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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
DG TAXUD	Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EBSI	European Blockchain Services Infrastructure
EC	European Commission
eFTI	Electronic freight transport information
EHR	Electronic health record
EU	European Union
EU4Digital Facility, EU4Digital	EU4Digital: supporting digital economy and society in the Eastern Partnership – Phase II
GE	Georgia
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFI	International financial institution
INATBA	International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications
IOSS	Import One-Stop-Shop
IRB EWG	Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development Expert Working Group
ISEA (ID.GOV.UA)	A universal platform for e-identification and authentication of users
MD	Republic of Moldova
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
MVP	Minimum Viable Product
NRA	National Regulatory Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RRA	Regional Roaming Agreement
RSA	Regional Spectrum Agreement



Abbreviations	Definition
SEED	Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data
SEWG	Spectrum Expert Working Group
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMB	Small and medium business
TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
UA	Ukraine
VAT	Value Added Tax



Introduction

This report reflects the activities of the second reporting period of the EU4Digital Facility Phase II (hereinafter - EU4Digital): 1 January 2023 – 30 June 2023. 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 is the core programme of the EU4Digital Initiative and builds on the first phase of the EU4Digital Facility (2019–2022).

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 digitalisation, underpinned by the digital rights and principles established by the EU.

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 including a **resilient digital transformation** which the EU4Digital Initiative is actively working towards. The agenda is supported by an ambitious Economic and Investment Plan which has the potential to mobilise up to 1.5 billion euro of public-private financing in support of the digital transformation of the region.

Building on the progress achieved through Phase I, Phase II of the EU4Digital Facility has been running since June 2022 to continue supporting the access, interoperability and transformation of the digital economy and society in the Eastern partner countries. The six thematic areas continue to support the three main EaP digital policy areas of digital infrastructure, eGovernance, and digital economy and innovation.

Political Highlights

This reporting period marks one year into the EU4Digital Facility Phase II. With stakeholders remobilised and networks reactivated, the activities are fully underway with results to show. Despite the continued regional challenges and war in Ukraine, the project is moving ahead in supporting the countries towards further harmonisation with the EU.

The EU4Digital activities are closely linked to its **stakeholders**. As with the previous period, fostering partnerships with key country stakeholders and relevant organisations towards a shared goal remains a core part of the project. For example, in this period, the project worked closely with partner organisations and local agencies in the eCommerce activity to support consultations, in the EdTech activity new partners were sought to support the learning content and promotion. The project also has specific working groups established outside the formal expert networks (e.g., in eCommerce pilot activity special working group was formed from the representatives of customs administrations to address practical involvement of end beneficiaries), which shows a willingness and commitment from stakeholders to address the topics with the facilitation provided through EU4Digital.

Having been granted **EU candidate country status** in June 2022, Moldova and Ukraine are actively working towards EU accession. In this context, EU4Digital, under the guidance of the Commission, has undertaken new efforts to support the assessment and transposition of EU standards and legislation in the digital domain. The project has noticed a positive push towards digital harmonisation from the countries, which is also reflected in bilateral deals such as the [lowering of roaming tariffs between Moldova and EU](#) telecom operators announced in May.



In **Ukraine**, despite Russia’s war of aggression, stakeholders continue to engage in activities and strive for business as usual where possible. Their main priorities remain shifted towards the war effort and future restoration. The Ukrainian stakeholders’ involvement is more targeted towards certain activities, for example eLogistics, eCommerce and digital upskilling, while their involvement in start-up ecosystems activities are focused on war technologies. Some Trust topics such as eID and eSignature are also supported by other donors in the field. Nonetheless this reflects the importance of the coordination and facilitation that is provided by the Facility as a regional hub for digital topics.

Through the activities, the efforts of the Facility are proving fruitful. With the support in Phase I, a new independent telecom regulator has been established in Azerbaijan, the Information and Communication Technologies Agency. The signature of a voluntary roaming arrangement between EU and Moldovan telecom operators was also supported by the earlier efforts of the Facility, while work continues in the telecom rules area on the topics of roaming, 5G and broadband extension.

The planning and deployment of **technical pilots** is foreseen for several activities, which provide the pilot countries and the wider region with the framework and experience needed for later full-scale development. In Ukraine and Romania the eCustoms pilot launched in June tested faster border crossing. In eTrust, the question of how to order one digital service from another country will be the focus of the pilot. ePrescription or Patient summary eServices will be central to the upcoming eHealth cross-border piloting, which will bring a further push to the region in terms of how these solutions could be used at national and regional level to advance the lives of citizens and businesses. In eCommerce, the National Pavilion account pilot in Ukraine and Armenia will help SMEs to overcome entry barriers to EU marketplaces through the use of a national account and support in the sales process.

Throughout activities, the Facility is helping to **raise awareness and support networking** on the topic of further harmonisation of the Eastern partner countries with the EU. Bringing together the relevant stakeholders through events and talks has a great impact in sharing experiences and EU best practices. For example, the International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA) association and EU4Digital joint event as well as eCommerce-related awareness session together with eCommerce Europe association were occasions to discuss the latest EU developments and practical steps for joining these EU associations. Also, EU4Digital ICT Innovation Forum raised important questions about the future of education for businesses to better prepare them for our post-industrial, digital society.

Lastly, in this reporting period the Facility has focused on the **acceleration of digital solutions** and supporting training and upskilling. The eCommerce Accelerator kicked off consultations with 35 Eastern partner countries’ SMEs to help them increase trade with the EU. The DESI Accelerator was also launched, analysing countries’ processes to see what still needs to be done to align with this important digital society monitoring tool. The EdTech Hub platform, which is expected to be launched in the next period, will be a further example of accelerating – through the new knowledge and new skills available to SMEs in the digital domain.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.



<p>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</p>	<p>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;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>2.3. Increase in the number of e-administration and e-health pilot solutions and users of these solutions.</p>
<p>3. Support digitalisation of businesses in the EaP countries and support the development of digital skills to digitally empower citizens, businesses and governments</p>	<p>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;</p> <p>3.2. Increase in cross-border use of digital environments and solutions among EaP partner countries and with the EU;</p> <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 thematic streams and the Communication stream during the reporting period (January 2023 – June 2023). 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 Eastern partner countries, EU4Digital has been supporting Eastern partner countries via both bilateral and regional discussions on the Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA), its status and next steps. The Eastern partner countries reinitiated national consultations with the aim to provide final positions regarding signing the updated RRA. Further, during the Roaming Expert Working Group (REWG) meeting in July, it was agreed to finalise national consultations by 20 July. Armenia



and Moldova have shared their positions on signing the updated RRA, whereas Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine are awaiting final feedback from national stakeholders to finalise their national consultations.

It is important to note that Moldova expressed reservations about signing the agreement in case Ukraine is not among the signatories, since most of Moldova’s roaming traffic within Eastern partner countries is with Ukraine. In addition, on 31 May 2023, telecoms operators from Moldova and the EU [signed a joint declaration](#) to lower roaming charges for businesses and citizens travelling between the two areas. The agreement was facilitated by the European Commission and builds on years of work by EU4Digital providing expertise to support the Commission and partner countries in preparing for developments in the field of roaming.

Country perspective

The table below presents the current status regarding each country’s national consultations on the updated RRA text.

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 raised questions on the implementation of the RRA. Currently awaiting the final version of the updated RRA text and expressed a commitment to sign the agreement.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD has approved the updated RRA text. However, MD commitment to sign the RRA depends on the outcome of Ukraine’s national consultation. MD representatives raised concerns that, due to exceptionally high roaming traffic with UA (~98% of all roaming traffic with the Eastern partner countries), they are not willing to join the agreement without UA signing it as well.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RRA was updated based on UA stakeholders’ latest comments, but UA feedback on the updated RRA text is pending.

5G private networks development

This activity aims to design the roadmaps / action plans facilitating the development of 5G private networks in the Eastern partner countries as well as to facilitate the timely implementation of the Regional Spectrum Agreement (RSA). The scope and workplan of the activity were finalised following discussions with the Spectrum Expert Working Group (SEWG) and Eastern partner country representatives. It was agreed that the activity will focus on EU best practices as the basis for designing roadmaps (action plans) to facilitate 5G private networks development. EU4Digital initiated the activity with the preparation of a report on best practices related to the implementation of 5G private networks in the EU.

Regarding the signing of the RSA – currently, the RSA is being updated by including additional frequency bands in order to provide improved network performance and enable the delivery of advanced services to the countries signing the agreement. The updated version of the agreement is expected to be signed by four countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova). Ukraine is unable to join the agreement at the current stage, however, their participation in the future is still expected.

EU toolbox for 5G security

The aim of this activity is to develop guidelines regarding secure 5G networks in the Eastern partner countries based on the EU toolbox for 5G security. Similar to the 5G private networks development activity, the scope and workplan for the EU toolbox for the 5G security activity were finalised following discussions with the SEWG and Eastern partner country representatives. It was agreed that the scope will include using the EU toolbox for 5G security as the basis for the development of guidelines regarding secure 5G networks in the Eastern partner countries.

EU4Digital finalised the EU best practice report on the implementation of the EU toolbox for 5G security and presented it during the SEWG meeting. To develop a coordinated approach towards facilitating the development of 5G private networks in the EaP region, a questionnaire on the as-is situation and potential areas of interest regarding 5G security was shared with the Eastern partner countries.



Key outputs:

- EU best practice report on the implementation of the EU toolbox for 5G security.

Monitoring & promoting broadband access

This activity promotes affordable access to high-speed and secure connectivity and supports monitoring of legislative developments in the field of regulatory governance. EU4Digital completed the round of data collection for 2022 that is required for monitoring broadband internet access developments covering both fixed and mobile technologies and connection speeds. Based on the data collected for 2020, 2021 and 2022 as well as market and regulatory developments reported by the Armenian National Regulatory Authority (NRA), EU4Digital prepared a country-specific broadband monitoring report for Armenia. In June, the report was shared for review with the Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development Expert Working Group (IRB EWG). Reports for the remaining Eastern partner countries will be prepared after the IRB EWG feedback is received.

EU4Digital also finalised a report on EU best practices in promoting access to competitive broadband internet services. The report provides an overview of the broadband facilitation policies of Germany, France, Lithuania, Romania and Portugal. The report highlights that while the EU sets uniform policy targets, legislation and instruments for broadband facilitation, implementation differs in the analysed EU Member States. Also, the report emphasises the impact of historic background on national broadband plans and investments. For the Eastern partner countries, the key takeaways include adopting and implementing broadband policies based on the as-is situation of the country, as well as establishing a coherent framework to monitor broadband market developments. The findings were presented during the IRB EWG meeting in May 2023.

Additionally, based on discussions with the IRB EWG, the scope of the activity was updated to include a framework for monitoring conclusions of legislative developments in the field of regulatory governance. During the IRB EWG meeting in May, the framework, approach and regularity of updates for monitoring legislative developments was approved by the Eastern partner country representatives. In June, EU4Digital shared the framework for monitoring legislative developments to be filled by country representatives.

Key outputs:

- Country-specific broadband monitoring report for Armenia.
- Report on EU best practices in promoting access to competitive broadband internet services.
- Framework for monitoring legislative developments in the field of regulatory governance.

Broadband market analysis

The activity aims to provide support for NRAs empowerment to monitor and ensure competitiveness in the target electronic communications markets in the Eastern partner countries through a market analysis process. During the reporting period, EU4Digital prepared for the launch of data collection for broadband market analysis, which was planned to be initiated by the end of August. The broadband market analysis questionnaire, including an explanation of de minimis criteria and the market analysis exercise, was shared with Eastern partner country representatives. To prepare for the data collection launch, EU4Digital will organise bilateral meetings with the participating Eastern partner countries and a workshop with all five Eastern partner countries.

It shall be noted that market analysis reports will be prepared for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova only. For Georgia, EU4Digital will review and assess the output of the other EU-funded market assessment exercise, which is currently ongoing in Georgia. A market analysis report will not be prepared for Georgia in order to avoid duplication. Also, a market analysis exercise will not be conducted for Ukraine due to data collection constraints.

Key outputs:

- Broadband market analysis questionnaire and a note of explanation of de minimis criteria for the holistic market analysis of electronic communications markets related to broadband.

Market assessment of high-speed connectivity

EU4Digital has prepared an interim report on a market assessment of high-speed connectivity needs in the South Caucasus region (i.e. Georgia and Armenia). A key component of the report is a data traffic model. This model is based on analysis of historic and current data consumption in the two countries as well as trends observed in comparable markets.



Moreover, the report offers a broad overview of the current telecommunications markets in terms of national and international connectivity. It also covers key social drivers for expanding high-speed connectivity (namely the research and education sector as well as rural / remote areas) and aims to build a reference for further discussions with national stakeholders within the region and international donors. It is planned to submit the final report in July for alignment with DG NEAR.

Key outputs:

- Interim report on market assessment of high-speed connectivity needs in the South Caucasus region.

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 expected in autumn 2023).

5G private networks development – key objectives:

- Prepare the report on EU best practices in the implementation of 5G private networks.
- Provide an overview of 5G private networks development in the Eastern partner countries.
- Provide support for the monitoring of RSA implementation.

EU toolbox for 5G security – key objectives:

- Provide an overview of the implementation of regulations that facilitate the EU toolbox for 5G security or other local regulations related to 5G security.
- Prepare an initial list of potential priorities and initiatives (solutions / approaches) that could be implemented in each Eastern partner country.

Monitoring & promoting broadband access – key objectives:

- Prepare country-specific broadband monitoring reports.
- Initiate the set-up of an EaP broadband competence network / observatory.
- Establish a framework for monitoring legislative developments in the field of regulatory governance.

Broadband market analysis – key objectives:

- Conduct the data collection exercise required for broadband market analysis.

Market assessment of high-speed connectivity – key objectives:

- Finalise the market assessment report on high-speed connectivity needs in South Caucasus.

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 the Eastern partner countries. EU4Digital evaluated the state of play regarding progress and plans in the eID and trust services area. The national eID and trust services are technically operating, with growing numbers of users, and all Eastern partner countries are making efforts to align to eIDAS practices. EU4Digital analysed and developed country-specific summaries that were shared with countries and presented during the eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services Network event. The findings of the analysis will be taken into account when establishing the scope and objectives of draft mutual recognition agreements.

EU4Digital has been developing the eTrust conceptual framework, including legal, organisational and technical requirements to harmonise with the EU. This framework will serve as an input to developing mutual recognition agreement drafts.

Key outputs:

- State of play analysis of eID and trust services, defining progress achieved and remaining gaps in the Eastern partner countries since Phase I.

Country perspective

With the aim to identify the progress achieved since Phase I and to focus key actions based on the remaining gaps, EU4Digital evaluated the state of play for each Eastern partner country. The table below presents the information about available electronic authentication solutions, trust services and their use cases, and, where applicable, other important developments in eID and trust services area.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In AM, electronic authentication is supported by ID card and Mobile ID. Authentication gateway provides a centralised gateway for electronic authentication. EKENG CJSC (e-Governance infrastructure implementation agency) provides electronic signatures. The electronic signatures are commonly used for tax and beneficial ownership declarations, but overall usage is still low.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In AZ, electronic authentication is supported by SIMA (a mobile application with electronic authentication functionalities offered by AzInTelecom) and Asan Imza (MobileID solution offered by Asan Certification Services Center). ASAN Login provides a single-sign-on portal to electronic services. Trust services available are SIMA electronic signature and Asan Imza electronic signature. They are commonly used for tax and online public services.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In GE, electronic authentication is supported by ID card. Public Service Development Agency provides electronic signatures, electronic seals and time stamps. These trust services are commonly used for online public services, public procurement and public servants' declarations. Also, GE has completed an audit by an accredited Conformity Assessment body under eIDAS on ETSI/CEN standards.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In MD, electronic authentication is supported by ID card and eToken USB-based device. Also, Mpass portal provides a central authentication gateway by integrating electronic authentication tools. Moldcell and Orange offer electronic signatures. MSign is a government electronic signature service. The trust services are commonly used for tax, electronic government and financial services, eHealth solutions, driving licences and registration certificates.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In UA, electronic authentication is supported by ID card, BankID, Mobile ID and ISEA (ID.GOV.UA). Trust service providers offer electronic signatures and electronic seals. Also, Ukraine has become the first country to be included in the European Commission's Third Countries Advanced Electronic Signatures LOTL list¹, enabling the verification of Ukrainian electronic signatures and seals using the EU infrastructure.

Pilot eID

The activity will assist Eastern partner countries in piloting interoperable cross-border authentication. EU4Digital will facilitate the technical implementation of cross-border authentication based on common principles and formats, using existing real-life eIDs and e-services, and will enable Eastern partner countries to test the readiness of national infrastructure for cross-border authentication.

EU4Digital kicked off the pilot and confirmed the concept and scope with participating countries. The participating Eastern partner countries include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova. Ukraine has expressed reservations about participating in the first pilot release due to limited resources, therefore, EU4Digital will keep open the possibility to involve Ukraine in later pilot phases. The pilot will test cross-border authentication; in particular, a scenario where an eID owner from one country accesses an electronic service of another country through eIDAS Node. Countries will be acting as both, eID provider and e-service provider. In parallel, countries will implement technical pilot components, supported by eIDAS Node.

Key outputs:

- Concept and scope description of cross-border authentication pilot.
- Pilot participants selected based on country readiness assessments.

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 develop a data governance strategy framework based on EU and global practices, will conduct a state of play diagnosis and prepare national and

¹ Third Countries Trusted List Browser, <https://eidas.ec.europa.eu/efda/tl-browser/#/screen/tc-tl>



regional recommendations for data governance strategic development. The activity will commence in autumn 2023.

Planning for the upcoming six months

Recognition of eID and trust services – key objectives:

- Develop a regional trust framework.
- Initiate technical assistance in performing self-assessments, as per MRA Cookbook², for the countries engaged in the MRA formal process.

Pilot eID – key objectives:

- Prepare an optimal set of components, technical requirements, technical memorandum of piloting activity.
- Continue technical implementation of cross-border authentication pilot.

Data governance – key objectives:

- Develop a data governance strategy framework, based on EU and global practices.
- Initiate state of play assessments of national data governance practices and strategic direction, based on the data governance strategy framework.

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 in the Eastern partner countries. The goal of this activity is to develop and pilot solutions, such as EBSI, and develop and provide recommendations for full-scale implementation in Eastern partner countries, including technical, legal and organisational perspectives. The activity will commence in autumn 2023.

eCustoms pilot

The activity aims to facilitate customs-to-customs data exchange and demonstrate improvement in the release time of goods, as well as introducing more advanced customs risk-management processes in selected pilot countries using innovative systems, i.e. Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED³). EU4Digital extended the eCustoms pilot from Phase I (when it was implemented between Lithuania–Belarus and Moldova–Romania) and launched the [Ukraine–Romania eCustoms pilot to streamline cross-border data exchange](#). This new pilot was based on needs expressed by the State Customs Service of Ukraine and with the support of DG TAXUD.

During the reporting period, it was agreed that the Ukraine–Romania eCustoms pilot would focus on integrating the SEED application into the countries' customs operations and test data exchange regarding empty trucks crossing the Siret–Porubne border crossing point (BCP). On 5 May 2023, the [State Customs Service of Ukraine and the Romanian Customs Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding](#) regarding the manner and testing of the electronic information exchange. Furthermore, on 30–31 May 2023, [EU4Digital visited the Porubne–Siret BCP in preparation](#) for the pilot. The one-week eCustoms pilot took place on 19–26 June. It resulted in almost 100 data records being exchanged with higher than 95% matching rate, as well as faster and more efficient customs processes. A [post-pilot conference in July](#) provided the opportunity to discuss the pilot results and final recommendations for both customs administrations will be formulated.

It is important to note that the eCustoms pilot outcome will serve as the bilateral test for potential larger-scale customs data exchanges in future, between the two countries and beyond.

Key outputs:

- Draft Memorandum of Understanding.

² European Commission, 'Mutual recognition agreement Cookbook' (January 2021), https://esignature.ec.europa.eu/intl-comp/dssdemo/downloads/MRAinfo_Cookbook_v1.0.pdf

³ Developed with EU support and tested for more than ten years in the Western Balkans, the SEED application offers a digital platform for submitting, processing and exchanging customs data. It simplifies processes, reduces paperwork, and enhances customs efficiency.



- Technical conditions specification for the eCustoms pilot data exchange between Ukraine and Romania.
- Training for end users and administrators.
- Developed and piloted empty trucks scenario between Ukraine and Romania.

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 the selected EaP countries. The selected countries will receive action plans to deploy Electronic freight transport information (eFTI) based on the state of play assessment. It is important to note, that with the eFTI Regulation⁴ implementation deadline approaching (EU-wide implementation planned by February 2026), 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 the reporting period, in January, EU4Digital kicked off the activity and organised an [event to raise awareness and understanding of electronic freight transport information exchange](#) and the EU's eFTI Regulation. Also, building on Phase I results, EU4Digital updated the report on the EU institutional and legal framework as well as practices in testing and deploying electronic freight information exchange.

EU4Digital also initiated the state of play assessment in the three Eastern partner countries — [Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan — selected to receive a customised roadmap for eFTI deployment](#). The assessment includes an overview of key logistics documents on road, rail and inland waterway transport, and clarifies the responsible parties and presence of international standards in the freight information exchange. The assessment framework also covers multimodality initiatives, governance of the exchange of freight information, overall legal framework, as well as commercial and awareness building aspects. The state of play reports are preliminarily planned to be completed by September.

Key outputs:

- Updated report on the EU institutional and legal framework as well as practices in testing and deploying electronic freight information exchange.
- Three pilot countries selected — Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan — to receive a customised roadmap for eFTI deployment.
- E-freight assessment framework and status assessment questionnaires.

Country perspective

The table below illustrates the high-level overview of selected countries' state of play regarding e-freight.

Country	Highlights
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan has ratified the relevant conventions in road (CMR convention) and rail (COTIF convention). • Azerbaijan has great interest and is the strongest in digitalisation of freight transport information exchange in rail transport mode as electronic waybills are currently used on both national and cross-border levels in rail transport in Azerbaijan. However, exchange of freight transport information in road and inland waterways transport modes is not digitised. • Regarding the organisational perspective, Azerbaijan has nominated the responsible institution for implementing electronic freight transport information exchange and dedicated the representatives to participate in the Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF).
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moldova has ratified the relevant conventions in road (CMR convention), rail (COTIF convention) and inland waterways (CMNI convention). • Even though currently Moldovan businesses are not exchanging freight transport information with the authorities digitally, Moldova is actively planning such initiatives in road and rail transport modes. Regarding the road transport mode, Moldova intends to develop in the near future the electronic systems such e-CMR and e-TIR. Currently, in rail transport mode paper waybills are used but Moldova is

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/electronic-freight-transport-information.html>



Country	Highlights
	<p>motivated to introduce the digital solution and is developing the integrated electronic document management system for the carriage of goods by rail (PEGAS).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also, four European Transport Corridors (under Trans-European Transport Network) were extended to Moldova. At the same time, Moldova has not nominated the responsible institution for implementing electronic freight transport information exchange.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ukraine has ratified the relevant conventions in road (CMR convention), rail (COTIF convention) and inland waterways (CMNI convention). Ukraine has great interest and progress in testing / practicing the exchange of freight transport information in road and rail. Particularly, Ukraine is developing the solution e-TTN to exchange electronic consignment notes in road transport mode on the national level. Ukraine has implemented eSMGS / eCIM in railway company of Ukraine. Regarding the water transport, Ukraine is more focusing on maritime which is not in scope of eFTI Regulation. As of multimodality, Ukraine has plans to create a single document for multimodal transportation. Also, four European Transport Corridors (under Trans-European Transport Network) were extended to Ukraine, Regarding the organisational perspective, Ukraine has nominated the responsible institution for implementing electronic freight transport information exchange.

eCommerce accelerator

The activity aims to strengthen the integration of the EaP eCommerce ecosystem with EU networks and support the ultimate strategic direction of increasing EU and EaP cross-border eCommerce by 50%. This is done by providing EaP countries with individual recommendations, training and consultations on national and company level.

The [EU4Digital eCommerce Accelerator was kicked off in February](#), in collaboration with EU associations, and will run until the end of the calendar year. The eCommerce Accelerator is structured into three tracks:

- Track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation. Assessment of legislation, standards and overall eCommerce ecosystem changes in EaP since 2020.
- Tracks 2 – National Pavilion Account pilot. Development of national pavilion accounts for selected pilot countries and support local SMEs to start selling on selected marketplaces.
- Track 3 – eCommerce consultations centre. Providing group training and individual consultations with the final goal for SMEs to register on EU marketplaces, list products and start selling.

Under track 1, EU4Digital built upon the eCommerce assessment performed in Phase I, i.e., updating the EU eCommerce baseline report, adjusting the eCommerce assessment framework and performing data collection through focus group sessions and questionnaires. As a result, EU4Digital started updating the eCommerce state of play and recommendations for the Eastern partner countries, which will lead to providing consulting support to countries on priority eCommerce topics.

Under track 2, EU4Digital prepared the selection criteria for European marketplaces, participating pilot countries, SMEs, and national pavilion account owners, and developed the final pilot concept. In May, EU4Digital held a pilot kick-off session with key eCommerce stakeholders from the Eastern partner countries. During the session, EU4Digital introduced the pilot, including the concept, Account owner and Product owner roles, responsibilities, and the activity timeline. Following the session and based on the specific country selection criteria, Armenia and Ukraine were chosen as the pilot countries, both having strong willingness to participate and experience existing platforms to serve as national account owners.

Under track 3, the [eCommerce consultations centre was launched](#) in March for the first 30 SMEs from the Eastern partner countries. In April, [EU4Digital and the International Trade Centre \(ITC\) announced a collaboration giving five more SMEs from Ukraine access to the eCommerce consultations centre](#). Between March and June, 117 hours of individual consultations were provided along with four group training sessions, covering presentation of the marketplaces; page creation, listing and placing; digital marketing strategy; customer support and reasons for brand and account blocking; taxes and customs procedures.

During this reporting period, four SMEs reported the first successes in registering on the EU marketplaces and listing at least three products as a result of the eCommerce consultations centre activities. The first published success story reported that [Ukrainian doormat company Artimat gained customers](#) as a result of the provided support. Further progress of the participant companies will be observed until the end of the year.



Moreover, a collaboration with EU4Digital EdTech Hub was initiated by offering an eCommerce badge for companies participating in the eCommerce consultations centre.

Key outputs:

- Set up the eCommerce Accelerator, in collaboration with EU associations, structured into three tracks — Track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation; Track 2 – National Pavilion Account pilot; Track 3 – eCommerce consultations centre.
- Updated the EU eCommerce baseline report.
- Adjusted the eCommerce assessment framework and eCommerce status assessment questionnaires.
- National Pavilion Account pilot concept, including selection criteria for European marketplaces, participating pilot countries, SMEs and National Pavilion Account owners as well as account owner and product owner roles and responsibilities.
- Two pilot countries (Armenia and Ukraine) selected for National Pavilion Account pilot.
- Four training sessions and 117 hours of individual consultations for 35 SMEs from Eastern partner countries.

eTrade 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 activity will be delivered as per the developed networking action plan which includes 13 events in total of different types (networking related to piloted solutions, networking related to sharing information on existing and developed solutions and networking related to sharing information on existing solutions during EU events).

In January, EU4Digital held an eFTI Regulation⁵ awareness-building session, during which the Digital Transport Corridors (eFTI deployment) activity was kicked off with stakeholders from the Eastern partner countries. The Regulation is currently being designed in the EU to establish a uniform legal framework and define the technical standards for digital freight information exchange by 2025.

In May, EU4Digital participated in the 14th International Capacity-Building Seminar on Trade and Transport Facilitation — ‘Trade Facilitation and Digital Transformation of multimodal information exchange in Eastern Europe and SPECA, Using United Nations Standards’ — (online, organised by Azerbaijan), and presented the pathway to deploy eFTI in non-EU countries.

In June, EU4Digital held an eCommerce-related awareness session, ‘Overview of the EU eCommerce updates & cooperation opportunities with Ecommerce Europe’, for the Eastern partner countries. This session offered an opportunity to build stakeholders’ awareness about EU updates and changes regarding the EU VAT eCommerce package⁶, Import One-Stop-Shop (IOSS) scheme, requirements for ensuring sustainable consumption choices and other topics. The session also welcomed [Ecommerce Europe](#) representatives, who presented the association, the possibility to join it, and shared how eCommerce businesses from the Eastern partner countries could stay up to date on eCommerce industry developments and best practices.

Key outputs:

- Networking action plan.
- Awareness building session ‘Importance of eFTI Regulation to the Eastern partner countries’.
- Awareness building session ‘Overview of the EU eCommerce updates & cooperation opportunities with Ecommerce Europe’.

Planning for the upcoming six months

eCustoms pilot – key objectives:

- Prepare recommendations on the required legal, organisational and technical adjustments to be made for full scale (SEED) solution implementation.
- Align and potentially initiate the extension of the eCustoms pilot geographically and data-wise.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/electronic-freight-transport-information.html>

⁶ More information: [VAT eCommerce package](#)



- Hand over the tested solution for further development, customisation and adaptation according to the needs of pilot countries.

Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment) – key objectives:

- Assess the current state of play of electronic freight information exchange in the selected countries.
- Design the roadmaps for eFTI deployment in the selected countries.

eCommerce accelerator – key objectives:

- Track 1 – eCommerce status re-evaluation:
 - Finalise country-specific recommendations for eCommerce harmonisation and growth in the Eastern partner countries and with the EU.
 - Provide national and regional consultations in the priority areas.
- Track 2 – National Pavilion Account pilot:
 - Select and onboard SMEs / product owners, nine per country, 18 in total.
 - Register national pavilion accounts on EU marketplaces.
 - List products on the national accounts and conduct other preparatory actions.
 - Launch the pilot, facilitate and monitor pilot progress and results.
- Track 3 – eCommerce consultations centre:
 - Prepare recommendations for further development of the eCommerce consultations centre.

eTrade stakeholders networking – key objectives:

- Organise a session on 'EU best practices and update on eFTI progress in the EU'.
- Organise and deliver up to two other 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 the Eastern partner countries' regional stakeholders and specialists from various eHealth areas was reinitiated. During the reporting period, EU4Digital held 31 meetings with eHealth Network representatives from the Eastern partner countries, involving relevant stakeholders and experts in diverse eHealth fields. During the meetings, EU4Digital facilitated each country's eHealth state of play assessment: eHealth development was analysed based on eHealth service portfolios, eHealth statistics, national eHealth architecture, operational and financing models, and the legal and regulatory environment of eHealth. Based on the collected data, EU4Digital started developing the state of play reports, preliminarily to be completed by September.

EU4Digital started preparation of updated guidelines for national eHealth strategy development, incorporating EU best practices, comprehensive data from state of play analysis and '[Common Guidelines for eHealth Harmonisation and Interoperability](#)', developed during Phase I. The guidelines for national eHealth strategy development are designed to assist stakeholders of the Eastern partner countries in advancing eHealth models for governance, financing, legislation, architecture and the workforce, as well as to provide support in developing roadmaps, sub-strategies and an actionable national eHealth strategy overall.

EU4Digital is assisting in drafting eHealth strategy document for Moldova by reviewing document draft and providing recommendations for comprehensive national eHealth strategy development. Detailed EU4Digital recommendations for the National eHealth strategy of Moldova will be developed in July.

Key outputs:

- State of play analysis and draft reports on eHealth in each Eastern partner country.
- Draft guidelines/manual for national eHealth strategy development.

Country perspective

The table below presents the summary of priorities and challenges in eHealth development in each Eastern partner country.



Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AM specified better access to healthcare via telemedicine as well as development of patient portal and mobile app as main priorities. Current challenges include complicated integration with existing systems, telemedicine solution implementation in rural areas and overall healthcare system resistance to new management mechanisms.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AZ aims to further develop its centralised electronic health record (EHR) services and central ecosystem. Another priority as well as challenge is continuous development of the Mobile Application for eHealth.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In GE the focus is around consolidation of systems to establish a one-stop-shop principle. Another big focus falls on data-related developments (seamless data exchange, single point of data entry and data quality). Main challenges include highly fragmented health sector and lack of data standardisation.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD is about to start its new eHealth programme for the next couple of years. Priorities include legal framework harmonised to EU legislation and directives, legal framework for telemedicine, implementation of ePrescription and EHR, as well as eHealth strategy and roadmap development.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UA underlined sustainability of financing the eHealth system, ensuring uninterrupted eHealth care system and development of technologies in response to war and service to refugees staying abroad as a main priority. Additionally, the focus is placed on telehealth services. Main challenges are extensive roadmap governance and IT infrastructure maintenance. Additionally, UA seeks to join MyHealth@EU for the cross-border service on Patient Summary with Poland.

Pilot cross-border eHealth

The EU4Digital cross-border eHealth service piloting activity aims to facilitate legal, technical, and organisational changes in Eastern partner countries. Network collaboration events, held by EU4Digital, initiated essential discussions with the Eastern partner countries about the pilot activity. During the events, EU4Digital presented preliminary readiness criteria for participating in the pilot, which cover legal environment, operating eHealth services and registries. Further discussions were held in working group sessions by selected pairs and separately, which served as a basis for eHealth pilot use-case alignment between countries. Indicatively, ePrescription and Patient Summary (or vaccination information as part of Patient Summary) are being considered as potential pilot use cases. Countries' readiness criteria, questionnaires on ePrescription and Patient Summary datasets, and technical specifications based on EU model were discussed. The sessions also facilitated identification of several feasible Eastern partner country pairs for the piloting activity: Ukraine and selected EU Member State, Ukraine – Armenia, and Georgia – Azerbaijan. The kick-off event for cross-border eHealth service pilot will take place in August.

Key outputs:

- Two pilot country pairs (country pairing decisions are still being validated, preliminary Ukraine and selected EU Member State, Georgia – Armenia, or Georgia – Azerbaijan) selected for cross-border eHealth service pilot.
- One cross-border eHealth service pilot use case is being selected between — ePrescription key functionality and Patient Summary (preliminary partial dataset on vaccination information, allergies as part of Patient Summary) the decision is to be validated with the Eastern partner countries.

Country perspective

The table below presents preliminary selected pilot activity services for each Eastern partner country.



Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AM expressed high interest in exchanging Vaccination information based on Patient Summary concept. ePrescription service would also be beneficial to AM.
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AZ expressed high interest in ePrescription service for piloting. However, Patient Summary service is also being considered.
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GE displayed a preference for ePrescription data exchange service, but Patient Summary service would also be beneficial to GE.
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response awaited.
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UA displayed a preference for Patient Summary data exchange service for pilot activity.

eHealth collaboration and communication

EU4Digital eHealth Collaboration and Communication platform content structure was renewed and restructured based on the Phase II needs. EU4Digital continued maintenance of the eHealth collaboration and communication platform. Additionally, EU4Digital held two virtual eHealth Network collaboration events, further setting the ground for collaboration towards eHealth development in Eastern partner countries. The first event focused on eHealth strategy development and cross-border eHealth service piloting, which involved best-practice sharing by several EU experts on topics such as key pillars of national eHealth strategy, comprehensive eHealth vision, sub-strategies and [MyHealth@EU](#) initiative for cross-border data exchange. The second event was dedicated to the cross-border eHealth service pilot ideation session. Eastern partner countries were keen and participated in the discussion on eHealth services for piloting. Different types of eHealth services were discussed, for example, telehealth solutions which could involve consulting with doctors from home, cross-border exchange of laboratory results, and ePrescription data.

Key outputs:

- Maintained eHealth collaboration and communication platform.
- Virtual eHealth Network collaboration event, focusing on eHealth strategic development.
- Virtual eHealth Network collaboration event, focusing on cross-border eHealth pilot service ideation.

Planning for the upcoming six months

eHealth strategic development – key objectives:

- Finalise guidelines for national eHealth strategy Development.
- Hold eHealth strategy development events on eHealth architecture and operational and financing models.
- Further provide support to Eastern partner countries in eHealth strategic documents' preparation.

Pilot cross-border eHealth – key objectives:

- Launch eHealth service pilot in EaP–EU and EaP–EaP scenarios.

eHealth collaboration and communication – key objectives:

- Launch sub-space on collaboration platform for piloting activities.
- Hold two collaboration workshops.

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 Eastern partner countries' stakeholders. During the reporting period, EU4Digital organised three events.



In March, EU4Digital held '[Start-up and Innovation Forum: Digital upskilling of SMEs and start-ups in the Eastern Partnership region](#)'. The forum presented diverse EU and Eastern partner countries' policy and support initiatives including the EU4Digital EdTech Hub programme. The event was the second in an annual Innovation Forum series and attracted more than 100 participants.

Also in March, EU4Digital organised the second networking event devoted to emerging and advanced technologies – the topic was '[Joining the International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications \(INATBA\) to facilitate international collaboration and technology adoption across the economy](#)' with INATBA being the main partner. The virtual networking session targeted national blockchain associations, industry players and policymakers specialising in blockchain. During the event, INATBA presented a detailed guide for the Eastern partner countries' stakeholders about joining the organisation. The guide was especially elaborated for Eastern partner countries and includes an overview of the organisation's value proposition, joining criteria and procedure. The event attracted more than 50 participants.

The third networking event, '[Startup Bridge: East meets West](#)', was organised in June in partnership with [Expertise France](#) in Paris, as a back-to-back event with 2023 Viva Technology Conference. The event highlighted the high-performance incubators and bridged more than 30 Eastern partner countries' start-ups and ministerial representatives with French ecosystem builders and investors.

Key outputs:

- Annual networking event 'Start-up and Innovation Forum: Digital upskilling of SMEs and start-ups in the Eastern Partnership region'.
- Networking event 'Joining the International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA)'.
- Networking event 'Startup Bridge: East meets West'.

Startups ecosystem development

The activity aims to support the development of the Eastern partner countries digital start-ups' ecosystem. The activity focuses on start-up incubation and promotion of tools for data-driven decision making.

During the reporting period, EU4Digital prepared a concept note defining the potential regional start-up incubation programme 'EU4Innovation East', outlining its objectives, actions and necessary budget. The programme was designed with the aim to promote high-performance incubation in the region. The programme's actions mainly focus on supporting incubators and ecosystem builders (EBs) to prepare the countries for future direct support programmes for entrepreneurs and start-ups.

In preparation for the large-scale programme, EU4Digital started preparatory actions that include mapping of key EBs and incubators, providing recommendations to further develop incubation in the Eastern partner countries (in progress), sessions to raise awareness about the benefits of high-performance incubation (planned in July), a networking event to connect EU incubators and Eastern partner countries' stakeholders (conducted in June), and sessions to transfer research findings and recommendations to programme execution partners and EBs (planned in July).

To map and evaluate the performance of the EBs and incubators, EU4Digital successfully conducted 10 national sessions engaging key EBs and incubators from each country. Through these sessions and online surveys, a comprehensive analysis of the Eastern partner countries' start-up ecosystems, with a particular focus on incubation, is being performed and the report that includes recommendations for incubation development is being prepared. The report is planned to be finalised by end of August.

Regarding the [EaP Startups ecosystem platform](#), EU4Digital developed an action plan for a coordinated promotional campaign. Also, EU4Digital is liaising with the platform implementor to improve the platform's technical capacity. The promotional campaign action plan is being discussed with the ICT Innovation and Start-ups Ecosystem Network in order to tailor the plan for the users' needs and facilitate more targeted promotion.

Key outputs:

- Concept note on the 'EU4Innovation East' programme.
- Incubation assessment framework and status assessment surveys for EBs and incubators.
- State of play diagnosis and draft 'Mapping and Diagnosis of the Start-up Ecosystem in the Eastern Partner Countries'.
- Plan for EaP Startups ecosystem platform promotional campaign.



Policy for emerging technologies

The activity aims to assess how selected emerging technology (e.g., AI, blockchain) is regulated across the EaP region and provide recommendations to harmonise with the EU regulatory framework and enabling conditions. The activity is planned to commence in August 2024, subject to the Contracting Authority's approval to mobilise this activity from the crisis response and ad-hoc support activities list.

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 focus area(s) 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 fourth networking events on digital innovation hubs on emerging and advanced technologies.
- Initiate preparations for the fifth networking event on digital innovation clusters (to be held in 2024).

Startups ecosystem development – key objectives:

- Finalise the 'Mapping and Diagnosis of the Start-up Ecosystem in the Eastern Partner Countries'.
- Organise awareness-raising sessions on incubation importance and impact.
- Organise online national consultation sessions for key national ecosystem stakeholders to present the diagnosis report results and receive feedback.
- Organise online / physical national handover sessions, for key national ecosystem stakeholders to present the diagnosis report final results, close the preparatory stage of the incubation programme, and initiate further collaboration among the stakeholders.
- Improve the technical capacity of the EaP Startups ecosystem platform.
- Initiate promotional actions for the EaP Startups ecosystem 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 for learning and/or improving digital skills in the Eastern partner countries.

EU4Digital significantly progressed towards the development and launch of the [EdTech Hub](#), which is planned for January 2024.

EU4Digital selected local coordinating partners nominated by the HDM Coordinators in each of the five Eastern partner countries. EU4Digital held multiple meetings with each of the local coordinating partners, to firstly introduce the EdTech Hub concept and then to gain insights into the local context. The information gathered helped to develop the course curriculum and learning content in a localised and relevant manner for each country. Additionally, these meetings helped to identify local training providers in the countries.

EU4Digital defined the three initial course topics for the EdTech Hub platform: eCommerce in EU marketplaces, digital marketing, and digitalisation of business. EU4Digital identified the need for an iterative, incremental method to implement the platform through a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) approach, which will allow EU4Digital to properly test the solutions and gather learner feedback. As such, the first course to be launched is 'eCommerce in EU marketplaces', for which EU4Digital has developed the detailed curriculum. For the MVP launch, Ukraine and Moldova have been prioritised. The remaining countries will be rolled out over time when the full platform launch occurs at a later stage.



EU4Digital then identified relevant learning content from local training providers in each of the Eastern partner countries, to be able to deliver training in national languages. Additionally, EU4Digital identified relevant learning content from multiple global providers, such as MinnaLearn and the Digital Marketing Institute.

In parallel, EU4Digital selected both a technical learning portal provider and a credentialling provider. In the MVP phase, the EdTech Hub platform will reside on the [atingi digital learning platform](#), a free-of-charge learning platform targeting developing countries. In the long term, EU4Digital will assess more permanent options for the technical platform. Additionally, EU4Digital selected the [Open Badge Factory](#) solution through which the EU-aligned digital open badges will be issued to learners who complete courses.

Key outputs:

- Selection and onboarding of local coordinating partners to the activity.
- Selected technical solution for the platform.
- Selected recognition and credentialling system.
- Curriculum for eCommerce in EU marketplaces courses.

Country perspective

The table below presents identified and established contact with local coordinating partners (nominated by HDM Coordinators) and local training providers in each Eastern partner country.

Country	Highlights
AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordinating partner: Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of High Tech Industry of Armenia • Local training provider: Union of Employers of Information and Communication Technologies (UEICT)
AZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordinating partner: The Small and Medium Business (SMB) Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan • Local training providers: The Small and Medium Business (SMB) Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan; ICT Labs
GE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordinating partner: Enterprise Georgia • Local training provider: Enterprise Georgia
MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordinating partner: Organisation for Entrepreneurship Development (ODA)
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local coordinating partner: Entrepreneurship and Export Promotion Office (EEPO) • Local training providers: Diia Business; Diia Education; Ukrposhta

Women’s mentorship programme on ICT skills

During the reporting period, EU4Digital developed a country-specific concept and action plan to facilitate the launch of a mentorship programme bridging the gender gap in ICT. The concept defines the programme as an independent initiative for the re-qualification of working-age women for the tech sector in Georgia, which is selected as a pilot country. The programme should support women, who want to make a real change in their careers by entering the ICT industry, to explore possibilities and take action toward re-qualification with the help of experienced mentors. The programme is composed of three seasons with different focus areas. The active phase of the programme – participants onboarding and mentor-mentee interaction – will take 5 months per season. The final concept and action plan have been developed, consulted upon with local stakeholders and submitted to the EU Delegation to Georgia.

Key outputs:

- Tailored mentorship programme concept and action plan, including criteria and recommendations regarding a national coordinating organisation, for women in Georgia.



DESI Accelerator

The activity aims to facilitate and support the implementation of Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) in the Eastern partner countries, through the provision of regional and national recommendations on DESI implementation, based on analysis of current status of data collection, as well as tailored support and capacity building in the form of various experience exchange seminars and training sessions. Provision of recommendations and support on the DESI connectivity dimension was excluded from activities within the DESI Accelerator, to prevent duplication of activities within the EU4Digital Telecom Rules stream.

During the reporting period, EU4Digital developed two documents to facilitate gathering of information about current data collection approaches in Eastern partner countries: methodological guidelines on DESI indicators measurement, which should support Eastern partner countries in evaluating their data collection methodologies; and a questionnaire for collecting information about the current state of DESI indicators measurement in the Eastern partner countries.

In May, EU4Digital held a regional DESI Accelerator kick-off event with the Digital Skills Network, to present the activity and launch the process of collecting data on the current approaches used by Eastern partner countries to measure relevant DESI indicators. EU4Digital aims to collect information on the latest experiences of digital performance data collection from the local stakeholders by the middle of July. After this stage, EU4Digital will be organising separate virtual consultation sessions with the representatives of each of the target countries, on request.

In parallel, EU4Digital engaged in building awareness about DESI Accelerator activities, including presenting at a TAIX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) workshop on '[Guidance on institutional and methodological prerequisites for Eastern Partnership Countries accession to the Digital Economy and Society Index](#)'.

Key outputs:

- Methodological guidelines on DESI measurement;
- A questionnaire to collect information about the current state of DESI indicators measurement in the Eastern partner countries;
- Regional DESI Accelerator kick-off event with Digital Skills Network.

Planning for the upcoming six months

EdTech learning platform – key objectives:

- Launch MVP badge 'eCommerce on the EU marketplaces'.
- Develop curricula for the badges 'Digital marketing' and 'Digitalisation of business'.

Women mentorship programme on ICT skills – key objectives:

- Based on need, organise a virtual workshop(s) to transfer know-how for implementing the action plan of the Women in Tech mentorship programme.

DESI Accelerator – key objectives:

- Develop and validate operational recommendations on regional and national levels to move towards implementing collection of DESI indicators in Eastern partner countries.
- Identify priority areas for provision of capacity building in each of the Eastern partner countries.

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.

EU4Digital website

In this reporting period, the restructured and revamped EU4Digital website was launched. The work that began in the previous reporting period was completed, with all the static content sections reviewed and updated, along with the website pages being redesigned and restructured along with the new visual identity. The result is a website with a fresh look and which provides our core EU4Digital community with a better user experience.

The website was officially relaunched in June 2023 in all 8 languages (English and the 7 national languages).



This period saw over 38,000 users, nearly 7,000 returning users and over 90,000 total page views. The number of page views has grown from 50,000 in the last period, which indicates that the audience is finding content that is more relevant and engaging to them, encouraging them to view multiple pages, possibly supported by more active Search Engine Optimisation of published content.

In the next period, EU4Digital will continue the regular maintenance of the website and prepare bi-annual analytics reports on its performance.

Key outputs:

- Restructured and revamped EU4Digital website finalised and launched.
- Bi-annual website analytics report.

Content production and promotion

In this reporting period, content production and publishing was in full swing, as activities were fully underway and project content channels and processes had been established. The main type of content was news, either from the thematic streams or partner project EaPConnect, about activity developments or events, or from the country focal points about digital developments in the Eastern partner countries.

In total, 61 content pieces were drafted, edited and uploaded in English, and 190 content entries in the local languages, totalling 251 content entries in all eight languages on the website, as shown in the table below.

Type	English	Armenian	Azerbaijani	Belarusian	Georgian	Romanian	Russian	Ukrainian	Total
News & events	61	24	22	10	22	36	36	40	251
Stories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Library	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	61	24	22	10	22	36	36	40	251

In this reporting period, three EU4Digital newsletters were prepared – one edition [in February](#), [one in May](#) and a special edition [in June](#) for the website launch. The subscriber list has grown by over 7% since the start of the reporting period, to a total of 3,292 subscribers.

Key outputs:

- 61 content items in English and 190 in the local languages on the website.
- Prepared and disseminated three newsletters.

Strategic interventions and visibility

In this reporting period, EU4Digital conducted a total of 17 strategic interventions and supported three events. As the activities progressed, the need for visibility support via social media and through events also increased. Besides this, the team supported EU4Digital’s visibility in the wider ecosystem by providing materials to DG NEAR, EU Neighbours East and the EU visibility in Moldova project.

Collectively, these interventions have significantly increased the spread of digital content related to the Facility. During this period, the number of web mentions nearly doubled – reaching 586. Similarly, we’ve also seen a sharp increase in mentions on social media (248 compared to 149 during the previous reporting period). With 613,700 users reached organically through the partner accounts and an additional 599,000 through advertising campaigns on Facebook, the overall social media reach during this period is estimated at 1,200,000. Peaks were observed during the INATBA networking event, the revamped website launch, as well as the announcement of a roaming agreement between EU and Moldova.

Twitter remains the most impactful social media channel for connecting with target audiences. During this period, the total number of partner posts both on Twitter and also LinkedIn increased more than twofold. Organic activity on Facebook remained the same, while advertising campaigns that were conducted to support four of the strategic interventions resulted in 3,000 unique link clicks.

Key outputs:

- A total of 17 strategic interventions.



Performance monitoring

During the reporting period, the EU4Digital monitoring framework, composed of the intervention logic and the list of key performance indicators (hereinafter, 'indicators'), including indicators under EU4Digital Facility's logical framework (logframe), were reviewed by EU delegations in the countries and approved by DG NEAR.

During the reporting period no new project joined the EU4Digital Initiative⁷, therefore, no additional elements were integrated into the EU4Digital monitoring framework. In the coming period, EU4Digital will continue communication with the Contracting Authority in terms of new projects joining the Initiative and, if such cases occur, EU4Digital will assess the feasibility and added value of possible monitoring synergies. If a project is assessed as relevant to be integrated into the EU4Digital monitoring framework, EU4Digital will adjust the framework by adjusting the intervention logic and adding indicators where necessary.

In addition, EU4Digital encoded the final results (intervention logic) of EU4Digital Facility Phase I in OPSYS and selected the matching indicators of Phase I and Phase II. In total 10 matching indicators were identified and will be monitored on a bi-annual basis as part of the EU4Digital monitoring exercise.

During the reporting period, nine additional indicators were included in the EU4Digital Facility's logframe to monitor activities under eCustoms pilot (five output indicators), Start-ups ecosystem development (two outcome indicators) and EdTech learning platform (two outcome indicators) activities.

In the next reporting period, EU4Digital will encode the EU4Digital Phase II logframe in OPSYS by adding results and indicators and will submit the logframe for review to the Operational Manager from the Contracting Authority side.

Key outputs:

- Encoded EU4Digital Facility Phase I intervention logic in OPSYS.
- Updated EU4Digital monitoring framework for the period January–June 2023.

Planning for the upcoming six months

EU4Digital website – key objectives:

- Regular maintenance of the EU4Digital website.
- Bi-annual analytics report.

Content production and promotion – key objectives:

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

Strategic interventions and visibility – key objectives:

- Support the preparation and visibility of the next Digital Conference and Steering Committee Meeting in October.
- Prepare strategic interventions to support the Facility's communication.
- Hold regular consultations with the streams and EU4Digital projects to collect content.

Performance monitoring – key objectives:

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

⁷ As per Inception Report, during the Phase II, the team will be in contact with the Contracting Authority in the event in which further projects join the EU4Digital Initiative to assess the feasibility and added value of possible monitoring synergies.



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 six-month period (January 2023 – June 2023) 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"> • Moldova Digital Summit 2023 – The Future of Digital (15–17 June, Chisinau, Moldova). • Moldova country visit (14–17 June, Chisinau, Moldova).
<p>Telecom Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roaming Expert Working Group meeting (8 February). • Roaming Expert Working Group meeting (3 April). • TAIEX Workshop on Guidance on institutional and methodological prerequisites for Eastern Partnership Countries accession to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) (5–7 April 2023, Chisinau, Moldova). • Spectrum Expert Working Group meeting (3–4 May, Prague, Czech Republic). • Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development Expert Working Group meeting (10–11 May, Paris, France). • Roaming Expert Working Group meeting (18 May). • Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network plenary meeting (24 May, Dublin, Ireland).
<p>eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services individual kick-off sessions with EaP representatives (February–March). • eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services Network event (3 May). • eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services cross-border authentication pilot kick-off (14 June, 29 June).
<p>eTrade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Transport Corridor (eFTI deployment) awareness building session and kick-off with EaP stakeholders (31 January). • EU4Digital eCommerce accelerator activity kick-off session with EaP stakeholders (14 February). • eCustoms pilot kick-off session between Ukraine and Romania: ‘New Ukraine–Romania eCustoms pilot to streamline cross-border data exchange’ (7 March). • eCommerce consultations centre kick-off with the selected EaP SMEs (16 March). • eCommerce group training on registration on the marketplaces (16 March). • eCommerce group training on page creation on the marketplaces (28 March). • eCommerce group training on digital marketing (20 April). • National pavilion pilot kick-off event (11 May). • 14th International Capacity-Building Seminar on Trade and Transport Facilitation “Trade Facilitation and Digital Transformation of Multimodal Information Exchange in Eastern Europe and SPECA, Using United Nations Standards” (23 May) • eCommerce group training on customer support, reasons for brand and account blocking, taxes and customs procedures (24 May).



Past events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2nd International Conference on Logistics, Management and Operation in the East-West Transport Corridor (25 May) eCustoms site visit: EU4Digital visits Ukraine–Romania border in preparation for eCustoms pilot (30–31 May). EU4Digital eCommerce-related awareness session: “Overview of the EU eCommerce updates & cooperation opportunities with Ecommerce Europe” (7 June). eCustoms pilot launch event (19 June).
eHealth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eHealth network collaboration event focusing on eHealth strategy and cross-border eHealth service piloting (27 April). eHealth network collaboration event – Pilot ideation session (19 May).
ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual EU4Digital Startups and Innovation Forum 2023: ‘Digital upskilling of SMEs and start-ups in the Eastern Partnership region’ (9 March). Networking event ‘Joining the International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications (INATBA) to facilitate international collaboration and adoption of the blockchain technology across the economy’ (30 March). Incubation activity regional kick-off session (26 April). Incubation activity individual country sessions with the key ecosystem builders (2–5 May). Incubation activity individual country sessions with the key wealth enablers (15–23 May). Networking event ‘Startup Bridge: East meets West’ (16 June, Paris, France). Meeting with French high-performance incubators (17 June, Paris, France). Coordination meeting with ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems Network regarding the promotion of EaP Startups ecosystem platform (10 July).
Digital Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAIEX Workshop on Guidance on institutional and methodological prerequisites for Eastern Partnership Countries accession to the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) (5–7 April 2023, Chisinau, Moldova). Regional DESI kick-off with Digital Skills Network on assessment of current state of DESI indicators in the Eastern partner countries (30 May).

Events planned for the upcoming six months

The following section presents events planned in the upcoming six-month period (July 2023 – December 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
Cross-cutting



Upcoming events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azerbaijan country visit (September). • Digital Conference for the Eastern Partnership (14 November). • Second annual EU4Digital Phase II Steering Committee Meeting (15 November).
<p>Telecom Rules</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roaming Expert Working Group meeting (3 July). • Independence of Regulators and Broadband Development Expert Working Group meeting (25–26 October, Yerevan, Armenia). • Spectrum Expert Working Group meeting (8 November). • Roaming Expert Working Group meeting (20 November). • Multilateral meeting between Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network, Latin American Forum of Telecommunications Regulatory Entities, European Mediterranean Regulators Group and Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (4 October, Madeira, Portugal). • Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network plenary meeting (29–30 November, Tbilisi, Georgia).
<p>eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eTrust and Cross-border Digital Services activities' joint session with Eastern partner countries (16 November).
<p>eTrade</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eCustoms post-pilot conference (7 July). • National Pavilion Account Pilot: account owner kick-off session (July). • National Pavilion Account Pilot: product owner kick-off session (August). • Awareness building session 'EU Best Practices and Update on eFTI Progress in the EU' (11 July). • Awareness building sessions 'E-freight state of play assessment results in the EaP' (5 September – Azerbaijan, 13 October – Ukraine, December - Moldova). • Awareness building sessions 'eFTI deployment roadmap' (January).
<p>eHealth</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two virtual eHealth network workshops focusing on eHealth architecture development as well as eHealth financing and operational models (August – September). • Two virtual eHealth network awareness sessions – collaboration events, focusing on identified topics of interest, i.e. telehealth frameworks, secondary use of data (September–October, November–December).
<p>ICT Innovation and Start-up Ecosystems</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incubation activity regional online awareness session: Importance of funding and promoting the activities of ecosystem builders (18 July). • Incubation activity regional online awareness session: Importance and benefits of supporting high-performance incubation (8 August). • Incubation activity individual country report consultation sessions with the key ecosystem builders and the key wealth enablers (20–25 July). • Incubation activity national country handover sessions with the key national ecosystem builders (September–November). • Networking event on digital innovation hubs: emerging and advanced technologies (October–November).
<p>Digital Skills</p>



Upcoming events

- Regional DESI event to validate the inputs on data collection approaches provided by EaP countries (October).
- Workshop to transfer know-how about implementing the women's mentorship programme action plan with national stakeholders, based on need (August–September).