DECISION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF SMART NETWORKS AND SERVICES JOINT UNDERTAKING No 13/2025

On the approval of the actions selected for funding from the HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 Calls for proposals

THE GOVERNING BOARD,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

Having regard to Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe[1], and notably the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (hereinafter "the SNS JU"), and in particular Article 17(2)(u) and19 (4) (j) thereof;

WHEREAS

(1) The Governing Board had approved the annual work programme including the topics for the calls for proposals HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 with Decision GB-14-2024 of 22 November 2024, Decision GB-02-2025 of 11 April 2025 (Amendment 1) and Decision GB-04-2025 of 16 May 2025 (Amendment 2);

(2) The calls for proposals HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 were launched on the EU Funding & Tender portal on 22 May (Stream B and C) and 18 June (Stream D), and were closed on 18 September 2025;

(3) Ranking and as relevant reserve lists are proposed for the 9 topics under the HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 call and one topic for the HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 calls

[1] This Regulation is also equally named "Single Basic Act (SBA)" or "Founding Regulation" in SNS JU documents. OJ L 427, 30.11.2021, p. 17.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

The results of the evaluation and the actions selected for funding for the topics under the HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 calls for proposals as presented in Annex to this decision are hereby approved.

Article 2

This Decision shall take effect on the day of its adoption.

Done at Brussels, on 18 December 2025.

For the Governing Board

Thibaut KLEINER
The Chair

Annexes:

1. The HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 implementation Note
2. The Call Evaluation Report (CER) for HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02, and its annexes
3. The draft call ranked lists of the HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 proposals retained for funding
4. The Book of Abstracts for the main list and reserve list of HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02 proposals
5. Observer Reports for HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-01 and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2025-02

ANNEX to GB decision no 12-2025

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

Table of Contents

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

[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

[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

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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].

[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**	**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		**20% IA**					
	%CSA		**2% 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

[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

[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	**#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].

[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** **[cumulative]**	**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).

[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.

[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

[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).

[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

[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.

[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

[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).

Cooperation with 6G National Initiatives

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:

[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.

[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.

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	**Heading**	**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	**Heading**	**Financial year 2026**				**Financial year 2027**			
		Estimate Commitment	% Ratio [Year	Estimate Payment Appropriations	% Ratio [Year	Estimate Commitment Appropriations	% Ratio [Year N/ye	Estimate Payment Appropriations	% Ratio [Yea

[50] The budget 2027 is anticipated within the bi-annual work programme 2026-2027. The estimation will be refined in 2026 and subject to the Governing Board for approval via amendment to this work program.

		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 %**

[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

[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		
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

[56] Please provide the reference to the specific provision in the scope of additional activities for the joint undertaking ;
[57] Please provide more information on the envisaged Additional Activities
[58] to be selected from the SRIA
[59] 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

	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

SNS R&I Work Programme 2026 (v4.2)

This Annex II is attached to the comprehensive Bi-Annual Work Programme 2026-2027 of the Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS JU) and it details the planned SNS R&I Work Programme for the year 2026.

Context and Objectives

The Smart Network and Services (SNS) JU is moving towards the end of the second phase of its implementation. The Research and Innovation Work Programme 2026 (R&I WP 2026) will act as a bridge between the previous SNS R&I Work Programmes and the final SNS Work Programme in 2027, facilitating a smooth transition from SNS phase two to the third and final phase of the SNS JU Programme. In this context, a number of recent and relevant developments are to be considered, notably:

Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe covering the 2025-2027 period

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026, despite its limited scope, directly supports the research and innovation priorities outlined in the Horizon Europe strategic plan for 2025-2027, with a focus around Smart Networks and Services. In the context of 6G networks and services, its actions are expected to contribute to the three key overarching and interlinked EU strategic orientations: 1) the green transition; 2) the digital transition, and 3) a more resilient, competitive, inclusive and democratic Europe. More specifically, the Coordination and Support Actions on International Cooperation and on Devices have a clear focus on the competitiveness of the EU supply side for 6G devices and on promoting Europe as a lead player worldwide for advanced smart network and services. Furthermore, the Research & Innovation Actions of the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 will offer key contributions towards the digital transition in two ways: i) by ensuring the availability of data sets needed to train AI models in AI-native 6G systems. ii) by offering an EU-wide technology experimentation platforms that can test and incorporate candidate 6G technologies in an end-to-end way for their further validation.

Industrial and business aspects

While the rollout of 5G matures globally, research and development (R&D) in 6G is accelerating across industries, academia, and governments. Although 6G is expected to be commercially deployed from around 2030, R&D activities are already shaping its technological foundation and economic vision and International standardisation has already been launched. These efforts are deeply rooted in industrial competitiveness, strategic public initiatives, and long-term business planning. A globally accepted 6G standard is a key priority. In addition, for EU stakeholders, technological sovereignty, together with reliable and resilient supply chains, are increasingly becoming important from the perspective of the private and the public side.

A key development considered by this WP is the acceleration of the 6G standardisation work already initiated at the level of the 3rd Generation Partnership Project- (3GPP). Whilst 3GPP's work is currently

focusing on studies, the actual early normative work is expected to start in 2026. In that context, several 6G requirements are currently under discussion globally and are expected to be agreed upon in the first half of 2026. However, some clear trends have already appeared in 3GPP (e.g., a simplified architecture compared to 5G, AI as a foundational enabler for 6G, need for a global standard with limited deployment options, further workon reduced-capability devices (e.g., RedCap, energy/network co-design, NTN and ambient IoT integration). The activities proposed in this Work Programme address the aforementioned industrial 6G trends in the following way:

i. The proposed work on AI is directly linked to the 3GPP's views that AI will play a major role in 6G and be implemented at every layer of the architecture to radically improve network performances and to support advanced use case deployments (AI as a Service – AIaaS). Whilst an AI native architecture is targeted, significant issues remain open such as the overall framework for AI/ML deployment and the specifics of network functionalities to drive AI models that are actually well adapted to the functioning of core network functions. This notion of AI (AI for networks) models needed to correctly represent network environments was also identified at the Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona. Training data availability and modelling play a critical role in that respect and the proposed work targets significant inroads into this domain. This issue is also fully in line with the objectives of the second pillar of the EU continent and apply AI strategies, aiming at developing EU data spaces for AI.

ii. The development of 6G requires global partnerships at multiple levels which is targeted by the proposed CSA for cooperation with India. In the wake of SNS JU activities initiated with the US, Japan and the Republic of Korea, India emerges as an important actor and European partner from several perspectives. Whilst the ultimate goals should be the development of a single global standard and a global ecosystem to boost market take-up, India's 6G initiative is backed by e.g., the Bharat 6G Alliance, which brings together industry, academia, research institutions, and standards bodies. With respect to the geography and distribution of population India has specific requirements on future systems, which should be understood at an early stage. This provides a very relevant platform for Europe to exchange views and objectives on 6G, including at technological, priority use cases, opportunities for joint experimentation and policy levels.

iii. As 6G is expected to provide connectivity to a myriad of diverse connected devices (e.g. drones, cranes, glasses, vehicles…) European sovereignty and competitiveness in the networked domain may eventually depend on its positioning on the device market, which potentially represents large volumes. This is an opportunity for the European microelectronics industry, and for associated software ecosystems. At 3GPP level, the device discussion is driven by the need to define specific IoT functionalities, classes of devices and by the fact that devices in industrial domains may follow a completely different life cycle than consumer smart phones. The proposed CSA in the device domains is expected to provide a European approach with an industrial roadmap helping Europe to regain ground on this market, also considering that with flexible and agile computing platforms, the hard boundaries between terminals and networks experienced with previous generations is expected to blur.

iv. Current 3GPP orientations point towards a system shaped not by complexity but by a focused, intentional architecture that streamlines deployment, optimises efficiency and enables monetisation and new value across industries. This calls for a simplified architecture as well as for simple migration and deployment. This is however a challenge considering the additional service capabilities that 6G is expected to serve with the introduction of a multiplicity of advanced technologies such as AI, ISAC, NTN, quantum level security, MRSS and many more. The proposed work on experimental platform precisely addresses this industry need, namely to deploy and test the most promising advanced new 6G technologies in close to operational scenarios, for their faster validation and derisking by industrial actors.

As preparatory steps for the SNS JU Work Programmes beyond WP2025, the 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (6G-IA) has been working to provide the main industrial and business aspects in a series of documents openly available[1]. As outlined above, this Work Programme

[1] https://6g-ia.eu/plans-papers/

is focusing on technical areas like AI to be applied in 6G networks for performance improvements, specialized devices for IoT applications and an experimentation platform. The Strands on AI and devices are particularly relevant for the European industry to improve technological sovereignty, as these areas are today dominated by other regions. The international cooperation with India is relevant in the context of ongoing negotiations between the EU and India on a trade agreement and with respect to the preparation of globally accepted standards for 6G. The Strand on the experimentation platform is an offer to stakeholders to trial different priority technologies, their feasibility and performance in the context of standardisation.

The current orientations for this transition are to be considered as a step towards the further development of 6G and beyond which covers a broader focus on the R&D activities for critical infrastructures, with an enlarged portfolio from R&D to experimental platforms and deployment of operational solutions for technologies identified also in the Draghi report on EU competitiveness[2], and notably:

1. **Networks as the infrastructure foundational pillar** and the stronghold that Europe can leverage to stimulate technological leadership in related domains (Draghi report annex, section 3.1).
2. **Cloud, AI, and quantum** as related technologies to contribute to the emergence of advanced, sustainable and secure network and service platforms (Draghi report annex, section 3.2).
3. **Microelectronics**, as the enabling pillar of a multiplicity of network functions, from baseband processing to RF, as needed to reach a level of sovereignty for the overall connectivity platforms (Draghi report annex, section 3.3).

Policy Objectives

Digital connectivity plays a pivotal role to deliver on the key goals of the Competitiveness Compass[3] that the European Commission adopted in January 2025, namely competitiveness, sustainability and security.

The profound digital transformation of our economy and society is driven by radical developments in AI, IoT and supercomputing, which multiply exponentially the volume of data being processed, stored, and also transmitted. This is only possible with advanced connectivity capabilities, enabling more efficient, flexible, reliable, secure, and sustainable communications.

As stressed in the European Commission's February 2024 White Paper[4], digital connectivity technology and market is in turn experiencing profound transformations, prompted by virtualization of communications, software-defined networking, and cloudification, leading to telco-edge-cloud convergence, while enabling to optimise network operations and enhance service delivery.

Enabling such transformation of the digital connectivity landscape requires, as for other key digital technology domains, to have the right policy and legal framework in place. The European Commission will seek to provide it in particular in the upcoming Digital Networks Act[5], Cloud and AI Development Act[6], the Apply AI strategy[7] and the AI Continent Action Plan[8]. It also requires substantial and sustained investments at all levels of the value-chain, starting with research and innovation. Those investments must certainly come from industry, but also from the public sector in view of the public policy goals at

---

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

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

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

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

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

[7] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/apply-ai

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

stake, as stressed in the Competitiveness Compass. Consequently, countries leading the digital race worldwide are investing heavily in research and innovation in digital connectivity technologies.

The EU has been at the forefront of research and innovation on wireless communications, focusing on 5G and 6G in recent years, notably through EU funding from the Horizon Europe Programme.

The Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS JU) has been instrumental to this effort, delivering on a successful collaborative EU public-private partnership that has led to significant research outcomes, fostering innovation and decisively contributing to Europe remaining competitive in next-generation network technologies.

It is necessary to keep this momentum for the remaining of the Horizon Europe programme and the SNS JU under the current EU Multi-annual Financial Framework, and onto the next one, so that EU-made digital communication technology continues contributing to a more resilient, green, and digitally sovereign Europe.

Protection of European Communication Networks as EU policy objective

The General Annexes of Horizon Europe's 2025 work programme reiterate that the protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States[9]. Entities assessed as "high-risk suppliers" are currently set out in the second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity of 202310 and the related Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox of 202311. In order to protect the specific policy interests of the Union and/or its Member States, it is therefore appropriate that for proposals under topics identified as "subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation" (in the specific conditions for eligibility), entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot provide/submit guarantees.

SNS technological Roadmaps and Synergies

From October 2023 to May 2025, 6G-IA organized various workshops on the following topics: Microelectronics, Photonics, NTN, AI, Security, Wireless and Cloud/Service Provision, Media, PPDR, Smart factories, etc. The purpose of these workshops was to identify future strategic directions for the SNS JU for the following years, starting with the NetworldEurope SRIA as the basis of 6G related technological topics.

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 focuses on a limited number of actions, which offer for potential collaboration in several aspects:

1. Collaboration between multiple technological domains and stakeholders. As smart networks and services become more complex, technology deployment in a domain has impact in other domains. This requires a transverse approach to technologies, with different communities (e.g. clouds, satcoms, terrestrial coms, microelectronics) called upon to work in a collaborative mode. For the specifics of this Work Programme, the device CSA is expected to bring together leading European

[9] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.

[10] NIS Cooperation Group, Second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, June 2023.

[11] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/communication-commission-implementation-5g-cybersecurity-toolbox

actors from at least 3 domains; telecoms, microelectronics, and use cases (verticals). The experimental facility platform will also provide opportunities to get communities like AI, software, mobile coms, security to work together.

2. International collaboration with India, following past calls with the USA, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, is identified as a key target in achieving global standards and understanding the needs of other markets where European solutions play a significant role.
3. AI data action is a domain that remains much exploratory at this stage. It calls for collaborative work between networking specialists, AI experts, modelling and simulation experts, at both industrial and academic levels.

International Cooperation

International cooperation in the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 targets early visibility of global 6G activities and the preparation of international consensus on technologies and systems. It is in line with the International Digital Strategy for the EU[12] and focusses on boosting the EU's technological competitiveness through economic and business cooperation, promoting a high level of security for the EU and its partners, and shaping global digital governance and standards with a network of partners.

Considering the recent policy developments between the EU and India on 6G under the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC)[13] promoting cooperation on 6G between R&I funding agencies and the links established by 6G-IA with the Bharat 6G Alliance towards secured and trusted telecommunications and resilient supply chains, EU-India cooperation will be reinforced with a dedicated coordination and support action (CSA).

Work Programme 2026 framework and structure

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 marks a critical transitional year for the SNS JU and the broader European 6G agenda. It comes at a time when the SNS JU Programme is moving from Phase 2 into Phase 3, consolidating the foundation laid in 2024–2025 and preparing for the final major call, under Horizon Europe, to be launched in 2027.

Compared to previous Work Programmes, the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 is smaller and more targeted. This focused approach enables the SNS JU to sustain momentum and ensure high-impact investments, while strategically preparing for a broader and more ambitious R&I Work Programme in 2027.

Importantly, the next 18 months will be pivotal for the global standardisation of 6G, as international bodies such as ITU and 3GPP move from framework definitions into early technical specifications. The SNS JU, in collaboration with the 6G-IA and its partners, must play a central role in shaping European contributions and securing technological sovereignty and industrial leadership in this process.

Finally, discussions will soon begin on the next European Framework Programme for Research & Innovation ("FP10"). The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 therefore also serves as a strategic bridge to future R&I policy in advanced connectivity and digital infrastructures.

Within this context, the 2026 R&I Work Programme builds on these efforts by reinforcing three strategic pillars:

1. Consolidation and visibility of the SNS JU results.
2. Groundwork of future industrial capabilities (e.g. devices, AI, testbeds).

[12] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/joint-communication-international-digital-strategy-eu

[13] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/key-outcomes-second-eu-india-trade-and-technology-council

3. Global positioning and strategic partnerships (e.g. with India, standards bodies).

The SNS JU R&I WP 2026 is designed to support (i) the completion of the SNS JU mandate, (ii) the early shaping of the "FP10" in advanced connectivity, and (iii) the strengthening of Europe's global 6G standing at a decisive moment in international standardisation. By building on the foundations laid in 2025, (particularly in device integration, AI, experimentation, vertical engagement, and international cooperation) the 2026 R&I Work Programme provides both continuity and strategic foresight.

Against the above background, the scope of the SNS JU R&I WP 2026 focusses on critical topics on 6G. It includes the following three streams:[14]

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 of experimental infrastructure(s), in support of the various phases of the SNS JU. Stream C developments in the SNS JU R&I 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.

Coordination & support actions (CSA): it 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, the 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, the 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.

The updated SNS roadmap (Figure 1) illustrates the phases of the Streams.

[14] Stream A of the Phase 1 SNS WP (2021-2022) is not supported in any of the subsequent SNS phases), being too late to further influence 5G Advanced and 6G standardisation.

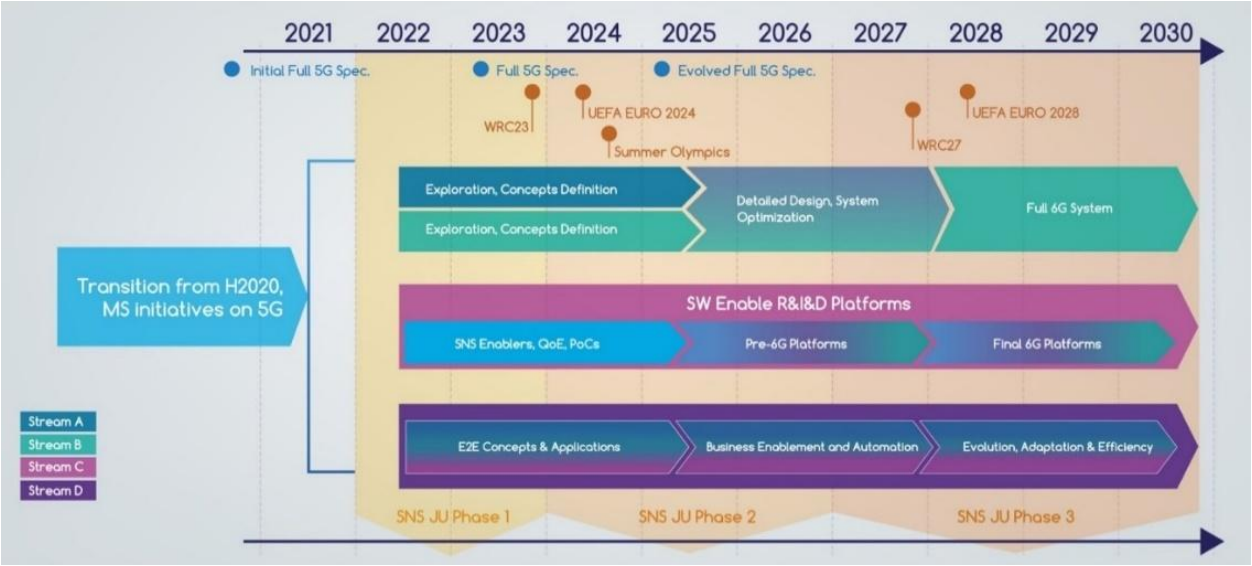

Figure 1: SNS Roadmap

Figure 2 presents how the outcome of each Stream is combined with other Streams activities and results during the following SNS Phases. Thus, it is envisioned that complementary results from the Streams may be re-used in subsequent Phases.

The arrows in Figure 2 illustrate how the outcomes of projects in Phase 1 are used in Phase 2, and then could be used from Phase 2 to Phase 3. More specifically,

- Stream C Experimental Infrastructure technologies are expected to serve as the basis for subsequent phase Stream D Vertical Pilot projects.
- 6G solutions and potential PoCs, developed in Streams A (only in WP2021-22) and B are expected to contribute to the Experimental Infrastructure projects (Stream C) and Vertical Pilot projects (Stream D) of subsequent SNS JU phases.
- Experimental Infrastructure projects (Stream C) and especially Vertical Pilot projects (Stream D) are expected to provide new requirements (e.g., KVIs, KPIs) to Stream B projects of latest SNS JU Work Programmes. The further development of Stream C projects is expected to follow a spiral evolutional approach, subject to the successful delivery of selected projects.
- The further development of Stream D projects is expected to follow a spiral evolutional approach, subject to the successful delivery of selected projects.

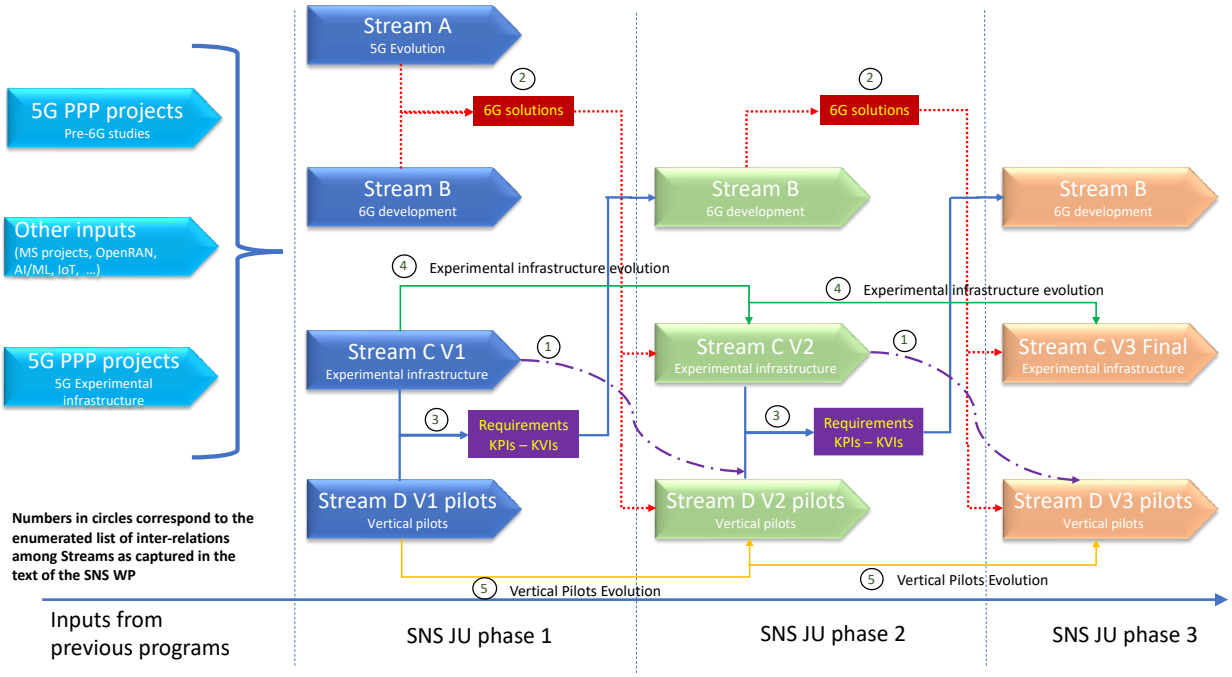

Figure 2: Interlinking of Streams into Phases

The R&I work of the Streams is expected to validate feasibility of a well-defined set of 6G KPIs emerging from the international agreements on 6G KPIs as available at the time of the start of the new projects, possibly complemented with ad-hoc KPIs not reflected in international settings like ITU, e.g., considered in the NetworldEurope SRIA KPIs, 6G KPIs produced by other projects, etc. In addition, definition and validation of KVIs will show how the SNS projects contribute to societal impact, to vertical sector applications and to the European industrial competitiveness. Applicants are invited to get familiar with the European background work on KPIs and KVIs[15].

By the time of the implementation of the SNS JU R&I WP 2026, multiple initiatives have already been launched and progressed in several Member States (MSs) or Associated Countries. These are expected to develop related operational and important results. Where applicable, applicants are encouraged to use results from such initiatives, to maximise the efficiency of public investments in Europe, which allow for synergies among different funding instruments and thus, create positive multiplier effects. Several actions are developed in SNS context to develop synergies with MSs 6G Programmes (see e.g. SNS JU SRG activities, SNS ICE and SNS CO-OP CSA projects and also 6G-IA signed MoUs).

It is also important to note that retained projects of the various Streams will have to cooperate in the SNS JU Programme for issues of common interests with arrangements set out in the written Collaboration Agreement in order to ensure a programmatic approach and achieve the SNS JU objectives.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-STREAM CSA, Coordination and Support Actions

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-01: SNS Operations and Output optimisation

Specific Challenges and Objectives

This Coordination and Support Action (CSA) will support interaction and synergies between SNS projects, as well with other relevant stakeholders, building on results, tools and lessons from Phases 1 and 2, while linking with activities in Phase 3. This will notably include structured collaboration

[15] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308596124000752

among projects, operation of thematic working groups and diffusion of knowledge. More specifically, it will organise the EuCNC & 6G Summit conferences in 2027 and 2028. All these activities will be carried out in close coordination with the SNS JU Office and SNS JU members (the Commission and the 6G-IA). The CSA should take into account and build as possible on publicly available outcomes of previous SNS CSA projects, in view to ensure continuity of community-support activities and avoid duplication of efforts.

Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The SNS JU estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Action
Eligibility Conditions	Subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (see General call conditions: section 2.B(i) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme). The participants directly subject to this eligibility condition are not only beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners but also subcontractors. Their participation is therefore subject to an ex-ante ownership control assessment by the EC and, if relevant, the EC acceptance of a guarantee approved by an eligible country.
Technology Readiness Level	Not applicable
Funding rate	100% no-for-profit organisations, 90% for profit organisations

Expected Outcome

The key expected outcomes are:

- Contribute to continuity across SNS JU Phases 1, 2 and 3, supporting the synergies and coherence of SNS R&I activities at programme level.
- Support structured collection and analysis of data from SNS JU projects, to assess progress against programme-level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including 6G KPIs and Key Value Indicators (KVIs).
- Promote awareness and visibility of the SNS JU programme and its results in Europe and globally, by preparing communication and dissemination material, including inputs for publications, including the organisation of the EuCNC & 6G Summit conferences (2027, 2028) as part of its dissemination and community-building activities.
- Support the SNS JU Office and the SNS JU members in facilitating engagement with national, European and international stakeholders, including vertical sectors, in alignment with SNS JU and EU policy priorities.
- Support the activities of the SNS JU Policy WG on standardisation, identify standardisation opportunities linked to project outcomes and facilitate stakeholders contributing to international standards bodies (3GPP, ITU, IEEE, etc.). Support visibility of European technical contributions, in coordination with SNS JU members (the Commission and the 6G-IA).

Scope

The project should contribute to the effective implementation of the SNS JU Programme, in close coordination with the SNS JU Office and SNS JU members (the Commission and the 6G-IA), following the research priorities of NetworldEurope SRIA and providing input to the SNS JU SRIA, around three core objectives: supporting programme delivery, animating the SNS community, and ensuring that results are exploited and translated into impact through dissemination and standardisation. In this context, the project will support the SNS JU in the following activities:

- Facilitate community-level collaboration across Phases 1, 2 and 3, thereby contributing to the coherence of R&I activities at programme level, taking into consideration dissemination tools developed during Phases 1 and 2. This includes facilitating coordination and exchanges across the SNS JU project community, and supporting activities foreseen in the cross-project collaboration agreement.
- Facilitate the operation of working groups of the SNS JU interest, especially on topics of common interest, providing support for knowledge exchange. This will include support to flexible cooperation between projects, and reaching out to SMEs.
- Monitor outcomes against SNS JU Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) plus the 6G KPIs and Key Value Indicators (KVIs) mapping to the 6G indicators of the other global regions, contributing to programme-level evaluation and impact assessment.
- Support the SNS JU in fostering international cooperation, promoting alignment and supporting cooperation with national authorities, vertical sectors, and relevant European bodies and initiatives.
- Further develop and update the Europe-wide cartography of relevant initiatives and identify interlinkages with national and EU-level programmes.
- Communicate and promote results across technical, industrial, and policy communities, in alignment with the SNS JU Communication policy and priorities.
- Support the organisation of EuCNC & 6G Summit (EuCNC & 6G Summit) conferences 2027 and 2028.
- Support the translation of research outputs into standardisation activities. Identify SNS JU related European policy priorities and technical developments from European players that should be reflected in global standards, thereby reinforcing Europe’s influence in shaping the future 6G landscape.

Overall, this CSA will support the SNS JU to operate as an integrated, impactful, and globally visible programme, so that investments in 6G research and innovation deliver long-term strategic value for Europe.

NB: Considering the expected outcomes and the scope of this CSA, a project duration of 2 years is expected.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-02: 6G Devices

Specific challenges and objectives

The smartphone industry has developed significantly, serving today about 5 billion users worldwide, with a yearly market of about 1 billion units globally sold, though with limited EU industrial presence in this domain, in spite of some technological supply capabilities. There are also device market opportunities, beyond smartphones as 5G and 6G, designed to serve a wider set of user equipment devices than high end smartphones only. As the digital society becomes more and more interconnected, it covers various use cases such as automotive, industry, health, and public safety. Connectivity extends to a plethora of objects, inter alia drones, robots, cranes, cars, medical devices, representing a huge device market potential, worth tens of billions globally.

Each use-case has its own set of requirements which, compared to regular 5G NR devices, may be less demanding in terms of data rates and latency, yet more stringent when it comes to device cost/complexity and power consumption. This has prompted 3GPP to develop a standard for this multiplicity of usages, known as RedCap (Reduced capabilities compared to 5G NR), also known as "NR Light". The standard is designed for reduced requirements, for instance for latency (100 to 500 ms, Data rates (150 Mb/s DL, 50 Mb/s UL), battery life (2 years typical), spectrum use (20 MHz blocks). In that context, the simplest implementation is expected to reduce modem complexity by a factor of 65% at FR1 range and 50% at FR2 range, whilst maintaining compatibility with a huge set of IoT use cases. This may represent an opportunity for the EU industrial ecosystem. Against this background, the challenge is to define a European roadmap towards 6G ready devices together with a companion implementation strategy, widely shared by the sector actors and essential application verticals, with the objective of stimulating a European industrial supply side in particular for a "long tail" of devices serving a multiplicity of application domains.

Such a new generation of devices should be based on microelectronics components that may still be adapted to address a "long tail" market composed of a multiplicity of IoT use cases rather than the bulk smartphone market used for apps and Internet access. The expected evolution in 6G will provide an opportunity to both support 5G-NR uptake, and to favourably position Europe for the 6G devices opportunities.

Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The SNS JU estimates that an EU contribution of EUR 2 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Action
Eligibility conditions	Subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (see General call conditions: section 2.B(i) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme). The participants directly subject to this eligibility condition are not only beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners but also subcontractors. Their participation is therefore subject to an ex-ante ownership control assessment by the EC and, if relevant, the EC acceptance of a guarantee approved by an eligible country.

Technology Readiness Level	Not Applicable
Funding rate	100% non-for-profit organisations, 90% for profit organisations

Expected Outcome

The primary outcome of this work is a widely endorsed European roadmap outlining options based on device complexity, target markets, and connectivity capabilities, accompanied by a strategy to revitalize European industrial capabilities in 5G/6G devices, which:

- Address in priority part of the end device market, notably that related to vertical specific use-cases with the objective of generating huge downstream production volumes, beyond the sole infrastructure segment.
- Support the telecom industry, through evidence-based recommendations and requirements, towards the provision of end-to-end capabilities serving key vertical markets with comprehensive EU offers across the value chain.
- Support to the SNS JU and the EC to define and implement measures aiming at strengthening the position of Europe's industry in the global 6G devices value chain.
- Support the microelectronics industry through evidence-based recommendations and requirements on how to achieve the volumes it needs from an economic perspective.
- Support the emergence of a complete European device-network ecosystem fuelling the deployment of 5G SA solutions towards 6G, as examples like 5G Redcap come with SA connectivity requirements.
- Identify key and priority vertical use cases which could be early adopters of such device capabilities, in particular looking into novel 6G potential markets. These use-cases will have to be characterized in terms of key device requirements (storage, processing, connectivity, intelligence).
- Federate European relevant actors around a device initiative that could be implemented during the next R&I framework programme in the context of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union (EU).
- Identify the main/critical issues and milestones for success such as technology, experimental facilities, open technology test platforms, integration in vertical business models as a function of the target device, connectivity options and use cases requirements.
- Structure the ecosystem of main players, telecom, microelectronics, key use cases/verticals, public actors.
- Assess the readiness of the European technological supply side and analyse its strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify links with key national initiatives and propose areas for cooperation.
- Identify potential links with the Chips JU and programmatic elements that may be relevant to address in the Chips JU context.

Scope

The scope covers:

- A structured dialogue between the main actors of the European telecom and microelectronics industries, duly complemented with representative verticals as well as institutional players (e.g. for security of public service type of applications) defining the requirements for lower complexity

"RedCap" like devices, and its potential evolutions in the context of the technology development towards 6G.

- Identification of the key/priority use-cases and the associated industries that may be used as lead market for early adoption and take up, including core requirements to be served in terms of storage, computing, intelligence, connectivity.
- Analysis of opportunities and threats for the EU's technological basis, technological competitiveness, and access to leading-edge technology vis-à-vis international competition in the area of 6G devices.
- Identification of key technologies (notably in the microelectronics domain) to develop simplified classes of devices, their mapping with European industrial capabilities the identification of potential gaps in the supply chain, and proposals to "close the gaps", either from a pure European perspective or with strategic partnerships worldwide. Identification of potential linkages with the Chips JU and the tools developed like the pilot lines is particularly relevant.
- Identification of key technologies and industrial know how requirements, to be mapped with EU capabilities covering 3 basic scenarios: i) TN only devices, with capabilities corresponding with startegic verticals; ii) TN and NTN compatible devices, with integrated electronics making interoperability possible between the two connectivity environments. Integration of WiFi may also be considered as appropriate (indoor scenarios); iii) high end smartphone like devices, to be considered as benchmark scenarios to map technological and industrial capabilities and identify EU gaps.
- Definition of an option dependent roadmap (see previous bullet point) for the exploratory development of such devices covering the core technologies, the experimental facilities, and the use-cases for early deployment scenarios of novel advanced systems. The chosen model for device should preferably be based on open technologies like RISC V where applicable.
- Within the key technologies contributing to the realization of such devices, the role of AI at edge is particularly relevant. The work should hence cover edge distributed AI, functionalities implemented in the device or in the edge, type of model to be used and related complexity.
- Identification of technological approaches enabling eco-friendly device design from a construction/deconstruction perspective.
- Definition of the software development ecosystem needed to support the use of these devices in various applications domains (e.g. applications for professional use or entertainment).
- Identification of relevant national initiatives and the development of a cooperation strategy to leverage national efforts at EU level.

Altogether, the scope of the CSA should cover the full definition of a European industrial programme to relaunch a device capability in Europe, which may be implemented either at EU level or/and at national level.

<u>NB</u>: Considering the timing constraints to follow up with a potential European device initiative under the next MFF, a project duration of up to 2 years is expected.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-03: EU-India International Collaboration

Specific challenges and objectives

Both the EU and the India address the challenges of 6G advanced research focusing on technologies such as wireless, optic, services, platforms, capitalizing on existing testbeds and projects, to reach further connectivity frontiers. India has released a national 6G vision[16] which defines an extensive industrial policy and associated technologies. This SNS JU International Cooperation activity targets a closer collaboration with India, including Indian SDO (e.g. TSDSI), Indian Government institutions and Indian stakeholders (including Bharat 6G). It builds on the interactions developed between EU stakeholders and the key associations and stakeholders in India. The goal of this CSA is to establish in-depth working relationships to assess further industrial cooperation opportunities and divergences to be taken into account from an EU perspective. This includes guiding the SNS JU and the EC on research collaborations and policy measures while providing factual insights into emerging technologies and supply chains in 6G.

Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The SNS JU estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.0 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.0 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Action
Eligibility conditions	Subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (see General call conditions: section 2.B(i) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme). The participants directly subject to this eligibility condition are not only beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners but also subcontractors. Their participation is therefore subject to an ex-ante ownership control assessment by the EC and, if relevant, the EC acceptance of a guarantee approved by an eligible country.
Technology Readiness Level	Not Applicable
Funding rate	100% non-for-profit organizations, 90% for profit organizations

Expected Outcome

- In depth analysis of the 6G Indian vision, including Indian SDO (e.g. TSDSI), Indian Government institutions and Indian stakeholders (including Bharat 6G), with commonalities and differences between the European and Indian perspectives, including downstream industrial opportunities and risks. A comprehensive priority list supported by factual elements (e.g. mapping supply chains in both the EU and India, analyses of state-of the-art technologies, economic, policy and legal landscape etc.) for cooperation opportunities is expected.

[16] https://bharat6galliance.com/bharat6G/Home/content/Bharat-6G-Mission-Task-Force-Reports/Bharat-6G-Mission-Task-Force-Reports

- A comprehensive analysis of the industrial ecosystems in India and EU in relation to 6G, including supply chain cooperation opportunities.
- Support to the SNS JU, EC and 6G-IA to define and implement measures aiming at strengthening the position of Europe's industry in the Indian 6G value chain.
- A detailed analysis of specific requirements on 6G in India and the EU and the potential impact on 6G specifications.
- Support future cooperation opportunities on 6G Vision, including relevant enabling technologies, platforms and testbeds for experimental research. Cooperation opportunities on societal and economic aspects of 6G should also be supported.
- Identification of commonalities, differences, and lessons learnt from the realization of trials and pilots in EU and India and proposals for future cooperation in 6G trials & pilots.
- Identification of potential synergies, areas of common research interests, and complementarities towards 6G systems design.
- Identification of common approaches towards the sustainability of 6G networks.
- Engaging with vertical industries to shape and promote 6G use-cases and business cases of common interest.
- Bridging EU and Indian 6G research communities (including Bharat 6G) and support the SNS JU in implementing actions related to research cooperation.
- Alignment of views on future exploitation in international standardisation as well as contributions to standardisation bodies and fora, supporting global views on open standards and interoperability, with particular focus on developments in ITU-T, ITU-R, 3GPP and other related standardization organizations.
- Factual elements (e.g. mapping supply chains in both regions, analyses of state-of the-art and emerging technologies in 6G) that help the SNS JU in assessing potential areas of cooperation.

Scope

The goal of this CSA is to facilitate structured cooperation and exchanges between EU and Indian stakeholders in the field of advanced connectivity research. The scope covers the following topics:

- Analytical assessment of the industrial policies and approaches in India and the EU in the 6G context, including opportunities and risks.
- Comprehensive analysis of the industrial ecosystems in both regions focusing on 6G-related requirements, complementarities, and long-term areas where cooperation can support future research or address technological dependencies (e.g. supply-chain considerations).
- Identification of priority domains of 6G technological cooperation that can be in the short term stimulated by cooperative R&D and would result in tangible benefits for Europe.
- Joint exploratory EU-India work on 6G Vision, its relevant technologies, platform or testbeds for experimental research and societal and economic aspects of 6G.
- Preparation of research-oriented roadmaps for possible future collaborations (such as in the development of tools for experimentation, open-source software tools and repositories, prototyping and evaluation, tools for probing and data analytics, emulation, management and technology trials and pilots), workshops and scientific exchanges.
- Applicants are invited to describe how the EU-India cooperation will be organised within the project and the approach they will use to engage with Indian stakeholders. The selected project is expected to interact with relevant Indian organisations, including standardisation bodies (e.g.

TSDSI), Indian institutions and other Indian stakeholders (including Bharat 6G). Proposals should include description of specific cooperation activities to be carried out such as exchange of information and results, sharing of data, sharing of methodologies, researcher exchanges and visits, joint workshops, joint testbeds etc. A strong and demonstrated innovation and industrial understanding of the 6G ecosystem of India is expected.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-Stream B - Research for revolutionary and evolutionary 6G Technology and systems

Specific challenges and objectives

The development of AI models for 6G networks requires access to high-quality, representative datasets that capture the complexity and diversity of next-generation communication environments. Such datasets are essential not only for enabling intelligent network automation, optimisation, and resilience, but also for empowering networks to provide AI-as-a-Service (AIaaS) to vertical industries and applications. By leveraging these datasets, 6G networks can support advanced use-cases such as immersive communications, autonomous systems, and mission-critical services, where robust and trustworthy AI models are a prerequisite for performance and reliability.

To achieve this, strong industrial participation is indispensable. The datasets must be validated and enriched by stakeholders with proven experience in operating real networks and delivering services across different vertical domains. Involving key players from telecommunications operators, technology providers, and vertical industries ensures that the data reflects real-world conditions, operational constraints, and application-specific requirements. This collaboration not only enhances the credibility and usability of the datasets but also accelerates the adoption of AI-driven solutions in practical deployments, aligning research outputs with the needs of industry and society.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B-01: Collection, Generation and Validation of Datasets suitable for training AI Models for 6G Networks and for AIaaS

Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The SNS JU estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 8 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8 million.
Type of Action	Innovation Action
Eligibility conditions	Subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (see General call conditions: section 2.B(i) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme). The participants directly subject to this eligibility condition are not only beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners but also subcontractors. Their participation is therefore subject to an ex-ante ownership control assessment by the EC and, if relevant, the EC acceptance of a guarantee approved by an eligible country. Subject to additional conditions (see General call conditions: section 2.B(iii) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme); This topic constitutes a duly justified

	case under Recital 21 and Article 5.2.(a) of the Council regulation (EU) 2021/2085.
Technology Readiness Level	Activities are expected to reach TRL 7 by the end of the project. For specific project outcomes (e.g. production of data sets for very advanced 6G features) TRL-5 and TRL-6 is also acceptable by the end of the project
Funding rate	100% non-for-profit organizations, 70% for profit organizations

Expected Outcome

The target outcomes include:

- A curated collection of high-quality real-world datasets, that have enough quality to train AI models that can run in operations, capturing realistic deployment scenarios—including user density, mobility patterns, network conditions, and realistic data traffic patterns from various applications, including vertical applications (non-exhaustive list). The collection could be obtained by any means or tools indicatively including but not limited to operational networks (real data) and/or network digital twins or advanced (high TRL) experimental platforms (emulators) or trials, gen AI (augmenting field measurements), and be significant in scale and broad representativeness (in terms of technologies, use-cases and verticals) designed to ensure scalability, providing a robust foundation for the training and validation of AI models for 6G networks and for AIaaS.
- An open-source simulator to create synthetic data sets (correlated between different network layers, and across different network points) of high quality capturing realistic deployment scenarios—including user density, mobility patterns, network conditions, anomalies and network attacks and realistic data traffic patterns from various applications, including vertical applications, etc.
- A modular framework and related methodology for generating and processing (e.g., cleaning, preprocessing) high quality realistic synthetic datasets to train AI models usable by 6G systems.
- A data space of appropriate scale to manage the datasets foreseen in the first expected outcome, covering the full data lifecycle for managing datasets, produced by SNS JU projects, for different reference use-cases at different scales. The data space should follow a framework that supports data/metadata sharing and governance within the SNS JU ecosystem, facilitating collaboration and interoperability, ensuring data sovereignty, privacy, security and compliance with EU regulations. Existing solutions for managing SNS produced data sets including repositories should be considered to avoid duplication with existing initiatives.
- A framework to audit any synthetic data sets that the project will create so as to ensure the validity/credibility of produced datasets.
- Activities that will encourage widespread use of the dataset (e.g., the integration with CAMARA / Network APIs / agents as a means to expose / enrich / monetise datasets, or the design of new control plane functions) and the overall framework by the SNS community, other EC initiatives and eventually by standardization bodies.

The produced datasets are targeted to be used by the SNS community to train AI models that will improve the performance of 6G networks or serve to develop AI solutions for 6G services and applications (AIaaS) for SNS JU verticals.

Scope

The focus is on:

- Collecting, and making available in an operationally effective way, high-quality real-world datasets from advanced (e.g., 5G Advanced, 6G) operational networks (real data) or network digital twins and/or advanced (high TRL), gen AI tools, experimental platforms (emulators) or trials, capturing realistic deployment scenarios—including user density, mobility patterns, network conditions, and realistic data traffic patterns from various applications, including verticals. Proponents should not consider datasets that have limitations in terms of, for example, coverage, capacity, number of devices, or where data and metadata do not have enough quality to train AI models. The datasets should originate from actors that have significant experience from operational networks and network components as well as service providers (including verticals), so that there is strong level of confidence that the datasets are useful for training AI models to be used by 6G networks. For the real-world datasets from advanced (e.g., beyond 5G, 6G) operational networks and/or advanced (high TRL) experimental platforms or trials and datasets produced by SNS JU projects this project should ensure the provision the presence of Metadata definition (to have a common descriptor for the data), methods to verify that the data is valuable for the training of realistic AI models, and ensure data reusability.
- Development of full protocol stack, end-to-end implementations enabling high-fidelity, system-level simulations of 6G networks building upon and enhancing existing open-source simulators for producing correlated reference datasets at different network layers, and across different network points. These simulations will span from the physical layer to the application layer and will include:
  - Support for multi-radio access technologies, including e.g., cellular, Wi-Fi, and non-terrestrial systems.
  - Disaggregated RAN architectures, enabling flexible and scalable deployment models.
  - Multi-band operation with accurate propagation and channel modelling across various frequency ranges (e.g., FR3, mmWave, cmWave, sub-THz), incorporating ray tracing-based channel models for enhanced realism.
  - Realistic traffic patterns that reflect anticipated data flows in future network scenarios.
  - Anomalies and network attacks that can be eventually used to test the resilience of AI solutions in 6G networks
- Design of an open-source framework and toolset for generating high quality realistic synthetic data, tailored to diverse environmental scenarios (e.g., urban, suburban, rural, indoor, industrial), user densities, security threats, mobility patterns, and node behaviour - including memory, CPU, storage, and energy consumption - as well as traffic profiles from a variety of vertical applications. These datasets should be produced following existing calibration directives from standardization bodies (e.g., 3GPP) and expected traffic patterns from European and international organizations (e.g., 5GAA, 5G-ACIA, etc.). The datasets should be validated from proponents that have significant experience from operational networks and network components as well as service providers (including verticals), so that there is strong level of confidence that the datasets are useful for training AI models to be used by 6G networks and for AIaaS. Optionally the tool may consider the use of reliable LLM solutions to enable a user-friendly interface for users and/or to calibrate the simulator and/or create the desired datasets.
- Creation of large-scale, open-source high quality synthetic datasets, following well established reference use-cases, containing measurements, channel and network indicators, and performance metrics across multiple protocol layers (RF, physical, MAC, network, transport, and application). These datasets will cover a broad range of network scenarios, architectures, technologies, and system configurations related to smart networks and services.

- Validation, quality assessment of the existing SNS JU project datasets, verifying the data's accuracy, consistency, and completeness ensuring their alignment with the specific use case and performance requirements of the 6G network.
- For the real-world datasets from advanced (e.g., 5G Advanced, 6G) operational networks and/or advanced (high TRL) experimental platforms or trials and datasets produced by SNS JU project, this project should ensure the provision the presence of: Metadata definition (to have a common descriptor for the data), methods to verify that the data is valuable for the training of realistic AI models and ensure data reusability.
- Engagement with standardization bodies and relevant open-source communities to promote the adoption of the framework, the associated simulation tools, and open datasets enabling industry-wide collaboration on shared software platforms and data resource.
- Creation of tutorials and implementation of dissemination activities to encourage widespread use of the framework, its synthetic datasets, and the underlying simulation tools including the development of APIs, new intelligence control plane function, etc.

This Topic expects proposals with strong industrial participation with demonstrated AI and operational expertise to ensure credibility, usability, and engagement with standardisation bodies. Academic institutions and RTOs will complement consortia where their expertise adds clear value

HORIZON-JU-SNS - Stream C – Smart Network & Services experimental infrastructure

Specific Challenges and Objectives

SNS Stream C and Stream D phase 1 projects have been developing Platforms and Trials and Pilots (T&Ps) and a number of them have engaged Open Call Experimenters to address specific additional use-cases and verticals T&Ps. However, technologies developed in the context of SNS Stream B projects or more widely in non-SNS projects (e.g. at National level) could not be integrable/tested in the Stream C/D projects at scale as not initially planned in the project tasks and resources or not selected in the Open Calls respectively. This project intends to provide testing/validation opportunities for new 6G technologies more systematically and also to aggregate the technologies into experimental platforms.

Going beyond Lab validation, e.g. as done in Stream B projects, live experimental infrastructure is needed to run more realistic experiments on E2E telecom systems (e.g. full E2E chains, not standalone proof of concept). These E2E systems are very costly and rare across Europe. It is impossible to get technologies right from the start. In that respect, it is expected that the experimental platform provides a representative infrastructure of a 6G network including representation of device, RAN, transport and core networks, including the needed applications/services to demonstrate the operation of a complete network. Many organizations will benefit from the SNS experimental platforms to validate technologies for 6G and SNS Phase 3 will enable the further inclusion of wider community members who will be able to accelerate their development cycle. The scope of the project will focus on executing technological validation experiments mostly using available platforms developed by past SNS JU projects and not creating/developing new platforms.

As the SNS JU and other 6G programs are maturing towards 2030, candidate 6G technologies will start appearing in SMEs, start-ups, spin offs as well as inside bigger companies. The open experimental platform will therefore be both a technology validation central facility and a technology accelerator for the ecosystem.

The platform will target two types of users, which can be combined as the user sees fits: (1) technology developers who will integrate their technology into the platform to expand its 6G capabilities. These technology developers are expected to bring solutions from past SNS projects in the experimental platforms and (2) experimenters who are interested in using the platform to run technological 6G experiments.

The challenge is twofold:

- To validate and reduce the introduction risk of candidate 6G technologies, components and architectures at system or sub-system level, in view of their adoption or validation at standardisation and at market level.
- To show the applicability of such technologies to efficiently support advanced application and use-cases not supported by current 5G systems and to be available and mature for implementation in upcoming Stream D projects.

The main objectives of this call are hence:

- To offer an EU-wide technology experimentation platform that can test and incorporate candidate 6G technologies in an E2E way for their further validation.
- To make such an experimentation platform capable of hosting advanced pilot “6G” use-cases during the SNS Phase 2 and Phase 3 implementation.
- To run technical experimentation showcasing technological results and to run pre-announced thematic experimentation campaigns (e.g. ISAC/JCAS, NTN, RIS…), with low barrier of entry for SNS JU developments. It is structured such that experiments with low TRL can be supported to allow broad participation, from SNS JU participants, and the wider connectivity community, including projects from National Initiatives.
- To enable the incorporation of SNS JU technology(and other third parties) in the platform to augment the platform capabilities and demonstrate the overall outcomes of the SNS JU program. These new technologies can then more easily be incorporated in Stream D projects to be demonstrated in a vertical context.

As in previous Stream C calls, related objectives include:

a) Technological experimentations with pre-announced thematic experimentation campaigns (e.g. ISAC/JCAS, NTN, RIS…), with low barrier of entry for SNS JU developments.

b) Reusability and evolvability of the experimental platforms over the lifetime of the SNS JU Programme: Platforms or specific components will be (i) further extended with SNS JU contribution/funding (at minimum) to ensure a continuous integration of the most promising 6G technologies and (ii) capable of supporting Stream D projects where appropriate. Technologies validated by experimentations may be further integrated into the E2E platform for capabilities expansion.

c) Accessibility and openness: Use of the platform in SNS Phases by any consortium, requires using a modular implementation methodology and, open-source solutions with well-defined and documented technological and business interfaces.

d) Directionality and optimisation of previous and related investments in Europe: 6G experimental platforms leveraging previous investments in Europe may be considered including other technology-oriented initiatives on open ecosystems (e.g., Open RAN). Leveraging 6G investments by Member States or Associated countries is also relevant in this context. Although it is not a mandate to reuse the results from previous investments, the proposal should clearly identify how it will extend these platforms to support 6G features and capabilities.

e) End-to-end: The target experimental facility should preferably demonstrate E2E service capabilities and include entire value chain including IoT devices, connectivity, and service provision. Provision of representation of device, RAN, transport, core and Layer 3 capabilities in 6G context is expected.

A well-designed integration of existing components (i.e. PoCs) to further develop the experimental platform will allow a constant improvement on services and technologies to be tested in the SNS JU. This integration will allow the test of complete systems that will become the basis of 6G networks and thus, create new knowledge and ideas.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C-01: SNS experimental infrastructure

Specific conditions. For all other call conditions, see Appendix I	
Expected EU contribution per project	The SNS JU estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 8 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8 million.
Type of Action	Research and Innovation Actions
Eligibility conditions	Subject to additional conditions (see General call conditions: section 2.B(iii) of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme); This topic constitutes a duly justified case under Recital 21 and Article 5.2.(a) of the Council regulation (EU) 2021/2085.
Technology Readiness Level	Experimental activities are expected to bring the technologies under test from TRL 4 up to 5 or 6 by the end of the experimentation cycle. Technology added to the platform needs to have a TRL 5 as a minimum. Experimental platforms are expected to have a TRL 6. For more information on TRL, please see General Annex B.
Legal and Financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	For SME and academia, the project will allocate up to 20% of the proposal budget on the FSTP mechanism in the form of up to 50 K€ grants (see General call conditions: section G of Appendix 1 to this R&I Work Programme)The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of the Model Grant Agreement Annex 5
Funding rate	100% non-for-profit organizations, 90% for profit organizations

Expected Outcome

The main outcome will be (1) the availability of an evolvable experimental infrastructure representative of a 6G system for the Phase 3 of the SNS JU Programme with the ability to engage the 6G community to run experimentations and (2) the validation of key 6G technologies with demonstrated performance characteristics through experiments carried out using the experimental infrastructure. Such reference platform in the SNS JU will be used to demonstrate 6G technologies including those developed by SNS Stream B projects. Proponents should select a clear and limited number of technologies from Stream B projects. It will provide platform users with standardized and supported methods for affordable-cost integration of new technologies in the end-to-end environment as well to follow a common SNS approach to KPI measurement and data definition-storage-exposition. This SNS reference platform can be also offered by SNS to other communities to support broader collaboration and technology diffusion (e.g. 3GPP, AI RAN Alliance, ESA, ETSI and others). It targets:

- Validation of new 6G network technologies in E2E setups potentially covering the European ecosystem. Within SNS, this project will further support Stream D projects that focus on supporting

trials for validation of vertical use cases. It will integrate, test and benchmark the various connectivity technologies to be used in future Stream D vertical evaluations.

- Validation capabilities covering as examples the 6 technological areas identified for SNS technological developments, namely: (1) AI Driven architecture, programmability and control, (2) Radio and signal processing, new waveforms and spectrum, ISAC capabilities, (3) Optical networking, flexible and green high capacity transport and backhaul, (4) Ubiquitous computing, edge cloud continuum service and management, (5) Security for network and services, security as a service and (6) NTN, technologies for TN/NTN unification.
- Experiments with network technologies following two schemes: (1) on demand, any topic and time experimentation, mainly from SNS community and (2) specific technologies open to the community, Platform will be open for experimenters outside of the consortium but with no budget for them. Proponents are requested to detail their plan for engaging such experimenters.
- Integration and validation of Stream B technologies coming from previous calls in the SNS in order to keep them as part of the new infrastructure until the end of SNS JU.
- Provision to SNS participants of a framework to mature their new technologies for exploitation, in order to accelerate potential start-ups, taking advance of the testing and experimentation tools and expertise from the project partners.
- Alignment with standards development by ensuring the platform follows standards evolutions and ensuring Impactful contributions to international standardization.

In view of ensuring maximum impact of previous investment, proposals should include a significant representation of European players with strong demonstrated impact at development and operation of 5G/6G experimental platforms and tools and strong potential of reutilization of existing platforms and solutions including open-source solutions. Proposals should also demonstrate the validity of the platform and related technology developments/validation in industrial context, towards maximised industrial take up.

Scope

The project will leverage existing SNS JU Stream C and D project results, aggregating testbed sites that can offer combined capabilities across Europe. The project should focus on integration, evaluation and validation beyond PoC of Stream B type of technologies for 6G KPIs and KVIs in a system context. The project should not engage in activities of interconnecting or federation, as these issues have been addressed in previous projects. The core of the activities is to run experiments, with some activities to maintain and expand the tool offered to the community.

The scope of this strand hence focuses on the following aspects:

- Accommodating a wide range of technologies towards 6G like RIS, ISAC/JCAS, NTN/5G, security, privacy, core evolution, AI, RAN evolution, network disaggregation, and any other relevant 6G subject as part of E2E setups for experimentation, see coverage of the 6 technological areas mentioned in the expected outcome, as example.
- Hosting advanced pilot “6G” use-cases not feasible during implementation lifecycle of ongoing Stream D projects due to the lack of maturity of the technology.
- Offering a well-defined catalogue of experimentation and KPI reporting tools that ensure repeatability, high level of automation, and comparison of results that provide valuable feedback to the developers and experimenters on potential shortcomings of the current prototype to facilitate technology maturation based on the experimental results.
- Offering users a low-barrier entry to an experimental facility enabling SNS-JU technologies, to run experiments.

- Providing trial facilities to enable hands on experience for engineer as part of their continuous learning and education.
- Integrating contributions from participants to expand the capabilities of the platforms with new features and capabilities.
- Ensuring security provisions for remote connectivity to the infrastructure for the experimenters.
- Providing plans on how to address the requirements for reusability and evolvability of the experimental platform over the lifetime of the SNS JU Programme.

The efforts are centralized around integration of technologies and execution of experimentation. Additional development will be strictly limited to maintenance and minimal integration effort of new technologies and prototypes, as the integration effort will be pushed on the experimenters. Platform upgrades and activities related to the integration of new technologies are also in scope as long as the running of experiments remains the core activity.

The platform will be open to any participant interested in running an experiment. There is no funding offered to the experimenters, who will propose to join according to their interest. The project will, however, include FSTP (Financial Support to Third Parties) to developers from current running SNS-JU projects as a support to integrate their technologies into the platform. SNS projects in Phase 3 are expected to include integration and experimentation resources with the new infrastructure in their Grant Agreements. For SME and academia, the project will allocate up to 20% of the proposal budget on the FSTP mechanism in the form of up to 50 K€ grants to support the integration efforts of key technologies developed in previous SNS JU calls until Call 2025. Solutions from SNS JU Call 2027 projects are not eligible for FSTP and should include the effort to integrate into their project, as explained in the legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements.

Experimenters get full insight from the results to improve their solution. If an experimenter wishes so, they can also leave a version of the technology solution inside the platform for their own use or for reference/use of the SNS community. This is a way to showcase the experimenter technology, but also for them to run additional trials without needing to visit the platform (remote connectivity). Leaving the technology is an in-kind contribution on loan preferably for the remainder of the project transforming the platform to be a showroom for these 6G candidate technologies.

Appendix 1: SNS 2026 Call overview and General call conditions

Notes:

i. An overview of the SNS 2026 call is provided at Section 1 of this Annex II to the SNS Joint Undertaking Bi-Annual Work Programme 2026-2027.
ii. The SNS 2026 general call conditions are based on the "General Annexes for Horizon Europe call conditions 2023-2025[17], with some exceptions and clarification that are specific to SNS and outlined in this Appendix to the Annex II to the SNS Joint Undertaking Bi-Annual Work Programme 2026-2027.
iii. Support to Stakeholders and applicants for this call will be provided through a regularly updated list of "Frequently Asked Questions", FAQ's, made available on the SNS JU website (link will be also available on the F&T portal).

1. SNS 2026 Call

Call identifier: HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026

Overview of the call

Type of call: single stage call

Opening date: mid to end January 2026

Submission of Proposals deadline: mid to end April 2026 17:00:00 (Brussels local time)

Proposals are invited against the Streams and topics set out at **Table App 2** below.

Overall indicative budget: EUR 22 million

General conditions relating to this call: see part 2 of this Appendix 1.

Estimated value of the In-Kind contributions to Operational Activities (IKOP) by the members other than the Union or their constituent entities: Minimum EUR 1.5 million. A minimum programme level IKOP contribution of 6.7 % is targeted and proposals are expected to significantly contribute to this target (see section 1.4 for related evaluation sub-criterion).

Note: For proposals submitted under the various Streams of this work programme and considering past average participation per type of beneficiary (profit & not-for-profit members -or non-members- of 6G-IA) the table below outlines how the IKOP target at Programme level is converted in minimum values[18]:

Table App 1

Streams / Topics	Indicative IKOP level as % of project budget to reach the objective.
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B (IA)	
01: Collection, Generation and Validation of Datasets suitable for training AI Models for 6G Networks and for AIaaS	**13,9%**

[17] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/horizon-europe-work-programmes_en

[18] All current IKOP values consider a target budget of 22 MEuros.

HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C (RIA)	
01: SNS experimental infrastructure	**3,6%**
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA (CSA)	
01: SNS Operations and Output optimisation	**2,4%**
02: 6G Devices	
03: EU-India International Collaboration	

In Kind Contribution to Operational Activities (IKOP) are defined in Article 2 (8) of the Council regulation (EU) 2021/2085 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe[19] as follows:

"*in-kind contributions to operational activities mean contributions by private members, constituent entities or the affiliated entities of either, by international organisations and by contributing partners, consisting of the eligible costs incurred by them in implementing indirect actions less the contribution of that joint undertaking and of the participating states of that joint undertaking to those costs;"*

For all SNS streams applicants will be invited to fill a mandatory IKOP declaration table in the Application Form Technical Description (Part B).

Target for SME participation is at 20% at programme level. Proposals are expected to contribute to this target as appropriate, see section 2.D for related evaluation sub criterion.

Table App 2

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 and for AIaaS	8.00
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C (RIA)	
01: SNS experimental infrastructure	8.00
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€)	**22.00**

2. General call conditions

The SNS JU operates under the Horizon Europe Rules for Participation, set out in Regulation (EU) (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 laying down the rules

[19] http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/2085/oj

for participation and dissemination in "*Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027)*" and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (EC) and (EU) No 1291/2013.

The general conditions outlined in this Section are complementary to the basic conditions outlined in the table provided in the definition of each funded topic of the SNS 2026 call. Further, if a topic deviates from the general conditions or includes additional conditions, this is explicitly stated under the specific conditions for the topic.

A. Admissibility

General Annex A of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025[20] shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme, with the following derogations to page limits:

The limit for a full proposal is **70 pages for RIAs and IAs** submitted under Stream B, C, **and 50 pages for CSAs** submitted under CSA Stream.

B. Eligibility

General Annex B of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme, with the following exceptions or amendments:

i) Restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation

Topic: HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-03

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, for proposals under topics identified as "subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation" (in the specific conditions for eligibility), participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Associated Countries, OECD and Mercosur countries, and India.

For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate.

Topics: HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-01, HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-CSA-02, and HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B-01

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, for proposals under topics identified as "subject to restrictions on participation in accordance with Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation" (in

[20] wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf (tpd)

the specific conditions for eligibility), participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and Associated Countries.

For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, in so far this is a Member State or Associated Country, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic, assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that:

a. control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action;

b. access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate;

c. ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

The participants directly subject to this eligibility condition are not only beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners but also subcontractors. Their participation is therefore subject to an ex-ante ownership control assessment by the EC and, if relevant, the EC acceptance of a guarantee approved by an eligible country.

ii) Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks

These restrictions apply in accordance with General Annex B of the General Annexes of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025:

Entities that are assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' ((and any entities they own or control*) are not eligible to participate as beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners .*

iii) Minimum participation of SNS JU member (other than the Union) in the below Streams, mainly intended to support IKOP generation:

Table App 3

Topics	Restriction	Justification	Note
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-B-01	At least half of the budget should be implemented by the	In line with Recital 21 and Article 5.2.(a) of the Council regulation (EU)	

Topics	Restriction	Justification	Note
	SNS JU member (other than the Union)[21] and their constituent or affiliated entities.	2021/2085 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe. IKOP generation with long term commitment of partners and JU members other than the Union, but also of new players from Artificial Intelligence and Data science. In particular, the goals for high-quality SNS datasets to train AI models for 6G networks and for AIaaS require to be established and steered with long term commitment of partners and from the JU members other than the Union.	
HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C-01	At least half of the budget should be implemented by the SNS JU member (other than the Union) and their constituent or affiliated entities.	In line with Recital 21 and Article 5.2.(a) of the Council regulation (EU) 2021/2085 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe. IKOP generation with long term commitment and required stability as needed to develop the EU-wide SNS experimentation infrastructure that spans the programme lifetime. It requires to be established and steered with long term commitment of	

[21] The SNS JU member other than the Union is the 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (6G-IA) https://6g-ia.eu/

Topics	Restriction	Justification	Note
		partners and of JU member other than the Union. This is needed to enable the incorporation of SNS JU technology and solutions in the platform and test them in future SNS trials with sufficient stability.	

For the above Topics (Table App 3), applicants will be invited to fill a **mandatory table of compliance** at proposal stage in the **Application Form Technical Description (Part B).**

Proposals that do not fulfil the above Table App 3 conditions, including the mandatory table of compliance, at the time of the proposal submission, will be considered ineligible and, therefore, will not be evaluated.

iv) Gender equality plans and gender dimension of R&I:

According to the General Annexes, provision of a gender equality plan for public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments) applies as per Part B of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025.

Additional gender issues (related to award sub-criterion consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content) shall be addressed as appropriate in case research results are expected to differ when applied to different gender populations of users.

v) Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine

Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons. With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024 (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014), legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by legal persons established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.

C. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

General Annex C of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme.

D. Award criteria

General Annex D of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme with the following complements:

For IAs under Stream B and RIAs under Stream C, the award criteria table is complemented as follows:

- Introduction in the impact section of a sub-criterion assessing the proposal contribution to the overall SME objective as appropriate;

- Introduction in the impact section of a sub-criterion assessing the proposal contribution to the IKOP objectives;

Table App 4

	Excellence (The following aspects will be taken into account, to the extent that the proposed work corresponds to the description in the work programme)	**Impact**	**Quality and efficiency of the implementation**
Research and innovation actions (RIA) **Innovation actions (IA)**	- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious and goes beyond the state of the art. - Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research *where relevant* and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end-users where appropriate.	- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project. - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities. - Extent to which the members of the proposed consortium contribute to the expected level of in-kind contribution to operational activities to help reaching the target additional investments	- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. - Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

		- SME Participation and opportunities to leverage project results.	
Coordination and support actions (CSA)	- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives. - Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures, including soundness of methodology.	- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from the project. - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.	- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. - Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

E. Documents

General Annex E of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme.

F. Procedures

General Annex F of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme with the following amendments related to the procedure to rank proposals:

i) Generic Case:

- When two **RIA or CSA** proposals are equally ranked and that it has not been possible to separate them using first the coverage criterion, second the excellence criterion, and third the generic Impact criterion (i.e., after step 2 of the procedure outlined in part F of the General Annex), the level of SME participation will be taken as the next criterion to sort out the ties and if still un-conclusive, the level of IKOP will be considered as appropriate. If still inconclusive, the procedure outlined in part F of the General Annex will be resumed from step 3 onwards.

- When two **IA** proposals are equally ranked and that it has not been possible to separate them using first the coverage criterion, second the impact criterion, and third the excellence criterion (i.e., after step 2 of the procedure outlined in part F of the General Annex), the level of SME participation will be taken as the next criterion to sort out the ties and if still un-conclusive, the level of IKOP will be considered as appropriate. If still inconclusive, the procedure outlined in part F of the General Annex will be resumed from step 3 onwards.

G. Legal and financial set-up of the grant agreements

General Annex G of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme. In addition:

Participants of selected projects will be requested to cooperate in the SNS JU Programme for topics of common interests by signing a written agreement (called "collaboration agreement"[22]) referred in the specific provisions of the Model Grant Agreement (Annex 5 of the MGA[23]).

Further to Open science provisions set out in the General Annex G of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025, in the SNS topics under Streams B and C, AI/ML training data sets, which will be created and used in the context of the selected projects, have to be made available through a common repository that will be openly accessed and may be used by other SNS projects over the programme lifecycle.

Financial Support to Third Parties

Financial support to third parties (FSTP) is planned for the following topic under the SNS 2026 call: HORIZON-JU-SNS-2026-STREAM-C-01

Up to 20% of the budget of proposals submitted under this topic will be reserved for Third Party Financing for SMEs and academia.

For these actions, the third-party financing contractual clause **the AGA 24 will apply (**Articles 6.2.D.1 and 9.4).

The generic conditions are described in the AGA with the following complementary points that are specific to SNS JU:

Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is of 50 K EUR for Grants to support:

a) executing technological validation experiments, with some activities to maintain and expand the tool offered to the community;

b) Validation of new 6G network technologies in E2E setups potentially covering the European ecosystem

c) The integration efforts of key technologies developed in previous SNS JU Calls;

Proposals should provide a description of the use of the financial support to third parties, addressing:

- the targeted objectives and results;

- the different types of activities that qualify for financial support;

- the criteria for giving financial support

It is recommended that the beneficiary providing third party financing is an entity eligible for 100% of reimbursement of the eligible costs.

H. Specific conditions for actions implementing pre-commercial procurement or procurement of innovative solutions

General Annex H of the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 is not applicable to the SNS call 2026 covered by this Work Programme.

****

[22] Collaboration Agreement - SNS JU

[23] general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf