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#EU4Digital

EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and
society in the Eastern Partnership

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List of Acronyms & Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definition
AM	Armenia
AZ	Azerbaijan
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EaPeReg	Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network
EBSI	European Blockchain Services Infrastructure
EC	European Commission
eFTI	Electronic freight transport information
eID, eIDAS	Electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services
EU	European Union
EU4Digital Facility, EU4Digital	EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership – Phase II
GE	Georgia
IRB EWG	Independence of Regulators and Broadband Expert Working Group
MD	Republic of Moldova
PESTLE analysis	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental analysis
REWG	Roaming Expert Working Group
RRA	Regional Roaming Agreement
RSA	Regional Spectrum Agreement
SEWG	Spectrum Expert Working Group
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SWOT analysis	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis
UA	Ukraine
WHO	World Health Organization



Introduction

This report reflects the activities of the first reporting period of the EU4Digital Facility Phase II (hereinafter - EU4Digital): 22 June 2022 - 31 December 2022. The report summarises the outputs achieved under the six thematic streams during the reporting period, as well as introduces aims and objectives of the activities that will be initiated in the next reporting periods. Also, it outlines the main political highlights.

Political Summary

EU4Digital: Supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership – Phase II (2022-2025), referred to as the **EU4Digital Facility**, focuses on enabling a stronger economy and stronger governance in the Eastern partner countries through digital transformation. This project builds on the first phase of the EU4Digital Facility (2019-2022) and remains the core programme of the EU4Digital Initiative.

The overall project objective is to extend the benefits of the Digital Single Market to the EU's Eastern partner countries and promote the development of resilient digital economies and societies. Under the guidance of DG NEAR, the EU4Digital Facility works in close cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the EU4Digital thematic networks, European Commission DGs and other EU institutions, as well as EU international partners such as the OECD, the World Bank, GIZ, EBRD and others.

Policy Context

The EU's [Digital Decade](#) programme, represented through the [Digital Compass](#), provides a tangible plan to achieve digital transformation of the EU economy and society by 2030. Focusing on four key digital areas of skills, infrastructure, government and business, the compass sets the main goals of digitisation, underpinned by the digital rights and principles established by the EU.

With digital high on the EU's policy agenda, this is reflected in the EU's relations with its strategic partners under the European Neighbourhood Policy towards building better and more harmonised digital markets. In the Eastern Partnership (EaP), the current policy agenda and [top ten targets towards 2025](#) were agreed between EU and EaP country leaders in a [Joint Declaration](#) at the EaP Summit in December 2021. This includes five 'together for' areas of resilient, sustainable and integrated economies; accountable institutions, the rule of law and security; environmental and climate resilience; resilient, fair and inclusive societies; and a **resilient digital transformation**. This renewed agenda builds on the previous policy agenda of '[20 Deliverables for 2020](#)' and was established following a multi-stakeholder inclusive consultation process, summarised in the [Joint Communication](#) of March 2020, and [Joint Staff Working Document](#) of July 2021.

With the importance of a **resilient digital transformation** confirmed through the renewed EaP policy agenda, the EU4Digital Initiative is well placed to **build on the progress achieved** in the region to date and further the access to, interoperability and security of digital services in the coming years. The new policy structure of four digital areas - three of which the Facility will contribute to (digital infrastructure, eGovernance, and digital economy and innovation) - provides a complementary grouping for the established six thematic areas of EU4Digital for Phase II of the project.

Political Highlights

In this reporting period, the EU4Digital Facility - Phase II was **officially launched**. The activities were mobilised within the new regional environment, and efforts were taken to reassess and adapt to the changing context.

The war in Ukraine, which began in early 2022, has been the main **source of insecurity for the region**. The EU has provided targeted [support to Ukraine](#) in several areas, and in June 2022 the European Council [granted the status of candidate country to Ukraine](#), as an initial step in the EU membership application process. With Moldova also being granted the candidate status and Georgia the European perspective, a renewed dynamic is in motion towards further alignment and bilateral relations with the EU. On the other hand, in line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020 and in light of Belarus's involvement in the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, recognised in the European Council Conclusions of February 2022, the EU has stopped engaging with Belarusian public bodies and state-owned enterprises.

In this context, the Facility has been working to **review and adjust the plan of activities to the new reality**, which includes reconnecting and consulting with stakeholders, and evaluating the context of implementation to achieve the objectives set. This ability to respond to the changing context was embedded in the set-up of the EU4Digital Facility, with additional ad hoc emergency support possible.



The Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership and the Steering Committee Meeting held in October 2022 were the first milestone events organised by the Facility to bring together the EU and EaP stakeholders at high level, as well as the technical expertise, to discuss the future of digital transformation in the region. With the changes among stakeholders since Phase I, and in the new regional context with Belarusian stakeholders no longer participating in the EU4Digital Initiative, there was a need to reconnect with each of the EU4Digital networks. Input gathered from stakeholders on the Facility’s activities will serve to recalibrate the needs and activities with all the countries, but especially Ukraine in the context of the ongoing war.

As the activities begin implementation, the EU4Digital Facility remains a relevant central hub for information, expertise and support to digitalisation in the EaP. The ICT Innovation stream held its first networking event, focusing on [Women 4 Digital Future](#). On the next steps and signing of the Regional Roaming Agreement, renewed assessments of the telecom environment and readiness were undertaken, given the changed regional circumstances.

As this period marked the transition between Phase I and Phase II, an emphasis was also placed on **raising awareness** among stakeholders: to present the achievements and successes of Phase I activities and to build on the established networks of stakeholders towards the new Facility objectives. For instance, the Facility participating in the [Eastern Partnership Business Forum](#) in October, organised by the Czech presidency to discuss digital topics on a regional level, presented opportunities to share information about the work accomplished so far and represent EU support for digital transformation in the region.

EU4Digital - objective, purpose and expected results

OVERALL PROJECT OBJECTIVE	
To extend the benefits of the Digital Single Market to Eastern partner countries and promote the development of resilient digital economies and societies	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS	
1. Secure and sustainable digital and telecom infrastructure across the Eastern partner countries	1.1 Enhanced legislative and regulatory framework conditions for reducing retail prices of mobile services for citizens while roaming in the EaP, as well as for promoting affordable access to high-speed and secure connectivity; 1.2 Sound implementation of the Regional Roaming Agreement, upon its signature; 1.3 Sound coordination of 5G frequencies and implementation of the Regional Spectrum Agreement, upon its signature; 1.4 The investments needs for 5G deployment are identified, based on EU best practice; 1.5 Progress in the independence of National Regulatory Authorities for telecommunications.
2. Improve digitalisation of public services and interoperability between governmental services at the national level, the EaP level, and between the EaP and the EU	2.1 Enhanced legislative and regulatory framework conditions for cross-border public services and interoperability between governmental services across the EaP and with the EU; 2.2. Increase in the adoption of cross-border electronic identification and in mutual recognition of signatures in line with EU standards of data protection; 2.3. Increase in the number of e-administration and e-health pilot solutions and users of these solutions.
3. Support digitalisation of businesses in the EaP countries and support the development of digital skills to digitally empower citizens, businesses and governments	3.1 Enhanced legislative and regulatory framework conditions for the development of the digital economy, cross-border e-commerce and scaling up of highly innovative digital start-ups and SMEs; 3.2. Increase in cross-border use of digital environments and solutions among EaP partner countries and with the EU;



	<p>3.3 Learning opportunities are provided via a regional digital learning platform and through adoption of recognised EU standards and practices, with the aim of setting the basis for digitally empowering one million EaP citizens and businesses;</p> <p>3.4. Increase in the number of digitally literate people in the EaP region.</p>
<p>4. Further establish EU4Digital as a recognised and well communicated brand encompassing all EU support to the digital economy and society in the EaP region, and providing links to complementary activities by the EaP partner countries, EU Member States, IFIs and other donors</p>	<p>4.1 The EU4Digital brand is further strengthened, and visible as the reference for EU cooperation on the digital economy and society in the EaP.</p>
<p>5. Support crisis response and ad-hoc needs of partner countries</p>	<p>5.1 EaP partner countries are supported with tailor-made solutions to ensure crisis response or support to ad-hoc needs.</p>

Project State of Play & Planning of Activities

This chapter covers the main EU4Digital Facility Phase II results achieved and a short description of related activities under the six streams and the Communication stream during the reporting period (June 2022 – December 2022). Under each thematic activity (where applicable), key highlights in the Eastern partner countries are provided. The report also introduces aims and objectives of the activities that will be initiated in the next reporting periods. Additionally, the report provides planning for the upcoming six-month period under each stream.

Telecom Rules

State of play

Roaming agreements

In the area of establishing a common roaming space between the five Eastern partner countries, EU4Digital has been supporting both bilateral and regional discussions about the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA) with the Eastern partner countries, regarding its status and next steps. Based on these discussions and a Roaming Expert Working Group (REWG) meeting in November 2022, two options regarding RRA glidepath and revised timeline were suggested. Based on the Eastern partner countries' feedback, the RRA text was updated and submitted for national consultations.

At the current stage, Ukraine has expressed reservations about signing the agreement. Consequently, Republic of Moldova representatives have raised concerns regarding joining the agreement without Ukraine, due to high roaming traffic between the countries. If both Ukraine and Republic of Moldova decide not to sign the agreement, then the business case for signing the RRA between the three remaining Eastern partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and expediency of the overall initiative becomes questionable. EU4Digital continues to support the Eastern partner countries for the potential signing of the RRA in 2023, including further discussions with Ukraine and Moldova regarding possibilities to amend the agreement to fit current reality.

Key outputs:

- RRA text, including glidepath and timeline, updated and submitted for national consultations.

Country perspective

The table below presents the current status regarding the national consultations on the updated RRA text per each Eastern partner country.



Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AM has approved the updated RRA text and expressed a strong commitment to sign the agreement.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AZ has approved the updated RRA text and expressed a strong commitment to sign the agreement.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GE has approved the updated RRA text and expressed a strong commitment to sign the agreement.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD representatives have raised concerns that, due to exceptionally high roaming traffic with UA (~98% of all roaming traffic with Eastern partner countries), they are not willing to join the agreement without UA signing it as well.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UA is expected to join the agreement later (when it will be possible). However, due to concerns expressed by MD, further discussions are planned to facilitate UA's joining process.

Spectrum releasing for 5G

During the Telecom Rules stream kick-off meeting with the EaPeReg in October 2022, the Spectrum Expert Working Group (SEWG) leadership highlighted that the scope of activities related to 5G shall be reviewed, as the focus of SEWG is expected to shift to other priorities. Thus, during the November 2022 SEWG meeting, EU4Digital presented the adjusted potential scope based on SEWG priorities and submitted for Eastern partner country review. An updated scope of the activity and proposed changes, based on feedback from the Eastern partner countries and discussions with DG NEAR.

Additionally, Eastern partner country representatives discussed the status of the Regional Spectrum Agreement (RSA) during the SEWG meeting in November 2022. It was agreed to remove Belarus and Ukraine from the list of signatories and proceed with signing among the four remaining countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova), with a possibility for Ukraine to join at a later stage. However, similar to the situation with the RRA, Moldova representatives have recently expressed concerns regarding their willingness to join the agreement without Ukraine. At the current stage, further discussions are planned to facilitate Moldova and Ukraine's joining process.

5G investment mapping

In October 2022, during the Telecom Rules stream meeting with the EaPeReg, the SEWG leadership highlighted that this activity should be reviewed. In the November 2022 SEWG meeting, it was agreed with the country representatives to provide feedback from each Eastern partner country regarding this activity.

Monitoring & promoting broadband access

EU4Digital completed another round of data collection required for monitoring broadband internet access developments covering both fixed and mobile technologies and speeds of connections, where applicable. During the Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development Expert Working Group (IRB EWG) meeting in December 2022, EU4Digital presented the data discrepancies among the Eastern partner countries. Thus, it was agreed that Eastern partner country representatives will review and share updated data sets by mid-February 2023. Also, the questionnaire was updated and shared with the IRB EWG in preparation for the next data collection round, which will start in January and be completed by 1 March 2023.

EU4Digital has also started preparing the report on EU best practices in promoting access to competitive broadband internet services (to be completed by the end of March 2023).

Key outputs:

- Draft report on monitoring state of play of broadband access for 2020-2021 in Eastern partner countries.
- Updated broadband data collection questionnaires and relevant methodology for 2022.



Broadband market analysis

A joint workshop with the IRB EWG on the imposition of remedies within market analysis was organised as part of the IRB EWG meeting in September 2022. EU4Digital is finalising alignment on a methodological approach and scope for the analysis and planning to start the data collection exercise in March 2023.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Roaming agreements – key objectives:

- Continue supporting bilateral discussions between Eastern partner countries regarding the signing of RRA (signing ceremony is planned in 2023).

Spectrum releasing for 5G – key objectives:

- To be decided regarding 'Spectrum releasing for 5G replacement' activity replacement with '5G private networks development' activity.

5G investment mapping – key objectives:

- To be decided regarding '5G investment mapping' activity replacement with 'EU toolbox for 5G security' activity.

Monitoring & promoting broadband access – key objectives:

- Prepare the report on EU best practices in promoting access to competitive broadband internet services and organise workshops to socialise and share findings.
- Conduct a data collection exercise required for broadband developments monitoring and prepare country-specific reports and the overall summary.
- Design an approach for monitoring legislative developments, including data collection, preparation of a draft proposal and organising workshops.

Broadband market analysis – key objectives:

- Align the methodological approach and scope of the market analysis with Eastern partner countries and network stakeholders.
- Conduct a data collection exercise required for the holistic market analysis of electronic communications markets related to broadband.

eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services

State of play

Recognition of eID and trust services

The activity aims to enable mutually recognised and secure electronic identification and digital trust services through mutual recognition agreements between Eastern partner countries. EU4Digital has initiated a state of play analysis in the area of eID and trust services to understand the progress achieved since 2020 H1 and to focus key actions based on the remaining gaps. Individual eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services kick-off meetings were organised with the representatives of Armenia and Ukraine; meetings with other Eastern partner countries are in progress and will be conducted during Q1 2023.

EU4Digital has also started to draft the common requirements based on EU best practices, such as eIDAS, mutual recognition cookbook, eIDAS note and others, which will serve as a recommendation for the mutual recognition agreement scope and objectives and will be aligned with Eastern partner countries.

Key outputs:

- State of play analysis on eID and trust services initiated to identify progress achieved and remaining gaps in the Eastern partner countries since Phase I.

Pilot eID

The activity aims to assist Eastern partner countries to pilot interoperable cross-border eID. EU4Digital will facilitate the technical implementation of cross-border eID pilots based on common principles and formats, aligned between Eastern partner countries. The pilot activities will enable Eastern partner countries to test the readiness of national infrastructure for cross-border eID. The planned results of this activity are developed and



tested technical pilots of cross-border eID as well as recommendations for further cross-border eID implementation. The activity will commence in March 2023.

Data governance

The activity aims to design a concept for a data governance strategy in line with EU and global practices and to provide recommendations for the Eastern partner countries. EU4Digital will facilitate the state of play analysis in the national data governance strategic directions of Eastern partner countries, based on the EU and global practices. EU4Digital will develop a data governance strategy framework and prepare recommendations for Eastern partner country data governance strategic development. The activity will commence in July 2023.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Recognition of eID and trust services – key objectives:

- Perform state of play analysis of the Eastern partner countries in the area of eID and trust services.
- Draft recommendations for the Eastern partner countries on the scope and objectives for the mutual recognition agreement based on EU best practices.
- Initiate definition of a regional trust framework through organising country-specific periodic workshops and providing legal, organisational and technical support during consultations and/or bilateral negotiations.

Pilot eID – key objectives:

- Prepare concept description of piloting activity (optimal set of components, technical requirements, technical memorandum).
- Select pilot participants based on country readiness assessments.
- Start cross-border eID pilot implementation.

eTrade

State of play

Pilot cross-border eTrade solutions

The activity aims to pilot and learn how cross-border use of digital eTrade enablers, standards and work practices, such as European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI), could be implemented; also, define recommendations for full-scale solution implementation. The goal of this activity is to develop and pilot solutions, such as EBSI (European Blockchain Services Infrastructure), and develop and provide recommendations for full-scale implementation in Eastern partner countries, including technical, legal and organisational perspectives. The activity will commence in July 2023.

Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment)

The activity aims to support trade facilitation and harmonisation between Eastern partner and EU countries by developing a roadmap on e-freight deployment in two selected EaP countries (selection to be carried out in cooperation with DG NEAR). The selected countries will receive action plans to deploy eFTI based on the state of play assessment. It is important to note, that with the eFTI Regulation¹ implementation deadline approaching (EU-wide implementation planned by 2025), Eastern partner countries would greatly benefit from aligning their electronic freight information exchange policies, leading to more efficient and simplified trade flows with the EU.

During this reporting period, EU4Digital carried out preparatory work to launch the activity: defining the activity concept, initiating the EaP country selection process for the state of play assessment report, reviewing the latest EU updates in the electronic freight information exchange, and preparing for an awareness building session and kick-off on 31 January 2023.

Furthermore, existing eFreight practices in EaP countries were researched. Relevant highlights:

¹ Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/electronic-freight-transport-information.html>



- Ukraine is developing eConsignment note (e-TTN) system for domestic transportation, which in the long term could be considered part of the eFTI solution. Over Q4 of 2022, project testing was carried out and full implementation is planned for summer 2023.
- Four European Transport Corridors (under Trans-European Transport Network TEN-T) were extended to the territory of Ukraine and Moldova in 2022, increasing their transport connectivity to the EU.²

eCommerce accelerator

The activity aims to provide updated Eastern partner country-specific recommendations and action plans for eCommerce harmonisation in the priority areas with the EU as well as piloting solutions that could increase cross-border eCommerce flows with the EU. This will be done by providing EaP countries with individual recommendations, trainings and consultations on national and company level. Additionally, the activity will pilot a National pavilion account solution (allowing SMEs to sell goods via a major marketplace under a national account created by the country authority) with the aim to increase cross-border eCommerce volume with the EU. To ensure sustainability of the EU4Digital eCommerce accelerator, EU4Digital will search for synergies with EdTech activity to continue upskilling EaP SMEs in selling on major EU marketplaces. The ultimate goal is long-term impact on eCommerce ecosystem development in the EaP region.

In December 2022, EU4Digital was finalising the EU4Digital eCommerce accelerator concept including definition of 3 tracks (track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation, track 2 – eCommerce pilot, track 3 – eCommerce trainings), target indicators and workplan. Also, EU4Digital updated the framework for eCommerce ecosystem status analysis to understand changes and progress since the Phase I eCommerce recommendations. Finally, the set up of the accelerator has started, including preparation for kick-off session with EaP stakeholders in February.

Stakeholders' networking

The activity aims to raise awareness and align to EU developments in eTrade through networking events (e.g. conferences, training, workshops, study visits) involving EaP countries and EU representatives to promote collaboration, exchange of expertise and information. The next steps are to develop a networking action plan and organise networking events where EU representatives relative to developments of eTrade practices will share developments in eTrade practices with EaP stakeholders. Topics will be finalised based on milestones achieved during the eTrade activity and on progress of EU developments (e.g., on eFTI developments in the EU and state of play of e-freight in EaP). The aim is to encourage networking and practices sharing between EaP stakeholders for further eTrade development. The networking events agenda will be aligned with the eTrade Network and starts in April 2023.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Digital Transport Corridor – key objectives:

- Select two Eastern partner countries to participate in the activity.
- Complete the assessment of updated EU practices in exchange of electronic freight information.
- Complete the assessment of electronic freight information exchange state of play in the selected EaP countries.

eCommerce accelerator – key objectives:

- Set up the eCommerce accelerator concept for 3 tracks: track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation; track 2 – eCommerce pilot; track 3 – eCommerce trainings.
- Track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation:
 - Review the eCommerce value chain framework and country specific progress.
 - Update country-specific national action plans for eCommerce harmonisation and growth in the EaP and with the EU.
 - Start providing consultations in the priority areas.
- Track 2 – eCommerce pilot:
 - Develop concept for eCommerce National Pavilion accounts pilot.

² European Transport Corridors : https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-amends-ten-t-proposal-reflect-impacts-infrastructure-russias-war-aggression-against-2022-07-27_en



- Select two Eastern partner countries for the pilot as well as the EU marketplace.
- Prepare for piloting the national pavilion accounts.
- Track 3 – eCommerce training:
 - Provide consultations in selecting topics and for selected SMEs.

Stakeholders networking – key objectives:

- Organise eFTI awareness-building sessions.
- Organise kick-off session for the eTrade network.
- Organise and deliver up to three networking events.

eHealth

State of play

eHealth strategic development

The activity aims to support the strategic development of Digital Health in the Eastern partner countries. In this reporting period, collaboration with EaP region stakeholders and specialists from various eHealth areas was re-initiated. Five kick-off meetings with representatives of Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia are planned for February 2023.

In 2022, EU4Digital developed a questionnaire for the state of play analysis, leveraging the eHealth assessment framework developed in Phase I. The questionnaire reflects trends in eHealth development in the EU and focuses strategic sections on eHealth service portfolios and national health and eHealth statistics.

EU Member States' (i.e., Spain, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, Lithuania, Slovenia) eHealth strategies were analysed to identify best practices in the EU. In addition, the preparation of recommendations for eHealth strategies was started by re-using existing studies and publications of the EC and WHO.

Key outputs:

- Individual eHealth kick-off meetings organised with representatives of Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan.
- Draft best practice analysis of EU national eHealth strategies in Spain, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, Lithuania, Slovenia, and of institutional documents from the EC and WHO.

Pilot cross-border eHealth

The activity aims to facilitate legal, technical, and organisational changes in eHealth in the Eastern partner countries. During February - August 2023, EU4Digital will define the piloting concept. In consultation with DG NEAR and considering countries' willingness and readiness, two-three Eastern partner countries will be selected to participate in the pilot. Workshops will be organised for alignment and to define the eHealth service piloting scope (ePrescription or Patient summary), plan and timeline.

eHealth collaboration and communication

EU4Digital's eHealth collaboration and communication platform, launched in Phase I, is dedicated to the internal collaboration of eHealth stakeholders from Eastern partner countries. This platform provides a repository of combined practices in eHealth and a space for country practice sharing and collaboration among eHealth experts. The platform content was renewed and restructured based on Phase II activities. It will provide individual country spaces for national eHealth strategy development activities and a common community space for piloting activities via a discussions forum, file repository, common calendar and communication (with integrated MS Teams).

Key outputs:

- EU4Digital eHealth collaboration and communication platform updated.



Planning for the upcoming six months

eHealth strategic development – key objectives:

- Perform state of play analysis in EaP countries.
- Assist in PESTLE analysis as an input to the eHealth strategy for each currently interested/active Eastern partner country.
- Assist in SWOT analysis for setting eHealth strategy directions for each currently interested/active Eastern partner country.

Pilot cross-border eHealth – key objectives:

- Prepare piloting activity concept description (country selection, eHealth service selection).

eHealth collaboration and communication – key objectives:

- On-board new eHealth working group members to the eHealth collaboration platform and activate its use for cross-country experience-exchange and collaboration.
- Facilitate eHealth development best practice sharing events in EU and EaP countries' areas of interest (eHealth Network event in March on eHealth strategy development, thematic collaboration event in May. Topics to be decided).
- Organise individual workshops with EaP countries to support their needs and interest areas.

ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems

State of play

Networking of innovation players

The activity aims to build awareness around specific areas of innovation, related to digital technologies, to further harmonise and transfer relevant EU practices to the EaP stakeholders.

During the reporting period, EU4Digital developed the networking action plan – an initial list of planned events for the whole project period (until June 2025), including topics, potential EU partners and EaP target audiences. The topics include blockchain for economy, emerging and advanced technologies, start-up incubation for digital innovations, digital innovation clusters, finance for digital innovations, as well as start-up ecosystems and digital policy.

EU4Digital organised the first networking event, in November 2022, 'Women 4 Digital Future - Supporting Women Entrepreneurship & Innovation'. This presented best practices in supporting women's entrepreneurship and upskilling opportunities and connected EaP organisations with the following EU-based platforms, initiatives and organisations: [WEgate](#) platform, the European platform for women professionals [Womenat](#); [Women Go Tech](#); [Women Business Angels](#); [WINGATE](#); [Female Founders](#). The event attracted more than 70 participants from around 60 organisations from the Eastern partner countries.

In addition, EU4Digital started organising the annual 'Start-up and Innovation Forum' for the Eastern partner countries, a catalyst for developing the ICT innovation and start-up ecosystem regionally while also deepening connections with the EU. The indicative theme for the first event is 'Digital technologies for the wide-reaching digital upskilling of SMEs in the Eastern Partnership'; the preliminary date is 9 March 2023.

Key outputs:

- Networking action plan, providing the initial list of planned ICT Innovation events.
- Networking event 'Women 4 Digital Future - Supporting Women Entrepreneurship & Innovation'.

Startups ecosystem development

The activity aims to support the development of the Eastern Partnership digital start-ups' ecosystem. The activity focuses on start-up incubation and promotion of tools for data-driven decision making. EU4Digital will map and evaluate the performance of Eastern partner countries' start-up incubators to raise awareness of incubation importance and impact. Also, EU4Digital continues to promote and foster use of the [EaP Startups ecosystem](#)



[platform](#), developed during Phase I, by collaborating with key stakeholders to promote the platform, and reporting on its performance. The activity was initiated in late December 2022.

Innovation clusters

The activity aims to develop a common framework and provide recommendations for the development of innovation clusters in EaP countries. EU4Digital will define the clustering approach using EU best practices for innovation cluster development, and define the thematic area by consulting with national stakeholders. The analysis inputs will be used to develop a common framework, which will provide the ground for assessing the innovation clusters' state of play in the EaP, and country-specific recommendations for further development of innovation facilities. This activity will commence in January 2024.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Networking of innovation players – key objectives:

- Organise second networking event - 'Emerging and advanced technologies: blockchain for economy'.
- Organise the annual 'EU4Digital Startup and Innovation Forum' for the Eastern partner countries.
- Organise third networking event in H1 2023.

Startups ecosystem development – key objectives:

- Design the concept note on the high-performing incubation programme for EaP start-ups.
- Map and evaluate performance of the Eastern partner countries' incubators.
- Organise awareness-raising sessions about incubation importance and impact with key ecosystem builders in the EaP.
- Facilitate preparation of the EaP Startup ecosystem platform's performance report for 2022.
- Identify and facilitate the EaP Startup ecosystem platform's promotion actions (e.g. event) to increase usage and improvement of the platform.

Digital Skills

State of play

EdTech learning platform

The activity aims to set the basis to digitally empower one million EaP citizens and businesses by providing learning opportunities through a regional digital learning platform. EU4Digital will leverage the results of Phase I to develop a final concept for the digital skills learning programme and to set up the platform to learn and/or improve digital skills in the Eastern partner countries.

The final concept for the digital skills learning programme will focus on upskilling of SMEs. The platform will be set up by utilising available learning resources and practices through an innovative badge (learning programme) approach. Learning programme content will be focused on priority digital areas such as data and cloud, software development, network and security, and other topics, which will be defined together with national stakeholders. The technical preparation of the learning platform will include the selection of the learning management system (learning portal), badges (digital credentials) management system, integration of learning sources and other components based on needs.

In the long run, the learning programme could scale and address the goals of a broader range of target groups, such as innovation support organisations and public servants. To prove the concept, EU4Digital will target the needs of SMEs; the programme should evolve gradually to provide personalised learning opportunities and more digital skills content. The activity will commence in January 2023.

Women mentorship programme on ICT skills

The activity aims to develop a country-specific concept and action plan to facilitate the launch of a mentorship programme bridging the gender gap in ICT. The concept will focus on re-qualification towards ICT of working-age women in Georgia, which is selected as a pilot country. The action plan will define the scope for the programme's launch. Importantly, the concept and the action plan will be developed in a way that allows other EaP countries to apply it in practice.

During this reporting period, EU4Digital mobilised relevant national stakeholders in Georgia, and conducted more than five consultations to identify specific needs and composition of the programme such as key



beneficiaries, number of stages, duration, number of participants and other aspects. The final concept and action plan will be presented to the stakeholders in a form of a virtual workshop to transfer know-how on implementing the programme.

DESI accelerator

The activity aims to support EaP countries with the implementation of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), in order to increase the quality of digital transformation monitoring and measurement.

As a first step, EU4Digital developed draft guidelines on DESI indicators, including sampling, regularity and survey questions, that should support Eastern partner countries in evaluating their currently-used data collection methodologies and the possible introduction of the full DESI measurement. This document will be the main reference for a questionnaire for collecting and measuring information about the current state of DESI indicators in the countries.

The assessment is planned to start in April - May 2023, including a regional DESI kick-off with the Digital Skills Network and consultation sessions. The inputs gathered from EaP countries will be used to develop a report including recommendations to move towards implementing full DESI indicator collection and measurement. Provision of targeted support and capacity building for all EaP countries to foster full DESI indicator collection and measurement adoption will be the final milestone and objective of the activity.

Key outputs:

- Draft guidelines on DESI indicators to support Eastern partner countries in evaluating their currently-used data collection methodologies and possible introduction of the full DESI.

Planning for the upcoming six months

EdTech learning platform – key objectives:

- Develop a concept for a digital skills learning programme in the EaP, including: a list of the most lacking digital skills, priority learning topics, criteria and framework to select learning source providers, approach to credentialing (recognising) the acquired skills, functional and technical requirements for the platform, and the governance and operation model, which will contain an approach for local parties' involvement.
- Define and introduce the first designed pilot badges (up to three), including the badge composition design and development of the learning content.
- Start preparing specifications for the platform's management (learning portal) and credentialing (digital badges) systems and selecting potential providers.

Women mentorship programme on ICT skills – key objectives:

- Finalise virtual consultations with national stakeholders of Georgia to define the needs and capabilities for implementing a women's mentorship programme.
- Develop a country-tailored women's mentorship programme concept and action plan, including criteria and recommendations regarding a national coordinating organisation.
- Organise a virtual workshop to transfer know-how about implementing the action plan.

DESI Accelerator – key objectives:

- Develop a questionnaire for collecting and measuring information about the current state of DESI indicators in the EaP countries.
- Organise a regional DESI kick-off with Digital Skills Network and consultation sessions.
- Collect and analyse data on DESI measurement in the Eastern partner countries.
- Develop a draft report including recommendations for EaP countries to move towards fully implementing DESI.

Communication

State of play

The activities of the communication stream aim to increase awareness about EU support to digital transformation in the EaP, but also serve to engage stakeholders and help inform and inspire the target audiences in the region. Building on the awareness raised through Phase I, in Phase II the Communication stream will support the thematic activities through revamping the established EU4Digital website hub, content



creation, tailored strategic interventions (e.g., promotion activities, newsletters, visibility events and other); and through partnerships with the local media.

Key outputs:

- New website visual identity and structure developed and approved.
- Bi-annual website analytics report produced: 25,000 website users and over 50,000 total page views.
- 20 content items in English and 51 in the local languages on the website.
- One newsletter prepared and disseminated.
- Consultations held internally and with the EU Delegations on the new communication approach.
- Communication strategy developed and approved.
- New visual identity developed and approved, instructions created.
- A total of nine strategic interventions and three events supported, including the Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership and Steering Committee meeting.

Performance monitoring

During the reporting period, the **EU4Digital monitoring framework**, composed of the intervention logic and the list of key performance indicators (hereinafter, 'Indicators'), was further reviewed and finalised through iterative consultations with EU4Digital Facility streams and with DG NEAR. In addition, EU4Digital analysed the use of [EU core indicators](#) related to digitalisation, which are provided in OPSYS, an IT platform, to monitor EU-funded interventions outside the EU. In total 12 EU core indicators were included in the list of indicators of the EU4Digital monitoring framework. In this regard, both the list of indicators and the intervention logic has been finalised.

At the same time, for the EU4Digital Facility reporting, the indicators applicable to the Facility's activities were included in the **EU4Digital Facility's logical framework (logframe)** and updated. In addition, EU4Digital has developed a **monitoring database** and data collection templates to collect reported indicators – data is collected and being reported in each bi-annual report.

Key outputs:

- EU4Digital monitoring framework, composed of the intervention logic and the list of KPIs, including the database with all the values collected on the KPIs during the reporting period.
- EU4Digital Facility logical framework (logframe) with all the values collected on the KPIs during the reporting period.

Planning for the upcoming six months

EU4Digital website:

- Create new webpages based on the approved website mock-ups.
- Finalise approvals of static pages, translation and uploading to website.
- Renew website domain names and hosting.

Content production and promotion:

- Continue regular content production for the website.
- Prepare cooperation with local media outlets in the region, where possible.
- Create and disseminate two newsletters.

Strategic interventions and visibility:

- Prepare strategic interventions to support the Facility's communication.
- Hold regular consultations with the streams and EU4Digital projects to collect content.

Performance monitoring:

- Create EU4Digital Facility logframe and enter relevant indicators into OPSYS.
- Report on the results with bi-annual reports.



Key Events

Summary of past events

The following section presents multiple digital-related events that took place in the Eastern partner countries during the past seven-month period (June 2022 – December 2022) in the six thematic areas. The events included both face-to-face and online meetings and workshops.

Past events
<p>Cross-cutting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU4Digital Phase II kick-off meeting with EU stakeholders and EU delegations (12 September). • Eastern Partnership Business Forum: Geoeconomic Challenges and Opportunities (17-18 October, Prague, Czech Republic). • Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership (24 October) (read more). • EU4Digital Phase II Kick-off and Steering Committee (25 October) (read more).
<p>Telecom Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13th Independent Regulators and Broadband expert working group meeting (20-22 September, Tsinandali, Georgia). • Telecom Rules kick-off meeting with the Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (13 October, Bucharest, Romania) (read more). • EaPeReg-BEREC Summit (10 November, Riga, Latvia). • 14th Spectrum expert working group meeting (14-15 November, Vilnius, Lithuania). • 20th Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network Plenary meeting (7 December, Prague, Czech Republic).
<p>ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT Innovation and start-up ecosystems activities kick-off with the ICT Innovation Network (18 October). • The first networking event 'Women 4 Digital Future - Supporting Women Entrepreneurship & Innovation' (28 November) (read more).

Events planned for the upcoming six months

The following section presents events planned in the upcoming six-month period (January 2023 - June 2023) in the six thematic areas. The calendar is indicative (both dates and countries); a confirmed plan of events will be provided every month together with monthly progress reports.

Upcoming events
<p>Telecom Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spectrum expert working group meeting (April-May, Prague, Czech Republic). • Roaming expert working group meeting (April-May). • Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development expert working group workshop on broadband data collection (28-30 March 2023, Baku, Azerbaijan). • Independence of Regulators and Broadband expert working group meeting (11-12 May, Brussels, Belgium). • Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network Plenary meeting (May-June, Dublin, Ireland). • Regional Roaming Agreement signing ceremony. (Date to be decided.)
<p>eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services kick-off meeting with eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services Network (April).



Upcoming events
<p>eTrade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eTrade eCommerce accelerator activity kick-off session with the EaP countries' stakeholders (online, February). • eTrade eCommerce accelerator activity pre-pilot conference (May). • eTrade eCommerce accelerator activity post-pilot conference (June). • eTrade kick-off meeting with eTrade Network (May). • Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment) awareness building session with the EaP countries' stakeholders (online, 31 January). • Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment) awareness building and 'EU and global practices to exchange electronic freight information' report findings session with the EaP countries' stakeholders (April). • Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment) awareness building, state of play and gap report findings session with the EaP countries' stakeholders (June).
<p>eHealth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eHealth Network kick-off meeting and introduction to eHealth strategy development (March). • eHealth individual country sessions with EaP in needed support areas (at least two per month). • eHealth network collaboration event on eHealth. Topic to be decided (May).
<p>ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual 'Start-up and Innovation Forum'. The indicative event topic is 'Digital technologies for the wide-reaching digital upskilling of SMEs in the Eastern Partnership' (9 March). • Networking event 'Emerging and advanced technologies: blockchain for economy' (end of March). • Awareness-raising session on incubation importance and impact with key ecosystem builders in the EaP (February-May). • Promotion event(s) for EaP Startup ecosystem platform (April-May).
<p>Digital Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional DESI kick-off with Digital Skills Network on assessment of current state of DESI indicators in the EaP countries (April-May). • Consultation sessions to advise Digital Skills Network on approaches for input provision, regarding collection and measuring information about the current state of DESI indicators in the EaP countries (February-March). • EdTech learning programme awareness-building session with Digital skills Network (June). • Workshop to transfer know-how about implementing the women's mentorship programme action plan with national stakeholders (February).