



# The Digital divide in Europe

## Towards meaningful connectivity



### ITU Regional Forum on Meaningful Connectivity

presented by

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# Agenda

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- What is the state of connectivity in Europe
  - Digital divide , rural urban , gender
- Why Meaningful Connectivity (MC) matters
- What will it take to attain universal access
  - Investment gaps
- Innovative approaches needed to achieve meaningful connectivity and inclusive internet access in Europe
  - Case studies , strategies and policies to connect the unconnected

# What is A4AI?

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The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) is **world's broadest technology sector alliance** working to **drive down the price of broadband** by transforming **policy and regulatory frameworks**

# The State of Connectivity in Europe - some facts

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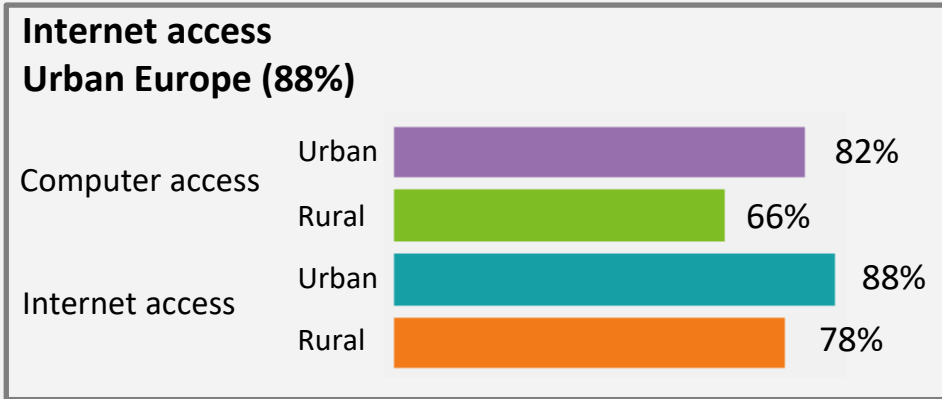


- 36% of the population in Central and Eastern Europe is unconnected compared to 19% in Western Europe (ITU 2020, A4AI/Xalam Analytics)
- 42% school-age children 3-17 years old in Eastern Europe & Central Asia are unconnected at home (UNICEF, 2020)
- Nearly all countries meet the UN Broadband Commission “1 for 2” affordability target for affordable entry-level service (Only Moldova is borderline) (ITU 2019)
- Europe is the region with the lowest fixed broadband prices as a percentage of GNI p.c. (1.4%) and also enjoys the highest median entry-level speeds (ITU 2019)
- 4G penetration in Europe is growing but there are still connectivity and coverage gaps across sub-regions. (ITU-A4AI Connecting Humanity, 2020).
- Women, make up 65% of European employees but are only 17% of the [European ICT workforce](#). (WEF 2020 )

# A rural/urban divide persists in Europe



Number of households with Internet/computer access in 2019

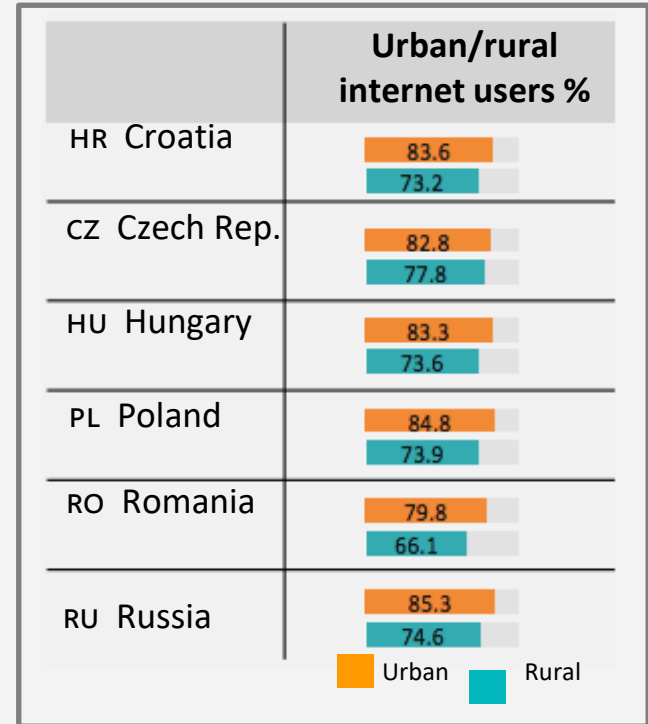


\*2019 ITU estimate.

Note: Insufficient data available to produce estimates for SIDS.

Source: ITU

**Rate of connectivity increasing but is it equitable within countries?**



\*Serbia and Slovakia didn't have readily available data  
Source: ITU

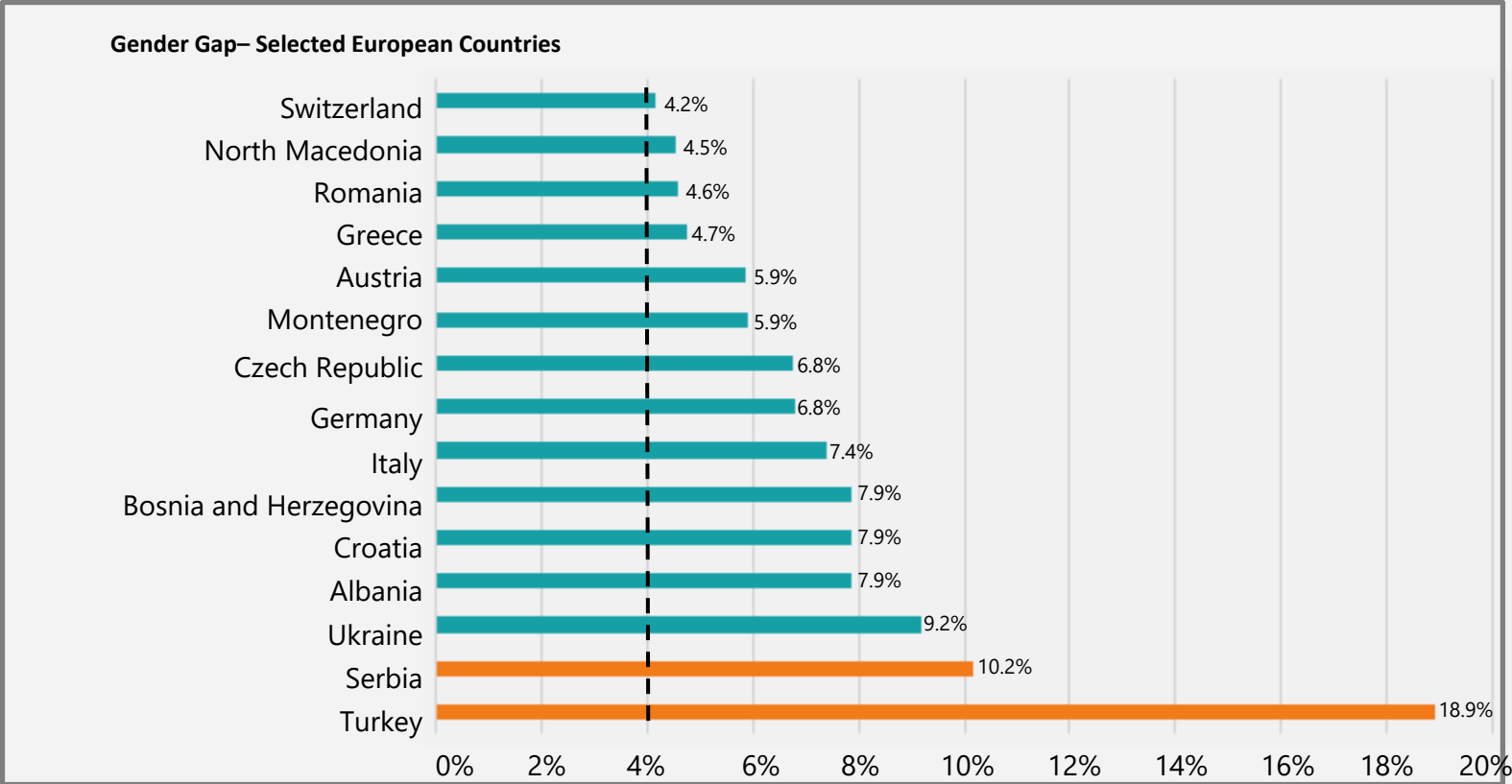
# Digital gender divide in usage is a key concern



-Western Europe has narrowed the digital usage gender gap.

-Central and Eastern Europe has on average a 3% gap

Greece and Turkey show significant gaps



Source : ITU,2020-

# Must secure affordable meaningful connectivity



The high cost to connect is excluding billions from the digital revolution:

**Nearly half of the world's population is still offline**

And a significant percentage of those online have unreliable and poor connections.

**We have meaningful connectivity when we can use the internet every day using an appropriate device with enough data and a fast connection.**

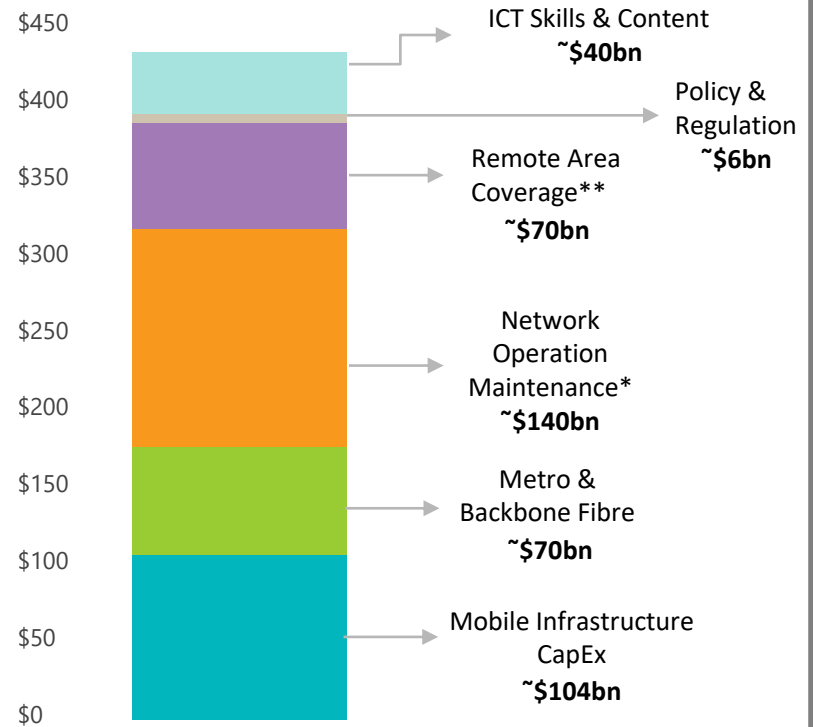


# Connecting Humanity by 2030 is urgent!



An estimated **USD\$428 billion** is needed to connect all of humanity to the Internet by 2030.

- ~90% of required investments are directly tied to the need to roll out and maintain broadband networks to support the additional connected user base and related traffic;



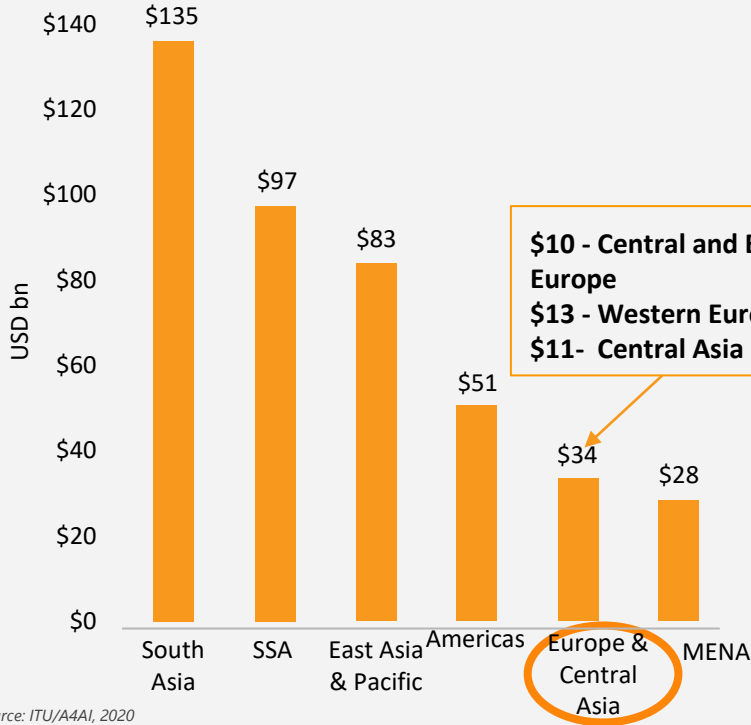
Source: ITU/A4AI, 2020



# Europe needs USD\$34-billion in investments

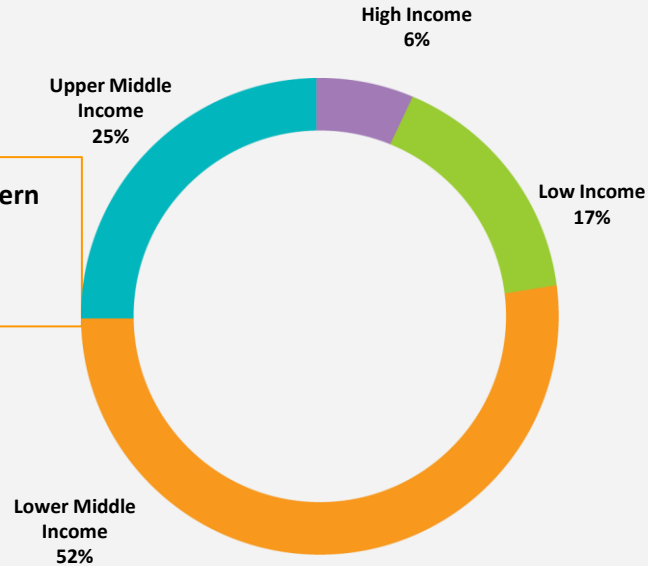


Connecting Humanity to Broadband – Investment Requirements by Region



Source: ITU/A4AI, 2020

Connecting Humanity to Broadband – Investment Requirements by Country Income Group

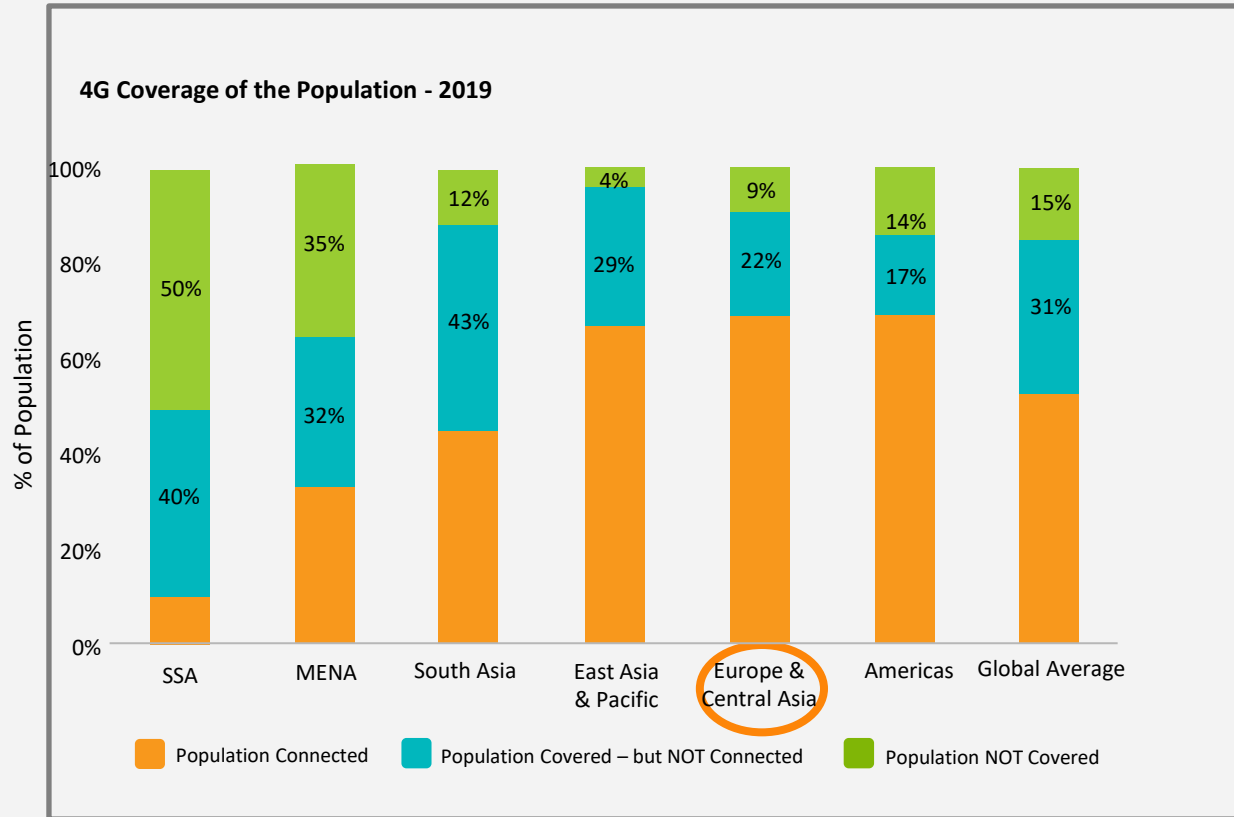


\$10 - Central and Eastern Europe  
\$13 - Western Europe  
\$11 - Central Asia

Europe has made significant progress, but investment gaps to attain universal access still persist.

Source: A4AI & Xalam Analytics, 2020

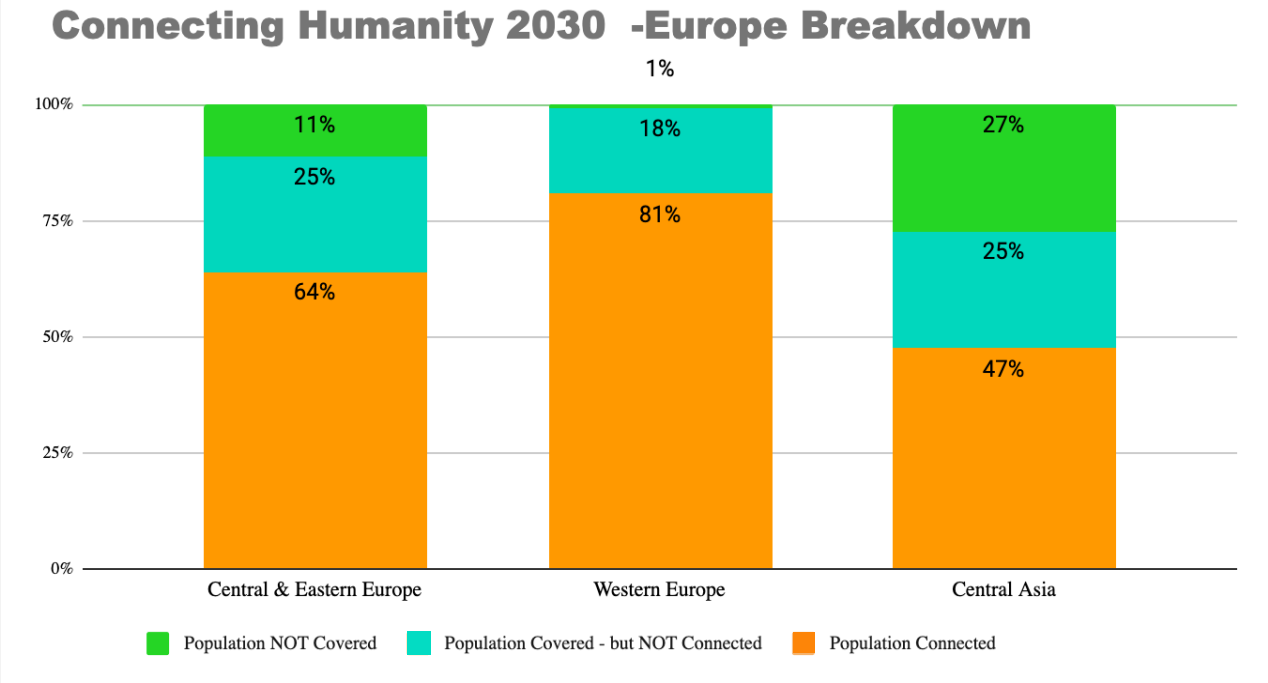
# Infrastructure Alone is not Sufficient



## Beyond infrastructure:

Complementary initiatives are needed to connect people already covered by broadband networks. These include programs to increase and support **device affordability**, **affordability of data and services**, **digital skills programs and content**, with a special focus on **closing the digital gender gap**.

# 36% of Europeans are not connected or covered



Central & Eastern Europe, as well as Central Asia, have significant percentages of the population not connected (with affordability being a major challenge) or not covered by 4G at all.

Source: A4AI & Xalam Analytics, 2020

# Policy actions to tackle digital inequality



## Increase partnerships to fund infrastructure & encourage new connectivity models

- Shared Rural Network
- Connecting Europe BB fund
- Community networks

**SRN -£1bn joint initiative** between UK Gov. & UK's 4 mobile network operators to extend overall 4G coverage to 95% of the UK landmass by Dec 2025.

### **Connecting Europe Broadband**

**Fund (CEBF)-** Expected EUR 550- 600 (June 2021) - so far, invested in seven very-high capacity network projects in rural and semi-rural areas across

**Cooperatives:** Guifi.net Catalan/Spain

## Push for Targeted interventions on access and skills

- vouchers
- social tariffs
- Subsidies

**WiFi4EU Programme-** A voucher of €15,000 is granted to municipalities to install free public Wi-Fi in public spaces.

**EC €200m voucher scheme for Italy** Helps low-income families buy high-speed broadband services (download speeds of at least 30 Mbps) & devices

**Grand Ecole du Numérique,** - Inclusive Digital talent accelerator; provides subsidies for ICT skills training

## Improve Inclusive Data Collection for policy planning

- New and improve data sets to monitor digital inclusion across user groups, gender, geography, race, etc.

**Collaboration across statistical agencies and EuroSTAT on inclusive data sets and indicators** Consider data to track access and use by traveler communities, migrants, refugees, senior citizens, young people, persons with disabilities, rural populations

**Establish clear monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs** Including those focused on digital skills.



**Thank You**

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