



**Asia-Pacific  
Economic Cooperation**

**Advancing** Free Trade  
for Asia-Pacific **Prosperity**

# Public-Private Dialogue on Digitally Enabled Services: Challenges and Opportunities

**APEC Group on Services**

January 2023





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Economic Cooperation**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

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**January 2023**

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Overview

The Public-Private Dialogue (hereinafter PPD) was held virtually on 6 July 2022. The PPD addressed two main topics relating to the opportunities and challenges of digitally enabled services: First, experiences about accelerating digital transformation and regulatory reform efforts during the pandemic. Second, approaches for sustaining developments in the digitalization of the four services sectors beyond the pandemic at both the Economy and APEC levels. To facilitate the dialogue, an APEC-wide survey was conducted prior to the PPD and 17 APEC economies responded.

All 21 APEC member economies were invited to attend and participate in the PPD, with over 130 participants. Panelists were composed of both government officials/policymakers and private sector delegates from the APEC region. International organization, such as WTO and OECD, also attended. The objectives of the PPD were: (1) to enable private sectors, government officials, and experts to better understand the growing demands during and after the pandemic for digitally enabled services; (2) to share experiences regarding provisional and permanent reform approaches adopted by governments in response to surging demands and challenges; and (3) to develop policy recommendations and guidelines in order to continue reform efforts post-pandemic with a view to enabling MSMEs, regulators, and APEC as a region to accelerate the digital transformation process. The PPD was successful in encouraging dialogues between the public and private sectors, which was reflected in both the content presented by all panelists and questions from participants that fostered discussions during the PPD.

## 1.2 Event Details

The virtual PPD was a half-day event with 3 sessions. It was organized as follows:

1. Opening Remarks
2. Session 1: *Public Sector Perspectives: Creating a Sound Regulatory Environment for Digitally Enabled Services*
3. Session 2: *Private Sector Perspectives: Challenges and Opportunities of Digitally Enabled Services*
4. Session 3: *Panel Discussion: Exploring Recommendations for Post-pandemic Regulatory Planning*
5. Closing Remarks

Speakers from the WTO, OECD, Asia-Pacific Services Coalition, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, and the United States of America also took part. Over 130 representatives from 15 member economies attended virtually.

## **2. Background**

The importance and benefits of digitally enabled services have been underscored and evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. While suppliers seek to provide services via the Internet or expand their online operations in response to the crisis, consumers are also adopting new consumption habits. Despite the growing demands and opportunities, there are two related challenges that potentially hinder future development. First, while relaxation of regulations that previously required physical interaction between suppliers and consumers have been common among APEC economies during the pandemic, many of the positive reforms have been provisional in nature with the possibility of being phased-out post-pandemic. Second, many MSME service providers and government agencies alike lack the know-how and resources necessary to grasp the emerging demands and opportunities.

Focusing on healthcare, education, financial (banking and insurance) and public services, this project aims to generate ideas among stakeholders and build momentum for the implementation of the ASCR by encouraging dialogue and experience-sharing between the public and private sectors to enhance awareness of potential challenges and formulate possible solutions to mitigate the challenges these sectors face. The PPD helps government officials develop policies and regulatory approaches that are consistent with service industry needs in an increasingly digitalized world, especially against fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. It supports MSMEs and public services in harnessing digital technologies for the purpose of enhancing their competitiveness and growth in the region.

## **3. Event Summary**

### **3.1 Opening Remarks**

Ms. Cynthia KIANG, Director General of the Bureau of Foreign Trade under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Chinese Taipei, makes opening remarks.

Digital technologies have significantly changed the ways of doing business, while particularly, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this process. The use of online

services, especially in sectors such as healthcare, finance, education, and public services has become more and more prevalent. Enterprises have endeavored to provide services online in response to the pandemic. In addition, governments have adopted various measures to promote digitally enabled services.

Consequently, a pre-event survey was conducted to learn about the status of member economies' policies and measures before, during and after the pandemic. The key findings of the survey and today's discussions will serve as reference for policy recommendations among APEC members. Additionally, they will enable small and medium-sized enterprises to harness digital technologies.

The rapid development of online services requires a sound regulatory framework to address the challenges, such as measures concerning cross border data flow and personal data protection. In this regard, Chinese Taipei attaches great importance to ongoing negotiations concerning the WTO's JSI on Electronic Commerce to create a conducive environment for businesses and consumers online and help unlock opportunities for digitalization.

In this PPD, an excellent group of speakers from the WTO, OECD, respective governments, and prominent enterprises in the region will share their views and experiences which are always invaluable and insightful to our work in APEC. Thus, it is hoped that the PPD will contribute to the implementation of the APEC Services Competitiveness Roadmap (ASCR), while strengthening the synergy of the ASCR and digitalization.

### **3.2 Session 1: Public Sector Perspectives: Creating a Sound Regulatory Environment for Digitally Enabled Services**

- **Key Findings of the APEC-wide Survey**

*Speaker: Dr. Roy Chun LEE, Senior Deputy Executive Director of the WTO & RTA Center, CIER, Chinese Taipei*

The APEC-wide survey focused on the developments of digitally enabled services in four sectors, namely healthcare, education, financial services (banking and insurance), and public services, before, during, and post-pandemic in the APEC region. While this presentation was given on June 23, 2022, the final report will include additional data from surveys returned after this date. A total of 17 APEC economies participated in this survey.



1. The results of the survey:

(1) Regarding the number of digitalization measures introduced by the four aforementioned sectors in APEC economies before, during, and post-pandemic, public services adopted the most digitalization measures, especially during the pandemic. The next sector was education, with approximately the same number of measures adopted by the healthcare sector during the pandemic. As the financial sector had already adopted digitalization measures before the pandemic, the growth rate during the pandemic was not as significant as that of the public services and education sectors.

(2) New measures adopted by APEC economies during the pandemic were mainly in education and healthcare, with the number of new measures adopted by the education sector much greater than that of the other sectors.

2. Key findings and recommendations:

(1) The pandemic acted as a policy accelerator, pushing governments across the region to introduce new measures to digitalize the four sectors. Most of the measures were permanent rather than contingent.

(2) Most APEC economies have captured opportunities brought about by COVID-19, accelerating digitalization reform in the four sectors by improving or by introducing new measures.

(3) While the number of new measures grew rapidly among the four sectors, the biggest challenges was how to sustain the momentum post-pandemic.

● **The Importance of Education in Thailand**

*Speaker: Ms. Prewprae CHUMRUM, Director, Bureau of Trade in Services and Investment Negotiations, Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand*

Educational services are critical to all economies but the pandemic has posed specific challenges. To deal with these challenges the Ministry of Education of Thailand employed five learning methods for delivering education to students across all regions: 1) on-site education, 2) on-air education, 3) online education, 4) on-demand education, and 5) on-hand education. Elements critical to transformation were ICT infrastructure, digital skills, equipment, and big data.

As Dr. Roy LEE mentioned that some of the seemingly temporary digitalization measures might become permanent, Thailand is also looking at relevant measures since online education offers alternative options to teachers and students. Recently, Thailand has rolled out three “Return to Education” Programs: 1) Bring the Kids Back to Schools, 2) The Minister of Education Safety Center, and 3) the Free Boarding TVET program, which includes vulnerable people in the educational system.

In addition, robust and transparent quality assurance standards will contribute to sustaining educational continuity and quality. Therefore, Thailand is participating in ASEAN programs (e.g., ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework) to promote the establishment of standards. There have been new initiatives (e.g., the ASEAN TVET) intended to equip ASEAN workers with skills required in the job market, making it easier for young laborers to find jobs, which is a critical step in resolving the labor shortage in ASEAN.

Since jobs and learning opportunities were lost during the pandemic, the measures rolled out in Thailand enabled learners and workers to upskill and reskill, while giving people opportunities to go back to work and school. This has not only benefitted educators and learners in Thailand, but also those in other APEC economies.

- **Measuring Barriers to Trade in Digitally Enabled Services in the Asia-Pacific Region**

*Speaker: Mr. Janos FERENCZ, Trade Analyst, Trade in Services Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD*

The growth of the services trade in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years has outpaced other regions. In particular, digitally enabled services accounted for an increasing share of the services trade, growing on average at 9% annually, which was much higher than the global average of 7%.

Regulations governing digital services have become more complex because most of the digitally enabled services are by nature cross-border and are hence more challenging to regulate. Digital trade barriers, as measured by the OECD Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, are high throughout the world. While the APEC region performs better than the global average, there is considerable heterogeneity across economies.

New data collected from economies in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and other economies in the Asia-Pacific, have indicated that barriers related to

communications, infrastructure, and connectivity contribute to at least half of all barriers observed in the regions, demonstrating the scope for reducing barriers related to telecommunication services and the scope for easing unnecessary and unjustified barriers to cross-border data flows. There is also considerable scope for reducing barriers in computer services, which are fundamental to digital trade, particularly with respect to investment regulation and barriers that affect the movement of computer professionals.

Mr. Janos FERENCZ's conclusions were:

1. Strengthening the evidence base is critical to informed policy discussions.
2. Evidence demonstrates that barriers remain high for digital services.
3. Closer cooperation regionally and internationally is key to building an enabling regulatory environment. APEC has played and still plays a crucial role in this regard.

#### ● **The Global Strategy of the PPC**

*Speaker: Mr. Toshihiko OSAWA, Director of International Cooperation, Personal Information Protection Commission (PPC), Japan*

The growth in data flow, advancements in ICT, and the importance of cross-border transfer of data, including personal information, have increased over the year. In view of this, the Japanese government has been promoting the Data Free Flow with Trust (DFFT) since the 2019 G20 meeting in Osaka. Also, the Revised Act on the Protection of Personal Information took effect on April 1, 2022, giving the PPC the authority to supervise both public and private sectors.

The three pillars of the PPC Global Strategy are as follows:

1. Development of a favorable environment for the DFFT
  - (1) The PPC will create an environment with options so that businesses can choose a cross-border transfer scheme based on their size and needs (e.g., adequacy decisions, certification schemes, or simply having a contract between exporters and importers on data).
  - (2) Japan has a mutual adequacy framework with the EU and UK and will continue to develop those frameworks, while considering the possibility of expanding the scope.

(3) The PPC will contribute to the formulation of global standards on emerging risks, such as unlimited government access and data localization. A series of discussions at the OECD in those areas is ongoing.

## 2. Appropriate responses to emerging trends

The PPC analyzes global trends on technological innovation and the relationship with personal data protection, such as cookies, facial recognition cameras, and AI. It also shares Japan's experience and discusses the latest trends at international forums, such as the GPA and APPA.

## 3. International cooperation on enforcement

As the current host of the G7 International Enforcement Cooperation Working Group, Japan is having discussions on how to strengthen bilateral and multilateral collaboration to effectively enforce the privacy protection.

### ● **The Role of the RegTech Association**

*Speaker: Ms. Deborah YOUNG, CEO, RegTech Association, Australia*

The RegTech Association is a non-profit and independent association founded in 2017, with 10 directors and 170 member organizations. The association leads engagement and collaboration among regulators, institutions, governments, and technological companies by organizing various programs, activities, research, consultations, and trade events.

The "2021 RegTech Industry Survey" showed that RegTech demonstrated resilience during the pandemic with investments from all horizons flowing into RegTech. Two-thirds of RegTech companies reported strong revenue growth in fiscal year 2021. On the selling side, there is a growth in jobs, with new opportunities emerging. The greatest challenge for small tech companies is that procurement is a key barrier. From the buying side, there is a stronger commitment to buy rather than build own solutions. There are new industries emerging (e.g., insurance, healthcare, energy, as well as government). The key drivers for institutions are regulatory pressure, digital transformation, and the increasing cost of compliance.

The RegTech Association will focus three new industry areas: government, small to medium enterprises, and second tier financial services players. Also, the association wants to embrace and adopt ESG principles as an industry to better support the natural

environment and resources, as well as deliver inclusive services to enhance investor outreach and strengthen its research capabilities via partnerships.

RegTech serves all regulated industries, including financial services, FinTech, and government, and APEC economies are already sitting on a collective powerhouse of RegTech innovation. The RegTech Association seeks to foster and fund initiatives that help governments and regulators revolutionize and transform the norm with a digital-first mindset.

- **ICT Services as Enablers for Digital Services Trade: The Role of Trade Policy and the WTO**

*Speaker: Dr. Martin ROY, Counsellor, Trade in Services and Investment Division, WTO*

A key channel through which digitalization has transformed trade is through the development of computers and telecoms that provide the basic infrastructure. Technological advancements and policies to facilitate investment in competition have increased the capacity of telecom networks to carry more data at higher speed and lower prices. This has expanded the tradability of services in enhancing enabling cross-border supplies across a wide array of services. This was also reflected in greater mode 1 supply and greater mode 1 trade overall, as well as greater data flows.

Although barriers may be lower in telecommunication than some other service sectors overall, there are still some barriers in place, typically, competition related measures or quantitative restrictions, and more so among developing members. In this context, the WTO can contribute to the enabling of services for the digital economy, by lowering trade and investment barriers, preventing the introduction of new barriers and preventing protectionist policy reversals, ensuring greater transparency, and encouraging best practices.

Key existing rules and commitments under the GATS can be improved to contribute to the digital services trade, including improving members' specific commitments on market access and national treatment and encouraging more members to adopt the Reference Paper on Basic Telecommunication Services.

In addition, discussions with respect to telecommunication and computer services under the WTO Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on e-commerce include improving market access commitments, updating the Reference Paper on Basic Telecommunication Services, formulating provisions on cross-border data flows,

preventing data localization, and facilitating open Internet access. In these discussions, differences of views still need to be addressed, typically types of exceptions, for instance, legitimate public policy objectives and also how this may interact with policies to ensure the protection of personal data.

### **3.3 Session 2: Private Sector Perspectives: Challenges and Opportunities of Digitally Enabled Services**

- **Challenges and Opportunities of Digitally Enabled Services: A Digital Health Perspective**

*Speaker: Dr. Peter WU, CEO of ASUS Cloud, Chinese Taipei*

The pandemic has accelerated the provision of digital health, considerably changing the digital health landscape. New analysis indicates that use of telehealth has increased 38 times from the pre-COVID-19 period. Therefore, the ICT industry is embracing these opportunities. For instance, ASUS, an ICT company, has set up different business units and helped hospitals in Chinese Taipei transform their emergency departments into digitally enabled ones.

Despite a wealth of opportunities, barriers that prevent further expansion include the cautiousness of hospitals in adopting new technologies, the limitation of regulations, and the lack of supportive health insurance payment structures. Therefore, the Ministry of Science and Technology in Chinese Taipei has issued more grants to hospitals and considered establishing a regulatory sandbox. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and Welfare is planning to open more tele-medicine scenarios and roll out new regulations on electronic health records in response to these challenges.

The demand for public-private partnership is especially strong on digital health. The government needs technical expertise and input from the private sector, while the private sector needs to work with the government to jointly formulate rules to better identify and respond to challenges arising from digital health.

- **Payments 101**

*Speaker: Ms. Sahra ENGLISH, Vice President of Global Public Policy at MasterCard, United States*

After explaining what electronic/ digital payment is, Ms. Sahra ENGLISH emphasized that cross-border payment is the glue of the digital economy. According to their research, 30% of the shift to digital payments has been permanent.

Each step of an e-payment transaction, from initiating to processing to authorization, relies on data, making the free flow of data a critical prerequisite to a well-functioning international payments ecosystem. Companies large and small rely on the free flow of cross-border data to provide their customers with innovative and secure products and services. Data localization can impact data flows, with possible negative consequences for businesses, particularly MSMES. Thus, APEC should promote work on identifying commonalities in regulatory approaches, align standards on cross-border data flows, and ensure personal data protection.

Open and competitive electronic/ digital payment markets can increase consumption, drive economic growth, and advance financial inclusion. Mastercard was excited to see some work being done in APEC. Particularly, it is supportive of the CPTPP, the USMCA, the Australia-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement, and other digital economy agreements that allow businesses and consumers to benefit from consistent and interoperable digital rules.

- **Removing Barriers to Digital Services Trade**

*Speaker: Ms. Kaaren KOOMEN AM, Director of Government & Regulatory Affairs at IBM Australia/New Zealand (on behalf of Australian Services Roundtable)*

While the pandemic has opened new opportunities for the provision of digitally enabled services, digitization presents regulatory challenges for drafting trade rules. Regulatory fragmentation and heterogeneity among economies increase trade costs and impede the development of digital services.

It is imperative to promote regulatory convergence on key issues, such as the recognition of electronic signatures, as well as online payments and lodgments, enabling cross-border data flows, preventing data localization, ensuring privacy protection, and dealing with fraud and cybercrime.

The core obligations should be incorporated in the WTO Joint Statement Initiative on E-commerce and other digital trade agreements:

1. Enabling cross-border data flows and preventing data localization

Businesses should be allowed to transfer data across borders subject to reasonable safeguards and not forced to use or set up data centers in order to enhance business opportunities, especially for SMEs.

2. Protecting source code and algorithms

Governments should not require the transfer of or access to source code and algorithms as a condition for market access. This will encourage innovation, and protect the proprietary information of companies.

3. Ensuring technological choices and open digital architecture

Businesses should not be required to utilize certain technologies. It is also important to promote the use of open architectures so that companies can benefit from cost effective, secure, and innovative technologies.

● **Providing Access to Digital Financial Services: Challenges and Opportunities**

*Speaker: Mr. Winsley BANGIT, Chief Customer Officer at GCash (Mynt - Globe Fintech Innovations, Inc.), the Philippines*

The Philippines is still under-penetrated in banking, with 65% of Filipinos not owning any form of bank account and less than 5% owning credit cards for investments. GCASH is the number one mobile wallet in the Philippines and also the only FinTech double unicorn in the economy. With more than 16 million registered users in its ecosystem and more than 6 million merchants and online sellers, GCASH strives to serve unbanked and underbanked clients and provides new opportunities through accessibility, relevance, and affordability.

1. **Accessibility:** GCASH has been able to reach more areas in the region, especially during the pandemic. Anyone with a smartphone can download the app and GCASH has made it easier to empower underserved Filipinos and businesses in finding more opportunities with financial and business solutions.
2. **Relevance:** GCASH helps customers send money to their loved ones when lockdowns are in place and has become one of the official government disbursement channels when the government has difficulty dispersing government aid and expanding remittance services to overseas Filipinos.
3. **Affordability:** Since the local minimum wage is only around US\$10, affordability is a key consideration. Filipinos are still relatively intimidated by financial services,



such as investments and insurance, because of document requirements. GCASH is conscious of making services affordable.

Although challenges remain in serving underbanked clients, GCASH has committed to increasing the availability and equality of opportunities to use financial services with digital solutions. Therefore, a digital trade policy is needed that caters to the specific level of development and inclusiveness of economies.

### ● **Q&A Session**

1. Regarding obstacles to developing digital health systems, Dr. Peter WU pointed out that the biggest barrier is the lack of incentives for hospitals and doctors to adopt new technologies.
2. Concerning open architecture that businesses have commonly adopted, Ms. Sahra ENGLISH and Ms. Kaaren KOOMEN stressed that industry-led open standards on payments gives an opportunity to all businesses to adopt creative innovation. Companies should be able to utilize the technology that works best and suits their needs.
3. Recommendations to promote trade in digitally enabled services are as follows:
  - (1) More dialogues between public and private sectors concerning digital health and RegTech is needed. Governments should implement regulatory sandboxes that allow for trials of new technologies to help foster innovation.
  - (2) The absence of a global digital trade agreements poses challenges to economies. APEC needs to intensify cooperation to promote greater regulatory consistency on critical issues, such as privacy protection, electronic signatures, cross-border data flow, non-discriminatory regulations on digitally enabled services, and guaranteed choice of technologies.
  - (3) APEC has a key role to play in enhancing digital inclusion. It is crucial to ensure that all people, businesses, and vulnerable groups are not left behind and can benefit from digital trade.

## **3.4 Session 3: Panel Discussion**

### ● **Exploring Recommendations for Post-pandemic Regulatory Planning**

*Moderator: Dr. Roy Chun LEE, Senior Deputy Executive Director of the WTO & RTA Center at CIER, Chinese Taipei*

Dr. Roy LEE opened the session by asking the panelists to provide recommendations regarding how to sustain post-pandemic momentum. What are the essential elements to be considered in policy formulation to promote the development of digitally enabled services?

1. Ms. Deborah YOUNG suggested that a deep understanding of technological solutions can aid financial inclusion, promote trust across ecosystems, and help regulators with their oversight duties. Non-profit organizations can serve as an independent body to reduce divergence among institutions, regulators, and governments, while even helping to develop standards. APEC economies have that at their disposal on RegTech right now. It is a matter of elevating that.
2. Dr. Peter WU recommended that the Public-Private Partnership is a good way. PPP enables discussions with governments on how to design business models, deliver good service models, and leverage their efforts to reduce concerns from various stakeholders as needed. RegTech is another good tool for us to overcome these challenges.
3. Mr. Anthony Patrick CHUA advised taking advantage of digital technology and innovation. Thus, regulatory coherence and building and strengthening the digital infrastructure are essential. Barriers must be removed to ensure the free and unhampered flow of data while the data itself is reliable and secured.
4. Mr. Winsley BANGIT recommended creating an enabling and forward-looking regulatory environment. Technology should be industry-led. Continuous experiment with openness through regulatory sandboxes is needed.

Dr. Roy LEE affirmed that the path to digitalization will not be reversed post-pandemic. To move forward, economies must forge even stronger public-private partnerships. More dialogues between private and public sectors and among regulators should be conducted to sustain the momentum.

### **3.5 Closing Remarks**

Ms. Antonia MEI, CTI Representative / Director of the Bureau of Foreign Trade under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Chinese Taipei, delivers closing remarks:

The PPD has offered a good opportunity to better identify and respond to emerging challenges and opportunities arising from digitally enabled services, as well as further enhance the work of APEC economies in the future.

Some takeaways from this dialogue:

First, there is an urgent need for APEC member economies to focus more on the enormous opportunities for services that are presented through digital transformation and utilize digital technologies to enhance service competitiveness.

Second, the flow of data underpins the development of digitally enabled services. Hence, greater cooperation is necessary to develop coherent strategies for cross border data flows, while ensuring appropriate privacy protections.

Third, it is important to bridge the digital divide by facilitating access to ICT services and upgrading digital skills.

Fourth, APEC should make a concerted effort to engage with the private sector to learn from experiences and facilitate the formulation of policies.

Last but not the least, APEC needs to strengthen cross-fora collaboration and ensure better coordination between the ASCR and APEC Internet and the Digital Economy Roadmap (AIDER) to unlock digital opportunities. As such, Chinese Taipei is willing to work with APEC members to make contributions.

#### **4. Outcomes and Recommendations**

Information collected from the APEC-wide survey indicates that a majority of APEC economies has grasped opportunities provided by the COVID-19 pandemic to accelerate the process of digital transformation of the focused service sectors. The experience-sharing and discussions that took place during the PPD also clearly demonstrated that a majority of APEC economies has seized opportunities provided by the pandemic to accelerate the dispersion of digitally enabled services, with public services as the main beneficiary of this reform. The major viewpoints expressed in the PPD suggest that the path to digital transformation should not and will not be reversed post-pandemic. The following recommendations were offered to achieve this goal:

1. There is an urgent need for APEC economies to focus on the enormous opportunities for service providers and consumers alike through digital

transformation and the utilization of digital technologies to enhance services competitiveness.

2. To sustain the pace of regulatory reform that supports digitalization of relevant service sectors post-pandemic, collaboration between regulators and private sectors is important. The collaboration can start with building a better understanding of how technological solutions can aid more financial inclusion, promote trust across ecosystems, and help regulators with their oversight, duties, and activities.
3. It is important for regulators to find a balance between liberalization efforts and maintaining regulatory objectives with confidence, and this can be achieved through more dialogues among regulators in the APEC region. It is also important to create an enabling and forward-looking regulatory environment with an inclusive agenda to ensure that all stakeholders, large and small, are heard and included.
4. A forward-looking regulatory environment is a key element. It needs to move away from the platform/technology-led approach to focus on industry/sector development and be led by public policy agendas and objectives. Continuation of regulatory experiments through regulatory sandboxes facilitates regulatory innovation and stays apace with market developments.
5. The flow of data underpins the development of digitally enabled services, and greater cooperation is needed to develop coherent strategies for cross-border data flow by ensuring appropriate privacy protections.
6. It is essential to bridge the digital divide by facilitating access to ICT services and upgrading skills.
7. Governments should make concerted efforts to engage with other sectors to learn about their experiences and know their needs so as to facilitate the formulation of policies. In addition, APEC needs to strengthen cross-fora collaboration to ensure better synergy between the ASCR and APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap to unlock digital opportunities.
8. The adoption and utilization of RegTech (Regulation Technology) is recommended especially for highly regulated sectors, such as the financial and healthcare sectors, to strengthen trust between regulators and different stakeholders.

## 5. Participants Feedback

### 5.1 Participants

Australia ; Canada ; Chile ; Hong Kong, China ; Indonesia ; Japan ; Malaysia ; New Zealand ; the Philippines ; the Russian Federation ; Singapore ; Chinese Taipei ; Thailand ; the United States of America

### 5.2 Survey Results

Generally, the PPD received overwhelming support with 100% of the participants agreeing on the relevance of this project and 100% rating that the project would achieve its intended objectives. Refer to Tables 1 and 2 for more information regarding the survey results.

**Table 1**

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral
Overall Satisfaction	65.12%	32.56%	2.33%
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
The objectives of the webinar were clearly defined	62.79%	37.21%	
The project achieved its intended objectives	58.14%	41.86%	
The agenda items and topics covered were relevant	62.79%	34.88%	2.33%
The content was well organized and easy to follow	60.47%	34.88%	4.65%
The speakers/ panelists/ moderators were well prepared and knowledgeable about the topic	62.79%	34.88%	2.33%
The time allotted for the webinar was sufficient	41.86%	44.19%	13.95%

**Table 2**

	Very	Mostly	Somewhat	A little	Not Much
How relevant was this project to you and your economy?	62.79%	27.91%	9.30%		
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Rate your level of knowledge of and skills in the topic prior to participating in the event:	23.26%	25.58%	44.19%	4.65%	2.33%
Rate your level of knowledge of and skills in the topic after participating in the event:	30.23%	41.86%	25.58%	2.33%	

### 5.3 Way Forward

Participants have recommended the following:

1. APEC can look at the connectivity capacity of its member economies. Also, in the area of cross-border services, how it can be further regulated or regulations relaxed since many services are now being provided online due to the effects of the pandemic.
2. Given the gaps in divergent regimes, it will be important to note the gaps between the member economies to find areas for potential convergence. Also, interest in determining whether industry leaders in developing incomes require regulatory hedges against foreign market encroachments.
3. APEC needs to discuss this issue more and try to develop some guiding principles, especially on the issue of regulatory consistency.
4. More engagement from member economies per sector/industry; more non-government collaboration and small group dialogues.
5. Specific services may be selected for further discussion at the GOS Meeting to identify which areas would be of common interest and what should be delivered accordingly.
6. This event revealed the importance for APEC to better coordinate work on services, digital issues, and regulatory restructuring.