

# Digital Transformation of SMEs in Eastern Partnership Countries (DT4SME)

Strengthen the competitiveness of SMEs in Eastern Partnership countries through digital transformation

## Challenge:

The economies of the Eastern Partnership countries are facing significant challenges, highlighting the urgent need for economic diversification and regional cooperation. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are crucial for sustainable growth and integration into the EU market. However, the potential of digital transformation to boost SME competitiveness is not fully utilised. With digitalisation efforts scattered across various ministries, there is a need for greater coordination and improved policies. Addressing these challenges is essential to fully harness digital opportunities and drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the region.

## Our approach

The project collaborates with the Ministries of Economy in Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, as well as the Ministry of Digital Transformation in Ukraine. These ministries are responsible for developing policies that drive the digital transformation of SMEs in their respective countries.

## Mission

The project's mission is to drive the digital transformation of SMEs across the Eastern Partnership nations. We aim to achieve this by providing businesses with practical solutions, insights, and resources to transition from conventional business approaches to efficient digital models. The project aims to make SMEs more sustainable, resilient, and competitive in an evolving global economy.



Project name	Digital Transformation of SMEs in Eastern Partnership Countries (DT4SME)
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project region	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine
Political partners	<b>Moldova: Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalisation of the Republic of Moldova</b> Armenia: Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia Azerbaijan: Ministry of Economy Georgia: Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development Ukraine: Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine
Duration	March 2023 to February 2027

## Outputs and Activities

### 1. Improved Framework Conditions

Activities: Collaborative actions with ministries and other stakeholders for the implementation of digitalisation strategies and statistical support measures. This involves initiating regional exchange processes and organising study visits.

### 2. Support of Digitalisation Networks

Activities: Technical consulting and support for cooperation projects among relevant actors, and the establishment of a network of Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs).

### 3. SME Capacity Building

Activities: Awareness-raising campaigns, training sessions, and technical support for SMEs in implementing digital solutions.



Moldova, a Meeting Point for Digital Innovation: The #DT4SME event brought together experts from the Eastern Partnership and the EU.

## Mid-Project Outcomes

- More than 600 participants (57% female) have benefited from the project's events and workshops, gaining insights into digitalisation topics at macro, meso, and micro levels.
- Over 100 SMEs across the Eastern Partnership (EaP) have received support in the form of tailored training and mentoring sessions on digitalisation topics, helping them move towards greater competitiveness.
- Fifty-two Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) have been supported with technical consultations on funding opportunities and workshops. As a result, the DIHs have strengthened their organisational capacity to accelerate digital transformation both nationally and across the EaP region. Two Moldovan applicants of DIHs prepared for EU recognition and integration into the EDIH network.
- Five research institutes across the EaP countries have enhanced their methodological expertise in SME research, including innovative data collection techniques, efficient data processing methods, and state-of-the-art statistical analysis.

## Highlights from Moldova

### Strengthening the Digital Innovation Ecosystem

Moldova is undergoing a rapid digital transformation, driven by its growing ICT sector and vibrant SME community. The DT4SME project is supporting the country by strengthening its digital innovation ecosystem in collaboration with government, academia, and sectoral partners. A core focus is empowering Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs), which provide SMEs with crucial access to digital tools, expertise, and tailored services essential for sustainable growth and success in a dynamic global market.

### Digital Innovation Hubs – Progress Toward European Integration

Within DT4SME, Moldova is actively strengthening its Digital Innovation Hub ecosystem. In the first EU call, five hubs were pre-selected, showcasing strong potential for SME digitalisation. Two candidates are preparing to join the official EDIH network, giving Moldovan SMEs access to advanced services and Europe's wider innovation ecosystem. Participation in regional conferences and exchanges further strengthens Moldova's position in the EaP as an emerging contributor to digital innovation.

### OECD Cooperation – Strengthening SME Digitalisation Policies

In collaboration with the OECD, DT4SME fosters regional dialogue and develop policy roadmaps for SME digitalisation. Moldovan stakeholders, including MEDD, ODA, MITP, and research institutes, participate in thematic study visits and international conferences, exchanging experiences with both EU partners and EaP countries. These activities strengthen Moldova's digital ecosystem, improve SME statistics, and align national strategies with European standards, ensuring more effective policymaking and regional cooperation.

### ODA – Strengthening SME Digitalisation and Entrepreneurship

Within DT4SME, cooperation with Moldova's Organisation for the Development of Entrepreneurship (ODA) enhances SME digitalisation and entrepreneurship. Through digital skills training, e-learning in e-commerce, tailored mentoring, and institutional development with IT security solutions, ODA empowers businesses to innovate, streamline operations, and expand internationally, making digital transformation a strategic pillar of Moldova's SME growth.

### Digital Transformation Academy and Grants for SMEs in Moldova

Digital Transformation Academy and Grants for SMEs in Moldova The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Moldova (CCI), within DT4SME, initiated the Digital Transformation Academy, engaging 30 entrepreneurs, including 10 Ukrainian refugees. Participants benefited from training, mentoring, and study visits. In parallel, 12 SMEs received financial support through the Grants Scheme, business their digitalizing processes from e-commerce to agriculture, and boosting innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness across Moldova.



Participants of the Digital Transformation Academy during training sessions

### EDIH Networking and Cybersecurity established between EaP countries

Within DT4SME, EDIH networking and cybersecurity efforts foster cooperation among Eastern Partnership countries. By facilitating knowledge exchange, joint initiatives, and regional collaboration, the project helps SMEs strengthen digital resilience, align with EU best practices, and build partnerships that enhance competitiveness and secure digital growth across the EaP region.



OECD workshop in Chişinău on SME digital transformation Regional Cooperation for a Digital Future: Leaders from 7 countries gathered in Chişinău for the #DT4SME conference.