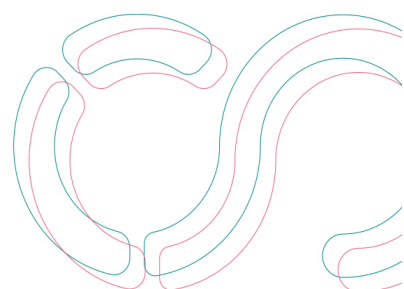


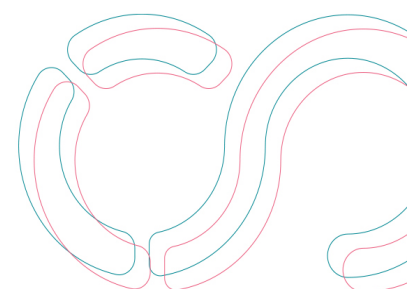
Phasing-out strategy  
for the Horizon Europe Co-programmed  
European Partnership for the European  
Open Science Cloud (EOSC)

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## Introduction

The European Commission's (EC) proposal for Horizon Europe 2028–2034 (FP10) foresees dedicated support to expanding and consolidating the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) as Europe's research and innovation data space. This is no wonder, given the unprecedented and escalating pressure that Europe's competitiveness and values, digital sovereignty, and strategic autonomy have come under in recent years. In this new global context, EOSC becomes far more than a research ecosystem: it becomes a strategic priority for the Union to build a resilient, productive and sovereign knowledge economy. EOSC is not simply aligned with this EU ambition but is indispensable to delivering on it.

In the lead-up to FP10, EOSC and the EOSC Federation have been called out on several occasions as a key structural element for the advancement of European competitiveness in research and innovation: EOSC secures Europe's sovereignty over research data, enables a thriving AI and innovation ecosystem, increases security in research, strengthens the Single Market for knowledge, and ensures that European values—openness, trust, and fairness—remain the foundation of global collaborative science.

EOSC underpins Europe's competitiveness and innovation agenda described in the European Competitiveness Compass<sup>1</sup> and in the latest communications on the European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures<sup>2</sup>, the Apply AI Strategy<sup>3</sup>, the AI in Science Strategy<sup>4</sup>, and the Data Union Strategy<sup>5</sup>, reinforced by the policy recommendations coming from the Letta report<sup>6</sup>, the Draghi report<sup>7</sup>, and the Heitor report on the next Framework Programme (Horizon Europe 2028-2034)<sup>8</sup>.

### **EOSC in 2026**

The aim of EOSC is to provide researchers and innovators across Europe with an open, trusted, multi-disciplinary and networked environment for finding, accessing, combining and reusing data, tools, and services. The current implementation model for EOSC is the Horizon Europe Co-programmed EOSC Partnership between the European Commission (EC) and the EOSC Association (EOSC-A), with overall strategic steering provided by an informal forum (the "EOSC Tripartite Governance") that brings together the EC, EOSC-A and the EOSC Steering Board, a Commission expert group representing EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon Europe (MS/AC).

A new governance and funding solution is required to ensure EOSC's continued development and operation in the next financial programming period of 2028–2034.

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<sup>1</sup> [Competitiveness compass](#)

<sup>2</sup> [European strategy on research and technology infrastructures - Publications Office of the EU](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Apply AI Strategy - EUR-Lex - 52025DC0723](#)

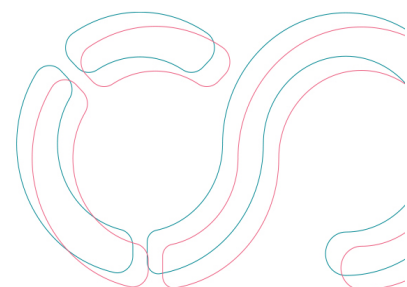
<sup>4</sup> [European strategy for artificial intelligence in science - Publications Office of the EU](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Data Union Strategy - EUR-Lex - 52025DC0835](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Much more than a market - Enrico Letta](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Draghi report on European competitiveness](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Align, act, accelerate - Publications Office of the EU](#)



The European Open Science Cloud reached a major milestone in 2025 with the [launch of the EOSC Federation](#), establishing the common European data space for research and innovation. The build-up of the Federation is coordinated and supported by EOSC-A, and steered by the EOSC Tripartite Governance.

At the 2025 EOSC Symposium, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalizing the EOSC Federation was signed by the president of EOSC-A, and has since been signed and implemented by the 13 candidate EOSC Nodes in the context of [the Federation's Build-up Group](#). The MoU sets the foundation for collaborative governance, technical interoperability, and data sovereignty across Europe's research ecosystem. The prototype Federation currently (February 2026) includes 13 candidate EOSC Nodes and the EOSC EU Node, connecting dozens of services and data sources, demonstrating EOSC's potential to accelerate discovery and innovation through FAIR data and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

The EOSC Federation is in 2026 at a pivotal point—moving from a proof of concept toward a sustainable, production-grade system underpinning Europe's ambitions for Open Science and data sovereignty. In the lead up to full operations, the EOSC Federation is also in the process of expansion, having completed a call for enrolment of new EOSC Nodes that brought in 14 applications in February 2026. Meanwhile, the governance of EOSC is transitioning from the current Co-programmed Partnership to a longer-term, more sustainable model for the next financial period (2028–2034).

### Legacy of the EOSC Partnership (2021-2027)

The current EOSC co-programmed Partnership has provided the basis for **the EOSC Federation** as a tangible and distributed ecosystem that European research communities can leverage to share and use data, services, and e-infrastructures. This system-of-systems will continue to grow to become the web of FAIR research data and services.

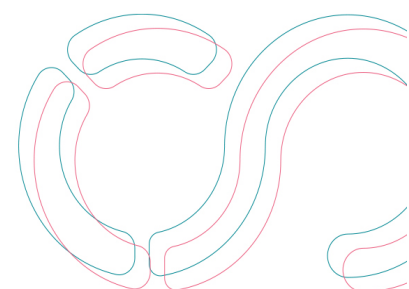
The EOSC Partnership has been pivotal in the large-scale mobilisation of research stakeholders towards mainstreaming **Open Science and research data management practices**. It has triggered the FAIRification of data in many domains, research infrastructures, research projects and organisations. The interconnection of stakeholders from all scientific branches and the build-up of a transnational and interdisciplinary community that advances research opportunities is a result of the ongoing EOSC activities.

This has been accompanied by the development of domain-specific services that help **sharing, reanalysing and reusing research artefacts**. The provision of these services through the EOSC Federation has now started and is going to make these developments usable for the whole European research community.

The EOSC Partnership has provided **training of researchers and support staff** towards the FAIR principles and their implementation, including the creation of competence centres<sup>9</sup>. These competence centres serve as points of reference in their respective countries, regions or thematic

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.skills4eosc.eu/network/competence-centres>



domains for finding training programmes and materials, best practices and tools for managing, reusing, sharing and analysing FAIR data and other digital research objects.

The research communities, research-performing and research-funding organisations, and other relevant stakeholder organisations have created **the EOSC Association**, a legal entity that is the voice of this community of EOSC users and providers. EOSC-A leads the coordination of the EOSC Federation and of course stands as the EC's partner in the Partnership MoU. Members include organisations from all MSs and several ACs. In complement with the EOSC Steering Board, this ensures efficient bottom-up and top-down support for EOSC and its strategic development that is aligned with the needs of research in Europe.

Thanks to the various stakeholders of EOSC, **strong links have been established with relevant partners**, such as ESFRI landmarks and projects, ERICs, data spaces, and large international organisations (such as RDA and UNESCO) to further advance sharing of data and services for research.

### **True scale of current funding**

EOSC under FP10 will build upon the significant work and investment since 2016 under the two previous framework programmes. Under the current Horizon Europe, the European Commission is supporting EOSC through the “research infrastructures” work programmes with several topics amounting to around 70 M€ per year. During the same period, the MS/ACs have provided around 400 M€ per year to support EOSC and Open Science<sup>10</sup>. The research community organised in the EOSC Association provided in-kind contributions at a level exceeding 300 M€ per year to EOSC, for a projected total of 2.5 B€ for the total duration of the Partnership.

### **Sustainability baseline: the “5 Tasks”**

In order to establish a baseline of sustainability for EOSC, the EOSC Tripartite Governance defined the activities required to maintain EOSC in the future, clustering them into the so-called “5 Tasks”. These must be taken into consideration when weighing the viability and desirability of a post-2027 EOSC scenario with or without Framework Programme funding.

#### **Task 1: Deploying and operating the EOSC EU Node**

- i. Focus on aspects related to deployment, maintenance and operation of the EOSC EU Node, which would become a reference node.

#### **Task 2: EOSC Federation**

- ii. Focus on evolving, expanding, coordinating, monitoring, and operating the Federation of Nodes.

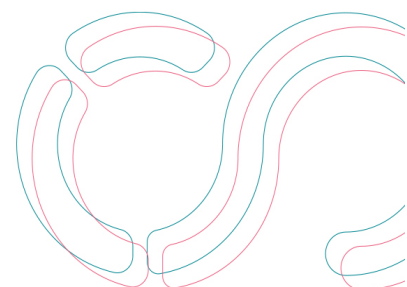
#### **Task 3: Enabling a Web of FAIR data and services for science**

- iii. Support for the implementation of FAIR and the maturation of FAIR within the European research community.
- iv. Contribution to the global evolution of FAIR.

#### **Task 4: Research and prototyping new capacities for the EOSC Federation**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.eoscobservatory.eu/explore/investments-in-eosc>



- v. This task takes a grassroots approach to innovating the EOSC Federation and supporting the research community in solving technical challenges.

**Task 5: Enabling Open Science policies and the uptake of Open Science practices through EOSC**

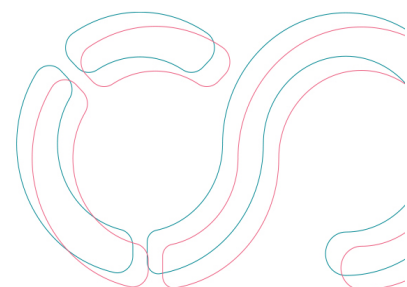
- vi. Support the implementation of Open Science within the context of the EOSC Federation.
- vii. Contribute to the uptake and evolution of Open Science policies and practices in Europe and globally from the EOSC angle.
- viii. Facilitate the implementation of Open Science in national contexts from the EOSC angle.

**Conclusion: a strategy to sustain and grow EOSC**

This phasing-out strategy is then, in fact, a “phasing-in strategy”, which assesses three legal and financial options to sustain EOSC's "5 Tasks" and, optimally, upscale the initiative overall. Key challenges for any scenario include securing a ringfenced budget, ensuring long-term stability for EOSC, coordinating financial commitments from MS/ACs and potentially private Members, and defining suitable governance structures.

For EOSC to succeed in the execution of the 5 Tasks and thereby realise the vision of a Web of FAIR data for researchers in Europe, an efficient, rapid, and resource-intensive approach must be centrally coordinated at the European, national and institutional levels simultaneously. This will ensure the timely implementation of a coherent Work Programme that is wholly aligned both with the requirements of the research and user community and European strategic considerations in the coming decade.

Due its horizontal nature across all thematic disciplines, its pan-European relevance, its importance as a key strategic asset and policy implementation instrument for the uptake of AI and data sovereignty, the EU and the MS/ACs may want to continue their direct strategic steering of EOSC in the long term.



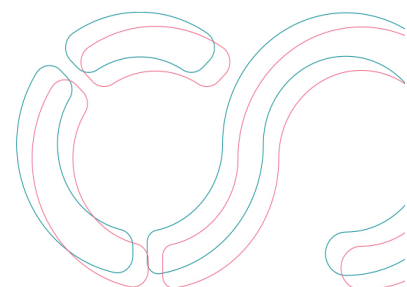
# 1 Scenario 1: European Partnership under Horizon Europe 2028-2034

## 1.1 Description of scenario

The proposed Horizon Europe for 2028-2034 (FP10) includes a simplification of the Partnership landscape, focusing on (1) a Work Programme (WP)-based Partnership (default option, replacing both Co-programmed and Co-funded types); and (2) Institutionalised Partnerships (Art 185 and 187 TFEU partnerships, only in duly justified cases). Crucially, the FP10 vision requires up-front commitments for financial contributions from all Partners.

For what concerns EOSC, in this scenario we examine a Tripartite-governed, Work Programme-based Partnership aligned with the selection criteria for such as specified in the FP10 proposal. The legacy of the EOSC Partnership described above ensures that EOSC is well-positioned to fulfil the FP10 Partnership selection criteria, specifically in the following ways:

- **Portfolio relevance:** EOSC is strongly aligned with FP10 objectives, including data sovereignty, AI and innovation, digital security, the Single Market for knowledge and the strengthening of European values.
- **Critical mass:** EOSC has documented substantial financial commitment from the Commission and MS/ACs over two framework programmes; and the research community organised in EOSC-A will have provided a projected 2.5 B€ in in-kind contributions over the lifetime of the current Partnership.
- **Partners' composition:** EU-wide participation in a WP-based Partnership can be expected. The 42 MS/ACs represented on the EOSC Steering Board unanimously support this model for the future EOSC, while roughly 250 research-performing organisations, funding agencies and service providers from 37 countries contribute to EOSC-A and its build-up of the EOSC Federation.
- **Pan-European relevance:** The current Partnership already engages providers and users from all Member States and from several countries associated to HE, with broad representation among Widening countries. As the backbone for research in terms of sharing FAIR data and services across domains and borders, EOSC will be relevant in all MS/ACs and research areas.
- **Mission-orientation:** The EOSC Partnership will continue its development of a web of FAIR research data and services under FP10, specifically but not exclusively through the funding of the EOSC Federation. EOSC stakeholders have already demonstrated their ability to provide multi-annual monitoring of activities and milestones.
- **Business plan:** Once the EOSC Federation is fully operational as the web of FAIR research data and services towards the end of FP10, several scenarios can be envisioned that will rely more heavily on partners other than the Union.
- **Openness and transparency:** EOSC and the EOSC Federation are open by design, and have been built in an open and transparent manner from their beginnings. Community-wide co-



creation of EOSC and the Federation, led by the broad spectrum represented in the EOSC Tripartite Governance, is well-documented.

- **Legacy:** The current EOSC Partnership has provided the basis for the EOSC Federation. The full legacy of the Partnership is detailed in the introduction to this document.

### 1.1.1 Objective

The objective for the EOSC Partnership to transition into a reinforced FP10 Partnership (Tripartite-led and WP-based) is twofold:

1. To move quickly to maintain the momentum built up by the existing co-programmed Partnership and the ongoing operationalisation and expansion of the EOSC Federation.
2. To establish a stable and predictable governance and financial basis for growing and operating the EOSC Federation and for advancing EOSC as a central initiative of the Union's strategy for research and innovation.

### 1.1.2 Policy assumptions

The Partnership option provides clear additionality to EU strategic objectives, and is based on the understanding that EOSC will remain an increasingly necessary component of the EU strategies and policy narratives cited in the introduction to this document—throughout FP10 and beyond.

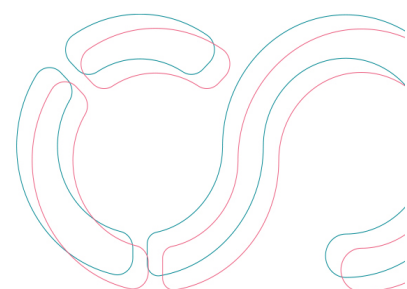
The critical mass of national and stakeholder commitment that is already building EOSC (Tasks 2 and 4) derives directly from the Tripartite collaboration facilitated by the Partnership. A reversion to WP-based funding alone would undermine the groundswell of resources and in-kind activities that have defined the Partnership's success in building EOSC. Furthermore, the realisation of EOSC in its role as a cross-cutting European Data Space—bringing added value to the full ecosystem of common European data spaces—is dependent on the mobilisation of the user base of European researchers represented in the EOSC Association (Tasks 3 and 5).

### 1.1.3 Coherence

A European Partnership preserves continuity in some of the established ways of working, including operations, monitoring and reporting, stakeholder management, personnel, and, perhaps most critically, leverages (and institutionalises) the trust established by the current Tripartite collaboration. Each of these elements of the governance and coordination of EOSC have been matured within the context of the current Partnership framework.

A reinforced European Partnership would also provide continuity with the strategic directionality established by the current EOSC Partnership's new Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda, SRIA 2.0, to be published later this year (2026).

Finally, additionality relative to the notion of EOSC as a strategic initiative of the European Union is maintained in this scenario. The EC has reaffirmed EOSC's strategic importance in multiple 2025 policy documents, including the ERA Policy Agenda, the European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures, and the AI in Science and Data Union strategies, positioning EOSC as a cornerstone of Europe's competitiveness and digital sovereignty indispensable to FP10 objectives.



In short, this scenario preserves and leverages the entire legacy of the current Partnership and builds on the trust cultivated in the research community that is necessary for EOSC's success.

## 1.2 Implementation modality

A Tripartite-governed, Work Programme-based Partnership will be the default option for Partnerships in the new HE. A Joint Undertaking is an alternative option; however, based on the current understanding of the proposed modalities of the former, it remains the potentially better fit for addressing the needs of EOSC.

### 1.2.1 Governance

The WP-based Partnership is established by an MoU between the EC and the other Members of the Partnership. For EOSC, these are expected to be the MS/ACs and stakeholder organisations such as the EOSC Association (EOSC-A).

### 1.2.2 Funding

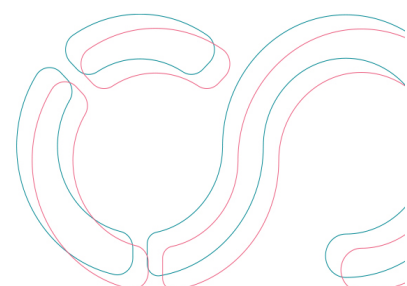
Under the current EC proposal for a WP-based Partnership, the EC, EOSC-A, MS/ACs and any Private Members are required to provide financial contributions to the operational budget of the initiative as well as co-financing of their own participation (or that of their members) in projects funded through the initiative. The question of meeting the financial commitment via structured in-kind contributions remains a point of negotiation in the FP10 proposal (February 2026). This would enable the Partnership to secure significant added value from the MS/ACs and EOSC-A, by leveraging their national and institutional level contributions to the EOSC Federation, while positioning the EC as seed funder.

## 1.3 Actionable pathway

To use a WP-based Partnership for EOSC, ways need to be found to channel dedicated support to the EOSC Federation, to its Nodes and resource contributors, and for its evolution (Tasks 1, 2 and 4); and likewise to stimulate uptake of EOSC by the research community (Tasks 3 and 5).

The management of the Partnership's resources would naturally be taken up by the EC. The Partnership's joint programme would be implemented by the HE Work Programme and its associated funding schemes.

Assimilation into a new Partnership by the current EOSC Partnership would be streamlined in the case of a WP-based Partnership, given the efficiencies shared by the two. This potentially seamless progression may be the single most important element in maintaining the momentum established in the first two years of the Federation's build-up, and in ensuring its sustainability. Specific actions that would exploit this continuity will include (1) the establishment of new governing bodies, now including the MS/ACs in a Tripartite governing board (pending details of the FP10 legislation) and updated terms for the Partnership MoU; (2) the transitioning of the monitoring framework and the SRIA; (3) the transition of the management of the operations and expansion of the EOSC Federation;



and (4) the transition of the role of the EOSC Association. Each of these transitions, while natural to the evolution of the Partnership, would need to be advanced carefully and with trilateral buy-in.

This pathway emphasises the strength of the Partnership option, as significant delays, disruptions and/or changes in the direction of travel during the transition from the current Partnership will jeopardize buy-in to the Federation from the user community, which is expected to be in a delicate early stage during precisely this transition period.

It should also be noted that some EOSC Nodes, as public-sector organisations, would be ineligible for procurement calls.

### 1.3.1 Milestones

- October 2026 (EOSC Symposium)-2028: Expansion of EOSC Federation through the sequencing of new Nodes, onboarding of resources
- Mid-2027: Secured financial commitments from the Partnership's Members, including provisions for the future of the EOSC EU Node
- End-2027: Adoption of SRIA 3.0, including Multi-Annual Roadmap for FP10's first Work Programme
- End-2027: Effective closeout of the co-programmed Partnership, having established capacity, prepared stakeholders, and primed new lines of communication for implementation of the new Partnership
- Early-2028: Establish Partnership MoU, WP and activities
- End-2030: Formal closeout of co-programmed Partnership monitoring and reporting

### 1.3.2 Key dependencies

To maintain continuity where it concerns the growth of the EOSC Federation, the ability of MS/ACs and EOSC-A Member organisations to leverage their in-kind contributions toward Partnership buy-in will be necessary. Without this provision, the Tripartite model risks collapse.

Trust and streamlined ways of working between the EC, MS/ACs and stakeholder organisations like EOSC-A are critical to timely and constructive decision-making.

Widespread support and steadily increasing adoption of the EOSC Federation by European researchers is essential to the relevancy of an EOSC Partnership. This requires a strong community voice embedded in the decision-making processes of the Partnership.

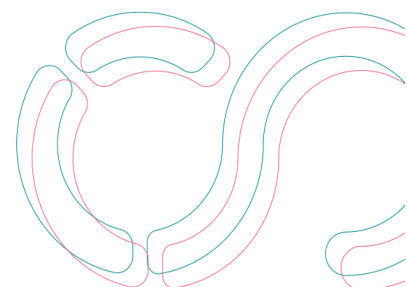
## 1.4 Monitoring

Monitoring of the implementation progress of this scenario will be supported by EOSC-A's EOSC Monitoring Tool and the EOSC Steering Board's EOSC Observatory data.

### **KPI 1 – MS.i /Tasks 1-2-4 – Extension of the operational EOSC Federation**

Baseline: Percentage of MS/ACs providing data and services to the Federation in 2026

Target: Participation in the Federation by data and service providers from at least 60% of the MS/ACs by 2030



**KPI 2 – MS.ii/Tasks 2-3-4-5 – Number of MS/ACs committed to the WP-based Partnership**

Baseline: 42 represented on current EOSC-SB

Target: EU27 + ACs

**KPI 3 – Tasks 2-3-4-5 – Strong policy framework for FAIR data and services at national level**

Baseline: Percentage of participating MS/ACs with a national policy to provide FAIR data and services through the EOSC Federation in 2026

Target: By 2030, 40% of participating MS/ACs will have a national policy to provide FAIR data and services through the EOSC Federation

**KPI 4 – MS.i/Task 2 – Interoperability of the EOSC Federation with the EuroHPC ecosystem (including through Data Labs) and Common European Data Spaces**

Baseline: N/A

Target: EuroHPC ecosystem and at least two Common European Data Spaces by 2030

## 2 Scenario 2: FP10 Work Programme support outside a Partnership framework

### 2.1 Description of scenario

This option moves away from the formal European Partnership designation and involves providing support to EOSC from FP10 through standard Work Programme topics.

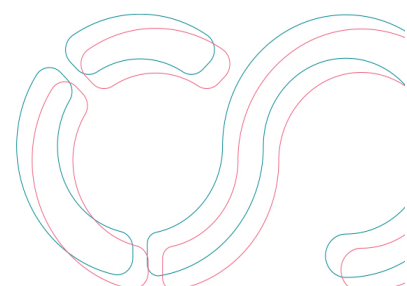
In its most basic form, this option means the areas of activity would be identified by the EC, which may continue to seek advice via Expert Groups. EOSC topics would be included in FP10 Work Programmes, negotiated at each programming cycle with input from MS/ACs via comitology, and from EC services.

#### 2.1.1 Objective

The objectives for the EOSC Partnership are necessarily the same in all phase-out scenarios:

1. To move quickly to maintain the momentum built up by the existing co-programmed Partnership and the ongoing operationalisation and expansion of the EOSC Federation.
2. To establish a stable and predictable legal and financial basis for growing and operating the EOSC Federation and for advancing EOSC as a central initiative of the Union’s strategy for research and innovation.

As this scenario may not meet the stability standard for objective #2, an auxiliary objective would be to provide a solid management and operations framework for the EOSC Federation while in production, and to continue its growth in terms of users and resource contributors.



## 2.1.2 Policy assumptions

The policy assumptions for this scenario strive to be neutral as to whether the possible funding mechanisms demand direct implementation of EOSC by the Commission or whether they enable an external entity to operationalise EOSC, including its Federation. In either case, the overall governance structure is unknown.

However, in order to maintain the momentum established in terms of both directionality and additionality, the underlying assumption in this scenario is heavily biased toward EOSC-A playing a leading role in at least Tasks 2 and 4 (and possibly 1), and that this role is funded accordingly.

The non-Partnership scenario risks the actual or perceived disruption of the policy and operational momentum established by the EOSC Federation during a critical time for user uptake, while simultaneously requiring an overhaul of EOSC's governance model. Together, these disruptions could inadvertently send a message to the research community of incoherence and/or EOSC's de-prioritisation by the Union. Similar perception problems could ripple through the ecosystem of the other emerging Common European Data Spaces. On the other hand, direct funding to a legal entity entrusted to manage the EOSC Federation (Tasks 2 and 4) could potentially streamline and accelerate its expansion, albeit in isolation from Tasks 3 and 5, thus jeopardising user uptake and researcher buy-in.

## 2.1.3 Coherence

In the absence of a Partnership, opportunities for coherence and synergies (directionality and additionality) are limited: there is no ringfenced funding for EOSC in the EU budget; there is no requirement for a SRIA that would provide directionality; there is no formal route for influencing the Work Programme call topics or their content; and projects awarded under EOSC calls in the Work Programme would not be coordinated together. In addition, alignment with and of national MS/AC funding, e.g., in connection to national EOSC Nodes, is limited.

The best-case scenario for coherence in FP10 without a Partnership is that the status quo is sustained until a better framework for long-term sustainability is found. While it is conceivable that Work Programme funding could provide the necessary life support to maintain the legacy of the current Partnership, the lack of continuity and loss of the Partnership's centre of gravity, in particular with respect to the EOSC Federation, introduces significant risk.

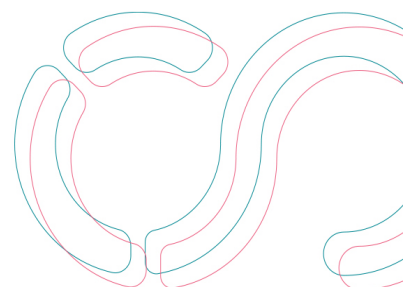
A leading role for the EOSC Association is seen as a prerequisite for coherence.

## 2.2 Implementation modality

### 2.2.1 Governance

The governance of EOSC without a Partnership, but in a scenario that keeps funding directed to EOSC via FP10, is unknown.

While management of the 5 Tasks, including programming and activities, could fall to the EC or EOSC-A (or another legal entity or consortium), or some combination of the two, this does not settle



the question of governance. This scenario leaves open the possibility of something resembling the status quo, where the Tripartite collaboration and/or governance, including the MS/ACs and EOSC-A as expert groups, could be reformulated. This would require a new legal agreement/MoU.

### 2.2.2 Funding

Funding in this scenario may be from the EU only, and it is unclear how it might address ownership of EOSC EU Node operations, or enforcement of a future EOSC “compliance” framework.

National-level co-funding—for example reduced rates, coordinated/joint calls—may apply at FP10 project level, but otherwise would need to be pursued outside FP10, adding significant complexity.

In this scenario there are Financial instruments—including Framework Partnership Agreements (FPA), including Contribution Agreements, or use of a Grant to an Identified Beneficiary (GIB) and cascading grants scheme—which would allow the EC to channel resources in a focused way to the EOSC Federation and/or EOSC-A.

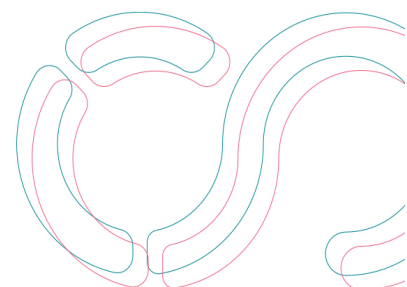
## 2.3 Actionable pathway

To use either or both of the two funding instruments, the FPA and GIB, the EU would contribute budget to an Identified Beneficiary/ies based on an FPA or Contribution Agreement defining the purpose, conditions and activities for which it is spent. The EC would remain the Granting and Contracting Authority for EOSC Tasks managed directly through FP10, preserving some directionality during the Partnership transition.

An alternative but considerably more complex implementation scenario for the no-Partnership option is for the EC to entrust funding, via a large-scale grant mechanism or Contribution Agreement, for indirect management of some or all of the 5 Tasks to EOSC-A or another private legal entity with a public service mission. In this case (and this case only) the entity must be pillar assessed with respect to all mandatory EC pillars as well as those financing pillars that will be used by the entity, in a process that can take 6-18 months. The EC would not be a member of the external entity. The formal framework for a new standalone governance structure would need to be agreed to maintain the EOSC Tripartite governance.

In this case some of the Partnership’s established directionality can be preserved, while its additionality could be secured and enhanced via the strong foundation provided by the introduction of a successfully pillar-assessed entity. The potential for disruption and delay, however, is substantial, and a no-Partnership option that would remove both the EC and EOSC-A from a direct coordinating role in the Federation would require a “reset” compromising the two keys to the Federation’s future success: rapid expansion and user uptake.

Maintaining EOSC-A’s standing as the operational coordinating entity of the EOSC Federation, a role that is already being fulfilled during the current phase of building up the EOSC Federation, would, on the other hand, carry forward the established ways of working and preserve the considerable institutional knowledge accumulated within the Association.



### 2.3.1 Milestones

Milestones i, iii, and iv in Scenario 1 (Section 1.3.1) remain relevant to Scenario 2. Additional milestones include:

- i. Mid-2027: Current Tripartite agrees on a framework for a standalone Tripartite governance for EOSC
- ii. Mid-to-end-2027: Naming of and/or contracting with the Identified Beneficiary; or, designation of entrusted legal entity, including pillar assessment, and establishment of Contribution Agreement
- iii. 2027–2028: Release of HE Work Programme (2028-2029) including dedicated funding for the EOSC Federation and EOSC EU Node

### 2.3.2 Key dependencies

- Inclusion of dedicated funding for EOSC Federation in HE Work Programme
- Continuation of FPAs and GIBs in FP10
- Continued funding for EOSC EU Node operations
- FPA scheme is dependent on EC's readiness to act as central manager of EOSC
- GIB scheme is dependent on EC designation of an identified beneficiary; contribution agreement funding is dependent on establishment of an entrusted legal entity

## 2.4 Monitoring

KPIs 1, 3, 4 and 5 from Scenario 1 (Section 1.4) remain relevant for Scenario 2. Additional KPIs include:

#### **KPI 1 – MS.ii-MS.iii/Tasks 1-2-3-4-5 – Number of 5 Tasks addressed by EOSC topics in first FP10 WP**

Baseline: N/A

Target: 5

#### **KPI 2 – MS.iii/Tasks 1-2-3-4-5 – Amount of dedicated funding for EOSC in first FP10 WP**

Baseline: N/A

Target: 150 M€ per year

#### **KPI 3 – Number of 5 Tasks assessed as progressing acceptably**

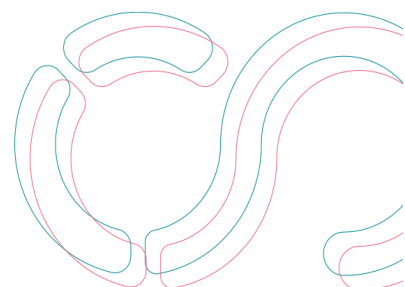
Baseline: 5

Target: 5

#### **KPI 4 – Tasks 2-3-4-5 – Total investment of MS/ACs into EOSC and Open Science**

Baseline: 400 M€ per year

Target: 500 M€ per year



## 3 Scenario 3: European Research Infrastructure Consortium

### 3.1 Description of scenario

This scenario does not rely on continued funding from the EU Framework Programme. The European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) is a specific legal form that facilitates the establishment and operation of new or existing Research Infrastructures with European interest on a non-economic basis. The principal task of an ERIC is to establish and operate a research infrastructure. The rules on its establishment and operations are defined in the ERIC regulation of 2009 (amended in 2013).

Only countries and international organisations can become a member or observer of an ERIC. With a membership of at least one EU member state and two other EU member or associated states, it has legal personality under EU law and full legal capacity recognized in all Member States. It is considered as an international organisation within the meaning of Article 15(c) of Directive 2004/18/EC. Members hold voting rights in the assembly of members.

In the case of an ERIC, neither the EC nor EOSC-A could become a member.

#### 3.1.1 Objective

The objectives for the EOSC Partnership are necessarily the same in all phase-out scenarios:

1. To move quickly to maintain the momentum built up by the existing co-programmed Partnership and the ongoing build-up of the EOSC Federation.
2. To establish a stable and predictable legal and financial basis for growing and operating the EOSC Federation and for advancing EOSC as a central initiative of the Union's strategy for research and innovation.

As the ERIC scenario may not meet the rapidity standard in objective #1, the emphasis here is placed on objective #2.

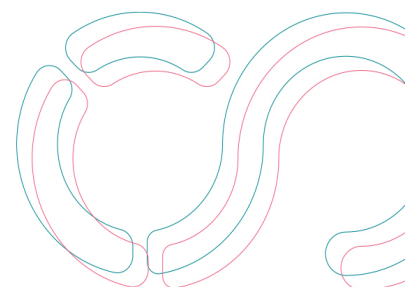
#### 3.1.2 Policy assumptions

The assumption here is that the ERIC framework will continue to be supported by EU law, and that current law allows for the recognition of EOSC and/or the EOSC Federation as a European Research Infrastructure eligible for ERIC status.

#### 3.1.3 Coherence

Because ERICs are driven and funded by the MS/ACs rather than the EC, some additionality is achieved but some is lost relative to the status quo and scenarios 1 and 2. Directionality is provided by the strong leadership model endemic to the ERIC, which is consensus-based and anchored both at the national and institutional levels, including jointly agreed statutes governing the operations of the ERIC.

In particular, an ERIC is especially well-suited to provide a strong and resilient management and operational structure for the EOSC Federation and its continued development (Tasks 2 and 4). The downside would certainly be the diminished role of the EC and the research community (EOSC-A) in



steering the Federation's development as a public good and Europe-wide strategic asset (Tasks 1, 3 and 5). This would likely slant toward the interests of the most heavily invested MS/ACs.

## 3.2 Implementation modality

### 3.2.1 Governance

MS/ACs hold jointly the majority of the voting rights in an ERIC. The European Commission cannot be a member of an ERIC, however, setting up or any significant changes to its statute (as defined in the ERIC regulation) must be sent to the European Commission for its review, assessment and subsequent approval or rejection. The EOSC Association could likewise not become a member.

An ERIC is a community legal instrument to which the Community does not make financial contribution within the meaning of Article 108(2)(f) of the Financial Regulation. It is not defined, nor phased in relation to the implementation of a specific EU Framework Programme. It allows the Community which sets up the ERIC to retain control over certain essential elements to be defined in the statutes of the ERIC.

### 3.2.2 Funding

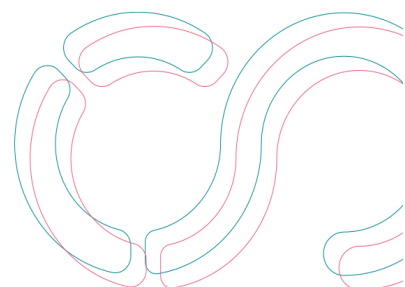
The bulk of the financing for the construction and operation of the ERIC would lie with the Participating States. An ERIC must secure a strong financial commitment from at least three Participating States to be viable under EU law.

Typically, EU funding to ERICs relates to actions supporting the preparatory work to establish an ERIC, to facilitate transnational access to an existing ERIC, to involve an ERIC in thematic R&D activities, or to develop the next generation of scientific instrumentation, tools, methods and services by the concerned research community. In general, the EC does not finance the infrastructure itself and its operation, and the ERIC is dependent on the commitments negotiated with the Participating States.

## 3.3 Actionable pathway

With the establishment of the EOSC Federation, and the EOSC EU Node, EOSC could naturally progress out of the EOSC Partnership into an ERIC. An ERIC is suitable to carry forward the ways of working and institutional knowledge accumulated by the Partnership. Lead-time to establish an ERIC, however, can be significant and requires a strong leadership commitment by at least three MS/ACs. It is more than likely that an ERIC could not be established before the start of FP10, necessitating an intermediate step along the lines of Scenario 1 or 2.

Such a major cultural and administrative reorganisation of EOSC in terms of governance, standard operating procedures, and, potentially, leadership, together with the long lead time to establish the ERIC, risks delaying, and otherwise distracting from the implementation of the 5 Tasks. The abdication of the EC from its longstanding leadership role in the EOSC initiative presents an additional risk.



### 3.3.1 Milestones

- i. End-2026: Secure sufficient bridge funding to sustain all 5 Tasks during the transition to an ERIC
- ii. End-2026-End-2027: Secure the commitment of at least three MS/ACs to lead the process to establish an ERIC for EOSC
- iii. End-2027: Engage additional MS/ACs to join the ERIC and commit funding
- iv. Mid-2028: Prepare and submit ERIC application
- v. End-2029: Negotiate and adopt EOSC-ERIC statutes and begin construction phase
- vi. 203x: Enter steady-state operations

### 3.3.2 Key dependencies

- Substantial resource commitment from at least three MS/ACs.
- Community buy-in, particularly among the EOSC-A membership.
- Continued funding for EOSC EU Node operations.

## 3.4 Monitoring

Meaningful quantitative baseline or target indicators can only be established following a fully funded treatment of this complex scenario. The KPIs are each relevant to the execution of all 5 Tasks.

**KPI 1 – MS.iii: Number of MS/ACs committed to the ERIC**

**KPI 2 – MS.iii-MS.v-MS.vi: Percentage of steady-state operations costs covered by committed MS/ACs**

**KPI 3 – MS.v: Months-to-completion of construction phase**

**KPI 4 – MS.vi: Months-to-completion of start of ERIC operations**

