



## 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (6G-IA)

Brussels, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026

### Re: Industry Leaders' Call to Prioritise Digital Connectivity and Telecommunications in FP10

In the current geopolitical landscape, the **digital connectivity and telecommunications sector**—encompassing advanced networks, connectivity infrastructures, and related digital services—plays a pivotal role in the well-being of European citizens and the resilience and competitiveness of the European economy. Sustaining leadership in this domain is essential to ensure Europe's technological sovereignty, security, and sustainability. Moreover, modern digital connectivity depends on breakthroughs across multiple enabling technologies, including computer networks, the cloud-edge continuum, distributed systems, artificial intelligence, microelectronics, and quantum technologies.

Europe faces intense global competition in the **digital connectivity and telecommunications sector**. While it remains a leader in some related areas, it lacks technological leadership across the entire value chain. To build on the strengths, address these challenges and excel globally, the EU must prioritise the digital connectivity sector in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

As leaders of innovative enterprises, we **urge the European Commission to recognise the digital connectivity and telecommunications sector as a strategic priority under the next MFF**. This recognition is crucial to maintain Europe's competitiveness, sustainability, societal resilience and unity. We are committed to collaborating with policymakers to foster a strong environment for research and development (R&D) in connectivity and smart service provision, aligning with our connected, sovereign, and resilient Europe.

### The importance of digital connectivity for Europe

**Telecommunications, from connectivity infrastructures to services**, are no longer a mere support function; they are **a primary engine of competitiveness, growth, and sovereignty for Europe**. In 2022, information and communication services accounted for 6.6% of EU business value added, surpassing many traditional industries. The sector has seen a significant increase in employment, with over 10 million Europeans working as ICT specialists, representing 5% of total EU employment. These high-skilled jobs are characterised by productivity levels over 50% above the EU average, with profitability that outpaces most sectors.

Major EU initiatives, including the Digital Decade, the Gigabit Infrastructure Act, and the Cybersecurity Act, recognise the sector's importance. However, **fragmentation, underinvestment, and regulatory complexity hinder Europe's progress**. Impactful reports (e.g., Draghi, Letta, Heitor, Niinistö, etc.) highlight the urgent need for action to prevent Europe from falling behind in the **digital connectivity and telecommunications sector**. More

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substantial **support for this sector**, improved funding tools, and better alignment of EU and national programs are crucial for scaling and deployment.

Europe's global competitors, such as the US, China, and Japan, are investing heavily in advanced connectivity, AI, cybersecurity, and defence. In contrast, the EU's R&D spending, at 2.27% of GDP in 2021, lags significantly behind. The next MFF must allocate sufficient resources across the technology spectrum, from connectivity to AI and cybersecurity, to ensure secure, resilient, and sovereign development. **A holistic, cross-sectoral industrial technology strategy** is essential for Europe to compete effectively.

**The 5G Public-Private Partnership (PPP) achieved vital breakthroughs**, including the creation of a vibrant collaboration ecosystem involving large industries, academia, and SMEs. This collaboration led to significant intellectual property rights and standard essential patents resulting from R&D activities. **The Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking (SNS JU) further expand these activities**, promoting inclusive collaboration for the development of 6G networks and services, while enhancing Europe's global profile. These collaborative frameworks maximise the impact of stakeholder investments and minimise individual risk exposure.

## A proposed way forward

The 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association (**6G-IA**) **is the voice of European Industry and Research for Next Generation Networks and Services**. 6G-IA's ever-increasing membership pool of more than 430 members (representing Industry, Academia & Research Centres, SMEs, Associations and Vertical industries) actively participates and contributes to the SNS JU objectives and targets.

The **6G-IA vision** details proposals for the digital connectivity and smart service provision for FP10. This vision is based on the following main pillars and cross-sector synergies:

- **R&D Pillar:** support for fundamental technologies such as wireless, optical and non-terrestrial communications, cybersecurity & telco cloud architecture, system sustainability and advanced connectivity.
- **Experimental Pillar:** Enable large-scale testing and validation of promising technologies, creation of software and services ecosystems, and dual-use applications for defence.
- **Pre-deployment and Market Uptake Pillar:** ensure a sustainable valorisation and scaling of technologies, supported through programmes such as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Digital or the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).
- **Cross-partnership synergies:** Strengthen planned synergies through formal ex ante agreements with related JUs or initiatives (e.g., Chips JU, HPC, AI, Cloud, Quantum).

## Final remarks

The time to act is now. **The digital connectivity and telecommunications sector must be prioritised in FP10**, alongside critical sectors like energy and defence. Europe must reduce

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fragmentation, create scale, mobilise investment, and align regulation with innovation to drive growth and technological and societal resilience in **telecommunications, digital connectivity infrastructures and services**.

Yours faithfully,

*Chairman of the 6G-IA Board*

***Signed on behalf of the 6G Smart Networks and Services Industry Association and key 6G-IA Full Members below***

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