



Public Affairs 101: The Lobbying Game & Reputation

EU Liaison Team at GÉANT

27 January 2026

Restricted

My background

- DG CNECT, Directorate C – Microelectronics and Photonics
- Inner workings of DG CNECT
- Hierarchy within the EC
- Importance of being seen as an ASSET, not just a stakeholder



CATHRIN STÖVER
Chief Communication Officer

- Chief Strategist
- Chief Communications Officer
- GN5-1 Coordinator for Outreach Activity
- e-infrastructure strategic collaboration lead
- EOSC policy and strategy lead



TANJA MAIER
Public Affairs Specialist

- EOSC policy and strategy support
- E-infrastructure strategic collaboration support
- Coordinate list of ongoing events
- Back up engagement of the EU Liaison Team across the organization via various initiatives (e.g. innovation, AI, learning material)



HENDRIK IKE
Public Affairs Manager

- GN5-1 WP2 Task 4 Task Leader Policy Engagement
- Coordinator for Consultations and Position Papers
- Internet Governance
- GEO Working Group Representative
- Sustainability Committee Chair (Gender Equality Committee phasing out)
- Funding: WP2 T4



EDIT HERCZOG
Senior EU Liaison Advisor

- Brussels-based consultant at Vision & Values SRL
- Monthly report (national, EU, and global developments, policy outlook, funding outlook, stakeholder outlook)
- Expertise in EU legislative landscape, hands-on support to the organization and the NRENs with long-term strategic foresight



Public Affairs Capacity - Which one are you?

Policy Taker

Execute policy once it is adopted

Monitoring

No policy alignment

Policy Maker

Amend policy proposal through engagement with decision-makers and advisory bodies

Give input when door is open -> consultations

Policy-aligned

Policy Shaper

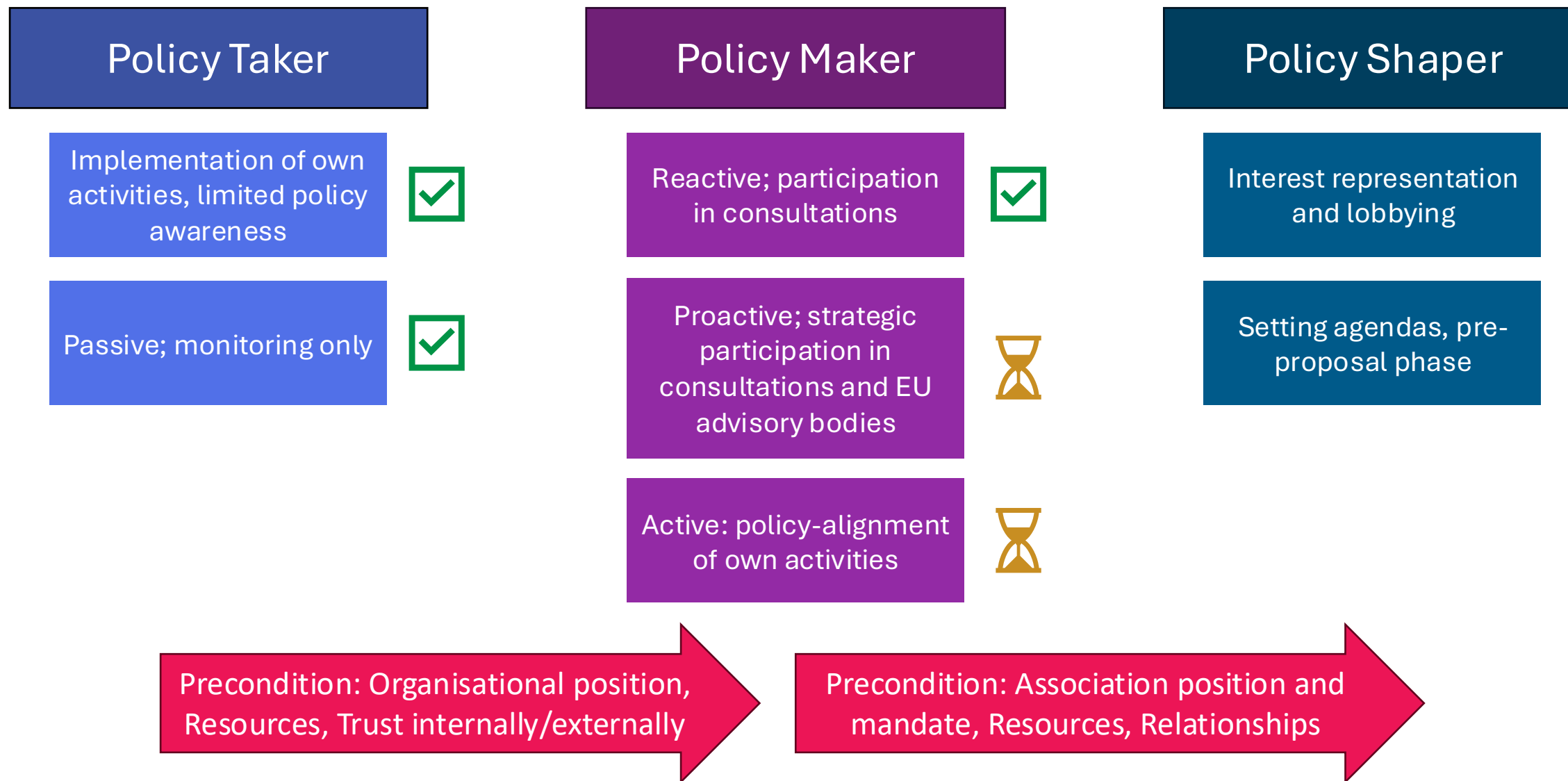
Agenda-setting

Pre-proposal phase of a policy

Interest representation and lobbying

Policy and strategy-aligned ahead of time

GÉANT



Consultations

- Since 2018, GÉANT is registered in the EU Transparency Register (alongside CSC, Jisc, NORDUnet, SURF...)
- In 2025, GÉANT responded to 19 EU consultations: public consultations, roadmaps, evaluations, revision proposals.

Why? So we could...

- Give input to our EU stakeholders
- Promote GÉANT and the NRENs (project results, governance model...)
- Apply the insights from our monitoring
- Align with experts internally

Selected Consultations

- MFF Consultations in Spring 2025
- European Research Area Act
- Outermost Regions Strategy
- Public Procurement rules revision
- Quantum Strategy of the EU
- European Data Union Strategy
- International Digital Strategy

Upcoming:

- Arctic Policy - Update
- European Open Digital Ecosystem (open source)

Examples of forthcoming actions in the field of **secure connectivity**:

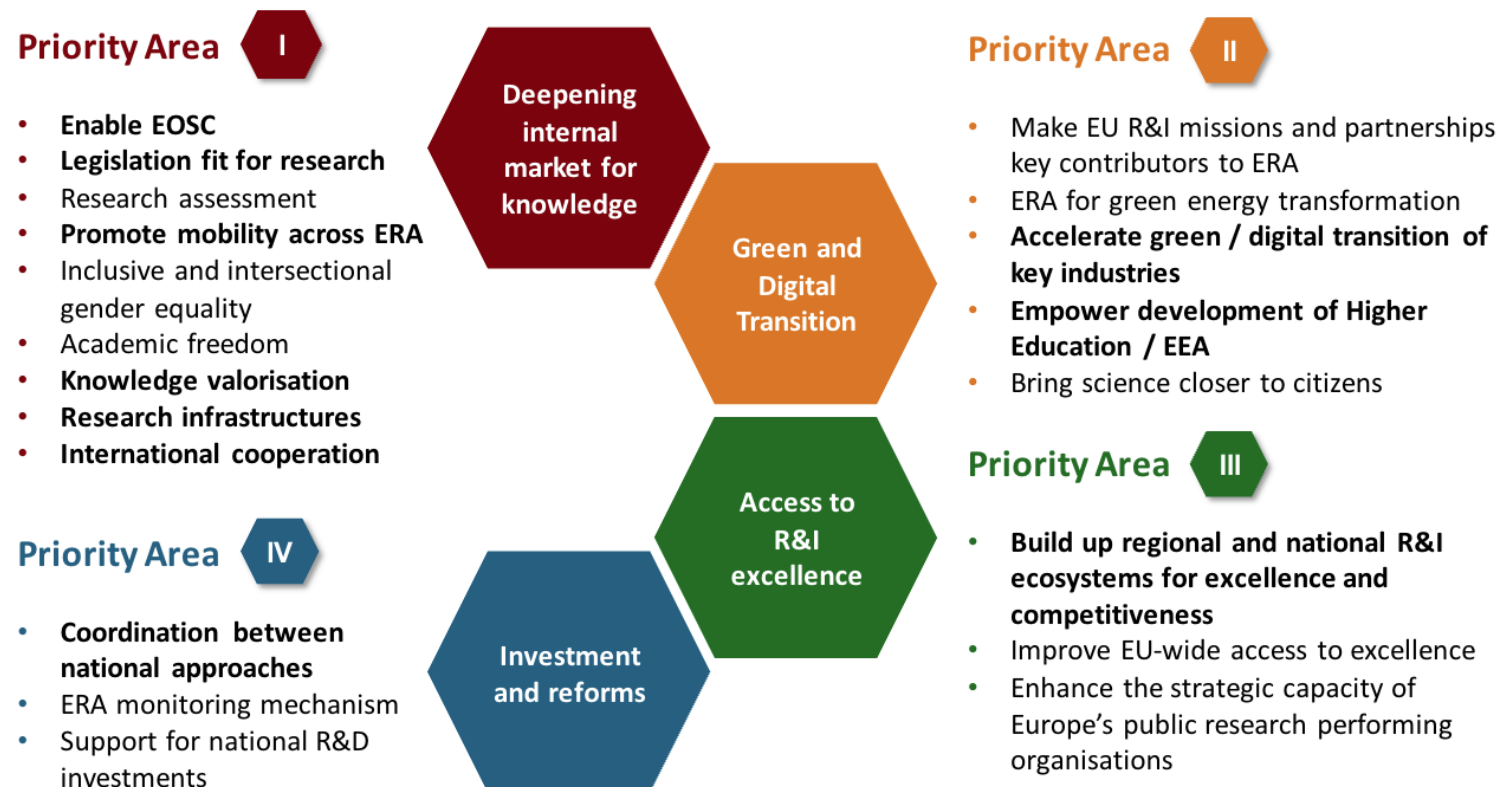
- **Arctic connectivity** is a strategic priority for the EU. The EU will work with partners to boost support for projects that advance new submarine cable routes in the region, by making use of the Connecting Europe Facility to catalyse public and private investments.
- A key element of **Global Gateway** investment in the digital sector is a network of strategic submarine communication cable infrastructure projects to provide secure and resilient links between the EU and partner countries. Investments include:
 - 1) **BELLA**, the first transatlantic optical fibre cable between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean, which connects Latin-American research institutes, provides fast access to Earth Observation data from the Copernicus component of the EU's Space Programme. It will be further extended across Central America and the Caribbean and will support the growth of High-Performance Computing in the region.
 - 2) The **MEDUSA** submarine cable, supported by the European Commission and EIB Global, will provide high-speed connectivity between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and will be extended to West Africa.
 - 3) **Blue-Raman** consists of a planned 11,700km secure submarine cable system connecting Europe to India, with landings in the Middle East and Eastern Africa, along the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). With its strong connectivity dimension linking Europe and India via the Gulf region, it will facilitate the exchange of data and increase cooperation with partner countries.
- The EU's Black Sea strategy recognises the **Black Sea** as a key gateway linking Europe to the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and beyond. To increase connectivity and trade with the **Eastern Partnership** region, the EU will support targeted investments in digital infrastructure, with the development of Black Sea digital links aiming at creating secure, high-capacity internet connection, when conditions allow.
- The **Central Asia Team Europe Initiative** will provide enhanced secure connectivity, primarily to unserved and underserved areas in Central Asia, via satellite provided by the EU private sector.
- **IRIS²**, the new secure satellite-based connectivity component of the EU's Space programme, will provide global coverage when the entire constellation will have been deployed. At an early stage, it will set up pilot projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The **EU-ASEAN Sustainable Connectivity Team Europe Initiative** under the Global Gateway includes a digital component promoting the expansion of the Copernicus mirror site in the Philippines to further countries in ASEAN, including Indonesia and Thailand.

Policy Alignment

Last year, we mapped the impact of the GN5-1 project with the European Research Area Policy Programme 2022-2024.

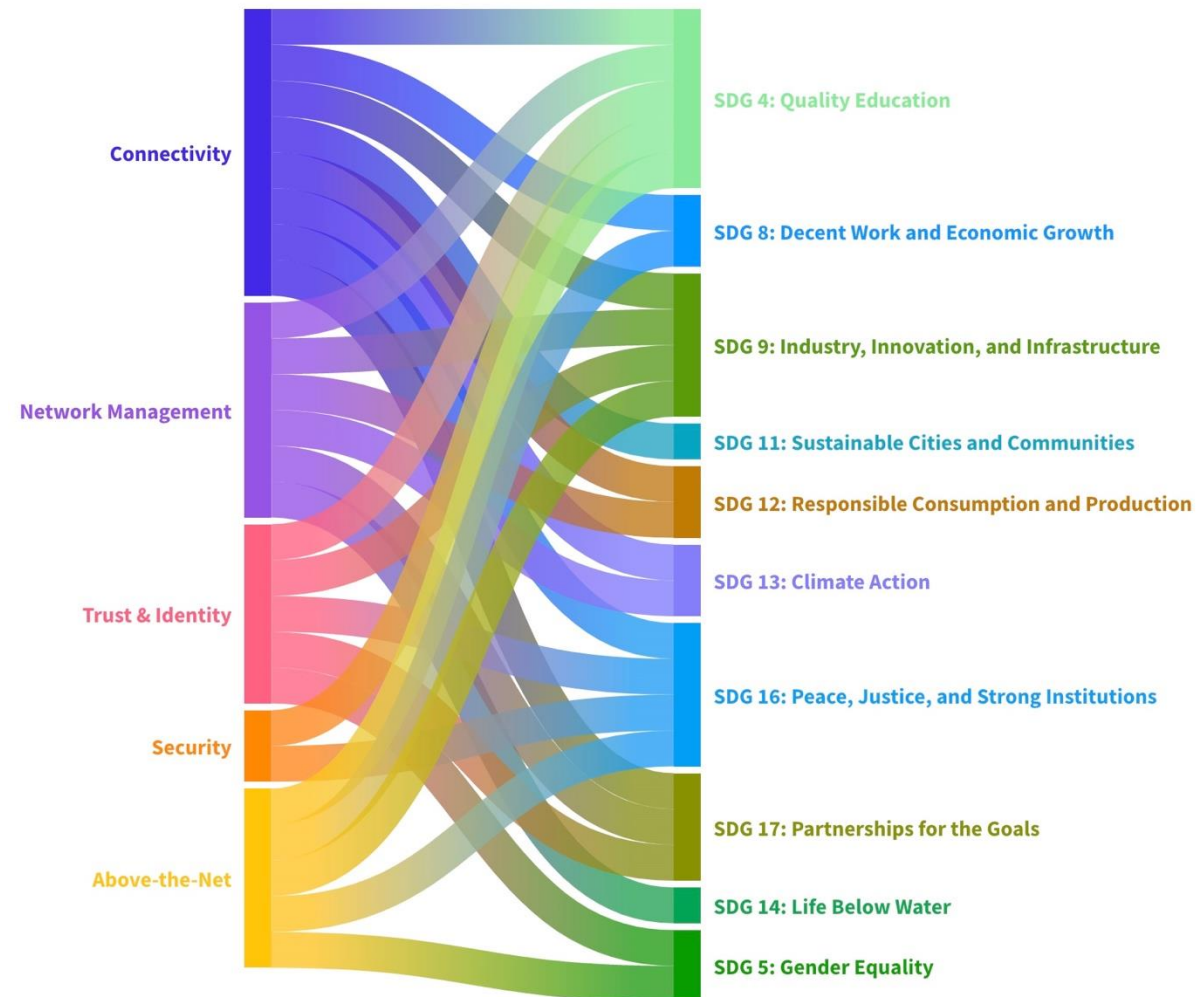
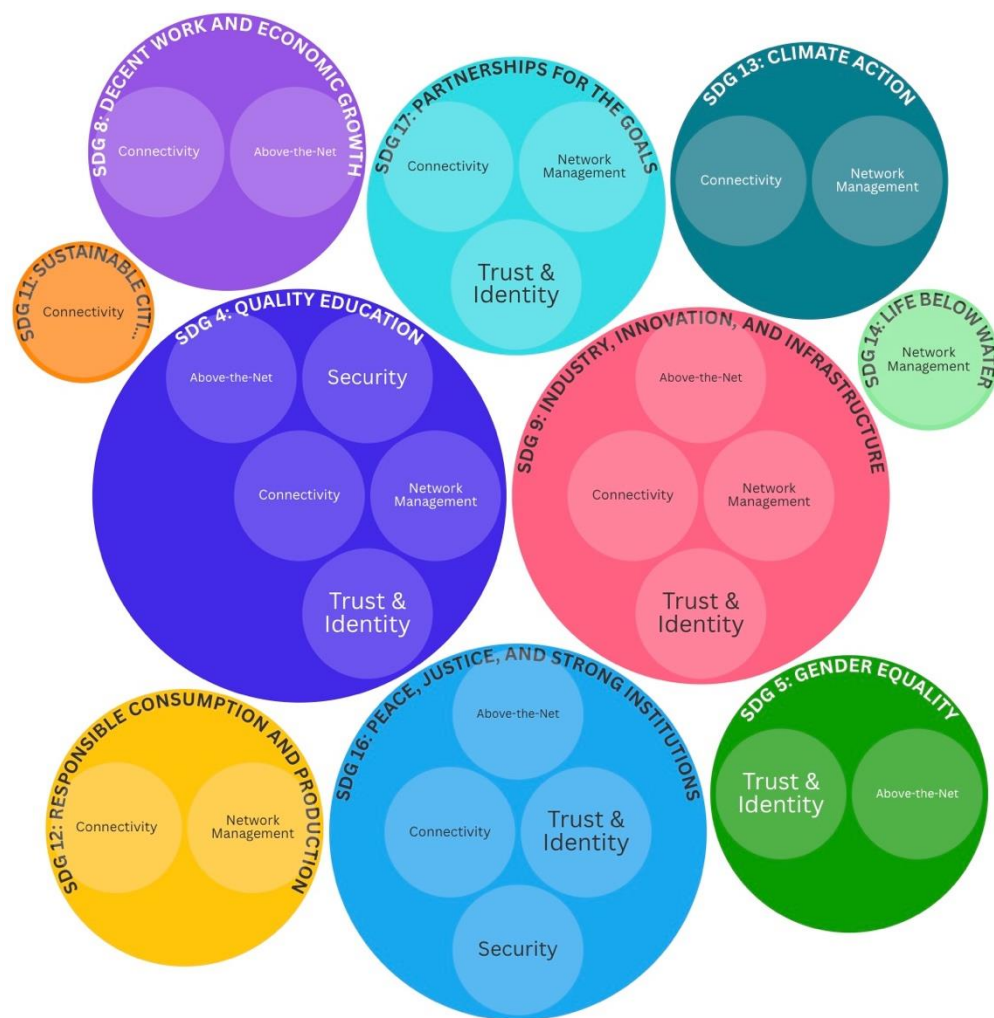
Why? So we could...

- Talk impact for Europe
- Share vocabulary
- Understand strengths
- ... and weaknesses
- Change perspective!

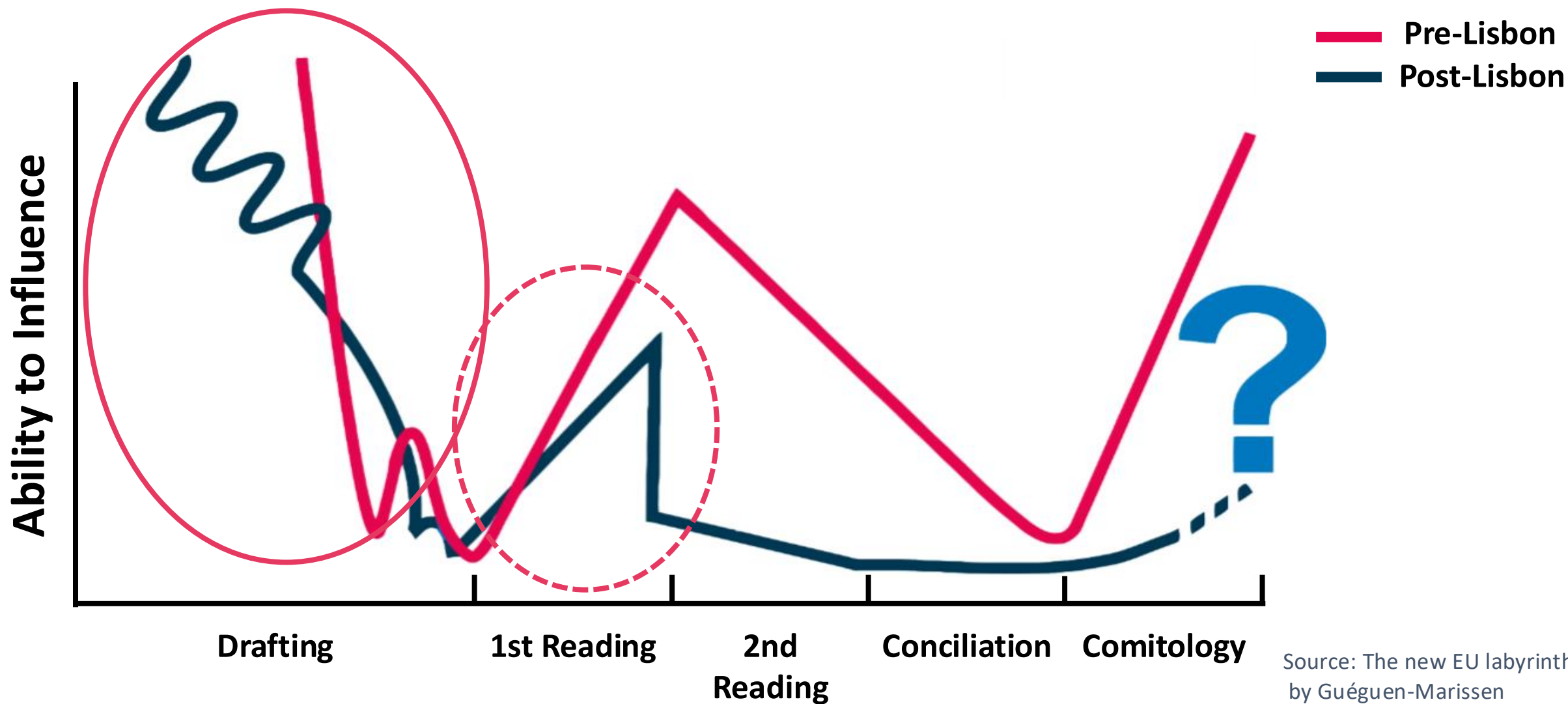


Policy Alignment II

In the Policy Engagement task (WP2T4) we mapped the impact of the project on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



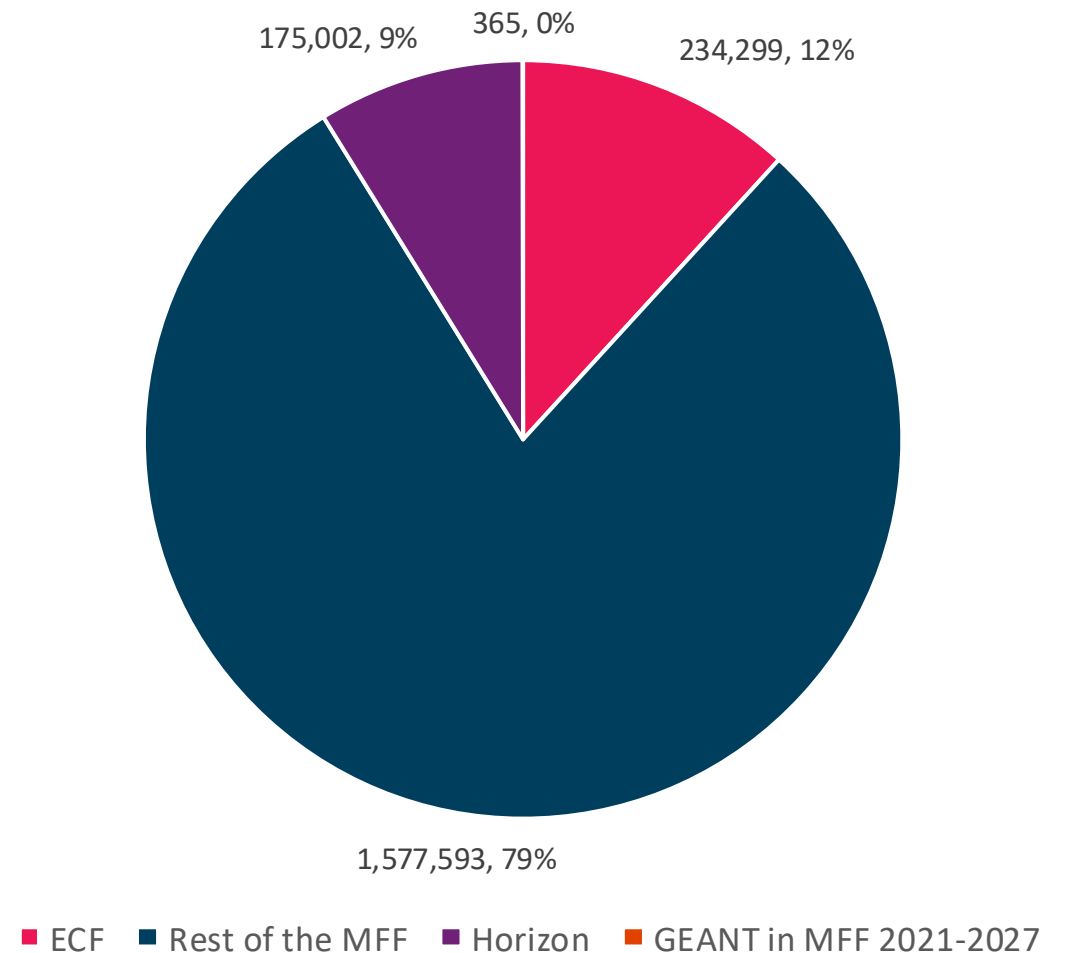
Pre- and Post-Lisbon curves of influence



Reality check towards next MFF

The sum of all financing received under the MFF 2021-2027 (365M) by GÉANT is too small for it to carry weight in the MFF negotiations or even the negotiation of individual budget lines.

Budget in millions (current prices)



What is the MFF?

The **MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK** is the **long-term budget plan of the European Union**

It sets out:

- **How much the EU can spend,**
- **In which policy areas, and under what rules,**
- Traditionally over a **seven-year period,**
- Shapes the **priorities and eligibility rules** of programmes like **Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Digital Europe,** and **Cohesion Funds**

On the 16th of July, the Commission adopted the **first package of legislative proposals** on the MFF.

The proposals now go before the co-legislators: the Council (Member States) and the European Parliament (MEPs), who negotiate their respective positions.

Agreement should be achieved latest by the **end of 2027.**

Funding Envelope to be Negotiated – Horizon Europe budget proposed to increase to €175 billion by EC. Final number will be the last thing agreed and at this stage, less important.

MFF 2028-2034 STRUCTURE

HEADING 1

(EUR 1 trillion)

National and Regional Partnership Plans

Regional Funds, Cohesion, Agriculture, fisheries, border control, migration, social

Repayment of NextGenerationEU

HEADING 2

(EUR 589.6 billion)

European Competitiveness Fund

Connecting Europe Facility
Union Civil Protection Mechanism+
Erasmus+
new! AgoraEU

Horizon Europe

HEADING 3

(EUR 215.2 billion)

Global Europe

Europe, Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Americas and the Caribbean and complementary global pillar for global actions

Common Foreign and Security Policy and Overseas Countries and Territories

Special reserve:
Support to Ukraine
(outside the MFF)

Heading 4 European Public Administration

+in-built flexibilities: Single Margin Instrument, Flexibility Instrument, Crisis Mechanism Instrument

MFF 2021-2027 vs. MFF 2028-2034

	MFF 2021-2027	MFF 2028-2034
PROGRAMMES	<p>52 programs</p> <p>Multiple portals, calls, and co-financing rules</p> <p>Mix of direct EU grants (Horizon) and shared management (ESIF/ERDF)</p>	<p>16 programmes, few large horizontal instruments</p> <p>Expanded use of the Funding & Tenders Portal, harmonised rules</p> <p>Stronger emphasis on direct EU management, fewer national silos</p>
R&D FOCUS	<p>Inclusive science; TRL 1–9</p> <p>Programmes: Horizon Europe, DEP (for AI, supercomputing, cybersecurity, digital skills), CEF for digital infrastructure</p> <p>Fragmented funding across many smaller programmes (e.g., EIC, EuroHPC, national structural instruments).</p>	<p>Applied, strategic, market-ready innovation (TRL 5–9)</p> <p>Few large horizontal instruments</p> <p>Mission-driven, large-scale projects focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological sovereignty (semiconductors, AI, quantum, batteries) • Resilience (critical infrastructure, supply chains) • Security (cyber defense, encryption, dual-use R&D) • International cooperation

MFF 2021-2027 vs. MFF 2028-2034

	MFF 2021-2027	MFF 2028-2034
DIGITAL TECH	Fragmented (skills, cybersecurity, AI split across programs)	Integrated under single “Competitiveness” pillar; emphasis on digital sovereignty, EU cloud, AI/ML
RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE	Supported via different programmes	Tied to strategic EC industrial and defense priorities
FUNDING	100% for RIA/CSA (70% for-profit) Mix of actual costs and limited lump-sum option	Most action types: up to 100% (up to 70% for-profit) Extensive rollout of lump-sums and simplified cost options (unit costs)

Back to basics

- I first became a lobbyist as an intern in Brussels in 2013 for a consultancy
- Lobbied for oil, gas and much worse
- But also renewables!
- However, we used the same tools for all of our clients
- This made me realise that this is a profession which can be developed and applied to many different areas – for good reasons
- Regardless of whether at the European vs National level



Public Affairs is the effort to secure the strategic interests of your organisation with policy makers

- Despite some opposing views, it is simply the more modern term for 'lobbying'

Public Affairs is becoming further entwined with Public Relations, which is more concerned with building a good reputational profile as a whole to the greater public

Who lobbies?

- Traditionally, lobbying was conducted by individuals literally ‘in the lobby’ outside the voting chambers of the Houses of Parliament in the UK
 - This still goes on..
- Maintaining close ties with policy makers was seen as a personal priority for the leaders of large private corporations
 - This still goes on..
- NGOs, citizens groups, and charities have become more active with the widening of civil society in the 20th century
 - NGOs now make up the largest registered lobbying percentage at the European level (26.2%)
- Associations (groups of businesses or NGOs or charities) also merge to have greater influence
- Private consultancies are a large player (client relationship – bespoke services etc)
- Now, there is a growing body of lobbyists who represent public organisations who cannot rely on a high level of governmental support

What is it about?

Insuring your position (old school)

- Identifying what decisions are made by policy makers that directly effect the future of your organisation
- Consider the scope of how tolerable these decisions are
- Operationalise pre-emptive efforts to influence the decisions

Growing your audience (new school)

- Creating an environment where your impact is visible to a growing circle of policy makers and the public
- This in turn makes your needs and desires hard to ignore



Insuring your position

Anticipatory vs Digested 'communication'

- Anticipatory
 - Creating a clear strategy that identifies what decisions are made by policy makers that directly effect the future of your organisation, and one that has measured the scope of those decisions
 - Directly reach out to policy makers to discuss your standpoint
 - Do you have fellow stakeholders in your field who share this standpoint? Invite them too
 - Know exactly what you are prepared to say to communicate your message
 - Provide context the policy maker(s) would understand, your hopes / worries, and a clear recommendation
 - Alternatives to direct meetings can be used to showcase your standpoint can be used when you are more focussed on suggestions
 - Panel debates (Chatham house rules)
 - Working dinners
- Digested
 - Providing information for your internal constituency
 - News monitoring reports that highlight the important items / results considered by policy makers
 - Daily / Monthly updates (more in depth)
 - This may sound passive, but is an important tool to gather feedback from your own constituency and form best practices

Growing your audience

- This is more related to Public Relations, but within the ‘public affairs’ group of actors.
- Also relies on a clear strategy which focuses on growing the world around you that you want to inhabit.
- Increasing your **public salience** is the key concern
 - How will my organisation become more relevant to a horizontal section of policy makers in different fields?
 - For example, does GÉANT & NRENs own solutions which are created in the fields of data services and connectivity, but can help other sectors? Energy, environment, climate, public health? Can you showcase these things to find further ministerial support? **Adjacencies**
 - Or at the European level, different DG’s?
 - Note that the digested communication method can be of use here to subtly widen your audience (bottom up)

Key things every practitioner should know

- Names & contact details of your parallel associates in ministerial (or European level) positions
 - And, hopefully, good relationships
- Lines of communication with experts within your NREN who may provide input and information on certain topics to help you develop your standpoint.
- Lines of communication with similar stakeholders.
- Knowledge of the decision-making processes in the institutions you interact with.
- The development of new trends in your field from a technological, political and economic perspective; **News**

What is changing in Brussels? The Digital ‘Omnibus’

- The Digital Omnibus proposal includes a set of technical amendments to a large corpus of digital legislation, selected to bring immediate relief to businesses, public administrations, and citizens alike, and to stimulate competitiveness.
- In short – **simplification** or **deregulation**
- The proposal is split into two, with one omnibus to streamline data rules, including the GDPR, and another focusing specifically on the AI Act. Both omnibuses have to go to lawmakers and EU countries for approval.
- No longer a ‘super regulator’
- Digital Networks Act



Brussels is done being the world's digital policeman

The “Brussels Effect” is dead. Now Washington is setting the pace on deregulation in Europe.



The EU's Approach - today

- Tougher regulation against (large) tech companies
 - Spillover: limiting digital technology's harmful impact on democracy
 - Examples: Digital Services Act (DSA), Digital Markets Act (DMA) -> GAFAM
 - Also: GDPR, NIS-2, Data Act
- Investments into European digital infrastructure and economy
 - Digital Europe Programme (DEP), Chips Act
 - InvestAI initiative 2025
 - Digital Decade Policy Programme (2021) -> goals towards 2030
- Strategic partnerships with “like-minded countries”
- Digital Networks Act planned for release in Q1 2026
 - Overhaul of the EECC
 - Goal to harmonise and modernise rules on network infrastructure (fibre, 5G, spectrum etc.) across all EU member states – as a **regulation**.

What we're up to – it's triilogue time

(Besides CNECT & other DGs)

European Parliament

- ITRE Committee & Rapporteurs
- MEP amendments for FP10
 - First draft mid-March
 - Amendments 9 April

Council of the EU

- Working Party on Telecommunications and Information Society
- Working Party on Research
- ERAC?



Please come and see me! **Rue Belliard 20**



Thank You

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