

# Digital future



March 2024

Accelerating the region's digital transformation is a priority under the Economic and Investment Plan to enable the twin green and digital transition. The roll-out of ultra-fast and secure broadband focuses on remote areas and lower-income populations to ensure universal access. The WBIF also supports investments in secure and energy-efficient data centres, cloud infrastructures, high-performance computing, and exploring synergies with other connectivity areas.

2009 - 2023

€53m

WBIF grant

€562m

estimated investment

up to €20m  
guarantee coverage

up to €1m  
EU technical assistance grant for guarantees

## Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans 2021-2027

Flagship 8  
Digital infrastructure



## Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans

The Digital Agenda paves the way for the digital transition of the region. It focuses on the EU Digital Decade policy objectives of digital skills, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, business and governments, digital transformation.

### EIP flagship investments 2020-2023

2 flagships endorsed

€44.7m WBIF EU grant

€177.1m estimated investment

### Expected results of flagship investments



615 schools equipped with smart labs for more than 198,000 students/year in Albania



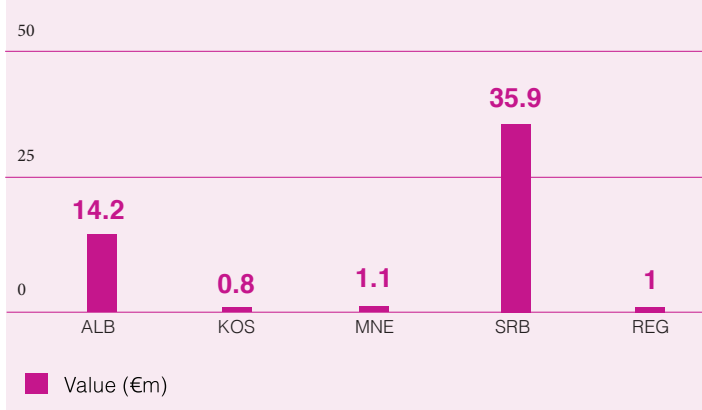
368,000 people with access to Internet in rural areas in Serbia



Infrastructure sharing via the Balkan Digital Highway initiative

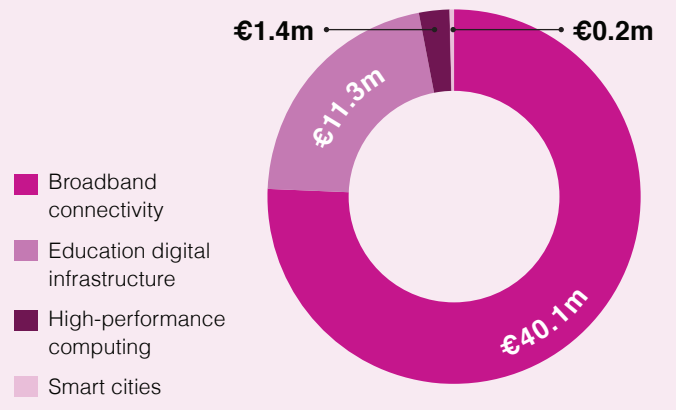
### WBIF grants approved by beneficiary

2009-2023



### WBIF grants approved by subsector

2009-2023



# Flagship investments examples

March 2024

## Flagship 8 Digital infrastructure

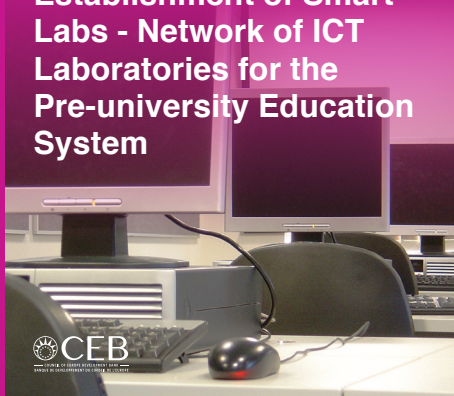
### Serbia Rural Broadband Rollout Phase 2



This project builds on the Rural Broadband Rollout project launched in 2020. It will enable Serbia to connect the existing fibre backbone to 815 additional settlements, 305 schools and at least 128,000 households in rural areas without access to a broadband network. The investments will create new economic opportunities and skills for local populations in less developed regions through increased access to connectivity and training. It will also advance a competitiveness-focused policy engagement in the telecommunications sector.

WBIF EU grant	<b>€34.2m</b>
EBRD loan	<b>€100m</b>
Beneficiary contribution	<b>€1.4m</b>
Estimated investment	<b>€135.6m</b>
Expected completion	<b>2026</b>

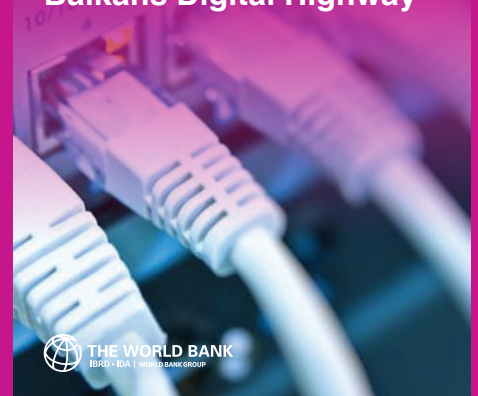
### Albania Establishment of Smart Labs - Network of ICT Laboratories for the Pre-university Education System



Preparing children and students for their future careers is one of the main goals in education. Albania is introducing ICT in elementary schools, with hands-on curricula taught in smart labs. This project will implement 654 smart ICT labs in 615 schools across the country, increasing the availability of computer labs for students in their pre-university cycles and enhancing computer programming skills. Overall, more than 198,000 students will benefit from the newly implemented labs annually.

WBIF EU grant	<b>€10.5m</b>
CEB loan (est.)	<b>€27m</b>
Beneficiary contribution	<b>€4m</b>
Estimated investment	<b>€41.5m</b>
Expected completion	<b>2025</b>

### Western Balkans Balkans Digital Highway



The availability of broadband infrastructure is a key determinant of economic and social development. Infrastructure sharing is an effective way to lower the costs of deploying broadband communications networks and obtain better connectivity. Given the benefits, the World Bank set up the Balkans Digital Highway initiative to advance regional interconnectivity and increase access to the Internet by establishing regional broadband infrastructure over transmission grids of state-owned energy companies. The WBIF funds the feasibility study and the preliminary designs for related investments.

WBIF bilateral donor grant	<b>€1m</b>
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