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# State of digital development and trends in the Europe States region: Challenges and opportunities

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24 February 2025

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## Informing the WTDC-25 preparatory process

- The “State of Digital Development and Trends” RPM documents and reports inform participants and stakeholders as they discuss regional digital agendas in the lead up of WTDC-25.
- The reports consist of two parts: the first provides an overview of the state of digital connectivity in the region, and the second showcases case studies.



## Universal and meaningful connectivity: a policy imperative

- Universal and meaningful connectivity (UMC) is a policy imperative to fully leverage the potential of connectivity. It is a requirement for enabling digital transformation.
- UMC enables everyone to enjoy a safe, enriching, and productive online experience at an affordable cost.
- UMC does not mean everyone must be connected all the time but describes a situation where everyone can access the Internet optimally and affordably whenever and wherever needed.



## Europe making made great strides towards UMC

- Europe has one of the highest digital connectivity rates globally.
- 91% of the population uses the Internet in 2024, far exceeding the global average (68%).
- Europe leads in broadband penetration, affordability, and regulatory maturity.
- In Internet use, Europe has achieved gender parity and almost bridged the urban/rural and age gaps



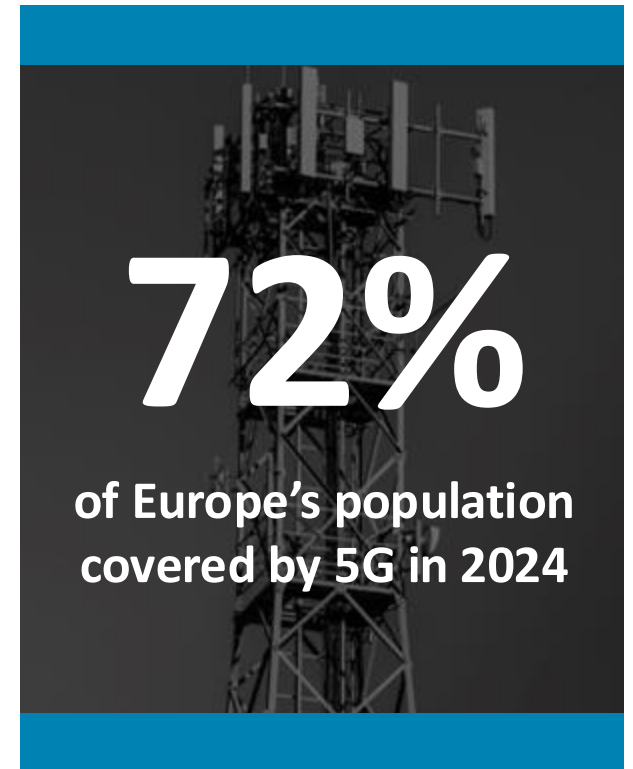
## Europe is leading in ICT Regulation and policy maturity



- Europe has the world's most advanced ICT regulatory frameworks.
- 90% of European countries most mature stage of ICT regulation, enabling competition and investment.
- The EU Digital Decade initiative drives policy coordination and innovation.
- Regulatory gaps remain outside the EU, requiring greater policy harmonization.

## Digital connectivity and infrastructure

- Mobile broadband subscriptions exceed 125 per 100 inhabitants, the highest globally.
- 5G networks cover 72% of the population, but rural coverage gaps remain.
- Europe leads in broadband affordability, with mobile broadband costing just 0.3% of GNI per capita.
- Urban-rural divides persist, with high-speed connectivity lagging in remote areas.



## Cybersecurity, e-waste, and sustainability



- Europe ranks among the highest in cybersecurity preparedness, with an average score of 66 out of 100 in ITU's Global Cybersecurity Index 2024.
- E-waste is a growing concern, with the region generating 12.3 billion kg in 2022, accounting for nearly 20% of global e-waste.
- 46% of e-waste is recycled, twice the global average (22%), but disparities remain across countries.

## BDT4Impact: Featured case studies

- ITU project “**Promoting and measuring universal and meaningful connectivity**” funded by the European Union accelerates progress towards UMC globally through advocacy, better measurement and research.
- **Child Online Protection initiatives** in Andorra, Malta, and Serbia are creating safer digital environments for children, addressing risks such as cyberbullying, harassment, and online exploitation.
- Montenegro’s **IPv6 laboratory** enhances digital readiness and supports digital transformation.



## BDT4Impact: Featured case studies

- Albania's **Digital Agriculture and Rural Transformation programme** (DART) is leveraging technology to support smallholder farmers and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals
- **CyberDrills** in Bulgaria and Cyprus improve cybersecurity readiness, fostering cooperation and better protection against digital threats.
- **Broadband mapping initiatives** in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moldova help design targeted interventions to enhance connectivity in underserved and hard-to-reach areas.



## The future of digital transformation in Europe

- Europe is on track to achieving universal and meaningful connectivity.
- Further investment in rural infrastructure and digital skills development is needed.
- Stronger regulatory collaboration will help reduce gaps between EU and non-EU countries.
- A focus on cybersecurity and environmental sustainability will shape Europe's digital future.



## Risks and challenges ahead

- Complacency in digital leadership could slow progress!
- Sustained investment in next-generation infrastructure is needed to maintain Europe's position.
- Environmental sustainability remains a challenge as demand for digital services increases.
- The risks of digitalization are growing: cybersecurity threats, disinformation, AI misuse, and online addiction.



# Thank you!

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More information:

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