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Experience of Azerbaijan in broadband internet development and its regional dimension

Given the role of economic, social, and humanitarian aspects, as well as the multiplier effect of broadband internet access infrastructure development, this area has announced a priority in our country. Azerbaijan made huge progress in broadband internet infrastructure development and its application in all areas of society for the last ten years. The rate of internet users rose from 46% to 80%, the rate of broadband internet users rebounded from 15% to 75%, while the rate of household users increased from 45.1% to 78.2% for the last ten years.

95% of rural telephone stations have already been provided with optic fiber cable system connection. 50% of the country's telephone system is reconstructed based on cutting-edge NGN technologies, which enable users to benefit from single line for phone connection, high-speed internet and IP TV. Besides, GPON technologies-based high-quality internet service is being provided in the capital city of Baku and other big cities. Moreover, high-quality wireless LTE technologies-based internet service is being rendered with the application of technological approach. "Public Wi-Fi" project has already successfully implemented in the parks, avenues, and other public areas of the Baku city, where people can get access to free Internet.

At present, the coverage of the 3G mobile network in Azerbaijan is 97.6%, and the coverage of the 4G mobile networks is 93.0%. These coverage rates played a crucial role in broadband internet development across the country.

Now, Azerbaijan's internet market is fully liberalized and no licenses are required for rendering internet access services, which gives impetus development. More than 40 internet service providers operate at the internet market of Azerbaijan; only three of them are public operators,

while others are private. Governmental support, a healthy competitive environment, and public-private partnerships underpin the success of broadband internet development in the country.

96% of schools in the country have been provided with computers and more than 60% of schools have broadband internet access. Currently, 84% of men and 76% of women use the internet in the country. Various projects are being implemented in the country to develop the information society, increase the ICT knowledge of the population, and promote the use of electronic services. Social projects are being implemented in cooperation with UN specialized agencies and their representation in the country in order to reduce inter-gender digital differences and support women's digital skills and personal development.

Today, the achievements in the development of the internet in Azerbaijan are highly valued by international organizations. Thus, in the World Economic Forum's "Global Competitiveness Report 2019", Azerbaijan ranked 43rd out of 141 countries in terms of the number of internet users per 100 people, and according to this indicator, Azerbaijan exceeds the world average by 1.5 times.

The development of broadband services in the country is carried out within the framework of the adopted National Strategy and State Programs. The "Strategic Roadmap for the Development of Telecommunications and Information Technologies in the Republic of Azerbaijan" approved by the relevant Decree of the President in 2016 sets ambitious goals for the development of services and broadband infrastructure with wide coverage in the country. Thus, increasing the coverage of the broadband network to 95% by 2025 by transferring broadband internet services (which is through copper lines currently) to fiber-optics, the speed of internet use per user in the fixed broadband network in Azerbaijan from the average speed of 3.6 Mbit / s in 2016 to 50 Mbit / s in 2025 and from 2025 then to reach the level of developed countries set as main goals. At the same time, increasing the coverage of broadband services on LTE and other wireless technologies by 10% annually to 85% in 2025 and 100% after 2025 are targeted.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan takes initiatives to build a high-capacity data transmission fiber-optic network in the region. Bilateral agreements have already been signed between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, as well as Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to launch fiber optic cable connection along the Caspian Sea.