CONCLUSIONS

OF THE WESTERN BALKANS DIGITAL SUMMIT 2022, PRISTINA

Western Balkans (WB) share the same ambition to work jointly on improving digital transformation, democratic, economic and digital policy development, regional cooperation, and the commitment undertaken by the leaders of the Western Balkans Six (WB6)[1][2] under the Common Regional Market (CRM) and previous Western Balkans Digital Summits.

We acknowledge the value of working together and witness the progress from the last Digital Summit in all policy areas under CRM Regional Digital Area. We take pride in the success and progress made under the ***WB Roaming Free Regime*** and re-confirm the ambition to start lowering the roaming charges for data between the EU and WB from 2023.

While the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) represents an opportunity for Western Balkans to foresee investments in digital infrastructure, we stand ready to access the Digital Europe programme with the support and commitment of the European Commission to increase the use of available funds for the implementation of digital investment projects.

European Union (EU) digital targets for 2030, focusing on four key pillars: skills, digital transformation of businesses, secure and sustainable digital infrastructure, and digitalisation of public services, set the framework of regional ambition in digital transformation. We commit to stepping up our efforts in this context and we call upon the EU and our partners to support us, including through ***dedicated and regional demand-driven support in digital transformation*** to facilitate integration of WB in pan-European digital zone.

Convened in Pristina for the 5th edition of the WB Digital Summit, we reconfirm our readiness towards strengthened regional efforts for digitalisation at all levels and commitment to create better conditions for people-to-people digital connectivity through safe and transparent digital environment.

Gathered in Pristina for the Digital Summit, we have agreed on the following:

● ***Welcoming the 5th edition of the WB Digital Summit***, and reiterating the importance of joint efforts in the continuous development of digital transformation in the Western Balkan region, we commit to accelerate regional cooperation in all digital policy areas;

● ***Appreciating the launching of the Regulatory Dialogue*** between the EU and WB, we agree to work on efficient enforcement of the relevant EU acquis and priority legislative reforms, and reiterate the importance of the European Commission's support to transformative policies within digital and green transition goals;

● Recognising the benefits the ***WB regional roaming free regime*** brought for the citizens, we have already embarked on an ambitious process of lowering roaming changes between the EU and WB through the preparation of the ***Roadmap*** for Lowering Roaming Charges between the EU and WB;

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[1] Common Regional Market (europa.eu)
[2] Regional Cooperation Council | Common Regional Market Action Plan (rcc.int)

- Acknowledging the efforts invested in the dialogue with mobile operators, we welcome *launching of the Advisory and Coordination Group* and commit towards an enhanced and structured cooperation with mobile operators, both the EU and WB operators;

- Understanding the importance of a more conducive environment for business in general and telecom operators in particular, we commit to fully *implement the policy reforms under the Roadmap not later than 2023*;

- Reaffirming our commitment to the *reduction of roaming charges starting with data in 2023*, we call upon the necessity for strengthened cooperation among all stakeholders involved;

- Recognising the importance of *5G networks*, we commit to undertake activities and agree on regional actions for effective secure implementation, based on measures recommended in the EU Toolbox on 5G cybersecurity, and increasing the speed for deploying high-speed networks;

- Congratulating the initiation of the negotiations on Western Balkans accession to the *Digital Europe Programme* for better use of funding instruments, we will expedite all required internal processes to effectively enable benefits from the programme not later than 2023;

- Expressing the will to undertake concrete actions in the framework of **regional interoperability**, we commit to work on efficient implementation of use-case(s) pilot project(s) in order to facilitate the exchange of information and movement of services through the Western Balkan region;

- Committing to start the actions on the development of *digital identity* in the WB in close cooperation with the European Commission by defining technical implementation and identity common standards, as well as technical framework (Toolbox) for digital identity;

- Acknowledging the importance of digital skills and the need to foster development of digital skills in the Western Balkans, we commit to undertake concrete actions to support *digital upskilling* and *reskilling* at both central and local levels in partnership with other regional organisations as well as embark on regional initiatives and programmes to close digital skills mismatch and enhance digital literacy capabilities of different target groups, including women, youth and Roma;

- Acknowledging the importance of *European High-Performance Computing* in accelerating digitalisation capabilities in WB, we stand ready to undertake concrete activities to facilitate participation of each WB economy in EU HPC, including integration into the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC);

- Committing to undertake regional activities on improving *e-services* and enhancing regional *interoperability* for faster, cheaper and more transparent governmental services, we will engage in implementation of at *least two cross-border/boundary use-cases* aimed at greater regional interoperability;

- Recognising the importance of ensuring data and services interoperability, we commit to establish **smart cities network** across WB region;

- Acknowledging the importance of *free flow of data,* both personal and non-personal, we put great emphasis on the alignment of required regional actions and commit to expedite processes to create adequate regional framework on free flow of data within WB and participate as appropriate in *EU Data Governance framework*;

- Recognising the efforts invested to establish a sustainable monitoring framework for better-quality statistics in the WB to support *evidence-based policy development* and assess the progress of digital transformation in the region, we commit to expedite the process and development of the framework for annual reporting on *Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)* for the Western Balkans in accordance with the EU DESI methodology;

- Recognising the potential of *Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)* to provide innovative services that help region's SMEs to dynamically respond to key digital challenges, increase their competitiveness and assist a successful digital transformation in the Western Balkans;

- Reiterating the importance of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI), we commit to establish high-level regional Working Group, which will work on all aspects of AI to ensure synergies with the EU in the field of AI;

- Committed to undertake activities to improve cooperation on *cybersecurity* within the region by increasing protection of critical infrastructure, cybersecurity capabilities resilience and regional awareness in the cybersecurity area. The focus will be also on preventing and detecting cyber threats as well as preventing, detecting and effectively responding to incidents, so as to mitigate their impact and ensure fast recovery; furthermore, we commit to enhance operational cooperation with the European Union, in particular the European Commission and *the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA),* and we invite the EC to support the process ;

- Committed to supporting a digital transition that is aligned with, and supportive of the green transition, including by ensuring investments in digital infrastructure favouring energy efficient technologies;

- Welcoming the successfully organised regional competition event *Balkathon 3.0*, which in its third year in a row now represents a flagship event that provides a great opportunity for innovative young people from the WB region to develop new digital solutions that will influence further development of digital transformation in the WB region, we reconfirm to support this process, as well as other similar activities;

- Inviting the European Commission, Regional Cooperation Council, and other international partners to continue supporting regional cooperation and coordination through the implementation of regional actions, politically, financially and technically;

- We task Regional Cooperation Council to follow closely the implementation of commitments undertaken and facilitate regional coordination, cooperation and dialogue in all digital policy areas;

- Congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina as the next Host of the Digital Summit and remain committed to duly implement all commitments specified herein.

Prishtina, 22 September 2022