STI is a vital enabler for achieving the SDGs. It has the potential to drive economic growth, improve health outcomes, enhance food security, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, among other benefits.

However, the current state of STI financing in developing countries, particularly in Africa, remains a significant challenge. In this context, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission has been collaborating with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team (UNIATT) on STI for SDGs since 2018. The JRC has worked closely with UNIATT within the framework of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism. This partnership has resulted in the many important milestones, including the publication of the Guidebook for the preparation of STI for SDGs roadmaps and the Global Pilot Programme for the development of roadmaps.

This collaboration with UNIATT has also paved the way for a JRC project on STI for SDGs roadmaps in Africa that was launched in 2022 and just ended with the definition of roadmaps in five African countries: The Gambia, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda and Seychelles. The JRC project focuses on aligning these countries' STI capacities with place-specific sustainability objectives using a challenge-led approach. The project's participative and data-driven nature has been essential in the successful definition of actionable projects for investment in STI, with extensive stakeholder consultations, surveys, and evidence-based analysis conducted alongside local experts and community leaders.
The findings have highlighted common challenges that, if addressed, can amplify the impact of STI for SDGs roadmaps across Africa.
These findings were presented on 23-25 October in a 3-day workshop that JRC organised in Pretoria, with the participation of representatives from all the country teams that were part of the project, including the Minister of the Gambia, and representatives from other countries such as South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Tunisia, as well as international organisations, academics and funding institutions.

The workshop included a dedicated session on STI financing and, among the point discussed, the following findings and key messages were highlighted:

First, as we know, Africa's STI investments are underfunded, with a significant gap between current spending and the recommended 1% of GDP. This gap needs to be addressed to ensure that Africa can harness the potential of STI to achieve sustainable development.

Although policy documents widely recognize societal challenges and SDGs, STI policies often lack sectoral specificity. Strengthening alignment between STI and sector-specific goals will be crucial going forward.

Policy coherence also presents a challenge. Ensuring alignment across governance levels and among diverse stakeholders—from government bodies to civil society—is essential.

Through this project, we have also observed limitations in policy implementation, with many promising initiatives struggling to move beyond pilot phases due to funding gaps or scalability issues.

Furthermore, data availability has been a critical obstacle for the project. Relevant STI data, especially in challenge-specific areas, is often incomplete. There is an untapped opportunity to integrate data from donor-funded projects to enrich monitoring and evaluation efforts, which will be key for continued learning and adaptation.

In light of these findings, some possible actions can be deployed to improve and facilitate financing of STI for SDGs roadmaps.

Firstly, there is a need to integrate STI into national development priorities, ensuring that STI investments are aligned with national development goals. STI for SDGs roadmaps serve this purpose by **giving directionality to investments**. This also requires demonstrating the socio-economic benefits of STI to decision-makers and the public, and prioritizing these projects within established budgets.

Secondly, **new mechanisms are needed to bridge the financial gaps** in Research and Development (R&D), including blended finance, mission-oriented innovation policies, or challenge-led approaches. These mechanisms can help to mobilize additional funding for STI investments and ensure that they are aligned with national development priorities. Blended finance might represent an opportunity for the implementation of STI for SDGs roadmaps, combining public and private funds to reduce investment risks and attract more substantial private sector capital. By carefully structuring these arrangements, private investments may complement public initiatives rather than displace them.

Lastly, **strengthening multi-sectoral collaboration** is crucial to attract investments, bringing together governments, research institutions, universities, and private sector actors to create a unified strategy for innovation. By fostering knowledge exchange and pooling expertise, multi-sectoral collaboration can ensure that STI initiatives are relevant, financially well-supported, and impactful.

In conclusion, unlocking the sustainable development potential, especially in developing contexts, through STI requires a **holistic, collaborative approach that aligns funding, partnerships, and policies with local, national and international priorities and objectives**. By fostering inclusive partnerships, leveraging innovative financing, and ensuring local ownership, we can build a resilient, knowledge-based economy that contributes to a prosperous and sustainable future for all.