

SUPPORTING
DIGITAL ECONOMY
AND SOCIETY IN THE
EASTERN PARTNERSHIP
#eu4digital

Armenia 
Azerbaijan 
Belarus 
Georgia 
Republic of Moldova 
Ukraine 

EU4Digital Facility

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List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definition
AM	Armenia
AZ	Azerbaijan
BY	Belarus ¹
EaP	Eastern Partnership
Facility, EU4Digital Facility	EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership
GE	Georgia
MD	Republic of Moldova
UA	Ukraine

¹ As a result of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the involvement of Belarus recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU is further suspending planned and ongoing activities with the participation of Belarusian public authorities and state-owned enterprises. The EU will continue to step up its support to Belarusian civil society.



1 Introduction

This report reflects the activities of the sixth reporting period of the EU4Digital Facility (hereinafter - EU4Digital): 1 July 2021 - 31 December 2021. Also, it outlines the objectives for the upcoming period as well as the main political highlights.

2 Political Summary

The EU4Digital Facility is the core programme of the EU4Digital Initiative. Launched in 2019, the EU4Digital Facility focuses on enabling a stronger economy and stronger governance in the Eastern partner countries through digital transformation. Its purpose is twofold: to promote key areas of the digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership region, in line with EU norms and best practices, and to establish EU4Digital as a recognised and well-communicated brand. Under the guidance of DG NEAR, this involves working in close cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the EU4Digital networks, thematic experts, country coordinators, EU Delegations, European Commission DGs and other European Union and global organisations.

Context

On 15 December 2021, the **6th Eastern Partnership Summit** was held in Brussels, bringing together the Heads of State or Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova² and Ukraine, with representatives of the EU and the Heads of State or Government of its Member States to discuss the renewed EaP policy agenda. At the conclusion of the previous '20 Deliverables for 2020' agenda, a large multi-stakeholder inclusive consultation process was launched towards setting the new objectives for the Eastern Partnership. These were first proposed in the [Joint Communication on the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020](#) in March 2020 by the European Commission and the High Representative for the Union on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In July 2021, the [Post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities](#) were published including the [top ten targets](#).

At the Summit, the leaders agreed on a [Joint Declaration](#) in which they reconfirmed the commitments from previous summits and bilateral agreements, and their determination to carry them forward in the renewed post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities and targets. A €2.3 billion Economic and Investment plan will underpin the agenda, with a potential to mobilise up to €17 billion in public and private investments.

The importance of a **resilient digital transformation** for the EU and Eastern Partnership was further reconfirmed in the declaration through the investment in digital infrastructure, eGovernance, digital economy and innovation, and cyber resilience and security. Building on the progress achieved in the region to date, the renewed targets aim to further the access, interoperability and security of digital services, focusing on areas such as access to affordable high-speed internet, the digitalisation of public administrations and private sector actions, empowerment through digital education and the mutual recognition of digital signatures. Facilitating international roaming, securing 5G networks and advancing cross-border trade are further initiatives included in the renewed agenda, alongside a focus on digital transport corridors, investments in digital start-ups and supporting cyber resilience and security.

Relations between the EU and Belarus remained governed by the restrictive measures applied by the EU against Belarus in response to the actions taken by the Belarusian regime following the August 2020 elections. At the EaP Summit the EU reconfirmed their support to the Belarusian people, including a [€30 million special financing](#) measure to support the citizens, civil society and independent media of Belarus, until the necessary conditions for peaceful democratic transition are in place for the authorities to resume cooperation within the EaP.

For EU4Digital, the context in Belarus has presented additional difficulty in implementation, particularly in terms of political engagement and communication activities. However, in consultation with DG NEAR a similar approach was taken to continue cooperation with Belarusian stakeholders on a technical level in the activities where possible. This includes working with businesses, organisations and technical levels of government required for the activities, and continuing to include Belarus in the analysis and assessments of the project.

Political Highlights

Over the past six months, the EU4Digital Facility continued to produce tangible results as activities reach maturity. This period was also focused on taking stock of achievements through the third annual **EU4Digital**

² Hereinafter referred to as 'Moldova'



[Steering Committee Meeting](#) which took place from 27 September to 1 October. The week-long event gathered almost 1,000 people from the Eastern partner countries and the EU for a series of virtual sessions reviewing the results achieved and upcoming priorities. Discussions with stakeholders further highlighted the key areas and shared commitment towards digital transformation as part of the renewed EaP policy agenda.

For this edition, it was agreed to kick-off the week with the first '**Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership**', which focused on the role of the EU4Digital Initiative in supporting digital transformation in the EaP region. The conference attracted over 500 participants from across the EU and EaP regions, including over 300 views from the public livestream and recording available. The conference received coverage in 17 media outlets in the region, with a potential reach of 21.5 million EaP citizens.

As the last Steering Committee of the current phase of EU4Digital, this particularly allowed for a **reflection on the political importance of the initiative**. Five key areas of contribution were highlighted in terms of (1) developing frameworks (e.g. eCommerce, eGovernance) to assess the situation and benchmark against EU and global practices, (2) establishing practices to reuse and adopt EU solutions (e.g. eDelivery, eSignature, SEED), (3) mobilising stakeholders towards the common interest within the EU and EaP and building cooperation, (4) connecting with international partnerships and donors to create positive synergies, and (5) laying the foundations for future large scale application of digital solutions and other national and bilateral projects.

In terms of achievements in the last six months, EU4Digital has launched **three new extensions of the technical pilots** in the area of eSignature, eDelivery and eCustoms. These pilots, which build on the success of the first country pairs, continue to energise stakeholders. They create the basis to test the solutions to lead to interoperability within the EaP and with the EU. In eSignature, a further pilot with Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Estonia has been initiated. In eDelivery, the third pilot will include Moldova and Ukraine to test the eInvoice cross-border exchange. The second eCustoms pilot will be between Romania and Moldova, further building on the progress made and the cooperation with DG TAXUD.

Supporting the establishment of a **common roaming space** between the six Eastern partner countries remains a priority for the Facility through the drafting and consultations on the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA). As further observations were received, the signing of the RRA and the Regional Spectrum Agreement has been postponed to 2022. EU4Digital also continued working on the topic of the international roaming space between the EU and EaP through the feasibility study. In the area of **regulators' independence**, the Facility finalised the country-specific legislative proposals on electronic communications ('Framework laws'), marking the culmination of the analysis done to further strengthen the organisational and financial independence of the national regulatory authorities in the countries.

Towards the **digitisation in public administration reforms**, the Facility has developed a framework for eGovernance development in the EaP. The Facility continued to support DG NEAR to align the framework to allow for a potentially larger reach than the EU and EaP through cooperation with the OECD.

Towards the set-up of the **EaP DISC Capital fund**, the Facility continued assisting the European Commission in negotiating with international financial institutions and raising awareness with potential fund owners.

During this period, the Facility continued discussions on the importance of the regional **EdTech Hub** educational programme to support the upskilling and reskilling of businesses and entrepreneurs in the region.

Empowering local stakeholders to further build on and implement the solutions and recommendations created through EU4Digital is an important part of this stage of activities. In eCommerce, the transfer of the piloted solution to beneficiaries has been completed. The Facility held consultations with the partner countries to initiate implementation and enable cross-border eCommerce. In the context of the DISC guide for the development of the ICT entrepreneurial ecosystem, a coordinating organisation to implement the recommendations has been identified in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In addition, building on the concept note developed by the Facility, the EU Delegation in Belarus is in the process of supporting the development of a national women go tech programme.

EU4Digital continued facilitating **networking between stakeholders** and the sharing of best practices during this period. The study visits on start-up ecosystem building in the Eastern partner countries were held in October, where around 70 participants from 40 different organisations joined virtual study visits to Lithuania and Spain. Two further events were organised on the topic of connecting EaP organisations to selected EU networks and platforms. The Digital Skills Forum organised by EU4Digital was held in October, which included presentations and workshops on approaches to running and managing National Jobs and Skills Coalitions and a virtual study visit to Ireland. The 3-day event attracted around 50 people each day from across the EU and EaP. In eHealth, collaboration events were organised with representatives from the EaP and EU to share EU best practices, including on active and healthy ageing and eHealth strategy development.



Communication of the achievements and impact of EU4Digital in the region continued during this reporting period through regular articles, news and events created and posted on the EU4Digital website in 8 languages and feeding into the EU4Digital newsletters. Two social media campaigns were also created and launched, one on Digital Skills and one joint eTrade and Trust and Security campaign. The material was designed to increase the visibility and awareness of EU4Digital, and to reflect the tangible benefits created through the work of the project to citizens and businesses in the EaP.

EU4Digital - objective, purpose and expected results

I. OVERALL PROJECT OBJECTIVE	
<p>The overall objective of the project is to eliminate existing obstacles and barriers for pan-European online services for citizens, both women and men, public administrations and businesses, including through the harmonisation of the digital environments among the EaP partner countries and with the EU.</p> <p>The geographical scope includes the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.</p>	
II. PROJECT PURPOSE	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promote key areas of the digital economy and society in the EaP region, in line with EU norms and best practices. Establish EU4Digital as a recognised and well communicated brand, encompassing EU support to the digital economy and society in the EaP region and providing links to other complementary activities by the Eastern partner countries, EU Member States, IFIs and other donors. 	
III. RESULTS	
Result 1	Legislative and regulatory framework conditions for the digital economy and society improved, and key enablers for electronic services are in place, including implemented policy recommendations and piloted cross-border eServices for businesses and citizens in the following areas: Telecom Rules, Trust and Security, eTrade, ICT innovation, eHealth, eSkills.
Result 2	EU4Digital brand established, visible and recognised as the reference for EU cooperation on the digital economy and society in the EaP.

IV. PROJECT RESULTS IN THE THEMATIC AREAS	
Telecom Rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> International agreement on a common roaming space among the Eastern partner countries. Strengthened independence of National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) for electronic communications in all 6 Eastern partner countries. Well-coordinated frequency distribution strategies among the Eastern partner countries and with the EU.
Trust and Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Piloted interoperable cross-border eSignature and established regional framework for cross-border eServices for businesses in the EaP region. Preparatory work completed for the design and implementation of cyber-security strategies in the EaP region, based on EU experiences.
eTrade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Better harmonised national legal frameworks for eTrade, including eCommerce and eCustoms, among the Eastern partner countries and with the EU. Piloted cross-border eTrade services among Eastern partner countries and with the EU.
ICT innovation	Legislative and regulatory reforms, relevant ICT infrastructures and best practices favouring the development of ICT research, start-ups & innovation ecosystems in the EaP region, in line with EU norms, established.



eHealth	Better harmonised national legal frameworks for eHealth, among Eastern partner countries and with the EU.
Digital Skills	Common methodology for designing digital skills strategies, and common competence framework for SMEs and microbusinesses in the EaP region established.

3 Programme state of play & planning of activities

This chapter covers the main EU4Digital Facility results achieved and a short description of the related activities under the six sub-streams and the Communication stream during the reporting period (July 2021 - December 2021). Likewise, under each thematic sub-stream (where applicable), key highlights in the six Eastern partner countries are provided. Additionally, the report provides planning for the upcoming three-month period under each sub-stream.

3.1 Telecom Rules

State of play

Roaming

In the context of establishing a **common roaming space between the six Eastern partner countries**, EU4Digital has been supporting the formal national approval procedures and discussions regarding the **Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA)**. It was expected that all Eastern partner countries willing to join a common roaming space would finalise the national approval procedures and sign the RRA during EaP Summit on 15 December 2021. However, the signing ceremony of the RRA was postponed to 2022 as national consultations are still ongoing in some of the Eastern partner countries, e.g. Ukrainian stakeholders have suggested substance matter changes to the RRA, which are currently under discussion by the Roaming Expert Working Group (REWG) of the Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (EaPeReg).

Additionally, EU4Digital continued the preparation of a [feasibility study](#) on establishing a **common international roaming space between the Eastern partner countries and the EU Member States**. EU4Digital has been collecting the data required to complete an economic impact assessment of a potential future common international roaming space between the Eastern partner countries and the EU Member States. In November, additional follow-up was issued to the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) regarding the EU data needed to complete this exercise. By the end of January 2022, EU4Digital expects to conclude data collection from the EaP and the EU, and will start data analysis to assess the economic impact of an EaP-EU roaming arrangement.

Key outputs:

- Technical assistance provided, including support and consultations to stakeholders during national approval procedures regarding the RRA as well as support to country representatives to provide the data required to complete feasibility study on EaP-EU roaming arrangement.

Country perspective

The table below presents the current status regarding the formal national approval procedures on the RRA per each Eastern partner country.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National consultations are still ongoing – the translated RRA is submitted for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for opinion. • Further, the RRA will be sent to the Government for launching a final 15-day consultation.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National consultations are still ongoing – MFA has provided a few suggestions to the RRA text.
BY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National consultations are still ongoing, however, with no estimate for completion.



Country	Highlights
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National consultations completed – ready to sign the RRA.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National consultations completed – ready to sign the RRA.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National consultations are still ongoing – the MFA and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have suggested substance matter changes to the RRA. If these suggestions are accepted by the rest of the Eastern partner countries, national consultations would have to be restarted in all countries, including Ukraine.

Regulators' independence

EU4Digital has progressed towards the end-phase in its activities related to **strengthening the organisational and financial independence of national regulatory authorities (NRAs)** for electronic communications in the Eastern partner countries. EU4Digital has aligned the model law on electronic communications based on the EU regulatory framework³ (hereinafter – Model law) with the Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (EaPeReg). Based on the aligned Model law, EU4Digital has drafted and aligned **country-specific legislative proposals on electronic communications (hereinafter - Framework laws) for each Eastern partner country**, considering national specificities pertinent to regulatory systems within each country. The Framework laws are aimed at strengthening regulatory independence and harmonising the national regulatory frameworks among the Eastern partner countries and the EU.

Also, EU4Digital has developed a **methodology establishing a harmonised approach to the collection of internet access services indicators** (hereinafter – Methodology) among the Eastern partner countries. The aim of this exercise is to enable the Eastern partner countries to monitor and assess on a regular basis the state of play regarding the availability of broadband internet access services in an EU-harmonised approach (in line with DESI) based on the Methodology⁴. Additionally, EU4Digital has piloted this monitoring exercise by preparing a preliminary summary of internet access services state-of-play assessment based on data collected from country representatives. Following this exercise, the Methodology was updated based on EaPeReg suggestions (e.g., 5G readiness indicator included) and full-fledged data collection as per the approach established in the updated Methodology is expected to be launched by EaPeReg to assess broadband development state-of-play.

In addition, a new activity aimed at drafting guidelines on market analysis for electronic communications networks and services based on EU best practices (minimum required process steps, key legislative norms, etc.) was launched in second half of November and preparatory work has been started.

Key outputs:

- Prepared country-specific Framework laws on electronic communications for each Eastern partner country to strengthen regulatory independence.
- Developed a methodology for the harmonised assessment of broadband connectivity in the Eastern partner countries.

Country perspective

On a country basis, a series of bilateral meetings have taken place adjusting country-specific Framework laws based on national specificities and taking into account proposals from Eastern partner countries. The table below presents the current status of Framework law alignment per Eastern partner country and other developments related to regulatory independence, where applicable.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country-specific Framework law has been aligned and is expected to be applied in review of relevant legislation.

³ [EU 2002/2009 electronic communications regulatory framework](#) is part of the 'Telecoms Package', adopted in 2002 and amended in 2009 to take account of the rapid development of the sector. This package includes four Directives which regulate specific aspects of electronic communications, as well as two Regulations.

⁴ With assumption of national digital and/or broadband policies in place and targets aligned to those of the European Union.



Country	Highlights
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Country-specific Framework law has been aligned and is expected to be applied in review of relevant legislation.According to the Decree of the President⁵, the Information and Communication Technologies Agency (ICTA) was established as an NRA on 11 October 2021, but it is not yet operational. The ICTA is expected to be reinforced, taking into account the provisions the Framework law.
BY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Country-specific Framework law has been aligned and is expected to be applied in review of relevant legislation.While Belarus is not yet planning to establish the NRA, the Framework law will be applied in review of national regulatory framework, as certain powers pertinent to NRAs are carried out by relevant ministries.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Country-specific Framework law has been aligned and is expected to be applied in review of relevant legislation.Work on transposition of Framework law in the particular area of universal service has already been started.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A proposal has been received to review the country-specific Framework law in relation to supervisory powers of the national regulatory authorities. The EU4Digital Facility will review the proposal and prepare necessary changes to the Framework law.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Country-specific Framework law has been aligned and is expected to be applied in review of relevant legislation.Recent changes to regulatory framework via adoption of laws on electronic communications and on the NRA itself brought the regulatory system to the baseline of the European Union, in particular in the area of independent decision making.

Freeing 700 MHz

EU4Digital continued to support a coordinated approach for **reassigning the 700 MHz frequency band** in the six Eastern partner countries by supporting regional negotiations towards the alignment on a final version of the **Regional Spectrum Agreement (RSA)**. Similarly to the RRA, the official RSA signing ceremony is planned to take place in 2022.

Key outputs:

- Technical assistance provided, including on-demand consultations for the Spectrum Expert Working Group (SEWG).

Planning for the upcoming three months

Roaming – key objectives:

- Support national approval procedures in order to finalise the RRA text (signing ceremony is expected in 2022).
- Finalise economic impact assessment of implementing a roaming agreement between the Eastern partner countries and the EU Member States.

Regulators' independence – key objectives:

- Provide on-demand technical assistance aimed at bridging the gaps identified and implementation of recommendations (preparation of legislation, stakeholder events, etc.).
- Draft guidelines on market analysis for electronic communications networks and services.

Freeing 700 MHz – key objectives:

⁵ Decree of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev "On some measures to improve governance in the field of digitalization, innovation, high technologies and communications in the Republic of Azerbaijan".



- Provide on-demand technical assistance, including support in the preparation and implementation of the RSA (signing ceremony is expected in 2022).

3.2 Trust and Security

State of play

eID and eSignature

About. The eSignature pilot aims to test the cross-border eSignature technical interoperability in selected Eastern partner countries. During the pilot, the testing of a qualified electronic signature solution compatible with eIDAS Regulation requirements takes place.

Pilot countries. The eSignature pilot was performed between Ukraine and Estonia (EaP – EU), and Ukraine and Moldova (inter- EaP). The eSignature pilot extension is being implemented between Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Estonia.

Scope. The eSignature pilot includes timestamping, eSignature creation, validation mechanisms and certificate status verification components deployed to enable the cross-border mutual recognition of qualified electronic signatures (digital signatures).

Following the achievement of technical eSignature compatibility between Ukraine, Moldova and Estonia during the completed eSignature pilots, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Estonia were selected to participate in eSignature pilot extension activity. During the reporting period, the pilot activities were initiated - official confirmations to participate in the piloting were received from Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, working groups were established, and kick-off sessions and coordination meetings were held.

The technical specifications of the eSignature pilots were aligned with the pilot countries, covering the specific needs of Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, in the form of a Technical memorandum. After aligning the Technical memorandum and determining the digital trust service provision profile of each country, subsequent implementation and testing phases will be carried out in Q1, 2022.

In parallel, EU4Digital developed the regional roadmap and individual country action plans on mutual recognition of trust services.

Key outputs:

- Finalised regional roadmap and individual country action plans for cross-border mutual recognition of trust services and eIDs for the Eastern partner countries.
- Preparatory actions for cross-border eSignature pilot between Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Estonia completed, including alignment of Technical memorandum.

Country perspective

Aiming to close identified gaps and to achieve cross-border mutual recognition between the Eastern Partner countries and EU member states, EU4Digital prepared recommendations in the form of individual country action plans and regional roadmap. The table below presents the data as per the individual country assessment performed between September 2019 – February 2020 and key recommendations for all Eastern partner countries to achieve cross-border mutual recognition of trust services based on the process described in the mutual recognition cookbook ('Mutual recognition agreement Cookbook'⁶).

Country	Highlights
AM	<i>Technical Maturity Rating: 3.05 Legal Maturity Rating: 2.47 Overall Maturity Rating: 2.76 (Managed)</i> There is only one certification authority (CA) and one registration authority (RA) in one entity. Armenia should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls, data privacy and protection, trust services key lifecycle management and trust services certificate lifecycle management.
AZ	<i>Technical Maturity Rating: 3.72 Legal Maturity Rating: 1.99 Overall Maturity Rating: 2.85 (Managed)</i> There is a need for secondary and tertiary legislation to enforce best practices and to ensure an adequate level of confidence in the operation of trust services at the trust service provider level. Azerbaijan should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls, data privacy and protection, trust services

⁶ European Commission, 'Mutual recognition agreement Cookbook' (January 2021), https://esignature.ec.europa.eu/intl-comp/dss-demo/downloads/MRAinfo_Cookbook_v1.0.pdf



Country	Highlights
	practice management, trust services key lifecycle management and trust services certificate lifecycle management.
BY	<p><i>Technical Maturity Rating: 3.69 Legal Maturity Rating: 3.70 Overall Maturity Rating: 3.69 (Defined)</i></p> <p>There is only one CA with several RAs. The national regulations are being rigorously implemented and followed by all registration authorities in Belarus. There is an adequate offering of trust services with eight public entities and three private entities. However, the encryption schemes and cryptographic algorithms used by Belarus currently are not compatible with the requirements of the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) and Webtrust standards. Belarus should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls and data privacy and protection.</p>
GE	<p><i>Technical Maturity Rating: 2.02 Legal Maturity Rating: 2.40 Overall Maturity Rating: 2.21 (Managed)</i></p> <p>There is only one major trust service provider (TSP) which acts as a CA and RA in one organisation. Georgia should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls, trust services key lifecycle management, trust services certificate lifecycle management, and data privacy and protection.</p> <p>Note: based on information received in July 2021, there has been significant improvement at TSP of Georgia to resolve the earlier identified gaps, which has confirmed significant improvement and achieve readiness for alignment with eIDAS, as a next step detailed re-assessment would be required.</p>
MD	<p><i>Technical Maturity Rating: 3.01 Legal Maturity Rating: 2.97 Overall Maturity Rating: 2.99 (Managed)</i></p> <p>To ensure better compatibility with eIDAS Regulation on certificate lifecycle management processes and enforcement of technical controls, Trust services best practices should be addressed at the primary or secondary regulations. Moldova should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls, trust services key lifecycle management, trust services subscriber key lifecycle management, and trust services certificate lifecycle management.</p> <p>As a result of the eSignature pilot performed between Ukraine and Moldova, Moldova has the solution to create digital signatures in testing environment and after the pilot could move it into production.</p>
UA	<p><i>Technical Maturity Rating: 4.49 Legal Maturity Rating: 4.69 Overall Maturity Rating: 4.59 (Defined and Measured)</i></p> <p>The laws and regulations on trust services are generally mature and compatible with the EU eIDAS Regulation. Ukraine has a very strong offering related to trust services, with 14 public entities and 7 private entities which offer various trust services. Ukraine should focus to cover gaps in the areas of trust services environmental controls, trust services subscriber key lifecycle management, trust services key lifecycle management, and trust services certificate lifecycle management.</p> <p>The eSignature pilot was performed between Ukraine and Estonia, and Ukraine and Moldova. As a result of eSignature pilot activities, Ukraine has an eIDAS-compatible solution to create digital signatures.</p>

Cross-border eServices

The aim of this activity is to develop guidelines to enable cross-border eServices, including specific recommendations for the Eastern partner countries for removing organisational and technical barriers for cross-border interactions. EU4Digital has completed data collection and verification based on the Cross-border eServices interoperability assessment, which includes the following criteria: principles defined in the European Interoperability Framework (EIF), legal questionnaire on policies for implementing cross-border eServices, digital service infrastructure implemented, operational digital enablers, public eServices maturity and accessibility for foreigners.

In parallel, the EU4Digital Facility analysed the collected data, identified gaps and started drafting country-specific recommendations for Eastern partner countries, which will be finalised in Q1 2022.

Key outputs:

- Collected/verified data from Eastern partner countries based on the assessment framework for Cross-border eServices readiness.



- Gap analysis drafted for the Eastern partner countries, including assessment of eServices offered on a national level and across borders, as well as digital enablers used for public eServices.
- Recommendations drafting initiated based on EIF principles, legal environment and digital service infrastructure gaps identified.

eGovernance

EU4Digital has developed a framework for eGovernance development in the Eastern Partnership region to support universally recognised developments of public administration. The framework highlights the importance of eGovernance when implementing public administration reforms. While eServices play an important role to citizens and businesses, there are basic areas – underlying conditions – that enable eServices and eGovernment overall and that compose the framework: internet access for citizens and officials, presence of digitised data, interoperability of the data, digital identification, governance and policy, as well as legal basis.

EU4Digital completed the data collection and started analysing the collected data. The ongoing analysis will serve as an input to develop actionable country-specific recommendations for the Eastern partner countries in the eGovernance fundamental areas (i.e. interoperability, access, digital data, identification, as well as legal basis and governance support). The recommendations will provide a practical guide to support necessary developments in the Eastern partner countries. The recommendations are to be prepared in Q1 2022.

In parallel, EU4Digital continued to collaborate with DG NEAR to align the eGovernance framework that may provide guidance for eGovernance and public administration reforms development beyond the EU4Digital Facility and Eastern Partnership.

Key outputs:

- Collected data to assess eGovernance maturity in the Eastern partner countries according to the developed eGovernance framework.

Planning for the upcoming three months

eID and eSignature – key objectives:

- Amend the regional roadmap on mutual recognition of trust services.
- Implement eSignature pilot between Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Estonia.
- Develop the recommendations for eSignature post-pilot activities.

Cross-border eServices:

- Prepare country recommendations for enabling interoperable cross-border eServices based on country assessments.
- Prepare regional guidelines for the enablement of cross-border eServices interoperability.

eGovernance

- Develop policy recommendations guiding the development and modernisation of public administration in the six Eastern partner countries.
- Organise country and regional consultations.



3.3 eTrade

State of play

Pilot cross-border eTrade solutions

About. The cross-border eTrade pilot tests the ground for paperless information exchange in selected Eastern partner countries using established EU-wide solution and standards. Specifically, cross-border trade partners (companies) are exchanging standardised invoice data.

Pilot countries. eDelivery pilot was performed between Armenia and Ukraine (inter - EaP), and between Ukraine and Poland (EaP - EU). In addition, the pilot between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine was initiated.

Scope. EU4Digital tested the cross-border interoperability between Eastern partner countries and the EU by exchanging the standardised invoice data using a secure, reliable and trusted channel [eDelivery - CEF Building Block](#). Piloting parties established [certified Peppol Access Points](#) and joined the [Peppol eDelivery network](#), which enables them to exchange data with the EU and beyond (almost 40 countries worldwide).

After the concept of cross-border interoperability to exchange eInvoice data was proven on a regional level, EU4Digital prepared a set of recommendations on the required legal, organisational and technical adjustments to facilitate further eDelivery enablement in all Eastern partner countries on the bilateral level.

Following the conclusion of the pilot in Armenia and Ukraine, EU4Digital introduced **consultation activities on eDelivery solution enablement** in the countries as per recommendations set out by EU4Digital. The expert team supported countries in technical installations and set-up of eDelivery in the national infrastructure and also covered relevant topics that could further facilitate the digitalisation of cross-border eTrade services in the Eastern partner countries, e.g. eDelivery applicability in Public procurement, e-CMR enablement, business model of an eDelivery Access Point owner, promotion activities of eDelivery solution. As a result of consultations, both Armenia and Ukraine have a fully functioning eDelivery solution, implemented in their national infrastructure. Further, once the required legal and organisational amendments have been completed, countries are considering to use the solution for procurement data exchange in full scope (both in business to business, business to government, as well as government to government transactions).

Key milestones of the activity include pilot country connection to the global Peppol eDelivery network, which links almost 40 member countries worldwide, enabling the secure and interoperable exchange of procurement data as well as fully technologically ready solution, which Armenia and Ukraine are planning to start using in full scale in the first half of 2022.

In addition to already implemented eDelivery pilots, EU4Digital is implementing **a cross-border eTrade interoperability test** between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The completion of the pilot is foreseen in Q1 2022.

Key outputs:

- Preparatory actions for eDelivery pilot between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine completed.
- Carried out consultation activities on eDelivery enablement in the pilot countries (Armenia and Ukraine) as per recommendations of the EU4Digital Facility.

Country perspective

The table below presents the status in the Eastern partner countries on exchange of electronic invoice data.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is already being used inside the country. • Peppol BIS 3.0 testing is completed and one eDelivery access point is available in production (realised in the scope of EU4Digital eDelivery pilot).
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is already being used on a national level. • Peppol BIS 3.0 is not adopted and there are no eDelivery access points established.
BY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is already being used on a national level. • Peppol BIS 3.0 is not adopted and there are no eDelivery access points established.



Country	Highlights
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is used only for B2B transactions but no decisions on a governmental level to adopt it on a national level for invoice data exchange was made. • Peppol BIS 3.0 is not adopted and there are no eDelivery access points established.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is already being used inside the country. • Peppol BIS 3.0 is being tested and one eDelivery access point is available in test environment (realised in the scope of EU4Digital eDelivery pilot).
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eInvoicing is already being used inside the country. • Peppol BIS 3.0 testing is completed and one eDelivery access point is available in production (realised in the scope of EU4Digital eDelivery pilot).

Stakeholder networking

As part of its networking activities, in November, EU4Digital organised a [practical session on eDelivery Access Point functioning, including information on the structure, services, pricing, etc. of an eDelivery Access Point](#). During the event, the practical information and real-life examples of eDelivery Access Point service provision and government collaboration with Access Point owners was shared by experts from Lithuania and Poland. In the coming period, EU4Digital is planning two networking activities – participation in the 11th eTrade Networking event and organising a showcase of the eCustoms pilot.

The summary of the overall networking events under the eTrade activity is presented in the table below:

#	Networking related to piloted solutions	Networking related to sharing information on existing solutions	Networking during events and conferences
1.	eDelivery showcase (Online, December 2020)	SEED site visit for eCustoms (Montenegro & Belarus, July – August 2019)	Digital Transport Days 2019 (Helsinki, October 2019)
2.	eCommerce showcase (Online, June 2021)	eDelivery study visit (Online, October 2020)	Digital Transport Days 2020 (Online, October 2020)
3.	eCustoms pilot showcase (TBC)	eCommerce awareness event (Online, May 2021)	
4.		Practical session on eDelivery Access Point owner business model (Online, November 2021)	
Support and facilitation of eTrade network workshops: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 6th eTrade network event (Minsk, June 2019) 2. 7th eTrade network event (Helsinki, October 2019) 3. 8th eTrade network event (Virtual, June 2020) 4. 9th eTrade network event (Virtual, December 2020) 5. 10th eTrade network event (Virtual, June 2021) 6. 11th eTrade network event (TBC) 			

Key outputs:

- Organised practical session on eDelivery Access Point owner business model.



Pilot mechanisms of customs information exchange

About. The customs information exchange pilot facilitates customs-to-customs data exchange and demonstrates the improvement in release time of goods, as well as introducing more advanced customs risk management processes.

Pilot countries. Customs information exchange piloting was performed between Belarus and Lithuania (EaP-EU), and the pilot between the Republic of Moldova and Romania is in progress.

Scope. EU4Digital tested customs information exchange by using the SEED (Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data) solution, implemented in the Western Balkan counties (financed and developed with EU support).

During the Belarus – Lithuania pilot, three data exchange related scenarios were tested:

1. [Empty Trucks;](#)
2. [Exchange of exit data from export declarations \(limited data set\);](#)
3. [Full declaration data set from the export declarations with volunteer companies.](#)

Preparatory actions for eCustoms pilot between the Republic of Moldova and Romania on data exchange on empty means of transport is ongoing.

The eCustoms pilot proved the concept of cross-border interoperability to exchange data between customs of EU and non-EU countries (in systematic and advanced manner). In order to enable the use of the SEED solution across the region, EU4Digital prepared a set of recommendations on the required legal, organisational and technical adjustments (for bilateral implementation).

The pilot between the Republic of Moldova and Romania is closely observed by DG TAXUD representatives to obtain insights on customs data exchange between the EU and third countries.

EU4Digital reached an important milestone in the eCustoms pilot – **a second eCustoms pilot between the Customs Administrations of the Republic of Moldova and Romania was initiated.** The pilot is being closely observed not only by participating countries but also by DG TAXUD, and it is expected that the activities implemented under the EU4Digital framework might bring some practical insights while making decisions on enabling data exchange between the EU and third countries.

Further, after the conclusion of the pilot, EU4Digital **will develop additional recommendations** on legal, organisational and technical changes required to enable systematic and advanced customs data exchange as well as other state-of-the-art functions (data matching, alerts, etc.) via the SEED solution.

As a final step, EU4Digital will **hand over the tested software** together with technical documentation to the pilot countries.

Key outputs:

- Preparatory actions for the implementation of eCustoms pilot between Customs Administrations of the Republic of Moldova and Romania initiated.

Country perspective

The table below presents the status in the Eastern partner countries regarding customs information exchange.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership agreement with the EU as well as bilateral protocols with Iran and Georgia are in place.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral protocols with Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey, Iran, Russia, Belarus and Uzbekistan are in place to ensure the facilitation of exchanges of electronic customs data. In the future, a bilateral agreement with Kazakhstan is planned to be signed. • From September 2020, the Twinning Project on ‘Support to the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan in the accession to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure, Convention on Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods and implementation of the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS)’ was initiated together with Italian partners (Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency).
BY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral protocol with Ukraine and bilateral cooperation with Lithuania are in place that facilitate the exchange of electronic data between the countries. <i>Note: updates from the previous reporting period are provided.</i>



Country	Highlights
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association Agreement with the EU is signed; in accordance with the requirements of Annex XIII, Georgia has introduced a Customs Code. • Georgia has completed a Twinning project to facilitate the introduction of the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) in Georgia. • Agreements are in place with regards to information exchange with Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine: with Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan on partial data set exchange (advanced information on customs declaration, transport document) and with Ukraine and soon Turkey on electronic exchange of the full data set. • Electronic exchange of Rules of Origin related data is in place with the People's Republic of China and a pilot implementation of the project on verification of origin document by using of blockchain technology is currently underway with Azerbaijan within the scope of the GUAM. • Georgia is involved in the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention initiative aimed at the development of an electronic facility for origin related data exchange and will be implementing the solution with free trade partners applying the Convention for origin purposes.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association Agreement with the EU is signed and requires approximation of customs legislation. • Moreover, agreement with Ukraine on mutual assistance and cooperation as well as CEFTA agreement are in place. • Customs code was updated in 2020 to specify provisions around simplified customs declaration.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association Agreement with the EU is signed and requires approximation of customs legislation. • Also, agreements with Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan are in place.

eCommerce

About. The eCommerce pilot uses digital tools to eliminate barriers and boost eCommerce volumes between the EU and the EaP countries as well as inside the region, especially for SMEs. During the pilot, EU4Digital established a national virtual warehouse to support selected SMEs, marketplaces, postal operators and customs to place products for sale abroad and facilitate cross-border delivery.

Pilot countries. The eCommerce pilot was performed between the three Eastern partner countries in the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – and Germany (EaP-EU), as well as between Azerbaijan and Georgia (inter-EaP).

Scope. EU4Digital established and tested a [virtual warehouse](#) to place goods for sale abroad in the EU and the EaP markets. The solution provides a single place for sellers to enter and automatically exchange data needed by customs and delivery businesses for cross-border eCommerce. The national virtual warehouse was [established in each pilot country](#).

In the long term, the virtual warehouse may facilitate eCommerce among the Eastern partner countries, with the EU member states and with up to 192 countries within the Universal Postal Union.

To facilitate enablement of the solution in the region and beyond, EU4Digital prepared a set of recommendations for the full-scale solution implementation on a national level by the pilot and non-pilot Eastern partner countries.

Following the successfully launched pilot in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, EU4Digital transferred the piloted solution - eCommerce virtual warehouse - to the beneficiaries. Also, EU4Digital completed **consultation activities** to support the Eastern partner countries to initiate implementation of the solution and to enable cross-border eCommerce as per the recommendations provided earlier. EU4Digital consulted countries based on their preference on the following topics: technical installation and set-up, operational model design, including such components as key activities, partners, resources, cost and revenue structure, customer segments, channels and relationships, value proposition, as well as required technology, success metrics and governance model. Consultations on these topics will support the Eastern partner countries to develop the piloted solution further and implement it in the live environment.



Key outputs:

- Carried out consultation activities to enable the eCommerce virtual warehouse in the pilot countries as per recommendations of the EU4Digital Facility.

Country perspective

The EU4Digital Facility aims to harmonise eCommerce between the Eastern partner countries and the EU. For this reason, [recommendations](#) have been drawn up based on the assessment of the current state of eCommerce in the Eastern partner countries. The table below presents the overview of eCommerce legal framework and standards.

Country	Highlights
AM	<p>Legal framework: Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) is signed with the EU and supports harmonisation of the legal framework, including consumer protection, customs area, security of trade, competition, electronic communications and electronic data exchange. Specific eCommerce legislation and eCommerce strategy are not developed. eCommerce law is in process of update by 2023.</p> <p>Standards: international (ISO, UPU) and national standards in the field of eCommerce are implemented by the National Institute of Standards.</p>
AZ	<p>Legal framework: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU is signed but doesn't particularly require harmonisation with EU legislation or standards having the focus on international legislation and standards (including the EU). eCommerce law exists from 2006. eCommerce strategy is not developed. eCommerce legislation framework is in process of update.</p> <p>Standards: international (UPU) standards are used and standardisation programme is launched by the Azerbaijan Standardization Institute to develop national standards in the field of eCommerce.</p>
BY	<p>Legal framework: there is no agreement signed with the EU to influence harmonisation of eCommerce legislation and standards with the EU. Specific eCommerce legislation is not implemented. There is no dedicated eCommerce strategy, but the National Strategy of Informatization Development includes certain areas of eCommerce.</p> <p>Standards: international (UPU) standards are used and national standards are developing with the priority to harmonise with international and regional standards. The State Committee for Standardization of the Republic of Belarus is focused on developing the technical regulation system in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and cooperates with leading international and European organisations (ISO, IEC, OIML, UNECE, CEN, CENELEC, ILAC, EA, GS1).</p>
GE	<p>Legal framework: Association Agreement with the EU is signed and requires harmonization of eCommerce framework (Liability of intermediary service providers) with the EU. eCommerce law drafted in 2018 in line with the EU acquis and is planned to be adopted in 2022. There is no dedicated eCommerce strategy, but the Digital Economy and Information Society strategy is being elaborated and will include certain areas of eCommerce.</p> <p>Standards: international UPU standards are registered and implemented.</p>
MD	<p>Legal framework: Association Agreement with the EU is signed and requires harmonisation with EU legislation and standards. As a part of this agreement, eCommerce law has been aligned with the EU in 2018. eCommerce strategy is not developed. In November 2021, the Parliament voted for the modification of 29 legal acts regarding the digitalisation of the economy. The basis of the actions contained in the "Roadmap for stimulating the process of digitization of the national economy and the development of e-commerce" is adopted. Further laws to stimulate eCommerce are being drafted.</p> <p>Standards: international (UPU) standards are used and national standards are developed by adopting the EU standards – the Institute of Standardization of Moldova is working on the adoption of the EU standards relevant to eCommerce.</p>
UA	<p>Legal framework: Association Agreement with the EU is signed and requires harmonisation with EU legislation and standards. As a part of this agreement, eCommerce law has been developed in line with the EU in 2014. It is planned to be updated by 2023. There is no dedicated eCommerce strategy, but the Digital Agenda includes certain areas of eCommerce.</p> <p>Standards: eCommerce-related standards are being implemented by the Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine, and postal standards in particular are ensured by the National commission for the state regulation of</p>



Country	Highlights
	communications and informatization. International (UPU) and national standards are being implemented. Ukraine is a partner of the European Committee for Standardization.

In addition to the provided recommendations, EU4Digital piloted the virtual warehouse for automated exchange of eCommerce data, which resulted in the following achievements.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot highlight: a seller of socks (Zeal Socks) sold a product to Germany through the virtual warehouse. The product was delivered to the buyer in 9 working days. Further steps: the national postal operator Haypost is the solution owner launching the eCommerce virtual warehouse as a part of own commercial services. The first interested sellers have already been identified. Internal testing and set up are in progress.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot highlight: a seller of handcrafted wooden accessories (ISAR Group) sold a product to Germany through the virtual warehouse. The seller was supported by the national eCommerce platform Azexport. The product was delivered to the buyer in 5 working days. Also, during the inter-EaP pilot, two sellers from Georgia placed and sold products on the national platform Azexport. The products sold were delivered to the buyer within 4 working days. Further steps: the solution owner Azexport is testing the possibilities to launch the solution as an enabler to connect Azerbaijani sellers to the major international marketplaces.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot highlight: two Georgian sellers - both women-led businesses, one producing children's clothing (RKO) and the other eco-friendly housewarming gifts (Funduki), sold a product to Germany through the virtual warehouse. Both items were delivered to the buyer in 7 working days. Further steps: the solution owners – Georgian Post and Enterprise Georgia – are exploring possibilities to launch the solution as an open beta for one year, possibly financed by donors.

Digital transport corridor (DTC)

Activity was finished in June 2020. Currently, the modality of the implementation is being considered by DG NEAR, the EU Delegation to Ukraine and key stakeholders from Ukraine.

In November 2021, EU4Digital [participated in a conference](#) organised by the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine to discuss the implementation of the international electronic consignment note (eCMR) — one of the key documents in road transportation. During the conference, different EU4Digital pilot projects (e.g. eDelivery, eCommerce, eSignature), the EU4Digital concept to establish a Digital transport corridor, eFTI regulation (electronic freight transport information), as well as relevant national initiatives in Ukraine were reviewed by the participants and considered as necessary building blocks for the digitalisation of transport documents.

Planning for the upcoming three months

eDelivery:

- Pilot standardised eInvoice exchange via eDelivery between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.
- Prepare set of recommendations on the required legal, organisational and technical adjustments to be made for eDelivery enablement in the Eastern partner countries and beyond (addition for the Republic of Moldova).
- Hand over the package of the tested solution for further development, customisation and adaptation according to the needs of the Republic of Moldova.

Networking – key objectives:

- Organise eCustoms pilot showcase.

Pilot mechanisms of exchange of information – key objectives:



- Implement eCustoms pilot between the Customs administrations of the Republic of Moldova and Romania.
- Prepare recommendations on the required legal, organisational and technical adjustments to be made for full scale solution (SEED) implementation (for Moldova-Romania pilot).
- Hand over the tested solution for further development, customisation and adaptation according to the needs of pilot countries (for Moldova-Romania pilot).

eCommerce

- If needed, provide further consultations to enable the eCommerce virtual warehouse in the pilot countries as per recommendations of EU4Digital Facility.

3.4 ICT innovation

State of play

EdTech Hub programme

In the last reporting period, EU4Digital developed the concept for the EdTech Hub programme to upskill employees and increase the competitiveness of SMEs in the Eastern partner countries by providing learning and development opportunities on digital topics such as data and cloud, innovation management, marketing via digital technologies and others. The goal of the programme is in accordance with one of the EU policy objectives beyond 2020 to improve the digital skills base of the EaP with the target to digitally empower 1 million EaP citizens.

The EdTech Hub programme concept received positive feedback from potential international learning content providers as well as international donors. The further practical actions are planned beyond EU4Digital Phase 1.

Networking of innovation players

In this reporting period, EU4Digital organised a study visit to meet leading start-up ecosystem builders in Spain and Lithuania, which finalised the series of ICT Innovation networking events. The discussion was held together with representatives of the following key organisations from Spain and Lithuania: Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, [Startup Lithuania](#), Bank of Lithuania, National Association of European Business and Innovation Centres ([ANCES](#)), National Innovation Enterprise ([ENISA](#)), Research Group on Bioinformatics, Intelligent Computer Systems and Educational Technology ([BISITE](#)), University of Salamanca. The event attracted around 70 participants from about 40 different organisations such as ministries, agencies, innovation, financial support and consultancy organisations empowering start-up ecosystems in the Eastern partner countries. This event emphasised that the most important factor for start-up ecosystem development is to have a coordinated approach for providing access to finance, resources, market, and knowledge for the ecosystem players. Also, countries should aim to build the capacity and ensure positive conversion rates of start-ups, by focusing on all phases of the start-up lifecycle.

In total, the series of six EU4Digital ICT Innovation networking events was attended by more than 460 participants from more than 300 organisations over a period of one and a half years.

Key outputs:

- ICT Innovation virtual study visit 'Journeys of EU organisations in building and developing start-up ecosystems'.
- Report summarising the lessons learned and key discussion points from the series of networking events and study visit.

Extension of EU networks and platforms

Eastern Partnership start-up ecosystem platform

EU4Digital has developed the initial version of the [Eastern Partnership startup ecosystem platform](#), which was introduced to the EaP stakeholders during the soft-launch event in December. The platform is a result of the efforts of the EU4Digital and the technical implementors - [Dealroom.co](#). The platform was developed based on the best practices from Europe, i.e. [EuropeanStartups](#) platform. It aims to provide trusted insights for data-driven policymaking for start-up ecosystem development.

To highlight, EU4Digital identified EaP partner organisations, which collaborated on data-enrichment as well as promotion of the platform: Armenian Code Academy, Innovation and Technology Agency in Georgia, Moldovan Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies and Startup Moldova Programme, 360 Tech Ecosystem Overview project under the Ministry of Digital Transformation and Ukrainian Startup Fund.

Officially the platform will be launched during the EU4Digital Startups and Innovation Forum on 27 January 2022.



Connecting to EU platforms and networks

During this reporting period, EU4Digital organised two virtual events aimed to further connect Eastern partner organisations to selected EU networks and platforms:

- The first event facilitated joining the community of [I4MS](#) by being introduced to particular services. The event also marked the launch of the dedicated community platform – ‘[EU4Digital Smart Industry Community Space](#)’ that aims to help EaP stakeholders to use the network for expertise on digital transformation of manufacturing SMEs. The platform already has almost 70 international and EaP members combined.
- The second event facilitated joining EaP stakeholders to the [European DIGITAL SME Alliance](#) (DIGITAL SME). It was an initial discussion on collaboration among participating EaP associations uniting ICT SMEs and the DIGITAL SME network. The event participants expressed high interest to take further actions to develop international linkages, at the same time highlighting the financial challenge to join as separate organisations. It was discussed that EaP stakeholders might join DIGITAL SME as a non-formal network. In this context, EU4Digital decided to support EaP organisations by facilitating the DIGITAL SME joining process and covering the membership fee.

Key outputs:

- Facilitated the registration of interested ICT innovation and start-up ecosystem stakeholders (business support organisations and competence centres) from the Eastern partner countries in the I4MS.

DISC activities

Leading organisation and start-up ecosystem development

In the previous reporting period, EU4Digital developed a [guide for the development of start-up ecosystems](#) in the Eastern partner countries that is dedicated for capacity builders i.e. local policymakers, international organisations and aid agencies. The guide provides the ecosystem maturity assessment as well as country-level recommendations for further development. In order to implement the guide, further EU4Digital actions were focused on the following:

- Identifying leading organisations to coordinate the holistic start-up ecosystem development. During this reporting period, EU4Digital continued consultations with EU Delegations, government level representatives and other related ecosystem players. As a result, potential organisations have been defined in several countries: a special Commission of existing ecosystem organisations is foreseen to be potentially established in Armenia and coordinated by the Armenian Ministry of High-Tech Industries, the Innovation and Digital Development Agency of the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of Azerbaijan, Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency, Moldova IT park, and the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine. The identified organisations will further continue national planning of large-scale national programmes with potential donors, including EU Delegations. The consultations are planned to be finalised in Q1 2022.
- Preparing the guide for leading organisations to understand their responsibilities and role in the ecosystem, familiarise with the best EU examples and establish the understanding of what the owner should do to boost the ecosystem’s growth. The guide is planned to be completed and introduced to the selected coordinating organisations in Q1 2022.

EaP DISC Capital fund

In the last reporting period, EU4Digital finalised the design of the 100-150 million EUR (the amount is indicative) EaP DISC Capital venture fund to support more than 1,500 ICT start-ups from idea to early growth stages and generate more than 250 scale-ups in the region. It is envisioned that the fund will provide funding in the form of subsidised debts and equity as well as empower start-ups through non-financial instruments such as associated programmes of incubation, acceleration, and internationalisation. The fund will be invested by the selected fund owner, such as international investor and accelerator, international finance institutions and other local/international co-investors.

During this reporting period, EU4Digital continued to support the European Commission in negotiations with international financial institutions on the EaP DISC Capital fund implementation process. The awareness-raising consultations were organised for potential fund owners and investors, and co-investors from the public and private sector.

Key outputs:



- Assisted the European Commission in negotiations with the international financial institutions on the EaP DISC Capital fund implementation and the awareness-raising presentations with potential fund owners.
- Carried out stakeholders' consultations to identify the owners for the start-up ecosystem recommendations implementation in each partner country.

Planning for the upcoming three months

Networking of innovation players - key objectives:

- Organise the Annual EU4Digital Startups and Innovation Forum for the Eastern partner countries.
- Prepare the guidelines for the future start-up policy event organisers.

Extension of EU networks and platforms - key objectives:

- Develop the Eastern Partnership startup ecosystem platform for mapping start-ups and other ecosystem players in the Eastern partner countries, similar to European Startups.
- Facilitate the registration of interested ICT innovation and start-up ecosystem stakeholders from the Eastern partner countries in the selected EU networks and platforms: the last event on joining International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA).
- Facilitate the registration of interested ICT innovation and start-up ecosystem stakeholders from the Eastern partner countries in the European DIGITAL SME Alliance.
- Prepare a guide on the registration possibilities for EaP ICT innovation and start-up ecosystem stakeholders on the relevant EU networks and platforms.

DISC activities - key objectives:

- Continue the assistance to the EC and key identified international finance institutions on the EaP DISC Capital fund implementation and awareness-raising presentations with potential fund owners as well as potential co-investors.
- Continue consultations with the stakeholders of the partner countries to identify the owners for the ICT ecosystem recommendations implementation in each country.
- Prepare guidelines for the start-up ecosystem coordinating organisation.

3.5 eHealth

State of play

eHealth collaboration platform

In 2020, EU4Digital launched a dedicated [eHealth platform](#), consisting of a communication portal as a complimentary part of the EU4Digital website and a separate **eHealth collaboration platform** exclusively for key eHealth representatives from the partner countries. During this reporting period, the [eHealth collaboration platform](#) was used to share relevant content such as toolsets and frameworks related to eHealth interoperability and national eHealth strategy development, as well as examples of eHealth strategies in leading EU countries.

During the reporting period, EU4Digital organised a series of collaboration events bringing together eHealth representatives from the partner countries to share EU practices and provide networking opportunities. The aim of these events was to further support cross-border collaboration and enactment of common harmonisation and interoperability guidelines. The events covered topics such as:

- eHealth innovation for active and healthy ageing - good practice sharing and international collaboration.
- eHealth strategy developments across the Eastern Partnership.

During these events, Eastern partner countries were given an opportunity to present eHealth wins in their countries, as well as hear from the eHealth experts across the EU on their experience in eHealth innovation, collaboration and strategy development.

In September, EU4Digital organised an event on good practices and international collaboration in the framework of IN-4-AHA (EU-wide Innovation Networks for Scaling Active and Healthy Ageing) with the focus on telemedicine. The event was held virtually and connected speakers from Scotland, Italy, and other EU Member States. The presentations focused on diverse and relevant topics, e.g., the representative from Scottish National Health Service shared practices on *patient to doctor* telemedicine in a form of video consultations that is one of the best examples in this area in Europe. Also, representatives from Italy shared another area of how



telemedicine is used – via the implemented pilot it was proven that remote monitoring of chronic patients through telemedicine solutions (incl. wearable medical devices) could considerably improve patient health outcomes.

In December, EU4Digital organised a virtual event where Eastern partner countries were invited to share their progress and strategic priorities in eHealth strategy development. During the event, EU4Digital presented a thorough overview of eHealth strategy developments in various EU countries such as Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Spain and Portugal.

Key outputs:

- Organised a virtual event on eHealth innovation for active and healthy ageing - good practice sharing and international collaboration.
- Organised a virtual event on eHealth strategy developments across the Eastern Partnership.
- Maintenance and periodical update of eHealth collaboration platform.

Planning for the upcoming three months

eHealth collaboration platform – key objectives:

- Periodically update eHealth collaboration platform and ensure its smooth operation.
- Maintain cross-border collaboration via organisation of networking events to further support Eastern partner countries in eHealth harmonisation and interoperability activities.

3.6 Digital skills

State of play

Digital skills measurement

The activity was finished in June 2020. During this period, EU4Digital amended and presented the information note (originally developed during the previous reporting period) regarding full DESI indicator measurement implementation in the EaP to DG NEAR and the European Training Foundation and validated the overall possible future scenarios and regional activities in regard to DESI indicator measurement.

National Coalitions

EU4Digital supported establishing and running National Coalitions (NC) in the countries by providing tailored support: sharing EU best practices and examples, providing ad hoc consultations on policy paper development and inviting NC stakeholders to participate in relevant EU events on topics important for their situation. NC establishment is still behind schedule in several countries due to COVID-19 related restrictions and political situation. During this period, EU4Digital organised the Digital Skills Forum that took place from October 27 to October 29 and provided a platform for the countries to gain insights on NC specific issues and learn from the experience of several EU MS NCs.

Conferences, trainings and study visits and promotion campaign:

During this period, EU4Digital focused on organising the Digital Skills Forum bringing together more than 50 individual participants for each day of the Forum. Several EU MS NC (Malta, Austria, Italy and Latvia) representatives presented their approaches to running and managing NCs. Workshops were organised within the Forum to enable setting clear goals for NCs; allow the countries to share their experience on the approaches on dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; an open session for the countries to share their progress on establishing and managing NCs as well as gaining answers for any open questions. During the last day of the Forum, a virtual study visit to Ireland was organised to present practical ways and initiatives on how to increase digital literacy and boost digital skills through NC related activities.

Key outputs:

- Organised the Digital Skills Forum.
- Within the Forum: organised regional trainings on the European competence frameworks, Competence Framework use cases and Job Role Profile application, as well as best EU practices for upskilling and reskilling workforce.
- Within the Forum: organised a Virtual Study Visit to Ireland.



Planning for the upcoming three months

National coalitions – key objectives:

- Signed National Coalition memorandums in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova.
- Develop National Coalition Action Plan template applicable to all countries.

Conferences, trainings and study visits and promotion campaign – key objectives:

- Organise virtual study visit to Spain or Belgium, to be decided based on preference of Eastern Partner country representatives.

3.7 Communication

State of play

Since the project launch, communication has played a major role in making the work of the EU4Digital Facility more visible and recognisable for the stakeholders and citizens in the EaP region. As a result of the comprehensive communication approach, since 2019 the achievements of EU4Digital have been seen by hundreds of thousands of EaP citizens on the EU4Digital website, in social media, local media outlets and on partner channels.

Website for EU4Digital

Throughout the project implementation, the EU4Digital website – eufordigital.eu – has been a **key hub for all digital communication and content** on the EU4Digital Initiative and related bilateral digital projects. Since the launch of the website, it has seen more than 166,000 visitors, with almost 205,000 sessions, and 590,000 page views. The website is updated daily and maintained in eight different languages (six local languages, English and Russian).

In the reporting period, **61 content pieces** were drafted, edited and uploaded in English, with a total of **376 content entries in all eight languages:**

Type	English	Armenian	Azerbaijani	Belarusian	Georgian	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Total
News	38	27	25	25	28	28	29	31	231
Events	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80
Feature stories	8	2	2	1	3	2	4	3	25
Library	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	40
Total	61	44	42	41	46	45	48	49	376

Overall, since the launch of the portal, a total of **673** news, events, stories and library entries have been developed and uploaded on the website in English, and **2,752** in the local languages.

To track the efficiency of the website performance, **two 3-month website analytics reports** (covering July-September and October-December) were prepared. The key highlights in the period July-December:

- **37,448** total website visitors with 37,143 being new visitors;
- **86,462** total website page views.

Development of the new **EaPeReg website** continued in the reporting period. Following the technical development, design, quality assurance process, technical and editorial capacity building for the EaPeReg’s team, the [portal was launched](#) in December.

Finally, as part of this activity, seven project outputs were shared via the [capacity4dev web platform](#): six news articles and one publication. In total, the number of downloads shows that there is a clear interest in EU4Digital materials on this knowledge sharing platform (e.g. the most popular EU4Digital publication ‘EU eCommerce baseline report – a milestone towards facilitating cross-border eTrade between EU and Eastern partner countries’ had 925 downloads).

Key outputs:

- 61 content items in English and 315 in national languages on the website.
- Two quarterly website analytics reports.
- [EaPeReg website](#) developed and launched.
- Key project outputs on capacity4dev web platform.



EU4Digital social media presence

In the reporting period, two EU4Digital campaigns were conducted – a thematic [Digital Skills campaign](#) was launched on 29 June and ran till 11 July on the EU Neighbours East and EU Delegations' channels. The campaign reached almost **1.72 million** people on social media through organic posts and paid ads, with **2.98 million** impressions generated from the paid ads. The campaign posts resulted in almost **37,600** unique link clicks and **758,800** post engagements. Despite its smaller scope, the overall campaign results outperformed or remained on par with the results of the previous more extensive EU4Digital campaigns, indicating well-timed and well-formulated content and strategic approach of the Digital Skills campaign.

The closing thematic campaign, focusing on [eTrade and Trust and Security achievements](#), was launched on EU Neighbours East and EU Delegations' channels and was run on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter between 8 November and 4 January. The campaign reached around **5.7 million** people through organic campaign posts and ads in social media, with **12.1 million** impressions generated from the paid ads. The posts resulted in a total of **57,460** unique link clicks and total post engagements amounted to over **1.87 million**.

Since the project launch, the targeted and engaging social media campaigns have reached more than **16.5 million** people to explain the EU's support behind the EU4Digital, build trust with the EaP citizens and inspire support and advocacy among audience and relevant stakeholders. In total, EU4Digital thematic campaigns generated **242,306** unique link clicks and more than **69,000** total post likes.

Key outputs:

- Digital Skills campaign implemented.
- eTrade and Trust and Security campaign developed and implemented.

Communication activities and visibility of EU4Digital

As reported in the previous period, five stories were produced in support of the Digital Skills campaign. The stories generated the potential media reach of **593,000 people** in the region.

As part of the eTrade and Trust and Security campaign, **seven feature stories** were developed in cooperation with media outlets in the Eastern partner countries. **Four feature stories** focused on promoting the eCommerce and eDelivery solutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine, and **three additional stories**, highlighting the eSignature solutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, were published. In total, the campaign gathered **28** media clippings, with the potential reach of these media materials being **27 million** people.

A new **partnership** with the media outlet in Ukraine (European Pravda at <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua>) was established to further improve the quality of produced media materials in the country and diversify the outreach.

Three newsletter editions were prepared and sent out during the reporting period. The [September newsletter edition](#) was sent to promote and invite the subscribers to join the virtual Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership which took place on 27 September. The [October newsletter edition](#) presented the main highlights from the Steering Committee week and was sent to 2,286 subscribers. The final [EU4Digital December newsletter edition](#) was sent to 2,444 subscribers and presented the latest EU4Digital highlights.

From its launch, the newsletter subscription database has **grown by 359%**, from 532 recipients in July 2019 to 2,440 recipients at the end of December 2021. In total **16 newsletter editions** were developed and sent to the organically grown list of recipients.

Full communication support was provided for the **Steering Committee week**. Two EU4Digital videos were produced and promoted, the dedicated [event webpage](#) was created, thematic videos were updated and played at the sessions. The updates and highlights of the Steering Committee week were published on the EU4Digital and EU Neighbours East websites, and a Twitter content package was prepared via Trello (announcement tweets and for each speaker of the Conference). The latter was shared with the key partners and speakers ahead of the event. Media invitations were prepared and distributed, and as a result, the Conference received coverage in a total of 17 media outlets in the region with the potential reach of 21.5 million EaP citizens. Extensive promotion of the conference has resulted in a high participation rate in the conference and Steering Committee week overall. Streaming of the Conference and its recording for replay has resulted in 335 views.

Finally, a **communication package** [was prepared on the Trello board](#) in support of the signature of the RRA and RSA, which is expected in 2022.

Key outputs:

- Seven feature stories created and published by the national media outlets.
- Three newsletters prepared and disseminated.
- A new media partner engaged.



- Full communication support provided for the Steering Committee week.
- Communication package prepared to announce the expected signature of the RRA and RSA.

Impact and result monitoring

Monitoring of project results continued during this six-month period. The progress on the EU4Digital indicators against the set targets and the context of implementation were collected and reported in the bi-annual report logframe annex.

Support was also provided on the ad-hoc requests received during this period which required input about the results and presentation of achievements. The team also provided input for the specific recurring bi-annual request to support the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine in monitoring the results of the project in Ukraine.

Key outputs:

- Continuous performance monitoring.
- Responding to ad-hoc requests.
- Reporting on results.

Ensuring coherence and coordination of activities

In the framework of the newly established coordination mechanism, regular calls with **EU Neighbours East** project took place throughout the reporting period to agree upon the schedule and format of campaigns, discuss their results and plan forward.

At the same time, the ongoing cooperation was ensured with the **EU Delegations** in the six Eastern partner countries on the subject of feature stories produced in support of campaigns as well as on the campaigns' planning, content production and publication.

EU4Digital also continued **contributing with content** to the EU-Moldova Cooperation e-Newsletter ([June-August](#), and [November-December](#) editions).

Key outputs:

- Collaboration with EU Neighbours east and EU Delegations.
- Contributions to EU-Moldova Cooperation e-Newsletter.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Since the core planned communication activities have been completed in the current reporting period, no planning is set for 2022.

At the same time, during the next three months, the EU4Digital website will be maintained and the important updates will be published and translated into local languages.

4 Key events

The following section presents multiple digital-related events that took place in the Eastern partner countries during the past six-month period (July 2021 - December 2021) in the six thematic areas. While the majority of face-to-face events and meetings could not take place due to COVID-19, online work continued, including meetings and workshops.

Past events	
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership (September) (Read more). • Third annual Steering Committee Meeting (September-October) (Read more: News article, Steering Committee Meeting platform page).
Telecom rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders' Forum: Eastern partners commit to finalising Regional Roaming and Spectrum agreements by December (September) (Read more). • EaPeReg Roaming Expert Working Group (REWG) agreed on the final text of Regional Roaming Agreement (September) (Read more).



Past events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">EaPeReg Independence of Regulators and Broadband Expert Working Group (IRB EWG) adopted Model Law on electronic communications as well as the draft Framework laws of each Eastern partner country prepared by the EU4Digital team together with IRB EWG experts (November) (Read more).EaPeReg summed up the results and achievements of its activity in 2021 and approved priorities for 2022 (December) (Read more).
eTrade
<ul style="list-style-type: none">eDelivery event regarding practicalities on functioning of an eDelivery Access Point in the Eastern Partner countries (November) (Read more).
ICT innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">I4MS to provide EaP manufacturing SMEs better access to finance and expertise for an acceleration of digital transformation (September) (Read more).ICT Innovation virtual study visit: Journeys of EU organisations in building and developing startup ecosystems (October) (Read more).Joining European DIGITAL SME Alliance community to foster international cooperation of digital SMEs on digital markets development (October) (Read more).
eHealth
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Virtual event on eHealth innovation for active and healthy ageing - good practice sharing and international collaboration (Read more).Virtual event on eHealth strategy developments across the Eastern Partnership (Read more).
Digital skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Digital Skills Forum (October) (Read more).