

**INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS AS A FORM OF ECONOMIC INTERACTION IN THE
DIGITAL ECONOMY**

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Abstract: The article examines the role of international projects as a key form of economic interaction in the context of the formation and development of the digital economy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The focus is on the process of digital transformation, which serves as a strategic priority of national development and a crucial factor in enhancing the country's competitiveness in the global economic space. The author analyzes the main areas of Uzbekistan's international cooperation in the field of digitalization, including the attraction of foreign direct investment, partnerships with leading global technology companies, the development of digital infrastructure, and the creation of a favorable environment for the export of IT services and IT outsourcing.

Special attention is paid to the implementation of state programs and strategic policy documents, including the "New Uzbekistan – 2030" Strategy, which defines long-term priorities for digital development, modernization of public administration, and the introduction of innovative technologies in the economy and social sphere. The article highlights the importance of e-government, national digital platforms, the One ID identification system, and interagency data exchange as the foundation for improving the efficiency of public administration and the quality of services provided to citizens and businesses.

A separate section is devoted to the analysis of Uzbekistan's cooperation with international organizations such as UNDP and the World Bank, as well as the country's participation in global initiatives and forums, including GSMA M360 Eurasia. It is shown that these projects contribute to technology transfer, human capital development, the growth of IT service exports, and the formation of a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

In conclusion, the article argues that international digital projects play a system-forming role in shaping a modern, inclusive, and competitive digital economy in Uzbekistan, ensuring its integration into the global digital space.

Keywords: digital economy, international projects, digital transformation, economic interaction, digital infrastructure, e-government, international cooperation, IT services, IT outsourcing, innovations, investments, digital platforms.

Objectives: Digital transformation opens new horizons for international cooperation and economic integration, significantly reshaping traditional models of business operations and public administration. In this context, the Republic of Uzbekistan is actively leveraging global opportunities to build a modern digital economy by developing strategic partnerships and implementing innovative projects. These initiatives are aimed at modernizing national infrastructure, enhancing economic competitiveness, and improving the quality of life of the population through the adoption of advanced digital solutions.

Uzbekistan's participation in international digital projects takes various forms. These include attracting foreign direct investment into the ICT sector, cooperation with leading global

technology companies in the development and implementation of software solutions, as well as the establishment of joint ventures to develop digital infrastructure such as data centers, 5G networks, and fiber-optic communication lines. Examples of such projects include partnerships with South Korean and Chinese companies in the telecommunications sector, as well as cooperation with European organizations in the development of e-government and digital services for citizens and businesses. These projects not only facilitate technology transfer but also stimulate the development of the local IT sector by creating new jobs and enhancing the skills of local professionals.

One of the key areas is the development of the export potential of IT services. Uzbekistan is actively working to create favorable conditions for IT outsourcing by attracting foreign companies to locate their operations in the country's technology parks, such as IT Park Uzbekistan. International projects in this area include workforce training programs aligned with global standards, as well as the creation of logistical and regulatory mechanisms that facilitate cross-border trade in digital services. For example, initiatives aimed at standardizing digital payment systems and simplifying customs procedures for e-commerce directly contribute to Uzbekistan's integration into global digital supply chains.

Overall, international projects play a critically important role in shaping a sustainable and competitive digital economy in Uzbekistan. They provide access to advanced technologies, knowledge, and capital, and also contribute to the harmonization of national standards with international ones. Further deepening of such cooperation will allow Uzbekistan not only to become a regional digital hub but also to significantly strengthen its position on the global stage, effectively leveraging the advantages of the digital era for comprehensive socio-economic development.

In 2023, the New Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy was approved as a foundational document for digital transformation, defining the country's development vector for the coming decade. This strategy is aimed at building a modern information society and forming a high-tech economy. It covers key areas, including the development of digital infrastructure, e-government, the digital industry, as well as the integration of digital technologies into social spheres and sectors of the economy.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated: “Without a digital economy, there is no future for the country's economy,”—a clear vision of the national strategy that underscores the urgency and strategic importance of digital transformation for Uzbekistan's future. This statement has formed the basis of many government programs and initiatives, stimulating the active implementation of innovations at all levels of governance and across all sectors.

The Republic of Uzbekistan demonstrates a strategic commitment to digital transformation at the highest state level. The national strategy represents a comprehensive approach to economic modernization, where digital technologies act as a catalyst for growth and innovation. This is not merely a technological upgrade—it is a fundamental restructuring of the country's economic model aimed at enhancing global competitiveness and integrating into the global digital space. Particular emphasis is placed not only on the adoption of technologies but also on the development of human capital capable of effectively operating in the new digital reality.

Methodology: Digital transformation in Uzbekistan is viewed as a critically important instrument for achieving sustainable economic development, creating new jobs, and improving the quality of life of citizens. The country's leadership recognizes that in the modern world, economic sovereignty and prosperity directly depend on a nation's ability to master and implement advanced digital technologies, integrate into global digital value chains, and attract international investment into high-tech sectors. Significant efforts are being made to create a favorable environment for innovation, including the development of a legal framework, tax incentives, and

infrastructure for IT companies and startups. These measures are designed to stimulate the growth of the domestic digital industry and attract leading global technology partners.

In the context of global challenges and opportunities, Uzbekistan is actively seeking ways to strengthen international cooperation in the field of digitalization. This is reflected in participation in international projects, the exchange of experience with advanced countries, and the attraction of foreign investment and expertise to implement large-scale digital initiatives. Digitalization efforts are aimed at transforming Uzbekistan into a regional digital hub capable of offering innovative solutions and attracting highly qualified specialists. Such ambitions require in-depth analysis of global experience and the adaptation of best practices to ensure sustainable and inclusive digital development.

A specialized Digital Government Project Management Center has been established as a single coordinating body to ensure a systemic approach to the implementation of digital reforms and the synchronization of efforts across various government agencies. Its mandate includes the development and implementation of strategic roadmaps, progress monitoring, and ensuring compliance with international digitalization standards. The Center plays a key role in ensuring system interoperability and the harmonization of legislation.

In terms of scale, more than 760 types of digital public services have been developed and implemented, covering such vital areas as obtaining certificates, business registration, payment of taxes and fines, and the processing of subsidies. These services have already been used by more than 10 million citizens and legal entities, indicating a mass transition to electronic interaction between the state and society, significantly saving users' time and resources while reducing corruption risks.

A Unified Citizen Identification System (One ID) has been introduced, providing secure, convenient, and unified access to all government digital services through a single account. This significantly simplifies citizens' interaction with the state by eliminating the need for multiple registrations and enhancing the security of personal data.

Table 1

Main Areas of International Digital Projects of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Area of Cooperation	Content and Characteristics	Expected Economic Effects
Development of digital infrastructure	Construction of data centers, development of 5G networks, and fiber-optic communication lines with the participation of foreign companies	Increased technological independence, growth in economic productivity
E-government	Implementation of digital public services, the One ID system, interagency data exchange	Reduction of administrative barriers, increased transparency and quality of public services
IT outsourcing and export of IT services	Attraction of foreign companies to IT Park Uzbekistan, development of export-oriented IT companies	Growth of foreign currency revenues, job creation
Innovative technologies	Development of AI, blockchain platforms, Web3, and fintech solutions	Formation of an innovation ecosystem, increase in value added
Workforce training	Joint educational programs, improvement of digital literacy	Development of human capital, increased competitiveness of specialists

Integrated information platforms have been developed to enable seamless data exchange between government agencies. These systems eliminate the duplication of information requests from citizens and businesses, increase the speed of decision-making, and enhance the overall efficiency of public administration through the implementation of the “one-stop-shop” principle. Modern payment systems are designed to automate financial transactions related to public services (taxes, fees, fines, and utility payments). They ensure a high level of transparency in government financial operations, minimize the human factor, and provide citizens with convenient payment options through multiple channels, including mobile applications and e-government portals.

The state infrastructure of digital interaction in Uzbekistan represents a multi-level ecosystem in which technological solutions are closely integrated with administrative processes. The establishment of the Digital Government Project Management Center has become a key step in ensuring strategic coordination among various government bodies, unifying approaches to digitalization, and introducing advanced project management practices. This body functions not only as a coordinator but also as a methodological center that develops standards, regulatory documents, and best practices for the entire public administration system, which is critically important for ensuring consistency and quality in the delivery of digital public services.

The implementation of national digital platforms demonstrates a decisive shift from fragmented automation of individual processes to the creation of a holistic, interconnected digital ecosystem of public services. The One ID platform has become a fundamental element in building a trusted environment for electronic interaction, where citizens can securely, quickly, and conveniently access a wide range of government services using a single profile and, where necessary, two-factor authentication. Interagency information systems, in turn, ensure uninterrupted and secure data exchange among government institutions, significantly reducing bureaucratic barriers, accelerating the processing of citizens’ requests, and improving the accuracy of data underlying government decisions. These initiatives lay the foundation for the further development of e-democracy and increased transparency of the public administration apparatus.

Further development of the digital interaction infrastructure includes expanding the range of services integrated with the One ID platform, as well as deepening interagency data exchange. A priority is the introduction of artificial intelligence and big data to personalize public services and enable proactive interaction with citizens. Attention is also given to the development of regional digital infrastructure to ensure equal access to digital opportunities for all residents of Uzbekistan, regardless of their location.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is one of Uzbekistan’s key international partners in implementing its ambitious digital transformation agenda. Its role goes beyond simple financing, focusing instead on strategic support and the introduction of innovative approaches that serve the country’s long-term development. UNDP actively supports not only the deployment of advanced digital solutions but also the development of a comprehensive e-government system and the strengthening of institutional capacity within public authorities, making them more effective and citizen-oriented.

The World Bank acts as a reliable financial partner, providing substantial investments and technical assistance for the development of Uzbekistan’s critically important digital infrastructure. These funds are directed not only toward modernizing networks and data centers but also toward creating new high-skilled jobs in the IT sector and stimulating private sector growth, thereby contributing to economic diversification and the formation of a competitive digital ecosystem. Support covers a wide range of initiatives, from basic infrastructure to innovative startups.

Joint projects of UNDP and the World Bank in Uzbekistan form a solid foundation for sustainable digital transformation aimed at achieving several interrelated strategic goals. First, they focus on increasing the inclusiveness of the digital economy, ensuring access and equal opportunities for all citizens—regardless of geographic location or social status—to benefit from digital technologies and online services. Second, they aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of digital transformation so that implemented solutions are not only innovative but also reliable, scalable, and adaptable to future changes. Third, they promote the large-scale development of digital literacy among the population, which is critically important for active citizen participation in the digital society and economy.

Table 2

Role of international organizations and projects in the digital transformation of Uzbekistan

International Partner / Project	Main Areas of Support	Results and Significance
UNDP	Development of e-government, institutional strengthening, digital inclusion	Improved efficiency of public administration, stronger citizen-oriented governance
World Bank	Financing of digital infrastructure, support for the IT sector and startups	Attraction of investment, private sector development
GSMA M360 Eurasia	International dialogue, telecommunications development, Open Gateway	Integration into global digital value chains, enhancement of the country's technological image
IT Park Uzbekistan	Creation of a preferential environment for IT business, attraction of foreign companies	Growth of IT service exports, formation of a regional IT hub
International venture funds	Investment in startups and innovative projects	Development of the startup ecosystem, support for technological entrepreneurship

These international organizations do not merely provide financial resources and technical assistance; they act as strategic partners, transferring critically important knowledge, advanced methodologies, and global best practices. This process involves adapting international standards to the specific context of Uzbekistan, ensuring maximum effectiveness and relevance of projects. The partnership is built on the principles of co-design, where international expertise complements the deep understanding of local specialists regarding market characteristics, cultural nuances, and societal needs. Such a synergistic approach makes it possible to create solutions that not only meet global standards but are also organically embedded in the national system, delivering tangible benefits to every citizen of Uzbekistan. As a result of this cooperation, Uzbekistan is actively integrating into the global digital space, shaping a modern and inclusive digital future.

The GSMA M360 Eurasia 2025 Forum in Tashkent became a landmark event, demonstrating Uzbekistan's transformation into a key node of Eurasia's digital infrastructure. The participation of more than one thousand leading experts from over sixty countries underscores the country's growing role as a regional technological hub and an attractive platform for international dialogue on the future of digital technologies.

International platforms and projects play a critical role in integrating Uzbekistan into global digital value chains and strengthening its position as a significant regional player. The GSMA M360 Eurasia Forum was not merely a conference but a powerful demonstration of the country's strategic readiness to engage on equal terms with leading global technology companies and

experts. Discussions on cutting-edge topics—such as the deployment of fifth-generation (5G) networks, the application of artificial intelligence across various sectors of the economy (from agriculture to healthcare), and the creation of integrated digital ecosystems—highlight the ambition of Uzbekistan’s plans. The country seeks not only to follow global trends but also to actively participate in shaping the future of the region’s digital economy by offering its own platforms for innovation exchange and partnership. Particular attention was given to cybersecurity, the sustainability of digital infrastructures, and the ethical aspects of deploying new technologies.

The signed agreements on the development of digital infrastructure represent concrete commitments by international partners to transfer technologies, invest in the local IT industry, and train highly qualified personnel. These agreements cover a wide range of areas, including the modernization of communication networks, the expansion of fiber-optic lines, and the implementation of smart solutions for cities and enterprises. The GSMA Open Gateway initiative is of particular importance, as it provides Uzbek developers and companies with access to standardized telecommunications application programming interfaces (APIs). This significantly simplifies the creation of innovative services—such as interactive applications, smart home solutions, and mobile financial services—and facilitates their rapid scaling to regional and global markets. In turn, this stimulates the local innovation ecosystem and enhances the competitiveness of Uzbek IT products.

The establishment of modern data centers not only ensures technological sovereignty by enabling the storage and processing of critically important data within the country, but also creates a reliable foundation for the development of cloud services, big data analytics, and advanced artificial intelligence systems. Investments in data centers attract major IT companies and startups, contributing to job creation, the development of specialized skills, and the formation of a more resilient and independent digital economy.

The IT park system in Uzbekistan has evolved into a powerful engine of economic growth, purposefully facilitating the attraction of foreign direct investment and stimulating technological entrepreneurship. Today, more than 2,800 residents operate actively within these special economic zones. These companies benefit from unprecedented preferential conditions, including substantial tax incentives, simplified administrative procedures, and access to state-of-the-art infrastructure. Such an environment minimizes barriers to entry and growth, allowing startups and large enterprises alike to focus on innovation and scaling.

The presence of 752 foreign companies in IT parks is a vivid indicator of Uzbekistan’s growing global attractiveness as a strategic location for IT business. These international corporations not only create new jobs but also play a key role in the transfer of advanced technologies, software development methodologies, project management standards, and global best practices. This process enriches the local IT sector, significantly upgrading the skills of Uzbek specialists and integrating them into the global technology industry. Many of these companies are engaged in IT process outsourcing, software development, and the establishment of R&D centers, contributing to the formation of a highly competitive environment.

Importantly, IT parks are developing not only in the capital but also in the regions, creating new growth points and decentralizing the IT industry. This supports balanced national development and provides opportunities for young talent outside Tashkent, ensuring access to high-paying jobs and modern technologies across the country.

The impressive growth of IT services exports—from USD 170 million to nearly USD 1 billion in just five years—is undeniable evidence of the effectiveness of the chosen IT sector development strategy. This almost sixfold increase reflects not only quantitative expansion but also a qualitative leap, confirming that Uzbek IT companies are successfully competing in international

markets by offering high-quality services in software development, IT outsourcing, digital solutions, and consulting. It underscores the ability of local teams not only to deliver complex projects but also to adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the global market.

At the same time, the attraction of USD 70 million in venture capital investment into startups serves as a strong indicator of the emergence of a mature and dynamically developing innovation ecosystem. These investments provide more than just financial support for young companies; they signal a high level of investor confidence in the Uzbek market. Venture funds and business angels increasingly view Uzbekistan not only as a promising market with growing domestic demand for digital services, but also as a favorable environment for startups with ambitious teams capable of creating innovative products and scaling them at both regional and global levels. This amount reflects confidence in the long-term potential of Uzbekistan's IT sector and its capacity to generate high value added.

Future prospects are associated with the deepening specialization of IT parks, the development of niche areas such as FinTech, AI, EdTech, and GameDev, and the creation of even more favorable conditions for attracting high-tech companies. The Uzbek authorities continue to actively improve the legislative framework and develop infrastructure to strengthen the country's position as a regional IT hub.

The national blockchain platform represents an ambitious initiative aimed at deeply integrating distributed ledger technologies into critical areas of public administration and the economy. The objective is not merely automation, but a radical increase in transparency, a reduction in corruption risks, and the обеспечение of maximum data security. Blockchain has the potential to revolutionize areas such as the land cadastre by ensuring the immutability of property rights and eliminating the possibility of falsification. It also simplifies customs clearance through the use of smart contracts, which are automatically executed once predefined conditions are met, significantly accelerating logistics chains. In addition, the technology enables the automation of social benefit payments, ensuring their targeted and timely delivery, as well as the creation of an immutable and secure system for storing medical data—critically important for the development of telemedicine and personalized healthcare.

The concept of "Uzbekistan Blockchain Valley" creates a unique innovation ecosystem where companies, startups, and developers can test breakthrough technological solutions—especially in the fields of blockchain and Web3—without the risk of violating existing legislation. This is a safe and controlled experimental environment in which regulators and innovators work together not only to pilot new products and services, but also to shape new rules of the game and regulatory frameworks. This approach allows the country to remain at the forefront of technological progress rather than catching up with it.

The decision by the Uzbek authorities to exempt crypto-asset transactions from taxation clearly demonstrates a progressive and forward-looking approach to regulating emerging technologies. Instead of restrictive measures or ignoring the cryptocurrency phenomenon, the government has chosen a strategy of active engagement and the creation of highly attractive conditions for the legal development of the industry. This significantly enhances investment attractiveness and contributes to the formation of Uzbekistan's reputation as an innovation-friendly country.

The national mining pool brings together the computing capacities of both local and foreign companies, positioning Uzbekistan as a regional mining center due to access to relatively affordable and stable electricity and a favorable regulatory environment. This step generates substantial economic benefits, including the creation of new high-tech jobs and the attraction of foreign direct investment. Moreover, it stimulates the development of related industries, such as the production and maintenance of specialized mining equipment, the development of cooling

systems, the creation and support of software for managing mining farms, and the expansion of data center infrastructure.

Overall, Uzbekistan is actively building a comprehensive digital ecosystem that attracts leading global IT players and ensures sustainable economic growth through the adoption of advanced technologies.

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