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BSB Dialogue
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Practical Outline

THE EU DIGITAL DECADE POLICY PROGRAMME 2030

*Opportunities for the Black Sea Innovation
Ecosystem*

**Black Sea Innovation Platform
DialogueInnoHub**

www.dialogueinnohub.com

Project BSB 1104

DIALOGUE: Dialogue for innovation and better governance"
co-funded by the INTERREG NEXT Black Sea Basin programme



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Introduction

Digital transformation is a key driver of competitiveness, innovation, and societal development. The **EU Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030** provides a coordinated strategy to guide Europe's transformation.

For countries and stakeholders within the Black Sea Basin, strengthening digital capacities represents a major opportunity to improve innovation ecosystems, increase cooperation between public authorities, academia and businesses, and support sustainable economic growth.

This practical outline explains the Digital Decade framework, its main priorities and targets, and highlights concrete opportunities for organisations in the Black Sea region to engage with EU digital initiatives and funding programmes.

How this outline matters to the quadruple helix actors

Public authorities & regional agencies

Use Digital Decade targets to benchmark local digital public-service delivery and identify infrastructure and skills gaps to prioritise.

Businesses & SMEs

Access funding and support to adopt AI, cloud and data tools, improve competitiveness and reach new digital markets.

Academia & research institutions

Lead digital-skills, AI and cybersecurity training initiatives and contribute to regional digital innovation hubs.

Civil society & NGOs

Champion digital inclusion and literacy programmes that help close the digital divide across the region.

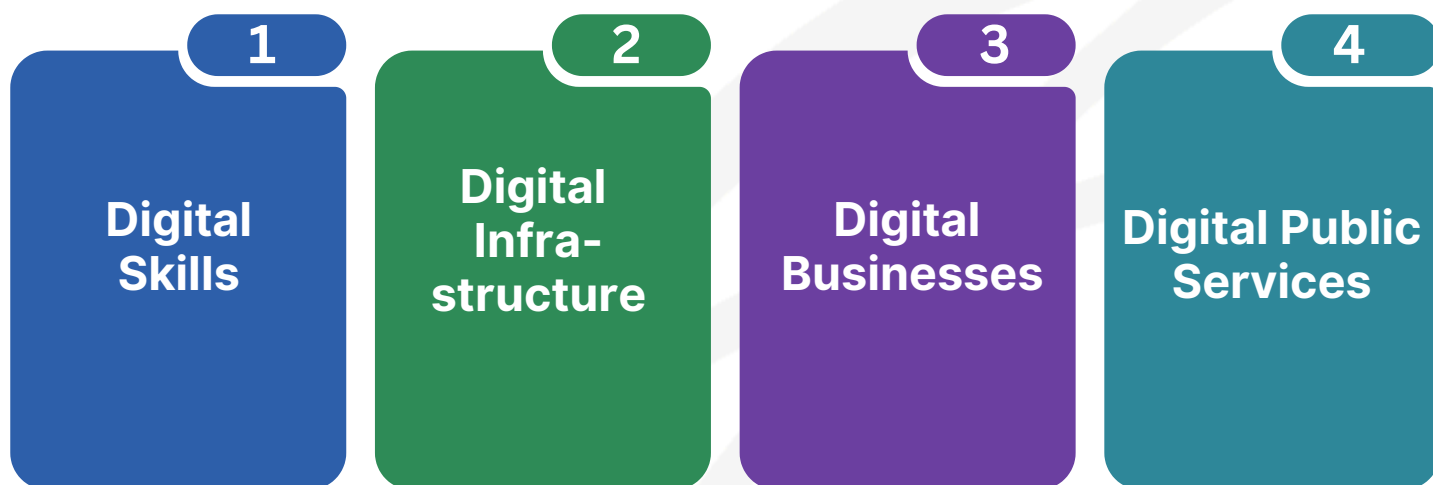


The EU Digital Decade Framework

The **Digital Decade Policy Programme** is a strategic initiative that outlines a vision for Europe's digital transformation until 2030, sets out concrete targets and objectives and provides a governance framework and mechanisms for collaboration, both between the Commission and Member States and among Member States.

It aims to foster a human-centric, sustainable, and inclusive digital society, ensuring all citizens and businesses benefit from digital advancements.

The strategy focuses on four interconnected pillars:



These pillars aim to strengthen Europe's digital sovereignty, enhance innovation capacity and ensure that digital technologies benefit citizens, businesses and public institutions.

Digital Decade 2030 Key Targets

The Digital Decade Programme establishes measurable targets to be achieved by 2030.

Digital Skills

- 80% of citizens with basic digital skills
- 20 million ICT specialists in the EU

Digital Infrastructure

- Gigabit connectivity for all households
- 5G coverage in all populated areas
- Edge & high-performance computing deployed

Digital Businesses

- 75% of companies using cloud, big data, or AI
- More scale-ups and innovative SMEs

Digital Public Services

- 100% online availability of key public services
- Digital identity for all citizens
- Full access to electronic health records

These targets provide a roadmap for European digital development and guide policy actions and funding programmes.



The Four Pillars of the Digital Decade

4.1 Digital Skills

Digital skills are essential for enabling individuals and organisations to participate fully in the digital economy.

Key priorities include:

- improving digital literacy among citizens
- increasing the number of ICT professionals
- promoting digital education and training
- strengthening digital competences in public administration.

The EU Regional Innovation Scoreboard reveals that the level of digital skills in the Black Sea region, and in particular for Bulgaria, Romania, and Türkiye, is comparatively low, which hampers innovation performance. Hence, for that region, initiatives such as digital training programmes, innovation labs, STEM education, and digital entrepreneurship programmes can contribute to closing the digital skills gap and improving the innovation ecosystem in general.

4.2 Digital Infrastructure

Advanced digital infrastructure is the backbone of digital transformation.

The EU aims to ensure:

- high-speed broadband connectivity
- advanced data processing infrastructure
- secure cloud services
- resilient digital networks.

The Black Sea region continues to face a notable digital infrastructure gap relative to other European regions, limiting its digital transformation potential. Improved digital infrastructure can help close this gap by supporting smart city initiatives, digital government services, innovation ecosystems and technology start-ups, and cross-border digital cooperation.



4.3 Digital Transformation of Businesses

Digital technologies are transforming how businesses operate, innovate and compete globally.

Key technologies promoted by the Digital Decade include:

- artificial intelligence
- cloud computing
- big data analytics
- digital platforms and services.

SMEs in the Black Sea region continue to lag behind their European counterparts in digital technology adoption, which constrains their growth potential. Closing this gap matters, as adopting digital technologies can lead to increased productivity, improved competitiveness, access to international markets, and the development of innovative products and services.

Business support organisations, clusters and innovation hubs play a crucial role in facilitating this transformation.

4.4 Digital Public Services

The digitalisation of public administration improves efficiency, transparency and accessibility.

Key priorities include:

- digital public services accessible online
- interoperable government systems
- digital identity for citizens
- improved digital interaction between institutions and businesses.

Trust in public institutions remains a key challenge in the Black Sea Region, so strengthening digital public services can play an important role in improving governance and increasing trust between institutions and citizens.



How Stakeholders Can Engage

The Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 establishes a formal monitoring and cooperation mechanism between the European Commission and Member States to track progress towards its measurable 2030 targets, anchored by annual reporting and national Digital Decade strategic roadmaps. Each Member State must submit a national roadmap setting out its planned, adopted and implemented policies, measures and actions. These roadmaps are subject to public consultation, giving interested stakeholders a direct opportunity to get involved in the design and setting of targets by participating in national roadmap consultations. **The DIALOGUE Practical Outlines of the mechanisms through which the citizens can engage in the design and future implementation of programs or policies** sets out the practical steps of how this can be done.

Beyond setting targets, the Programme channels a wide range of existing EU funding instruments towards digital transformation — including the European Regional Development Fund, the Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe, and the Connecting Europe Facility. This gives organisations multiple funding routes to pursue their own digital priorities while simultaneously contributing to the EU's shared 2030 targets.

To support large-scale, cross-border digital initiatives, the Programme also introduced Multi-Country Projects, which require participation from at least three Member States and can be implemented through structures such as European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs). These multi-country projects, together with regional bottom-up partnerships, depend on engagement from a broad range of stakeholders — public authorities, businesses, research institutions and civil society organisations. None of these actors can close the region's digital gaps alone; sustainable progress depends on partnership and collaboration, and on exchanging know-how and innovation across sectors and borders.



Funding Opportunities Supporting the Digital Decade

Several European programmes are providing funding to support the achievement of the Programme's objectives:

01

DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

Focuses on deployment of advanced digital technologies including:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Cybersecurity
- High-performance computing
- Advanced digital skills.

[www://](#)**02**

HORIZON EUROPE

The EU's main research and innovation programme supports projects in:

- digital technologies
- smart industry
- artificial intelligence
- data-driven innovation.

[www://](#)**03**

INTERREG & CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

Support regional cooperation initiatives including:

- digital public services
- smart city solutions
- innovation ecosystems.

[www://](#)

Examples of Digital Innovation Projects Relevant to the Black Sea Region

Several types of initiatives illustrate how Digital Decade priorities can be implemented in the region.

Example 1 – Digital Innovation Hubs

Regional digital innovation hubs provide SMEs with access to:

- digital technology testing
- expert advice
- training and skills development.
- Such hubs can accelerate digital transformation among local businesses.

Example 2 – Smart City Solutions

Cities in the region can implement smart technologies such as:

- intelligent traffic management systems
- digital public services platforms
- smart energy management.
- These initiatives improve urban sustainability and quality of life.



Example 3 – Digital Skills and Education Programs

Universities and training institutions can develop programmes focused on:

- artificial intelligence
- cybersecurity
- data science
- digital entrepreneurship.
- These programmes contribute to building a digitally skilled workforce.



Where to Start from?

01**EXPLORE**

Learn the Digital Decade's priorities and pinpoint the challenge your organisation wants to address – **this outline is your starting point.**

02**TRACK**

Monitor the EU Funding & Tenders Portal and DialogueInnoHub Black Sea Innovation Platform for updates for open calls that match your idea. Join Info days or dedicated webinars for more information and getting answers on your questions.

03**CONNECT**

Use the Black Sea Innovation Platform -DialogueInnoHub to find partners across the region and build your consortium.

04**PREPARE**

Join Dialogue training and mentoring sessions to strengthen your proposal before you submit.

05**APPLY & SHARE**

Submit your proposal – and once funded, share your results through BSIP so others in the region can build on your progress.



Get in Touch

The Practical Outline is developed in the framework of the BSB 1104 DIALOGUE project (Dialogue for innovation and better governance), which is co-funded by the INTERREG NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme.

For questions about this guide, partnership opportunities or support navigating Digital Decade-aligned funding, contact the Black Sea Innovation Platform - DialogueInnoHub.

- Website: www.dialogueinnohub.com
- Email: info@dialogueinnohub.com
- EU Funding & Tenders Portal: ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders

