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Yearly report

WITAR WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the critical issue of gender diversity in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, in the context of the EC Horizon Europe (HEU) Smart Networks and Services (SNS) programme, with a particular focus on promoting the participation and advancement of women in telecommunications. Despite significant technological progress, the ICT industry continues to face gender disparity, with women under-represented at all levels, from technical roles to leadership positions. Women comprise less than 30% of the global ICT workforce, with even lower percentages in technical and leadership roles. This imbalance limits the diversity of perspectives essential for driving innovation and making informed decisions. Key barriers contributing to this disparity include societal stereotypes, limited access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, insufficient mentoring opportunities, and workplace biases, all of which hinder entry and retention for women in the field. The under-representation of women not only impacts social equity but also diminishes the economic and innovation potential of the sector. Research highlights that gender-diverse teams enhance business performance and foster creativity. In addition, gender diversity is also key in the overall current AI design, development and implementation, to avoid any potential gender bias and ensure the richness of the current and future AI models. Addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach, including fostering inclusive workplace cultures, implementing gender-sensitive recruitment and retention strategies, expanding access to STEM education for girls, and creating mentorship and leadership development opportunities. By closing the gender gap, the ICT sector can unlock significant economic benefits and position itself as a leader in equitable innovation. This report reflecting on the effort made by Women in Telecommunication and Research (WiTaR) 6G-IA working group over the past year to take a step in closing the gender gap in ICT.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
1. Introduction	4
2. Statistics and surveys	5
3. WiTaR activities	8
3.1. Website	8
3.2. LinkedIn	9
3.3. Member growth	12
4. Social media activites	14
4.1. Podcast.....	14
4.2. LinkedIn Campaigns	15
4.2.1. Meet Our Members Campaign.....	15
4.2.2. Monday Facts Campaign.....	16
4.2.3. Innovator of the Week.....	17
4.2.4. Other social media campaigns and initiatives.....	18
4.2.4.1. International Women Day (IWD)	18
4.2.4.2. Ada Lovelace Day.....	19
5. Lunch salons	21
5.1. Lunch Salon #1.....	21
5.2. Lunch Salon #2	21
5.3. Lunch Salons of 2026.....	22
6. Events.....	23
6.1. EUCNC & 6GS - June 2025	23
6.2. ICTON - July 2025.....	25
6.3. TECHRITORY FORUM - October 2025	27
7. Planning for 2026 and next steps	29
8. List of contributors	30

1. INTRODUCTION

The “Women in Telecommunications and Research (WiTaR)” Working Group was founded in 2023, but initiative stemmed from H2020 project Hexa-X, in which the group “Women in Hexa-X” was created in 2021. This group gathered participants from Hexa-X project interested in addressing and promoting diversity in the ICT area, and in particular in the ecosystem of collaborative actions in Europe. The name of the group changed to Women in Telecommunications and Research (WiTaR) in 2022, to extend beyond the Hexa-X project and gather participants from SNS-JU projects. The Working Group has been progressively growing (115 participants and engagement expanded to 33 SNS JU in the WG at time of publication) and extending its reach, organizing special sessions in events.

Objectives of the WiTaR WG are:


- Become “reference” point in the SNS programme and develop awareness across the overall SNS members/community to ensure a gender-balanced approach in European R&I activities.
- Promote visibility of women and their achievements and encourage them in engagement in leadership positions.
- Support role models for both soft and hard skills of junior researchers and students in order to contribute to 6G-IA and SNS actions related to ICT skills, ensuring that ICT missing skills in EU also systematically address missing ICT women skills.
- Contribute to engage more women in 6G research in particular sustainability – societal work, including panels, interviews... contributing to the definition of 6G use-cases ensuring the minimization of bias and enriching the set of identified use-cases.
- Interact with SNS and 6G-IA members, analysis of potential gender reported issues and contribution to the issues solving.

2. STATISTICS AND SURVEYS

Conducting surveys and extracting the outcomes in the form of statistics, is one of the effective ways, WiTaR get in touch with its community and understanding the pressing issues that need to be addressed. One of the key objectives was/is to possibly identify and define the major gender gaps issue/problems, from both qualification and quantification perspectives, including the exact identification and formulation of the issue/problem and the possible related quantification with references figures/statistics. This section highlights (as great and valuable example) the survey conducted during Women in Telecommunication and Optics (WeInTel) workshop (ICTON 2025) and some of the received comments and feedbacks from audience. The survey was conducted during the session and about 15 participants took part in it. Here are some important questions and the related answers:

- ***Have you ever received training or education around diversity, equity and inclusion, specifically related to gender balance?***
 - %33 YES / %67 NO
- ***What is your company doing to ensure gender balance?***
 - A significant number of respondents noted that while their organizations lack formal gender-balance programs, they also lack active discrimination.
 - Several participants reported that gender is not a point of focus because "there isn't any kind of discrimination" and the work environment is naturally respectful.
 - Some highlighted that while no specific actions are taken to promote balance, there is also "no resistance" to it or "sexist behaviour" observed.
 - A smaller group of participants identified specific, top-down initiatives being implemented.
 - Some organizations have integrated gender as a specific parameter for hiring or have implemented quota systems.
 - Initiatives include offering special trainings and occasional workshops, though one respondent noted these are sometimes poorly publicized.
 - One respondent pointed to "leading by example," noting that their CEO is a woman, even in the absence of other formal policies.
 - Many respondents felt disconnected from their organization's diversity efforts or reported a lack of clear communication.
 - Several participants admitted they had "no idea," "don't know," or that the company "does not transparently discuss" these details.
 - Some only hear about gender topics around specific dates like International Women's Day (IWD - 08th of March), suggesting that efforts may be symbolic rather than consistent.
 - One respondent highlighted the reality of the field, noting a 1:10 female-to-male ratio despite the company claiming not to differentiate between employees.
- ***What is your company not doing, although it would be beneficial?***
 - Work-Life Integration:
 - Failing to accommodate mothers' needs regarding evenings and weekends.
 - Representation & Visibility:
 - Neglecting to normalize women's presence in the field to move beyond "token" status.
 - Lack of recognition for female accomplishments in the industry.
 - Failure to actively promote internal initiatives (e.g., Women in Telecom).
 - Structural Support & Mentorship
 - Absence of formal mentorship programs.

- Lack of experiential workshops where women can share challenges and resolutions.
- **Strategic Mindset**
 - Treating gender equality as a "fashionable trend" rather than a necessity.
 - Hesitation to be outspoken or transparent due to perceived social or political risks.
- **Awareness**
 - Significant lack of internal communication, leaving employees unaware of existing efforts or possibilities.
- ***Does gender diversity have a positive impact on your business success?***
 - 66% Yes, 17% No, 17% Can't say
- ***How can we improve the current statistics in SNS with women participation and retention?***
 - **Strategic Visibility & Role Models**
 - Highlight women's specific scientific contributions rather than celebrating them solely based on gender.
 - Showcase female excellence and professional milestones to normalize their presence and motivate those currently in the field.
 - **Data-Driven Insights**
 - Conduct statistical studies to identify exactly where and why women leave (the "leaky pipeline") to create targeted retention interventions.
 - Use data to move beyond guesswork and address specific cultural or structural barriers.
 - **Structural & Cultural Development**
 - Shift focus from mere access to a comprehensive culture of confidence and continuity from early education to senior leadership.
 - Establish specific training programs and working groups to foster professional growth and community.
 - **Outreach & Awareness**
 - Increase the visibility of existing gender initiatives to ensure women are aware of available support systems.
 - Actively publicize technical opportunities to broaden the participation base.
- ***Do you agree in areas like product design, hiring and funding etc. gender balance helps to address biases and fosters fair and equitable approach?***
 - 71% Yes, 18% No, 1% Can't say
- ***Which actions/initiatives could support gender diversity and inclusiveness in SNS-JU?***
 - **Early Pipeline Development**
 - Introduce STEM and SNS role models in primary and high schools to encourage girls to pursue telecommunications engineering.
 - Building long-term interest before students reach the university level.
 - **Visibility & Event Integration**
 - Increase the frequency of women-focused workshops and special sessions within major conferences (e.g., ICTON).
 - Organize visits to SNS project partners to foster networking and visibility of female researchers.
 - **Structural & Policy Support**
 - Seek direct support and active involvement from the SNS Joint Undertaking (JU) leadership to prioritize diversity.
 - Implement gender quotas where they are contextually appropriate and impactful.
 - **Communication & Awareness**
 - Ensure all existing initiatives and support programs are widely publicized, as current efforts are often under-advertised.



The WeInTel workshop at ICTON 2025 highlighted a critical transition in the telecommunications sector: while overt discrimination is declining, a significant "transparency gap" remains. Survey results reveal that employees desire a shift from passive neutrality to proactive structural support, specifically calling for merit-based visibility of female scientists, formal mentorship programs, and better work-life integration for mothers. To improve retention and participation within SNS-JU, participants advocate for data-driven interventions and early-education outreach to redefine the STEM pipeline, emphasizing that gender equality must be treated as a strategic necessity rather than a superficial trend.

3. WITAR ACTIVITIES

3.1. WEBSITE

We are pleased to report on the second full year of activity for our dedicated WiTaR page on the 6G-IA website (<https://6g-ia.eu/witar/>), launched on 23rd May 2024. This page continues to serve as a central hub for promoting diversity and empowering women in telecommunications and research as part of the 6G-IA initiative.

During 2025, the page maintained its role in sharing resources, highlighting our goals and objectives, and providing up-dates on our activities and events. It also continues to host tools for networking and collaboration, fostering a community committed to advancing inclusivity in 6G research and development. Through this digital space, acting as a central hub of all our events and activities, we aim to redirect here when engaging with a broader audience to inspire a more diverse and innovative telecommunications ecosystem.

The 6G-IA website also hosts our membership application form (available at <https://6g-ia.eu/wg-application-witar-wg/>), enabling the community to grow within the same digital environment.

Comparing this second year of activity (2025) to the initial months following the launch in 2024, we observe a steady increase in engagement across the page and related events. Between 23 May 2024 and 27 January 2026, the WiTaR page received 1,287 views from 725 unique users. Our events contributed significantly to engagement, with the three main lunch salons together generating 439 views per active user across several hundred participants. (see Figure below)

Overall, the combined pages and events accumulated 2,058 views from 1,136 unique users.

Page path and screen class	↓ Views	Active users	Views per active user	Average engagement time per active user	Event All eve
Total	2,058 1.09% of total	1,136 1.03% of total	1.81 Avg +4.99%	58s Avg +146.68%	1.11
1 /witar/	1,287 (62.54%)	725 (63.82%)	1.78	57s	4,373 (
2 /wg-application-witar-wg/	241 (11.71%)	198 (17.43%)	1.22	54s	744
3 /event/witar-first-lunch-salon-session-pillars-of-success-how-women-make-tech-teams-successful/	173 (8.41%)	141 (12.41%)	1.23	22s	575
4 /event/witar-second-lunch-salon-a-practical-introduction-to-data-protection-compliance-21-may-2025/	146 (7.09%)	130 (11.44%)	1.12	27s	523
5 /event/witar-lunch-salon-3-building-inclusive-6g-through-technical-leadership/	120 (5.83%)	84 (7.39%)	1.43	40s	424

Figure 1: WiTaR page path and statistics from 23/05/2024 to 27/01/2026

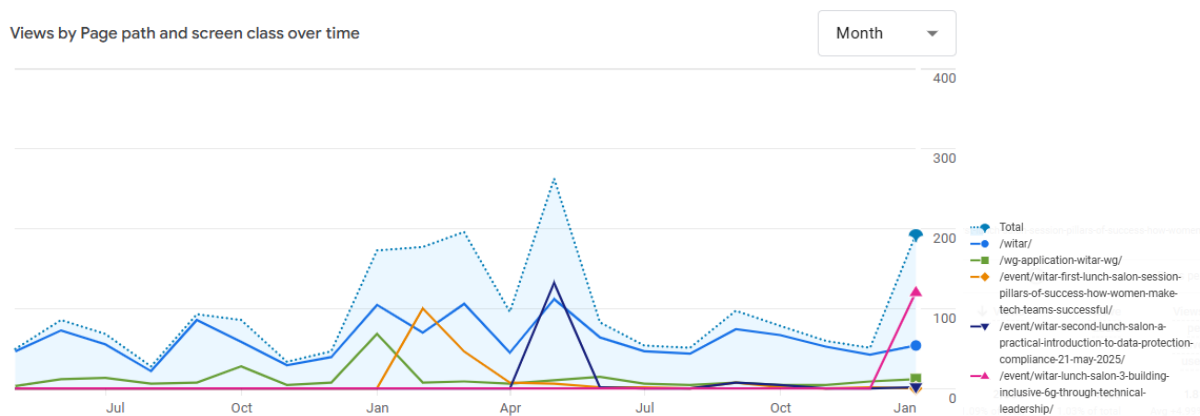


Figure 2: WiTaR page views and screen class over time between 23/05/2024 to 27/01/2026

Peaks in activity correspond to in-person events such as EuCNC & 6GS, ICTON and TECHRITORY, but also promotional campaigns via LinkedIn and of course online events such as first and second Lunch Salons in yellow and dark blue and the coming third one in pink, reflecting the effectiveness of targeted outreach.

The membership form attracted an additional 241 views from 198 users, with a peak corresponding to the start of new SNS JU projects in January 2025.

The comparison highlights the page’s increasing role as a focal point for collaboration, visibility, and awareness of women’s contributions to 6G research and innovation and demonstrates a sustained growth in engagement across the second year of activities.

3.2. LINKEDIN

Officially launched on 15 September 2024, and being its first full year of activity, the WiTaR public LinkedIn page (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/6giawitar/>) has shown great engagement results. Created to complement the WiTaR working group’s outreach activities, the page was designed to broaden visibility, promote diversity, and amplify women’s voices in telecommunications and research within the 6G-IA ecosystem. Replacing the closed group fostering a close-knit community, the goal of the public page was to target a wider audience outside the 6G-IA and SNS JU projects community.

During its second period of operation, the LinkedIn page consolidated its role as a key communication and engagement channel for WiTaR.

Between 27 January 2025 and 26 January 2026, a total of 103 posts were published, ensuring a consistent and structured presence throughout the year. This sustained activity resulted in 43,727 impressions, demonstrating a substantial increase in reach compared to the initial launch period. Engagement levels also grew significantly, with 1,706 reactions, 25 comments, and 35 reposts, reflecting an increasingly interactive and responsive audience.

Highlights

Data for 1/27/2025 - 1/26/2026

43,727

Impressions

1,706

Reactions

25

Comments

35

Reposts

Metrics

Impressions ▾

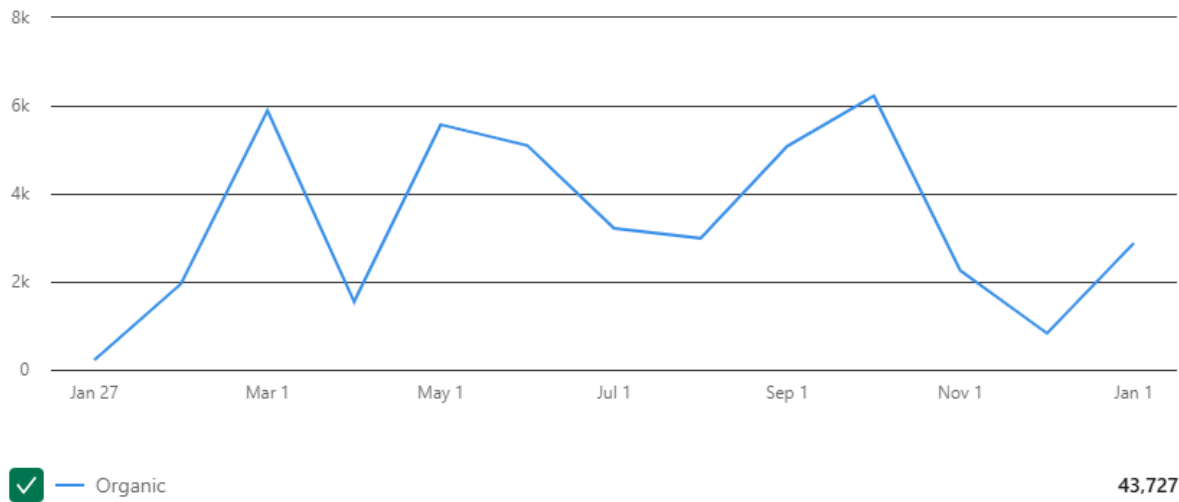


Figure 3: WiTaR LinkedIn page organic content metrics between 27/01/2025 and 26/01/2026

Visitor metrics further illustrate the page's maturation. Over the same period, the LinkedIn page recorded 628 page views from 305 unique visitors, confirming steady interest beyond passive content consumption.

Visitor highlights ?

628

Page views

305

Unique visitors

0

Custom button clicks

Visitor metrics ?

Page views ▾

All pages ▾

All filters

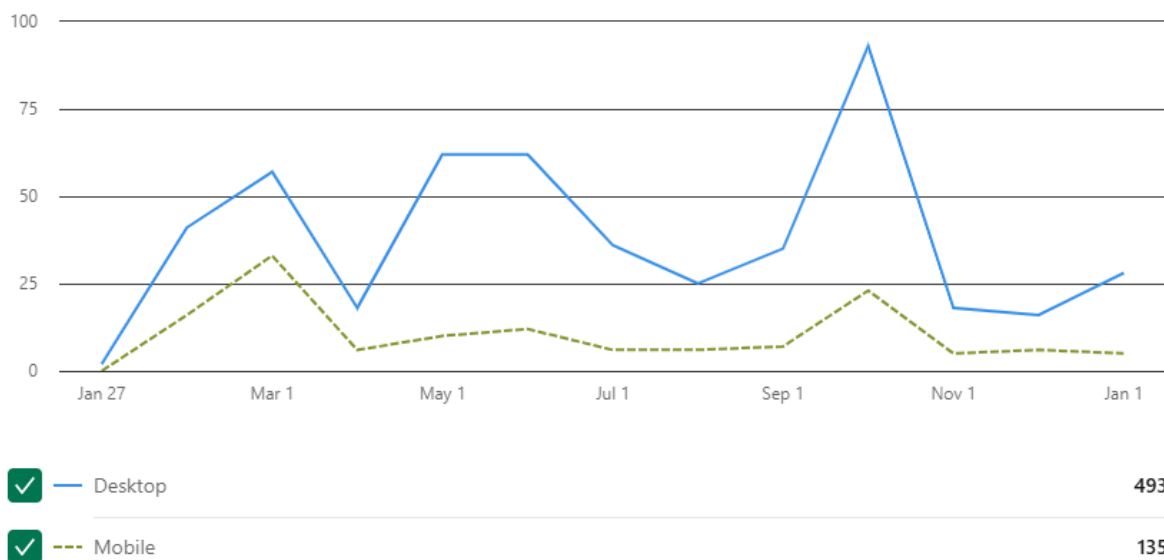


Figure 4: WiTaR page visitors metrics from 27/01/2025 and 26/01/2026

By January 2026, the page reached 478 total followers, with 250 new followers gained over the last 365 days, highlighting strong and continuous growth in the community.

Follower highlights ?

478

Total followers

250

New followers in the last 365 days

Figure 5: WiTaR page follower highlights from 27/01/2025 and 26/01/2026

When compared with the initial launch phase between 15 September and 9 December 2024, during which the page accumulated 9,110 impressions, 320 reactions, and reached 182 followers, the 2025 full year shows a clear scaling effect.

Highlights

Data for 9/15/2024 - 12/9/2024

9,110

Impressions

●0%

320

Reactions

●0%

5

Comments

●0%

3

Reposts

●0%

Figure 6: WiTaR page path and statistics from 23/05/2024 to 09/12/2024

The increase in impressions, engagement, posting volume, and follower base demonstrates the transition from an establishment phase to a mature and impactful communication channel. This evolution reflects the effectiveness of a more structured content strategy, including regular thematic posts such as #WiTaRMondayFacts, new #WiTaRMeetOurMember, #InnovatorofTheWeek event promotion, and awareness-driven storytelling aligned with the working group’s mission.

Overall, this full year of LinkedIn activity confirms the platform’s value as a central tool for outreach, visibility, and community building. The sustained growth in reach and engagement underlines WiTaR’s ability to connect with a wider professional audience and reinforces LinkedIn as a strategic pillar for promoting inclusivity and women’s leadership in 6G research and innovation.


3.3. MEMBER GROWTH

WiTaR’s evolution in 2025 reflects a significant step change in both scale and influence. Initiated within the European flagship project Hexa-X in February 2021, the WiTaR Working Group was subsequently expanded to the wider 5G Infrastructure PPP community in June 2021, before being formally launched as the 6G-IA WiTaR Working Group in Fall 2023. These successive phases laid the foundations for WiTaR’s structured growth and increasing visibility within the European 6G research ecosystem.

In 2024, WiTaR was still in a strong expansion phase, building on its transition into the SNS framework. During that year, the working group attracted around 112 members of all genders from 22 SNS JU projects, demonstrating growing recognition of its mission to promote gender equality, inclusion, and empowerment in telecommunications and research.

By 2025, this momentum had translated into a marked consolidation and acceleration of growth. WiTaR is achieving to fully establish itself as an active working group within the 6G-IA and SNS JU communities, reflecting its ongoing progression from a project-initiated initiative to a independent working group on 6G research and innovation inclusion. End of January 2026, membership reached **155 members, and engagement expanded to 33 SNS JU projects** (primarily from SNS JU Call 1): **6G4Society, 6G-DISAC, 6G-EWOC, 6G-GOALS, 6G-REFERENCE, 6GTandem, 6G-VERSUS, 6G-XCEL, ACROSS, AMAZING-6G, CENTRIC, ELASTIC, ETHER, FIDAL, Hexa-X-II, IMAGINE-B5G, NETWORK, OPTI-6G, ORIGAMI, PREDICT-6G, PROTEUS-6G, RIGOUROUS, ROBUST-6G, SEASON, SNS CO-OP, SNS ICE, SNS OPS, SUNRISE-6G, SUSTAIN-6G, TeraGreen, TrialsNet, VERGE, X-TREME 6G.**

This growth is driven by continuous outreach to project managers and communication leads through Technology Board (TB) and Steering Board (SB) meetings, as well as sustained coordination via the SNS Communication Task Force.



Overall, the comparison between 2024 and 2025 highlights WiTaR's transformation from an expanding community into a growing working group. The steady increase in membership and project coverage reflects both numerical growth and the effectiveness of WiTaR's active participation in events, strategic forums, and awareness-raising activities are still in aim and potential growth is still possible. However, on the 80 projects the SNS JU counts, only 33 projects are still represented in the working group, with clear room for further working group expansion and development.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES

This section highlights the key WiTaR working group communication and marketing activities, including podcasts, LinkedIn campaigns and other social media campaigns.

4.1. PODCAST

The podcast titled "**Advancing Research and Standardization Synergies in Emerging Technologies**", a collaborative effort between WiTaR and the SNS CO-OP project¹, has been released on January 28th 2026. It brings real experiences and learnings shared by our guests, the synergies between research and standardization, the barriers that still hold inclusive cooperation, and the pathways we can take together to align stakeholders and drive meaningful exchange.

The podcast has been moderated by Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom, and featured a distinguished panel of experts who talked about the telecom world and how it is built. The podcast brought together the panel of the following experts:

- Hakima Chaouchi, Head of Digital Sovereignty at Institut Mines Telecom
- Albena Dimitrova Mihovska, Chief Technology Officer at SmartAvatar BV
- Prachi Sachdeva, Senior Consultant at Dutch Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)
- Susan Rea, Centre Director at Nimbus Centre MTU

It is available at: <https://rss.com/podcasts/sns-co-op-podcasts/2500162/>

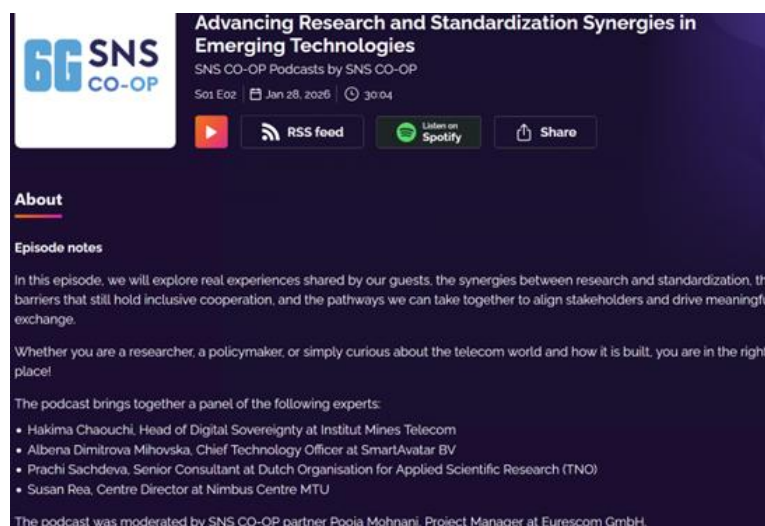


Figure7: WiTaR and the SNS CO-OP podcast screenshot on Spotify platform

¹ CO-OP URL: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101192000>

The podcast highlighted the critical role of standardization in embedding equity, diversity, and inclusivity into the development of 6G technologies. The discussion included how gender diversity within standards development strengthens innovation in emerging domains such as AI and cybersecurity.

Building on this podcast, WiTaR facilitates collaboration frameworks between research, industry, and standardisation bodies. It also envisions engagement with StandICT.eu. Additionally, WiTaR plans to design & develop practical guidance that capture best practices and lessons learned, helping to scale impact across ecosystems. Looking ahead, sustained engagement through lunch saloon webinars ensures that these conversations evolve into tangible, long-term outcomes.

4.2. LINKEDIN CAMPAIGNS

Along the year 2025, the WiTaR social media strategy evolved but remained around the idea of reaching wider, high-level communities such as a non-technical and societal audience. For example, following the 2024 campaign #WiTaRMondays Facts WiTaR upgraded it to the new campaign #InnovatoroftheWeek campaign to amplify visibility and ensure consistency and educational value with more contemporary figures of women still alive and active. In addition, the creation of the #MeetOurMembers campaign developed internal cohesion and authenticity with actual members of the research community within the working group.

4.2.1. MEET OUR MEMBERS CAMPAIGN

New campaign of 2025, the #MeetOurMembers (or #WiTaRMember) campaign played a central role in humanising the WiTaR community and making its diversity visible. Rather than focusing on historical figures or abstract statistics, this format highlights individual members, their professional backgrounds, areas of expertise, and their motivation for engaging with WiTaR. By giving a voice to women researchers, engineers, project managers and communication experts across different SNS JU projects, the campaign strengthens the sense of belonging within the Working Group.

The campaign also helps external audiences better understand the breadth of profiles involved in WiTaR and the concrete value of cross-project collaboration.

Engagement with these posts tends to be qualitative rather than purely quantitative, with reactions and comments often coming from peers and colleagues, indicating strong relevance and community resonance. These posts significantly outperform most event-related content in engagement quality.

Across the 12 posts of the WiTaR #MeetOurMembers LinkedIn campaign, the content generated a total of 9,353 impressions and 397 clicks, indicating solid visibility across the network.

Engagement was also strong, with 361 clicks, reflecting sustained interest in the featured members and their stories. For illustration, this campaign generated a total of **375 likes and loves, 7 comments, and 24 reposts**.

In total, 12 members were posted and more are planned for the future. This campaign was scheduled during the period of activities from May to August 2025.

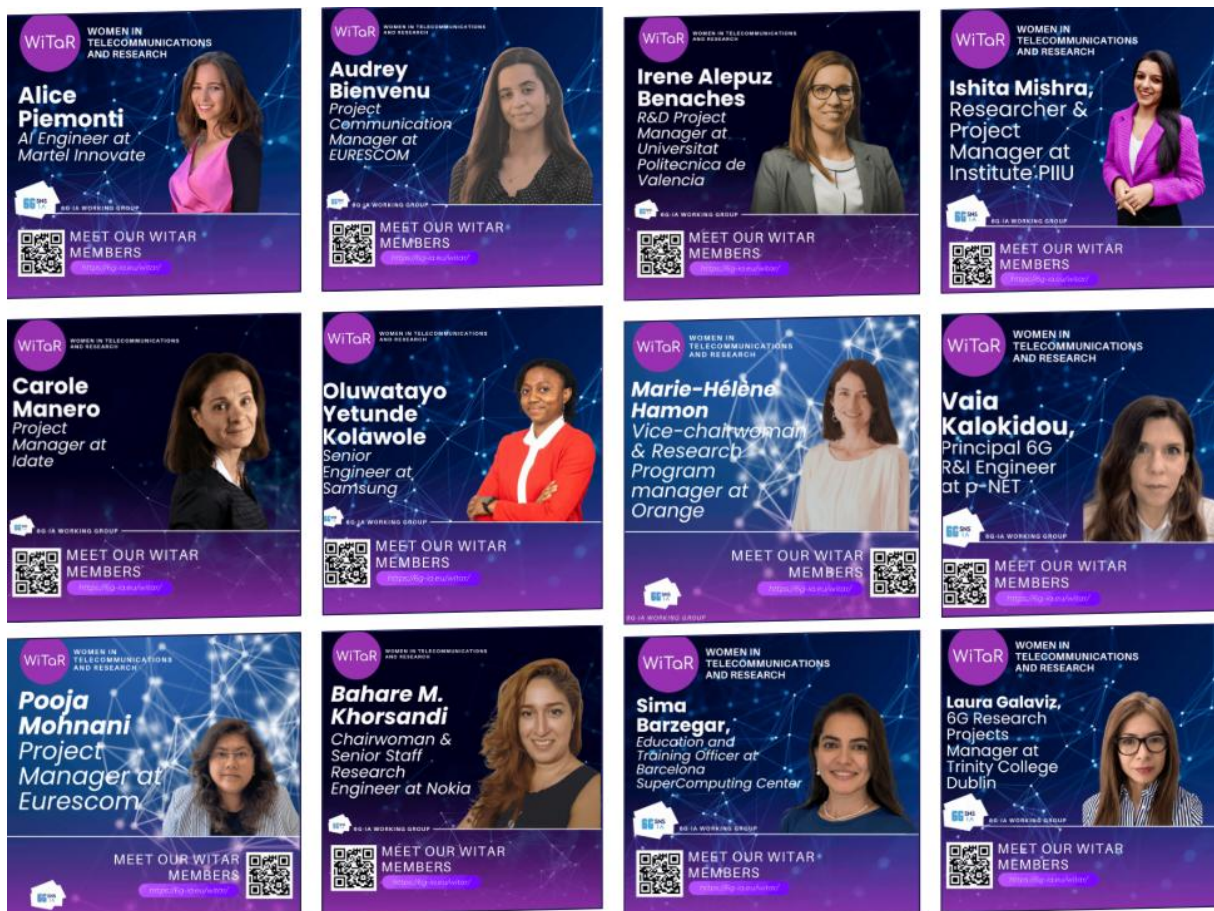


Figure 8: Collage of WiTaR LinkedIn posts of the #MeetOurMembers campaign 2025

4.2.2. MONDAY FACTS CAMPAIGN

#WiTaRMondayFacts campaign is a recurring content campaign that started in September 2024 already but was replaced by the campaign #InnovatoroftheWeek mid-year.

This campaign plays a foundational role in maintaining continuity, educational value and identity building across the year. Featuring women pioneers such as Margaret Hamilton, Mary Combos, Evelyn Boyd Granville or Jean Bartik, this format consistently delivers steady engagement despite lower absolute reach than major campaigns. But as each individual post may appear modest in isolation, collectively they contribute significantly to sustained audience attachment and credibility.

Published on a weekly basis, it offers short, educational insights into historical women’s contributions to science, technology and innovation. This campaign is less event-driven and more foundational: its strength lies in regularity and credibility rather than peak performance metrics. Over time, its goal was to reinforce WiTaR’s positioning as a knowledge-driven Working Group committed to awareness-raising and education.

Monday Facts posts also serve as a low-threshold entry point for new followers, helping to maintain steady engagement and audience growth between larger campaigns and events.

For the #WiTaRMondayFacts campaign in 2025, across the eight posts, the campaign generated a total of 482 impressions, 52 likes and 15 clicks.

While overall visibility and engagement were lower than in earlier periods, this reduction is consistent with the strategic reallocation of communication efforts and resources towards newer initiatives and event-related activities.



Figure 9: Collage of some WiTaR LinkedIn posts of the #WiTaRMondayFacts campaign 2025

4.2.3. INNOVATOR OF THE WEEK

The WiTaR *#InnovatoroftheWeek* campaign provides continuity and long-term narrative structure to WiTaR's communication strategy. The visual identity is kept keeping and the posts are published on a weekly basis also on the Monday to not lose the monopoly of the hashtag #WiTaRMondayFacts as the *#InnovatoroftheWeek* is already very popular.

The post is shorter, but still with educational insights into modern women's contributions to contemporary science, technology and innovation.

This campaign is less historical-driven and more actuality-related: Like the campaign #WiTaRMondayFacts its strength lies in regularity and credibility rather than peak performance metrics.



Figure 10: Collage of some WiTaR LinkedIn posts of the #InnovatoroftheWeek campaign 2025

4.2.4. OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

In addition to event related campaigns, such as the WiTaR incoming and past presence at important in-person events such as EuCNC & 6GS, TECHRITORY and ICTON, the Ada Lovelace Day and the International Women Day (IWD) celebrations registered stronger engagement quality and higher performance overall.

4.2.4.1. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN DAY (IWD)

The post for the International Women’s Day (IWD) generated some of the strongest performance indicators across the year 2025. The International Women’s Day 2025 post² stands out as a clear peak, achieving 4,652 impressions, 426 engagements, 106 likes and a notably high 9.2% engagement rate, alongside 303 clicks and 16 reposts. Beyond visibility, the post directly contributed to community growth, generating 13 new followers, confirming that awareness-driven content can also deliver tangible audience expansion when paired with a strong call to action.

The IWD 2025 post published by the WiTaR LinkedIn page generated strong visibility and engagement, demonstrating the relevance of gender equality topics within the 6G research and innovation community that is the majority of the page followers.

Overall, these metrics underline the post’s success in raising awareness, driving engagement, and reinforcing WiTaR’s positioning as a key voice on inclusivity, leadership, and gender equality in telecommunications and 6G research.

² https://www.linkedin.com/posts/6giawitar_leadership-technical-research-activity-7303785734589628416-wZA6/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAC3vsD0BQIpB82QHMMVsbSdVX6MOjEVO9b0



Figure 11: WiTaR postcard in a post for the International Women's Day 2025

4.2.4.2. ADA LOVELACE DAY

Compared to last year, in 2025 no campaign was organised to let the communication efforts focus on the coming TECHRITORY 2025 presence. The Ada Lovelace Day 2025 post by WiTaR demonstrated strong engagement despite modest reach.

The post generated 408 impressions and reached 271 LinkedIn members organically, resulting in 46 total interactions. Engagement consisted of 27 reactions, 3 comments, 7 reposts, and 9 link clicks, giving a click-through rate of 2.2%. This indicates that the content resonated strongly with those who saw it, particularly through storytelling, historical context, and references to WiTaR events such as the EuCNC & 6G Summit 2025 and Techritory 2025. However, the post contributed to only 1 new follower,

suggesting that while the content effectively engaged the existing audience, its overall reach remained limited.

#AdaLovelaceDay #WiTaR #WomenInSTEM #6G #Innovation #Inclusion #Equality
#Telecommunications #Leadership



Figure 12: Screenshot of the WiTaR post for Ada Lovelace Day 2025

5. LUNCH SALONS

The Lunch Salon are online events, initiated in the first stages of the group, in 2021, to share experiences on gender diversity. These meetings were quite informal, driven by exchanges and discussions rather than presentation, and held during lunchtime (hence the term « lunch salon). In 2025, WiTaR decided to restart these more interactive sessions, and organised two Lunch Salons in 2025.

5.1. LUNCH SALON #1

The first 2025 Lunch Salon was organized on March 4th, 2025, inviting Akshay Jain, Radio Research Scientist at Nokia Bell Labs, to provide his insights on the key pillars of success, and how Women make tech teams successful. He shared interesting feedback and views on the importance of gender diversity and how it empowers teams of scientists shaping the future of technologies. He illustrated by presenting women met during his career path and how their contribution was crucial.

In total, the first event counted 31 registrations and the full recording³ published on the SNS JU channel under the dedicated WiTaR playlist counted 56 views.



Figure 13: Banner of the WiTaR Lunch Event #1 Topic: Pillars of success – How women make Tech teams successful

5.2. LUNCH SALON #2

A second Lunch Salon was held on 21 May 2025, featuring Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom GmbH, who delivered a practical introduction to data protection compliance. The session highlighted the importance of effective personal data management and provided a structured, practice-oriented overview of the GDPR, clarifying key principles, roles, and responsibilities with a strong emphasis on real-world application. The discussion raised participants' awareness on how to

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN_4nSRr6fY&list=PLdoUExp7oG-4dHIJhCe3_lyhFuOttLJC&index=4

integrate data protection into their daily workflows, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability.

The online event counted 27 registrations and the recording⁴ published on the SNS JU channel under the WiTaR playlist counted 36 views.



Figure 14: Banner of the WiTaR Lunch Event #2 Topic: A Practical Introduction to Data Protection Compliance

5.3. LUNCH SALONS OF 2026

The WiTaR Working Group is actively reaching out to experts across various fields to invite them to participate in the Lunch Salon workshop series. At the time of publication of this report, Lunch Salon #4 and #5 have already been arranged and organized. Further details on the dates, timing, and outcomes of these sessions will be published on our website and included in the 2026 annual report.

⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN_4nSRr6fY&list=PLdoUExp7oG-4dHIJhCe3_lyhFuOttLJC&index=4

6. EVENTS

6.1. EUCNC & 6GS – JUNE 2025

The EuCNC & 6GS 2025 (European Conference on Networks and Communications and 6G Summit) featured a special convened session dedicated to Women in Telecommunications and Research. This was the 4th WiTaR convened session in EuCNC and 6GS conferences. This session aimed to spotlight the contributions of women in advancing the telecommunications field and to address challenges in achieving gender diversity in research and industry. Bringing together leading women professionals, researchers, and advocates, the session targeted to foster dialogue on creating inclusive opportunities, overcoming barriers, and inspiring the next generation of female leaders in telecommunications.

The agenda included (1) Welcome from the WG chair Bahare M. Khorsandi, (2) WiTaR introduction and up-date on the recent activities of the working group from Bahare M. Khorsandi, (3) Video messages from Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak (EC DG CNECT Deputy Director Responsible for Advanced Digital Skills), Lyse Brillouet (Orange Executive Vice-President Research), Muriel Attane (EARTO Secretary General) and Thierry Klein (Nokia Bell Labs Solutions Research President), managed, collected and presented by Didier Bourse, (4) Introduction of this year's theme "Women visibility/invisibility – Targeted SNS actions" with dedicated presentation from Didier Bourse, (5) Industry and academia's view and practice to encourage gender diversity with presentation from (i) Accademia: Ahmad Nimr (University of Dresden) and (ii) Industry: Dinh-Thuy Phan-Huy (Orange), (6) Bar camp on "Women visibility/invisibility – Targeted SNS actions", chaired by Pooja Mohnani and including three additional facilitators Uwe Herzog, Prachi Sachdeva and Stefan Wunderer and (7) Conclusion and next steps presented by Bahare M. Khorsandi. Specific actions were proposed to be engaged during this excellent convened session, including (among others) (1) analysis of the current set 6G use-cases and possible identification of potential gender gap issues or/and gender enrichment, (2) possibly enabling child care services during EuCNC & 6G Conferences, targeting to possibly enable more women / researchers to contribute on-site to forthcoming EuCNC & 6GS editions / other conferences.

Another important results from WiTaR activities are evidencing in participation of women in the EUCNC & 6GS conference. The EuCNC & 6GS conference has seen a significant rise in female participation, increasing from 7% to 19.5% within a year. This remarkable growth highlights the ongoing efforts of WiTaR working group to promote gender diversity and inclusivity within the field of communication networks and technologies. The increase underscores the growing interest and recognition of women's contributions in this traditionally male-dominated sector, paving the way for a more balanced and innovative future.



Figure 15: WiTaR session at EuCNC & 6GS 2025



Figure 16: WiTaR Bar Camp at EuCNC & 6GS 2025

The Bar Camp was organized by Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom GmbH, using an open, participant-driven co-creation format in which the agenda and content were shaped and led by the attendees themselves. The pitch leaders included Uwe Herzog (Eurescom GmbH), Prachi Sachdeva (TNO), and Stefan Wunderer (Nokia). This interactive approach fostered open dialogue, peer learning, and the exchange of diverse perspectives across disciplines, sectors, and professional backgrounds. Participants actively co-created strategies addressing business vision, standardization, and the intersection of sustainability and diversity. The barcamp evolved on the following 3 pillars:

- How Diversity Redefines Business Vision

Participants explored how diversity acts as a strategic enabler rather than a compliance requirement. Discussions highlighted how inclusive leadership and diverse teams broaden business perspectives, improve decision-making, and support long-term resilience.

- How Diversity and Inclusion Strengthen Standardization

The sessions emphasized that inclusive standardization processes lead to more robust, transparent, and widely adoptable standards. Participants discussed how diverse representation in standards development helps mitigate bias, improves interoperability, and ensures that emerging technologies reflect societal needs.

- Aligning 6G Development with Sustainability and Diversity

Discussions on 6G focused on the need to integrate sustainability and diversity considerations from the earliest stages of technology design and standardization. Participants underlined the interdependence between energy efficiency, social responsibility, and inclusive innovation, stressing that future 6G ecosystems must balance technological advancement with environmental impact and societal value.

Key Takeaways

As for EuCNC & 6GS 2024 edition, the Bar Camp format successfully fostered open exchange and collective ownership of ideas.

Participants concluded that diversity, inclusion, and sustainability are not parallel considerations but foundational elements that strengthen business strategy, standardization outcomes, and the long-term success of 6G technologies.

6.2. ICTON – JULY 2025

The 3rd edition of the Women In Telecommunications and Optical Networks (WeInTel) workshop was held during the 25th International Conference on Transparent Optical Networks (ICTON 2025) in Barcelona, Spain. Co-chaired by Dr. Sima Barzegar and Dr. Pantea Nadimi Goki, the workshop aimed to showcase a diverse range of research initiatives led by women in optical communications. By highlighting these achievements, the event sought to encourage young researchers and inspire their professional journeys.

A highlight of the program was a presentation from the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Unit of the Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC), which focused on "Advancing Science Through Inclusive Gender Equality Plans". The workshop also featured a panel discussion where speakers shared insights on the role of women in research, followed by an audience survey exploring gender issues within corporate and academic environments.

This joint event between WiTar and WeInTel was supported by the Severo Ochoa program and the HORIZON EUROPE projects SEASON (G.A. 101096120) and FLEX-SCALE (G.A. 101096909).

Participants included:

- Aina Serrano Rodrigo, CamGraPhICS s.r.l.
- Vanessa Villegas Zannella, Telefónica.
- Valentina Gemmato and Francesca Samà, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna.

- Prof. Dr. Carmen Mas Machuca, University of the Armed Forces & Technical University of Munich.
- María Gracia Puga Villanueva and Helena Moço Lopes, EDI Unit, Barcelona Supercomputing Center.



ICTON 2025
25th Anniversary International Conference on
Transparent Optical Networks

July 6th to 10th 2025
Barcelona – Catalunya – Spain



Figure17: WiTaR session at ICTON 2025

6.3. TECHRITORY FORUM – OCTOBER 2025



Figure 18: WiTaR session at 5G-TECHRITORY 2025

The co-creation session at TECHRITORY Forum 2025 brought together the WiTaR and Pre-Standardisation Working Groups of the 6G-IA, organized in collaboration with the SNS CO-OP project. The session focused on strengthening inclusion, diversity, and research-to-standardisation linkages within Europe’s evolving 6G ecosystem. Opening remarks highlighted WiTaR’s evolution and its role in embedding gender equity across European R&I activities.

A keynote message from a recorded video from **Erzsébet Fitori**, Executive Director of the SNS JU reinforced the importance of closing gender gaps and fostering inclusive leadership in STEM. Presentations outlined the complementary missions of WiTaR and the Pre-Standardisation WG, emphasizing inclusive participation in standards development. Expert insights demonstrated how diversity directly enhances research excellence, innovation capacity, and Europe’s global competitiveness. These included:

- Dr. Rute C. Sofia, leader of the European Task Force on 5G+/6G, stressed that diversity directly impacts research excellence: “When we overlook diversity, we limit innovation.” She described how the INSTAR-6G Task Force is advancing inclusive participation in 6G standardisation, linking technical expertise with EU policy goals. She also invited the community to join various task forces to learn and align in areas like AI, Cybersecurity, Quantum, etc. She also informed about the Human Rights Horizontal Task Force (HTF) – under development, and their plan to propose recommendations for a human rights-compliant society.
- Prachi Sachdeva (TNO) reinforced this with an economic argument: “Closing the tech gender gap could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025.” Her advice to women entering

standardisation work was simple yet powerful: “Find a mentor. Build alliances. Develop soft skills. Ask for feedback early — and participate in social networking events.”

The Panel discussion on “Challenges and opportunities for women in standardisation” was moderated by Uwe Herzog (Eurescom), and featured Didier Bourse (Nokia), Prachi Sachdeva (TNO), Hakima Chaouchi (IMT), and Dr Alben Mihovska (Aarhus University). Discussions focused on barriers and opportunities for women in standardisation. Didier Bourse underlined (among other quantification) that only 9% of inventors are women, while Hakima Chaouchi urged universities to foster participation in standards work. Alben Mihovska called for bridging research and standardisation to maintain an inclusive innovation pipeline. Summing up, Bourse noted: “True innovation reflects the full spectrum of humanity.”

The session concluded with concrete next steps, including expanded collaborations, mentorship initiatives, and upcoming WiTaR activities.

7. PLANNING FOR 2026 AND NEXT STEPS

As we look ahead to the next year, our group dedicated to diversity and women in telecommunications is planning an ambitious agenda to expand our work and impact. Building on the momentum of past successes, we aim to organize workshops to develop technical and leadership skills, and plan networking events to foster collaboration and support. Among the key priorities for 2026 will be the further progress on the gender gaps/issues qualification and quantification and the further engagement from SNS projects champions. Additionally, we aim to advocate for more inclusive representation in conferences, panels, and key decision-making roles within the industry. By amplifying diverse voices and championing inclusivity, we hope to drive meaningful progress and inspire lasting change in telecommunications.

In 2026, WiTaR will continue the “Lunch Salon” initiative, a monthly platform dedicated to fostering dialogue and engagement on gender diversity and inclusion within the telecommunications and research community. This program invites volunteers from across projects to share their insights, experiences, and best practices on topics ranging from workplace challenges and success stories to strategies for creating inclusive environments. The Lunch Salon aims to inspire and empower members by highlighting the transformative potential of diversity in driving innovation and collaboration. By exploring how gender diversity benefits individual fields of expertise, this initiative underscores WiTaR’s commitment to creating a more equitable, supportive, and forward-thinking professional environment.

WitaR will also initiate new streams of activities to move forward towards a better understanding of how gender diversity is addressed in the development of technologies, focusing in 2026 on two target areas:

- Use cases: Thorough assessment of use-cases considered for 6G to define potential related 6G design and implementation recommendations.
- Standardization: Evaluation of gender representation in standardization bodies and identification of potential gaps.

The outcomes will feed another objective for 2026, the publication of a whitepaper “Empowering Women in Telecommunication & Research: Pathway to Equity and Innovation” that will capture the insights on strategies on raising awareness, the learnings with our participations at strategic events, summary of surveys, interviews and related data analysis. We also plan to share the best practice from programs/companies fostering inclusivity and diversity with call-to-action suggestions.

With our recent participation at the 5G Techritory, we also see a collaboration and a potential LoI/MoU with Riga Tech girls on the joint organization of events, workshops/webinar etc. to create an impact that influences the policymakers, industry leaders and community as a whole.

8. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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