The Digital divide in Europe
Towards meaningful connectivity

ITU Regional Forum on Meaningful Connectivity

presented by

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March 8 2021
Agenda

- 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?

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

➢ 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet access</th>
<th>Urban Europe (88%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Computer access</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet access</strong></td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2019 ITU estimate.

Rate of connectivity increasing but is it equitable within countries?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Urban/rural internet users %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR Croatia</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ Czech Rep.</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>HU Hungary</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL Poland</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO Romania</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RU Russia</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74.6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Serbia and Slovakia didn’t have readily available data.

Source: ITU

Note: Insufficient data available to produce estimates for SIDS.
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
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.
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;

![Graph showing estimated investments](image)

- **ICT Skills & Content**: ~$40bn
- **Remote Area Coverage**: ~$70bn
- **Network Operation & Maintenance**: ~$140bn
- **Metro & Backbone Fibre**: ~$70bn
- **Mobile Infrastructure CapEx**: ~$104bn
- **Policy & Regulation**: ~$6bn

Source: ITU/A4AI, 2020
Europe needs USD$34-billion in investments

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population NOT Covered</th>
<th>Population Covered - NOT Connected</th>
<th>Population Connected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central &amp; Eastern Europe</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: A4AI & Xalam Analytics, 2020

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.
Policy actions to tackle digital inequality

Increase partnerships to fund infrastructure & encourage new connectivity models
- Shared Rural Network
- Connecting Europe BB fund
- Community networks

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.

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

Sources: Europa, A4AI, OECD, WEF, OFCOM
Thank You

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