

SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking

BIANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

2026 -2027

SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking

Bi-Annual Work Programme for years 2026-2027

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Message from the Executive Director

I am delighted to share with you the Bi-Annual Work Programme of the SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking for the period 2026-2027. These two years will be decisive for our partnership, marking the final stretch of the current Multi-annual Financial Framework and offering the opportunity to continue delivering on our current mandate while preparing the future of both our partnership and of the European ATM research and innovation.

Developing digital solutions for the modernisation of Europe's ATM system remains our core business. After years of development, the projects launched under the first Digital European Sky calls will start to deliver mature SESAR Solutions aligned with the European ATM Master Plan. At the same time, we will launch the final exploratory and industrial research calls (ER4 and IR3) in 2027, ensuring a continuous flow of technological solutions through the SESAR innovation pipeline, from low to high technology-readiness levels.

Equally crucial will be their deployment. A major milestone will be the submission to the European Commission of the proposal for a Common Project 2 (CP2) in 2026, the regulatory instrument for implementing Strategic Deployment Objectives (SDOs) through a synchronised and harmonised roll-out across Europe, translating the research results achieved over recent years into measurable improvements in network performance, resilience and sustainability.

As we advance along this path, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to act as a bridge connecting research, innovation and deployment, and uniting all actors of the European ATM ecosystem around a shared vision. Through this collective approach, we ensure that innovation translates into operational reality while strengthening Europe's global influence by promoting interoperability, harmonisation and the competitiveness of our ATM industry. The planned expansion of the partnership to include members from third countries associated to Horizon Europe will further reinforce this dimension.

Today, modernising Europe's ATM is a strategic imperative. Without faster development and deployment of SESAR Solutions, growing congestion, higher emissions and increasingly fragmented and vulnerable airspace risk undermining Europe's competitiveness, technological sovereignty and climate objectives. Achieving the collectively agreed ambitions of the European ATM Master Plan will require sustained commitment and mobilisation across the aviation community - from research and industry to regulators and ANSPs - and I count on our members to maintain their active engagement in turning this vision into reality.

This work programme represents a collective commitment to make Europe the most efficient and environmentally friendly sky to fly in the world. You can count on me and on the SESAR 3 JU's dedicated staff to deliver it.

Andreas Boschen

Executive Director SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking

Chapter I – Introduction

1 Our Mission

The SESAR (Single European Sky ATM Research) project is the technological pillar of the Single European Sky (SES), which seeks to reform the European air traffic management (ATM) system and improve its performance. The SESAR 3 JU coordinates the definition and development phases of the SESAR innovation cycle and facilitates the market deployment of SESAR Solutions. It builds upon the experience of the SESAR Joint Undertaking and the successful implementation of the SESAR 1 and SESAR 2020 R&I Programmes. The goal of the SESAR 3 JU is to deliver the Digital European Sky (DES), a vision seeking to transform Europe’s aviation infrastructure enabling it to handle the future growth and diversity of air traffic safely and efficiently, while minimising environmental impact. This will make air transport smarter, more sustainable, connected and accessible to all civil and military airspace users, including new entrants.

The SESAR 3 JU’s mission statement is **“to accelerate through research and innovation the delivery of an inclusive, resilient and sustainable digital European sky”**:

- accelerate – reducing the time to market through focused and agile R&I, supporting faster transition to deployment through an extended innovation life cycle;
- inclusive – integrating and connecting all types of air vehicles and users, including civil and military, manned and unmanned;
- resilient – enabling flexible, scalable, safe and secure ATM that can withstand disruptions in the aviation system;
- sustainable – establishing Europe as the most efficient and environmentally friendly sky to fly in the world.

SESAR’s vision is to **make Europe the most efficient and environmental friendly sky to fly in the world**. By doing so, the SESAR 3 JU not only delivers on the SES priorities, but also contributes actively to the overarching EU policy objectives of the “European Green Deal”¹ and the “Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy”², as well as to the priorities set out in the European Commission’s 2024-2029 political guidelines³, and in particular to the “Clean Industrial Deal”⁴ and the “Competitiveness Compass”⁵. This contribution is particularly notable in relation to the ambitious target of decreasing the carbon footprint of the transport sector in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

2 Background and link with the European ATM Master Plan and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

The reform of ATM in Europe is imperative to cope with air traffic growth, the climate challenge and with significant unforeseen traffic variations and security threats (such as the ones caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and by the Russian war against Ukraine). This requires changes allowing operations to take place under the safest, most cost- and flight-efficient and environmentally friendly

¹ European Commission COM(2019) 640 final: The European Green Deal.

² European Commission COM(2020) 789 final: Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future.

³ von der Leyen, U., [Europe’s Choice – Political guidelines for the next European Commission: 2024–2029](#).

⁴ European Commission COM(2025) 85 final: The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation.

⁵ European Commission COM(2025) 30 final: A Competitiveness Compass for the EU.

conditions, as well as measures contributing to the reduction of aviation emissions. The European ATM Master Plan and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) offer a strategic approach to implement the transformation of the ATM and frame the action of the SESAR 3 JU.

2.1 The European ATM Master Plan: our roadmap to the Digital European Sky

The SESAR 3 JU is in charge of the stewardship of the European ATM Master Plan, including its updates⁶ and the monitoring of the SESAR project. The 2025 edition of the European ATM Master Plan⁷ represents a bold and ambitious vision for the future air traffic management in Europe. It calls for a strong focus of the entire sector on market uptake activities, through Strategic Deployment Objectives (SDOs) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Strategic Deployment Objectives (SDOs)

The SDOs, 10 in total, are based on SESAR Solutions already delivered or in the pipeline and address essential operational changes covering ATM functionalities, including a new service delivery model, that need to be rolled out between 2025 and 2035. Focusing on these 10 SDOs and ensuring the timely deployment and operational integration of SESAR Solutions is the path to achieve the Digital European Sky. The ATM Master Plan also introduces Development Priorities (DPs) that focus on the exploratory and industrial research required to deliver new technological solutions aligned with the performance ambitions of the SES. The 12 DPs cover the prioritized actions needed to develop future ATM functionalities and roll-out phase D (Figure 2), supporting the long-term vision of where we want the sector to be by 2045.

⁶ Published for the first time in May 2008 (and endorsed by the Transport Council in March 2009), the European ATM Master Plan has been updated in 2012, 2015, 2020, and 2025 through strong collaboration between all ATM stakeholders.

⁷ The European ATM Master Plan 2025 edition is available online at this address: <https://www.sesariu.eu/MasterPlan2025>

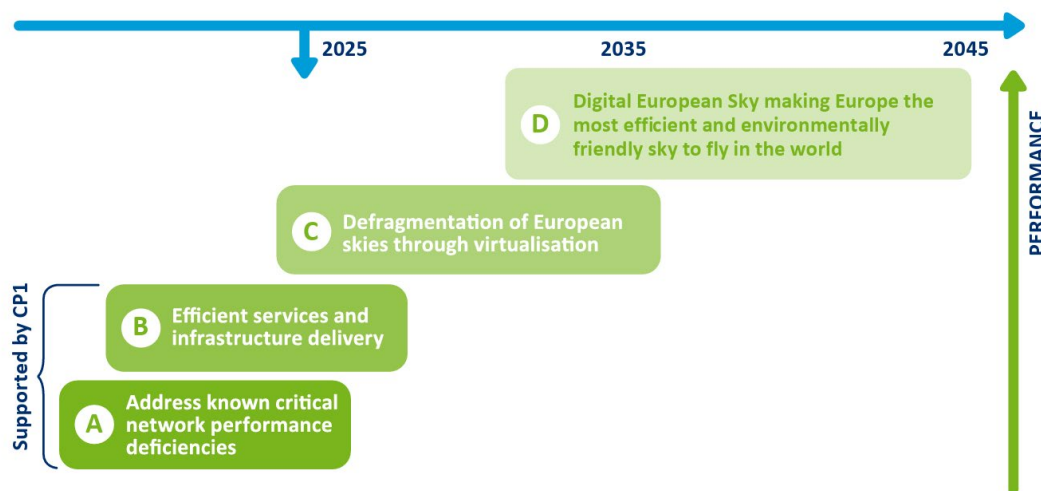


Figure 2: Four-phased approach to roll-out of the ATM Master Plan

Phase D of the ATM Master Plan introduces several challenges, including the need to integrate higher levels of automation and connectivity, further transition to trajectory-based operations (TBO), implement dynamic airspace management, and integrate new and green aviation technologies such as zero-emission aircraft, all while keeping the role and function of human operators central. The ATM Master Plan recognizes these as pressing R&D challenges that require addressing cybersecurity risks, ensuring seamless multi-link communications, and integrating innovative air mobility (IAM) solutions like drones and air taxis into an already complex airspace. The objective is not only to enhance operational efficiency and safety but also to ensure that Europe's air traffic system evolves in a sustainable and secure manner, meeting both environmental goals and growing traffic demands. Achieving this vision will demand the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders, to make Europe the most efficient and environmentally friendly sky to fly in the world and keep it at the forefront of global air transport.

2.2 The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda

The Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA)⁸, developed in preparation of the DES Programme, sets out the initial framework linking the ambitions of the SESAR 3 JU to the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Horizon Europe Programme. The SRIA identified flagships and roadmaps for their implementation. As the ATM R&I landscape continues to evolve, the ATM Master Plan 2025 includes a mapping between the SRIA's flagships and the development priorities (DP) to ensure coherence and alignment at all strategic levels.

3 Strategy for the implementation of the supporting R&I programme

The DES programme is structured into three main R&I phases: exploratory research (ER), industrial research and validation (IR), and digital sky demonstrators (DSD). The SESAR 3 JU operates through a holistic and interconnected innovation pipeline, based on these three R&I phases, comprising a continuous cycle of definition, development, and deployment phases. This integrated approach allows the seamless progression of ideas from exploration and conceptualization (low TRL) to real-world application.

⁸ SESAR 3 JU, [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda - Digital European Sky](#)

The pipeline is constructed from four categories of activities; categories 2 and 3 are within the industrial research and validation phase:

1. exploratory research (TRLs 0–2), funded under Horizon Europe for the EU part;
2. industrial research and validation (TRLs 3–6), funded under Horizon Europe for the EU part;
3. fast-track innovation and uptake (TRLs 2–7), funded under Horizon Europe for the EU part;
4. Digital Sky Demonstrators (TRL 8), funded under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the EU part⁹, in collaboration with CINEA.

The SESAR innovation pipeline and its four categories of activities are shown in Figure 3.

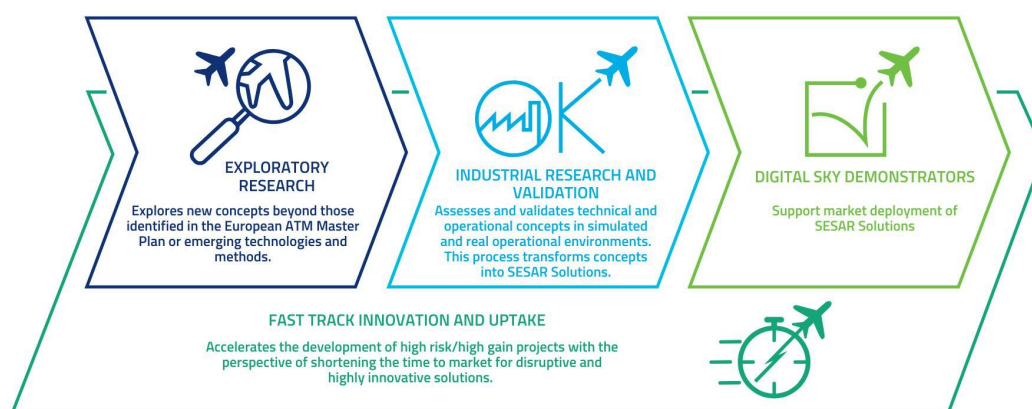


Figure 3: The SESAR innovation pipeline

The pipeline is designed to ensure that the SESAR Solutions emerging from the development phase are not only thoroughly tested and refined but are also deployed by early movers. The SESAR 3 JU drives both the definition and development phases, and assumes a facilitating role in the deployment phase. Through the Digital Sky Demonstrators (DSDs) and in close collaboration with the entities such as EASA, EUROCAE and the SESAR Deployment Manager (SDM), the SESAR 3 JU contributes to a seamless transition from development to implementation, and for a large adoption across Europe.

The SESAR 3 JU provides financial support, mainly in the form of grants, to R&I indirect actions, selected following open, transparent and competitive calls ensuring their openness for newcomers¹⁰.

Figure 4 provides an overview of the high-level planning and calls sequence of the DES programme for 2021–2030. The calls sequence is taking into consideration the need to ensure the R&I pipeline in feeding the new calls with previous calls' results.

⁹ Within the DES, Digital Sky Demonstrators are subject to a specific working arrangement. In this arrangement, the SESAR 3 JU ensures the strategic orientation of the projects and provides technical advice to the European Commission, in coordination with the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), which manages the calls for proposals and the resulting grants.

¹⁰ As defined in Article 5.2(a) of the Single Basic Act (SBA).

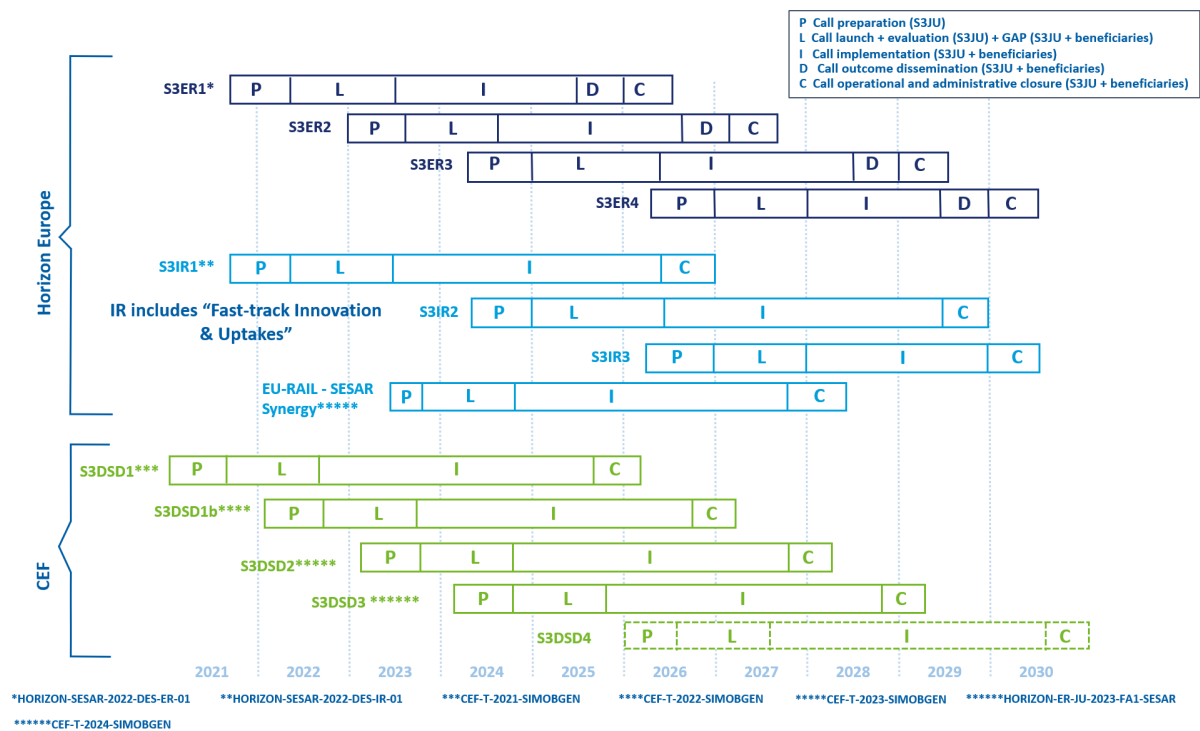


Figure 4: The Digital European Sky calls sequence

In addition to the operational activities, SESAR 3 JU incorporates transversal activities such as architecture and strategic deployment planning and monitoring. These transversal activities support coherence among individual projects, thereby contributing to the overall cohesion of the DES program.

Chapter II – Bi-Annual work programme for 2026-2027

1 Executive Summary

In 2026–2027, the SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking (SESAR 3 JU) will continue to monitor and steer the implementation of the Digital European Sky (DES) programme ensuring its alignment with the priorities and ambitions of the newly adopted European ATM Master Plan. These two years will be decisive, as they cover the final phase of Horizon Europe and set the ground for the next programming period post-2027. In this context, the Bi-Annual Work Programme (BAWP) 2026–2027 defines the priorities and activities to ensure optimal success, focusing on nine operational objectives that capture the main achievements expected at operational and organisational levels.

Operational activities

In 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will deliver a major milestone with the submission to the European Commission of the proposal for a Common Project 2 (CP2). This cornerstone instrument, once brought forward by the European Commission, will support the implementation of the ATM Master Plan through a synchronised and timely deployment across Europe of the SESAR innovation that support the transition to a more efficient and future-proof ATM system.

The JU will continue to ensure a strengthened monitoring and strategic steering the implementation of its portfolio of projects across all 3 phases of the innovation pipeline. Since the waves of projects launched in the first half of the programme (ER1, ER2 and IR1 calls for proposals) will reach their final phase, SESAR 3 JU will ensure that they deliver their Solutions at the expected level of maturity, and will conduct their orderly closure. In addition, it will finalise the selection and launch into execution the projects under the ER3 and IR2 calls (launched in 2025), and will prepare the final DES calls namely ER4 and IR3 to be launched in early 2027. Projects under the IR2 and IR3 calls will develop the Solutions addressing Phase D of the ATM Master Plan.

The SESAR 3 JU will continue to facilitate and support the acceleration of market uptake of the SESAR Solutions by providing technical expertise in the implementation of the ongoing DSD projects (DSD1a–DSD3), and will contribute to the preparation of a potential DSD4 call to be launched in 2026. In addition, the JU will coordinate with EASA and EUROCAE to ensure that the technical regulatory framework supports the implementation of the deployment priorities defined in the ATM Master Plan with a particular focus on the roll out of the SDOs and the transition to a new service delivery model.

Synergies and collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders will ensure that the R&I activities are embedded within a broader European, national and regional agenda, leveraging investments, avoiding duplication, and ensuring coherence between research, innovation, and deployment. Particular efforts will be dedicated to strengthen the cooperation with the European Space Agency (ESA) notably through a memorandum of cooperation.

ATM being global by nature, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to engage and collaborate with international actors, notably in the context of ICAO, to ensure global interoperability and a harmonised framework. In particular, it will implement targeted measures to mitigate global harmonisation risks associated to the elements in scope for CP2. In addition, the JU will expand its partnership to include new members established in third countries associated to Horizon Europe.

Support to operations

To deliver on these ambitions, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to provide a range of corporate and support services to ensure operational efficiency, regulatory compliance and organisational resilience. Building on the Back Office Arrangements with other JUs and administrative collaboration with the European Commission and EUROCONTROL, the SESAR 3 JU will pursue further efficiency gains across its processes. At the same time, it will maintain a lean internal structure, operate as an agile organisation, remain an attractive employer, and advance its transformation into a greener and more digital workplace through the implementation of action plans on the introduction of Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and for its digital transformation.

Communication and outreach will remain a key enabler, with activities aimed at promoting the DES vision, raising awareness of projects results and SESAR Solutions, and demonstrating the central role of the SESAR 3 JU in the orchestration of the ATM ecosystem. To that end, the JU will organise yearly events such as the SESAR Annual Conference and the SESAR Innovation Days, and will participate actively in major EU and international events.

2 Operational activities

2.1 Objectives for 2026-2027

Through its BAWP 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU delivers on the general and specific objectives set in the Single Basic Act (SBA).¹¹ In addition, the Multiannual Work Programme (MAWP).¹² defines five Strategic Areas of Operations (SAO) that frame the operations of the SESAR 3 JU and the delivery of the DES programme activities. The section below provides a description of the activities that will be undertaken under each SAO.

These activities deliver on the 9 overarching operational objectives that capture the main goals of the SESAR 3 JU over the two years of operation.¹³

The Table 1 below presents these 9 operational objectives, with their key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets for the years 2026 and 2027. It also highlights their links with the general and specific objectives included in the SBA and with the five SAO and their related activities.

¹¹ The general objectives of the SESAR 3 JU are defined in Articles 4, 5 (general objectives common to all JUs), and 142(1) of the SBA, while its specific objectives are defined in the Article 142(2) of the same act.

¹² In section 2.4 of the MAWP.

¹³ The 9 operational objectives have been developed in full alignment with its legal mandate, its ultimate goals as per the MAWP and in alignment with the European ATM Master Plan and the SRIA. The operational objectives follow the SMART principle to ensure a clear road map and efficient monitoring by a set of RACER key performance indicators.

Table 1: SESAR 3 JU's Operational Objectives for 2026-2027

No	Operational objectives 2026-2027	Key performance indicators	Target for 2026	Target for 2027	Related objective in SBA (Art. 142)	Related SAO
1	Strengthen strategic monitoring of development and deployment activities in line with the European ATM Master Plan	Deliver augmented strategic development and deployment monitoring reports for information to the Governing Board (GB)	100%	100%	All	SAO 1
2	Deliver proposal for regulatory measures to implement the SDOs of the ATM Master Plan	Proposal for a CP2 submitted to the European Commission	100%	n.a	1c, 2d&e	SAO 4
3	Launch last wave of calls (ER4 and IR3)	Conduct a gap assessment Phase D taking into account the outcome of IR2 evaluations to prepare IR3	100%	n.a	All except 1c and 2d	SAO 2 and SAO3
		Calls ER4 and IR3 published, evaluations completed and grants signed	n.a	100%		
4	Ensure delivery of SESAR Solutions in line with the European ATM Master Plan priorities	Complete delivery of SESAR Solutions covered by IR1	100%	n.a	All except 1c and 2d	SAO2 and SAO 3
5	Build critical mass of early movers to accelerate market deployment aligned on SDOs of the European ATM Master Plan	Provide technical specifications in view of potential DSD4 call	100%	n.a	1c, 2d&f	SAO 4
		Communicate DSD1b results at TRL8	n.a	100%		
		Develop the joint SESAR–EASA implementation roadmap for the new service delivery model	100%	n.a		

		and present it at a joint event in 2026				
		Support EASA update of the EPAS to reflect the SDOs	100%	100%		
6	Ensure harmonised global ATM framework through active engagement with international partners	Complete selection process of new members targeting entities established in associated third countries	100%	n.a	All	All
		Implement targeted measures to mitigate global harmonisation risks associated to the elements in scope for CP2	50%	100%		
7	Promote and develop synergies in high priority areas linked to the mission of the JU	Sign a Memorandum of Cooperation with ESA	100%	n.a	1c and 2d	SAO 5
		Communicate the results of the EU-Rail JU – SESAR 3 JU synergy project	n.a	100%		
8	Provide input to the EU interinstitutional discussion on the future of ATM research	Develop a blueprint on the future EU ATM public-private partnership	100%	n.a	All	SAO 1
9	Transformation of our organisation towards a greener and more digital place to work	Implementation rate of action plan to introduce EMAS in cooperation with EUROCONTROL	50%	100%	All	All
		Implementation rate of action plan to deliver a digital and secure organisation	100%	100%		

The SESAR 3 JU will continue to measure its progress against the Horizon Europe key impact pathways (KIPs), the KPIs common to partnerships, and the KPIs specific to the SESAR 3 JU.¹⁴ Performance against these indicators will be reported in the SESAR 3 JU Consolidated Annual Activity Reports (CAAR).

2.2 Activities per Strategic Areas of Operations

2.2.1 Strategic area of operation 1: Provide strategic steering to the Digital European Sky programme

For the years 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU will continue its strategic steering of the DES, notably through a strengthened monitoring of the development and deployment activities in line with the European ATM Master Plan, and the delivery of yearly comprehensive reports to the Governing Board (GB). In addition, the SESAR 3 JU will contribute inputs to the discussion on the future of ATM research beyond the current programming period.

Transversal projects launched under the IR1 (AMPLE3 and PEARL) and IR2 calls will help steer the R&I efforts of the SESAR 3 JU. Their support will mainly focus on the European ATM Master Plan monitoring notably through the Strategic Deployment Monitoring Report and the support to the CP2 definition. In addition, the transversal projects support the DES programme execution, notably through community-building, project progress assessments and performance evaluation of the SESAR Solutions.

FLAGSHIPS	FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH	ATM APPLICATION-ORIENTED RESEARCH	INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH PHASE D	INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH PHASE C	FAST TRACK INNOVATION AND UPTAKE	DIGITAL SKY DEMONSTRATORS
	ASTAIR HYPER Solver	CODA ANTENNAE ASTONISH SATERA	FCDI	MIAR		ESMA AMEA
		ATMACA RESPONSE TADA	SOLO NETWORK TBO ECHO 2 ATC-TBO	IRINA FCA		
	HUCAN ANTIOPATE	DEEPFLOW SMARTS	ISLAND		FASTNET KAIRIS	
	IMAFUSA MUSE	CORUS FIVE U-AGREE	AI4HYDROP		EUREKA OPERA	BURDI EALU-AER
	SEC-AIRSPACE VISORS		ISNAP	IFAV3	SAFIR-READY ENSURE SPATIO	U-ELCOME
	MAIA PRIAM	MULTIMODX	TRAVEL WISE		CNS DSP VITACY	EXODUS DEVICE
	AEROPLANE E-CONTRAIL	F4ECLIM	GREEN-GEAR STEPLESS	CICONIA CONCERTO	GALAAD GEESSE DYN-MARS	ECHOES HERON PEACOCK
	SYNTHAIR TRUSTY	ORCI	ASTRA AWARE	DIALOG	JARVIS	DARWIN
	ATM-EXCITE		MITRANO	HARMONIC		
Knowledge transfer ENGAGE 2 Transversal AMPLE3 PEARL						

Figure 5: The Digital European Sky projects portfolio

In February 2025, the Governing Board concluded that a dedicated public-private partnership (PPP) for ATM organising and coordinating all phases of the SESAR innovation cycle, from definition to

¹⁴ Details on these KPIs is provided in the Annexes 3, 4 and 5 of the SESAR 3 JU CAAR 2024.

deployment, was necessary to achieve the objectives outlined in the ATM Master Plan. In 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will ensure that the position of its Governing Board is appropriately communicated in the context of the MFF preparations and negotiations. Among other activities and inputs, the JU will develop a blueprint on the future EU ATM Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and submit it to the European Commission.

To ensure proper representation of the entire ATM ecosystem, the SESAR 3 JU will conduct a membership expansion from third countries associated to Horizon Europe. The call for new partners will be launched in Q1 2026.

2.2.2 Strategic area of operation 2: Deliver exploratory research

This SAO addresses the first phase of the SESAR innovation pipeline which aims at bringing out innovative, unconventional and breakthrough solutions through exploratory research covering both fundamental (TRL 0-1) and applied research (TRL 1-2). Activities under this SAO will contribute towards the objectives of launching the new wave of projects, and ensuring the delivery of the SESAR Solutions in line with the Master Plan priorities. This will be achieved through the monitoring and steering of projects funded under the calls for proposals ER1, ER2 and ER3, to ensure that the Solutions developed reach the expected maturity gates and are aligned with the Development Priorities and the ATM Master Plan roll out milestones. The subsections below summarise the planned activities per call.

2.2.2.1 DES ER 1 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2022-DES-ER-01)

In 2023, 18 grants have been awarded as a result of the ER1 call, amounting to a total EU contribution of € 22 million, for a total investment of around € 25 million. These projects have completed their research activities in Q3 2025 and will be closed by the end of Q1 2026, except for the transversal project Engage 2, which will continue its activities into 2027. In 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will support the final phases and orderly closure of these projects, and consolidate their results.

2.2.2.2 DES ER 2 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2023-DES-ER-02)

In 2024, 18 grants have been awarded as a result of the ER2 call, amounting a total EU contribution of around € 26 million, for a total investment of around € 28 million. The implementation of these projects started in Q3 2024, with closure of the research activities expected in Q3 2026, and project closure in the first half of 2027. Throughout 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor these projects to ensure that research activities are conducted in accordance with the signed grant agreements, particularly regarding timelines and deliverables. Additionally, it will ensure that the developed Solutions align with the Development Priorities of the ATM Master Plan and reach the expected maturity level.

2.2.2.3 DES ER 3 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2025-DES-ER-03)

On 15 January 2025, the SESAR 3 JU published the ER3 call, which opened on 1 April, with a call deadline on 16 September 2025. The call amount of € 24 million is divided between WA1 on Fundamental research (€ 10 million to cover the Development Priorities FR-1 to FR-3), and WA2 on Applied research (€ 14 million to cover the Development Priorities AR-1 to AR-3). In 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will finalise the grant preparation process in view of signing the grants by mid-May. The SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor these projects during their implementation to ensure the delivery of the Solutions aligned with the ATM Master Plan and at the expected maturity level before the end of the research activities by mid-2028.

2.2.2.4 DES ER 4 call (HORIZON-JU-SESAR-2027-ER-04)

In 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU will prepare and launch the last exploratory research call under the DES. The ER4 call will aim at selecting projects that should deliver Solutions addressing strategic development priorities for fundamental research (TRL 0-1) and applied research (TRL 1-2) as defined in the ATM Master Plan. During 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will develop the technical specifications which are expected to be adopted by the GB in December of that year. The ER4 call will be tentatively opened in January 2027 with a call deadline set for May 2027. Following the evaluation and the award of the selected proposals, the grant preparation phase should be open in September, leading to the signature of grant agreements before the end of 2027 and the beginning of the research activities in early 2028. Execution of the research activities will run until the end of 2029.

The indicative budget of the ER4 call is not yet known.

2.2.3 Strategic area of operation 3: Deliver industrial research and validation

This SAO addresses the second phase of the SESAR innovation pipeline which supports the transition of potential SESAR Solutions to maturity levels of TRL6 or 7 (for fast-track projects). In 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU will focus on the delivery of the Solutions needed to advance Phase D of the European ATM Master Plan. Therefore, the main objectives during these two years will be the launch of the last wave of DES calls, in particular the IR3 call, and the delivery of the SESAR Solutions in line with the Master Plan priorities. This will be achieved through the monitoring and steering of projects funded under the calls for proposals IR1, EU-RAIL – SESAR Synergy and IR2, to ensure that the Solutions developed reach the expected maturity gates and are aligned with the Development Priorities and the ATM Master Plan roll out milestones. In addition, the activities will include a gap assessment of Phase D as part of the preparations of the IR3 call for proposals to be launched in 2027. During these activities, particular attention will be paid to the early engagement of the projects with the EASA (safety, regulatory, standardisation and certification aspects where appropriate). The subsections below summarise the planned activities per call.

2.2.3.1 DES IR 1 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2022-DES-IR-01)

32 grants have been signed in Q3 2023 with a total granted amount of around € 181 million, for a total investment of around € 347 million. The SESAR 3 JU will focus on the final phase of the monitoring of these IR1 projects to ensure that they deliver their SESAR Solutions aligned with the Development Priorities at the expected maturity level in the first half of 2026. The projects will be closed in 2026.

2.2.3.2 Synergy call with EURAIL (HORIZON-ER-JU-2023-FA1-SESAR)

In 2024, the project Travel Wise was selected as a result of the first ever call for proposals jointly launched by two JUs. The total investment for this project is around € 6.9 million. The grant is managed by the EU-Rail JU, with SESAR 3 JU providing technical expertise in the monitoring of the project to ensure the delivery of SESAR Solutions aligned with the Development Priorities at the required quality and maturity levels by Q3 2027 following the fast-track approach.

2.2.3.3 DES IR 2 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2025-DES-IR-02)

On 15 January 2025, the SESAR 3 JU published the IR2 call, which opened on 1 April, with a call deadline on 16 September. The call amount of € 230 million is divided between seven Work Areas aligned with the six development priorities of the ATM Master Plan for industrial research (IR-1 to IR-6). In addition, the Work Area 7 will allow the selection of transversal projects supporting the execution of the DES programme. In 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will finalise the grant preparation process in view of signing the grants by mid-May. The SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor these projects during

their implementation to ensure the timely delivery of the Solutions aligned with the Development Priorities at the expected maturity level. The closure of the projects will take place in 2029.

2.2.3.4 DES IR 3 call (HORIZON-SESAR-2027-DES-IR-03)

In 2026-2027, the SESAR 3 JU will prepare and launch the last industrial research call under the DES. The IR3 call will aim at selecting projects that should advance the maturity of Solutions contributing to the delivery of the Phase D. During 2026, based on a gap assessment of the outcome of IR2, the SESAR 3 JU will develop the technical specifications for the IR3 call to target critical gaps of high strategic relevance within the limits of remaining budget available. The specifications are expected to be adopted by the GB in December 2026. The call will be tentatively launched in January 2027 with a call deadline set for May 2027. Following the evaluation and the award of the selected proposals, the grant preparation phase should be open in September, leading to the signature of grant agreements before the end of 2027 and the beginning of the research activities in early 2028.

The indicative budget of the IR3 call is not known yet.

2.2.4 Strategic area of operation 4: Facilitate an accelerated market uptake of SESAR Solutions

This SAO covers the third phase of the SESAR Innovation pipeline designed to accelerate the market uptake of SESAR Solutions. The activities under this SAO will support two main operational objectives for the years 2026 and 2027: build a critical mass of early movers to accelerate market deployment aligned on the SDOs, and deliver a proposal for regulatory measures to implement the SDOs.

This will be achieved mainly by providing technical support to the Digital Sky Demonstrators and by coordinating several activities to support market uptake, including the elaboration of a proposal for a CP2.

2.2.4.1 Digital Sky Demonstrators

In 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will provide technical support to the projects funded under CEF calls CEF-T-2021-SIMOBGEN (DSD1a), CEF-T-2022-SIMOBGEN (DSD1b), CEF-T-2023-SIMOBGEN (DSD2) and CEF-T-2024-SIMOBGEN (DSD3), already launched and contractually managed by the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA). The SESAR 3 JU will continue to provide technical expertise during the execution phase of these projects. The SESAR 3 JU is equally committed to offering technical support for both the preparation and execution phases of a potential DSD4 call, which is tentatively planned for 2026 but remains unconfirmed.

More specifically, in 2026-2027, during the implementation phase of the DSD calls mentioned above, the SESAR 3 JU will aim at ensuring that the demonstrators will take place in live operational environments and demonstrate the concepts, services, technologies and standards necessary to deliver the DES. To that end, technical projects reviews will be run in 2026 and 2027 to assess the progress made by the projects and take corrective actions if needed to ensure moving towards TRL 8. During the projects' review, particular attention will be paid to the connection of the projects to the standardisation, regulatory and deployment activities, notably by involving standardisation bodies and manufacturers. It has been shown that early engagement with the regulator during the demonstration process can significantly de-risk subsequent issues related to regulatory needs, approvals, safety assessments etc. for the SESAR Solutions under scope.

DSDs being the key component in the facilitation of the deployment of SESAR Solutions, the SESAR 3 JU is committed to provide input to the Commission for potential future CEF calls in 2027.

2.2.4.1.1 DSD call CEF-T-2021-SIMOBGEN (DSD1a)

Five projects, with a combined grant amount of around € 48 million are currently in the implementation phase. Three projects address the U-space & Urban Air Mobility flagship (projects BURDI, EALU- AER and U-ELCOMÉ) and two projects address the Aviation Green Deal flagship (projects ECHOES and HERON).

These projects should be concluded by a TRL 8 maturity gate during Q3 2025 and a closure in 2026.

2.2.4.1.2 DSD call CEF-T-2022-SIMOBGEN (DSD1b)

Three projects, with a combined grant amount of € 69 million were awarded in 2023. Two projects address the Virtualisation and cyber-secure data sharing flagship (projects DEVICE and EXODUS) and one project addresses the Connected and automated ATM area flagship (project ESMA).

The SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor the execution of these demonstration activities that will be concluded by a TRL 8 exit maturity gate during Q4 2026 and closure in 2027.

2.2.4.1.3 DSD call CEF-T-2023-SIMOBGEN (DSD2)

One project, PEACOCK, in the Green Deal flagship, was awarded in 2024, with a grant amount of around € 1.5 million. The SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor the execution of the project through technical review to ensure a successful maturity gate in Q3 2027 and subsequent closure of the project.

2.2.4.1.4 DSD call CEF-T-2024-SIMOBGEN (DSD3)

One project, AMEA, has been selected and started its activities at the end of 2025. With a grant amount of around € 27 million, the project will accelerate the deployment of multilink capabilities within the aircraft avionics & ground ATM networks through integration of next generation SATCOM services alongside VDL Mode 2.

The SESAR 3 JU will closely monitor the execution of the projects' demonstration activities. The projects will be concluded by a TRL 8 exit maturity gate during Q3 2028.

2.2.4.1.5 DSD call CEF-T-2026-SIMOBGEN (DSD4)

Should the European Commission confirm that budget is available to launch a CEF call in 2026 that includes Digital Sky Demonstrators, the SESAR 3 JU plans to contribute to the preparation of the DSD4 topics. The scope will be limited to the SDOs and could focus on key priorities like CP2 Solutions. It would enable supporting their early implementation in order to bring quick wins to aviation.

2.2.4.2 Activities to accelerate the market uptake of SESAR Solutions and the implementation of the European ATM Master Plan

2.2.4.2.1 Common Project 2

In line with its regulatory mandate, the SESAR 3 JU will dedicate significant effort in 2026 and 2027 to preparing, delivering and supporting the adoption of the proposal for a Common Project 2 (CP2). CP2 is a cornerstone instrument to support the implementation of the ATM Master Plan 2025 through the timely and synchronised deployment across Europe of SESAR innovations. It will help create an enabling regulatory framework that serves both operational stakeholders and industry, ensuring that SES instruments work hand-in-hand. This regulatory step supporting the transition towards a performance-driven, service-oriented ATM is essential to addressing the challenges ahead, safeguarding network efficiency and resilience, and contributing to Europe's climate and competitiveness goals. Built on the Strategic Deployment Objectives (SDOs), which already reflect maturity, network performance potential, regulatory aspects and investor interest, the CP2 proposal

will identify which new specific ATM functionalities need to be implemented in a coordinated and synchronised manner in the European ATM system.

During 2026, based on the initial work conducted in the second half of 2025, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to lead the development of the proposal through an open, transparent and inclusive process bringing together the European Commission, EASA, EUROCONTROL, SDM, and the community of operational and industrial stakeholders, as well as standards organisations. This approach will ensure broad buy-in from the sector, and accountability and alignment with regulatory and deployment frameworks. The CP2 proposal will be submitted to the European Commission by June 2026, after which SESAR 3 JU will support the subsequent phases of the regulatory process leading to adoption and a smooth transition into implementation.

In doing so, SESAR 3 JU reaffirms its role as the bridge between development and deployment, ensuring that Europe's investments in ATM innovation translate into lasting performance improvements for the entire aviation network. At the same time, it prepares the ground to justify continued coordination of deployment under a single PPP for ATM, in line with the mandate defined by its Governing Board in 2025.

2.2.4.2.2 Coordination activities to accelerate market uptake of SESAR Solutions

The SESAR 3 JU will ensure the acceleration of the market uptake of SESAR Solutions by coordinating activities with the SESAR Deployment Manager (SDM) and all relevant standardisation and regulatory bodies, and by ensuring seamless collaboration between the SES instruments. The aim is to monitor and de-risk at technical level the roll-out of the SDOs defined in the European ATM Master Plan, notably by ensuring, through a close collaboration with EASA, that the regulatory framework supports their implementation. This includes in particular the SDO 8 supporting the transition to the new service delivery model, notably through the work of a dedicated task force co-chaired by SESAR 3 JU and comprising ANSPs and industry representatives. Furthermore, it is planned to develop a joint SESAR–EASA implementation roadmap for the new service delivery model and present it at a joint event in 2026.

SESAR Deployment Manager (SDM). Through its MoU with the SDM, the SESAR 3 JU will focus on continuing to improve the strategic monitoring of CP1 activities. Furthermore the SDM is closely associated to the development of the CP2 proposal to make sure that the proposal takes into account the lessons learned from CP1 and is widely supported by operational stakeholders.

European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). Through its service-level agreement (SLA) with EASA, the SESAR 3 JU will focus on ensuring maximum levels of alignment between the European Plan for Aviation Safety (EPAS) and the ATM Master Plan to create the enabling technical regulatory framework for the SDOs. In addition, EASA is closely associated to the development of the CP2 proposal to make sure that the proposal is sufficiently mature and takes into account regulatory and standardisation needs.

Standardisation bodies. The SESAR 3 JU's contribution to the development of European standards is crucial for ensuring the readiness for the deployment of SESAR Solutions and for accelerating their market uptake. The SESAR 3 JU will continue to participate actively in the EUROCAE Council and the Technical Advisory Committee, as well as the European ATM Standards Coordination Group and the European UAS Standards Coordination Group. The objective is to ensure that the CP2 and EASA regulatory framework supporting SDOs are adequately supported by standardisation activities.

2.2.5 Strategic area of operation 5: Deliver SESAR outreach (cooperation, synergies and cross-cutting themes and activities)

For the years 2026-2027, the activities under this strategic area of operation will support the main operational objective to promote and develop synergies in high priority areas linked to the mission of the JU and to ensure harmonised ATM framework through active engagement with international partners.

2.2.5.1 Synergies

In accordance with its legal basis, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to pursue synergies that maximise the impact of its activities. These synergies aim to ensure that its research and innovation activities are embedded within a broader European, national and regional agenda, leveraging investments, avoiding duplication, and ensuring coherence between research, innovation, and deployment.

At EU level, SESAR 3 JU will maintain its cooperation with the **European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA)**, notably in relation to the implementation of DSDs funded under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). These projects form an integral part of the DES programme and are essential to facilitating the deployment of SESAR Solutions, thereby bridging the gap between research, innovation, and market uptake (as detailed in section 2.2.4.1).

SESAR 3 JU will put particular emphasis on strengthening links with relevant programmes and initiatives under **Horizon Europe**, with a strong focus on **Cluster 5 “Climate, Energy and Mobility”**. In this regard, the SESAR 3 JU will continue its participation in the Commission-led Clean Planet Inter-Partnerships Assembly, which provides a forum bringing together partnerships across sectors. The JU will also actively monitor and identify Horizon Europe calls and projects under the Work Programme 2026–2027 that are relevant to ATM, in particular, with a view to building synergies and facilitating knowledge exchange.

Regarding the other JUs, close cooperation with the **Clean Aviation JU** will also remain a priority, given the complementary roles of both partnerships in advancing sustainable aviation, as presented in the Aviation Research and Innovation Strategy (ARIS).¹⁵ jointly developed in 2025. The SESAR 3 JU will also continue to collaborate with the **EU-Rail JU** through the joint project Travel Wise, which provides opportunity to strengthen collaboration on intermodal transport solutions. In parallel, the SESAR 3 JU will explore synergies with other partnerships under Horizon Europe where cross-sectoral cooperation can create added value for ATM research and deployment.

At national and regional level, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to seek synergies with major sectoral policies, programmes and activities, with the aim of leveraging local investments while aligning them with the objectives and priorities included in the ATM Master Plan. Engagement with Member States will be supported through the **States’ Representatives Group (SRG)**, building on the work achieved over the past years, serving as a channel to explore opportunities for coordination with national and regional initiatives.

During 2026-2027, the Working Groups established with the **Campania Region** and the **Galicia Region** as a result of the MoCs signed in 2025 will support the joint assessment of respective R&I regional strategies and plans in light of the ATM Master Plan, ensuring that calls and investments are

¹⁵ Clean Aviation JU, SESAR 3 JU: *Aviation Research & Innovation Strategy, A pathway to competitive and sustainable aviation supporting Europe’s sovereignty*, 2025.

complementary and mutually reinforcing. In parallel, the SESAR 3 JU foresees continuing its discussions with other EU regions.

2.2.5.2 Stakeholder engagement

2.2.5.2.1 Institutional stakeholders

The SESAR 3 JU will maintain close relations with its key institutional stakeholders to ensure that its activities are aligned with and take into account developments in the EU's policy on ATM. It will also establish appropriate cooperation and coordination with the following organisations, including through formal cooperative arrangements when appropriate.

European Space Agency (ESA). The SESAR 3 JU will place particular emphasis on strengthening cooperation with the European Space Agency (ESA), notably in the context of Europe's sovereign satellite constellation IRIS². Harnessing ESA's expertise in satellite navigation, connectivity and earth observation, combined with the opportunities offered by IRIS², will be key to enabling the next generation of digital and resilient air traffic services. By integrating space-based capabilities with aviation innovation, SESAR will reinforce Europe's global leadership and accelerate the transition towards a safe, sustainable and connected future for air transport. The SESAR 3 JU will establish a MoC with ESA to frame this strengthened collaboration.

EUROCONTROL (as Network Manager). Coordination with EUROCONTROL in its function as Network Manager is crucial to ensure alignment and complementarity in the implementation of the European ATM Master Plan. In 2026–2027, the SESAR 3 JU will continue its active participation in the NM Board, NDTECH and other relevant groups (covering both civil and military aspects). This collaboration will be central to synchronising research, innovation, standardisation and deployment with the operational priorities of the Network Manager, ensuring that SESAR Solutions are effectively translated into tangible improvements in network performance.

In addition, collaboration with the **European Defence Agency (EDA)** and the **EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)** will continue, framed by the existing MoCs. With the EDA, the SESAR 3 JU will secure support and buy-in from the military community (in their roles as ANSPs, airport operators, airspace users and regulators) in areas of common interest such as space-based systems, the integration of unmanned aerial system (UAS), or cybersecurity. With the EUSPA, cooperation will focus on aligning R&I activities where satellite technologies and GNSS solutions are involved.

2.2.5.2.2 Industry stakeholders

The SESAR 3 JU will foster strong ties with key European stakeholder groups, including, in particular, the following:

Civil Air navigation service providers (ANSPs). The SESAR 3 JU will work closely with the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO) to ensure the broadest possible awareness of SESAR 3 JU activities and to secure engagement and buy-in from ANSPs, including those outside the membership of the SESAR 3 JU. In particular the SESAR 3 JU will participate in CANSO's Complete Air Traffic System (CATS) initiative which aims to design and deliver the next generation air transport system on the basis of an agreed roadmap developed through a highly collaborative process involving a wide range of ATM stakeholders globally.

Professional Staff Organisations (PSOs). The SESAR 3 JU will implement arrangements to secure the support of different professional staff organisations to provide operational and technical knowledge of direct relevance to the successful delivery of SESAR results and Solutions. This will also serve to enhance the buy-in of end users in relation to ATM modernisation and SESAR Solutions. As the current

arrangements which secure the support of the PSOs will come to an end in 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will assess during this period which future arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure the continuation of this activity.

Civil Airspace users (AUs). The SESAR 3 JU will continue its close collaboration with airspace user organisations to secure awareness of and commitment to its work and activities, including implementing arrangements to leverage, where appropriate, their technical expertise and advice for project-related activities. As the current arrangements which cover the activity of the AUs will come to an end in 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will assess during this period which future arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure the continuation of this activity.

European airports. The SESAR 3 JU will work closely with European airports and the Airports Council International on airport-related activities in its work programme to secure airports' active engagement and to raise awareness of SESAR among airport partners, including through events.

New entrants. The SESAR 3 JU will approach new innovative airspace users and organisations in the field of unmanned traffic management / U-space, Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) and high-altitude operation (HAO) based on relevant EU strategies and on a case-by-case basis to find the most efficient mechanism of cooperation for the benefit of SESAR 3 JU tasks and activities. In particular, the SESAR 3 JU will support the European Network of U-space Stakeholders, set up by the European Commission to promote stakeholder engagement in Innovative Air Mobility (IAM) deployment.

Research Associations. The SESAR 3 JU will continue to monitor the need and extend its engagement with key research groupings, including the Advisory Council for Aviation Research and Innovation (ACARE), the European Aeronautics Science Network (EASN) and the Association of Scientific Development of ATM in Europe (ASDA), through activities and/or events of shared interest, to ensure ATM obtains appropriate visibility, and adequate information flow to/from their members.

Alliance for Zero-Emission Aviation (AZEА). The SESAR 3 JU will continue to participate in the Alliance as a member and contribute in particular to the development of the AZEA roadmap and the activities of the Working Group dealing with the integration of electric and hydrogen-powered aircraft into the European network.

2.2.5.3 Cooperation with non-EU countries and international organisations

Pursuant to its strategy for cooperation with third countries and international organisations, the SESAR 3 JU will continue during 2026–2027 to engage actively with key international partners in support of global interoperability and harmonisation. In doing so, it will seek to mitigate any global harmonisation risks associated with the implementation of the European ATM Master Plan, in particular its SDOs and to the elements in scope for CP2 through active outreach and engagement in relevant international fora, including ICAO expert groups and bilateral cooperative arrangements. It will do so, notably as part of Team Europe, in close coordination with the European Commission to ensure consistency and alignment with the EU's broader aviation strategy, in particular its external affairs dimension.

At the global level, in relation to ICAO, the SESAR 3 JU will maintain active participation and collaboration under the leadership of the European Commission. This will include participation in the preparation of Europe's contributions to high-level ICAO events, such as the high-level safety conference foreseen for 2027. The SESAR 3 JU will maintain its participation in the ICAO GANP Study Group, in light of the expected timeline for the update of the the ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP), and the ICAO Advanced Air Mobility Study Group. Ensuring continuing alignment between

the ICAO GANP, the European ATM Master Plan and the DES programme is essential to de-risk development towards deployment.

The SESAR 3 JU will continue using the EU-US MoC as the umbrella agreement to engage with the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on ATM modernisation, civil aviation research and development, and global interoperability. This cooperation will focus on four work areas: integration of new entrants (higher airspace operations, urban air mobility and small UAS), evolution of performance-based technologies (integrated CNS, TBO and standards), advancing innovation into ATM (cybersecurity, human factors, and exploratory research), and coordination in relation to ICAO.

The existing cooperative arrangements with other international partners covering the ATM domain, whether of the SESAR 3 JU or at the level of the European Commission or the EU, will be maintained and, where appropriate, further enhanced during 2026–2027 as SESAR Solutions evolve and are deployed. This includes arrangements with Japan and Singapore. The SESAR 3 JU will also work closely with the European Commission and other SESAR 3 JU members to identify and leverage opportunities to extend and deepen international collaboration. Priorities will be set in line with the EU's external aviation policy, and will include the EU's neighbourhood countries as well as those third countries with whom the EU has, or is seeking to negotiate, a comprehensive air transport agreement. The SESAR 3 JU will also participate in activities under the EU's technical cooperation projects with Latin America, North Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia, where relevant areas of work are included in their work programmes.

In addition, to ensure proper representation of the global ATM ecosystem, in 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will conduct a membership expansion by welcoming new associated partners from third countries associated to Horizon Europe.

Due to the EU sanctions imposed on Russia and Belarus in response to the war of aggression against Ukraine, 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.

2.3 Research and innovation priorities, challenges and expected impacts

The challenges facing the aviation sector are both longstanding and emerging. Most critically, the sector must significantly reduce its CO₂ emissions while managing an ever-growing volume of air traffic, which will continue to strain the capacity of the ATM system. Over the coming decade, the usage of the airspace will undergo significant changes, making it more complex to manage with the introduction of new types of air vehicles, such as drones, air taxis, and high-altitude aircraft. By 2035, zero-emission aircraft (e.g. hydrogen and electric) that may operate differently from today's traditional aircraft may begin entering service. These transformations must be addressed in the context of increasingly severe weather caused by climate change and a shifting security and defence landscape in Europe, which not only poses additional security challenges but also reduced the available airspace by around 20%. In light of these challenges, the ATM system will need to become more scalable, resilient, and efficient, leveraging digitalization and automation to enable optimal flight trajectories across the network, anywhere and anytime.

Against this backdrop, the European ATM Master Plan 2025 sets the vision and priorities to make Europe the most efficient and environmentally friendly sky to fly in the world by 2045. It also outlines the expected benefits (capacity, fuel, CO₂, punctuality, cost-efficiency) as well as what that means for Europe's economy and citizens. This vision is underpinned by the Digital European Sky, which leverages advanced digitalization, automation, and data-driven operations to optimize ATM while

ensuring sustainability, safety, and security. The transition from today's ATM to tomorrow's Digital European Sky is divided into 4 overlapping phases (A to D) of development and deployment of essential operational changes covering ATM functionalities. The development of the Solutions supporting Phase C started under SESAR 2020 programme. The calls launched under the DES programme continued the development of these Solutions, and began to address the ones supporting Phase D Development Priorities. The deployment of this final phase of the ATM Master Plan should be completed by 2045.

The ATM Master Plan identifies 12 strategic Development Priorities (DPs) which cover the prioritised actions needed to develop future ATM functionalities and roll out phase D. They are presented in the Figure 6 below.

DP	Strategic development priorities	
IR-1	Transformation to trajectory-based operations	Industrial research
IR-2	Transition towards high performance of air-ground connectivity (multilink)	
IR-3	Future en-route and TMA ground platforms	
IR-4	Future airport platform	
IR-5	Autonomy and digital assistants for the flight deck	
IR-6	U3 U-space advanced services, IAM and vertiports	
AR-1	Research to help shape the future regulatory framework for a Digital European Sky	Exploratory research
AR-2	Definition of U4 U-space full services	
AR-3	Integration of the next generation aircraft for zero-/low-emission aviation	
FR-1	ATM impact on climate change	
FR-2	Digital flight rules	
FR-3	Investigate quantum sensing and computing applied to ATM	

Figure 6: European ATM Master Plan's Strategic Development Priorities

The IR2 call launched in 2025 aimed at significantly advancing the Development Priorities in relation to Phase D. In 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will run a gap assessment of Phase D taking into account the outcome of IR1 and progress of IR2. The two calls for proposals targeting exploratory research and industrial research that the SESAR 3 JU plans to launch in 2027 will reflect the result of this gap assessment. Therefore, this section of the BAWP 2026-2027 dedicated to R&I priorities, challenges and expected impacts will be amended at the end of 2026.

2.4 Calls for proposals

The following activities are scheduled to take place in 2026 and 2027 in relation to the calls for proposals as described in Chapter II, section 2.2:

- For exploratory research (SAO2):
 - Implement and close the HORIZON-SESAR-2022-DES-ER-01 and HORIZON-SESAR-2023-DES-ER-02 calls;
 - Implement the HORIZON-SESAR-2025-DES-ER-03 call;
 - Prepare and launch the HORIZON-JU-SESAR-2027-DES-ER-04 call.
- For industrial research and validation (SAO3):
 - Implement and close the HORIZON-SESAR-2022-DES-IR-01 and HORIZON-ER-JU-2023-FA1-SESAR calls;
 - Implement the HORIZON-SESAR-2025-DES-IR-02 call;
 - Prepare and launch the HORIZON-JU-SESAR-2027-DES-IR-03 call.
- For the Digital Sky Demonstrators (SAO4) - contractually managed by CINEA:
 - Finalise the DSD1a CEF-T-2021-SIMOBGEN;
 - Implement and finalise the DSD1b CEF-T-2022-SIMOBGEN and DSD2 CEF-T-2023-SIMOBGEN;
 - Implement the DSD3 CEF-T-2024-SIMOBGEN;
 - Contribute to a potential DSD4 CEF-T-2026-SIMOBGEN.

The topics and full descriptions of the calls HORIZON-JU-SESAR-2027-DES-ER-04 and HORIZON-JU-SESAR-2027-DES-IR-03 will be made available in Q4 2026 and included in a dedicated Annex to this BAWP.¹⁶

2.5 Calls for tender and other actions

Annex II provides an overview of the planned calls for tender and other actions and the estimated budget.

3 Support to operations

3.1 Communication, dissemination and exploitation

3.1.1 Communication

Communication plays an integral role in building trust, securing buy-in and maintaining momentum for the SESAR 3 JU's R&I activities. It is also key for accelerating innovation and the implementation of SESAR Solutions. The following table provides an overview of the SESAR 3 JU communications objectives and their corresponding actions, audiences and key messages.

For full details of the planned approach, activities and channels, see the SESAR 3 JU communications strategy for 2022–2027.¹⁷

¹⁶ This process will require an amendment of the BAWP 2026–2027 at the end of 2026. A similar approach was adopted for the ER3 and IR2 call texts in the BAWP 2024–2025.

¹⁷ SESAR 3 JU [Communications Strategy 2022–2027](#)

In 2026 and 2027, the focus of the SESAR 3 JU's communication activities will be:

- promoting the added value of the partnership and the programme;
- promoting SESAR R&I activities in relation to key policy areas;
- showcasing results and Solutions delivered by R&I projects;
- supporting members and projects regarding their obligations and commitments to communicate about projects within the framework of the partnership and programme.

The following table (Table 2) provides an overview of the major events and conferences in 2026 and 2027 in which the SESAR 3 JU expects to invest significant resources. However, it should be noted that various other conferences and events organised by the EU and by European and international stakeholders might require the SESAR 3 JU's participation through speakers, workshops or exhibition stands.

Table 2: Key events and conferences for SESAR 3 JU in 2026 and 2027

Event name	Date	Location	Organiser	Comment
Transport Research Arena (TRA)	18-21 May 2026	Budapest (HU)	European Commission	The SESAR 3 JU will be participating in the event with a joint exhibition stand together with Europe's Rail JU, Clean Hydrogen JU and Clean Aviation JU. The SESAR 3 JU will also be organising several activities on-site during the event to promote SESAR research and innovation efforts.
SESAR 3 JU Internal Gathering 2026	25 May 2026	Lisbon (PT)	SESAR 3 JU	On the eve of Airspace World 2026, the SESAR 3 JU will organise its annual internal gathering for representatives from its core membership and key stakeholders to exchange on the programme and other developments in the sector.
Airspace World 2026	26-28 May 2026	Lisbon (PT)	CANSO	The SESAR 3 JU will join forces with the Europe for Aviation partners to showcase how collaboration is transforming Europe's skies into a seamless, sustainable, and future-ready aviation ecosystem. SESAR Walking Tours will be organised

				to promote the ongoing R&D and Deployment projects.
SESAR 3 JU Annual Conference 2026	12 October 2026	Brussels (BE)	SESAR 3 JU	The conference will gather policy makers, industry leaders, and stakeholders from across the aviation sector to take stock on current and future ATM research priorities. Attendees will also have the chance to explore an on-site Digital Sky Marketplace Exhibition, featuring a sample of SESAR JU's innovative projects and cutting-edge technologies that are reshaping ATM.
EU Drone Summit 2026	November or December 2026	Brussels (BE) TBD	DG MOVE	The SESAR JU will join forces with DG MOVE to showcase the latest SESAR innovations in urban air mobility and its portfolio of U-space projects.
SESAR Innovation Days 2026	7-11 December 2026	Cork (IE), under the patronage of the Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU	SESAR 3 JU	Now in its 16 th edition, the SESAR Innovation Days have become a landmark event in the European aviation research calendar, bringing together researchers, industry professionals, and academics to showcase cutting-edge ATM innovation. The event will be organised in collaboration with the EU Irish Presidency.
Airspace World 2027	25 – 27 May 2027	Lisbon (PT)	CANSO	SESAR 3 JU will take part in this annual event to showcase the latest achievements and results from the programme. On the eve of the event, an internal gathering will be organised to bring the SESAR JU community together and foster exchanges ahead of the conference.
SESAR 3 JU Annual Conference 2027	Q4 2027	Brussels (BE)	SESAR 3 JU	Annual conference and exhibition to showcase the

				latest SESAR JU activities and project portfolio.
SESAR Innovation Days 2027	TBD	TBD	SESAR 3 JU	The 17 th edition of Europe's leading ATM research conference.

Furthermore, the following table (Table 3) presents the publications, digital communications and communications coordination currently planned for 2026-2027.

Table 3: Main publications and communication activities in 2026 and 2027

Activity	Date
Application of the SESAR 3 JU visual identity (print material: posters, visual graphics, etc.)	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
SESAR innovation pipeline – R&I highlights	Q1 2026 and Q1 2027
Consolidated annual activity reports	Q2 2026 and Q2 2027
SESAR Solutions catalogue – web portal updates and thematic extracts	Q3 2026 and Q3 2027
Various brochures/factsheets on SESAR 3 JU R&I (e.g. performance, environment, Solutions, results)	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Blueprint on the future EU ATM public-private partnership	Q4 2026
Communication on the results of the EU-Rail JU-SESAR 3 JU synergy project	Q4 2027
Communication on the DSD1b results	Q4 2027
Digital communications	
Digital assets (e.g. thematic portals, videos, animations, virtual reality, augmented reality)	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Online communications	
E-news (interviews and project news)	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Contributions to external magazines	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Press relations	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Social media campaigns	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Communications coordination	
Online and face-to-face meetings with the Communications Coordination Group	Q1–Q4 2026–2027
Project guidance, communications plan reviews and monitoring progress	Q1–Q4 2026–2027

3.1.2 Dissemination and exploitation

The SESAR 3 JU will continue to implement actions aimed at raising awareness among beneficiaries about the importance of dissemination of projects' results. The activities are tailored to the specific situations of the projects, depending on the different projects' implementation stages.

Besides continuous monitoring of the dissemination activities related to the projects performed by the members and the partners, during the implementation of these activities (according to the applicable periodicity and certainly at the final reporting stage), the SESAR 3 JU will ensure that the requirements of the grant agreements in this regard are met.

3.2 Procurement and contracts

For 2026–2027, the SESAR 3 JU will assign the necessary funds for procurement. Annex II provides indicative information on the planned procurement and contract activities for 2026-2027 for planning and transparency purposes.

3.3 Other support operations

3.3.1 Legal and procurement support for operations

In the field of legal and procurement support for operations, in 2026 and 2027 the SESAR 3 JU will carry out the following actions.

For legal affairs

- Develop legal analysis on various matters. This analysis aims to:
 - ensure the regularity and legality of all of the SESAR 3 JU's binding agreements, contracts, grants, decisions, processes and measures;
 - monitor the implementation compliance of the agreements concluded with the SESAR 3 JU's founding members (Membership Agreement and Administrative Agreement) as well as with the European Commission (Delegation Agreement(s)) in compliance with the SBA;
 - appropriate support for the activities aimed at defining the future of the SESAR 3 JU and of the programmes it implements.
- Such analysis could take the form of:
 - legal advice, opinions, legal risk assessments and related mitigation actions;
 - the drafting of agreements and legal documents in strict compliance with the SBA and applicable regulations;
 - participation in the SESAR 3 JU's technical and administrative projects;
 - drafting, reviewing or updating SESAR 3 JU's internal rules and procedures.
- Coordinate with the European Commission and relevant SESAR 3 JU stakeholders with regard to legal aspects of:
 - Support the internal governance;
 - Participate in interagency legal and procurement networks (the Inter Agencies' Legal Network and the Network of Agencies' Procurement Officers) as well as in Horizon Europe legal networks (the Legal Mechanism Issue Group and the Common Implementation Centre ad hoc meetings).

For procurement

- Provide legal and procedural support and advice for the effective implementation of the procurement plan for 2026 and 2027 (see Annex II): preparation, launch and administration of procurement procedures and contracts.
- Develop legal and procedural analysis on various matters in the field of procurement in view of the rules and regulatory framework applicable to SESAR 3 JU procurement and contract management. Such analysis could take the form of legal advice, legal risk assessments and related mitigation actions, SESAR 3 JU staff training activities, guidelines or other material on procurement matters as well as drafting, review and/or update of the SESAR 3 JU's internal rules and procedures related to procurement activities.
- Promote automation in the management of procurement and contracts (i.e. e-tendering, Public Procurement Management Tool ("PPMT") and new modules made available to SESAR 3 JU by the European Commission).
- Liaise with other JUs and EU agencies in relation to interinstitutional joint procurement and for the creation of synergies and efficiencies between JUs under the Back Office Arrangement (BOA) for procurement services.

3.3.2 Corporate planning and reporting activities

In the field of corporate planning and reporting, and in continuity with activities carried out in recent years, in 2026 and 2027 the SESAR 3 JU will carry out the following actions.

For corporate planning

- Following consultation with the SRG and the SC as necessary, the SESAR 3 JU will prepare and submit to the GB any necessary amendments of the 2026-2027 BAWP. In particular, an amendment of the BAWP 2026-2027 will be necessary to include the technical specifications for the ER4 and IR3 call for proposals to be launched in Q1 2027.

For corporate reporting

The SESAR 3 JU will develop its *Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2025* and its *Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2026* and submit them to the Budgetary Authority respectively by 30 June 2026 and 30 June 2027.

The SESAR 3 JU will also provide inputs to the Biennial Monitoring Reports for the European Partnerships established under Horizon Europe.

Finally, the SESAR 3 JU will continue delivering the work packages as foreseen in the contribution agreement between the European Commission and the SESAR 3 JU.¹⁸

3.3.3 Data protection

In 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will continue ensuring compliance of its processes and tools for processing operational and administrative data with the applicable rules on Data Protection and align with the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) recommendations. Key activities will include:

- Preparing records for potential new processing operations of personal data and related data protection notices.

¹⁸ Contribution Agreement MOVE/E3/CA/SESAR3JU/662-2021/SI2.883337 - SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking's technical assistance for the DSDs.

- Drafting joint controllership or controller/processor arrangements notably with EUROCONTROL in the context of the Data Protection Administrative Arrangement (DPAA).
- Coordinating the performance of Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIAs) and implement as a priority the Action Plan stemming from the DPIA on Office 365, especially regarding the deployment of new features, including those incorporating artificial intelligence technology.
- Responding to queries from the EDPS and data subjects, and promote a culture of data protection at SESAR 3 JU through training and awareness raising initiatives.
- Representing SESAR 3 JU in the DPOs interagency network and liaising with other JUs' and EUROCONTROL's DPOs to identify synergies and possible Back Office services in data protection matters.

External contractors will support in the implementation of some of the above mentioned activities, specifically those of a technical and specialised nature, such as maintaining the central online data protection register, providing operational or legal support, and conducting DPIAs for the deployment of new ICT technologies

All initiatives will incorporate data protection safeguards in line with Article 35 of the SBA, the EUDPR (Regulation (EU) 2018/1725), and the new Artificial Intelligence Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689) on Data Protection matters.

3.3.4 Information and communications technology management

In 2026-2027, the transformation of the SESAR 3 JU towards a more digital place to work remains a core objective.

To that end, sustained efforts will be made to ensure that the ICT infrastructure and the operating environment are suitable to meet the needs and budget of the SESAR 3 JU, in line with the ICT Strategy and the Information and Cybersecurity Strategy. Implementation and progress will be guided and monitored through an annual action plan, while the configuration is managed through internal governance (the Common Services Change Board).

ICT services and infrastructure will continue to be provided to the SESAR 3 JU by EUROCONTROL. The details of the scope of services, assets and management of change are based on individual service requests, offers and agreements covering the requested scope and within the budget agreed. An architecture model and appropriate security arrangements are maintained to ensure adequate information segregation while ensuring that the SESAR 3 JU benefits from the economy of scale.

In addition to services from EUROCONTROL, the SESAR 3 JU also uses corporate services and common procurement, under an SLA, with the European Commission.

To coordinate and provide a local focal point, the SESAR 3 JU continues to outsource (via a services contract) an ICT coordination service that is responsible for planning and coordinating delivery, upgrade and change projects, as well as being the focal point on ICT matters for staff and other suppliers. The ICT coordination services will continue to support the SESAR 3 JU by:

- providing expert advice and input in the fields of ICT, unified communications and business continuity management;
- providing a stable and continuously accessible teleworking infrastructure;
- ensuring minimal interruptions to service and the continuity of support arrangements acting as an interface with ICT suppliers (EUROCONTROL, European Commission and other third parties).

3.3.4.1 Cybersecurity management

In addition to Information and Communications Technology Management, complementary cybersecurity services will continue to be delivered from CERT-EU (under the SLA), EUROCONTROL, and where necessary SESAR 3 JU direct contracting. This will include the operation of a new Security Operation Centre (SoC), established jointly with EUROCONTROL under the existing BOA.

Activities to ensure ongoing compliance with the cybersecurity regulation¹⁹ will be performed, along with assessments on proposed changes to ICT, and introduction of new ICT capabilities. This may include tasks requested by CERT-EU, along with efforts to enhance the cybersecurity maturity of the SESAR 3 JU in response to the growing number of cyber threats targetting public/governmental and aviation organisations. To identify areas of risk, inputs from CERT-EU and EATM-CERT (EUROCONTROL) reports will be analysed.

The Local Cybersecurity Officer of the SESAR 3 JU will continue to be in charge of the decisions regarding ICT security configuration as Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) for the Executive Director of the SESAR 3 JU.

3.3.5 Support services

Support service activities are related to the following administrative tasks and services:

- facilities management, in particular with regard to EUROCONTROL as the owner of the premises, logistics service providers and suppliers;
- mission coordination;
- insurance management, ensuring necessary coverage and the follow-up of any insurance claim.

In 2026-2027 the SESAR 3 JU support services will continue maintaining the interaction and coordination with the corresponding EUROCONTROL services under the SESAR 3 JU-EUROCONTROL administrative arrangement.

3.4 Human resources

3.4.1 Human resources management

In 2026 following the mid-term review of the MFF and the inclusion of additional contributions from third countries there will be a decrease in staff financed from the EU budget but an increase in staff financed through third-country contributions (UK). Consequently, the authorised staffing levels of the SESAR 3 JU for 2026 will comprise 36 Temporary Agents, one Contract Agent, one Seconded National Expert financed from the EU budget and one Contract Agent financed through third-country contributions.

3.4.1.1 Recruitment and management of human resources

Following the SBA, the body of staff of the SESAR 3 JU consists of temporary agents (TAs) and contract agents (CAs) who are subject to EU's staff regulations.

3.5.1.1.1 Statutory staff recruitment policy

¹⁹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2023/2841 of 13 December 2023 laying down measures for a high common level of cybersecurity at the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union.

The SESAR 3 JU launches recruitment procedures aligned with the European Commission processes, for TAs through the announcement of vacant posts on its website and the website of the European Personnel Selection Office. The SESAR 3 JU could also recruit CAs from the European Personnel Selection Office's reserve lists.

The Executive Director is the appointing authority of the SESAR 3 JU, as delegated by the GB.

3.5.1.1.2 Other personnel working at SESAR 3 JU and managed by the SESAR 3 JU

Seconded national experts

The SESAR 3 JU recruits Seconded National Experts (SNEs) from competent national organisations in the EU Member States, especially where expertise within regulators, public authorities or other public bodies is required. In line with the Commission's staff adjustment measures the number of SNEs positions will be reduced from two in 2025 to one in 2026.

Interim services

The SESAR 3 JU may engage interim staff on short-term contracts through temping agencies in either of the following cases:

- the necessary replacement of TAs or CAs in a situation of their long-term absence, and for the duration of such an absence;
- or
- unforeseen additional tasks implying a level of additional workload that cannot be carried out by the existing TAs and CAs.

For these cases, the SESAR 3 JU uses a framework contract (reference HR/2024/OP/0095) for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2028. The maximum budget available for this procurement is equivalent to three full-time equivalents (FTEs) per year during a 4-year period.

Blue book trainees

The SESAR 3 JU offers traineeships to blue book trainees through the SLA signed with the European Commission. The maximum capacity of the SESAR 3 JU to host blue book trainees, in accordance with the SLA, is four trainees per traineeship period of five months.

Atypical trainees

The SESAR 3 JU may occasionally accept atypical trainees for short-term traineeships, without a financial impact for the SESAR 3 JU.

3.4.1.2 Appraisal of performance and reclassification/promotions and mobility policy

For the reclassification and appraisal of TAs and CAs, the SESAR 3 JU is aligned with the Commission's implementing rules.

For internal and external mobility opportunities for the SESAR 3 JU staff, the SESAR 3 JU makes the vacancy notices accessible internally as well as externally while mobility for SESAR 3 JU staff is possible between the EU agencies.

3.4.1.3 Gender representation and geographical balance

The SESAR 3 JU ensures equal opportunities and geographical balance in its selection and recruitment processes. On 31 December 2025, the JU will have 39 staff members in post including temporary agents, contract agents and a seconded national expert. Women represent 54% of the workforce and

men 46%. Among the three staff occupying senior and middle management positions, gender balance has not yet been achieved. In total, 12 different nationalities are represented among the staff.

3.4.1.4 *Schooling*

The European Schools cover the schooling needs of children of SESAR 3 JU staff, for eligible members of staff.

3.4.2 Staff establishment plan

Table 4: Staff establishment plan for TAs for years 2025-2027

Function group and grade	2025				2026		2027	
	Authorised budget		Actually filled as of 31 December 2025		Authorised budget		Envisaged budget	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts
AD16								
AD15								1
AD14		1		1		1		
AD13		2		1		2		2
AD12		3		4		3		3
AD11		5		1		5		5
AD10		2		3		4		4
AD9		8		7		6		6
AD8		7		6		5		5
AD7		3		5		3		3
AD6						2		2
AD5				3				
Total AD		31		31		31		31
AST11								
AST10						1		1
AST9		1		1				
AST8								
AST7		1				1		1
AST6				1				
AST5		3				2		2
AST4		1		2		1		1
AST3				1				
AST2								
AST1								
Total AST		6		5		5		5
AST/SC6								
AST/SC5								
AST/SC4								
AST/SC3								
AST/SC2								
AST/SC1								
Total AST/SC		6		5		5		5

Function group and grade	2025				2026		2027	
	Authorised budget		Actually filled as of 31 December 2025		Authorised budget		Envisaged budget	
	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts	Permanent posts	Temporary posts
Overall total		37		36 ²⁰		36		36

Table 5: Staff establishment plan for CAs for years 2025-2027

Function group	2025			2026	2027
	FTE corresponding to authorised budget	Executed FTE as of 31 December 2025	Headcount as of 31 December 2025	FTE corresponding to envisaged budget	FTE corresponding to envisaged budget
IV	1	1	1	1	1
III					
II					
I					
Total	1	1	1	1	1

Table 6: Staff establishment plan for Contract Agents financed from external revenues for years 2025-2027

Human Resources financed outside the EU budget	Foreseen in 2025	Recruited as of 31/12/2025	Foreseen in 2026	Foreseen in 2027
Financed from participation of candidate countries and/or third countries	1 FGIII	1 FGIII	1 FGIII	3 (2 FGIV, 1 FGIII)

Table 7: Staff establishment plan for SNEs for years 2025-2027

Seconded National Experts	Authorised 2025	Recruited as of 31/12/2025	2026 estimate	Draft Budget 2027 estimate
Total	2	1	1	1

²⁰ One post reduced during the year following the MFF mid-term review.

3.4.3 Strategy for achieving efficiency gains and synergies

- **Collaboration with the European Commission.** The SESAR 3 JU will leverage synergies from the use of European Commission's ICT systems and services. The ICT systems supplied by the Commission are in particular related to:
 - financial management and accounting systems (attribute-based access control (ABAC / SUMMA);
 - human resources management (SYSPER / job information system modules, DOC Engine, preparation for the new HRT tool);
 - the management of Horizon Europe calls for proposals and grants (e-Grants) ;
 - procurement (e-Procurement);
 - mission management (MIPS);
 - document management, advanced records system (ARES)
- **European Union Agency Network (EUAN):** The SESAR 3 JU is an active member of the EUAN and of its various sub-networks, notably under the Performance Development Network. The SESAR 3 JU Executive Director is representing the Joint Undertakings at the EUAN Steering Board until March 2026.
- **Leverage best practices for corporate productivity through the SESAR 3 JU Common Services Change Board (CSCB).** This internal board, dedicated to maintaining the integrity and coherence of SESAR 3 JU common services²¹, provides a structured and systematic approach for prioritisation and pre-approval of projects with a corporate impact.

Back-Office Arrangements (BOA)

As per Article 13 of the SBA, the JUs implement BOAs. Although exempted from this provision, as per article 158 of the SBA that makes EUROCONTROL its main provider of BOA services, the SESAR 3 JU collaborates as much as its particular setting allows with other JUs.

- **Collaboration with other JUs.** the SESAR 3 JU capitalises on shared back office services²² and, in particular, is actively involved in the BOAs in the field of human resources, accounting (by providing one of the three accounting officers for all the JUs), procurement support services and ICT. The SESAR 3 JU will continue seeking efficiency gains through initiatives such as sharing services with other JUs, agencies and/or the Commission, including for instance interagency and inter-institutional procurements, common services defined in the BOAs with other JUs, EU Agencies Network shared services catalogue:
 - **Human resources:** the BOA HR implements actions in three main areas of HR Support: recruitment, HR legal framework and HR digitalisation. Its objective is to maximise synergies among the JUs, harmonise procedures by valorising best practices, ensure coherent HR support services, achieve efficiencies and economies of scale, increase the

²¹ Quality Management System, ICT scope and services, Business Applications, Business Continuity Management, Information and Document Management; Information Security compliance, Data Protection compliance

²² As per the Administrative Agreement between SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking and EUROCONTROL under Art. 157 and 158 of the SBA (ref. S3JU/LC/005-CTR) as well as the service level agreements for the provision of back office services placed between SESAR 3 JU and the other joint undertakings under Art. 13 of the SBA.

negotiation power of JU's operating under the SBA towards contractors and service providers.

- **Accounting:** the SESAR 3 JU implements its financial rules²³ which define, inter alia, powers and responsibility of the 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 BOAs 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.
- **Procurement:** The BOA in procurement will continue to create synergies among its members throughout 2026-2027, as outlined in the Joint Public Procurement Planning ('JPPP') endorsed by the Steering Committee. Among the inter-institutional tender procedures planned for this period, the renewal of a framework service contract for managed IT services remains a top strategic priority. Experience has shown that by pooling a negotiation power, the BOA joint administrative calls for tenders attracts a higher number of economic operators, leading to more competitive bids and stronger market responses. In 2026 the BOA will further prioritize the digitalization of contract management processes with a strong focus on streamlining its operating framework.
- **ICT:** Due to its unique setup and location of its ICT service delivery, the SESAR 3 JU is a signatory (opt-in party) of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) establishing the BOA for ICT. It demonstrates SESAR 3 JU's commitment to fostering synergies with other Joint Undertakings.²⁴.
- **Collaboration with EUROCONTROL.** In application of Articles 157(g) and 158 of the SBA, the SESAR 3 JU established an agreement with EUROCONTROL in 2022, which governs the provision of infrastructure and logistics support, ICT and other services to the SESAR 3 JU. On this basis, the SESAR 3 JU will seek maximum synergies with EUROCONTROL regarding the services that the latter can make available in this framework.

4 Governance

4.1 Bodies of the SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking

The governance bodies of the SESAR 3 JU are outlined in section 3.1 of the MAWP. With reference to the SBA of the SESAR 3 JU, the governance is depicted in Figure 7.

²³ SESAR 3 JU Governing Board Decision GB(D)01-2021, article 25.

²⁴ Detailed information on the management of ICT and cybersecurity at SESAR 3 JU can be found in section 3.3.4.

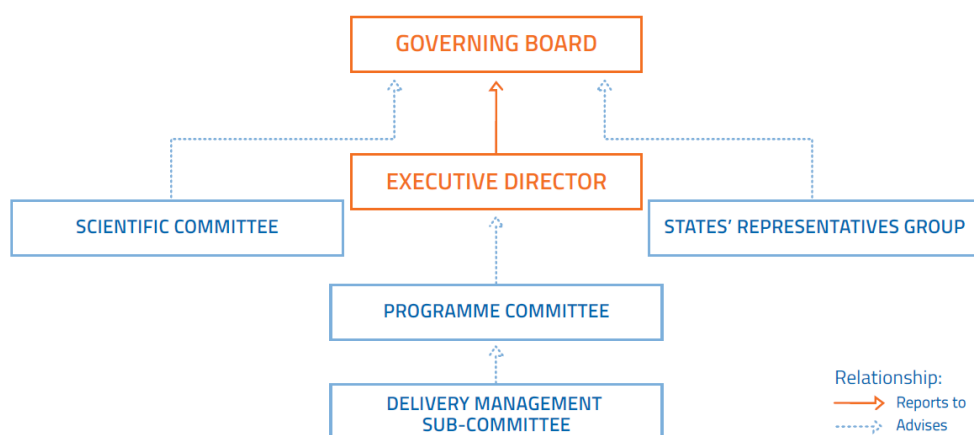


Figure 7: SESAR 3 JU governance

4.1.1 Governing Board

The composition²⁵, functioning and tasks of the SESAR 3 JU GB are outlined in the SBA in the Articles 15 to 17.

The GB will hold at least two ordinary meetings per year as per article 16 of the SBA. The Table below provides a provisional timetable for key GB activities and decisions in 2026 and 2027.

Table 8: Provisional timetable for key Governing Board activities and decisions in 2026 and 2027

Q2 2026	Adopt the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2025 Deliver an opinion on the Final Accounts 2025 Assess, approve or reject the applications for new associated members
Q4 2026	Take note of the strategic development and deployment monitoring reports covering 2026 Adopt an amendment to the BAWP 2026–2027 with regard to the budget 2027 and the call texts for ER4 and IR3 Adopt the Internal Audit Capability's work plan for 2027
Q2 2027	Adopt the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2026 Deliver an opinion on the Final Accounts 2026
Q4 2027	Take note of the strategic development and deployment monitoring reports covering 2027 Adopt the Internal Audit Capability's work plan for 2028

4.1.2 Executive Director

The functions of the Executive Director (ED) derive from the SBA Articles 19 and 152.

4.1.3 States' Representatives Group

The role of the States' Representatives Group (SRG) is described in Articles 20 and 153 of the SBA.

²⁵ The full list of SESAR 3 JU members and their constituent entities is published on the [SESAR 3 JU website](#).

The SRG will hold two meetings per year and will review information and provide opinions notably on the programming documents, on the CAAR, and on the programme progress and achievement of its targets and expected impacts as part of Horizon Europe. On a yearly basis, it will provide to the GB a report on national and regional research and innovation activities related to the deployment and uptake of relevant technologies and innovative solutions. The report will be useful to identify synergies.

As the mandate of the current Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRG will expire in Q1 2026, the appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure appointment of new office holders in due time.

4.1.4 Scientific Committee

The role of the Scientific Committee (SC) is described in Articles 21 and 154 of the SBA.

The SC will hold at least two meetings each year and will advise on the scientific priorities to be addressed in the work programmes and, in this context, will be consulted on the content of all research calls. It will also provide information to the GB on issues and topics of interest determined by the SC or reply to requests from the GB.

The mandate of the current SC expiring in Q3 2026, the appropriate administrative measures will be implemented by the SESAR 3 JU to ensure continuity of this body.²⁶.

4.2 Advisory body to the Executive Director

4.2.1 SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking Programme Committee

The role of the SESAR 3 JU Programme Committee (PC) is described in Section 3.1.2.1 of the MAWP.

A total of four meetings per year will be initially scheduled to support the SESAR 3 JU in the management of the programme. Ad hoc meetings could be scheduled should it be required by the progress of the programme.

In a consultative role to support the SESAR 3 JU ED, the main expected coordination activities of the PC for 2026-2027 will consist of:

- Contributing to the consultation for the CP2 definition;
- approving the release 16 & 17 plans and close – out reports;
- monitoring both operational and financial progress of the release 16 and 17, as well as issues and risks;
- identifying the impact and proposing means of mitigation for risks and issues whether programmatic, resource related, technical or operational to ensure alignment with the European ATM Master Plan;
- contributing to the consultation phases leading to the definition of the technical specifications for the ER 4 and IR 3 calls;
- provide strategic input to the annual strategic development and deployment monitoring reports;

²⁶ See GB(D)14-2022 on the appointment of the members of the SC and on an adoption of a reserve list.

- making recommendations to facilitate an accelerated market uptake of SESAR Solutions (demonstrators with early movers, coordination with EASA to ensure that the regulatory framework supports the implementation of the SDOs, support standardisation activities).

5 Strategy and plans for the organisational management and internal control systems

5.1 Financial management

The SESAR 3 JU will continue to ensure the transparent and effective management of financial resources and a high level of budget implementation (in terms of both commitments and payments). It will pay particular attention to increase the execution rate of the budget, in particular for Title 2, while keeping late payments at a low level (<2%).

The SESAR 3 JU will be confronted with a major change in 2026 with the implementation of the new financial and budgetary management corporate tool of the Commission, SUMMA that is going to replace ABAC as of 01/01/2026. The experience gained by the EC services during their first year of use (2025) should help having a smooth transition.

During 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to streamline workflows within the SESAR 3 JU's finance-related IT systems and to maintain a high level of accuracy in budgetary forecasting.

The procedures and tools at the SESAR 3 JU related to services contracted to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Budget such as treasury services will continue to be implemented in accordance with the service agreements.

The SESAR 3 JU is also supporting the Members in collecting their financial contributions (by drafting the annual contribution agreement with the EC and by calculating the individual amount of financial contributions for the other Members) and the in-kind contributions (IKOP and IKAA) for the Members other than the EU.

5.1.1 Financial monitoring and control

In 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will ensure the reliability and completeness of the financial information necessary for the budgetary execution. The SESAR 3 JU's budget implementation financial procedures, circuits and controls will be monitored through diverse axes certifying adequate and efficient documentation with appropriate scrutiny and quality control of the implemented budget.

This will require:

- evaluation of the financial processes and circuits in the finance and budget field, with adaptation to any new financial rules when necessary;
- an analysis of *ex ante* control in terms of risk and efficiency;
- reviews of the accessibility and correctness of reports;
- deployment and documentation through dashboards;
- ensuring the accuracy of SUMMA workflow users and access rights.

5.2 Internal control, risk management and audits

As an integral part of its Quality and Internal Control Policies, the SESAR 3 JU deploys a Quality Management System that aims at ensuring that operational activities are effective and efficient, legal and regulatory requirements are met, financial and other management reporting is reliable, assets and information are safeguarded, fraud and irregularities are prevented, detected, corrected and followed-up, risks are adequately managed.

As part of its operational objective of transforming the organisation towards a greener and more digital place to work, the SESAR 3 JU, supported by a service contract, has started the revision of its Quality Management System in line with the upgrade and transformation of its Information Management System. In the course of 2026, the upgrade will be completed and during 2027 the implementation of both systems will be monitored to identify areas of improvement.

Audit functions remain formally separated from quality and internal control to preserve the independent and objective assessment of financial and non-financial controls by external and internal auditors.

5.2.1 SESAR 3 Joint Undertaking's internal control

In 2026 and 2027, the SESAR 3 JU will continue to operate an effective and compliant internal control and its monitoring, including maintaining a risk register and associated treatment actions in accordance with the applicable policy and will follow up on all audit recommendations to ensure proper closure in the appropriate timescale.

The internal control framework is built upon the European Commission 17 principles and best practices shared across the network of agencies and JUs. The measurements and reporting associated with internal control have been assessed by the European Court of Auditors and found to be satisfactory for purpose, it is on this foundation the SESAR 3 JU continues to maintain, and when necessary improve its internal control implementation.

In continuity with the previous years, the SESAR 3 JU will carry out corporate management team annual reviews to assess and monitor the performance of the SESAR 3 JU by assessing each of the relevant indicators for all internal control principles and related characteristics. The CAARs will report on these indicators.

5.2.2 Ex ante controls

Ex ante controls will remain important tools to help the SESAR 3 JU to prevent errors and to avoid the need for *ex post* corrective actions. In accordance with Article 74 of the EU financial regulation and Article 21 of the SESAR 3 JU's financial rules, *'each operation shall be subject at least to an ex ante control relating to the operational and financial aspects of the operation, on the basis of a multiannual control strategy which takes risk into account'*. The main objective of *ex ante* controls, therefore, is to ensure that the principle of sound financial management is applied. In 2026 and 2027, the following *ex ante* activities will be systematically carried out:

- generating and checking grant agreements;
- initiating and verifying invoices for administrative expenditure;
- assessing periodic reports from grants and verifying and paying cost claims.

Additionally, the SESAR 3 JU will continue performing risk assessment at the project level during the grant agreement preparation phase and before the signature of Horizon Europe grant agreements, with due consideration to risks stemming from SMEs or newcomers.

5.2.3 *Ex post* controls

One of the other major pillars of assurance for the SESAR 3 JU is its *ex post* audit activity. Its main objectives are as follows:

- providing the authorising officer with the necessary elements of assurance on the operational expenditure in a timely manner;
- assessing the regularity and legality of the transactions;
- attaining residual error rates at an acceptable level at the closure of the Horizon Europe programme, once the financial impact of all audits and correction and recovery measures have been taken into account;
- determining the sound financial management of the transactions, with the support of the internal or external technical experts, with the overall objective being to assess the value for money of the SESAR 3 JU's operations;
- identifying systemic errors through the analysis and synthesis of the results obtained and formulating recommendations to address the issues;
- providing the SESAR 3 JU auditees with recommendations to improve the financial management, processes, procedures and practices applied to the activities related to the SESAR 3 JU's contracts, with the main purpose being to ensure that recurring errors are avoided by the SESAR 3 JU beneficiaries.

The Horizon Europe ex-post audit strategy is a risk based one, focusing on the riskier parts of the population. Risk identification is based on robust risk assessments, triggered both by the Common Audit Service (CAS) and by SESAR 3 JU. These risk-based audits allow the detection of errors that cannot be identified by ex ante verifications and contribute substantially to the improved corrective capacity, while ensuring appropriate audit coverage.

In 2026, the audit activity for SESAR 3 JU, will encompass 3 audits in 3 beneficiaries to be performed by the CAS. For these activities, the SESAR 3 JU actively participates in the CAS coordination mechanisms.

For 2027, the audits to be performed will be selected according to the risk profiles of beneficiaries on cost claims submitted in 2026.

Furthermore, the new funding mechanism will require an adapted approach to ex-post financial audits as well as technical reviews. These reviews, performed by external experts, focus on the technical implementation of the action and are conducted ex-post (i.e. after an interim or final payment). They concern the work of a single participant, and include the examination of non-financial supporting documents demonstrating the proper technical implementation of the action. It remains to be seen whether the first reviews will take place still in 2027 or only later.

5.2.4 Corporate risk management

Table 9 presents a summary of the most significant risks²⁷ to be noted for the SESAR 3 JU and its activities in 2026 and 2027 as extracted from the risk register. The risks were defined and maintained through the risk assessment exercise performed by the SESAR 3 JU's management on 29 September 2025.

²⁷ Those with a criticality score higher than 8 (high and moderate level).

Table 9: SESAR 3 JU critical risks and related mitigation actions

Description of risk	Affected objective(s) (²⁸)	Criticality	Summary of risk mitigation
Lack of resources and time to complete development of Phase D by 2030 due to increased ambition in scope for Phase D	Launch the last wave of calls (ER4 and IR3)	12	Perform a gap assessment of the IR2 outcomes against the development priorities for Phase D of the Master Plan
Insufficient level of coordination and harmonisation of SDO deployment	Deliver proposal for regulatory measures to implement the SDOs of the European ATM Master Plan	12	Deliver CP2 proposal to ensure effective coordination and harmonisation of SDO deployment

5.2.5 Strategic risk assessment

In June 2022, the Internal Audit Service (IAS) conducted a strategic risk assessment of the SESAR 3 JU, whereby the auditors assessed risks related to operational, administrative, financial and IT processes. This assessment led to the 2023–2025 strategic internal audit plan.²⁹ which included two main and one reserve audit topics which were audited over the course of 2023-2025 by the IAS. As the current strategic internal audit plan comes to an end in 2025, it can be expected that the IAS will perform the next in-depth risk assessment in 2026.

5.2.6 Anti-fraud strategy

The SESAR 3 JU anti-fraud strategy (2023-2026).³⁰ was adopted in June 2023. This strategy builds on the previous versions while including a strong focus on the DES programme. The current strategy is valid until end 2026 and will be subject to a review in the course of 2026-2027.

5.2.7 Audits

5.2.7.1 Internal Audit Capability

The SESAR 3 JU's Internal Audit Capability will perform audits and/or consulting engagements based on risks identified in 2025 and 2026. It will also coordinate activities with the IAS and the European Court of Auditors (ECA). The 2026 annual audit plan of the Internal Audit Capability will be presented to the GB in Q4 2025, and the 2027 plan in Q4 2026.

5.2.7.2 Internal Audit Service

Internal audits are carried out by the IAS in liaison with the Internal Audit Capability. The IAS has not identified which audits will take place in 2026 and 2027 at the SESAR 3 JU.

5.2.7.3 European Court of Auditors

Every year, the ECA provides the EP and the Council with a statement of assurance of the reliability of the annual accounts of the SESAR 3 JU and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions, based on an audit of the JU accounts. The fieldwork related to the audit of the accounts 2026 is

²⁸ This column identifies which operational objective (as identified in section 2.1) may be affected by the risk, should it occur.

²⁹ Internal Audit Service, strategic internal audit plan for the SESAR 3 JU for the period 2023 – 2025, Ref Ares(2022)6677146-28/09/2022.

³⁰ SESAR 3 JU Governing Board Decision GB(D)09-2023 on the SESAR 3 JU anti-fraud strategy 2023-2026 of 26 June 2023.

expected to start in December 2026 (final report publication in November 2027) and the fieldwork related to the audit of the accounts 2027 is expected to start in December 2027 (final report publication in November 2028).

5.3 Business continuity management

The Business Continuity management plan established in 2024 will be implemented and updated if required. The contact list with personal details to reach the staff and intra-muros contractors in case of emergency will continue to be updated on a quarterly basis. A real-conditions exercise could be organised to test its effectiveness.

Chapter III – Budget ³¹

As per Article 110 of the EU financial regulation.³², ‘a budgetary commitment shall be preceded by a financing decision adopted by the Union institution or by the authority to which powers have been delegated by the Union institution’. This financing decision must set out certain essential elements for actions involving expenditure from the budget for grants, procurement and prizes. The BAWP for 2026-2027 constitutes the financing decision for 2026 upon adoption of the general budget of the European Union. By the end of 2026, the BAWP will be updated in view of providing the financing decision for 2027.

It should be noted that, in accordance with Article 110(5) of the EU financial regulation and the principle of sound financial management, the SESAR 3 JU authorising officer may decide to make non-substantial changes and amend the indicative budget or timing for a given procurement procedure if this allows for improved adherence to the SESAR 3 JU’s objectives. A change of more than 20% in the volume of appropriations, the introduction of a new action or other changes affecting the strategic choices in the work programme are to be considered substantial.

1 Revenue

Table 10: SESAR 3 JU revenues in 2026 and 2027 – commitment and payment appropriations

Statement of revenue					
Title/chapter	Heading	Financial year 2026		Financial year 2027	
		Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations	Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations
EU contribution (excluding European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and third countries’ contribution) ⁽³³⁾	1	84 695 310	101 090 998	88 973 192 ³⁴	101 308 604
<i>of which (fresh C1) administrative (Titles 1 and 2)</i>		3 767 397	3 767 397	16 087 212	3 842 717

³¹ 2026 Budget is subject to the adoption of the EU General Budget for 2026. All figures may be updated during the adoption procedure.

³² Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

³³ This information has to be obtained by the JUs from the parent Directorates-General when they work on the work programme or its update, as JUs do not have an overview of the different fund sources that are included in the EU contribution. Even though the JUs normally have an entry for the ‘overall Union contribution received’ (including EFTA and non-EU countries’ contribution) under the contribution agreements, a breakdown of the EU contribution per fund source would allow the Commission financial services to cross-check it with the data already provided (from hearings, WD III and ABAC).

³⁴ 1 euro difference due to rounding.

<i>of which frontloaded commitments (Titles 1 and 2)</i>	1.1				
<i>of which operational (Title 3 & 4)</i>	1.1	80 927 913	97 323 601	72 885 981	97 465 887
<i>Of which C2 Operational (Title 4)</i>					
<i>of which related to additional entrusted tasks</i>					
EFTA and non-EU countries' contribution	1.1	11 868 744	12 295 032	11 979 970	12 300 692
<i>of which administrative EFTA (Titles 1 and 2)</i>	1.1	97 952	97 952	418 267	99 911
<i>of which administrative third countries excluding EFTA (Titles 1 and 2)</i>	1.1				
<i>of which operational EFTA (Title 4)</i>	1.1	2 104 126	2 530 414	1 895 035	2 534 113
<i>of which operational third countries excluding EFTA (Title 4)</i>	1.1	9 666 666	9 666 666	9 666 668	9 666 668
Financial members other than the EU contribution	2.1; 3.1	7 142 857	7 142 857	7 142 857	7 142 857
<i>of which administrative (Titles 1 and 2)</i>		7 142 857	7 142 857	7 142 857	7 142 857
<i>of which operational (Title 3)</i>					
Financial contributing partners' contribution					
Interest generated					

Other revenue			150 000 ³⁵		
Unused appropriations from previous years	5.1		69 928 350		20 300 739
of which administrative					
of which operational			69 928 350		20 300 739
Total estimated revenue		103 706 911	190 607 237	108 096 020 ³⁴	141 052 892

2 Expenditure

Table 11: Detailed SESAR 3 JU expenditure budget 2026 and 2027 – commitment and payment appropriations

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE					
Title Chapter	Heading	Financial YEAR 2026		Financial YEAR 2027	
		Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations	Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations
1. Staff					
Salaries and allowances	11	6 855 919	6 754 252	6 995 000	6 995 000
<i>of which establishment plan posts</i>		6 274 104	6 274 104	6 400 000	6 400 000
<i>of which external personnel</i>		581 815	480 148	595 000	595 000
Expenditure relating to staff recruitment	12	5 000	5 000	6 000	6 000
Mission expenses	13	277 500	219 225	284 000	284 000
Socio-medical infrastructure	14				

³⁵ This amount relates to the participation of four Joint Undertakings, Clean Aviation JU, SESAR 3 JU, Clean Hydrogen JU and EU Rail JU to the conference Transport Research Arena (TRA) 2026. To gain efficiency and to enhance synergies implemented via the BOA Procurement, as stipulated in the SBA, the JUs have agreed in an SLA to formalise the organisation and participation in the TRA conference held in Dublin, via a joint procurement activity. SESAR 3 JU will take the lead as Contracting Authority implying the signature of the contract with the service provider as well as payment for the activities. As a result, SESAR 3 JU will invoice the three JUs in 2026 for an estimated amount of EUR 150 000.

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE					
Title Chapter	Heading	Financial YEAR 2026		Financial YEAR 2027	
		Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations	Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations
Training	15	40 000	32 600	41 000	41 000
External services	16	158 750	142 875	162 000	162 000
Receptions, events and representation	17				
Social welfare	18				
Other staff-related expenditure	19	50 000	40 000	50 000	50 000
2. Infrastructure and operating					
Rental of buildings and associated costs	20	199 850	193 363	203 000	203 000
ICT and data processing	21	2 126 318	1 362 647	2 170 000	2 170 000
Movable property and associated costs	22	5 000	5 000	6 000	6 000
Current administrative expenditure	23	451 633	386 075	466 000	466 000
Postage/telecommunications	24				
Meeting expenses	25	25 000	17 500	26 000	26 000
Running costs in connection with operational activities	26				
Information and publishing	27	565 000	403 750	577 000	577 000
Studies	28				
Other infrastructure and operating expenditure					
Total administrative (1 + 2)		10 759 970	9 562 287	10 986 000	10 986 000
3. Operational					

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE					
Title Chapter	Heading	Financial YEAR 2026		Financial YEAR 2027	
		Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations	Estimate commitment appropriations	Estimate payment appropriations
SESAR 2020 programme	3				
Digital European sky programme	4	92 698 705	179 449 031	82 379 161	129 967 407
Total operational (3 + 4)		92 698 705	179 449 031	82 379 161	129 967 407
Title 5 - Unused Appropriations not required in current Year	5	248 236	1 595 919	14 730 860	99 485
Estimated total expenditure		103 706 911	190 607 237	108 096 020 ³⁴	141 052 892

3 Details on the budgetary steps

3.1 Initial budget

3.1.1 Revenue

The 2026 and 2027 operational expenditure is exclusively covered by the EU contribution:

In 2026, a request for EUR 92 698 705 in commitment appropriations will be issued. This amount is composed of EUR 80 927 913 and EFTA contribution of EUR 2 104 126, as well as a UK participation to Horizon Europe amounting to EUR 9 666 666. In payment appropriations, a request of EUR 109 520 681 is foreseen, composed of EUR 97 323 601 and EFTA EUR 2 530 414, as well as a UK participation EUR 9 666 666. EUR 69 928 350 of unused EU contribution from previous years will be reactivated to cater for the payment needs of 2026.

In 2027, the remaining operational commitment appropriations for the rest of the Horizon Europe programme that will be requested are estimated at EUR 72 885 981 and EFTA contribution at EUR 1 895 035³⁶, as well as a UK participation to Horizon Europe amounting to EUR 9 666 668. In payment appropriations, estimations are EUR 97 465 887 and the EFTA contribution of EUR 2 534 113³⁶, as well as a UK participation EUR 9 666 668. In payment appropriations, EUR 20 300 739 will be reactivated from unused EU operational contributions from previous years.

The reallocation of credits following the mid-term revision of Horizon Europe represents a reduction of the EU contribution attributed to the SESAR 3 JU of EUR 14 million over the 2025-2027 budgets, with a cut in commitment appropriations of EUR 4 million in 2026 and of EUR 7 million in 2027. Moreover, the contribution from the EU budget to the AI Giga Factories initiative will result in a cut

³⁶ For 2027, the EFTA rate used is 2.60%.

amounting to EUR 5 978 378 (EUR 2 842 414 in 2026 and EUR 3 135 964 in 2027), which has also been taken into account.

The 2026 administrative expenditure is covered with financial contribution paid by the EU as described in the Legislative Financial Statement (LFS) (EUR 3 767 397, and EUR 97 952 EFTA) and, by application of the Membership Agreements, by EUROCONTROL (EUR 3 571 429) and the other Members (EUR 3 571 429).

In 2027, the EU is expected to transfer the remaining commitment appropriations for the rest of the current Horizon Europe programme (for the years after 2027), as foreseen by the LFS, for an amount of EUR 16 505 479 including EUR 418 267 EFTA. In payment appropriations, the estimated amount of EUR 3 942 628 including EUR 99 911 EFTA is scheduled for 2027, as per the LFS.

The 2027 administrative expenditure will also be financed by EUROCONTROL and the other Members by application of the Membership Agreement.

3.1.2 Expenditure

Administrative budget:

Title 1:

In 2026, Budget lines under chapter 11 "Salaries and allowances" increase by less than 1% compared to 2025 Budget in force considering the estimated indexation, the step changes and reclassifications, according to the Budget Circular issued by the European Commission central services.

The other lines under Title I increase by less than 1% in average, with an 8% increase in HR support fees (HR Transformation project: new SYSPER tool to be deployed progressively in the next three years).

Title 2 :

Title 2 expenditure decreases compared to 2025 mainly due to the fact that 2025 administrative expenditure had one off costs. In particular, EUR 200 000 was required as on-boarding fee to SUMMA accounting system, and a significant investment was budgeted to migrate SharePoint to a new SharePoint online technology. This contributed to increase the 2025 budget needs significantly.

As of 2026, the 'current administrative expenditure' remains quite stable with the application of a conservative 2% inflation rate in most cases.

The same 2% inflation rate was applied to the 2027 administrative expenditure.

Operational budget:

Title 3: Horizon 2020 programme

The Horizon 2020 programme was finalised in 2024, with a full administrative closure foreseen once potential ex-post audits corrections are implemented. It is estimated that this will not occur before 2027 due to on-going Horizon 2020 audits for other EU granting authorities, which may have an impact on SESAR projects in case of extrapolation of audit findings.

Title 4 : Horizon Europe programme

In 2026, in commitment appropriations, EUR 92 698 705 are foreseen:

- to initiate the second instalment, amounting to EUR 87 311 973, of the second Industrial Research call (IR2), for a total call amount of EUR 230 000 000, as approved by the Governing Board on 12 December 2024.

In 2025, unused credits (EUR 58 200 823) were reactivated to complement a first instalment which is currently estimated at EUR 123 756 721³⁷ and will be committed (level 1) by the end of 2025. With the amount requested in the Draft Budget 2026, an estimated amount of EUR 211 million will be reached. This will be sufficient to sign the grant agreements by application of Art. 29 of the SBA. The missing EUR 19 million to complement both instalments will be requested in 2027.

- for other support actions for an amount of EUR 5 386 732.

In 2026, in payment appropriations, EUR 179 449 031 (out of which EUR 69 928 350 will be financed by unused appropriations from previous years) are planned for:

- Pre-financing payments of IR2: EUR 138 000 000
- Pre-financing payments of ER3: EUR 9 600 000
- Interim/ Final payments of ER1: EUR 4 414 667
- Interim/ Final payments of ER2: EUR 8 436 385
- Final payments of IR1: EUR 13 685 097
- Other support and communication actions: EUR 5 312 882

In 2027, in commitment appropriations EUR 82 379 161 are foreseen for:

- Initiation of the last instalment amounting to EUR 18 931 306 of the second Industrial Research call (IR2)
- An amount EUR 46 688 704 (allocation still to be determined) to initiate projects under the ER4 and IR3 calls
- Other support actions for an amount of EUR 16 759 151 (last instalment for Programme support amounts to EUR 10 180 651)

In 2027, in payment appropriations, EUR 129 967 407 (out of which EUR 20 300 739 will be financed by unused appropriations from previous years) are planned for:

- Pre-financing payments of ER4 and IR3: EUR 32 824 054 (allocation still to be determined)
- Final payments of IR1: EUR 4 391 764
- Interim payments of IR2: EUR 69 000 000

³⁷ Amount subject to change based on potential additional savings in operational expenditure.

- Interim/final payments ER1, ER2 and ER3: EUR 15 601 927
- Synergy Call with EU Rail final payment : EUR 1 500 000
- Other support actions: EUR 6 649 662

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
ANSP	air navigation service provider
ATM	air traffic management
AU	airspace user
BAWP	biannual work programme
BOA	back-office arrangement
CA	contract agent
CAAR	consolidated annual activity report
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
CINEA	European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
DES	Digital European Sky Programme
DSD	Digital Sky Demonstrator
EASA	European Union Aviation Safety Agency
ECA	European Court of Auditors
EDA	European Defence Agency
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMAS	Eco-management and audit scheme
ER	exploratory research
ESA	European Space Agency
EUROCAE	European Organisation for Civil Aviation Equipment
EUROCONTROL	European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation
FTE	full-time equivalent (staff)
GB	SESAR 3 JU Governing Board
IAM	Innovative Air Mobility
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICT	information and communications technology

IKOP	in-kind contributions to operational activities
IKA	In-kind contributions to additional activities
IR	industrial research and validation
IT	information technology
JU	Joint Undertaking
KPI	key performance indicator
LFS	Legislative Financial Statement
MAWP	multiannual work programme
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MoC	memorandum of cooperation
MoU	memorandum of understanding
PPP	public-private partnership
PSO	professional staff organisations
R&I	research and innovation
SAO	Strategic Area of Operations
SBA	Single Basic Act
SC	Scientific Committee, established in accordance with the Single Basic Act (see below)
SDM	SESAR Deployment Manager
SDO	strategic deployment objective
SES	Single European Sky
SESAR	Single European Sky ATM Research
SESAR 2020	SESAR 2020 innovation R & I programme, also referred to as the 'SESAR 2020 Programme' or 'SESAR 2020 R & I Programme'. It is the coordinated set of activities described in this document, being undertaken by the SESAR JU Members and managed by the SESAR JU
SESAR JU	Single European Sky ATM Research Joint Undertaking, established as a joint undertaking within the meaning of Article 187 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, established under the SESAR JU basic act
SESAR JU basic act	Council Regulation (EC) No 219/2007 of 27 February 2007 (OJ L 64, 2.3.2007, p. 1) on the establishment of a joint undertaking to develop the new generation European air traffic management system (SESAR), as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 1361/2008 of 16 December 2008 (OJ L 352, 31.12.2008, p. 12)

	and by Council Regulation (EU) No 721/2014 of 16 June 2014 (OJ L 192, 1.7.2014, p. 1)
SESAR 3 JU	Single European Sky ATM Research 3 Joint Undertaking
Single Basic Act	Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe and repealing Regulations (EC) No 219/2007, (EU) No 557/2014, (EU) No 558/2014, (EU) No 559/2014, (EU) No 560/2014, (EU) No 561/2014 and (EU) No 642/2014, OJ L 427, 30.11.2021, p. 17–119; as amended by Council Regulation (EU) 2023/1782 of 25 July 2023 amending Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe, as regards the Chips Joint Undertaking, OJ L 229, 18.9.2023, p. 55–62.
SLA	service-level agreement
SNE	Seconded National Expert
SRG	States' Representatives Group
SRIA	strategic research and innovation agenda
TA	temporary agent
TRL	technology readiness level
U-space	A set of new services relying on a high level of digitalisation and automation of functions, and specific procedures designed to support safe, efficient and secure access to airspace for a large numbers of drones, with an initial look at very low-level operations
WA	work area

Annexes

Annex I: Annual additional activities plan

EUROCONTROL:

Additional Activity Category	Sum of Estimated additional activity value 2025	Sum of Estimated additional activity value 2026
1. Support to additional R&I	8.121.000	11.301.000
2. Scale-up of technologies	432.000	344.000
3. Demonstrators	3.478.000	1.730.000
4. Creating new business opportunities	100.000	150.000
5. Training & skilling development	0	0
6. Contribution to the development of new standards, regulations and policies	6.734.000	6.620.000
7. Supporting ecosystem development	2.950.000	2.362.000
8. Communication, dissemination, awareness raising, citizen engagement	249.000	332.000
9. Other	0	0
Grand Total	22.064.000	22.839.000

Other Members:

Additional Activity Category	Sum of Estimated additional activity value 2025	Sum of Estimated additional activity value 2026
1. Support to additional R&I	31.381.277	15.174.618
2. Scale-up of technologies	11.067.382	15.953.863
3. Demonstrators	19.938.809	22.428.374
4. Creating new business opportunities	3.375.003	0
5. Training & skilling development	0	0
6. Contribution to the development of new standards, regulations and policies	1.062.290	991.742
7. Supporting ecosystem development	20.910.243	9.987.307
8. Communication, dissemination, awareness raising, citizen engagement	770.893	880.302
9. Other	51.469.994	61.584.208
Grand Total	139.975.892	127.000.413

Annex II: Call for tenders and other actions

The tables below present the main procurement activities to be conducted in 2026-2027 covered by operational and administrative appropriations. The tables will be updated at the end of 2026 with a more precise account of the procurement activities of 2027.

Table A 1: Main procurement activities covered by operational appropriations

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Under operational appropriations								
Op. 01	4000	Experts for deliverables and project reviews	Provision of technical expertise for assessing the deliverables and contributing to Horizon Europe projects' review	Ad hoc	2026	100 000	Expert contracts	External expert from Commission database
Op. 02	4000	Expert call evaluations	Provision of technical expertise for the evaluation of calls for proposals	Ad hoc	2026	50 000	Expert contracts	External expert from Commission database
Op. 03	4000	Expert call for application evaluations	Provision of technical expertise for the evaluation of Young Scientist Award applications	Ad hoc	2026	10 000	Expert contracts	External expert from Commission database
Op. 04	4000	Consultancy and Support to SESAR 3 JU related to Strategic Management and Facilitation of Market Uptake	Provision of independent consultancy for the execution of the SESAR 3 JU programme	Q2	2026	100 000	Specific contract under framework contract ref. S3JU/LC/014-CTR	Continuation of specific activities in support of the CP2 proposal development
Op. 05	4000	Consultancy and Support to SESAR 3 JU related to Strategic Management and	Provision of independent consultancy for the execution of the SESAR 3 JU programme	Q2	2026	270 000	Specific contract under framework contract ref. S3JU/LC/014-CTR	support to Market Uptake activities

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
		Facilitation of Market Uptake						
Op. 06	4000	Airspace users' expertise	Provision of airspace users' expertise for the execution of the SESAR 3 JU programme	Q4	2026	200 000	Specific contract under the framework contract ref. S3JU/LC/009-CTR – LOT 1	-
Op. 07	4000	Airspace users' expertise	Provision of airspace users' expertise for the execution of the SESAR 3 JU programme	Q4	2026	100 000	Specific contract under the framework contract ref. S3JU/LC/017-CTR – LOT 2	-
Op. 08	4000	Airport expertise	Provision of airport expertise for the execution of the SESAR 3 JU programme	Q1	2026	292 050	Specific contract under framework contract ref. S3JU/LC/019-CTR	-
Op. 09	4000	Professional Staff Associations	Provision of PSO's expertise to the DES in the field of Air Traffic Controllers' European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC)	Q4	2026	25 000	Specific Contract under Framework Contract S3JU/LC/012-CTR – LOT 1	-
Op. 10	4000	Professional Staff Associations	Provision of PSO's expertise to the DES in the field of European Cockpit Association	Q4	2026	25 000	Specific Contract under Framework Contract S3JU/LC/007-CTR - LOT 2	-
Op. 11	4000	Professional Staff Associations	Provision of PSO's expertise to the DES in the field of European Transport workers Federation (ETF)	Q4	2026	25 000	Specific Contract under Framework Contract S3JU/LC/008-CTR - LOT 3	-
Op. 12	4000	Young Scientist Award	Prize for Young Scientist Award (including travel costs)	Q4	2026	18 500	Prize Award	-

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Op. 13	4000	Communication Operational	EU Drone days 2026	Q1	2026	75 000	Inter-institutional procurement (FWC S3JU/LC/030-CTR)	-
Op. 14	4000	Communication Operational	Airspace World 2027	Q1	2026	100 000	Inter-institutional procurement (FWC S3JU/LC/030-CTR)	
Op. 15	4000	Coordination with EASA	EASA SLA	Q1	2026	300 000	Service Level Agreement EASA - SESAR 3 JU	To cover 2026 activities
Op. 16	4000	Coordination with EASA	EASA SLA	Q1	2027	200 000	Service Level Agreement EASA - SESAR 3 JU	To cover 2027 activities
Op. 17	4000	Digital European Sky Programme	Programme Support (S3DSS). ³⁸	Q3	2026	3 696 182	On-going Direct contract ref. S3JU-004-CTR	-
Op. 18	4000	Digital European Sky Programme	Programme Support (S3DSS). ³⁹	Q1	2027	10 180 651	On-going Direct contract ref. S3JU-004-CTR	-

³⁸ As per article 29(2) of the Single Basic Act, the budgetary commitment under this contract is divided into annual instalments, which do not exceed 80 % of the cumulative budget of the residual years of duration of the SESAR 3 JU

³⁹ As per article 29(2) of the Single Basic Act, the budgetary commitment under this contract is divided into annual instalments, which do not exceed 80 % of the cumulative budget of the residual years of duration of the SESAR 3 JU

Table A 2: Main procurement activities covered by administrative appropriations

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Under administrative appropriations								
Ad. 01	2700	PR	Subscriptions to publications, newspapers, memberships	Q1	2026	30 000	Direct procurement for very-low-value items – items to be paid against invoices (very low procurements) or negotiated procedure	Politico Subscription, EUROCAE membership, Aviation advocacy, etc.
Ad. 02	2700	PR	Office of publications	Ad hoc	2026	5 000	Inter-institutional procurement (SLA)	Editorial, graphical work and printing
Ad. 03	2700	PR	Small procurement	Ad hoc	2026	10 000	Direct procurement for very-low-value items – items to be paid against invoices (very low procurements)	-
Ad. 04	2700	PR	Strategy and support	Q1	2026	180 000	Inter-institutional procurement (FWC CS2JU)	Social media, press and copyrighting support
Ad. 05	2700	PR	Digital communication	Q2	2026	90 000	Inter-institutional procurement (FWC CS2JU)	-
Ad. 06	2700	PR	Events	Q1	2026	250 000	Specific Contract implementing FWC S3JU/LC/030-CTR	Visibility at aviation events and air shows, as

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
								well as external and internal SESAR 3 JU events
Ad. 07	1900	PR	Corporate events (social activites)	Q2	2026	12 500	Negotiated Procedure	-
Ad. 08	19000	PR	Corporate events (social activites)	Q4	2026	12 500	Negotiated Procedure	-
Ad. 09	2100	PR	Provision of web services	Q1	2026	125 205	Inter-institutional procurement (FWC CS2JU)	
Ad. 10	2100	ICT	Renewal of the Adobe licenses	Q2	2026	12 000	Purchase Order implementing FWC DI/07720 via DIGIT	Joint procurement
Ad. 11	2100	ICT	TESTA-NG	Q1	2026	50 600	Specific Contract implementing EC FWC via DIGIT	Joint procurement
Ad. 12	2100	ICT	NextSend	Q1	2026	500	Purchase Order, paid on invoice	Very low value
Ad. 13	2100	ICT	Mobile Telephony services	Q1	2026	3 183	Specific Contract implementing MTS V FWC via DIGIT	Joint procurement
Ad. 14	2100	ICT	Provision of ICT Hardware assets (new corporate mobile phones)	Q1	2026	15 000	Specific Contract implementing EC FWC	Joint procurement
Ad. 15	2100	ICT	Provision of Global SLA DIGIT	Q1	2026	30 000	Specific Contract implementing EC FWC	Joint procurement
Ad. 16	2100	ICT	Fixed Telephony services	Q1	2026	7 109	Specific Contract implementing VOICE IV FWC via DIGIT	Joint procurement

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Ad. 17	2100	ICT	Provision of recurring ICT Services	Q1	2026	1 249 316	To be provided by ECTRL under administrative agreement ref. S3JU/LC/005-CTR	Joint procurement
Ad. 18	2100	ICT	Provision of ICT Hardware assets (new headsets, webcams and privacy screens for identified users)	Q1	2026	20 000	To be provided by ECTRL under administrative agreement ref. S3JU/LC/005-CTR	Joint procurement
Ad. 19	2100	ICT	Provision of ICT services (Action plan to digitalise S3JU-2026 component)	Q3	2026	150 000	To be provided by ECTRL under administrative agreement ref. S3JU/LC/005-CTR	Joint Procurement
Ad. 20	2100	ICT	Provision of ICT coordination services	Q1	2026	204 705	Specific Contract under FWC	
Ad. 21	2300	Finance	Provision of Speedwell/Bluebell	Q1	2026	17 300	To be provided under ERCEA SLA	
Ad. 22	2300	Finance	Provision of Back-Office Arrangement Accounting Services	Q1	2026	10 000	To be provided under JU SLA	
Ad. 23	2300	Finance	Provision of SLA SUMMA and Treasury services	Q1	2026	54 000	To be provided under EC SLA	
Ad. 24	2300	Legal	Legal Services	Ad hoc	2026	20 000	Negotiated Procedure	-
Ad. 25	2300	Data protection	Legal Support to Data Protection activities	Q1	2026	30 000	Specific Contract(s)	-
Ad. 26	2300	Data protection	Legal Support to Data Protection activities	Q3	2026	39 487	Specific Contract(s)	-
Ad. 27	2300	Data protection	Register online, support and legal services	Q1	2026	3 500	Specific Contract(s)	Interinstitutional procurement procedure led by EU-Rail JU (FWC).

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Ad. 28	2100	Cyber and information security	Provision of cyber and information security services	Q1	2026	100 000	Specific contract(s) under Framework contract S3JU/LC/016-CTR	Provision of advisory services in the area of cybersecurity, data protection and business continuity.
Ad. 29	2100	Cyber and information security	Provision of cyber and information security services	Q1	2026	92 700	To be provided by ECTRL under administrative agreement ref. S3JU/LC/005-CTR	Joint procurement
Ad. 30	2100	Cyber and information security	Provision of cyber and information security services	Q1	2026	30 000	Specific Contract implementing EC FWC	Joint procurement
Ad. 31	2300	Quality Management	Provision of HAN services	Q1	2026	22 200	EC Service Level Agreement implementation	Annual service fee for 12 months for the use of ARES and EU Sign
Ad. 32	2300	Quality Management	Provision of Quality, Information and Document Management Services	Q1	2026	158 496	Specific contract under Framework contract S3JU/LC/029-CTR	
Ad. 33	2000	Facility	Front and back office reception services	Q4	2026	77 850	Specific contract under Framework contract S3JU/LC/018-CTR	
Ad. 34	1900	HR	Team Building	Q2	2026	25 000	Negotiated procedure	Teambuildings 4 teams ED, RES, EAC, T&S

Ref.	Budget line(s)	Procurement area	Procurement description	Target signature date	Budget year	Total estimated budget (EUR)	Type of contract/ procedure	Comments
Ad. 35	2300	Audit	Supply of technical assistance services in the field of Audits and Controls (External Audit of the Annual Accounts 2026-2027)	Q2	2026	50 000	Specific contract implementing EC Framework Contract - Interinstitutional procedure	S3JU External Annual Audit

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