



Digital future



February 2023

Universal access to fast and secure broadband



Accelerating the region's digital transformation is a priority under the Economic and Investment Plan to enable the twin green and digital transition. Since 2017, the WBIF supports investments in both infrastructure and services. The roll-out of ultra-fast and secure broadband focuses on remote areas and lower-income populations to ensure universal access. Investments in secure and energy-efficient data centres, edge and cloud infrastructures, links to EU initiatives on high-performance computing, and exploring synergies with other connectivity areas are also supported.

2009 - 2023

€54.2m

WBIF grant

€640m

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.

Expected results (2023 - 2030)



70% of households with broadband connectivity in rural areas in Albania



71,900 people with access to next generation broadband networks in rural areas in Montenegro



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



Broadband connectivity for 152,000 households and 480 schools in rural areas in Serbia



500 schools connected to high-speed broadband benefitting over 136,500 students/year in Kosovo*

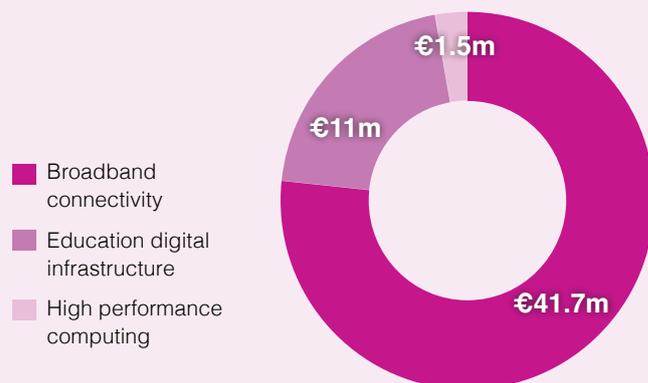


Infrastructure sharing via the Balkan Digital Highway initiative

WBIF grants approved by beneficiary



WBIF grants approved by subsector



* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Flagship investments examples

February 2023



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 **€34.2m**

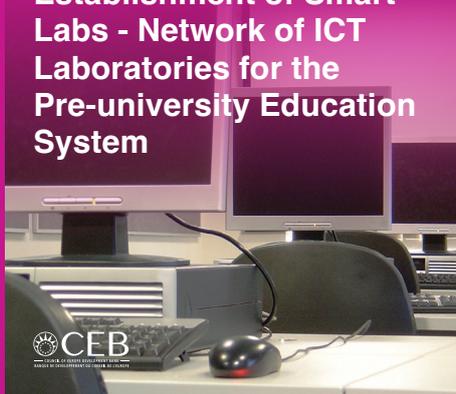
EBRD loan **€70m**

Beneficiary contribution **€3.4m**

Estimated investment **€107.6m**

Expected completion **2025**

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 684 smart ICT labs in 627 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 **€10.5m**

CEB loan (est.) **€20.1m**

Beneficiary contribution **€3.4m**

Estimated investment **€34m**

Expected completion **2025**

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 for people 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 Donors grant **€1m**

Expected completion **2023**