Key messages:

- •The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the gap between e-resilient and vulnerable economies. It has brought into focus the need for an immediate digital transformation of the economy both publicly and privately, for which the highspeed internet access and digital integration of the entire nation are necessary.
- •To overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and reduce further exposure to its continued effects, there is a vast need to speed up the introduction and application of public and private eservices. Education, social aid, healthcare, banking and finance, trade, and freight including cross-border import-export-transit operations are the fields of the special focus of ICT interventions and respective cooperation within the SPECA region and beyond.
- Kyrgyzstan's landlocked status, leaving the country less connected and besides of main international transport corridors is to be strategically addressed in the medium and long term. Regional collaboration and integration are the key to progressing in this direction. The legal changes to set up a more favourable investment environment, private sector involvement as well as infrastructure codeployment including through integrated international transport corridors laid on the territory and connecting the country with the outside world are the required measures.



KYRGYZSTAN: THE WAY AHEAD TO ADDRESS E-RESILIENCE READINESS AND CO-DEPLOY INFRASTRUCTURE

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant economic loss to Kyrgyzstan in 2020 (-8,6% of GDP) and continues to slow down the economy in 2021.¹ Disruptions to the air and road transport cross-border and transit operations, and the entire service sector were the main generators of the loss. The ICT sector being comparably stable itself was not able to contribute significantly to reducing economic dropdown due to limited development of ICT networks, e-services, and e-businesses inside of the country and for cross-border operations and interactions.

This Policy Brief communicates online tools capable to keep decision makers and the public aware of the status of the country with e-resilience readiness as well as to assess co- deployment opportunities and initiate infrastructure projects enabling the country to be more resilient and less exposed to the pandemics such as COVID-19

Where does Kyrgyzstan stand with eresilience readiness

The e-resilience readiness monitoring panel as a planning tool has been introduced recently by ESCAP. ESCAP also held dedicated surveys and developed analytical reports on e-resilience readiness of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and

Mongolia² as well as of the entire SPECA region.³ The four-pillar measuring e.g. the ICT related country policy for various sectors of the economy, the ICT role in developing new systems and products as for eadapting and recovery from COVID-19, the role of the ICT in data gathering and management, those driving

¹ http://mineconom.gov.kg/froala/uploads/file/137ff8773a6fcb9a3663f16e9166d7fa2c5f29f8.pdf

² https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ASSESSING%20E-RESILIENCE%20%20in%20Kazakhstan%2C%20Kyrgyzstan%20%20and%20Mongolia.pdf

³ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Understanding%20of%20the%20E-

Resilience%20Framework%20for%20Crises%20Preparedness%20in%20RECI%20and%20SPECA%20countries%2C%20Ms.%20Aid a%20Karazhanova 0 0.pdf

respective policies, decisions and actions, and the **existing ICT infrastructure** as a physical foundation for all above was proposed and used.

The set of quantitative indicators and indices were used to build each pillar, those were gathered as the result of the above-mentioned surveys and the use of valid international data sources e.g. ITU ICT Development Index (IDI)⁴ or E-Government Development Index (EGDI) of UN DESA.⁵

A major finding of data aggregation, qualifying and visualisation the E-resilience readiness monitoring dashboard⁶ indicates that Kyrgyzstan has shown a remarkable performance by setting the foundations for e-resilience. The scores for the mobile network coverage and mobile broadband subscriptions can be

factored in e-resilience status. The dashboard also shows that most fixed-broadband services offer over 10 mbit/s high-speed internet access, which Kyrgyzstan still lacks. The low number of households with internet access at home and in schools, and a large number of households and schools that cannot access the internet at their locations are indicated. Moreover, the country has poor affordability of handsets as of the high handset prices. In conclusion, in Kyrgyzstan, most people have limited use of fixed broadband, despite the quality it provides, whereas strong usage in the mobile communications environment is evident. Therefore, further investments and support for actual internet usage, particularly fixed-broadband, may be required to enhance the e-resilience and e-readiness of the country.

Figure 2: ICT infrastructure status in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia

ICT infrastructure as a physical foundation	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Mongolia
Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (0-100 max)	120	120	120
Percentage of Individuals using the Internet (0-100 % max)	78.9	38	47.16
Fixed (wired) broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	13.44	5.64	9.66
Active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants (0-100 % max)	77.57	94.03	83.72
Mobile tariffs (%monthly GDP per capita) (0-100 % max)	93.53	33.43	48.92
Handset prices (%monthly GDP per capita) (0-100 max)	55.61	16.35	30.46
Computer software spending (0-100 % max)	0.02	0.09	0.13
Percentage of households with Internet access at home (0-100 % max)	87.59	21.11	22.99
Percentage of Households with a computer (0-100 % max)	80.53	23.29	30
4G mobile network coverage (0-100 % max)	75.3	70	45
Fixed-broadband subscriptions, >10 Mbit/s, % of total fixed-broadband subscriptions, (0-100 % max)	51.83	64.27	0.58
International Internet bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	55,067.84	47,863.64	22,399.44
Internet access in schools (0-100 % max)	n/a	41.37	70.66

Source: ESCAP (2021), E-resilience Monitoring Dashboard | ICT & DRR Gateway,

How to enable infrastructure co-deployment?

Kyrgyzstan, as it develops its ICT sector and infrastructure, faces a need for fibre optic communication lines (FOLC) to reach more

evenly all parts of the mountainous country to enable better mobile and fixed internet access

⁴ https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx

https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/publication/2 020-united-nations-e-government-survey

https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiYTQ5NzJiYjktYTM3Yy00Z mVkLWJiNzktMWYxOGZhYjg0OWI4liwidCl6ljgwNGZhNDQzLTVIZGIt NDNiMS1hZmUzLWY5NGE2MGVkNjUzZSJ9

and respectively digital services to people and the economy.

In order to overcome limited links to the main infrastructure connecting landlocked Central Asia with the rest of the world, the Government of Kyrgyzstan has put significant efforts to build land transport and power transmission infrastructure crossing the country. On one hand, these provide access to the main international transport corridors built through Central Asia while on the other hand, they interlink the interior of the country, better connecting provinces and districts geographically split by mountains.

Infrastructure co-deployment significantly reduces the cost of construction and increases the efficiency of the investments as the recent experience with co-deployed development of the Data-Kemin Power Transmission Line and FOLC as part of CASA-1000⁷ and DIGITAL CASA-Kyrgyz Republic⁸ projects have demonstrated. So

far, it was the only renowned case of the infrastructure co-deployment in Kyrgyzstan. There is a need to frame up the legal and policy bases, build regulations and co-deployment standards, generate cross-sector interests and programmes to truly enable ICT co-deployment with the other infrastructure.

Representatives of respective Government agencies and experts participated in the subregional and country workshops held in support of the above mentioned RECI project. The ESCAP Secretariat undertook background studies including on Kyrgyzstan⁹ and developed a methodology.¹⁰ These served as a foundation for two newly launched online tools to promote and technically enable ICT infrastructure codeployment both among the group of neighbour countries and inside of one country to pledge and then justify infrastructure co-deployment.

Co-deployment Partnership Portal

The Partnership Portal on Co-deployment¹¹ is a generic online facility to assess co-deployment opportunities, set up bilateral and multilateral partnership communication, generate interests and commitments as well as initiate co-deployment projects. The essence of the tool is in its powerful technical and substantial backup with pre-assessed measurement, background database and programmed calculating algorithms, which have been developed by a highly professional team of ICT and infrastructure co-deployment experts.

To communicate it among target countries and their interested institutions and then to train experts, the ESCAP Secretariat invited ITTLLDC to collaborate. Experts representing the state-owned enterprises in the energy sector, private telecommunication operators took part in the online training session for Kyrgyzstan held on May 21, 2021. ITTLLDC employed its expertise to test the portal and share professional views on possible improvements and the vision of the future for the country and relevant ministries, agencies, and state-owned as well as private companies with the co-deployment portal.

Simulator of the Integrated Infrastructure Corridors

The Simulator of the Integrated Infrastructure Corridors¹² is logically bound with the above codeployment portal and serves for in-depth assessment and justification of the benefits of

the infrastructure co-deployment within agreed and planned integrated corridors. The Simulator includes among others the **Almaty – Cholpon-Ata** integrated transport corridor, which was

<u>/02UAIUa/02USIIai Sileeva.</u>

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge

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products/Output%202%20Methodology Part II EN 2.pdf ¹¹ https://drrgateway.net/partnership-portal-co-deployment

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https://broadband.shinyapps.io/SmartCorridorsSimulator/

⁷ CASA-1000: <u>http://www.casa-1000.org</u>.

⁸ https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-

<u>Presence/CIS/Documents/Events/2018/06_Dushanbe/Presentations/ITU%20Workshop%2029%20May%202018%20-%20Aida%20Sharsheeva.pdf</u>

https://unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/National Report Kyrgyzstan Russian ids.pdf

¹⁰

proposed by experts from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan at the joint workshop of the RECI project in October, 2019. Following the proposal of country experts at the above workshop the ESCAP Secretariat conducted an in-depth study¹³ and made Almaty - Cholpon-Ata a model corridor for infrastructure co-deployment.

ITTLLDC employed its expertise to test the Simulator and to communicate the benefits of using it among relevant government agencies as well as research and development institutions and private companies.

¹³

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge s

Conclusions and Recommendations

The way ahead with the e-resilience readiness monitoring dashboard

- The Dashboard enables decision makers and experts in Kyrgyzstan to assess and compare where the country stands with ICT, e-services and e-businesses, and then foster their development to be better prepared and e-resilient to pandemics and the other extreme events. Further use of it would allow to trace and compare the progress made, build regular millstone reporting and enable the formulation of regulations, policies and decisions. The shared use of the dashboard would also cooperation leverage the respective countries and set up the baseline for developing joint and country programmes and actions.
- Kyrgyzstan may put more efforts to improve online financial services, social networks, and online services (OSI), which may include the development of a national portal, e-services portal, and eparticipation portal, as well as the websites of the related ministries of education, labour, social services, health, finance, and environment, as applicable.
- Kyrgyzstan is highly regarded in the digitalization level of businesses and mobile applications. Nevertheless, neither e-commerce nor emerging technologies have reached their full potential yet. Therefore, expanded investment and promotion for advanced technologies from both public and private sectors are required to adopt new systems and applications in accordance with the enhancement of e-resilience.

Infrastructure co-deployment

- Fyrgyzstan declares that international land transport corridors are among the key development priorities of the country in the coming 10 to 20 years. A Road infrastructure development is underway and there is a plan to extend the railway network, connecting Kyrgyzstan with China and Uzbekistan as well as internally. Power transmission lines are also developing. All these give an excellent opportunity for co-deployed development of the infrastructure specifically with ICT.
- ➤ The studies¹⁵ and online tools developed by the ESCAP Secretariat give a foundation and capability to leverage infrastructure codeployment both inside of Kyrgyzstan and with neighboring countries while planning co-deployed development of the cross-border integrated corridors.
- The enhanced interest and cross-sectoral networking that emerged through the use of the co-deployment portal is to foster political will and development of the co-deployment policies, regulations and then strategies, programmes and projects. The Simulator, meanwhile, would visibly and thoroughly demonstrate the benefits of the co-deployment upon reaching pre-feasibility and feasibility phases of the co-deployment.

https://mfa.gov.kg/uploads/content/1036/3ccf962c-a0fc-3e32-b2f0-5580bfc79401.pdf

¹⁴ National Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan by 2040. Available at:

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Output%203%20Calculus%20Part III EN 2.pdf

Acknowledgement

This policy brief was prepared by Talaibek Makeev, ITTLLDC expert in consultation with the ESCAP project secretariat. Peer-review inputs were provided by Aida Karazhanova and Michael Williamson from ESCAP, Vadim Kaptur, Ukraine, and Aziz Abakirov, Kyrgyzstan.

ITTLLDC and UNESCAP secretariat worked together under the regional RECI project "Addressing the transboundary dimensions of the Agenda-2030 through Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) in Asia and the Pacific" (2018-2021) project. This is a follow up to recommendations of the Third Session of the Committee of Information, Communications and Technology and Science, Technology, and Innovation (CICTSTI-3)¹ and the Bishkek Declaration of November 20, 2020, on "Strengthening Regional Cooperation to support Socioeconomic Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19"¹ of the UN Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

ESCAP, in collaboration with the ITTLLDC helped Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia to assess the needs and then to develop online tools for measuring e-resilience readiness, enabling and simulating ICT integration and co-deployment with other infrastructure specifically within the integrated international transport corridors.