13th February 2026

Joint communications statement

Strengthening Europe - Japan Digital Gateway with Polar Connect

In line with EU-Japan Digital Partnership and to strengthen the collaboration on submarine cables, NII/SINET and NORDUnet have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the Polar Connect initiative aiming at safeguarding European and Japanese digital sovereignties. This agreement intends to achieve secure and resilient connectivity across the Arctic connecting Asia and Europe, in favour of research, development, innovation and education.

In our modern digital society, more than 97% of the internet traffic flows via submarine cables. However, the routes used by those cables have become insecure in the current geopolitical context.

Therefore, *Polar Connect* will use a novel cable route through the Arctic, where Europe and Asia can directly interconnect using a resilient, secure, and sovereign infrastructure, key to Europe's and Japan's digital autonomies.

Valter Nordh, NORDUnet CEO, stated:
"NORDUnet and the Nordic National Research and Education Networks have identified and created an innovative vision for such a resilient system[1], promoting the new critical infrastructure *Polar Connect*, highly strategic and enabling new opportunities in terms of communications and research collaboration with our Asian partners."

Kento Aida, NII Professor / Vice Director-General stated:
"At NII, we are committed to ensuring secure and resilient global connectivity for research and education. The Polar Connect initiative represents a strategic step toward diversifying international routes and strengthening digital sovereignty for both Japan and Europe. Through this collaboration with NORDUnet, we aim to create a robust infrastructure that supports cutting-edge research and innovation across continents."

NII/SINET and NORDUnet have a long history of collaboration in networking, exchanging internet traffic between the Nordic countries and Japan, in recent years as partners in the Asia-Pacific Europe Ring (AER). They both recognize the strategic importance and asset of a strong, sustainable, and resilient international footprint for Europe and Japan and they are committed to advancing the digital Global Gateways - technological infrastructures that facilitate the flow of digital information, represented by systems that promote connectivity between different continents.

[1] https://polarconnect.net/Vision2030

About NORDUnet
NORDUnet is a collaboration between the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) of the five Nordic countries, i.e., Denmark (DeiC), Finland (Funet/CSC), Iceland (RHnet), Norway (Sikt), and Sweden (Sunet). NORDUnet operates a world-class data network, based on dark fiber and spectrum sharing, together with support for e-infrastructures, including media services like videoconferencing and lecture capturing & playback. More than 400 research & education institutions in the Nordics, with over 1.2 million users, are connected via the Nordic NREN networks, enabling scientists, educators, and students to work and share knowledge globally. NORDUnet is an active participant in the European NREN collaboration GÉANT and is a founding father of intercontinental NREN collaborations such as the Advanced North Atlantic (ANA) and AsiaPacific Europe Ring (AER) systems that are part of the Global Research and Education Network (GREN). In 2020, NORDUnet celebrated 40 years of Nordic NREN collaboration.
https://nordu.net/
Contact: ieva@nordu.net

About NII/SINET
Science Information NETwork (SINET) is a nationwide information and communication platform developed and operated by the National Institute of Informatics (NII) to serve as a core scientific information infrastructure for universities and research institutions across Japan. With network nodes distributed throughout the country, SINET supports collaboration and community-building among researchers and educators, while promoting the broad dissemination of scientific knowledge. SINET is also interconnected with leading international research networks, including Internet2 in the United States and GÉANT in Europe, enabling the seamless exchange of research data essential for advanced global research projects. Today, SINET provides more than 1,000 universities and research institutions with a high-performance scientific information infrastructure, organically linking them through a nationwide 400 Gbps backbone network—one of the fastest in the world—along with an international backbone of the same capacity, ensuring robust connectivity for global research collaboration.
https://www.sinet.ad.jp/en
Contact: y-fujimoto@nii.ac.jp