



Liberalizing Services and Promoting Digital Services: Prospects for Enhancing Trade in CAREC Countries

15 March 2022 (Tuesday), 15:00–16:30 (Manila time)
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Economic diversification is a priority of countries of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program. The objective is to increase productivity, integrate better into global value chains, strengthen resilience, and grow faster together. The report [Developing the Services Sector for Economic Diversification in CAREC Countries](#) analyzes CAREC members' economic structure and potential for diversification through services development.

The report discusses core producer services: freight handling, transport and storage, telecommunication and information services, financial and business services, education, research and development services, and quality testing and certification services. For these services subsectors to develop, an enabling environment characterized by good governance, pro-competitive policies, efficient capital and labor markets, high-quality physical and digital infrastructure and effective regional cooperation must be in place.

CAREC countries must adopt a coherent and comprehensive approach for the balanced development of interdependent services subsectors. The study also suggests various projects that could meet policy needs whether at the national, subregional, or regional level, and a range of options for the identified priority services.



This RCI-POD webinar will discuss the potential of the services sector focusing on liberalization and promotion of digital services trade and offer recommendations to facilitate services' growth in the CAREC region and beyond. It will also feature two related publications:

Advancing Digital Services in Asia and the Pacific, the theme of the [Asian Economic Integration Report 2022](#) shows that rapid digitalization is bringing down barriers to services trade, but policy reforms such as trade liberalization and deregulation of digital services are still needed, while regulatory cooperation can encourage interoperability.

The [OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index 2022: Policy Trends Up to 2022](#), a comprehensive review of services trade regulations in 50 countries, found signs of liberalization in 2021. Open and well-regulated services markets in an increasingly digital economy are crucial.

AGENDA

Host and Moderator:

Mr. Jong Woo Kang, Principal Economist, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department (ERCD), ADB

15:00 — 15:05

Opening Remarks

Ms. M. Teresa Kho, Director-General, East Asia Department, ADB

15:05 — 15:55

Presentation: Advancing Economic Diversification in CAREC Countries through Services Sector Development

Mr. Patrick Low, former Chief Economist, World Trade Organization Secretariat; now Senior Advisor, Tulip Consulting, Geneva

Mr. Bahodir Ganiev, Senior Advisor, Center for Economic Development, Uzbekistan

Presentation: Opportunities in Digital Services Trade in Central Asia and Beyond

Mr. Rolando Avendano, Economist, ERCD, ADB

Presentation: Liberalizing Services Trade: Services Trade Restrictiveness Index for Two CAREC Countries—The People's Republic of China and Kazakhstan

Ms. Irene Olivan Garcia, Trade Policy Analyst, Trade in Services Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD

15:55 — 16:20

Moderated Discussions

16:20 — 16:30

Closing Remarks and Way Forward

Ms. Emma Fan, Director, Public Management, Financial Sector and Regional Cooperation Division, East Asia Department, ADB

Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, Central and West Asia Department, ADB

The **RCI-POD Webinar Series** aims to provide a venue for casual and open policy dialogue on regional cooperation and integration issues.