

Serbia: EIB supports digitalisation of schools with €65 million



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- Modern IT equipment and high-speed internet for primary and secondary schools across Serbia.
- 50 000 teachers to improve their digital skills and 700 new jobs to be created.
- Investment enables equal and inclusive access to digital education for all and uninterrupted e-teaching during crisis situations such as COVID-19.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) will invest €65 million in the modernisation of primary and secondary schools in Serbia to provide new digital equipment, connectivity, and capacity building training for 50 000 school teachers. The investment from the EU bank will support Serbia's national education strategy, upgrade digital capacities in Serbian schools and contribute to economic and productivity growth, youth employability and the advancement of the country's innovative capacity.

Schools across Serbia will benefit from modern computer classroom equipment and wireless local area networks, and 50 000 teachers will be trained to improve their digital skills. The project is expected to create up to 700 new jobs.

This investment is part of the EIB's Economic Resilience Initiative and will ensure equal and inclusive access to digital education for pupils in Serbia, creating equal education opportunities in rural and urban areas, and empowering young people with digital skills to prepare them for a competitive labour market.

Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova, responsible for the EIB's activities in Serbia, said: "Modern, effective education and digital literacy creates new opportunities in life for young people, and makes them competitive on the modern job markets. A strong digital economy is vital for innovation, growth, jobs and competitiveness. Today, this is one of the key enablers of growth and prosperity in countries around the world. Finally, schools in advanced phases of digitalisation have proven more efficient in challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU bank is pleased to be able to contribute to a more resilient Serbia, capable of operating efficiently even in the most difficult of times. The European Investment Bank looks forward to continuing its support for Serbia and its transition into a digital, sustainable and innovative economy."

The Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications of the Republic of Serbia Tatjana Matic stated: "The project that aims to digitize the education system is a priority for the Government of Serbia. Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications and the Ministry of education, science and technology development of the Republic of Serbia started the "Connected Schools" Project implementation in 2019. This EIB investment will allow major benefits of the project to reach all schools in Serbia. MoTTT will be able to benefit from it. The Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications is advancing with the construction of a standardised and sustainable wireless local area network in all schools and the comprehensive improvement of national academic network communication infrastructure, while the Ministry of Education is providing digital equipment in a synchronised manner and thus creating the infrastructure base for the development of the digitalised classrooms, teaching and learning process. Providing modern IT equipment and high-speed internet, as well as the improving teachers' digital skills will further contribute to digital education, which is necessary pillar of the cotemporary, sustainable and strong society, especially in the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will contribute to bridging the digital divide, raising digital literacy and competitiveness in the digital age, and expand the base for IT industry growth. All young people must be given an equal chance to gain competencies that will enable them to make the same choices as their peers in developed digital economies."

Sem Fabrizi, EU Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, said: "COVID-19 has obliged the whole world to go digital. Mastering digital competence has become more than ever crucial for learning, work and active participation in society, as well as for acquiring other key competencies such as communication, science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and languages. This comprehensive EIB investment in digital school infrastructure and digital skills of teachers across Serbia comes at a critical time in the modernisation of the Serbian education system. It is an integral part of the European Union's overall efforts that the EU has already made in the

education system in Serbia. With more than €100 million so far, the European gold standards and best practices have been integrated in the Serbian education system, many generations of students will be benefiting and thus creating active citizens of the future.”

The EIB will provide a significant level of technical support in aid of project preparation and implementation. To date, the EIB has invested €50 million in the modernisation of Serbian schools, improving the quality of learning conditions for around 28 000 primary and secondary school children in over 200 education facilities in Serbia. €200 million has been invested in reviving Serbia’s research and development sector, creating a long-term platform for scientific development in all major areas. For more information about this project, please visit the following link:

<https://www.eib.org/en/stories/serbia-digital-education>.

Background information

About the EIB in Serbia:

The EIB has been active in Serbia since [1977](#). Since 2001, we have been providing finance to support key infrastructure projects, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), industry, services and local authorities. To date, 83 projects have been financed and over €6 billion invested in SMEs and in transport, education, healthcare and utility infrastructure. For more information regarding the EIB’s projects in Serbia, please refer to:

<https://www.eib.org/en/projects/regions/enlargement/the-western-balkans/serbia/index.htm>

About the EIB in the Balkans:

The EIB is one of the leading international financiers in the Western Balkans. Since 2007, the Bank has financed projects totalling almost €8 billion in the region. Alongside its continued support for the reconstruction and upgrade of public infrastructure, since 2010 the EIB has expanded into many new areas, such as healthcare, research and development, education and SMEs.

For detailed information on the EIB’s activities in the Western Balkans, please visit the following link:

www.eib.org/en/publications/the-eib-in-the-western-balkans

About Team Europe and the COVID-19 response in the Western Balkans:

As part of the #TeamEurope strategy, the EU’s global response to COVID-19, the EIB Group has rapidly mobilised €5.2 billion outside the EU, accelerating financing and targeted technical assistance. For the Western Balkan countries, the EIB has prepared an immediate support package of €1.7 billion, primarily for SMEs and the healthcare sector. The total EU financial support package for the Western Balkans amounts to more than €3.3 billion. For more information:

www.eib.org/en/press/all/2020-111-eib-group-to-contribute-eur1-7-billion-to-t

[he-eu-s-covid-19-response-package-for-the-western-balkans](#)