

Press release: Foreign Secretary to announce £10 million commitment to build digital skills in the Western Balkans

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson will today (9 July) announce that the UK will commit £10 million to help build digital skills and employment prospects for young people in the Western Balkans.

The Foreign Secretary will make the announcement at the first day of the Western Balkans Summit, joined by European and Western Balkans Foreign Ministers.

The funding will see the British Council provide training to children in over 4,500 schools, to bolster digital literacy and core skills across the region. By providing access to a digital education, this funding will help foster the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs, both in the Western Balkans and UK.

The Foreign Secretary will reiterate the UK's commitment to the Western Balkans by announcing an additional £1 million to help the region address difficult legacy issues of the past, this includes working to find and identify the 12,000 victims still missing from the conflicts of the 1990s.

Speaking ahead of the Summit, the Foreign Secretary said:

This new funding demonstrates the UK's enduring commitment to the Western Balkans region.

We are working internationally to provide young people, particularly young women, with the digital skills necessary to participate in the future economy and fulfil their potential.

Importantly it also shows our desire to help the region overcome some of the most difficult chapters in their history and pave the way to an even more prosperous future.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- This £10 million project will run over three years. It expands the British Council 21st Century Schools pilot, enabling primary school age children to develop critical thinking, problem-solving and digital literacy skills. It will run in each of the six Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia – reaching 4,500 primary schools and up to one million children.

It will help foster the next generation of digital innovators and entrepreneurs by providing computer programming and coding training.

- The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It works with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year it reached over 65 million people directly and 731 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. It makes a positive contribution to the countries it works with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 it is a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. It receives 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. britishcouncil.org

Further information