

Trade and Investment Promotion: At the Crossroads of Digital Disruption²⁶

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e-Commerce opens the doors to instant new opportunities and fast-tracks business internationalization at an unprecedented speed. By its very definition, e-commerce enhances export promotion, which is a core service portfolio component of Trade and Investment Promotion Organizations (TIPOs).

Yet e-commerce also challenges the very notion of "export". Increasingly, companies are being "born global" thanks to online platforms, eroding the traditional concept of what it means to export and which companies are able to do it without the support of their national TIPO.

Therefore e-commerce presents both opportunities and challenges for TIPOs. With the private sector now able to access trade information and potential clients at little to no cost via digital platforms, many traditional services offered by TIPOs are at risk of becoming irrelevant. At the same time, e-commerce is introducing new challenges for businesses which TIPOs could play a role in resolving.

The session will cover some of the following topics:

- The decreasing relevance of the traditional TIPO portfolio of services and the need for new online, targeted & customized services
- Measuring online commerce is difficult; traditional methods (e.g. trade fair participation) are irrelevant and new measures are needed
- Traditional commerce problems remain (customs, certifications, etc.), TIPOs need to reconcile these with the new method of selling online

Moderator: Mr. Martin Labbé, Senior Officer, Institutional Development, International Trade Centre

Speakers:

- Ms. Siv Ahlberg, Programme Director, Finnpartnership - Finnish Business Partnership Programme
- Ms. Indira Malwatte, Chairperson and Chief Executive, Sri Lanka Export Development Board
- Mr. Sebastian Tamás, Director of Innovations, Hungarian National Trading House
- Mr. James Zhan, Director of Investment and Enterprise, UNCTAD