



Sector summary

The WB6 Digital Agenda and SEE 2020 Strategy aim to unlock access to the 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 is part of the Multi-annual Action Plan for Regional Economic Area (MAP-REA) of WB6 under the digital integration pillar. In response, the WBIF adopted digital infrastructure as an additional eligible sector at the 17th WBIF Steering Committee meeting held in Frankfurt in December 2017. Various WBIF stakeholders with relevant digital expertise were consulted since then, including DG CONNECT. At the 18th WBIF Steering Committee meeting (Paris, June 2018) the first digital project was approved.

The WBIF supports the deployment of digital infrastructure (including broadband connectivity) in the region through technical assistance for the preparation of investment projects. Projects in the sector will focus on 'white zones' (areas without access to broadband network), rural areas, and support the digital connectivity of education, health, municipal and government institutions.

Selected results and benefits

- 2,000 educational institutions, 350 healthcare facilities, and 31 local government units with at least 30 Mbps fixed broadband connection;
- Increase to 70% the share of households with broadband connection across the country;
- Approximation to EU standards for broadband connectivity of 100 Mbps and at least 30 Mbps in remote areas;
- Increased business opportunities in all economic sectors;
- Economic development through better digital broadband connectivity and accessibility.

Data as of November 2018

PROJECT EXAMPLE

Regional Broadband Infrastructure Development in Albania

Estimated total investment:	€48m
WBIF grant:	€0.5m
Estimated loan (EIB):	€24m
Beneficiary contribution:	€4.8m
Other sources:	€18.7m

Albania has identified digital connectivity and broadband infrastructure as a key priority. The ICT investments covered by the project will ensure broadband infrastructure development at national level, covering over 2,000 public education facilities, at least 350 health facilities, and 31 local government units with a minimum bandwidth of 30 Mbps fixed broadband connection. The aim is to achieve EU standards for broadband connectivity of 100 Mbps and at least 30 Mbps in remote areas.

Building on the results of a Pre-feasibility Study developed under the UNDP in 2017, a €0.5 million grant was allocated by WBIF in June 2018 for the next stage of the project - feasibility study and development plan for efficient and smart investments in broadband infrastructure across the country.

