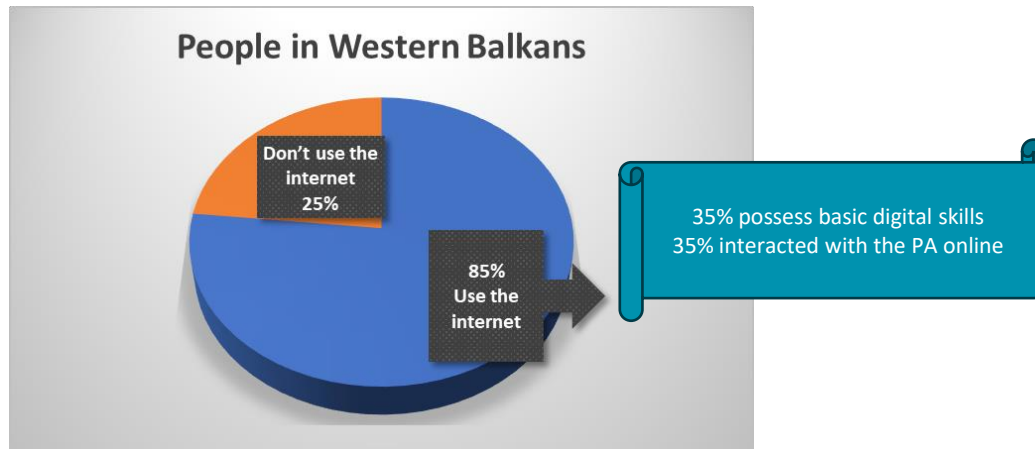




Digital Transformation in Western Balkans
Maja Handjiska – Trendafilova, ReSPA Director

Technology and Digitization: Crucial reform levers with yet untapped full potential

- Despite **uneven regional progress**, Western Balkans achieved marked **advancements in service delivery** (digital services);
- Impressive progress in **Albania** with **95% online digital services** (OECD/SIGMA monitoring); **Improved e-government ranking of Serbia in 2022 from the high to the very high EGDI group in Europe** (EGDI Index, UN DESA). In 2021 almost 100% of households in **Kosovo*** were using broadband services, followed by **Montenegro** with 96%;
- **The road to convergence with EU peers: Still long and challenging**



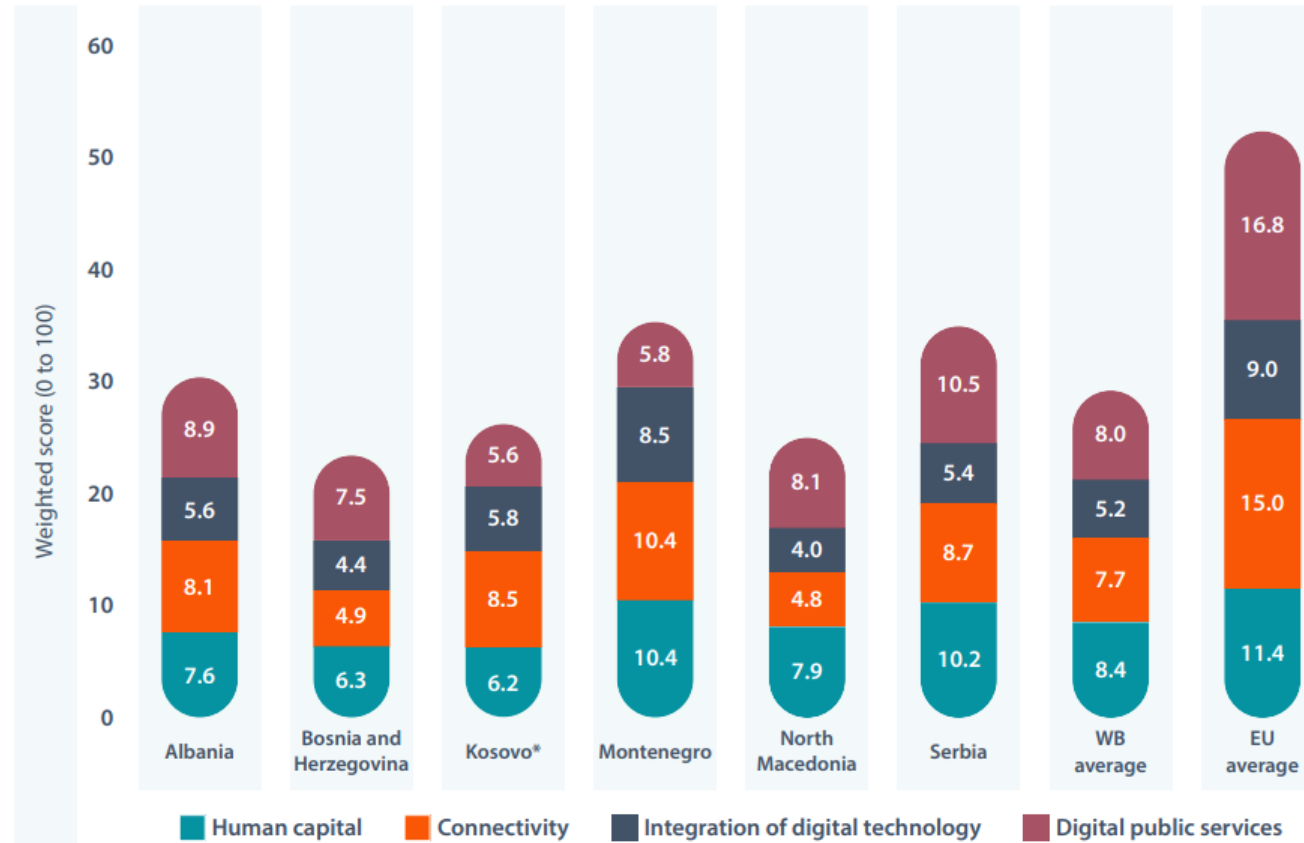
Western Balkans	European Union
35% internet users Interact online with PA	65% internet users Interact online with PA
43% supply of digital public services for citizens	75% supply of digital public services for citizens
59% supply of digital public services for businesses	75% supply digital public services for businesses
42% Open Data maturity	81% Open Data maturity



Political will, strong administrative leadership, commitment, agency, and reform impetus remain crucial for robust and irreversible progress

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and ICJ Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

Western Balkans Region is Scored Below the EU Average in All DESI Dimensions



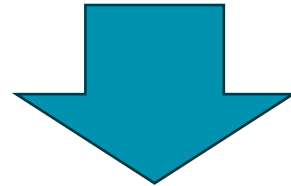
Source: WB DESI Calculation, EU DESI 2022 (EU average)

Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania scored above The Western Balkans average in the overall EU DESI (2022)



Technology Diffusion, Uptake and digital transformation – NOT as a mere end goal in itself

- Technological advancements hold the **potential to drive sustainable development** and create a better future for all. Innovation, global connectivity, healthcare advancements, educational transformation, sustainability, e-governance, data-driven insights, scientific breakthroughs, etc.
- Western Balkans works to integrate into the EU and accelerate its commitment to the SDGs by 2030 ➡ **Embracing innovation and technology** can be a defining factor in the success;
- **Digital transformation**: a tool to enhance economic competitiveness, social inclusion, public services, and administrative efficiency



Technology diffusion, uptake, and digital transformation should achieve the **broader goal** of improving the quality of life, economic stability, and sustainable development in the Western Balkans, rather than being viewed as standalone objectives



Importance of Strategic, Holistic and Adaptive Approach:

Integrating technological solutions into various aspects of governance and service delivery

Challenges abound. They Run Deeper and Are Not JUST Technology-Related. Mindful of fundamentals.

Political commitment to reforms and ownership;
Professionalisation of the public service;
Attractiveness of the public sector;
Lifelong, systematic and sequential learning and capacity building;
Knowledge and peer exchange in the public sector;
Collaborative governance cultures



Digital = Key Priority

Digital-by-default principle, Accelerate digital transformation

Improved efficiency, better citizen services, increased competitiveness, and enhanced overall digital readiness.



Pathways Ahead:

Stimulating public sector innovation through digital technology



Creation of **collaborative ecosystems**; Inclusive technological solutions with **human-centred design**; Agile methodologies; Adaptable regulatory frameworks; **Policy innovation**, Gov-tech pilots, Experimentation & Innovation, Culture destigmatising failures; **Roll out of digital literacy programs**, **Open data** initiatives, **Innovation hubs**, Pilot projects, **User feedback** loops, **Cross-sector integration**, **Inclusive participation**, Risk management, Collaborations and public-private partnerships, **Sandbox** environments, **Lifelong learning** and building digital capacity at all levels, Responsive scaling, and **Ethical considerations**



Building **resilience and responsiveness** in public administration **through technology diffusion and uptake** through strategic, holistic and adaptive approaches (integrating technological solutions into various aspects of governance and service delivery, considering public administration's specific needs and goals).



Need For Concrete Instruments and Actions on the ground:

ReSPA aims to accelerate digitalisation efforts, improve the quality and accessibility of digital services, and harness the power of data for more effective and transparent governance in the Western Balkans, to be an even more relevant partner in our public administrations' organisational, technological, and cultural transformation:

- ✓ **To upskill our most precious asset – our human capital;**
- ✓ **To a change of public service values, mindsets and practices – paired with innovation and digital government;**
- ✓ **To make advancements that meet citizens' and businesses' expectations and deliver growth-enhancing reforms.**

