Accelerating Sustainability in Telecoms (AST) Sustainability Strategy

Electronic Report

1. Executive Summary

The **Accelerating Sustainability in Telecoms (AST)** project has successfully demonstrated how Europe's twin digital and green transitions can be implemented through social dialogue. Co-led by **Connect Europe** and **UNI Europa ICTS**, and co-funded by the **European Commission (DG EMPL)**, the project provided a structured framework to align **technological innovation, environmental responsibility, and social inclusion** within the European telecom sector.

As the two-year funding period concludes, the **AST Sustainability Strategy** ensures the **continuation, visibility, and impact** of the project's outcomes. It provides a roadmap for embedding AST's results into the ongoing activities of the **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)**, promoting long-term adoption of sustainability and fair transition principles across European telecom operators, workers' organisations, and policymakers.

This Strategy sets out a clear plan to:

- Maintain and expand the dissemination of AST outputs — including the **Toolkit**, **Infographics**, **Policy Guidelines**, and **Joint Declaration** — through the communication channels of Connect Europe and UNI Europa.
- Institutionalise AST's achievements by integrating sustainability and twin transition topics into the permanent agenda of the **Telecoms SDC**.
- Launch **pilot sustainability initiatives** in companies and unions, developing case studies and success stories to inspire replication.
- Establish a **pipeline of long-term EU funding opportunities** to support follow-up projects, capacity building, and cross-sectoral initiatives.
- Strengthen synergies with other EU programmes and networks, including the **European Green Digital Coalition**, the **UNI Europa Commerce Twin Transition project**, and the **Digital Europe skills alliances**.

The AST Sustainability Strategy therefore bridges the project's implementation phase and its legacy phase. It defines how Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS, together

with their members, will sustain the dialogue, promote good practices, and lead Europe's telecom sector towards a model that is digital, green, and socially just.

2. Context and Rationale

Europe's telecom sector sits at the intersection of the **twin transition** — the simultaneous transformation driven by digitalisation and decarbonisation. Networks, data infrastructure, and digital platforms are not only fundamental to the continent's competitiveness; they are also key enablers of sustainability across all major industries, from energy and transport to manufacturing and public services.

However, the rapid pace of technological change brings challenges for workers, companies, and regulators. New business models, automation, and the rise of AI require fresh governance frameworks and new skills. Meanwhile, climate neutrality targets demand significant reductions in the sector's energy consumption and carbon footprint.

The **AST project** emerged to address these converging pressures by creating a structured dialogue between employers and workers at EU level. It demonstrated that **social dialogue is an effective governance mechanism for managing transformation**, ensuring that innovation remains human-centred and inclusive.

The findings of the AST Research Report confirm that sustainability in telecoms depends on three interconnected dimensions:

- **Technological innovation** – advancing efficiency, circularity, and resilience through new technologies such as AI, IoT, and Open RAN.
- **Social responsibility** – ensuring fair working conditions, reskilling, and equality in the digital workplace.
- **Environmental performance** – reducing emissions, energy use, and waste across networks and data centres.

To sustain these achievements, it is necessary to move from project-based collaboration to **institutionalised cooperation**. The Sustainability Strategy provides the framework to embed the twin transition into long-term social dialogue structures, ensuring continuity of impact, visibility, and funding.

3. Objectives of the Sustainability Strategy

The **AST Sustainability Strategy** defines how the project's legacy will be preserved, expanded, and mainstreamed across the European telecom sector. Its overarching goal is to ensure that the lessons, tools, and partnerships developed under AST continue to inform both **policy and practice** well beyond the project's initial two-year funding period.

Rather than concluding with the project's closure, this strategy marks the beginning of a **long-term transformation process**. It provides a roadmap for embedding sustainability into the sector's social dialogue structures, operational practices, and funding frameworks.

The specific objectives of the Sustainability Strategy are structured around five key pillars:

1. Ensuring Continuity and Long-Term Impact

The first objective is to guarantee the ongoing dissemination, adoption, and implementation of AST's outputs.

This includes maintaining public access to the **Toolkit**, **Infographics**, **Policy Guidelines**, and **Joint Declaration** on the Connect Europe and UNI Europa websites, ensuring they remain living resources rather than static deliverables.

The aim is to support companies, unions, and policymakers in applying the tools to real-world situations — from designing ESG strategies to negotiating collective agreements that reflect the principles of the twin transition.

2. Institutionalising the Twin Transition within the Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee

A central commitment of the project is to integrate AST's results into the **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)**, transforming them into a permanent point on the Committee's agenda.

This will be achieved through the establishment of **a dedicated Working Group on Sustainability and the Twin Transition**, co-chaired by Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS.

The Working Group will act as a hub for knowledge sharing, monitoring implementation, and coordinating pilot initiatives, ensuring that the dialogue remains dynamic and responsive to emerging challenges such as AI governance, energy efficiency, and skills development.

3. Promoting Widespread Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement

The third objective focuses on ensuring that AST's results continue to reach a wide audience across Europe.

Through joint communication efforts, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will disseminate the project's insights across their **member networks, affiliates, and EU-level partners**, while also reaching national social dialogue structures, universities, and policy forums.

A particular emphasis will be placed on making AST materials available in **multiple EU languages**, and on supporting their use in **training and capacity-building activities** organised by both social partners.

4. Encouraging Pilot Sustainability Initiatives and Good Practice Exchange

Building on section 3.3.2 of the Grant Agreement, the strategy seeks to stimulate the launch of **pilot sustainability initiatives** in telecom companies and unions across Europe.
These pilots — covering areas such as circular network design, energy reduction, inclusive reskilling, and ethical AI — will generate **case studies** that illustrate the tangible benefits of the twin transition for companies, workers, and consumers alike.

These examples will then be showcased through **European conferences, webinars, and awards** to inspire replication within and beyond the sector.

5. Establishing a Long-Term Funding and Partnership Framework

To ensure financial sustainability, the project partners will develop a **pipeline of EU funding opportunities**, monitoring relevant programmes such as **Horizon Europe**, **Digital Europe**, **ESF+**, and **LIFE**.

The goal is to secure new grants or tenders to support the continuation of AST's core activities — such as data collection, skills development, and policy coordination — either as a **stand-alone initiative** or as part of a **broader EU consortium**.

This approach will be complemented by the exploration of **cross-sector synergies** with other UNI Europa projects (Commerce, Finance, and Services) and with the **European Green Digital Coalition** to enhance visibility and resource efficiency.

Together, these objectives define a **comprehensive and future-oriented vision** for the European telecom sector: a sector that not only leads the digital revolution but also models how sustainability, fairness, and innovation can coexist.
The following section outlines how these goals will be governed and institutionalised through the Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee to ensure their long-term realisation.

4. Governance and Integration into the Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the AST project requires embedding its principles and activities into **existing governance structures** that can carry them forward beyond the initial funding period.

The **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)** provides the ideal framework for this purpose — as the only institutional platform where European-level employers and workers jointly shape the sector's policy and social agenda.

The AST project has already established a strong foundation for dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders. The next step is to **institutionalise these achievements** by transforming them into **permanent governance mechanisms** within the SDC.

4.1 Embedding AST within the Social Dialogue Framework

Throughout its implementation, AST has demonstrated that the twin transition — digital and green — can only succeed if it is governed through **collaborative and anticipatory dialogue**.

The project partners, **Connect Europe** (representing telecom employers) and **UNI Europa ICTS** (representing workers), therefore commit to maintaining AST's core mission as part of their ongoing cooperation within the SDC.

To achieve this, the following integration measures are proposed:

- **Establish a permanent SDC Working Group on Sustainability and the Twin Transition**
  This Working Group will succeed the AST Steering Group, assuming its coordination functions. It will operate under the formal umbrella of the SDC and convene at least twice a year.
  Its mandate will include:
  - Monitoring the implementation of AST policy recommendations;
  - Coordinating the dissemination and updates of the Toolkit and Infographics;
  - Collecting and analysing good practices and case studies from companies and unions;
  - Identifying new areas of joint research and EU funding opportunities.

- **Integrate sustainability reporting into regular SDC plenary sessions**
  Each year, the Working Group will present an update on the progress achieved, including data on training programmes, social dialogue initiatives, and environmental performance indicators collected from participating organisations.
  These updates will ensure continuous feedback from national members and provide a transparent mechanism to track long-term outcomes.

- **Create a repository of collective agreements and initiatives on the twin transition**
  Building on AST's mapping of company practices, the partners will establish a digital repository within the Connect Europe/UNI Europa websites to showcase agreements, policies, and initiatives related to digitalisation, decarbonisation, and social sustainability.

- This will serve as a reference point for negotiators and policymakers across Europe, promoting mutual learning and replication.

4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The success of the Sustainability Strategy depends on clear role-sharing among the project's core institutions and stakeholders.

Connect Europe will:

- Lead on policy and industry engagement, ensuring that sustainability is integrated into the strategic and regulatory agenda of telecom operators;
- Coordinate the continuous dissemination of outputs via its communication channels, working closely with the Connect Europe Sustainability WG;
- Represent the project outcomes in relevant EU policy discussions (e.g., Green Deal Industrial Plan, Digital Networks Act, AI and Data Acts).

UNI Europa ICTS will:

- Lead on social dialogue and workforce engagement, supporting national affiliates in applying AST tools and guidelines in collective bargaining and workplace negotiations;

- Promote the inclusion of sustainability and skills provisions in collective agreements, especially in areas related to digital upskilling, green jobs, and fair working conditions;
- Facilitate exchange among trade union networks to strengthen cross-country cooperation on the twin transition.

The European Commission (DG EMPL) and other EU institutions will be invited to:

- Provide ongoing support and visibility to the initiative through participation in annual SDC plenaries and ad-hoc working group sessions;
- Ensure synergies between AST follow-up actions and other EU-funded projects, including those under the ESF+, Digital Europe, and Horizon Europe programmes.

Member Organisations and National Social Partners will:

- Act as the primary implementers of AST's recommendations, adapting them to national contexts and company realities;
- Launch pilot projects, share results with the SDC Working Group, and participate in EU-wide dissemination;
- Nominate focal points to contribute data, case studies, and expertise to the monitoring and evaluation system.

4.3 Governance Mechanisms and Reporting Cycle

To ensure visibility, continuity, and coordination, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will continue to cooperate closely in managing the follow-up activities related to AST.
Building on the strong collaboration established during the project, both organisations will work to maintain a shared communication and governance framework that supports the long-term implementation of the Sustainability Strategy.

This framework will serve to:

- Coordinate dissemination and reporting efforts through the **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)** and relevant EU channels;
- Facilitate exchanges between companies, workers, and policymakers on sustainability practices and outcomes;

- Provide a space — whether digital or institutional — where project materials, case studies, and updates can remain accessible to stakeholders;
- Support outreach to EU institutions, national partners, and other interested sectors, promoting awareness of the project's results and future opportunities for collaboration.

Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will also ensure that the project's communication assets — including the Infographics, Toolkit, and Policy Guidelines — remain available and regularly highlighted through their respective networks and events.
Outreach will focus on encouraging replication of good practices and inspiring further engagement from telecom operators, trade unions, and policymakers across Europe.

Rather than defining fixed communication tools, the approach will remain **flexible and adaptive**, evolving in line with available resources, upcoming initiatives, and future joint projects.

The objective is to keep the AST partnership dynamic, visible, and capable of responding to new policy and industry developments as Europe's twin transition advances.

4.4 Ensuring Accountability and Continuity

Accountability is a core principle of the Sustainability Strategy. To maintain credibility and stakeholder confidence, the Working Group will:

- Adopt **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** covering training uptake, environmental improvements, and inclusion measures;
- Prepare a **short annual report** summarising activities, outcomes, and lessons learned, to be shared with the SDC plenary and the European Commission;
- Review and update the **AST Toolkit and Infographics** every two years to reflect technological and policy evolutions.

These mechanisms will transform AST from a one-off project into a **continuous governance process**, positioning the Telecoms SDC as the institutional driver of sustainability and innovation in the sector.

5. Long-Term Dissemination and Communication

Effective and sustained dissemination is essential to ensure that the results of the **Accelerating Sustainability in Telecoms (AST)** project continue to inform policy, guide industry practices, and support the twin transition across Europe.

The **Sustainability Strategy** therefore establishes a coordinated plan to maintain and expand the visibility of AST's outputs through ongoing communication, stakeholder engagement, and capacity-building activities led jointly by **Connect Europe** and **UNI Europa ICTS**, with the active participation of their national affiliates and members.

The goal is to transform AST's tools, reports, and case studies into a **permanent reference framework** for sustainable transformation in the telecom and ICT services sectors.

5.1 Guiding Principles for Communication

The long-term dissemination plan will follow four key principles that mirror the project's core values:

1. **Accessibility** – ensuring that all outputs remain open, free, and easily usable by companies, trade unions, and policymakers.
2. **Continuity** – maintaining a consistent presence through Connect Europe and UNI Europa channels to keep the twin transition high on the sector's agenda.
3. **Relevance** – regularly updating the materials to reflect new technologies, EU policy developments, and good practices from companies.
4. **Engagement** – promoting interactive forms of learning and exchange that turn AST outputs into living resources.

5.2 Online Presence and Digital Repository

A cornerstone of the dissemination strategy is the **AST online platform**, hosted on the Connect Europe website and mirrored by UNI Europa ICTS.

This dedicated section will act as the **digital repository** for all project materials, including:

- The **AST Final Report**
- The **Infographics Package** linking visual data with policy recommendations
- The **Roundtable and Final Conference Report**

- The **Joint Declaration on Accelerating Sustainability in Telecoms**
- Presentations, recordings, and case studies from partner companies and unions.

The platform will remain permanently accessible at: https://connecteurope.org/projects/AST/

Each resource will include a concise description, hyperlinks to related policy documents (e.g. EU Green Deal, Digital Decade, Skills Agenda), and where relevant, downloadable templates or visual summaries.

The objective is to make the AST materials **self-explanatory and adaptable**, allowing organisations across the EU to replicate or scale up successful practices.

To complement this, UNI Europa will feature an overview of the project within its own "Digitalisation and Twin Transition" section, ensuring visibility across its wider trade union network, including Commerce, Finance, and Services.

5.3 Communication Channels and Outreach Tools

Both project partners will leverage their institutional communication infrastructures to ensure continued outreach.

The main channels include:

- **Connect Europe** – website news, newsletters, LinkedIn and X (Twitter) posts, and cross-promotion through member operators' sustainability pages.
- **UNI Europa ICTS** – newsletters, campaign materials, and participation in UNI Global network communications.
- **Joint events and policy forums** – updates and discussions presented at the Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee, the Liaison Forum, and other sectoral social dialogues.
- **Academic and policy dissemination** – use of AST findings in workshops, conferences, and research collaborations with universities and think tanks (e.g. ETUI, Visionary Analytics).

5.4 Capacity-Building and Knowledge Transfer

Beyond visibility, the Sustainability Strategy aims to ensure that the AST outputs actively support capacity-building.

To this end, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will jointly promote **training and learning activities** based on the project's findings.

These activities will reinforce the project's objective of turning social dialogue into a practical instrument for managing technological and environmental change.

In parallel, the partners will develop **case-study briefs** and **multimedia learning materials** that illustrate how sustainability can be embedded in business operations and collective agreements.

Such content will be updated regularly and made available in English, French, and additional EU languages, based on demand from national members.

5.5 Expected Outcomes

The implementation of this long-term dissemination and communication plan will deliver:

- A **permanent digital knowledge hub** on sustainable telecom practices;
- Increased awareness and adoption of AST tools across EU Member States;
- Continuous learning opportunities for both employers and workers;
- Stronger linkages between telecom sustainability and EU policy agendas;
- An enhanced international reputation for Connect Europe and UNI Europa as leading advocates for responsible digitalisation.

6. Pilot Sustainability Initiatives and Case Studies

A key component of the AST Sustainability Strategy is the **translation of dialogue into action** — ensuring that the project's outcomes are not only disseminated but actively applied and tested within companies, trade unions, and national social dialogue structures.

The **Pilot Sustainability Initiatives** will act as real-world laboratories for implementing the principles and tools developed throughout the project, providing measurable evidence of how sustainability and the twin transition can be achieved in practice within the European telecom ecosystem.

6.1 Purpose and Rationale

The pilot initiatives aim to:

- **Operationalise the AST Toolkit** by supporting companies and unions in applying its recommendations;
- **Collect practical evidence** on how sustainability and digital transformation interact at the organisational level;
- **Showcase best practices** that can be replicated or scaled up across Member States;
- **Reinforce the role of social dialogue** as a driver of responsible innovation and fair transition;
- **Strengthen the visibility** of the telecom sector as a frontrunner in implementing Europe's Green Deal and Digital Decade objectives.

By linking research and policy to company-level practice, the pilots will bridge the gap between **strategic vision and operational change**. They will also feed back into the Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC), where their lessons can inform policy updates, training needs, and new collective bargaining frameworks.

6.2 Framework and Governance of Pilot Actions

The **SDC Working Group** will oversee the coordination and evaluation of pilot initiatives.
The group will:

- Set common methodological guidelines and reporting templates for participants;
- Provide assistance to companies and trade unions in selecting pilot areas;
- Monitor progress and ensure consistency with EU and national regulatory frameworks;
- Support visibility through communication campaigns and publication of results.

Each participating company or national partner will appoint a **pilot focal point** responsible for coordination with the Working Group.
The pilots will follow a common sequence of stages:

1. **Selection of thematic area and objectives** – choosing one or more dimensions of the twin transition (e.g. AI for energy efficiency, circular procurement, reskilling programmes).

2. **Joint planning between management and worker representatives**, ensuring the initiative reflects the principles of social dialogue.
3. **Implementation and monitoring**, with qualitative and quantitative indicators (energy saved, workers trained, materials reused, etc.).
4. **Evaluation and documentation**, resulting in a **case study** to be published and shared within the WG.

6.3 Thematic Areas for Pilot Implementation

The pilot initiatives will cover four main thematic areas reflecting the priorities identified through the AST research, roundtables, and final conference:

1. **Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction**
    - Optimising network operations, data centres, and logistics to reduce emissions and energy consumption.
    - Exploring renewable energy integration and heat recovery systems.
    - Measuring progress through clear metrics (PUE, WUE, and carbon intensity indicators).
2. **Circular Networks and Responsible Procurement**
    - Extending equipment lifecycles and reusing components through reverse logistics and modular upgrades.
    - Encouraging green procurement practices and cooperation with suppliers that meet sustainability criteria.
    - Promoting transparency in value chains, including through blockchain-based traceability systems.
3. **Skills and Workforce Transformation**
    - Implementing reskilling and upskilling programmes aligned with the AST Policy Guidelines on employability and lifelong learning.
    - Promoting gender balance, youth inclusion, and training for older workers to ensure equitable access to green and digital jobs.
    - Developing partnerships with universities and training providers for continuous learning modules.
4. **AI, Automation, and Ethics in Innovation**

- Testing frameworks for fair and transparent use of artificial intelligence in network management and HR processes.
- Evaluating how algorithmic decision-making affects productivity, job quality, and well-being.
- Promoting human oversight, worker consultation, and ethical auditing systems.

Each thematic cluster will serve as a reference point for future collective bargaining, helping to define **practical standards** for sustainable transformation that balance competitiveness with fairness.

6.4 Development of Case Studies

The lessons and outcomes of each pilot will be captured through **detailed case studies** coordinated by the project partners, with communication support from Connect Europe's and UNI Europa's media teams.

Each case study will include:

- Background and objectives of the initiative;
- Description of the implementation process and stakeholders involved;
- Measurable results (energy savings, training hours, waste reduction, etc.);
- Social impact assessment (on employment, skills, and work organisation);
- Challenges and recommendations for replication.

These case studies will be published in the **AST online repository**, accessible through the Connect Europe and UNI Europa websites, and promoted through newsletters, webinars, and social media campaigns.

They will also be **presented at EU-level events** — including future Social Dialogue Committee meetings and conferences organised under the European Green Digital Coalition and Digital SME initiatives.

6.5 Recognition and Visibility

To maximise visibility, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will jointly identify **European and international award schemes** that recognise outstanding sustainability achievements in business and social dialogue.

Examples include:

- The **European Sustainable Industry Awards**,
- The **CSR Europe Awards**,
- The **European Social Innovation Competition**, and
- The **ILO Global Good Practices in Just Transition Awards**.

AST partners will assist participating organisations in submitting their pilot projects to these platforms, ensuring broader recognition and dissemination of results. In addition, the most successful initiatives will be featured in **annual AST Highlights Reports** and presented in **EU Green Week or Digital Assembly** sessions, promoting the telecom sector as a **pioneer in responsible and forward-looking transformation**.

6.6 Expected Outcomes

The implementation of the Pilot Sustainability Initiatives will lead to:

- A portfolio of case studies demonstrating measurable progress in sustainability, social dialogue, and innovation;
- Enhanced cooperation between employers, workers, and policymakers at national and EU levels;
- Increased visibility of the telecom sector's contribution to the EU Green Deal and Digital Decade targets;
- A robust evidence base to guide future EU-funded projects and social dialogue negotiations;
- Greater public recognition of the telecom industry as a **catalyst for the twin transition**.

7. Funding Coordination Mechanism

Ensuring the long-term continuity of the AST initiative requires a sustained effort to identify, coordinate, and leverage relevant funding opportunities.

The purpose of this mechanism is not to establish a fixed structure, but rather to provide a flexible framework through which Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS can align resources, explore synergies, and plan future actions in a coordinated manner.

The partners will continue to **monitor EU and international programmes** that support skills development, sustainability, and social dialogue in the digital economy. This monitoring will include potential opportunities for research, innovation, training, and social partnership activities that build on AST's results.

Depending on relevance and feasibility, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS may jointly prepare or support applications under suitable funding schemes, or contribute to initiatives where AST's objectives can be integrated into broader policy frameworks.

To facilitate coordination, the partners may establish a **light governance structure or informal working arrangement** to regularly exchange information on open calls, funding trends, and possible joint projects.

This structure would also help ensure complementarity between ongoing social dialogue work and new sustainability initiatives developed at EU or national level.

The Funding Coordination Mechanism will remain **adaptive and exploratory**, guided by three overarching principles:

1. **Alignment** – ensuring that future funding activities remain consistent with AST's values and goals;
2. **Synergy** – encouraging collaboration between industry, social partners, and public authorities;
3. **Sustainability** – supporting projects that deliver tangible benefits for people, the environment, and the telecom ecosystem.

By maintaining a proactive yet flexible approach to funding, Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will be able to **extend the reach and impact** of the AST initiative, ensuring that its outcomes continue to inspire new forms of collaboration and innovation well beyond the project's initial duration.

8. Synergies and Partnerships

The long-term sustainability and visibility of the **AST initiative** depend on the ability of social partners to maintain strong partnerships and meaningful cooperation across the European ecosystem.

Throughout the project, AST has shown that achieving a fair and inclusive twin transition requires collaboration that transcends institutional and sectoral boundaries — bringing together companies, workers, policymakers, and researchers around shared goals.

8.1. Building on the AST Collaborative Model

AST created a trusted space for dialogue between **Connect Europe**, **UNI Europa ICTS**, and a wide network of stakeholders, demonstrating that innovation and social progress are mutually reinforcing.

This cooperative model — based on research, foresight, and practical experience — will continue to guide future collaboration, ensuring that the project's legacy evolves through new partnerships rather than ending with its formal completion.

Both partners will remain committed to embedding AST's principles within a broader framework of cooperation, integrating sustainability and digitalisation into ongoing policy debates and social dialogue structures.

8.2. Strategic Cooperation at European and Sectoral Level

At the European level, **Connect Europe** and **UNI Europa ICTS** will continue to engage with institutions, networks, and initiatives that align with AST's objectives. Potential synergies include exchanges with **DG EMPL**, **DG CONNECT**, and **DG GROW**, as well as with platforms such as the **European Green Digital Coalition**, **EU-OSHA**, and **ETUI**.

These collaborations can ensure that AST's outcomes inform EU policy discussions on skills, ESG reporting, and sustainable digital transformation.

At sectoral level, the **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)** will remain the key arena for follow-up activities, fostering cross-country learning and integrating sustainability topics into future work programmes.

AST may also inspire similar approaches in related UNI Europa sectors — such as commerce or finance — where the twin transition poses comparable challenges and opportunities.

8.3. Partnerships for Knowledge, Innovation, and Dissemination

Collaboration with research and innovation communities will remain central to sustaining AST's impact.

Institutions such as **Visionary Analytics**, universities, and policy research centres can help update the evidence base and support ongoing reflection on new technologies, work organisation, and sustainability governance.

Joint studies, conferences, and expert exchanges will reinforce the link between research and social dialogue, keeping the initiative relevant and evidence-driven.

Equally, partnerships with companies, SMEs, and national-level organisations will enable the continued dissemination of AST materials — including the **Toolkit, Infographics, and Policy Guidelines** — and promote their practical use in training, negotiation, and policymaking contexts.

8.4. Guiding Principles for Future Partnerships

Future cooperation will be guided by a few simple but enduring principles:

- **Openness**, to ensure that collaboration remains inclusive and cross-sectoral;
- **Complementarity**, to align AST's activities with other EU and national initiatives;
- **Flexibility**, allowing adaptation to evolving policy and funding environments;
- **Impact**, to focus on partnerships that create tangible benefits for workers, companies, and society.

Through this open and adaptive approach, **Connect Europe** and **UNI Europa ICTS** will ensure that AST continues to act as a bridge between technology, sustainability, and social progress — turning the project into a lasting platform for shared learning and collective action across Europe's digital landscape.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that the **AST Sustainability Strategy** remains relevant, credible, and aligned with its long-term objectives.
Rather than establishing fixed procedures, the monitoring framework will serve as a **guiding approach** to support reflection, learning, and continuous improvement among social partners and stakeholders involved in the twin transition.

9.1. Purpose and Principles

The overarching purpose of monitoring is to assess progress, capture lessons, and ensure that the actions inspired by AST contribute to lasting impact. Evaluation will focus on understanding how the project's results — including dialogue mechanisms, policy tools, and pilot initiatives — continue to support sustainability, innovation, and inclusion across the telecom sector.

This process will be guided by a few key principles:

- **Proportionality**, ensuring that monitoring efforts remain balanced and not overly burdensome;
- **Transparency**, encouraging open exchange of information and experiences;
- **Participation**, involving both employers and workers in reviewing progress;
- **Adaptability**, allowing the framework to evolve as new challenges and opportunities emerge.

9.2. Coordination and Process

Monitoring will take place within existing governance structures — notably through the **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)** and its working groups. Connect Europe and UNI Europa ICTS will jointly facilitate exchanges of information, feedback, and experiences from national members and affiliated organisations.

Progress will be reviewed periodically in a collaborative manner, with an emphasis on qualitative insights rather than quantitative reporting.

Findings may be summarised and shared with stakeholders to foster dialogue and guide future joint activities.

This will ensure that monitoring functions not merely as an evaluation exercise, but as a **learning process** that strengthens mutual understanding and cooperation.

9.3. Areas of Reflection

The assessment will broadly focus on four interrelated areas that reflect AST's integrated approach:

1. **Sustainability and Environment** – how telecom operations and networks evolve towards greener and more circular models;
2. **Skills and Workforce Development** – how training, inclusion, and employability continue to advance;
3. **Innovation and Transformation** – how technological change aligns with social and environmental objectives;
4. **Dialogue and Governance** – how cooperation between social partners contributes to responsible and forward-looking decision-making.

These areas are intended as a **flexible reference**, allowing partners to adapt priorities and indicators over time according to evolving needs and contexts.

9.4. Looking Ahead

Monitoring and evaluation will remain an ongoing and collaborative effort, evolving in step with the broader EU agenda on the twin transition.

By fostering open communication and regular reflection, the partners will ensure that AST's legacy continues to inform new initiatives and strengthen social dialogue in the telecom and digital sectors.

In this way, evaluation becomes not an endpoint but a **continuing process of shared learning**, supporting the long-term goal of building a sustainable, inclusive, and innovative European telecom ecosystem.

10. Conclusions and Next Steps

The **AST Sustainability Strategy** marks an important step in translating the project's achievements into a lasting framework for cooperation and dialogue.

It builds on the collective effort of **Connect Europe**, **UNI Europa ICTS**, and their partners to demonstrate that the telecom sector can lead Europe's **twin transition** — one that is digital, green, and fair.

Over its two-year duration, AST has generated a broad set of tools, policy recommendations, and shared experiences that connect technological innovation with social responsibility.

This Strategy ensures that those results continue to inspire action, supporting a culture of sustainability and inclusion across the telecom ecosystem.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on maintaining **continuity, collaboration, and adaptability**.

The **Telecoms Social Dialogue Committee (SDC)** will remain the main forum through which AST's principles are discussed, updated, and integrated into future agendas.

Social partners will continue to promote sustainability, skills development, and responsible innovation through collective bargaining, knowledge sharing, and participation in EU initiatives.

Longer term, the ambition is to evolve AST's legacy into a **permanent reference framework** for sustainable transformation in the telecom and digital sectors. This will depend on ongoing commitment, regular dialogue, and cooperation among

industry actors, workers, and policymakers — ensuring that the goals of competitiveness, inclusion, and environmental responsibility advance together.

Ultimately, the AST project shows that **sustainability and social dialogue are mutually reinforcing**.

By continuing to work together, Europe's telecom community can turn these principles into practice — shaping a digital future that is innovative, resilient, and genuinely human-centred.