

The Connecting Europe Facility regulation adopted to support connectivity across the EU

The European Parliament has adopted the regulation establishing the next Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) programme, which will support investments in Europe's transport, energy and digital infrastructure networks with a budget of €33.71 billion for the 2021-27 period.



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This week's adoption by the European Parliament, following the Council's adoption on 14 June, finalises the legislative procedure and represents an important contribution to reaching the ambitious targets set out in the European Green Deal and the Digital Decade. The next steps in implementing the CEF programme include the adoption of a work programme by the Commission.

With a budget of 2.07 bn euros (in current prices), the digital part of the CEF, will fund connectivity projects of common EU interest and contribute to deploying Gigabit and 5G networks across the EU. The current pandemic has highlighted the need for better connectivity and accelerated emergent digitalisation trends. Access to fast, reliable and stable connections allows many to turn to teleworking, take their businesses online and stay connected. Connectivity supports access to online education, public services, digital skills and new opportunities. More so, advanced networks, particularly 5G, can contribute to unleashing widespread innovations across sectors including medicine, manufacturing, transport, automotive and energy sectors.

CEF Digital will:

- contribute to the deployment of and access to safe and secure very high capacity digital networks and 5G systems;
- support an increased security, resilience and capacity of the digital backbone networks in the

EU;

- foster the digitalisation of transport and energy networks.

Based on the new CEF Regulation adopted today, the programme will mobilise resources to promote 5G deployment along the main EU transport paths, thus enabling the development of advanced, state of the art, services such as Connected and Automated Mobility. Also, it will support best practices for 5G early adoption in local smart communities, for instance to make services of general interest, such as in health or education, more efficient and closer to citizens.

CEF Digital will furthermore enable the integration of innovative high performance computing and cloud services. Targeted connectivity investments will ensure that state of the art digital capacities are accessible across the EU, as well as connect the EU with strategic international partners, for instance through submarine or satellite connectivity. It will connect high performance computing centres and cloud infrastructures for secure and reliable data sharing, boosting the EU's competitiveness and capacity to tackle complex societal challenges.

Building and upgrading the EU's connectivity infrastructure, including submarine cables, can contribute to connect remote areas and islands, thus providing adequate connectivity to all EU citizens. Connectivity will play a key role in revitalising rural areas with new opportunities to participate in the digital transformation. In fact, a recent public opinion survey shows that more than 90% of surveyed Europeans believe that the attractiveness of rural areas will depend on available connectivity.

The next step is to finalise the first CEF Digital work programme and launch the corresponding calls, expected later this year.

The Connecting Europe Facility Regulation

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