



# CAREC Digital Strategy 2030: Mid-Term Review

Preliminary Findings

Special CAREC High-Level Meeting on  
CAREC Digital Strategy 2030 Midterm Review (MTR)  
26 June 2025  
Manila, Philippines



# The Role of Digital Strategy Committee

The **CAREC Digital Strategy Steering Committee** has been established to **Drive the Implementation** of the CAREC Digital Strategy 2030.

**Led and constituted** by Governments of the CAREC member countries,

**Facilitated** by the CAREC Secretariat.

Chaired by CAREC countries on a **Rotational Basis** following the CAREC chairmanship rules.

Based on **Mutual Good Will** and an **inclusive multi-stakeholder consultation model**.



# CAREC Regional Digital Development Highlights (2020–2025)

## Key Developments:

- **Internet Penetration:** Increased from <50% (2019) to 70% (2025).
- **Regional Connectivity:** Trans-Caspian Fiber Optic Cable linking Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan (Proposed)
- **Digital Logistics:** CAREC Advanced Transit System pilot to streamline cross-border logistics (In Progress)
- **E-Learning Expansion:** National platforms in Georgia (500,000 students) and Uzbekistan (1 million students), Pakistan produces 50,000+ annual ICT graduates, and exports to 170+ countries.

## E-Government:

- Significant improvements in digital service delivery from all CAREC countries, with major public services available online.
- Adoption of paperless trade, reduced trade costs and facilitate trade

# Pillar 1 - Leadership, Governance & Investment

- **Leadership Commitment:**

- Established in 2021, the CAREC Digital Strategy Steering Committee and annual forums support cross-country policy alignment.

- **Targeted Investments:**

- Kazakhstan's \$500M investment via "Digital Kazakhstan 2025" drove penetration to 96%;
- Uzbekistan's ambitious \$1B "Digital Uzbekistan 2030" expanded internet coverage to 75%.
- Georgia mobilized over \$100M in private funds through innovative public-private partnerships.
- People's Republic of China (PRC) pledged \$209M in grants to support the development of digital infrastructure in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

- **Governance:**

- Kazakhstan's Ministry of Digital Development "Digital Kazakhstan 2025", Uzbekistan's Agency of Communications & Technology, Azerbaijan's "National Digital Transformation Program 2025", Georgia's Digital Governance Agency (2022) for digital policy and cybersecurity, and Tajikistan's Agency for Innovation and Digital Technologies (2024), etc.

- **Capacity Building:**

- Regular CAREC senior official training programs on digital leadership and policy management.

## Pillar 2 - Digital Policy Enablers & Safeguards

- **Regulation, Data Protection & Privacy:**

- Kazakhstan's data protection legislation (2023) aligned with global standards
- Azerbaijan's comprehensive cybersecurity regulatory framework (2024)
- Mongolia's Telecom Law 2022 & Digital Nation Strategy & Guidelines (2022–2027)
- Tajikistan's comprehensive cybersecurity and digital identity legislation
- Digital Nation Pakistan Bill 2025
- Turkmenistan 2020–2025 Digital Transformation Strategy

- **Cybersecurity Cooperation:**

- Azerbaijan leads regional cybersecurity workshops and training
- CAREC-wide cybersecurity standards harmonization efforts and policy roundtables

- **Inclusive Digital Policies:**

- Georgia's "Internet for All" initiative expanded digital access.
- Kazakhstan's community IT centers improved rural digital inclusion
- Uzbekistan's targeted training for women IT entrepreneurs.
- Mongolia's DEMOSC project for rural and underserved areas

## Pillar 3 - Infrastructure, Resilience & Platforms

- **Infrastructure Development:**
- **Fiber-Optic Expansion:**
  - Kazakhstan invested \$200M in fiber-optic backbone enhancements.
  - Uzbekistan committed \$300M to digital infrastructure improvements.
  - Tajikistan enhanced international connectivity via fiber-optic expansion with the People's Republic of China.
  - People's Republic of China installed 3.837M 5G base stations by May 2024
- **Digital Platforms & Interoperability:**
  - Kyrgyz Republic's Tunduk platform interconnected over 70 government agencies.
  - Trans-Caspian Fiber Optic Cable (proposed).
  - CAREC exploring regional trusted digital identity frameworks for cross-border service interoperability (in progress)
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:**
  - Renewable-powered data centers in Uzbekistan (2023), Kazakhstan, and Georgia.
  - Solar-powered telecom towers for rural connectivity in Pakistan

## Pillar 4 - Digital Skills & Competencies

- **Skill Development Initiatives:**
- **Digital Literacy Programs:**
  - Georgia raised digital literacy from 60% to 85% via national e-learning.
  - Uzbekistan's ICT training programs reached over 500,000 participants by 2023, with 40% female participation.
  - Kazakhstan achieved 92.8% national digital literacy.
- **Youth & Entrepreneurial Engagement:**
  - CAREC University Startup Competition fosters regional youth innovation.
  - CAREC regional coding bootcamps and hackathons promote ICT skills.
- **Gender Inclusion Efforts:**
  - Initiatives to address digital gender gaps, particularly in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.

## Pillar 5 - Innovation & ICT Competitiveness

- **Startup Ecosystems:**

**Baku Innovation Hub** Azerbaijan, **Torch Program & China International Technology Transfer Center (CITTC)** PRC, **Innovative Startup Acceleration Program (GITA)** Georgia, **Astana Hub** Kazakhstan, **Kyrgyzstan Accelerator Lab** Kyrgyz Republic, **MonJa Startup Accelerator** Mongolia, **Ignite & National Incubation Centers** Pakistan, **State Business Incubator** Tajikistan, **Startup Ecosystem National Program** Turkmenistan, and the **IT Park Uzbekistan** have supported thousands of startups and provided millions of VC backed investments.

- **Regional Innovation Networks:**

- CAREC Innovation Week and Digital Economy Tour in Hangzhou (2023/2024), creating cross-border startup collaborations.

- **Competitiveness & Rankings:**

- China ranks 11th globally in the Global Innovation Index (2024), making it the top-performing upper-middle-income economy. Significant improvements have also been recorded for Kazakhstan (from 79th to 48th) and Azerbaijan (from 82nd to 53rd). Other Central and South Asian countries, including Georgia (57th), Kyrgyzstan (99th), Tajikistan (107th), Pakistan (91st), and Uzbekistan (83rd), have also improved their rankings.



# Key Sector Transformations

- **Digital Health:**
  - Uzbekistan's telemedicine initiative provided services to over 2 million people; Kazakhstan's covered 75% of the population, including rural areas.
- **Digital Education:**
  - Georgia's national e-learning platform engaged 500,000 students.
  - Uzbekistan expanded its digital education infrastructure for 1 million students.
- **Digital Trade & Logistics:**
  - CAREC Advanced Transit System: Broader digital logistics platform across AZE, KAZ, GEO, KGZ streamlining cargo transit (~40% faster), complemented by customs digitization via e-TIR.
  - Digital Rail Corridor (AZE-KAZ-GEO) – an integrated rail logistics platform reducing cargo transit times by ~30%, operational delays by 40%, and increasing regional freight volume by 15% (since 2024).
  - Kazakhstan's Single Window Customs and Kyrgyzstan's Electronic Customs Clearance System (ECCS) each reduced clearance times by 30%
- **Digital Payments:**
  - Pakistan's Rast instant payment system facilitated over 892 million transactions by 2025. All other CAREC countries have significant numbers for their digital payment solutions.

## Cross-Border Cooperation Achievements

- **KGZ's Tunduk platform** improved cross-border administrative data exchange and service delivery.
- **Silk Visa and KAZ's QR permits** eased travel and legal work for UZB citizens.
- **AZE, KAZ, and GEO** launched a digital rail corridor to boost regional trade. The three countries are working on mutual digital signature recognition for smoother transactions.
- **Digital remittance platforms** improved money transfers, especially between KAZ and KGZ.
- **KAZ and UZB's satellite monitoring** cut disaster response time by 20% and improved flood readiness.
- **Would you like to share a similar project?**

## Emerging Technologies & Green Initiatives (Few Examples)

- **AI in Farming** – 15% yield gain (KAZ)
- **AI in Customs Procedure** – GEO pilot
- **AI Chatbots** – Public services (AZE)
- **Smart Cities** – KAZ, UZB, TAJ improve efficiency
- **Smart Agri (IoT)** – UZB, AZE pilot projects
- **Green Infrastructure** – Data centres, solar towers (PAK)
- **Satellites** – Water/disaster coordination (KAZ–UZB)
- **Blockchain** – Property (AZE), Agri traceability (UZB), Certificate of Origin (MON)
- **What Regional project can be initiated?**

## Strategic Recommendations

### 2025-2030

- Create Regional **Governance models** based on ASEAN and EU digital integration.
- Use **blended finance and PPPs** to boost infrastructure investment.
- Scale **successful pilots and align regulations** through dialogue and workshops.
- Launch **digital skills programs** for women and rural communities using global models.
- **Support startups** and innovation through regional forums and partnerships.
- Build **eco-friendly digital infrastructure** powered by renewables.
- Track progress using **global benchmarks** and regular evaluations.

## Governance

### Recommendations

- Strengthen **coordination, oversight**, and national monitoring for effective digital strategy implementation.
- Align **digital goals with sectoral policies** and ensure stakeholder engagement through clear communication.
- **Mobilize investments** and maintain momentum via capacity building, PPPs, and political commitment.