



# E-Commerce and the Digital Economy Programme, Phase II (ECDE II)

The rapid development of the digital economy, including digital trade, creates opportunities for developing countries and is a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation.

The E-commerce and the Digital Economy Programme, Phase II (ECDE II) helps policy makers of developing countries, to create favorable framework conditions for E-commerce by supporting them in identifying and removing obstacles to its development and supports the private sector through three pillars: research and analysis, technical assistance and consensus-building.

## Overall goal

ECDE II seeks to enhance inclusive and sustainable development gains and economic benefits from E-commerce for people and businesses in developing countries. It does so by supporting the establishment of favorable framework conditions for E-commerce through the provision of research and analysis on relevant topics, technical assistance on E-commerce strategy, ICT infrastructure, payment solutions, trade logistics and facilitation, legal framework, skills development, financing SMEs and consensus building activities.

## Pillars, activities and outputs

- 1. Research and analysis:** Activities and outputs include the Digital Economy Report, a biannual publication serving as a reference source for policymakers, the production and analysis of statistics, their inclusion in the *UNCTADStat* online database and the *UNCTAD Global Cyberlaw Tracker*, which tracks the state of adoption of E-commerce legislation.
- 2. Technical cooperation:** Activities and outputs include the *E-Trade Readiness Assessments*, which provide an analysis of the E-commerce ecosystems of beneficiary countries and *E-commerce Strategies/Action plans* based on these assessments. Additionally, the *Implementation Support Mechanism* and the *eTrade Reform Tracker* help monitor the implementation of recommendations and support inter-ministerial coordination, while the *eTrade for Women* initiative provides support to women-led E-commerce businesses.
- 3. Consensus building and partnerships:** Activities and outputs include the *Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy*, the

---

### Country/region

Global

---

### Executing agency

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

---

### Duration

2025-2029

---

### Total budget

USD 41,643,138

---

### SECO contribution

CHF 4,000,000

---



*eWeek* and the *eTrade for all* initiative which foster dialogue on the digital economy among UNCTAD member states and the public and private sectors. Moreover, the *Working Group on Measuring E-commerce* advances cooperation on E-commerce measurement, enhances statistics and the *Task Group on Measuring E-commerce Value* develops internationally agreed guidelines and recommendations on E-commerce value.

## Outcomes

**Intermediate outcome 1:** Improved policy environment for reaping gains from E-commerce and the digital economy in developing countries.

1.1: Enhanced understanding of governments of policy options to benefit from E-commerce and the digital economy.

1.2: Improved capacities of governments to establish favorable framework conditions for E-commerce and the digital economy.

1.3: Increased intergovernmental consensus on how to foster gains from E-commerce and the digital economy.

1.4: Improved capacities of women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries to take advantage of the digital transformation.

**Intermediate outcome 2:** More effective, efficient, transparent and well-resourced international multi-stakeholder digital cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development gains.

2.1: Strengthened multi-stakeholder dialogue, coordination and partnerships on E-commerce and the digital economy.

## Results of the previous phase

ECDE I led to 79% of developing economies adopting laws related to E-commerce, 25 reporting progress in implementing the Programme's recommendations, 8 with a strategy on E-commerce addressing gender, 17 supplying UNCTAD with data related to E-commerce, 28 development partners incorporating E-commerce in their development assistance plans and 3.5% of resources to support Aid for Trade per year dedicated to E-commerce. The *eTrade for Women* has involved 32 partnerships aimed at increasing business opportunities, 81 advocacy actions, 77% of participants with bigger confidence and networks, 50% experiencing growth and many reporting jobs creation. ECDE I has contributed to increasing the proportion of individuals using the Internet for purchasing or ordering goods or services in developing economies of 7.8%. It intervened in Peru, Tunisia and Ghana and led for example to the digitalization of Tunisia's Central Bank's information system and procedures to facilitate cross-border E-commerce.

## Governance structure

The ECDE Branch of UNCTAD's Division on Technology and Logistics administers the day-to-day operation of the ECDE Programme. The Branch has dedicated staff for each pillar responsible for the programme management and quality control. A multi-year activity plan helps the Branch to prioritise its work based on available funds, demands for assistance from developing countries and LDCs and donors' priorities. Requests for technical assistance are processed, in principle, on a first-come-first-served basis. The Branch collaborates with a wide network of institutions, including the 35 partners of the *eTrade for all* initiative, that participate in programme activities according to their specific expertise in E-commerce and the digital economy. Swiss local representations are involved when activities are conducted in their countries. They explore and ensure synergies with existing Swiss activities. SECO is part of an advisory board of core donors, which provides strategic advice on the steering of the programme. It approves annual reports, monitors the progress on programme outcomes and discusses operational adjustments in accordance with new trends and priorities.


## How to get involved


Governments interested in an *E-Trade Readiness Assessment* or other ECDE activities must submit a formal request to UNCTAD through the Office of the Secretary-General.

**seco-cooperation.admin.ch**

Rules-based trade system



Follow us on   
[www.instagram.com/  
seco\\_cooperation/](https://www.instagram.com/seco_cooperation/)

Follow us on   
[www.linkedin.com/company/  
seco-cooperation](https://www.linkedin.com/company/seco-cooperation/)

ECDE Programme at UNCTAD:  
[ecde@unctad.org](mailto:ecde@unctad.org)

ECDE Programme at SECO:  
[info.wehu@seco.admin.ch](mailto:info.wehu@seco.admin.ch)

WEHU 2026