



DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE



SECTOR SUMMARY

The Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans and SEE 2020 strategy aim to unlock access to a digital economy in the Western Balkans by integrating the region into the pan-European digital market. This requires future-proof digitisation strategies, an updated regulatory environment, improved broadband infrastructure, as well as access and digital literacy. Digital infrastructure and broadband are part of the digital integration pillar of the Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans (MAP-REA). In response, the WBIF adopted digital infrastructure as an additional eligible sector in December 2017. Various WBIF stakeholders with relevant digital expertise have been consulted since then, including DG CONNECT, developing this new sector under WBIF in line with the European Commission's policies and strategies and beneficiaries' needs.

WBIF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

The WBIF supports the deployment of digital infrastructures (including broadband connectivity) in the region through technical assistance for the preparation of investment projects. Projects in the sector focus on 'white zones' and rural areas as well as support the digital connectivity of educational, healthcare, municipal and governmental institutions. In December 2019, the WBIF extended its area of assistance to e-Infrastructures, interconnection of administration, research and education networks with speeds of up to 500 Gbps, and high performance computing.

WBIF GRANTS BY SECTOR

Digital infrastructure subsectors (€m)



■ Broadband connectivity



Western Balkans Investment Framework **WBIF**
BUILDING THE EUROPEAN FUTURE TOGETHER

PROJECTS SUPPORTED	ESTIMATED PROJECT VALUE	PROJECTS WITH LOANS SIGNED	WBIF GRANTS AWARDED	WBIF GRANTS IN 2019
6	€252 m	1/€4.3 m	€5.9 m	€5.4 m

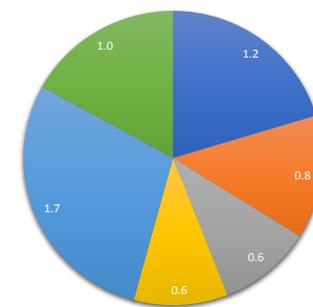
EXPECTED RESULTS

- 70% of households with access to broadband connections in rural areas in Albania
- 190 healthcare facilities and 200 schools with 1GB fix broadband internet in rural areas in the north-east of Albania
- 136,500 students and teachers in 500 primary and secondary schools connected to high-speed broadband in Kosovo
- 48,700 people with access to next generation networks in 'white' areas in Montenegro
- 47,200 people with access to ultra-fast internet in 'white' and 'grey' zones in North Macedonia
- 1,500 schools and 225,000 households connected to broadband networks in rural areas and increased access to services for 650,000 people in Serbia

WBIF GRANTS BY BENEFICIARY

Value of grants (€m)

Number of grants



● Albania
● Kosovo*
● Montenegro



● North Macedonia
● Serbia
● Regional projects



PROJECT EXAMPLES



Broadband Infrastructure Development in Montenegro



Over 36% of the population in Montenegro lives in rural areas. The provision of broadband internet access in remote locations exceeds the purchasing power of operators and are a financial challenge. Therefore, such areas were omitted in the commercial development plans of telecom operators.

The WBIF funds a feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis in order to find a technical, institutional and organisational solution for next generation network broadband throughout the entire country.

The main objective of this infrastructure project is to address Internet Broadband accessibility and connectivity in the country and ensure fixed broadband connectivity for education facilities, hospitals, public institutions, municipalities, and households. The deployment of fixed broadband infrastructure will strengthen economic and social development. Increased access to ICT will boost digital connectivity between Montenegro and other countries in the region and the EU, reduce the digital gap, and contribute to the region's development.



ESTIMATED PROJECT VALUE:	€27.6 m
WBIF GRANT:	€0.6 m (TA)
ESTIMATED LOAN:	€15.9 m (EBRD)



Connecting Primary and Secondary Schools in Kosovo



Information and Communications Technology is one of the six priority sectors for economic development in Kosovo. Together with the World Bank, the country is implementing the Digital Economy Project for Kosovo (KODE), in order to improve access to better quality and highspeed broadband services and to online knowledge sources, services and labour markets for citizens, and public and academic institutions. It will enable higher education institutions to interconnect through Kosovo's National Research Education Network (NREN) and connect to the GEANT Network to have access to new sources of information and new opportunities for research and education.

The WBIF funded project will extend the KREN Network to all primary and secondary schools and ensure connection speed of at least 1 Gbps. WBIF provides the feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis for assessing mid-mile and last-mile connection interventions needed, and thus the involvement of the private sector.

Extending coverage to primary and secondary schools in cities, small towns and rural areas will enable 136,500 students and teachers in 500 schools across the country to have access to a high-speed and resilient network, share and access knowledge using the latest standards and services.



ESTIMATED PROJECT VALUE:	€25.6 m
WBIF GRANT:	€0.8 m (TA)
ESTIMATED LOANS:	€11.9 m (EIB) €11.9 m (CEB)