

BiH Dayton Project



Bosnia and Herzegovina is joining the EU Digital Europe Programme – EU Delegation

 June 5, 2024

The EU Delegation issued a [press release](#) announcing that BiH has joined the EU Digital Europe Programme. The full text of the release is below.

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed an agreement for joining the EU Digital Europe Programme, which constitutes an important step towards the improvement of working and development conditions of SMEs in the field of digitalisation. The agreement will enable legal and natural persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina to apply for grants provided by the European Union in the field of digitalisation under the same conditions as applicants throughout Europe.

The Digital Europe Programme disposes of a budget of 7.5 billion EUR for a period 2021 – 2027 and aims to strengthen the infrastructure and capacities in key areas such as supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and digital

skills.

The Head of EU Delegation and EU Special Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Johann Sattler, said that Digital Europe represents the EU's ambitious vision for a future, where every citizen, every business and public services in Europe can reap the benefits of digital technologies. "Today's signing of the agreement for joining the Digital Europe Programme provides a significant opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance its digital transformation in almost all areas of the economy and society, including digitalisation of public services. I am glad that Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a country whose future is in the EU, will participate in the Programme that will stimulate research and innovation, which are essential for utilising highly sophisticated technologies and skills, such as artificial intelligence and high-performance computing. This is the only way to compete successfully in global markets. The digital innovation hubs piloted in Bosnia and Herzegovina thanks to EU support are a good example of helping small and medium-sized enterprises how to proceed with digital transformation. The EU remains committed to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina's digital journey and will continue to work with the authorities to ensure that the country benefits fully from the Digital Europe Programme, as well as other EU funding opportunities", said Ambassador Sattler.

The agreement was signed by the Commissioner for the Internal Market of the EU, Thierry Breton, on behalf of the EU, and during today's event, the agreement was signed by the Minister of Communications and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Edin Forto, on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The agreement will enter into force retroactively as of January 1, 2024.

"We are catching up with the region. We are putting the European funds at the disposal of companies, universities, institutes and public institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Joining the Digital Europe Programme will therefore significantly contribute to common goals, values and strong links between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union in the field of digital technologies. Small and medium-sized enterprises will particularly benefit from this", stated Minister Forto.

The EU is committed to supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina with its digital transition, including through projects such as EU4DigitalSME, which was presented today at Europe House. EU4DigitalSME is co-funded by the European Union with an amount of 5 million EUR and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany with an amount of 1.1 million EUR and is implemented by GIZ. EU4DigitalSME and the project of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) entitled "Go Digital in Bosnia and Herzegovina" are part of the programme EU4SMEs for the digital transformation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

An important achievement of the project EU4DigitalSME is the contribution to the digital ecosystem that it makes by improving policies and encouraging cooperation between the public and private sector. The establishment of four digital innovation hubs (DIHs) is a remarkable accomplishment. These hubs constitute a key step towards digital transformation and serve as critical resource centres that provide SMEs with the necessary support and resources in a digital age.

"We are proud of the fact that we were the hosts of the signing ceremony of this important partnership that we have been extensively preparing for. The mission of DIHs is to support the digital development of SMEs and enable their presence in the local and international markets. Training on digitalisation-related topics was provided for almost 700 SMEs and 130 employees at public institutions. Twelve new international cooperation partnerships were established in the field of research and development. Two digital transformation centres were founded for the purpose of continuing the provision of services to companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Support was also provided for the establishment of a digital identity/e-wallet platform. This platform is extremely important for the digitalisation process of a country", said Eva Näher, GIZ Programme Manager in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EU4DigitalSME project that has been ongoing for several years has facilitated a direct cooperation between 70 SMEs and research institutions. 70 innovation vouchers for the improvement of business operations and products of SMEs were distributed in cooperation with the INTERA technology park. Fourteen innovative activities involving SMEs and research organisations focusing on innovation were implemented thanks to the support provided for the development of research and cooperation in the Western Balkans.

During the event, representatives of DIHs established in the framework of the project and other panelists, including the consultants from FundingBox, discussed the advantages and modalities for the most efficient participation in the Digital Europe Programme for the purpose of applying for grants from EU funds in the field of digitalisation.

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BIH DAYTON PROJECT

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