# Setting the context:
# Digital skills in south-eastern Europe

*Jaroslaw Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe*
*International Telecommunication Union (ITU)*

DIGITAL SKILLS IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL APPROACHES FOSTERING DIGITAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Regional assessment

- Regional assessment conducted in 2020

- Identified national approaches in fostering digital skills development

- 9 assessed countries included Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine

- The assessment examined: Macroeconomic Conditions, Skills Development Policies in the Region, Education, Demand for and Types of Digital Skills, Digital Skills Gaps, ICT Infrastructure

- The executive summary is available on the event webpage here

# Macroeconomic conditions

- In 2019 South-Eastern Europe saw:
  - an average 1.9% real GDP growth
  - an average GDP per capita of $6,000.

- The competitiveness index spider graph for the assessed countries is very similar

- Strengths are seen in the pillars: **health and primary education**, **macroeconomic environment, higher education and training** and **goods market efficiency**

- Debt levels and youth unemployment must be monitored

- Creation of actions and policies on digital skills development will enable young people gain new skills and competencies
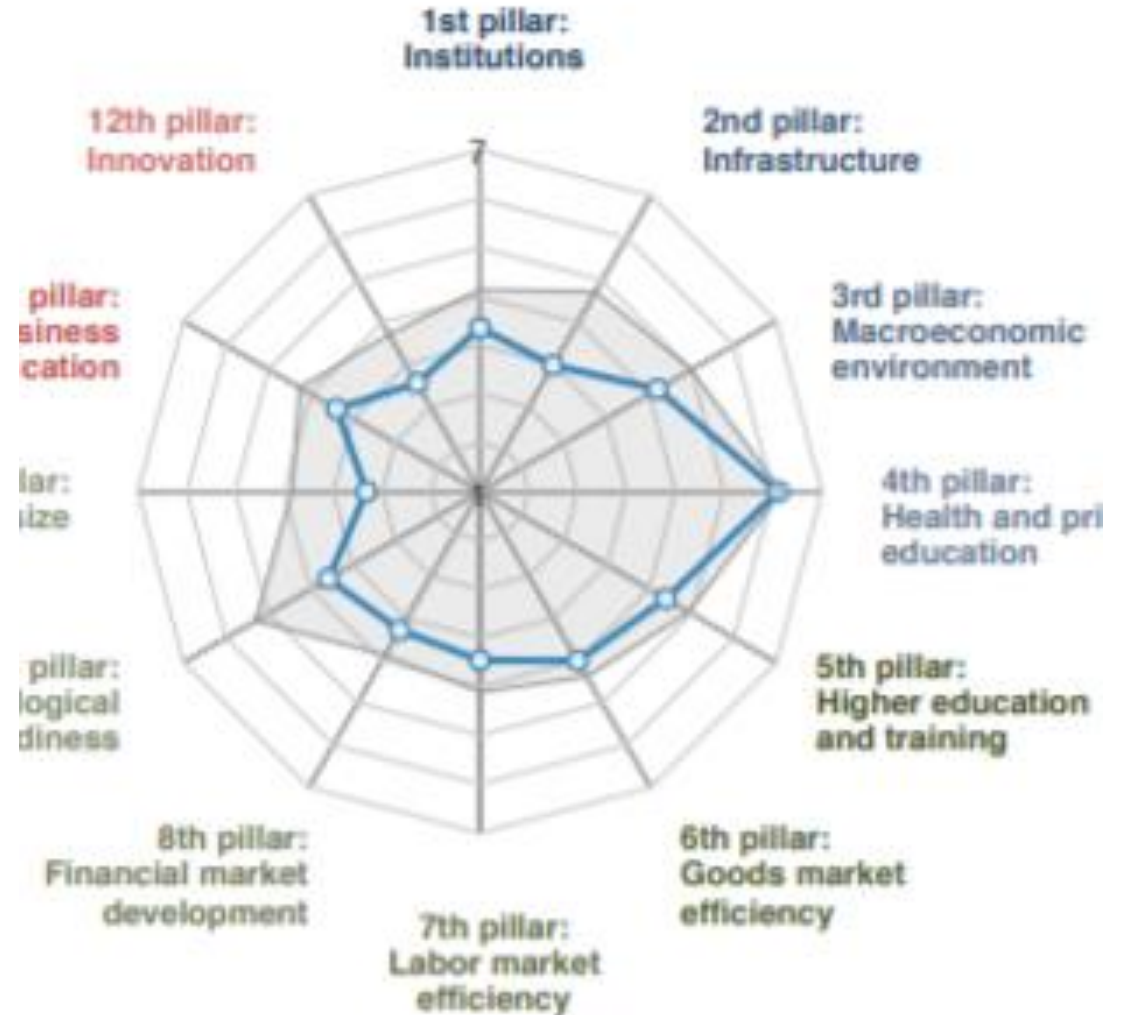
# Skills development policies in the region

- Stand alone skills development policies or part of wider national strategies for ICT and broadband

- Countries have developed their own "Digital" brands, creating wider public awareness

- The Digital Agenda of Europe provided policy domain guidance as countries set their digital agenda strategies

- Digital agendas in the region focused on: Investment in **ICT infrastructure**, Acceleration of digital transformation in the **public sector**, ICT for **education**, Investment in **e-government**, Improvement of **national e-services**, Inclusivity and digital **gender equality,** Leveraging digital skills for **innovation and entrepreneurship**.

- Further digital skills investment needed in digital skills training in the public sector and the basic education sector

# Education

The region is expanding the digitization of education systems with several progressive policy domains and ongoing programs.

- **Albania:** ICT for education is part of the national digital agenda targeting 100% internet access for education, equipping schools, and embedding ICTs into teacher training.

- **Georgia:** Unified strategy of Education and Science emphasizing digital education and the teaching of ICTs being part of the national curriculum.

- **Moldova:** "Digital Moldova" includes programs for digital education in compulsory general and continuing education and the inclusion program "digital skills for all".

- **Turkey:** "2023 Education Vision" document of the Ministry of National Education establishes the development of digital content and skills

# Demand for and Types of Digital Skills

- 15 to 25-year-olds in South-Eastern Europe have **intermediate digital skills**

- **Advanced digital skills** are with university graduates or digital technology sectors workers.

- Urgent areas needing increased skills include: **Teacher training**, **Practical digital literacy** for technical and vocational education, Increased **digitalization in education**.

- Companies should focus on employee **reskilling and upskilling**

- Utilizing workforce planning tools and predictive analytical models is key to plan for **talent acquisition**

# Digital Skills Gaps

- **Increasing** private sector **demand** for intermediate and advanced digital skills

- The **lack** of **qualified labour** in the market creates constraints for business expansion

- Greater inclusiveness and diversity and the need for **digital gender equality**

- Need to increase **teacher capacity** and competencies in new technologies

- Better **alignment** of the education system with the requirements of the labour market

- Need for active **labour market programs**, raising the level of digital skills in priority sectors

- **Certified training** in digital competencies should be provided

- Design, digital skills studios, workshops and laboratories made **available** to the **wider community**

- Public and private sector **investment** in **database**, **knowledge banks** and **information management systems**

# ICT Infrastructure

- South-Eastern Europe **is doing well compared to** the rest of the world on all indicators
- Internet access and high-speed broadband have **scope for growth**
- Further investment in **high-speed internet access** and **promoting greater subscriber numbers** brings positive developments in the digital space in South-Eastern Europe

| Indicator | 9 SEEC | Europe | World |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fixed-telephone subscriptions 100 inhabitants | 19.13 | 31.32 | 16.87 |
| Mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants | 114.28 | 120.83 | 112.05 |
| Active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants | 65.20 | 99.38 | 77.78 |
| 3G coverage (% of population) | 95.97 | 98.65 | 93.46 |
| LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population) | 89.56 | 97.02 | 85.79 |
| Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants | 19.99 | 32.97 | 16.54 |
| Individuals using Internet (%) | 70.68 | 82.19 | 51.98 |
| Est. number of Households with a Computer (%) | 59.51 | 71.82 | 40.44 |
| Est. number of Households with Internet access (%) | 73.94 | 84.94 | 60.72 |

# Thank you

Any questions please contact [eurregion@itu.int](mailto:eurregion@itu.int)