topics of mutual interest. Since 2024, SNS JU and Chips JU have been exploring in depth common priority areas such as Microelectronics for 6G networks. In 2025, SNS JU has incorporated a dedicated microelectronics topic in its R&I AWP.

Cooperation with European Space Agency
A Memorandum of Intent (MoI) was signed in October 2025 to enhance cooperation between the SNS JU and the European Space Agency (ESA, particularly in the context of NTN and Europe's broader goal of strengthening technological sovereignty in space-enabled communications.

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[42] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-chips-act

In 2026, the SNS JU and ESA are expected to further formalise this cooperation, notably in Access to ESA's ground and in-orbit testing infrastructure; Data and knowledge sharing across complementary projects; and Joint support to standardisation activities, especially in 6G-related domains; and mutual reinforcement of research agendas between the SNS JU and ESA.

Cooperation with the European 3C Ecosystem

The SNS JU cross-cutting activities linking research and policy and strategic thinking will continue in 2026. In line with the EC White Paper on "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?", it is necessary to continue developing a synergetic ecosystem between relevant actors in the cloud/computing continuum.

The SNS strategic Policy WG (subgroup on Networks Connected, Collaborative, Computing (3C) Networks) is expected to continue focusing in 2026 on the development of a European strategy for the telco-cloud-edge. The work of the Policy WG will feed into pending and forthcoming EU initiatives such as the review of the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC)[43], the Digital Network Act (DNA), the review of the Digital Decade, the Cloud and AI Development Act, the Code of Conduct, etc. Furthermore, in line with the MoU between the 5G Automotive Association (5GAA) and 6G-IA, cooperation will be strengthened through the continuation of the SNS strategic WG "5G for Connected and Automated Mobility - Deployment Stream" and the 6G-IA WG "5G/6G for Connected and Automated Mobility - R&I Stream". Such work will be relevant also in the context of EU initiatives such as the forthcoming Automotive Action Plan. The SNS strategic WG is expected to continue working on its standardisation workstream and on proposing steps towards a European standardisation strategy for smart networks and services in 2026.

International Cooperation

The EU-India Trade and Technology Council[44] was established in 2023 as a coordination platform to address key trade, trusted technology and security challenges. Both partners reaffirmed the importance of deepening their digital cooperation and committed to accelerating a human-centric digital transformation, as well as the development of advanced and trustworthy AI, semiconductors, High-Performance Computing and 6G for the benefit of both economies and societies. EU-India cooperation was further strengthened through the MoU signed in 2024 between the EU 6G-IA and the Indian Bharat 6G Alliance towards secured and trusted telecommunications and resilient supply chains. In this context, EU-India cooperation may be materialised under R&I WP 2026 Stream CSA. More specifically, a CSA is to establish in depth working relationships to assess further industrial cooperation opportunities and also divergences between the EU and the Indian 6G visions. Furthermore, the cooperation opportunities and joint activities sought under EU-US Trade and Technology Council, under the EU-Republic of Korea and the Japan-EU Digital Partnerships to coordinate and pave the way towards complementary advanced research and supply chains for 6G networks and services will continue as well in 2026. Three R&I projects on the EU-US, EU-Japan and EU-Republic of Korea cooperation funded by the SNS JU will continue their operations throughout 2026 covering cutting edge research topics such as AI, Open RAN and other 6G technologies.

Cooperation with other EU programmes

The SNS JU will also assess to what extent the additional tasks laid out in the Regulation are being addressed and will in particular, strengthen strategic collaboration with 5G deployment activities and

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[43] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/european-electronic-communications-code.html
[44] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/key-outcomes-second-eu-india-trade-and-technology-council

promote synergies among relevant Union-funded trials, pilots and deployment activities in the area of smart networks and services (e.g. CEF2 Digital programme, Recovery and Resilience Funds, InvestEU).

<u>Cooperation with 6G National Initiatives</u>
The SNS JU will also continue to pursue potential synergies with national 6G initiatives and policies, through the SNS CO-OP, notably through the organisation of workshops and interactions with implemented actions at MS level, in view of defining common follow up actions at EU level.

2.3 Support to operations of the SNS JU for 2026-2027

2.3.1 Communication, dissemination and exploitation

SNS JU vision is to deliver advanced, secure and sustainable smart networks and services, positioning Europe as a leader in the global digital landscape and contributing to the future of European connectivity and to key verticals industrial competitiveness.

The SNS JU aims to lead Europe into the future by shaping the design and the development of advanced connectivity and 6G, while improving the deployment of 5G, with a vision to converge adjacent technologies and components, from microelectronics to the computing continuum, building on 6G AI-native networks and capabilities like sensing, positioning and integration of terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks. We envision a world where ubiquitous, intelligent, and sustainable networks and services transform industries, enhance societal well-being, and strengthen Europe's technological sovereignty.
Adopted by the SNS JU GB in November 2024, the SNS JU Communication Policy and Plan supports the achievement of European leadership in 6G technology and future smart networks and services development, positioning advanced connectivity as a key enabler for Europe's competitiveness.

The Communication Policy and Plan supports this vision through different channels and tools adapted to the different audiences of the JU. These channels and tools are regularly evaluated. Furthermore, coordination of communication and dissemination activities is consistently maintained, with a focus on maximising the impact of projects and programme activities.
The SNS JU communication activities for 2026-2027 will continue to support the priorities identified in the BAWP and agreed by the SNS JU GB, in full alignment with the strategic objectives outlined in the SNS JU Communication Policy and Plan. In addition, the new geopolitical context and the negotiations on the future EU budget requires focus on impact, which will be supported by the communication strategy of JU.

Communication objectives will be to:

- Drive European leadership in 6G development and advanced connectivity, continuously building on SNS JU as a private-public partnership and a European strategic asset,
- Increase the visibility and impact of the SNS JU and its projects,
- Provide timely and accurate information about the SNS JU activities, calls, and opportunities,
- Encourage stakeholder engagement and investment,
- Foster community building within the R&I ecosystem,
- Ensure effective coordination with other JUs and relevant initiatives,
- Offer educational resources and support to stakeholders, beneficiaries and the general public.

Our communication strategy will balance delivering technical content with addressing broader, more accessible topics related to 6G technology and the future of connectivity. This approach will position the SNS JU not only as expert in a specialised sector but also as a comprehensive dissemination channel that

serves as a reference point for policy makers. It is important to position the SNS JU as a key enabler for the future of European advanced connectivity, an effective and strategic asset for Europe to deliver on smart networks and services that support European key vertical industries as well as take into consideration security, societal needs and sustainability in the development of future technologies (e.g. working and delivering on KVIs).

In 2026-2027, the SNS JU will implement key actions around:

1. **Thought Leadership and Expert Panels:** Organise and participate in high-profile expert conferences, panels, workshops, roundtables and events on ~~6G,~~ future Smart Networks and Services related technologies.
2. **Enhanced Visibility for the SNS JU and positioning advanced connectivity as a key asset for Europe:** Continuously highlighting the SNS JU's role and objectives as well as achievements of the SNS JU programme and projects, with tailored communication and support on projects and programme impact.
3. **Strengthen communication towards and collaboration with industrial vertical sectors and other JUs,** with the common objective to demonstrate impact of the public-private models, contribute to Europe's competitiveness at a crucial moment for Europe and the renewal of the European budget.
4. **Broader Audience Engagement:** Actively involving experts and non-field expert public in discussions about future Smart Networks and Services and related technologies, addressing policy makers and the wider public, the success of 6G will also depend on public acceptance and technology uptake.

Target audiences

- **Policy-makers:** EU institutions, individual Member States and regional authorities.
- **SNS stakeholders in Research and Innovation and adjacent technology / strategic sectors such as micro-electronics, cloud and edge, etc.**
- **SNS JU current and potential new beneficiaries.**
- **Private and public investors.**
- **General public:** with a focus on engaging diverse communities beyond the technological and research sectors.

Communication channels

The SNS JU will develop content targeting the different following channels:

- The SNS JU Website
- Social media (e.g., LinkedIn, X, Mastodon, YouTube, assessment of other relevant online social media channels)
- Events
- Publications
- Newsletter & Newsflash
- Media
- Direct mailings

Key events in 2026 (subject to updates)

- Info Day(s) and brokerage event for the 2026 Calls of Proposals

- Mobile World Congress 2026
- Joint Undertakings Networks Events (tbc)
- EuCNC + 6G Summit 2026
- Techritory 2026
- ETSI / 6G Standardisation events
- 6G Global Summits and other relevant 6G Conferences

The SNS JU communication, dissemination and exploitation activities (including key events) for 2027, will be further detailed in an amendment of the BAWP 2026-2027 planned for adoption in December 2026.

2.3.2 Procurement and contracts

The SNS JU will implement its administrative budget by launching specific SNS JU procurement procedures, by participating in JU joint procurement procedures, and by taking part to Framework Work Contracts of the EC and other European Institutions.

The SNS JU is part of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Back Office Arrangement (BOA) on Procurements since December 2022. This SLA is intended establish a centralised procurement system to manage joint administrative procurements for the benefit of all signatory JUs.

This SLA is led by the Clean Aviation JU and aims at creating synergies by launching common procurement procedures covering common JU needs. This centralised management of common procurement needs allows the SNS JU to reduce its administration workload while eventually benefitting from advantages derived from a higher demand of services.

The Back Office Arrangements in Procurement ('BOA Procurement') will continue to create synergies among its members across 2026-2027 as reflected and endorsed by the Steering Committee Joint Public Procurement Planning ('JPPP').

Among the inter-institutional tender procedures planned for the 2026–2027 period, the renewal of a framework service contract for managed IT services is the most strategic priority.

It has been proven that by pooling a negotiation power, the BOA joint administrative calls for tenders draw the attention of higher number of economic operators, ensuring competitive bids and robust market responses.

Finally, in 2026 the BOA will further prioritize the digitalization of contract management processes with a strong focus on streamlining its operating framework.

Apart from the JUs BOA above, the SNS JU has also signed several SLAs with different Directorates-General of the EC for the provisions of specific services by the Central Services. In 2026 the main operating SLA with EC DGs will concern: specific IT services (SLA DIGIT); specific HR services (SLA DG HR); specific payroll services (PMO); specific financial/accounting applications – ABAC/SUMMA - (SLA DG BUDG); specific logistics services (OIB); specific document management services Hermes ARES NOMCOM (SLA SG).

The SNS JU also intends to purchase services and goods through specific Framework Contracts (FWC) negotiated by the EC services or other EU Institutions with external contractors for specific services/goods that are required on a regular basis, and in which the SNS JU is considered as a potential contracting authority.

2.3.3 Other support operations

Efficiencies and synergies – Back Office arrangements

The priority for 2026 in terms of synergies and efficiencies for the operations of the JU is to further continue and refine its participation in the JU BOA, namely, Accounting, Procurement, Human Resources and Information and Technology.

Accounting

SNS JU implements its financial rules (SNS GB Decision 02-2021 Financial rules art. 25) which define, inter alia, powers and responsibility of SNS JU Accounting Officer. They also make an explicit reference to the possibility that this function could be attributed to the Accounting Officer of the European Commission, and such option was effectively utilised by the JU in the past. However, in October 2021 the European Commission announced the intention to terminate their role of the Accounting Officer of the JU, except for the treasury function, which became effective as of 1 December 2022. The resulting situation was tackled by applying the back-office arrangements solution for the accounting function of the JUs. In fact, within this solution, EU Rail JU is now performing the role of the Lead JU and is also, being one of the respective three JUs (with the Clean Aviation JU and the SESAR 3 JU), acting in the role of the accounting service provider.

ICT

In continuation of the long-lasting coordination and collaboration practice on information and communication technology (ICT) and following the signature of the SLA of the BOA ICT in January 2025, the Joint Undertakings have developed and approved a common IT annual work plan for 2026. This plan identifies 7 action lines covering 4 service areas for 2026:

- Service area 1: Governance:
  - Common governance, decision-making and budget monitoring: in this area, the implementation of the IT annual work plan and budget for 2026 will be monitored, and the common annual work plan for 2027 will be prepared in view of an adoption by the BOA ICT Steering Committee before the end of 2026,
  - Management of shared infrastructure, which includes in particular the delivery of Infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) under MS 365 technology,
  - Investigation of AI implementation for the JUs;
- Service area 2: Management of shared infrastructure
  - Service delivery and monitoring of the service contract,
  - Preparation of a procurement procedure for the establishment of an FWC for ICT managed services, in coordination with the BOA Procurement,
- Service area 3: Workplace services provision
  - Workplace service delivery and monitoring of the service contract,
  - Continuous improvement of infrastructure in the White Atrium building (especially the meeting rooms);
- Service area 4: Security and compliance management, which includes the continuation of the implementation of the requirements of the Cybersecurity Regulation, and follow-up of other security requirements. This also includes the monitoring of the common business continuity plan and disaster recovery plan (BCP/DRP)

Ten Joint Undertakings are signatories of the BOA ICT, co-lead by the Clean Hydrogen JU and the IHI JU. The common work plan identifies, for each action, a specific JU lead responsible for implementing the action.

In addition to common actions defined in the BOA ICT common IT annual work plan, JUs continue their collaboration with other Commission services and IBAs, and implement their own specific actions as described in section.

ICT Management

The SNS JU will onboard on SUMMA as of 1 January 2026. The preparation work to onboard this tool (including training, testing and change management) has been carried out in 2025.

IT Operations

The priorities for 2026-2027 of the IT System of the SNS JU are to consolidate the stability and the reliability of the system, to provide IT support to staff in the use of IT applications and equipment and to cooperate with the Commission to ensure synergy and efficient use of resources.

Outcomes
- The first key outcome in terms of digital transformation foreseen for the SNS JU for 2026 is the implementation of its IT autonomy which was completed end of 2025 with some delays in comparison with the planned schedule due to the complexity of the exercise and the lack of human resources in the IT area within the JU.
- Fully operational SNS JU Digital Workplace.
- Fully stable IT system – including for corporate applications which are key for the SNS JU, such as COMPASS-SyGMA.

Logistics

The SNS JU is based in the White Atrium Building in Brussels where seven other JUs are located. As of Q1 2026, the office premises will be completely refurbished in order to provide appropriate working space to the SNS JU staff.

2.3.3.1 Feedback to policy

In a response to intensifying global tech competition, the European Commission 2026 Work Programme 'Europe's Independence Moment' sets a fast-track agenda to boost EU competitiveness, resilience, and strategic autonomy. This agenda follows President von der Leyen's political guidelines and the latest State of the Union, emphasising sustainable prosperity, regulatory simplification, deeper Single Market integration, and reinforced defence and digital technological sovereignty. In addition, the Competitiveness Compass also highlights the need for stronger public-private coordination and converting research into industrial value. The proposal for the 2028–2034 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, places research and innovation at the heart of the EU's economy and investment strategy, emphasising simplicity, flexibility, and strategic spending. It aims to tackle challenges posed by climate change, technological disruption, and demographic trends by investing in science, empowering entrepreneurs, and enhancing public and private sector support for R&I.

The SNS JU's feedback to policymakers will showcase our achievements and will highlight the importance of scientific evidence from EU-funded projects and their contribution to addressing technology policy. The SNS JU is actively gathering policy recommendations and lessons learned from its projects. These will be incorporated into a feedback to policy report that will be presented to the SNS JU GB in 2026.

The report will serve as a tool to share the results of funded projects with policymakers and make recommendations relevant for a specific policy field as part of efforts to ensure policymaking is evidence-informed, ultimately leading to better legislation and policies. The report can be used as insights for legislative initiatives, the design of future research and innovation funding programmes as well as evaluations or international negotiations. The document will communicate evidence-based policy recommendations effectively to the European Commission, Parliament, and Council. Concretely, it will encompass references to what worked well, what are the challenges, and what is the advice. for a future continuation of the programme by identifying concrete initiatives to feed into. Additionally, this tool can benefit the research community in raising awareness about the relevance of their research in designing policy.

2.3.4 Human Resources

2.3.4.1 HR Management

The SNS JU will achieve its goals by recruiting the right people, managing resources effectively, and keeping skilled staff motivated and engaged in a positive and productive work environment. The Executive Director will oversee all HR functions to ensure staff work in a safe, respectful, and supportive workplace. The SNS JU reached its planned staffing capacity of 17 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2025, in line with the Legal Financial Statement. Looking ahead, recruitment will focus primarily on replacing staff in cases of turnover.
Human Resources Priorities for 2026-2027:

- Recruitment: Hiring will be done as needed, following current procedures and ensuring alignment with the BOA and the joint recruitment framework used across JUs.

- Appraisal and Reclassification: These processes will take place in yearly basis, in line with the rules set out in GB Decisions.

- Mobility and Diversity: The SNS JU will follow new EU Agency Network guidelines—once approved—on staff mobility and improving gender and geographical balance.

The SNS JU activities on human resources for 2027, will be further detailed in an amendment of the BAWP 2026-2027 expected to be adopted in December 2026.

2.3.4.2 Strategy for achieving efficiency gains and synergies through back-office arrangements

According to the SBA, Joint Undertakings shall achieve synergies via the establishment of back-office arrangements (BOA), operating in some identified areas. Article 13 identifies Human Resources Support among the areas where common BOA could be set up. In that context, CBE JU is the lead JU for the BOA HR with IHI JU as "back-up JU".

Scope of the BOA HR support

Established in 2024, the BOA HR will build on the achievements of its first two years and - will continue in 2026 to focus on the following key areas of HR support, while further developing new projects and activities:

Recruitment

- ***Alignment and harmonisation of the JUs' recruitment processes***: Following its finalization in 2025, the common selection process guidelines—designed in accordance with best practices and the applicable legal framework—will be implemented across all JUs, ensuring a consistent and transparent approach whenever a selection procedure is launched.
- ***Organisation of joint selection procedures to increase efficiency gains:*** The JU's will strive to organise joint selection procedures for common profiles with same grades. This practice already in place, will be strengthened in 2026.
- ***Establishment and sharing of reserve lists:*** Where appropriate, the JUs will continue to share their reserve lists to shorten their recruitment processes and time-to-recruit.
- ***Inter-JU Competency framework:*** The BOA HR will continue to work on the common inter-JU competency framework and harmonization of job profiles, reinforcing consistency and clarity across all roles and supporting more effective HR management in JU's.

HR legal framework

The JUs share a common legal framework in the HR domain, therefore, additional synergies can be achieved by enhancing the existing collaboration in this area. The focus in 2026 will be on:

Staff Well-being and Conflict Prevention

Expanded in 2025 with 4 additional members further to a new call for expression of interest, the JUs will continue to offer to the JU's staff a common network of Confidential Counsellors. Information campaigns and joint actions will be launched to promote staff well-being, raise awareness about psychological and sexual harassment, and implement preventive measures aimed at mitigating workplace conflicts. In this context the JU's will also increase the visibility of mediation services to JU's staff.

Collaboration with the EU agencies network (EUAN) and the EC

The JU's will continue to attend EUAN meetings, including possible ad-hoc participation of the HR Officers to different working groups. The JUs will continue strengthening their collaboration with DGHR /PMO about common HR matters. Notably, building on the recent reinforcement of the collaboration with DG HR, the latter and DG HR will explore the feasibility of working on new synergies such as the possibility for JUs to join the Standing Working Party, access to the newly developed modules of the Human Resources Transformation (HRT)platform (the European Commission-DG HR's upcoming system to replace SYSPER), and a more agile sharing of reserve lists among EU bodies, including executive agencies.

BOA HR network

The JUs HR Officers will continue their strong collaboration. A new multi-annual work plan which will include inter-JU new projects and activities will be developed and adopted by the BOA HR Steering Committee**.**

After two years of existence, the BOA HR will take stock of its experience and will reflect on the modalities of its governance.

HR digitalisation

In 2026, the JUs will continue to move towards a digitalisation of HR processes. The BOA HR will continue to share good practices in the use of HR IT systems. and will continue to actively take part in the HR Transformation programme led by the EC.

2.3.4.3 Staff Establishment Plan

Function group and grade	2025				2026		2027	
	Authorised budget		Actually filled as of 31/12		Authorised budget		Requested budget	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts
AD 16								
AD 15								
AD 14		1		1		1		1
AD 13								
AD 12		1		1		1		1
AD 11								
AD 10								
AD 9								
AD 8		5		3		5		5
AD 7				2				
AD 6								
AD 5								
TOTAL AD		7		7		7		7
AST 11								
AST10								
AST 9								
AST 8								
AST 7								
AST 6								
AST 5								
AST 4								
AST 3								
AST 2								

AST 1						
TOTAL AST						
AST/SC 6						
AST/SC 5						
AST/SC 4						
AST/SC 3						
AST/SC 2						
AST/SC 1						
TOTAL AST/SC						
TOTAL AD+AST+ AST/SC						
GRAND TOTAL						

Contract Agents	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2025	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2025	Headcount as of 31/12/2025	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2026	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2027
Function Group IV	7	6	6	7	7
Function Group III	2	2	2	2	2
Function Group III	1	1	1	1	1
Function Group I					
TOTAL	10	9	9	10	10

Seconded National Experts	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2025	Executed FTE as of 31/12/2025	Headcount as of 31/12/2025	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2026	FTE corresponding to the authorised budget 2027
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0

Recruitment forecasts 2026 following retirement/mobility or new requested posts					
Job title in the JU	**Type of contract (Official, CA, TA)**		**TA/Official**		**CA**
			Function group/grade of recruitment internal (Brackets) and external (single grade) foreseen for publication		**Recruitment Function Group (I, II, III and IV)**
	Due to foreseen retirement/ mobility	**New post requested due to additional tasks**	**Internal (brackets)**	**External (brackets)**	
Project Officer (tbc)					1

Gender representation middle and senior management

50% Female – 50% Male

Geographical representation

country	staff members
DE	1
HU	2
RO	1
IT	4
ES	2
BE	1
EL	2
CY	1
FR	2
total	**16**

2.3.4.4 Record management, data protection and access to documents

Record management covers all information, both electronic and physical, necessary to ensure evidence of the SNS JU's activities ensuring an appropriate level of accountability, transparency, and retention of its legacy. Effective record management helps to meet the JU's transparency obligations, in particular by facilitating public access to documents and implementing the principle of accountability of public actions. Effective record management helps to meet the SNS JU's transparency obligations, in particular by facilitating public access to documents and implementing the principle of accountability of public actions.

To keep awareness among staff at a high level, the SNS JU will continue with procedural guidance and trainings on these matters.

As regards the processing of personal data, SNS JU applies Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 ("EUDPR")[45]. The SNS JU, in compliance with EUDPR, is liaising with the relevant services of the European Data Protection Supervisor and contributing to the activities of the inter-institutional data protection networks and WGs to raise awareness among the staff and stakeholders. Internally, the SNS JU data protection will continue to develop new data protection policies covering horizontal services and encompassing such areas as internal control, procurement, IT, HR, and governance.

The SNS JU, as a controller, maintains a record of processing activities under its responsibility in a central register ("GDPR central" tool) and makes this register publicly accessible. In addition, the SNS JU takes appropriate measures to provide transparent information, communication and modalities for the exercise of the rights of the data subject. More information is available on SNS JU website[46]

Based on the results of the SNS JU Data Protection compliance monitoring exercise carried out in 2025, SNS JU will continue to ensure compliance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 through the implementation of targeted actions under the Data Protection Action Plan, in close synergies with the other Joint Undertakings and with the support of an external service provider where needed.

The 2026 actions will focus on the following priorities:

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[45] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj/eng
[46] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/data-protection-declaration/

- Formalising the role of managers in the implementation and monitoring of data protection measures, and holding regular bilateral meetings with the DPO;

- Completing outstanding joint controllership agreements and data processing contracts;

- Establishing a mandatory notification mechanism for new processing activities to the DPO;

- Adopting and applying a risk analysis methodology to all personal data processing activities;

- Updating the SNS JU privacy policy and finalising specific privacy statements (e.g. procurement, third-party tools such as MS Office 365);

- Finalising the updated procedure for handling data subject rights, ensuring compliance with legal requirements on restrictions, consent withdrawal, and profiling safeguards;

- Institutionalising the annual DPO report and defining KPIs for core compliance areas;

- Completing the implementation of pending security measures, including a comprehensive risk management strategy, security incident and data breach management procedures, and strengthened backup and email security.

Regarding access to documents, the SNS JU will address any requests for access to documents according to Regulation No 1049/2001, in a spirit of openness and transparency, in order to bring its activities and outputs closer to the public by giving the opportunity to the public to monitor its work.

2.4 Governance activities

2.4.1 Governing board

The GB is the decision-making body of the SNS JU. It has the overall responsibility for the strategic orientation, coherence with the relevant Union objectives and policies and operations of the JU and supervises the implementation of its activities.

The GB of the SNS JU is composed of two representatives of the EC on behalf of the EU and five representatives of 6G-IA. It shall hold ordinary meetings at least twice a year, whereas extraordinary meetings may be convened at the request of the Chairperson, the Executive Director, the EC or 6G-IA. The meetings of the GB are convened by the Chairperson. The agenda of the meetings and the decisions taken are made publicly available on the website of the SNS JU. The Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson of the SRG are invited as observers to the GB meetings.

In 2026, it is foreseen that the GB of the SNS JU holds three meetings. The GB's key activities for 2026 are listed below:

Key activities	Estimated Timetable (In Quarter-Q)
Approval of the SNS JU AAR 2025 and First discussion on the SNS JU AWP 2027	Q2
Approval of the evaluation outcome for SNS JU Call 6	Q3
Adoption of the SNS JU AWP 2027 (Updated SNS JU BAWP 2026-27)	Q4

2.4.2 Executive Director

The Executive Director is the chief executive responsible for the day-to-day management of the SNS JU. The Executive Director is the legal representative of the SNS JU and is accountable to the GB. She is supported in her activities by the staff of SNS JU (SNS JU Programme Office).

On 24 May 2023, the GB appointed Erzsébet FITORI as the SNS JU Executive Director as from 1 October 2023 and for a period of four years, until 1 October 2027 (initial mandate). By the end of this initial mandate, and after an assessment of her performance as well as of the future tasks and challenges of the SNS JU, her mandate could be extended for a period of not more than three years.

2.4.3 States' Representatives Group

The SRG is one of the advisory bodies of SNS JU. The SRG provides recommendations and the opinion of EU's Member States and associated countries on the SNS JU, including: the progress of the programme implementation, the draft BAWP, the AAR, as well as other measures taken to address specific objectives of the initiative. The secretariat of the SRG is provided by the SNS JU Office and the Executive Director, members of the SNS JU Office, 6G-IA representatives or EC representatives may be invited as observers.

The SRG reports to the GB on a range of matters, and in particular by means of an annual report describing the status of relevant national or regional research and innovation programmes and initiatives and identifying potential areas of cooperation.

In 2026, at least two SRG meetings are planned in Q2 and Q4. Additional meetings could take place, if needed. In all the meetings, the SRG members will be invited to report information about national and regional activities and initiatives linked to the SNS JU objectives with a view to prepare the SRG annual report and to ensure complementarities and identify areas of cooperation with the SNS JU activities.

2.4.4 Stakeholders Group

The SG brings together relevant public and private stakeholders, including organised groups active in the field of the SNS JU. Following the decision of the GB on the renewal of the Stakeholders' Group[47] call for expression of interest has been launched in (December 2025).
The SG is regularly informed on the activities of the SNS JU and, if relevant, is invited to provide comments on the JUs planned initiatives. Such consultations may include, for instance, the preparation of the 2026 SNS JU multi-annual SRIA and Annual Work Programme, the development of strategic reports on research priorities for future Framework Programmes at the request of the Executive Director, or the preparation of major events such as the EuCNC & 6G Summit. Further consultations may be organised as appropriate.

2.5 Plans for the organisational management and internal control systems

Internal Control Framework

The Internal Control Framework (ICF, approved in 2023 (SNS JU GB decision 12/2023), provides reasonable assurance to the GB regarding the achievement of the SNS JU's objectives.

In line with the requirements expressed in the SNS JU Financial Rules and in the EU Financial Regulation, it shall:

- Ensure that operational activities are effective and efficient. The SNS JU meets its objectives defined in the BAWP 2026-27 using the adequate human and financial resources.

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[47] https://smart-networks.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/07-2025-sns-gb-decision-renewal-stakeholders-group-final.pdf

- Ensure that legal and regulatory requirements are met. The SNS JU operates in full accordance with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure that reporting is reliable. The SNS JU management produces regular, reliable and easily accessible management information on financial management, use of resources and progress on the achievement of operational objectives.
- Ensure that assets and information are safeguarded.

The SNS JU managers take the necessary measures to ensure the completeness and preserve the integrity of the data on which management decisions are taken, and reports are issued. All the SNS JU management processes and functions concur to these four objectives granting the largest possible preventive, detective and corrective controls in line with the available resources.

In 2026-2027, the SNS JU will continue to run its operations by improving the quality level of programme implementation while integrating the corrective actions that were identified in the past.

The main activities that will be performed include the following:

- Report on compliance and effectiveness of internal control in the annual activity report;
- Carry out periodic review of risks at least yearly in the context of preparing the annual work programme;
- Update of the risk register set-up in 2025;
- Implementation of the Internal control guidelines adopted in 2026;
- Coordinate visits of the European Court of Auditors and of the external auditor of SNS JU accounts;
- Liaise with the auditors of the Internal Audit Service (IAS);
- Follow up on the implementation of action plans on audit recommendations and on observations of the discharge authority;
- Ensure a smooth implementation of the findings of the common JUs ex-post audit strategy and optimise the JU's specific audit efforts based on the analysis of the ex-post audits and of the specificities of SNS JU beneficiaries.

Financial procedures

The SNS JU shall fully comply with the requirements of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 (the Financial Regulation). In compliance with its Article 71, the SNS JU respects the principle of sound financial management. The SNS JU also complies with the provisions of the Model Financial Regulation applicable to the JU (Financial Rules adopted in 2021; SNS JU GB decision 02/2021).

The financial procedures and the workflows in place follow the financial rules, the general control framework applicable in the Commission and the Horizon Europe rules and guidance. Monitoring arrangements, including through the Union representation in the GB, as well as reporting arrangements, will ensure that the SNS JU can meet the accountability requirements both to the College and to the Budgetary Authority.

Regarding ICT tools applied to support its financial procedures, most transactions are dealt with via the corporate tools COMPASS/SyGMA, with certain grants-related transactions being performed directly in the EC accounting system ABAC or completed in ABAC following initiation in other tools (e.g. COMPASS/SyGMA or ECS). On 1 January 2026, the SNS JU will adopt SUMMA the new accounting and financial system currently adopted by the EC services. The SNS JU Staff will continue to be trained adequately to ensure maximum competence in the use of the IT tools as well as the various transactions which can arise (e.g. grant amendments, the Mutual Insurance Mechanism, recoveries). The

Administration and Finance Team and the Programme Team will continue to coordinate with corporate services to ensure coherent understanding and implementation of the financial rules.

Ex ante and Ex post controls

Standard ex-ante control measures are in place for Horizon Europe programmes. The Administration & Finance Team and the Programmes Team of SNS JU will continue to work closely together in their day-to-day activities of initiation and verification of payments of invoices and cost claims, creation of commitments, recovery orders, validation of financial and technical reports and following up on other financial and administrative aspects of the projects. Ex-ante controls follow a risk-based monitoring approach, which contribute to further reducing the risk of failing projects and/or loss of funding in the final stage of the SNS JU programme.

These activities will be conducted in a timely manner that will be monitored through the defined set of key indicators, in particular, the time to pay, the budget implementation and work programme execution.

The Ex-post audit process represents a significant element of the Internal Control System of the SNS JU. The main objectives of the audits are:

- To ensure the legality and regularity of the validation of cost claims performed by the SNS JU's management;
- To provide an adequate indication on the effectiveness of the related ex-ante controls;
- To provide the basis for corrective and recovery activities, if necessary.

In 2026, the SNS JU will continue to cooperate with the Fraud and Irregularities in Research Committee of the R&I family as well as with the Common Audit Service. For OLAF cases, Relevant Programme Officers staff have received training on fraud detection and prevention. The possibility to deepen the knowledge in this field will continue to be promoted within the learning and development framework of the SNS JU also in liaison with other JUs.

In 2026-2027, ex post controls of operational expenditure will continue to be implemented in line with the Horizon Europe audit strategies. The Common Audit Service of the Common Implementation Centre of the Research & Innovation department of the EC carries out all audits for the SNS JU (internally or outsourced to external firms) for Horizon Europe.

In particular, in 2026 it is foreseen to implement the risk-based 'Horizon Europe Audit Strategy' in a systematic and centralised manner. The JU will carry out a risk assessment aimed at the identification and selection of risky beneficiaries for in-depth ex-ante controls and for risk-based ex-post audits of payment transactions. The JU will ensure that risk profiles of beneficiaries are established and periodically updated, and that the selection of beneficiaries and projects for in-depth ex-ante controls and ex-post audits is carried out taking account of the above risk assessment.

Together, ex-ante and ex-post controls will provide the Authorising Officers with the necessary elements of assurance on the research and innovation budget under their responsibility. To that purpose, the SNS JU will implement the control strategy for the Horizon Europe programme (including ex-ante and ex-post controls and anti-fraud) in 2026.

Specific attention will be paid to:

- raising beneficiaries' awareness of the financial and administrative aspects of the Horizon Europe rules and how to avoid errors in cost reporting;
- validation of financial and technical reports.

Audits

The SNS JU audit arrangements are set up in accordance with Article 28 and 58 of the SNS JU Financial Rules. The audits provide reasonable assurance about the state of effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes and serve as a building block for the Executive Director's (Authorising Officer's) annual Declaration of Assurance.

Internal audits are carried out by IAS of the EC. In 2026, audits will be based on the SNS JU Strategic Internal Audit Plan 2025-2027 adopted by the IAS in 2024 further to a risk assessment.

The following table lists the prospective IAS audit topics for the period 2025-2027.

	Prospective IAS audit topics (2025-2027)
Audits	1. Limited review of the SNS JU's ICF
	2. Audit on grant management
Follow-up	• Continuous desk review of the recommendations reported as implemented
	• On-the-spot follow up as required

Depending on the results of the annual risk assessment update and considering the main risks identified by the IAS, the 2025-2027 strategic internal audit plan may be adapted at that time by either planning additional audit engagements or by replacing one of the prospective audits. Considering the risks outlined above, the IAS has identified the following as a potential reserve audit topic "HR management and ethics".

As to the external audits, every year, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) provides the European Parliament and the Council with a statement of assurance of the reliability of the annual accounts of the JU and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, based on an audit of the SNS JU accounts. The fieldwork related to the audit of the accounts 2025 is expected to start in January 2026 (final report publication in November 2026).

In 2025, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) mission focused on grant selection procedures, recruitment processes, revenue management, and the review of the main control procedures. The ECA issued a clean opinion on the final SNS JU accounts and provided a limited number of recommendations regarding the internal control framework.

In 2026 and 2027, the SNS JU will take into account the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the ECA exercises and, where necessary, establish and implement appropriate follow-up actions and improvement plans.

3. BUDGET

The SNS JU budget 2026 is proposed to the GB for adoption on the basis of the EU contribution as foreseen in the adopted EU General Budget. The Draft Budget 2026 of the SNS JU was prepared a year before in close collaboration with the European Commission services and is meant to be part of the EU General Budget as far as the EU contribution to the SNS JU is concerned. The budgetary figures anticipated in this document for 2027 are subject to possible adjustments as it will be discussed with the Commission in January 2026 and proposed for adoption under the EU General Budget 2027.

Statement of revenue:

The budget of the JU is made of the contributions of the European Union, the EFTA and third countries and the private members, being the EU the main contributor (97% in 2026).
The operational budget represents the 98% of the budget of the year. It is meant to pay the EU co-financing to projects selected and managed by the SNS JU. The EU contributions are complemented with the EFTA contributions 48and with the United Kingdom contributions 49. The administrative budget represents the 2% of the budget of the current year. The EU, the EFTA and the private members will contribute to the administrative activities as foreseen in the SBA. Unused appropriations of previous years will be re-activated and used with priority in accordance with the article 6 of the Financial Rules of the JU.

Statement of expenditure:

Administrative expenditure in 2026 and in 2027 is meant to follow similar patterns to 2025 with highest level of activity and fully staffed and in respect to the multiannual financial programming of the Commission for the period 2021-2027. In 2026 the call for proposals will amount to EUR 22 million. The operational budget of 2026 is significantly higher corresponding to EUR 128 million. The difference will be committed in the call of 2027. This is the key factor of this bi-annual budget, the launch of a large call for indicative EUR 220 million that will be financed with the remaining budget of 2026 and with the budget of 2027. This is subject to the approval of the R&I programme 2027 and the budget 2027 by the Commission and by the Governing Board in the course of 2026. This will be the last call of the JU under the MFF-2021-2027 and will be further elaborated during 2026 and proposed for approval to the Governing Board. This is the reason for presenting an anticipated budget 2027 in this work programme because the large call 2026-2027 will be financed by the budget of both years.

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48 EFTA contributions 2026: 2,6% of the EU contribution.

49 The UK contribution for 2025-2027 amounts to EUR 21 million associated to the operations of the JU. These will be claimed by the JU to the Commission in 2027 expectedly.

STATEMENT OF REVENUE									
Title Chapter	**H ea di ng**	**Financial year 2026**				**Financial year 2027[50]**			
		Estimate Commitment Appropriations	In %	Estimate Payment Appropriations	In %	Estimate Commitment Appropriations	In %	Estimate Payment Appropriations	In %
EU contribution (excluding EFTA and third countries contribution)		**121.557.178**	**91%**	**138.169.477**	**86%**	**107.357.605**	**88%**	**103.000.000**	**44%**
of which (fresh C1) Administrative (Title 1&2)		1.916.436		1.916.436		3.000.000		3.000.000	
of which frontloaded commitments (Title 1 and Title 2)									
of which Operational (Title 3)		119.640.742		136.253.041		104.357.605		100.000.000	
Of which related to additional entrusted tasks									
EFTA and third countries contribution		**9.160.487**	**7%**	**3.592.406**	**2%**	**13.791.298**	**11%**	**23.678.000**	**10%**
of which Administrative EFTA (Title 1&2)		49.827		49.827		78.000		78.000	
Of which administrative third countries excluding EFTA (Title 1&2)									
of which Operational EFTA (Title 3)		3.110.659		3.542.579		2.713.298		2.600.000	
Of which operational third countries excluding EFTA (Title 3)		6.000.000				11.000.000		21.000.000	
Financial Members other than the Union contribution		**791.992**	**1%**	**791.992**	**0,5%**	**804.852**	**1%**	**804.852**	**0,3%**
of which Administrative (Title 1&2)		791.992		791.992		804.852		804.852	
of which Operational (Title 3)									
Financial Contributing partners contribution									
Interest generated									
Other revenue		p.m.		p.m.		p.m.		p.m.	
Unused appropriations from previous years		**1.820.542**	**1%**	**18.967.348**	**12%**		**0%**	**105.000.000**	**45%**
Of which administrative		613.792		1.060.688					
Of which operational		1.206.750		17.906.660				105.000.000	
TOTAL ESTIMATE REVENUE		**133.330.198**	**100%**	**161.521.223**	**100%**	**121.953.755**	**100%**	**232.482.852**	**100%**

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE									
Title Chapter	**Hea ding**	**Financial year 2026**				**Financial year 2027**			
		Estimate Commitme nt	% Ratio [Year	Estimate Payment Appropriati ons	% Ratio [Year	Estimate Commitment Appropriatio ns	% Ratio [Year N/ye ns	Estimate Payment Appropriati ons	% Rati o [Yea

		Appropriations	N/year N-1]		N/year N-1]		ar N-1]		r N/year N-1]
1- Staff									
Salaries & allowances									
- Of which establishment plan posts		*1.200.000*		*1.200.000*		*1.500.000*		*1.500.000*	
- Of which external personnel		*800.000*		*800.000*		*1.000.000*		*1.000.000*	
Expenditure relating to Staff recruitment									
Mission expenses		45.000		45.000		45.000		45.000	
Socio-medical infrastructure		5.000		5.000		5.000		5.000	
Training		20.000		20.000		20.000		20.000	
External Services		205.047		205.047		210.000		210.000	
Receptions, events and representation		5.000		5.000		5.000		5.000	
Social welfare		65.000		65.000		70.000		70.000	
Other Staff related expenditure		17.000		17.000		17.000		17.000	
2-Infrastructure and operating									
Rental of buildings and associated costs		227.000		227.000		227.000		227.000	
Information, communication technology and data processing		400.000		400.000		400.000		400.000	
Movable property and associated costs				74.000					
Current administrative expenditure		300.000		312.896		300.852		300.852	
Postage / Telecommunications									
Meeting expenses		3.000		3.000		3.000		3.000	
Running costs in connection with operational activities		80.000		80.000		80.000		80.000	
Information & publishing									
Studies									
Other infrastructure and operating expenditure				360.000					
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE (1+2)		**3.372.047**	**-13%**	**3.818.943**	**-1%**	**3.882.852**	**15%**	**3.882.852**	**2%**
-Operational									
TOTAL OPERATIONAL (3)		**129.958.151[51]**	**-2%**	**157.702.280**	**29%**	**118.070.903**	**-9%**	**228.600.000**	**45%**
ESTIMATE TOTAL EXPENDITURE		**133.330.198**	**-3%**	**161.521.223**	**28%**	**121.953.755**	**-9%**	**232.482.852**	**44%**

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[51] This amount covers the call of 2026 (EUR 22 million) and part of the large call of 2027. The cost of the experts is included in the Title 3.

ANNEXES

Annex 1- IKAA Plan

OVERVIEW ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF IKAA FOR 2026					
Additional Activities type[52]	Description of the Additional Activities[53]	Country of the contributor	Link to JU objectives / KPIs[54]	Link to JU project/ topic (if relevant)	Estimated annual value (in M€) [55]
1. Support to additional R&I					
	Activities related to the preparation of, and participation in, research and innovation projects funded by private or public bodies other than the Union. Spin off research and development activities (all research activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely research into the evolution of 5G systems and research into 6G systems which is not funded by the SNS partnership).	BE	a) High Risk Research Funding b) Technological consensus building c) Advanced 6G Solutions for verticals d) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals e) Energy Efficient Telecommunication Networks	Stream B, C, D projects	71,000,000.00
2. Scale up of technologies					
	Investment in start-ups and new products in the advanced networks and services domains.	BE	a) SME Innovation and participation b) A competitive data economy c) Foster emergence of new actors ion the 6G supply chain d) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	17,000,000.00
3. Demonstrators					
	Trials, demos, pilots and Proof of Concepts (PoCs), go to market, early deployment of technologies; (not funded by SNS JU projects like customer trials).	BE	a) Advanced 6G solutions for verticals b) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	0
4. Creating new business opportunities					
	Activities related to patent Filing not funded under a grant by the Union (the costs associated with all Patent filing activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely IPR in the area of 5G and 6G. This includes both the costs associated with IPR preparation as well as submission costs).	BE	a) Share on Family patents	Stream B, C, D projects	450,000.00

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[52] Please provide the reference to the specific provision in the scope of additional activities for the joint undertaking ;
[53] Please provide more information on the envisaged Additional Activities
[54] to be selected from the SRIA
[55] Costs incurred by contributors in implementing additional activities less any contribution to those costs from the Union and from the participating states of that joint undertaking

	Contributions to standardization (all standardization activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely standardization of 5G and 6G in SDOs like 3GPP, O-RAN Alliance, ITU etc. which is not funded by the SNS partnership. This includes both the costs associated with participation in standardization as well as any necessary technical preparatory work such as research or simulation).				

5. Training & skills development

	R&D training programs (e.g., PhD programs) not being funded by the EC in the advanced networks and services domain.	BE	a) Scientific excellence	Not Applicable	0

6. Contribution to the development of new standards, regulations and policies

	Contributions to standardization (all standardization activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely standardization of 5G and 6G in SDOs like 3GPP, O-RAN Alliance, ITU etc. which is not funded by the SNS partnership. This includes both the costs associated with participation in standardization as well as any necessary technical preparatory work such as research or simulation).	BE	a) Standardization contributions	Stream B, C, D projects	20,000,000.00

7. Supporting ecosystem development

	Activities to develop the ecosystem including building cooperation with verticals; (e.g., creation of specific interest groups, International cooperation not funded under a grant by the Union).	BE	a) SME Innovation and participation b) A competitive data economy c) Foster emergence of new actors ion the 6G supply chain d) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	1,300,000.00

8. Communication, dissemination, awareness raising, citizen engagement

	Dissemination activities of results globally to achieve consensus on supported technologies as preparation of future standards; (publications, workshops, conferences). SNS related education and events to promote future ICT technologies.	BE	a) Rapid diffusion b) Reach Programme level consensus on 6G KPIs	Stream B, C, D projects	0

9. Others

	Contributions to activities of the 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (6G-IA) and any other group or association of stakeholders in the area of the Smart Networks and Services Joint	BE	a) Development of energy efficient telecommunication networks	Stream B, C, D projects	0

	Undertaking, not funded under a grant by the Union; (e.g., working groups, white papers).		b) Collaboration and synergies with other Partnerships c) Ensure research on secure future digital services		55
TOTAL ALL PLANNED IKAA					109,750,000.00
IKAA BREAKDOWN PER COUNTRY					
Country	**Estimated value**				
BE	109,750,000.00 €				

**OVERVIEW ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF IKAA FOR 2027**
Additional Activities type[56]	**Description of the Additional Activities**[57]	**Country of the contributor**	**Link to JU objectives / KPIs**[58]	**Link to JU project/ topic (if relevant)**	**Estimated annual value (in M€)**[59]
**1. Support to additional R&I**
	Activities related to the preparation of, and participation in, research and innovation projects funded by private or public bodies other than the Union. Spin off research and development activities (all research activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely research into the evolution of 5G systems and research into 6G systems which is not funded by the SNS partnership).	BE	f) High Risk Research Funding g) Technological consensus building h) Advanced 6G Solutions for verticals i) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals j) Energy Efficient Telecommunication Networks	Stream B, C, D projects	71,000,000.00
**2. Scale up of technologies**
	Investment in start-ups and new products in the advanced networks and services domains.	BE	e) SME Innovation and participation f) A competitive data economy g) Foster emergence of new actors ion the 6G supply chain h) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	17,000,000.00
**3. Demonstrators**
	Trials, demos, pilots and Proof of Concepts (PoCs), go to market, early deployment of technologies; (not funded by SNS JU projects like customer trials).	BE	c) Advanced 6G solutions for verticals d) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	0
**4. Creating new business opportunities**
	Activities related to patent Filing not funded under a grant by the Union (the costs associated with all Patent filing activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely IPR in the area of 5G and 6G. This includes both the costs associated with IPR preparation as well as submission costs). Contributions to standardization (all standardization activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely standardization of 5G and 6G in SDOs like 3GPP, O-RAN Alliance, ITU etc. which is not funded by the SNS partnership. This includes both the costs associated with participation in standardization as well as	BE	b) Share on Family patents	Stream B, C, D projects	450,000.00

	any necessary technical preparatory work such as research or simulation).				

5. Training & skills development

	R&D training programs (e.g., PhD programs) not being funded by the EC in the advanced networks and services domain.	BE	b) Scientific excellence	Not Applicable	0

6. Contribution to the development of new standards, regulations and policies

	Contributions to standardization (all standardization activities aligned with the goals of the SNS partnership, namely standardization of 5G and 6G in SDOs like 3GPP, O-RAN Alliance, ITU etc. which is not funded by the SNS partnership. This includes both the costs associated with participation in standardization as well as any necessary technical preparatory work such as research or simulation).	BE	b) Standardization contributions	Stream B, C, D projects	20,000,000.00

7. Supporting ecosystem development

	Activities to develop the ecosystem including building cooperation with verticals; (e.g., creation of specific interest groups, International cooperation not funded under a grant by the Union).	BE	e) SME Innovation and participation f) A competitive data economy g) Foster emergence of new actors ion the 6G supply chain h) Uptake of digital solutions within verticals	Stream B, C, D projects	1,300,000.00

8. Communication, dissemination, awareness raising, citizen engagement

	Dissemination activities of results globally to achieve consensus on supported technologies as preparation of future standards; (publications, workshops, conferences). SNS related education and events to promote future ICT technologies.	BE	c) Rapid diffusion d) Reach Programme level consensus on 6G KPIs	Stream B, C, D projects	0

9. Others

	Contributions to activities of the 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (6G-IA) and any other group or association of stakeholders in the area of the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking, not funded under a grant by the Union; (e.g., working groups, white papers).	BE	d) Development of energy efficient telecommunication networks e) Collaboration and synergies with other Partnerships f) Ensure research on secure future digital services	Stream B, C, D projects	0

TOTAL ALL PLANNED IKAA	109,750,000.00

IKAA BREAKDOWN PER COUNTRY	
Country	**Estimated value**
BE	109,750,000.00 €

Annex 2- R& I Work programme 2026

See Annex 2 in a separate document

Annex 3- SNS JU Organisational Chart