

S. Korea's Digital New Deal, a great transformation to create a world-leading nation

S. Korea's success in containing COVID-19 with excellent digital infrastructure

COVID-19 broke out in the beginning of 2020, but there is no sign of it disappearing at this point. Countries around the world are struggling with a decrease in jobs and the contraction of the real economy, resulting in a recession. Also, people feel insecure in their everyday lives because of the risk of infection.

Against this backdrop, S. Korea's strong response to COVID-19 served as a lesson for the rest of the world. Our excellent information and communication technology with well-built infrastructure have allowed us to start a contactless lifestyle by keeping us in data-based quarantine with an epidemiological investigation of infection routes, by providing real-time information about the provision of face masks, and by allowing students to attend school online, as the first in the world to do so. Thanks to such efforts, during this unprecedented economic crisis when negative growth rates are expected worldwide, Korea shows a relatively good economic growth prospect with -1.1 percent, the highest growth rate among 37 OECD member countries according to the OECD's economic outlook report released this December.

Digital transformation in economy and society under the Digital New Deal

Based on excellent digital technology and infrastructure, the Korean government announced in July the "Digital New Deal" policy with the "Korean New Deal Comprehensive Plan" to overcome the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 and lead the global digital economy. By 2025, the government will spend a total of KRW 58.2 trillion on 12 tasks in the four areas of D.N.A (Data, Network, AI) ecosystem reinforcement, digital transformation of education infrastructure, contactless industry promotion, SOC digitalization, etc. in the four areas of the Digital New Deal project, creating 90.3 million jobs. Meanwhile, the government will seek to promote the digital transformation of the Korean economy and society.

Details on the Digital New Deal

The first and representative task of the Digital New Deal is to promote the convergence and use of data, fifth-generation mobile communications, and artificial intelligence in all industries. To this end, the government will promote the "Data

Dam" project by building infrastructure and sharing data, which will facilitate the use of data in areas close to people's lives. More specifically, with about 1,300 types of data that can be learned through artificial intelligence by 2025, the government will provide artificial intelligence and cloud vouchers to support the digital transformation of SMEs and to develop artificial intelligence convergence service (AI+X project), which allows us to respond to infectious diseases and tell whether it is an illegally copied product, etc. in the industries that are a vital part of people's everyday lives.

Also, through the digital transformation of educational infrastructure, we will create an on- and offline convergence learning environment for elementary, middle, and high schools, universities, and vocational training centers nationwide, expanding educational contents. Additionally, the government will lay the foundation for the growth of new contactless industries by building a contactless infrastructure in areas close to people's lives such as medicine, work, business, etc. Furthermore, the government will promote the digitalization of core infrastructures such as roads, railroads, and ports for safe and convenient life and will aim to improve the competitiveness of related industries by smartening cities, industrial complexes, and logistics.

The government will promote drastic regulatory innovation and support active participation and investment of the private sector to make the "Digital New Deal" positioned as a successful policy for developing new industries. Also, the government will continuously strengthen the partnership with local governments for central-regional cooperation.

The Digital New Deal is a national innovation project in Korea that seeks to turn the great crisis of COVID-19 into an excellent opportunity to take a leap forward in become a leading country in the future. Through the Digital New Deal, Korea plans to use all its technology to produce an outcome that can have a significant impact on the digital lives of its people. By overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for the digital economy in the future, Korea will set a good example for the rest of the world.

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** The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not reflect the views of KOTRA.*