**Western Balkans Digital Summit**

**Skopje 2018**

# CONCLUSIONS
# OF THE WESTERN BALKANS DIGITAL SUMMIT 2018

# 18-19 APRIL, SKOPJE

# CONCLUSIONS
# OF THE WESTERN BALKANS DIGITAL SUMMIT 2018

At the Trieste Western Balkans Summit, we stressed the importance of the integration of the Western Balkans with the European Union's (EU) Digital Single Market and confirmed our commitment to the goals of the Digital Integration Component of the Multi-annual Action Plan (MAP) for a Regional Economic Area (REA).

In order to combine existing efforts and to develop recommendations for the future cooperation, we agreed to hold a Digital Summit together with the European Commission (EC), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and business representatives, taking into account priorities identified in the EU Digital Single Market approach: digital infrastructure, trust and security, skills, and digitization of industry.

We therefore welcome the EC's Digital Agenda Flagship initiative, which was announced on 6 February 2018 and which fulfils our expectations and complements the actions agreed on in the MAP for REA.

We welcome the first regional Digital Summit held in Skopje, which reflects our commitment to the ownership of the processes of economic development, in order to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for our citizens, technological transformation and digitalization that profoundly affects jobs, goods and services, industries and education.

By welcoming the industry-led study "The Digital Transformation of the Western Balkans" that shows how digital transformation of the region can contribute to a higher GDP, the Western Balkans' leaders expressed willingness for further actions on the required reforms and priorities for a successful digital transformation of the Western Balkans' REA, which helps increasing the region's attractiveness in terms of investment and the development of start-ups, scale-ups and new jobs.

**THE FOUR PLATFORMS:**

## Digital skills

We confirm the interest of the Western Balkans' economies towards integration within the EU Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, by endorsing the objectives and principles of the Coalition. We recognize the need for proactive participation in EU programmes and initiatives such as Girls in IT, EU Code Week and cross-border traineeships within the newly established Digital Opportunity Scheme.

As Western Balkans economies, we reiterate the need for creating policies for ICT certification of all population groups and commitment to address the development of digital skills.

## Trust and security

We welcome the discussions on the region's cybersecurity readiness and state of play of harmonization of cybersecurity legal frameworks in the Western Balkans, with the aim to highlight the importance of deep regional cooperation, but also cooperation with key international partners active in the area of cybersecurity.

We agree about the importance of establishing cooperation with the European Union Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) with RCC's support in terms of implementation of the Network and Information Security (NIS) Directive, including preparation of cyber security strategies, but also for the call for establishing a network of Computer Security Incidents Response Teams (CSIRTs) in the region in order to progressively integrate in the EU CSIRTs network;

We express our readiness to establish a regional framework for recognition of certificates of electronic signature and facilitation of cross-border trusted services;

## Digital connectivity

By emphasizing the digital connectivity gaps in the Western Balkans region and the primary importance of broadband development and its quality, we determinate a

precondition for integration of the region within EU's Digital Single Market: adoption of development plans of next generation broadband networks, creating an adequate environment for investments, introduction of 5G technology (where needed) and preparations in the Western Balkans economies in order to establish Broadband Competence Offices.

We also note the importance of extending the geographical scope of the Regional Roaming Agreement, to ensure full coverage in the Western Balkans and subsequently to identify models for lowering prices within the region and between the region and the EU.

We express our commitment to establish a regional multi-stakeholder dialogue that would include authorities, operators, IT communities and consumer protection organizations, facilitated by the RCC and supported by the EC, with aim to reach an agreement on the model and the dynamics of the process to be implemented for roaming charges reduction within the region, in order to achieve compliance with the EU Roam-Like-At-Home model.

We support any efforts made by operators to lower roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkans.

We express our preparedness to follow with interest the implementation of WiFi4EU project in the EU member states, so as to be prepared for prospective rollout to the Western Balkans region.

## Digital economy and society

We welcome the opportunities the data economy can provide in the region: improving the quality of open data portals through close regional cooperation to promote the Western Balkans as an Open data region; increasing regional cooperation among digital hubs; coordinating regional activities on interoperability standards; assessing demand for establishing regional digital Innovation Hubs; and learning from regional government cloud success stories.

**DIGITAL EXPO:**

By organising the Regional digital EXPO and business to government meetings as a part of the Digital Summit, Western Balkans economies show the readiness for the further quality development of innovative partnership between the public and private sector.

**COMBATING FAKE NEWS:**

Taking to account the recent developments across the world and in Europe that have raised concerns over the phenomenon of "fake news", the European Parliament, as well as European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel, called for a European solution to this problem. Given the fast spreading of fake news through the internet and social media, the Digital Summit presents an opportunity to discuss the issue and possible solutions in the battle against this phenomenon in the digital age.