Consultation workshop on implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action
4 November 2025, Mongolia

Leveraging Transformative Potential of Trade Integration and Facilitation for the Implementation of the APOA

Trade, Investment and Innovation Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

VPoA and APoA Comparison: Trade, trade facilitation, and regional integration

	VPoA (2014–2024)	APoA (2024–2034)
Structure	**Trade, Trade Facilitation (P3)** and **Regional Integration and Cooperation (P4)** were separate, standalone priorities.	**Trade, Trade Facilitation, and Regional Integration (P2)** are merged into a single priority area.
Trade (Market Access, Diversification)	Focused on expanding overall trade volume **(P2)** and enhancing **structural transformation(P1)**	Focuses on **accelerated diversification** into higher value-added goods and especially **digital services exports**
Trade Facilitation	Focused on **rinitial implementation** of the **WTO TFA**	Focuses on **full, harmonized, and digital implementation** of the TFA, specifically through **Paperless Trade, NSW, and digital transit systems**
Regional Integration	Focused on deepening **traditional regional trade agreements** to create larger, competitive markets.	Focuses on deeper **integration** to build **resilient regional value chains** and align policies to withstand global shocks (linking trade to P4 on resilience).

Digital trade is a cross-cutting enabler

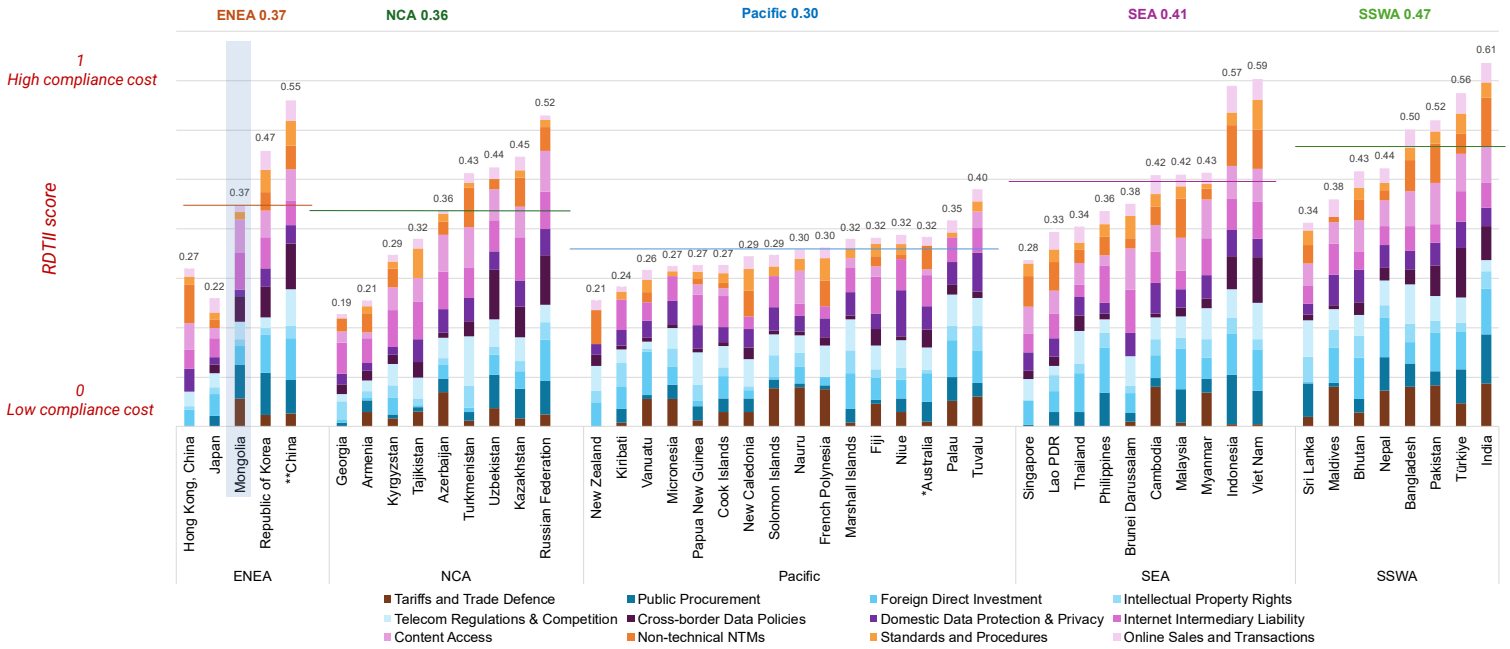
APoA Priority	Expected Outcome	How Digital Trade Helps	Key Areas that Trade Integration needs to support
P1: Structural Transformation & STI	Diversified, high-value, and innovative economy.	**Creates digital export sectors** (services). Boosts manufacturing efficiency via **data/digital tools**.	**Data Governance and Intellectual Property (IP) Protection**
P2: Trade, Trade Facilitation, & Regional Integration	Reduced trade costs/time; deeper integration.	**Paperless trade, Cross-border ecommerce** expands market access, **Digital service** exports	**Digitalization of Customs, Data Governance, Digital platforms, E-commerce and Online Transactions, Digital Trade Agreements (DTAs)**
P3: Transit, Transport, & Connectivity	Reduced transit time and cost.	Digitalizes logistics and monitoring for transparency. Optimizes asset use with smart systems.	**Data exchange, Digital documents**

State of play

Digital trade environment

Based on 48 Asia-Pacific economies, **Mongolia**'s cost of compliance is higher than 27 economies in the region

Asia-Pacific RDTII 2.0 average scores, by subregions, 2024-25



Traditional trade policies

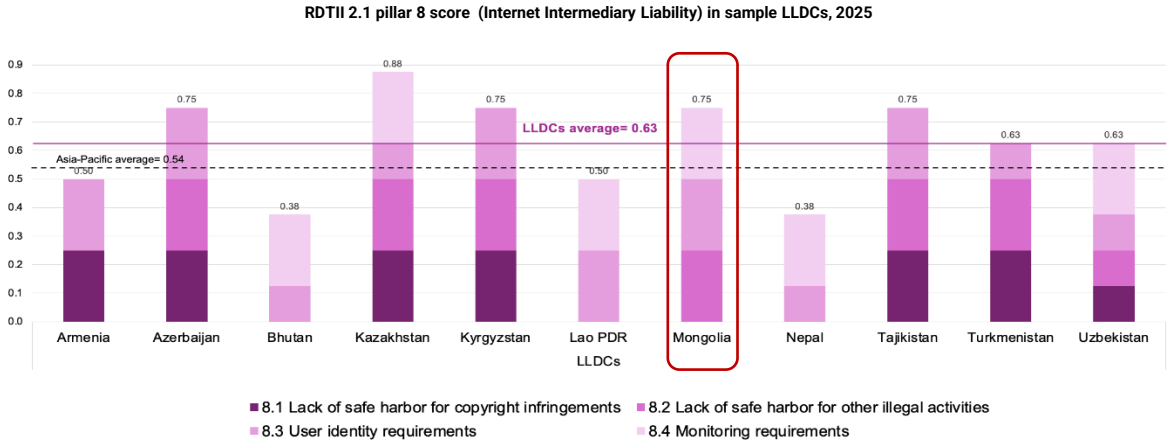
Other domestic policies

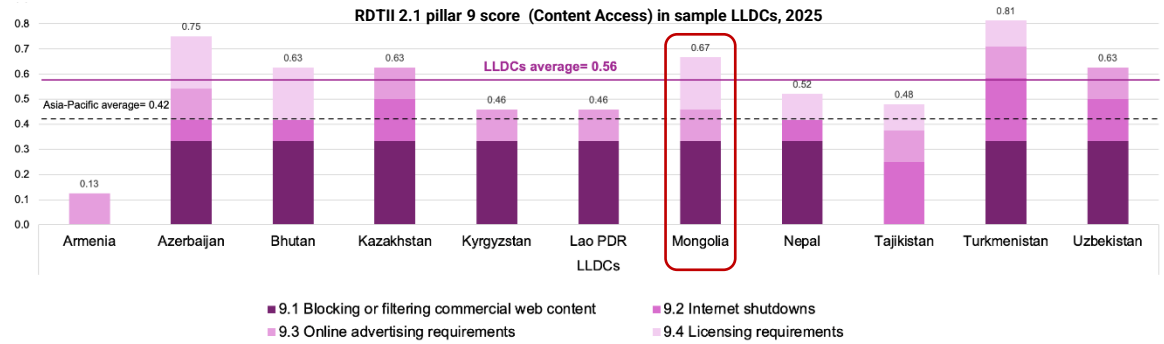
Digital governance

* Preliminary data only
** Based on initial data from EUI
*** Not all members shown

Source: Regional Digital Trade Integration Index (RDTII), https://www.unescap.org/projects/rcdtra

Regulations affecting e--platforms





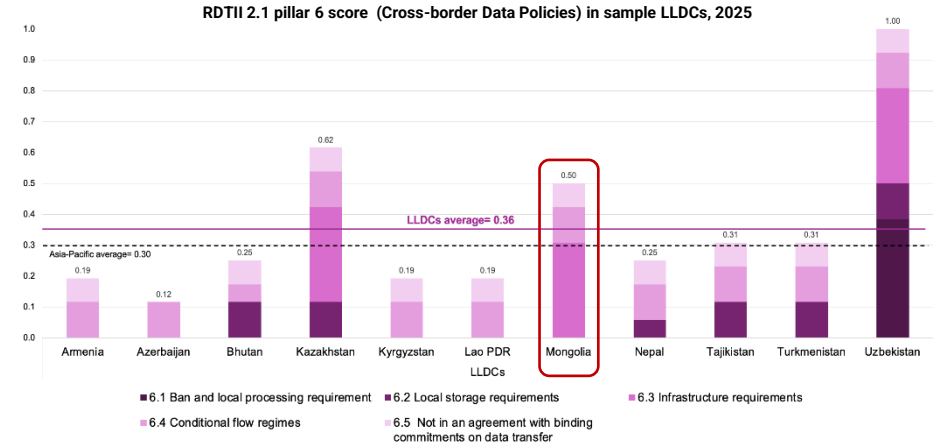
Source: ESCAP RDTII Database, available at https://www.unescap.org/projects/rcdtra/databases-kp

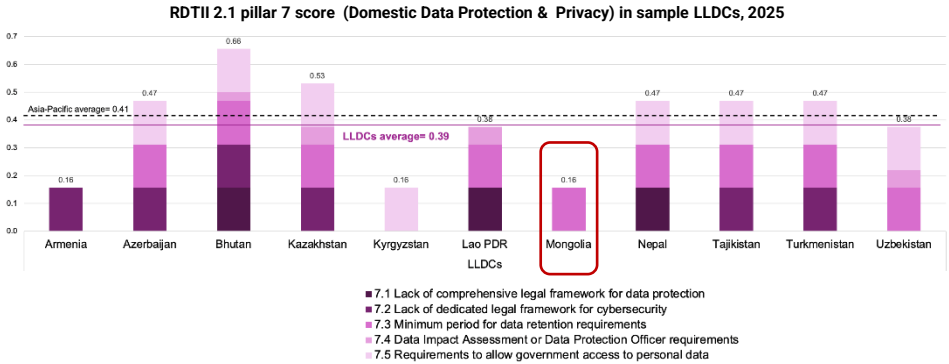
Shared complexity among LLDCs:

- ❑ Lack of safe harbor regimes to protect online intermediaries
- ❑ Costs to verify/record personal information, monitor activities, and remove/block content of users
- ❑ Practice of blocking/filtering commercial web content
- ❑ Limitations affecting online advertising

Mongolia requires licenses and user activities monitoring to online platforms, yet shields them from copyright liability and rarely cuts the internet.

Regulaitons affecting trust: Data governance and cybersecurity





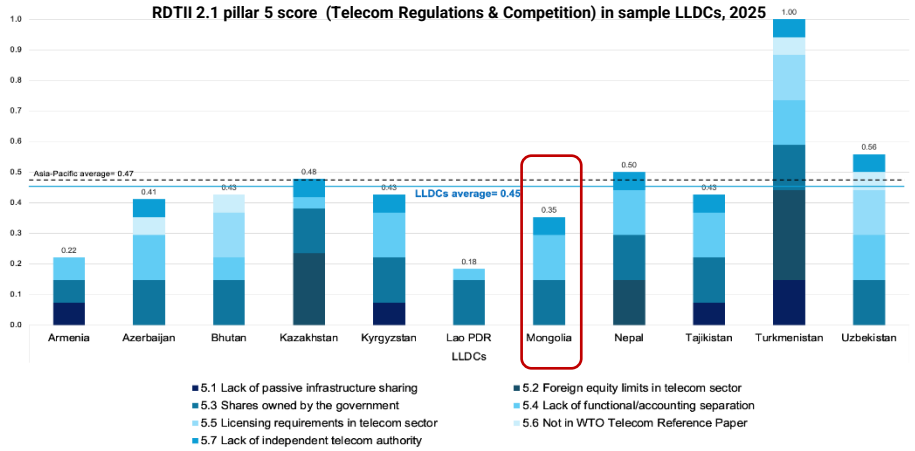
Source: ESCAP RDTII Database, available at https://www.unescap.org/projects/rcdtra/databases-kp

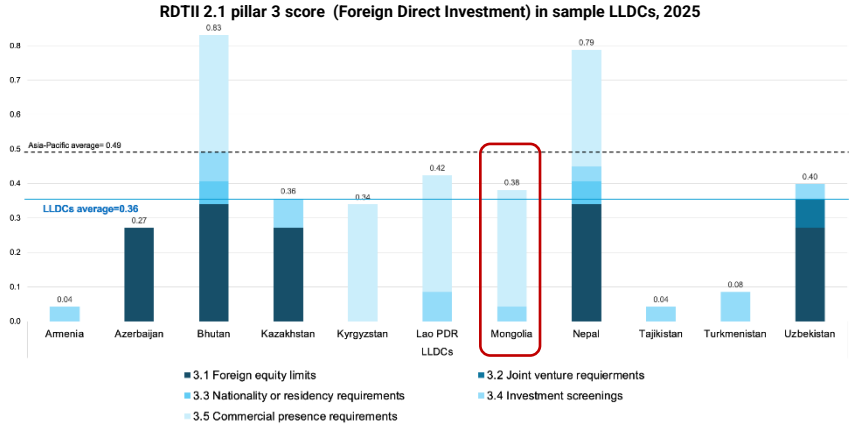
Shared complexity among LLDCs:

- ❑ Not in an agreement with binding commitments on data transfer
- ❑ Varied conditions on data flows
- ❑ Insufficient legal protection for data- and cyber security
- ❑ Governments power to access personal data without explicit authorization

Mongolia has relatively stringent cross-border data policies, but it boasts robust data-protection and cybersecurity rules.

Regulations affecting digital infrastructure and FDI





Source: ESCAP RDTII Database, available at https://www.unescap.org/projects/rcdtra/databases-kp

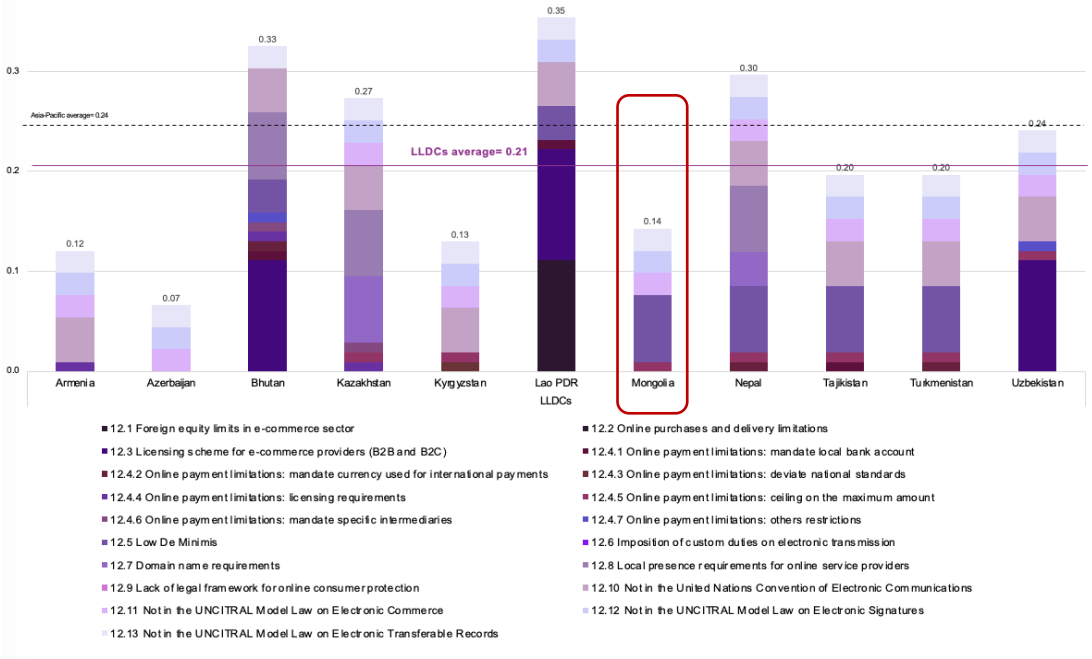
Shared complexity among LLDCs:

- ❑ Barriers exist in digital infrastructure settings, and regulatory fragmentation in investment
- ❑ Foreign equity limitations and government dominance in the telecom sector might impact the competition environment
- ❑ Lack of accounting/functional separation decreases transparency
- ❑ Lack of independent telecom authority
- ❑ Some LLDCs allow government to review/block foreign M&A
- ❑ Several LLDCs economies require foreign service providers to establish commercial presence

Mongolia is relatively open (infrastructure sharing mandate, WTO Telecom Paper, and no bans on foreign equity), yet requires a local presence and has state-owned telecom.

Regulations affecting E-transaction

RDTII 2.1 pillar 12 score (Online Sales & Transactions) in sample LLDC economies, 2025



Shared complexity among LLDCs:

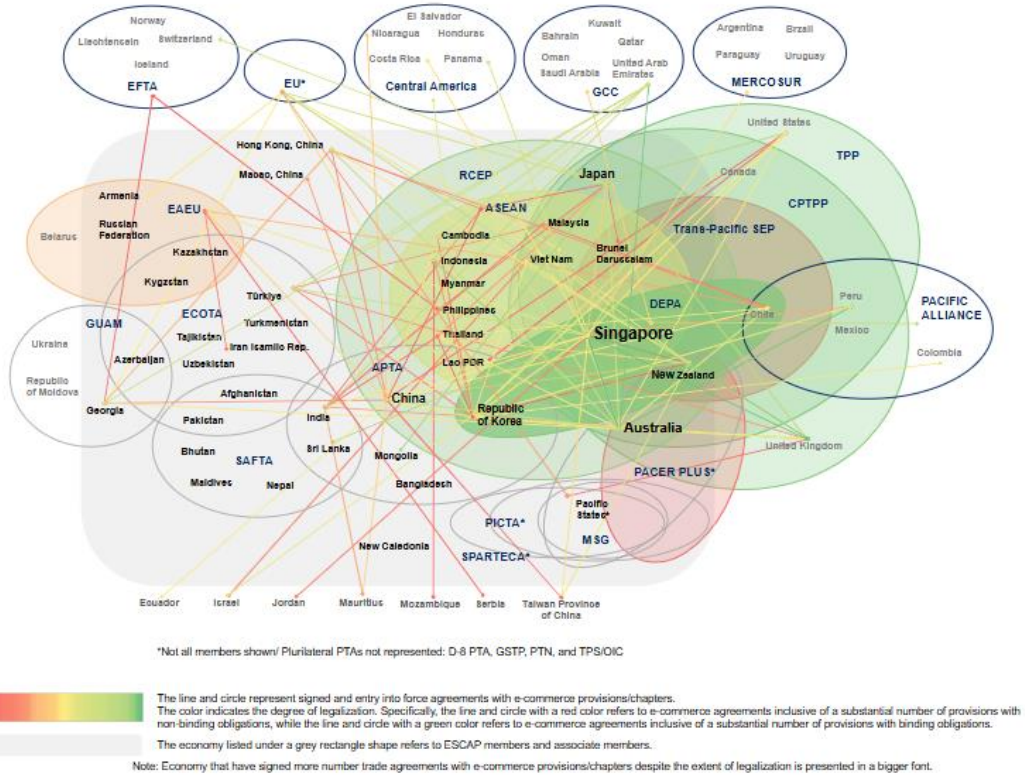
- Lack of reference to **global** legal frameworks
- Low **de minimis** thresholds for cross-border shipments of low consignment
- Limits in online payments, particularly on ceiling on the **maximum transaction** values

Mongolia places few limits on e-commerce, but like other LLDCs, it stays outside most global model laws and keeps a low de minimis threshold.

Source: ESCAP RDTII Database, available at https://www.unescap.org/projects/rcdtra/databases-kp

Participation in Trade Agreements with Digital Trade Provisions

Most Asia-Pacific LLDCs, including Mongolia, have limited participation in trade agreements that include provisions relevant to digital trade



*Not all members shown/ Plurilateral PTAs not represented: D-8 PTA, GSTP, PTN, and TPS/OIC

The line and circle represent signed and entry into force agreements with e-commerce provisions/chapters.
The color indicates the degree of legalization. Specifically, the line and circle with a red color refers to e-commerce agreements inclusive of a substantial number of provisions with non-binding obligations, while the line and circle with a green color refers to e-commerce agreements inclusive of a substantial number of provisions with binding obligations.

The economy listed under a grey rectangle shape refers to ESCAP members and associate members.

Note: Economy that have signed more number trade agreements with e-commerce provisions/chapters despite the extent of legalization is presented in a bigger font.

Source: ESCAP (2024) https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/preferential-trade-agreements-trends-and-developments-asia-and-pacific-20242025

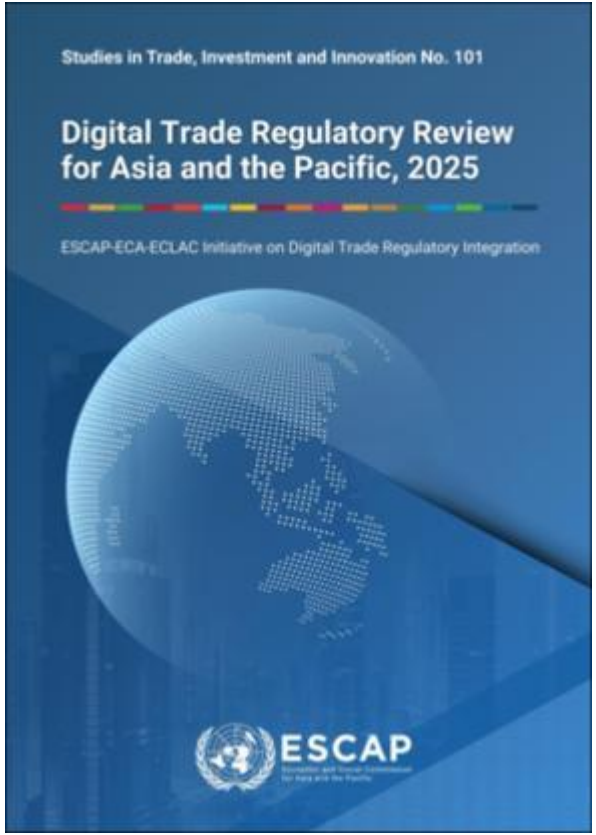
Conclusion

The APoA provides the framework, but only targeted policy action can eliminate the regulatory friction and fully unlock the potential economic transformation.

ESCAP is positioned to support by:

- Provides Technical Assistance for implementing the Cross-border Paperless Trade Agreement, ensuring full digital implementation of the WTO TFA.
- Utilizes the RDTII framework to diagnose and benchmark regulations, offering capacity building for Data Governance, E-commerce
- Offers Analytical and Technical Support for effectively negotiate and implement Digital Trade Agreements (DTAs), addressing the 'Integration Gap' and securing market access.
- Generates action-oriented research on diversification and high-value digital sectors, and higher-value economic activities
- Convene LLDCs and transit countries, fostering regional cooperation for digital trade and transport connectivity

THANK YOU



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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

https://www.unescap.org/kp/2025/digital-trade-regulatory-review-asia-pacific-2025