POLICY BRIEF

DCED
Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

DCED Business Environment Working Group – Using BER to Build Back Better

Using Business Regulation in Re-opening the Economy following the COVID-19 Pandemic

The economic and employment crisis created by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has far-reaching effects on private sector development around the world. While efforts to contain the spread of the virus have disrupted production flows, reduced demand for non-essential goods and services and forced businesses to suspend or scale down operations, the challenges of recovering from this crisis are quickly emerging.

The Business Environment Working Group of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) is working with its members to identify ways business environment reform can support the recovery process and help developing and emerging economies to build back better. To this end, it has commissioned a series of policy briefs on how donor and development agencies can work with governments, business representative organisations and other programme and development partners to build back better with business environment reform.

This is the first policy brief in this series. It looks how policies and approaches in business regulation can be used to prepare for and during the re-opening of the economy.

Key messages

1. Regulatory flexibility should not come at the price of public policy outcomes. It is important to balance regulatory requirements to protect health and safety, and regulatory flexibility.
2. Clear and timely public communication around policy measures can help ensure that firms are aware of the latest changes and guidelines.
3. Frequent private sector consultation, and accurate and timely data, allow governments to monitor the impact of the crisis. This can inform the refinement of public support measures to firms and allocate policy measures to where they are most needed. Timely and accurate data also facilitate central-local policy coordination.
4. Online government-to-business services can be critical in the context of social distancing.
5. The crisis can be an impetus for reform. A number of countries have taken the opportunity to introduce measures that help not only to navigate the current crisis, but also to set the groundwork for longer-term, sustainable improvements of the business environment.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 global health crisis quickly became an economic one as firms were hit hard by a combination of demand and supply shocks. The crisis has been disrupting several channels through which countries achieve productivity growth—and, by extension, job and wage growth. At the same time, it provides opportunities for deeper structural change to rebuild better than before. In terms of policy measures in response to the crisis, one can distinguish between three stages: relief, reopening and restructuring, and recovery (see Figure1).[i] These three stages of response do not have absolute boundaries. They inform and interact with one another and can overlap both chronologically and in terms of types of activities.

This note looks at government responses to the crisis with a focus on business regulations impacting firms. After providing a brief summary of first-phase policy measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, it focuses on policies and approaches in preparation for and during the re-opening of the economy. While it is too early to assess the impact of the reopening measures on firms, the note attempts to draw initial lessons based on principles of good regulatory practices that have been developed worldwide. A second note in this series gives insight into the role of a sound business regulatory environment for recovery and building resilience after major economic and financial crises, with potential relevance for economic recovery post-COVID-19 (phase 3).

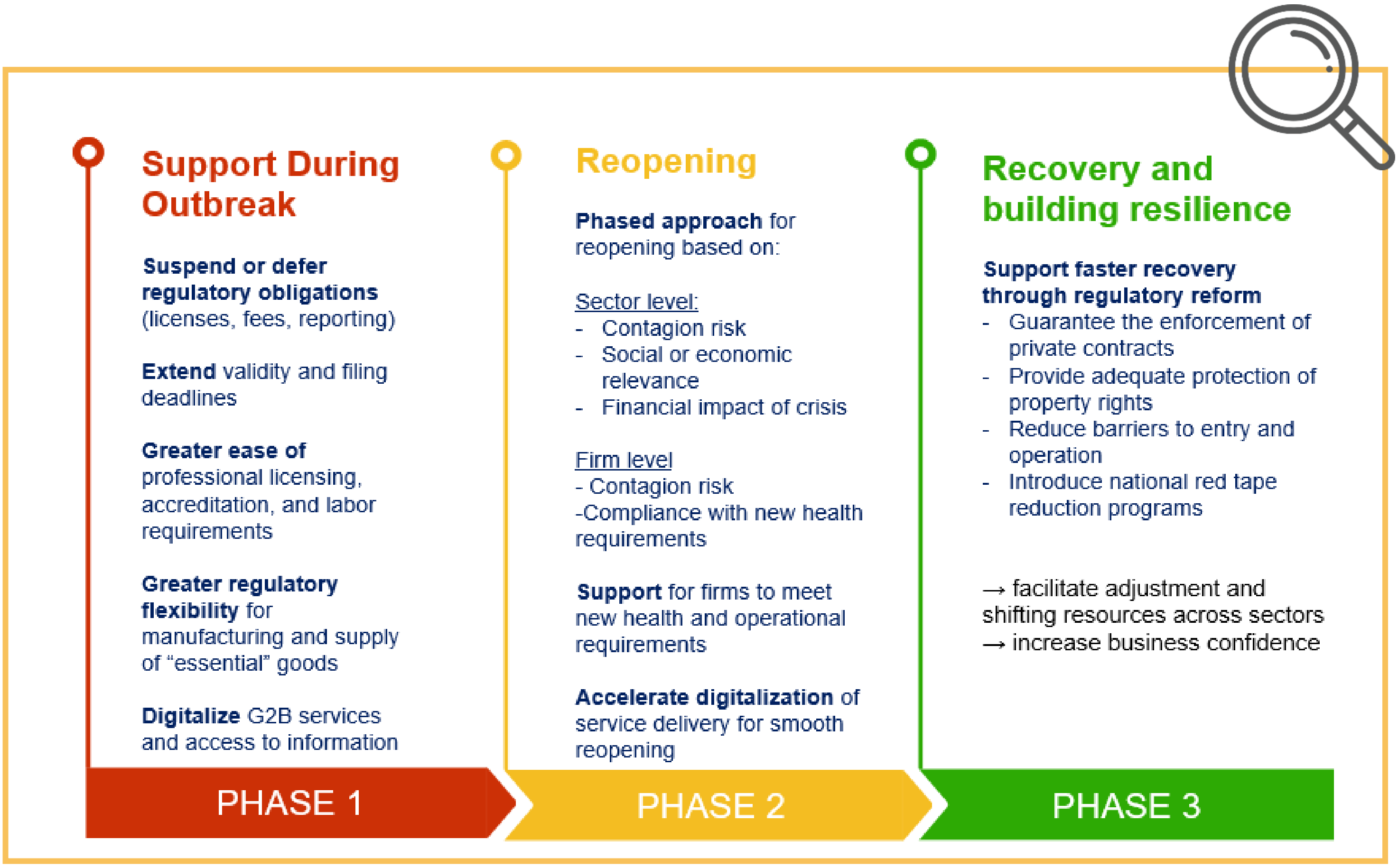


Figure 1: Business regulation policy responses from relief to recovery

First response policy measures in the context of an evolving COVID-19 crisis

The first wave of Government support in response to the economic impact of COVID-19 mostly materialized in the form of temporary financial stimulus packages and subsidies to keep otherwise viable businesses operating and mitigate job losses. Business subsidies have either been targeted towards industries hit hardest, including tourism and retail such as in the case in Australia, or focused on businesses of a certain size, such as in Japan and France.

The most popular measures include:

- Direct financial support (including reduced interest rates, reduced capital requirements for banks, additional and/or subsidized loans to businesses and guarantees to banks for SME lending)
- Indirect financial support (tax exemptions, tax waivers)
- Incentives to retain employees (social insurance refund, greater labour regulation flexibility, financial support by providing medical equipment, wage subsidy schemes)
- Employee protection (unemployment reinsurance, reskilling and training funds)
- Support with ongoing costs (rent, utilities, debt moratoria, forbearance)
- Leave and self-isolation or quarantine support (e.g., Singapore)[ii].

To complement fiscal subsidies, governments have taken several regulatory actions to help firms to weather the immediate impact of the crisis. Governments are helping businesses through indirect financial support, greater regulatory flexibility, and temporary amendments to insolvency frameworks. The COVID-19 crisis has had an impact on informal firms, as well as formal firms. Recognizing this, several governments have extended support to informal firms, mainly in the form of cash transfers. In addition, effective use of data and communication with the public help to increase and monitor firms' uptake of support measures.

To complement financial and regulatory support to keep businesses afloat and workers employed, **temporarily eliminating or reducing some administrative costs on domestic and foreign businesses** can provide further relief. Common measures include temporarily suspending or delaying tax and social security filings;[iii] waiving fees for government transactions such as licenses, registrations, or permits; and automatically extending the validity period of licenses and permits.

In the same vein, **greater regulatory flexibility** can support firms' resilience. This includes simplifying trade procedures for certain products or traders (e.g. Argentina[iv], Indonesia[v]), greater regulatory flexibility concerning occupational licensing (e.g. United States[vi]) or making labour regulations more flexible to allow for home-based work (e.g. China, El Salvador). Some governments are also supporting companies that have been looking to repurpose their production and research and development (R&D) capabilities to support the fight against COVID-19[vii]. For example, Bangladesh waived the requirement for companies to adjust the Memorandum of Association, in order to expand production lines to address market shortages of essential goods. It is important for authorities to strike a balance between regulatory requirements to protect health and safety, and regulatory flexibility to meet medical demand and support repurposing businesses.

Introducing **extraordinary, time-bound adjustments to insolvency frameworks** can also help prevent viable firms from being prematurely pushed into insolvency. To avert mass bankruptcies, where a large number of insolvencies could trigger fire sales and a collapse in asset prices, governments have, among other measures, increased the barriers to creditor-initiated insolvency filings. This includes raising the debt threshold for credit-initiated bankruptcy proceedings, limiting access in personal bankruptcy systems to debtors' petitions, suspending directors' duty to file for bankruptcy upon insolvency, or suspending the personal liability of directors for a fixed time period. For example, Latvia and Turkey have suspended new filings by creditors, while Singapore, Spain, and Russia have suspended directors' obligation to file for bankruptcy. To the extent that governments grant loan forbearance, it is important to implement policies to minimize impacts on firms' credit histories and scores (such as appropriately flagging non-payment of loans under forbearance and not treating it as an insolvency event for credit scoring purposes).

Extending support to informal firms is relevant particularly in low and lower-middle-income countries where up to 80% of economic activity occurs in the informal sector. The pandemic-related economic contraction has led to further expansion of the informal economy. It has pushed formal micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) into informality, leaving them with limited access to government support and increasing their instability and risk of closure. In

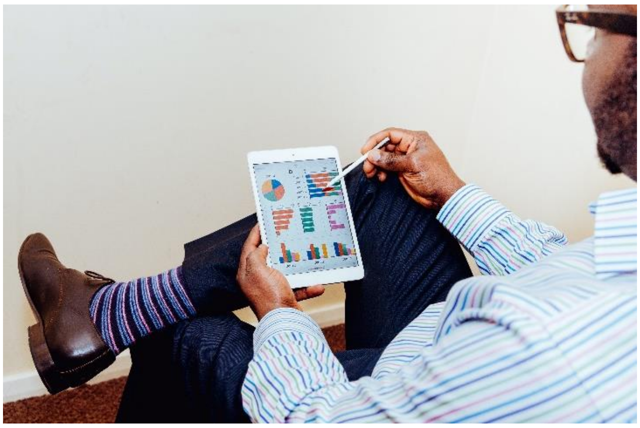
response, a number of governments have introduced relief measures, often in the form of financial support for informal firms. In Togo, for example, the government launched a new digital, cashless transfer program (NOVISSI) that provides financial aid to adult informal workers affected by the pandemic. An important consideration here is that support measures to informal firms should not be contingent on their formalisation for tax purposes, which could limit uptake.

Continuous and transparent communication to the public on policy measures can help to ensure that firms are aware and can potentially benefit from them. In Mexico, for example, the National Commission for Better Regulation publishes online all COVID-19 policy measures issued by the government. [viii] In Singapore, businesses can access the latest information through the platform GoBusiness.[ix]

Frequent private sector consultations facilitate the identification and prioritization of policy response measures. In the United States and Europe, municipalities have successfully leveraged public-private dialogue, involving development companies, chambers of commerce, and local firms.[x] Measures adopted following consultations have included revisions to land use and zoning regulations to create greater flexibility for SMEs to stay open, and teleconsulting services on various topics (e.g., commercial lease amendments). [xi] Other countries have created public-private committees at the national level. For example, shortly after its inception, Morocco's Economic Watch Committee [xii] recommended suspending social security contributions and establishing a moratorium to reimburse bank credits. [xiii] In Nigeria, the Private Sector Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID) [xiv] has mobilized considerable financial resources towards supporting the government's response while also providing thought leadership on COVID relief measures.

Given the challenges posed by social distancing guidelines, governments are also leveraging e-solutions to collect information and feedback from firms. The government of Mauritius, for instance, entered into a strategic partnership with Business Mauritius – an independent association that represents over 1,200 local businesses - to carry out an in-depth "Business Pulse" survey, conducted entirely online. Results highlighted the critical challenges faced by firms and quantified the impact the pandemic has had.[xv]

Finally, timely and detailed firm data can help governments to monitor the impact on firms and the allocation of support measures. Albania, for example, is establishing a Tourism Response and Recovery Task Force to create a database of all tourism-related goods and service providers, to collect information on revenue and employment losses, and to maintain the database as a live dashboard on a digital platform.[xvi] Such data not only facilitate the targeted allocation of support programs to particularly vulnerable groups or sectors, but also mitigate some of the risks of corruption. Timely information on the crisis' impact on firms, as well as accessibility and effectiveness of support policies, is also critical to be able to adjust measures. Initial evidence from the United States and China, for example, show that while support programs were associated with benefits such as business survival probability or improved cash flows, their effectiveness might vary by firm size.[xvii]



Reopening economies during COVID-19

More than half of the world's population has been under lockdown at some point over the past year with strong containment measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.[xviii] As economies have been reopening their economies after prolonged lockdowns, key principles for effective business regulation apply; they include following a 'one-government' approach to government-to-business (G2B) service delivery supported by technology. It is also important to take a transparent, risk-based approach, that allows for regulatory flexibility without compromising public policy outcomes.

Governments that have been investing in e-government services and digitalization have been better prepared to continue functioning or to move G2B services online throughout the relief and reopening phases, as they have been adjusting to a new context of social distancing. For example, Singapore quickly leveraged its existing digital infrastructure by establishing GoBusiness, a platform jointly developed by GovTech and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It allows businesses to apply on-line for exemptions and permissions to continue their operations.[xix]

Others have been working to accelerate the digitalization reform agenda in the crisis context. Countries like Israel[xx], Morocco[xxi], and Greece[xxii] have been investing in systems that facilitate data-exchange among government agencies and the provision of integrated service delivery to citizens and firms. In Greece, gov.gr offers over 500 services online with additional digitalized

services to be provided through the centralized platform.[xxiii] The Philippines is another example of proactively speeding up government programs to streamline and automate G2B services.[xxiv]

Digitalization of processes that previously required in-person interactions can require legal reforms. In Morocco, for example, authorities passed a bill in April 2020 to allow public limited companies to hold virtual meetings of shareholders.[xxv] Others passed amendments to allow online court proceedings. For example, Bulgaria amended the civil procedure code, providing parties with the option to conduct their hearings online.[xxvi] While the UK has been developing its online court system over the past four years, the government recently passed Civil Procedure Rules 2020 (Amendment No. 5 Coronavirus), a set of new, simplified rules on online services in civil, family, and tribunal proceedings.[xxvii]

Reopening of economies globally remains a moving target. Most governments are regulating the scope and pace of opening in phases based on various criteria. These criteria include risk profiling and economic relevance of the sector, location, firm characteristics, or a combination thereof. Risk criteria are based mainly on the likelihood of contagion; factors include the density of workers or customers, the degree of 'digitalization' of the sector or aptness for telework, and individual businesses' compliance with health and safety regulations. Shanghai, for example, determined the rate of reopening of business based on (i) impact on city development and daily needs, (ii) contribution to the area economy, (iii) positions of core management and skilled front-line operators, (iv) businesses that have enough customer orders, and (v) strong prevention methods against COVID-19 transmission. In Europe, many countries have designed their reopening based on criteria for the risk of transmission or contagion[xxviii]. Aside from guidelines on the density of workers or customers, governments' mitigation measures include spacing out business hours, allowing only parts of buildings or areas to be occupied at certain times, and supporting firms' compliance with new health regulations by subsidizing the purchase of personal protective equipment. In all cases, clear communication of the criteria is critical for firms to be able to comply.

Effective central-local coordination can facilitate a systematic yet tailored approach by location. It requires sound and timely data, and effective communication, to the public. Several countries have been using a combination of national and localized approaches to reopening. China, for example, issued guidelines at the central[xxix] and provincial levels. Vietnam also combined central guidance with local adaptation, to mitigate some of the economic impacts. Hanoi, for example, was able to open bars and clubs after going 28 days without transmission, while a lockdown was reinstated in Da Nang once a case was detected (after having gone weeks without a case).

The governments of New Zealand, Canada, and Australia have also adopted a staggered re-opening approach using a traffic light classification model that determines whether a province can reopen or not based on updates of public health indicators in local communities. Moldova is moving in a similar direction.[xxx] It will assign different administrative-territorial units a rating on a four-tier scale based on COVID-19 infections per 100,000 inhabitants over the past two weeks. In the United States, the State of New York introduced a micro-cluster strategy whereby rules and restrictions target areas and surrounding communities with the highest transmission of COVID-19 cases. Maps of cluster zones are easily accessible online[xxxi]. Effective central-local coordination, accurate and timely data, and effective communication to the private sector are critical to be able to adjust to circumstances as needed. Nevertheless, there are concerns that inconsistencies between state and province approaches to reopening may destabilize businesses and consumers, and that the restrictions will impact the supply chains downstream and upstream[xxxii]. This underscores the importance of clear, timely and continuous communication, and monitoring of the impact of policy measures on both health and economic outcomes in different jurisdictions.

Approaches to compliance monitoring and enforcement vary and continue to evolve. They include re-registration, self-certification, monitoring compliance by leveraging data or technology (e.g., drones), and inspections (either proactive or based on complaints). Effective use of data, and taking a risk-based approach, can support compliance, and a number of governments are moving in that direction. In China, for example, in the early stages of reopening, businesses had to register for reopening in some provinces (e.g. Sichuan Province). However, in line with a more risk-based approach, in March 2020 the central government issued regulations to allow for swift reopening in low-risk areas and sectors without additional formalities.[xxxiii]

To encourage compliance with health regulations while mitigating the costs of compliance and enforcement, some governments are resorting to self-certification. Beijing, for example, introduced self-declaratory compliance [xxxiv] with post-supervision for the resumption of construction projects. [xxxv] Vietnam and Australia rely on a combination of self-certification and risk assessment. Vietnam developed a COVID-19 risk assessment index to determine if a business could maintain operations, or if it had to suspend reopening until the risk was lowered. Firms had to submit the assessment report to the Department of Health. In Australia, the government agency Safe Work Australia published a set of self-assessment guidelines that employers can use to determine their risk level.[xxxvi]

Several governments are leveraging technology (such as drones) to monitor public areas, and to enforce social distancing and other reopening measures. A few countries have even attached thermal cameras to the drone to scan local communities for high temperatures. Drones were initially used to enforce lockdown, but governments such as Bahrain,[xxxvii] Lithuania,[xxxviii] Spain,[xxxix] Morocco,[xl] France have continued to use drones to monitor compliance throughout reopening.[xli]

Others are monitoring compliance through inspections, either in response to complaints, or proactively, or both. New York City, for example,

regulations by subsidizing PPE, or regulatory easing. In China, several provinces and city governments provided support to firms to meet new health and safety requirements. For example, Chengdu, Sichuan and Guangzhou introduced online management portals to ensure the provision of protective equipment for businesses. Businesses were able to submit their needs for PPE, and stock and distribution were managed by the government, using the portal. Beijing established a supply guarantee system for essential prevention equipment at the city and district levels. Businesses could apply for support from the municipal agency if in short supply.[xlv] In Shandong, the Bureau of Industry and Information established a government-association-enterprise coordination system. Associations confirm industry reopening lists, clarify responsibilities, make service plans, collect business needs, and coordinate demand for government support.[xlvi]

is using both proactive and reactive inspections to monitor compliance with the State guidance for phased reopening.[xlii] For greater efficiency, inspections are conducted in tandem with other government agencies where possible. For example, inspectors conducting routine inspections are also looking for COVID-19 compliance violations. In South Africa, the Department of Labour also provided its inspectors with risk assessments and checklists that businesses are expected to follow to remain open.[xliii] Others are taking a sectoral approach. In South Korea, for example, early in their reopening phase, officials inspected nearly 40,000 construction, distribution, and manufacturing sites to ensure that reopening precautions are being complied with.[xliv]

While approaches to compliance monitoring and enforcement may vary across countries, governments can manage costs to the economy without compromising public policy objectives by following certain key principles – such as minimizing the burden on business through joint inspections, self-certification based on clear criteria combined with risk-based inspections, and effective use of technology.

Several governments have taken measures to support businesses in complying with new

In other countries, governments supported firms through regulatory easing. As the economy started reopening, the city of Vilnius in Lithuania agreed to provide public spaces to outdoor catering establishments for free. The previously rigid and confusing permit procedure was replaced by a simple registration process and the reform immediately resulted in the issuance of over 270 outdoor café permits.[xlvii] In Chicago, the city council agreed to accelerate licensing for companies that establish onsite childcare centres. In Hoboken, businesses are permitted to expand outdoor spaces to operate further into the street, while respecting hygiene and social distancing protocol. The licenses for these establishments have been streamlined and the fees waived.[xlviii] In

Israel, the government of Tel Aviv–Yafo spearheaded a relief package that waived fees charged for placing tables, chairs and partitions on the sidewalk, as well as fees charged for night-time operating licenses.[xlix] While such measures may be temporary in some cases, they might provide a basis for permanent simplification.

Conclusion

The variance in regulatory and policy approaches, particularly during the re-opening phase, illustrates the challenges policymakers face in navigating the unique economic and public health challenges posed by COVID-19. While it is too early to assess the impact of one measure over another, based on global experience so far, a few lessons can be drawn.

First, regulatory flexibility should not come at the price of public policy outcomes. It is important for authorities to balance regulatory requirements to protect health and safety and regulatory flexibility. One way for governments to manage this delicate balance is by taking a risk-based approach to regulation, based on objective criteria. Self-certification is generally a good practice, but it is most appropriate for low-risk activities and with robust ex-post enforcement mechanisms in place. Higher risk activities merit more stringent requirements. In all cases, risk-based systems, such as inspections, require good data and effective staff allocation.[l]

Second, clear and timely communication around policy measures to the public can help ensure that firms are aware of the latest changes and guidelines. This is particularly important given the continuous evolution of the pandemic and, often corresponding, changing regulatory landscape.

Third, frequent private sector consultations and accurate and timely data allow governments to monitor the impact of the crisis. They can then support firms by designing and allocating policy measures to where they are most needed, and adjusting them in a timely fashion if warranted. The better the quality of government databases and the more data are shared among and within government agencies, the easier it will be to ensure that policy measures reach the intended recipients. This includes coverage, and consistency across databases (for example regarding business classification systems). Timely and accurate data also facilitate central-local policy coordination and allow for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the measures on firms and public health objectives.

Fourth, providing G2B services online can be critical in the context of social distancing. Not surprisingly, the COVID-19 crisis has already accelerated the trend towards digitalization. However, technology is not a magic wand and, particularly if countries lack the requisite public key infrastructure or legal basis, digitalization cannot be implemented in a matter of weeks. In many contexts, prior simplification or regulatory changes have to occur before services can be put online. Otherwise, there is a risk of (at least in part) transferring an inefficient bureaucracy into the virtual world. On the other hand, the crisis can be an opportunity to lay the foundation for moving towards electronic integrated service delivery.[li]

Finally, the crisis can indeed be an impetus for reform. Several countries have taken the opportunity to introduce measures that help to navigate the current crisis, and have also set the groundwork for longer-term, sustainable improvements of the business environment. Legal changes to allow for virtual court proceedings in Bulgaria and the UK, or accelerated automation and simplification of G2B services in the Philippines, are examples.

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Endnotes

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i For more information on the three stages of crisis response, refer to the World Bank Group's COVID-19 Crisis Response Approach Paper. World Bank Group (June 2020) *Saving Lives, Scaling-up Impact and Getting Back on Track: World Bank Group COVID-19 crisis response approach paper.* Available online: https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/136631594937150795/world-bank-group-covid-19-crisis-response-approach-paper-saving-lives-scaling-up-impact-and-getting-back-on-track [accessed 25th March 2021].

ii Singapore Tourism Board (February 2021) *FAQs for Tourism Businesses.* Available online: https://www.stb.gov.sg/content/stb/en/home-pages/faq-on-covid-19.html [accessed 25th March 2021].

iii Countries undertaking such measures include Austria, Albania, Algeria, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Greece, Hungary, Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jordan Lithuania, Malaysia, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Togo, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Vanuatu.

iv Global Trade Alert (March 2020) *Argentina: Government changes the list of products subject to non-automatic import licenses in response to the COVID-19 outbreak*. Available online: https://www.globaltradealert.org/state-act/43494/argentina-government-changes-the-list-of-products-subject-to-non-automatic-import-licenses-in-response-to-the-covid-19-outbreak [accessed 25th March 2021].

v ASEAN Briefing from Dezan Shira & Associates (March 2020) *Indonesia Issues Second Stimulus Package to Dampen COVID-19 Impact.* Available online: https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/indonesia-issues-second-stimulus-package-dampen-covid-19-impact/ [accessed 25th March 2021].

vi National Conference of State Legislatures, USA (December 2020) *COVID-19: Occupational licensing during public emergencies.* Available online: https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/covid-19-occupational-licensing-in-public-emergencies.aspx [accessed 25th March 2021].

vii For example, textile companies are switching production lines from producing garments to making hygienic masks and medical robes; cosmetic companies are making hand sanitizers; hotels are becoming quarantine centres; distilleries are creating disinfecting alcohol; and automotive companies are evaluating options to producing urgently needed medical devices such as ventilators.

viii Gobierno De Mexico (2020) *Respuestas regulatorias a la epidemia COVID-19*. Available online: https://conamer.gob.mx/respuestas-regulatorias-covid-19/GobiernoFederal/Index [accessed 25th March 2021].

ix GoBusiness COVID (2021). Available online: https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/ [accessed 25th March 2021].

x For example, in many large US cities, economic recovery taskforces include private and public actor. Examples include Chicago (Recovery Task Force), Los Angeles (Economic Recovery Task Force), and New York (Recovery Strategy Group).

xi The City of Seattle's Office of Economic Development partnered with a non-profit a law firm to launch a toolkit to help SMEs to explore options for their commercial leases with a goal of remaining in their spaces.

xii The Moroccan government launched the CVE on March 11 to find ways to support the economic sectors directly affected by the global health threat, notably tourism and transport. The committee, chaired by Minister of Economy, includes the General Confederation of Moroccan Businesses (CGEM), the Moroccan Federation of Trade, Industry, and Services, and the Moroccan Federation of Handicrafts.

xiii The Ministry of Economy subsequently adopted the recommendation from the Morocco's Economic Watch Committee.

xiv CACOVID is spearheaded by the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Aliko Dangote Foundation and Access Banko.

xv Business Mauritius (December 2020) *Impact of COVID-19 on Business in Mauritius.* Available online: https://www.businessmauritius.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Survey-Presentation_Final_08dec2020.pdf [accessed 25th March 2021].

xvi World Bank Group (2020) *Supporting Firm Resilience: A firm support program for WBG COVID phase 2 response.* Available online: http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/111141593044217205/Supporting-Firm-Resilience-Final.pdf [accessed 25th March 2021].

xvii World Bank Group (October 2020) *Unmasking the Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses: Firm level evidence from across the world.* Available online: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34626/Unmasking-the-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Businesses-Firm-Level-Evidence-from-Across-the-World.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#page=17&zoom=100,58,334 [accessed 25th March 2021].

xviii OECD (November 2020) *The Territorial Impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government.* Available online: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/ [accessed 25th March 2021].

xix GoBusiness COVID (2021). Available online: https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg/ [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxx Interoperability framework that uses integrated hardware and software structure to facilitate data exchange across government agencies.

xxi LTE Magazine (January 2020) *L'agence de Développement du Digital (ADD) au Maroc en 7 Points.* Available online: https://lte.ma/lagence-de-developpement-du-digital-add-au-maroc-en-7-points [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxii Ministry of Digital Governance, Greece (March 2020) *Το κράτος αποκτά ενιαίο πρόσωπο*. Available online: https://mindigital.gr/archives/1277 [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxiii Enhanced Surveillance Report: Greece (September 2020) Institutional Paper 134.

xxiv Philippine News Agency (1st October 2020) *ARTA hastens automation initiatives to cushion COVID-19 impact.* Available online: https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1117274 [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxv DLA Piper (April 2020) Maroc: Le droit des sociétés face au COVID-19. Available online: https://www.dlapiper.com/fr/france/insights/publications/2020/06/morocco-corporate-law-under-covid-19/ [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxvi CMS (August 2020) *Bulgaria passes bill for digitalization of judicial process.* Available online: https://www.cms-lawnow.com/ealerts/2020/08/bulgaria-passes-bill-for-digitalization-of-judicial-process [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxvii Uk Statutory Instruments, Senior Courts of England and Wales, County Court, England and Wales (21st August 2020) *The Civil Procedure (Amendment No. 5) (Coronavirus) Rules 2020.* Available online: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/889/made [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxviii For example, Austria, Greece, Lithuania, Poland among others.

xxix The People's Republic of China, State Council (9th April 2020) *Notice of the State Council on the Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism for the Prevention and Control of the Novel Coronavirus Infection and Pneumonia Epidemic on Issuing the Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of the Epidemic of the Resumption of Work and Production of Enterprises and Institutions in Different Risk Areas across the Country*. Available online: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2020-04/09/content_5500685.htm [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxx WorldAware (September 2020) *Intelligence Alert: Moldova to transition COVID-19 response from a national initiative to localised approach October 1.* Available online: https://www.worldaware.com/intelligence-alert-moldova-transition-covid-19-response-national-initiative-localized-approach-oct [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxi New York Forward (2021). Available online: https://forward.ny.gov/ny-forward [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxii See for example: Australian Government Department of Health (October 2020) *Framework for National Reopening.* Available online: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/10/framework-for-national-reopening-october-2020.pdf#page=9 [accessed 25th March 2021]; Harvard Business Review (May 2020) *The Case for Reopening Economies by Sector.* Available online: https://hbr.org/2020/05/the-case-for-reopening-economies-by-sector [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxiii The People's Republic of China, State Council (4th March 2020) *Notice of the General Office of the State Council on Further Streamlining Approval and Optimizing Services to Accurately and Steadily Promote the Resumption of Work and Production of Enterprises.* Available onlinehttp://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2020-03/04/content_5486767.htm [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxiv A business affirms that it is in compliance with the requirements, otherwise it will be subject to penalties.

xxxv The People's Government of Beijing Municipality (25th March 2020) *Notice of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development on optimizing and adjusting construction project resumption verification methods and other work matters.* Available online: http://www.beijing.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengcefagui/202003/t20200326_1739523.html [accessed 25th March 2021].

xxxvi Australian Government Department of Health (October 2020) *Framework for National Reopening.* Available online: https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/10/framework-for-national-reopening-october-2020.pdf#page=9 [accessed 25th March 2021]

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