



**ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe  
(RDF-EUR) 2025**

***Information and Communication Technologies for attaining  
Sustainable Development Goals***

organized by the International Telecommunication Union, Telecommunication Development Bureau  
with the support of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority of Hungary and cooperation  
with the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunication Administrations (CEPT)

**24 February 2025  
Budapest, Hungary**

**REPORT**

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## 1. Introduction & General Overview

The ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe (RDF-EUR) 2025, organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the ITU, took place on 24 February 2025, in Budapest, Hungary. The event was hosted by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority of Hungary, in cooperation with CEPT, and preceded the ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for Europe on 25-26 February 2025.

The RDF-EUR facilitated high-level dialogue and collaboration among telecommunications policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, academia, and development organizations. It was crucial in setting strategic priorities for the BDT's regional work plan between World Telecommunication Development Conferences.

The forum allowed ITU and its stakeholders, including Member States and Sector Members, to exchange views on achieving meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in Europe.

## 2. Documentation

The agenda, programme and meeting documents are published on the RDF website ([here](#)).

## 3. Participation

The event was attended by a total of 98 participants (47 female and 51 male), including 93 (95%) attending in person and 5 (5%) participating remotely. **32** Member States were represented by 61 delegates, along with participants from various stakeholder groups, 12 from ITU-D Sector Members, 14 guests. The final list of participants is available on the RDF website (available [here](#)).

## 4. Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony of the ITU's Regional Development Forum began with remarks from dignitaries, highlighting the importance of digital transformation, innovation, and regional cooperation in promoting sustainable development. The opening remarks were given by the following speakers:

- **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU
- **Dr. Péter Vári**, Deputy Director-General, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, Hungary
- **Mr Oli Bird**, Co-President of CEPT – European Conference of Postal and Telecommunication Administrations
- **Ms Gwi-Yeop Son**, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UN Development Cooperation Office

**Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, BDT Director, welcomed distinguished guests including Ministers, Ambassadors, and Director Generals. He highlighted the significance of the event, pointing out the 160th anniversary of the ITU and the numerous challenges faced by the global community, such as natural disasters and the rapid advancement of new technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet of Things. Dr. Zavazava emphasized the ITU Development Bureau's commitment to leveraging technology for positive impact on people's lives, communities, and the global community.

Dr. Zavazava emphasized the preparations for the upcoming World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, scheduled from 17 to 28 November 2025. He expressed confidence in Azerbaijan's readiness to host the event in a state-of-the-art venue and highlighted the progress made by the four established Working Groups, particularly in drafting a clear and concise Declaration. Additionally, he mentioned the Youth Summit to be held in Varadero, Cuba from 11-13 March 2025, encouraging member states to sponsor young participants and emphasizing the importance of grooming the next generation of leaders. He encouraged the Com-ITU team to join to

develop a common proposal. Dr. Zavazava also recalled the importance of the Youth Summit from 11-13 March in Varadero and the Celebration of the Youth on 16 November in Baku.

Dr. Zavazava underscored the ITU's mission to ensure that everyone benefits from the digital future, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals. He referenced the Kigali Action Plan and the Regional Initiatives for the Europe Region, focusing on digital infrastructure development, digital transformation, digital skills enhancement, digital inclusion, ICT security, and digital innovation.

Dr. Zavazava launched the report on the State of Digital Development and Trends in the Europe Region: Challenges and Opportunities (available [here](#)) celebrating the achievements of Europe in bridging the gender gap and rolling out 5G technology, which is crucial for the foundation of artificial intelligence.

He acknowledged the contributions of the European Commission and other partners in supporting global development efforts. Dr. Zavazava also drew attention to the outcomes of the COP29 and the importance of green digital technologies for early warning systems. He reiterated the ITU's commitment to bridging the digital divide and emphasized the role of international cooperation in achieving sustainable development goals.

**Dr. Péter Vári**, Deputy Director-General, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), Hungary welcomed the attendees and thanked Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the ITU, for his presence and the work of the ITU. He acknowledged the key role of this Forum to share proposals and views to contribute to regulations. He acknowledged the invisible effect of emerging technologies which nevertheless are part of our everyday activities. Dr. Vári emphasized the RDF as a crucial platform for knowledge exchange, where stakeholders could collectively shape digital policies and address pressing challenges. He encouraged fruitful discussions and reiterated Hungary's dedication to facilitating impactful dialogues on the future of ICT development.

**Mr Oli Bird**, Co-President of CEPT – European Conference of Postal and Telecommunication Administrations, and Chair of Com-ITU, highlighted the role of ICTs in sustainable development, emphasizing their contribution to economic growth, poverty reduction, and the realization of the UN 2030 Agenda. He acknowledged the potential and risks associated with emerging technologies, such as AI, in either narrowing or widening the digital divide.

He reaffirmed CEPT's commitment to coordinating European Common Proposals (ECPs) for WTDC-25, ensuring a unified regional approach to global digital policymaking. Reflecting on WTDC-22 in Kigali, he noted CEPT's leadership in securing environmental and human-centric commitments within ITU's strategic agenda.

Mr Bird further emphasized the importance of development partnerships, aligning ITU's efforts with broader UN processes, addressing gender disparities in ICT, and promoting sustainable digital transformation. He called for renewed efforts in bridging regional digital divides and strengthening ITU's engagement in Europe's development priorities. Mr Bird also praised the Africa Broadband Mapping project as an example of cooperation with cross-regional impact.

In conclusion, Oli Bird reaffirmed CEPT's commitment to contributing positively to the development within the European region and the global discussion at the upcoming WTDC, aiming to harness ICTs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Ms Gwi-Yeop Son**, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UN Development Cooperation Office, addressed the Regional Development Forum for the Europe Region, emphasizing the rapid advancement of technology and its impact on society. She highlighted the adoption of the Pact of the Future, including the Global Digital Compact, and the upcoming review of the UN World Summit on the Information Society. She underlined the importance of harnessing digital technologies while addressing risks and

ensuring inclusivity. Ms Son acknowledged the progress of Regional Initiatives and identified critical elements such as stable digital infrastructure, innovation, transformation, inclusion, skills development, and trust in ICTs as essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda. She underscored the necessity of collaborative efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and bridge the digital divide. She concluded her remarks by expressing gratitude to the International Telecommunication Union and the National Media and Infocommunications Authority of Hungary for organizing and hosting the Forum. She looked forward to discussions and insights to shape a more inclusive, innovative, and connected future.

## 5. Appointment of the Chair of the Regional Development Forum

At the end of the opening session **Dr. Péter Vári, Deputy Director General of NMHH** was appointed by acclamation as the Chair of the RDF for Europe.

## 6. Roundtable Discussions:

### 6.1. ROUNDTABLE ONE: State of Digital Development and Trends - Challenges & Opportunities:

<b>09:30 – 10:30</b>	Moderator: <b>Mr Jaroslav Ponder</b> , Head of the ITU Office for Europe
	<b>Setting the Stage:</b> ITU Presentation by <b>Sofie Maddens</b> , Chief, Digital Knowledge Society Department, ITU, BDT
	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>H.E. Stefan Andonovski</b>, Minister of Digital Transformation, North Macedonia</li> <li>– <b>H.E. Milan Dobrijevic</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications Government, Republic of Serbia</li> <li>– <b>H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca</b>, Former President of Malta, Founder &amp; Chair of The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society</li> <li>– <b>Mr Tonko Obuljen</b>, President of the Council, HAKOM, Croatia, and BEREC Vice Chair 2025, Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC)</li> <li>– <b>Mr Zoltán Nagy</b>, Deputy CEO of Digital Hungary Agency, Hungary</li> <li>– <b>Mr David Vicente</b>, Director, Andorra Digital</li> <li>– <b>Dr. Milan Radulović</b>, PhD EE, President of the Council, Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services (EKIP), Montenegro</li> </ul>

The first RDF roundtable discussed digital development trends, challenges, and opportunities in the region, focusing on connectivity, regulation, and sustainability. Moderated by **Mr Jaroslav Ponder**, the panel included speakers from various countries and organizations.

**Ms Sofie Maddens** provided an overview of the highlights of the "State of Digital Development and Trends in the Europe Region: Challenges and Opportunities" report, highlighting Europe's global leadership in broadband affordability, cybersecurity, and ICT regulation. With 91% of the population online, Europe far exceeds the global average, yet rural areas and investment disparities remain challenges. While regulatory frameworks are among the world's most advanced, further policy harmonization is needed to bridge gaps between EU and non-EU countries.

Infrastructure expansion and 5G deployment continue to progress, but rural connectivity still lags, requiring continued and targeted investment. Europe also leads in cybersecurity preparedness, yet e-waste remains a concern. Sustainability efforts must accompany digital growth, as increasing demand

for digital services poses environmental risks. Several ITU initiatives, including meaningful connectivity projects and child online protection programs, were presented as examples of regional digital progress.

Ms Maddens emphasized that environmental sustainability, digital inclusion, and resilience must remain top priorities as the region advances its Digital Transformation agenda.

“State of Digital Development and Trends in the Europe Region: Challenges and Opportunities” report can be accessed through the [link](#).

Following the presentation by ITU, roundtable discussions provided important insights and perspectives as presented by the panelists. The main highlights of the discussions included:

- The roundtable discussion brought together high-level representatives from North Macedonia, Serbia, Malta, Croatia, Montenegro, Hungary, and Andorra to discuss the role of digital transformation in their economies, national strategies, and regional cooperation. Speakers emphasized that digitalization is no longer a choice but a necessity, driving economic growth, innovation, and inclusion. North Macedonia’s new Digital Transformation Agency launched initiatives such as an e-services portal expansion and a national cybersecurity strategy, while Serbia showcased significant investment in technology parks, ICT education, and AI-driven government services. Malta’s former President highlighted the digital divide as a pressing challenge, advocating for increased investment in education, digital literacy, and inclusion of vulnerable populations. Regulatory leaders from Croatia and Montenegro stressed the importance of harmonized policies, cybersecurity awareness, and international collaboration in achieving balanced digital growth. Andorra drew attention to the importance of digital skills development and child online protection.
- Challenges and risks were a focal point, with concerns expressed over cybersecurity, AI misuse, and equitable digital access. Serbia emphasized workforce development and AI governance, while Hungary and Andorra underscored the need for strategic investment in infrastructure and public digital adoption. Participants highlighted the importance of ensuring digital services are both accessible and beneficial, with digital well-being initiatives and regulatory safeguards playing a crucial role. Cooperation at both the regional and international level, particularly through ITU initiatives, was seen as essential in bridging gaps between EU and non-EU nations.
- Attention was drawn to the necessity of support to the Western Balkans on the Early Warning Systems (EWS), in particular focusing on cell broadcast systems roll out, with the aim of strengthening disaster preparedness and digital resilience of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Building upon the outcomes of the recently held ITU Regional Initiatives Accelerator Workshop, ITU called for financial support of up to 30 million Euro to ensure the fully fledged assistance to all concerned countries.

Following the conclusion of the first roundtable session, with the aim of demonstrating strong commitment of concerned countries and reinforcing a call for funding, an official announcement ceremony was held on the Support to the Western Balkans on Early Warning Systems.

## 6.2. ROUNDTABLE TWO: Matchmaking Roundtable on Fostering Partnerships on Infrastructure Development for Universal Connectivity

<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	Moderator: <b>Ms Valentina Stadnic</b> , Programme Officer, ITU Office for Europe
	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Mr Armer Juka</b>, Member of the Steering Council, Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP), Albania</li> <li>– <b>Ms Naama Henig</b>, Director, International Affairs Department, Ministry of Communications, Israel</li> <li>– <b>Ms Mzia Gogilashvili</b>, Chief Expert on International Relations, National Communications Commission, Georgia, and the representative of the Eastern Partnership Electronic Communications Regulators Network (EaPeReg)</li> <li>– <b>Ms Cristina Aguiar</b>, Head of Unit, Regulation for Citizens and Consumers, ANACOM, Portugal</li> <li>– <b>Mr Yuriy Matsyk</b>, Director of the Broadband Infrastructure Department, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Ukraine</li> <li>– <b>Dr. Per Fröjd</b>, Vice President of International Standards, Ericsson, Sweden</li> <li>– <b>Ms Kerstin Juettner</b>, Public Affairs Officer – International Government Relations UN/ITU, Rohde &amp; Schwarz GmbH &amp; Co. KG, Germany</li> </ul>

Roundtable two of the RDF focused on fostering partnerships for infrastructure development to achieve universal connectivity. The session, moderated by **Ms Valentina Stadnic**, Programme Officer, ITU Office for Europe, aimed to facilitate an interactive dialogue among stakeholders from governments, the private sector, and international organizations to discuss strategies and initiatives that support meaningful and universal connectivity. The panel included distinguished speakers from Albania, Israel, Georgia, Portugal, Ukraine, Sweden, and private-sector leaders from Ericsson and Rohde & Schwarz.

The following present the main highlights of the discussions.

- The discussions focused on national experiences, regional collaboration, policy frameworks, and private-sector innovations that contribute to bridging digital divides and strengthening infrastructure for universal access.
- Panelists highlighted the importance of cybersecurity and resilience, with Albania detailing its response to a major cyberattack, and Ukraine presenting its broadband expansion efforts amid wartime disruptions as an example of resilience in extreme conditions.
- The session highlighted various approaches to infrastructure development. Israel showcased its public-private partnership model with efficient regulatory oversight, which rapidly expanded high-capacity broadband networks. Georgia outlined its broadband strategy and regulatory alignment with EU policies, emphasizing the importance of harmonized frameworks in fostering digital growth. Meanwhile, Ukraine discussed its digital governance innovations, particularly its DIIA platform, which has facilitated access to e-government services and strengthened connectivity during crises. Speakers emphasized that resilient digital infrastructure must be supported by a robust regulatory environment, international cooperation, and private-sector investment.
- The discussion also focused on spectrum management and 5G deployment, with Albania detailing its recent spectrum auction process and regulatory reforms aimed at accelerating mobile broadband development.

- The private sector contributed to the discussion, with representatives from Rohde & Schwarz and Ericsson underlining the need for long-term policy alignment, transparent stakeholder participation, and capacity-building initiatives. The importance of fiber, satellite, and wireless technologies in achieving universal connectivity was also explored, with fixed wireless access highlighted as a viable solution for reaching underserved rural areas.
- Partnerships were repeatedly emphasized as a critical enabler of digital transformation. ITU was widely recognized for its role in facilitating international cooperation, providing technical assistance, and supporting regional broadband initiatives. The discussion highlighted the success of ITU's Partner2Connect initiative, which has been instrumental in mobilizing resources for infrastructure projects. Several panelists called for strengthened cooperation between governments and the private sector, urging increased investment in capacity-building, cybersecurity, and digital literacy programs.
- The session concluded with a call for sustained collaboration and a reaffirmation of ITU's commitment to supporting digital infrastructure resilience. Participants acknowledged that achieving universal connectivity requires continuous investment, regulatory adaptability, and strong multilateral cooperation. With ITU's leadership, stakeholders reaffirmed their shared responsibility to ensure inclusive, secure, and future-proof digital infrastructure that supports global Sustainable Development Goals.

The session ended with the signing and exchange of the Letters between ITU and Cyprus on "Support to the Capacity Development and Announcement of a Special Workshop on Infrastructure Resilience and Quality of Services". This capacity-building initiative in partnership with Cyprus sets a commitment that focuses on network resilience and cybersecurity measures.

### 6.3. NETWORK OF WOMEN FOR EUROPE: Building Connections, Empowering Futures

<b>12:30 -13:00</b>	Moderators: <b>Ms Valentina Stadnic</b> , Programme Officer, & <b>Ms Andrea Matasova</b> , Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe
	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>H.E. Katarina Tomasevic</b>, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Serbia</li> <li>– <b>Ms Inga Rimkevičienė</b>, Chair of the Com ITU CEPT Project Team for ITU-D</li> <li>– <b>Mr Vilem Vesely</b>, Deputy Director, Department of Electronic Communications, Czech Republic</li> <li>– <b>Ms Kerstin Juettner</b>, Public Affairs Officer – International Government Relations UN/ITU, Rohde &amp; Schwarz GmbH &amp; Co. KG</li> <li>– <b>Ms Mathilde Maury</b>, Director, Policy and Government Affairs Global Policy and International Affairs, Nokia, Finland</li> </ul>

The session commenced with the remarks by **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, BDT Director, who emphasized the importance of fostering gender inclusivity and empowerment in digital development. He highlighted ITU's ongoing efforts, including mentorship initiatives that connect established professionals with young women in marginalized communities. Stressing the importance of tangible results over rhetoric, he reiterated ITU-D's role in delivering impactful solutions and ensuring that digital transformation benefits all. He called for the active involvement of men in gender equality efforts and underscored the necessity of bringing voices from underrepresented women to WTDC, ensuring that discussions reflect the experiences of those most affected by digital inequalities.

Dr. Zavazava outlined ITU's key initiatives aimed at promoting digital literacy and skill development among women and girls. He emphasized the role of ITU Academy and Digital Transformation Centers in equipping women with the tools needed for meaningful participation in the digital economy. He also announced that this year's Girls in ICT Day would be co-hosted by the Arab and CIS Regions, inviting all stakeholders to contribute to the effort. Recognizing persistent gender disparities in digital access, he reaffirmed ITU's commitment to closing the gender digital divide and providing women with equal opportunities in the technology sector.

**H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca**, former President of Malta, also delivered an address on protecting young girls in the digital world, urging for immediate global action against cyberbullying, online exploitation, and gender-based digital violence. Citing alarming statistics, she illustrated the growing risks of online abuse, including the manipulation of children by online predators and the alarming rise of self-generated harmful content. She emphasized that technology's rapid expansion has outpaced regulatory and protective measures, leading to a fragmented global response that has failed to sufficiently address the crisis.

She called for a shift from reactive policies to proactive, preventive strategies, highlighting the necessity of comprehensive digital literacy programs, ensuring that Big Tech companies implement safety-by-default mechanisms and take responsibility for the online environments they create. She emphasized that cross-border enforcement mechanisms must be strengthened to prevent online predators from exploiting legal loopholes.

Network of Women in ITU-D discussions provided important insights and perspectives as presented by the panelists. The main highlights of the discussions include:

- The panel discussion focused on mentorship, collaboration, and strategies for empowering women in the ICT sector. The conversation explored systemic changes needed to foster gender equality, the significance of professional networks and pathways for advancing women in leadership roles. Insights were shared on experiences across various industries, from defense and telecommunications to technology, highlighting the challenges and progress in increasing female representation. The importance of leadership, mentorship, and targeted initiatives such as ICT awareness programs was emphasized as crucial in encouraging more women to pursue careers in the sector.
- The discussions underlined the role of trust and support in professional networking. A successful mentorship initiative launched last week by ITU was highlighted, with significant participation from mentors and mentees, demonstrating strong engagement in fostering career growth. The expansion of dedicated networks into regional chapters was cited as a key development of NoW in ITU-D, reinforcing the importance of structured support systems. Additionally, the necessity for male allies to actively support and advocate for gender inclusivity was stressed, with calls for greater recognition of diverse perspectives and collaborative leadership.
- Insights from the private sector revealed the challenges and opportunities of working in male-dominated industries. Personal experiences emphasized the value of networking, continuous learning, and professional development as essential tools for career advancement. Strategies such as fostering inclusive corporate cultures, supporting employee resource groups, and creating mentorship opportunities were discussed as ways to encourage more women into leadership positions. The importance of being proactive, confident, and open to learning in professional environments was also highlighted.
- Further discussions addressed the importance of industry-led initiatives to promote gender inclusion. Examples of corporate partnerships aimed at developing skills, increasing female representation, and promoting leadership opportunities were shared. The role of capacity-



building programs, mentorship, and digital literacy in bridging the gender divide was emphasized. The value of fostering diverse teams was recognized as a key driver of innovation and long-term success in the ICT sector.

At the end of the session, two significant initiatives aimed at supporting women's participation in the digital and cybersecurity sectors were highlighted. The first initiative, a cybersecurity-focused program, is designed to promote the equal and meaningful involvement of women in cybersecurity-related fields.

This initiative – **Her Cybertracks**, spans across 67 countries and provides structured learning and mentorship opportunities. It is supported by a government partnership and seeks to address the underrepresentation of women in cybersecurity through capacity-building activities, skill development, and networking opportunities. The initiative is structured into three thematic tracks, ensuring that participants receive targeted training and guidance tailored to different aspects of cybersecurity.

The second initiative focuses on the **Women in GovTech Challenge**, an international competition aimed at increasing women's engagement in digital governance. This program is a collaboration between multiple international organizations and governments and aims to encourage women to develop and implement digital solutions for public services. The inaugural edition of the challenge saw participation from 149 women across 49 countries, demonstrating strong interest and engagement. The next round of applications remains open until March of the following year, providing an opportunity for aspiring participants to contribute to GovTech innovation. This initiative aligns with broader digital transformation goals, fostering an inclusive approach to government technology development while equipping women with the skills and recognition needed to lead in the public sector. Both initiatives reflect ongoing commitments to ensuring that women have greater access to professional growth opportunities in the digital and cybersecurity industries.

#### 6.4. ROUNDTABLE THREE: P2C Matchmaking Roundtable on Fostering Partnerships for Development

<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	Moderator: <b>Ms Viktoriia Omelianenko</b> , Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe
	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>H.E. Katarina Tomasevic</b>, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Serbia</li> <li>– <b>Mr George Michaelides</b>, Commissioner of Communications, Cyprus</li> <li>– <b>Ms Beatrice Covassi</b>, Senior Expert, Policy Outreach and International Affairs, DG Connect, European Commission</li> <li>– <b>Ms Fiona McCluney</b>, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Albania</li> <li>– <b>Ms Pranvera Kastrati</b>, i.a. Head of Programme Department, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)</li> <li>– <b>Ms Mathilde Maury</b>, Director, Policy and Government Affairs Global Policy and International Affairs, Nokia, Finland</li> <li>– <b>Ms Natalia Vicente</b>, Vice President for Public Affairs, Global Satellite Operator's Association (GSOA), Brussels</li> <li>– <b>Ms Maria Ylenia Farrugia</b>, Data Innovation and Governance Manager, Malta</li> </ul>

The third roundtable provided a platform for collaboration and strategic partnerships for development across Europe. The session aimed to align resources with real-world needs and highlighted innovative

approaches to building sustainable, high-value partnerships. It sought to support initiatives that advance the region's skills development agenda, digital transformation, and regional growth.

The session was moderated by **Ms Viktoriia Omelianenko**, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe, where panelists shared their insights on the implementation of the Partner2Connect (P2C) initiatives. The main highlights of the discussions included:

- The panel discussion focused on fostering partnerships for digital development, bringing together representatives from various sectors to discuss strategies for collaboration and innovation. Participants emphasized the importance of inclusive partnerships between governments, regulatory bodies, private sector companies, and international organizations to bridge the digital divide, promote cybersecurity, and ensure sustainable digital transformation. It was highlighted that while technological advancements have improved connectivity, disparities remain, particularly in rural and underserved areas. To address these challenges, speakers underscored the need for legislative frameworks that are adaptable to rapid technological change, ensuring fair competition, data privacy, and security.
- A significant aspect of the discussion revolved around the role of regulatory cooperation and regional harmonization in advancing digital policies. One speaker detailed efforts to align national regulations with European standards, including the adoption of new laws and the implementation of projects to expand digital infrastructure. Collaboration with the European Commission and neighboring countries was cited as a key driver in ensuring policy coherence and leveraging expertise across borders. Additionally, the importance of public-private partnerships was emphasized, particularly in the development of digital skills and capacity-building programs to equip citizens with the necessary tools to engage in the digital economy.
- The conversation also addressed the role of cybersecurity in digital transformation. It was noted that small countries often face challenges in securing the necessary resources and expertise to develop robust cybersecurity frameworks. International collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and participation in joint cybersecurity initiatives were identified as essential mechanisms for strengthening national security measures. Furthermore, speakers emphasized the importance of gender inclusion in digital and cybersecurity sectors, pointing out that women remain underrepresented in key areas such as ICT and cybersecurity. Efforts to encourage women's participation, including mentorship programs and initiatives to improve access to STEM education, were highlighted as critical to fostering diversity in the field.
- Another key topic was the expansion of digital infrastructure, with the private sector playing a pivotal role in advancing connectivity solutions. Representatives from telecommunications companies discussed the deployment of broadband networks, 5G technology, and smart city initiatives aimed at improving efficiency and sustainability. The integration of satellite technology was also identified as a crucial component in reaching remote and underserved communities, particularly in rural areas where terrestrial infrastructure is limited. Speakers emphasized the need for innovative financing models and shared risk investment strategies to ensure that connectivity projects are both sustainable and scalable.

The session concluded with the signing of a letter of engagement between ITU and Andorra, reaffirming commitments to child online protection. This commitment aims to strengthen national capabilities in safeguarding children in digital spaces through policy development, awareness campaigns, and stakeholder engagement. The collaboration underscores the broader theme of the discussion that digital transformation requires sustained partnerships, long-term commitments, and coordinated action across sectors. The event served as a platform to reinforce the importance of cooperation in achieving digital inclusion and security on a global scale.

## 6.5. ROUNDTABLE FOUR: Roundtable on the Implementation of ITU Regional Initiatives for Europe

<b>16:00 – 17:30</b>	Moderator: <b>Ms Valentina Stadnic</b> , Programme Officer, ITU Office for Europe
	Presentation of the Implementation of RIs by <b>Mr Jaroslaw Ponder</b> Head of the ITU Office for Europe
	Panelists: – <b>Ms Inga Rimkevičienė</b> , Chair of the Com ITU CEPT Project Team for ITU-D – <b>Mr Nabil Gangi</b> , FAO Deputy Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia – <b>Ms Alessandra Molz</b> , Skills and Employability Specialist, ILO – <b>Mr Boris Radanovic</b> , Head of Engagement and Partnerships, Safe Internet Center, UK – <b>Ms Madalina Clapon</b> , European Vice Chair of the ITU-D Study Group 2, Expert at ANCOM, Romania

The session on the Implementation of ITU Regional Initiatives focused on the implementation of the Regional Initiatives for Europe as adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 which are namely:

- **EUR1:** Digital infrastructure development
- **EUR2:** Digital transformation for resilience
- **EUR3:** Digital inclusion and skills development
- **EUR4:** Trust and confidence in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technologies
- **EUR5:** Digital innovation ecosystems

The fourth roundtable focused on the implementation of ITU's Regional Initiatives for Europe, highlighting achievements, challenges, and future priorities as the region prepares for the upcoming WTDC-25. The session reflected on progress in connectivity, digital transformation, inclusion, cybersecurity, and innovation, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts between governments, private sector stakeholders, and international organizations. The key highlights of the panel discussion included:

- It was noted that over the past three years, significant advancements have been made through ITU's Regional Initiatives, covering 46 countries, including EU and non-EU states. Participants underscored the critical role of digital transformation in bridging technological gaps, reinforcing regulatory frameworks, and fostering innovation. Specific progress included increased cooperation with regulators, enhanced technical assistance, and the expansion of platforms such as the 5G Techritory initiative. Notably, ITU signed two memoranda of understanding to enhance collaboration with key regulatory bodies, further strengthening its role in digital policy alignment.
- The discussion also emphasized the importance of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. Several projects were highlighted, such as Albania's mapping system development, Montenegro's digital transformation initiatives, and joint efforts with the European Commission to expand digital skills and connectivity. In addition, ITU's collaboration with multiple stakeholders led to tangible outcomes, including cybersecurity drills, early warning system development, and digital skills assessments.

- The session acknowledged the critical need to support Ukraine, detailing ongoing efforts to assess broadband and broadcasting infrastructure damage while securing financial and logistical support from partners. Despite setbacks caused by ongoing destruction, work was expected to resume, with several countries offering financial contributions and expertise.
- Another key discussion point was the importance of digital inclusion, particularly in relation to accessibility, digital literacy, and gender equality. ITU's continued engagement with women and youth in technology was praised, with increased participation in study groups and training programs. The Network of Women and Generation Connect initiatives were cited as successful models in fostering engagement and leadership opportunities.
- Cybersecurity remains a major concern, with ITU's role in facilitating regional cyber drills, strengthening national frameworks, and supporting child online protection initiatives. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies and educational institutions was emphasized as essential to addressing emerging threats, particularly concerning AI-generated risks and digital safety for vulnerable populations.
- Looking forward, the panelists discussed strategies for shaping future regional initiatives, stressing the need for continued cooperation, resource mobilization, and policy harmonization. Participants agreed on the importance of integrating AI-driven solutions while ensuring digital transformation remains inclusive and secure. The role of ITU-D Study Groups in shaping regulatory frameworks and policy recommendations was reaffirmed, with a call for greater involvement from all stakeholders to maintain Europe's leadership in digital innovation.
- In conclusion, the session underscored the necessity of sustained engagement and long-term commitment from all parties involved. The upcoming regional meetings will serve as a platform to refine priorities and develop concrete action plans, ensuring that Europe continues to lead in digital transformation while fostering international cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Following the insightful interventions by the panelists, the session transitioned to a presentation by **Mr Mohamed Ba**, Head of Digital Innovation at BDT, ITU. His presentation addressed the ITU Regional Initiatives for 2023-2025, emphasizing the Regional Initiative (RI) Accelerator as a mechanism designed to support the delivery and shaping of regional initiatives by engaging stakeholders and co-creating project concepts.

The presentation detailed the process of accelerating regional initiatives, the assumptions underpinning the RI Experimentation, and the significant milestones that included the endorsement of the RI Accelerator, the engagement of ITU Acceleration Centres, and the development of RI projects. The presentation provided insights on trends research, case studies, and the co-creation process intended to catalyze project activation.

The session concluded with the signing of a UN2UN agreement between ITU and ILO, aimed at advancing digital literacy for adults aged 45-65 in rural areas, with a specific focus on low-educated populations, women, and disadvantaged groups. This initiative, implemented in collaboration with the ILO, will first be deployed in Moldova, where a common assessment of digital literacy will be conducted among targeted communities. The project is expected to play a crucial role in bridging digital gaps and ensuring broader participation in the digital economy.

The signing ceremony underscored ITU's commitment to fostering inclusive digital development and reinforcing international partnerships to drive meaningful change. The initiative aligns with broader efforts to enhance digital skills, promote accessibility, and support socio-economic growth in underserved populations. The event closed with an acknowledgment of the collective resilience and dedication of all stakeholders, reinforcing the importance of continued collaboration in shaping Europe's digital future.

## 6.6. GENERATION CONNECT EVENT: Intergenerational dialogue on challenges and opportunities in the field of digital development in Europe

<b>17:30 – 18:00</b>	Moderator: <b>Ms Viktoriia Omelianenko</b> , Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe
	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Mr Filippo Di Crescenzo</b>, ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy</li> <li>– <b>Ms Selma Kaymakci</b>, ITU Generation Connect Europe Youth Envoy</li> <li>– <b>Ms Annamária Wettstein</b>, Youth Delegate of Hungary to UN</li> </ul> Closing Intervention <b>Dr Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava</b> , Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU

As part of the ITU Regional Development Forum, the Generation Connect Event brought together youth, policymakers, and industry leaders to discuss the future of digital development in the region. The dialogue provided a platform for youth representatives to engage in discussions on digital development in Europe, highlighting both challenges and opportunities.

The discussion centered on key themes, including cybersecurity, digital inclusion, and the impact of artificial intelligence. Youth speakers emphasized the importance of cybersecurity training for young people to ensure safe navigation of the digital landscape. They also stressed the critical need for robust digital infrastructure, as internet access has become essential for democracy, education, and social participation. Digital literacy, particularly in the areas of critical thinking and understanding social media's influence, was highlighted as a necessary component of education.

The inclusion of women and marginalized groups in digital careers and discussions was another focal point. It was noted that many young women are unaware of opportunities in cybersecurity and other technology-related fields, underscoring the need for targeted outreach and awareness. Language accessibility in digital platforms was also identified as a factor in ensuring broader participation.

The conversation on artificial intelligence explored both its potential and its risks. Participants advocated for AI literacy and the inclusion of youth in policymaking processes, as young people are among the most affected by technological advancements. The rapid pace of digital transformation necessitates swift responses, and youth engagement was seen as crucial in ensuring that policies remain relevant and effective.

The panelists addressed the impact of technology on mental health, particularly among younger generations. Research linking increased social media use to declining mental well-being and the importance of regulation to protect youth were highlighted. As an example, the success of phone-free schools in Hungary, which have been implemented to help students regain focus and improve cognitive development was shared with the RDF participants. The discussion emphasized the need for a balance between digital access and mindful technology use, ensuring that young people develop both critical digital skills and the ability to focus deeply on complex tasks.

Throughout the session, speakers reiterated that youth voices must be included in all policy discussions, not just those directly related to youth. They urged decision-makers to recognize young people as active participants in shaping the digital future, rather than passive beneficiaries of policies. The event underlined the importance in achieving an alignment between youth priorities and broader regional objectives, reinforcing the commitment to fostering a more inclusive, sustainable, and digitally empowered future.

The BDT Director emphasized the centrality of the youth agenda in ITU's work, highlighting that young people should be the architects of their own digital future. He recognized the vast opportunities that the digital world offers across business, society, and entertainment and encouraged youth to freely express their perspectives. Drawing an analogy to diplomatic envoys, he affirmed that youth representatives serve as messengers of their generation's aspirations and concerns, reinforcing the importance of their voices in shaping policies.

Reflecting on global youth engagement, he acknowledged contributions from various regions, including Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Americas, praising their enthusiasm and innovative thinking. He extended an invitation to young people to participate in the upcoming ITU Youth Summit in Cuba, urging country representatives to support their participation. He expressed hope that some national administrations would incorporate youth perspectives into their official contributions to the upcoming WTDC.

He reiterated ITU's commitment to fostering youth engagement and announced a dedicated youth celebration event on November 16 in Baku, one day prior to the WTDC, underscoring the ITU's long-term vision for empowering young people in digital transformation. His remarks reflected a strong belief in youth-led innovation, intergenerational learning, and international collaboration as key drivers of digital progress.

## 7 Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony of the Regional Development Forum was marked by reflections on the significant outcomes achieved throughout the event.

**Dr. Péter Vári**, Deputy Director-General, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority of Hungary and Chair of the RDF delivered closing remarks reflecting on the challenges of identifying and achieving common goals in a rapidly evolving technological and societal landscape. He expressed his gratitude to the ITU for its support and commitment to advancing digital development, acknowledging the valuable best practices and innovative technological solutions shared during the Forum. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that these advancements remain aligned with ITU's core values and remain accessible to all, regardless of location.

He highlighted the significance of the event, noting that it was a privilege for his country — one of ITU's founding members 160 years ago — to host such a gathering. He acknowledged the productive discussions and agreements signed during the Forum, commending the active involvement of participants and the dedication of the ITU team and local organizers in ensuring the event's success.

As the Forum concluded, he encouraged ITU to continue driving forward its initiatives and wished all participants strength in achieving their goals, underscoring the importance of continued collaboration.

In his closing remarks, **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, BDT Director, delivered a certificate of recognition to the RDF Chair and followed by his closing remarks. He expressed gratitude to the Hungarian administration for the commitment to hosting and organizing the event, acknowledging the significant resources required to make such a forum successful. He noted that the Forum brought together representatives from member states, sector members, academia, and private industry, reinforcing the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in digital development.

He emphasized the growing engagement of the private sector in ITU's development sector, with over 40 new industry members joining since last year. He underlined the importance of fostering an environment where industry players can thrive, recognizing their role in driving digital transformation. He also highlighted the significance of ITU's data-driven approach, urging participation in expert groups on household statistics and telecommunications indicators, which contribute to globally recognized methodologies and help assess Europe's leadership in infrastructure deployment and gender parity.

Reflecting on Europe's role in global digital progress, he praised the region's commitment to harmonization, policy alignment, and support for neighboring and developing regions. He also commended the matchmaking efforts within the Forum, ensuring that pledges and commitments translate into tangible actions that improve lives.

He recognized the European Commission's contributions to broadband mapping, open-source initiatives, and capacity building, emphasizing that ITU remains committed to delivering impactful projects with transparency and accountability. To this end, he introduced a structured reporting mechanism to ensure responsible use of funds and continuous evaluation of project progress, inviting feedback to enhance efficiency.

He announced that the Regional Development Forum report would be submitted to the Regional Preparatory Meeting as an information document and available online for comments over the next ten days before being finalized. He encouraged participants to engage in upcoming interregional coordination meetings and the TDAG in May to align outcomes across regions. He thanked all attendees for their dedication and urged them to continue collaborating toward a more connected and inclusive digital future.

The ceremony concluded with an invitation to a reception hosted by the ITU-D Sector Member, MetalCom, Hungary.

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