Report on the TrainForTrade course Statistics on the Digital Economy, E-commerce and Digital Trade for SIDS 2025

Organized by UNCTAD in cooperation with UNSD and WTO
Delivered in English
Course delivery dates: from 9 June to 20 July 2025
Webinar date: 18 July 2025

Statistics on the digital economy, e-commerce and digital trade
Special course for the Small Island Developing States

six-week e-learning course + a webinar • from 9 June to 25 July 2025

261 participants from 37 countries

72% average score

82% satisfaction rate

61% female participations

"This course offered not only an introduction to the theoretical framework, but allowed also knowledge exchanges among other officials working in this field."
Roshelle Henry, Jamaica

"I will apply these skills in my work by improving data quality, conducting more rigorous analyses, and contributing to evidence-based decision-making."
Somika Khushi Ryan, Fiji

"The course served as a bridge between conceptual understanding and tangible progress toward SDG alignment and digital transformation."
Josephine Peters-Ross, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Participants had access to manuals, multimedia presentations, tests, surveys, forum and webinar

Summary

The e-learning course on "**Statistics on the Digital Economy, E-Commerce and Digital Trade**" (SDT) for participants from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was successfully organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The course and its follow-up webinar were delivered from 9 June to 20 July 2025.

The total number of participants for the course was 261 participants (159 women – 61%) from 37 SIDS countries or areas. Out of the total registered, 132 have received a certificate of completion. Overall, the average score and satisfaction rates for the course were 72% and 82% respectively.

The course was delivered via the TrainForTrade distance learning platform. In this platform, participants have access to manuals, multimedia presentations, modules, evaluations, opinion polls, and forums created for each module, allowing participants to hold discussions with the instructor and the other participants.

The objectives of the course are to equip participants with the knowledge and tools to produce, analyze, and disseminate national digital trade statistics effectively, from identifying key indicators to developing a tailored dissemination policy.

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Background

This course is part of the 14th Tranche of the Development Account[1]. It is based on the TrainForTrade blended learning strategy to boost the digital economy in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of Africa, the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific. This initiative aims to strengthen digital capacities in SIDS by focusing on three key areas: *Legal Aspects of e-Commerce*, *Digital Identity for Trade and Development*, and *Statistics on the Digital Economy, E-Commerce and Digital Trade*. Through a blended learning approach combining online courses, workshops, and a final in-person conference, it supports SIDS in adopting effective digital trade policies and strengthening responsiveness to a quickly evolving digital environments.

SIDS face unique development challenges due to their small size, geographic isolation, and vulnerability to external shocks. While digital technologies offer important opportunities to overcome these constraints, many SIDS still lack the digital infrastructure, legal frameworks, and data needed to fully benefit from e-commerce and digital trade. This initiative address these gaps to support more inclusive and resilient development.

For this project, UNCTAD worked closely with three UN regional economic commissions: ECLAC, ESCAP and ECA; the Statistics Divisions of UN DESA, UNCITRAL and the WTO; and the UN resident coordinator system for delivery purposes.

Objectives

The global objective of the course is to provide participants a clear vision of the key concepts, definitions and data sources relevant to digital trade statistics; to identify key indicators, prioritize data production, and address challenges in developing national digital trade statistics; to build a customized roadmap, organize and disseminate statistics effectively, and leverage surveys and administrative sources; and to be able to produce insightful analyses and develop a comprehensive dissemination policy tailored to digital trade data.

Programme Outline

1. The training package consists of five modules delivered over five weeks plus a closing webinar. (32 hours).Digital trade, digital economy and statistical concepts
2. Setting the objectives, identifying the pre-requisites and roadmap
3. Data collection
4. Data compilation
5. Dissemination and Analysis

Course Participants

Primary Target

Compilers of international trade statistics from (depends on countries):
- National Statistical Offices (NSO)

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[1] More information available at: https://tft.unctad.org/projects/current-projects/digital-economy-in-small-island-developing-states/

- Central Banks
- Other national authorities

Secondary Target

Digital trade statistics users, analysts, policymakers and economists from:
- Ministries of foreign affairs, tourism, agriculture, trade and/or commerce, finance, information and communications, technology, etc
- Chambers of Commerce
- Business clusters
- Financial institutions
- Non-governmental organizations
- Entrepreneurs
- Academics

A total of 261 participants (159 women – 61%) from 37 countries or regions registered and were selected to participate in the course. Out of the total of 261 registered and accepted candidates, 171 participants initiated their activities in the course and 132 have completed it receiving a certificate of completion.

Figure 1. Course participants' roles
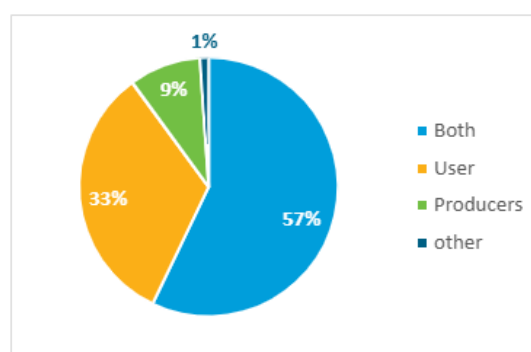
As shown in Figure 1, 57% of course participants were both users and producers of trade statistics, while an additional 33% were users only. In the end, the course saw more interest among the users of trade statistics than originally planned when compared to the target population focused on statistics producers.

Figure 2. Participants by institution

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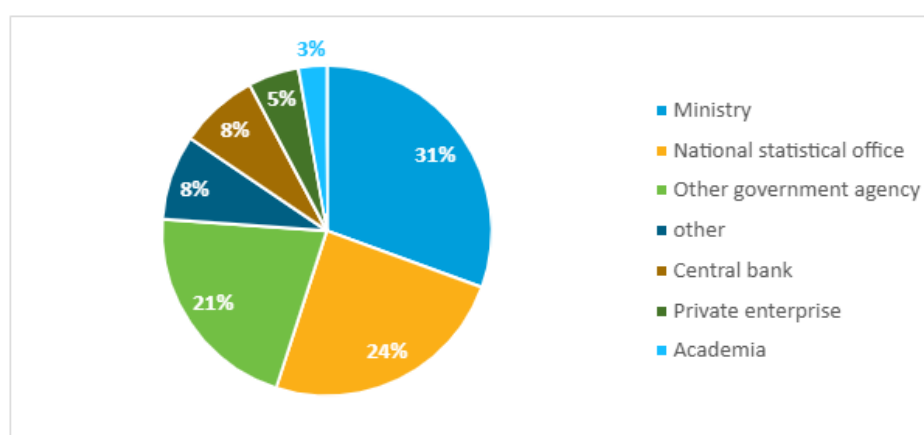
Figure 2 illustrates that 31% of the participants of the course belong to a ministry. The other percentages comprise 24% for national statistical offices, 21% for other government agencies, 8% for central banks, 8% for 'other', 5% for private enterprise, and 3% for academia. Together, over 80% of course participants belong to a national entity or governmental agency.

For detailed information of participants, with a breakdown by gender and country, please refer to Annex 2: Participants of the e-learning course.

Delivery of the Course

The on-line courses were conducted from 9 June to 20 July 2025 with a follow-up webinar organized on the 18 July 2025. The course was delivered in English, with registration and course participation free of charge. Registered trainees were accepted and provided access to the online user platform where they could course materials were made available.

The e-learning courses were conducted according to the established schedule (see Annex 1: Agenda of the course). During the five-week period, participants had the opportunity to go through five modules of the course, permitting them to learn through various multimedia means (manuals and videos), and interact with other participants from different countries, facilitators, and experts via the discussion forum. Trainees had the flexibility to study and participate in the fora within the different sections of the course, generating enriching discussions and allowing for the exchange of information, ideas, and experiences. At the end of each week, participants were evaluated through an online test. Additionally, at the end of each week, and the course itself, participants were invited to share their feedback and suggestions. The information generated by the feedback and suggestions was utilized to improve the training material and the organization of the course in the future (for more information, refer to the Course evaluation section below).

The course was further enhanced with an interactive simulation exercise, enabling participants to apply the knowledge gained across the modules in a dynamic, real-world scenario.

Discussions in the forum

Participants engaged in discussions and exchanges with experts in the course forum. **There was a total of 249 posts** exchanged focused on topics covered by the course. A brief overview can be found in the figure below.

Figure 3. Number of posts in the different fora and the word cloud with the most frequently used words
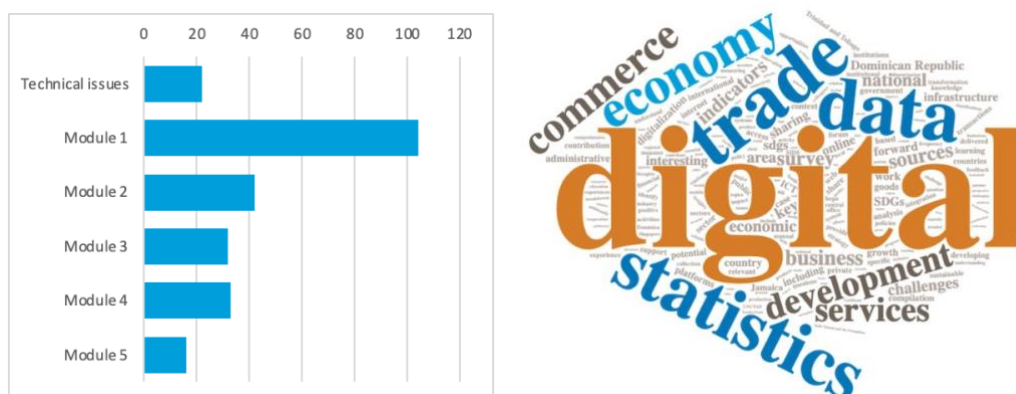
Main moderators for the fora:

Mr. Thierry Coulet, international trade specialist, replied to specific questions asked by participants in the online fora. Mr. Dominique Chantrel, Ms. Liliane Flour, Mr. Tomasz Kulaga and Ms. Guadalupe Paz Coria from UNCTAD/TrainForTrade moderated the discussions in the fora and provided technical assistance.

Course Results

At the end of each module, participants were invited to evaluate their knowledge through a quiz. The average grade for the modules was 72%.

**Figure 4. Average score (%) for quizzes for specific modules (M1-M5)**
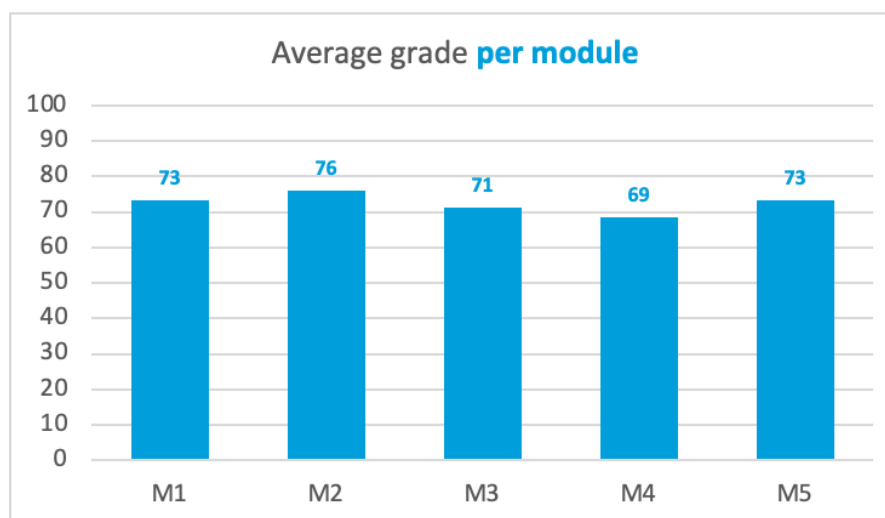
Course evaluation and impact

The evaluation of the modules and the course have been designed to assess participants learning processes, the accuracy of the training material and the organization of the course while considering multiple aspects such as the quality of the training material, the organization of the modules, the module subjects, etc.

Each week participants were asked to complete the opinion questionnaire, evaluation the modules they had just completed. After completing all course modules, participants were then invited to evaluate the entirety of the course. **The overall satisfaction rate for the course was high, at 82%**.

Figure 5. Satisfaction rates (%) for specific modules (M1-M5) and final feedback
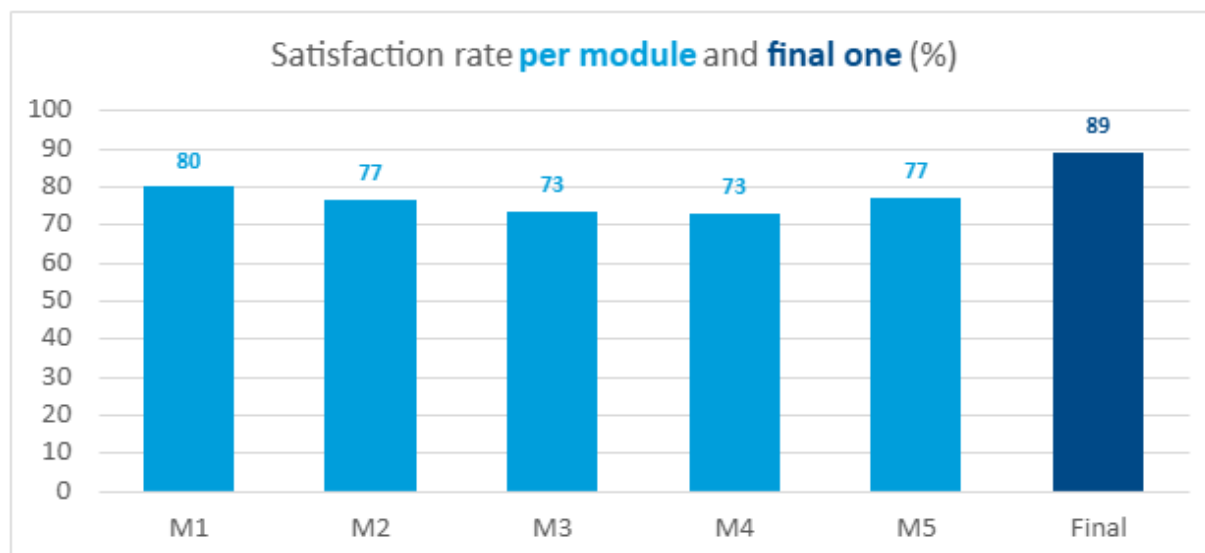

Participants evaluated the course very positively, with all questions receiving over 80% satisfaction. There remains room for improvements regarding the methodology used throughout the course. On the other hand, participants appreciated the communication throughout the course as well as the fact that their knowledge increased.

Figure 6. End of the course feedback
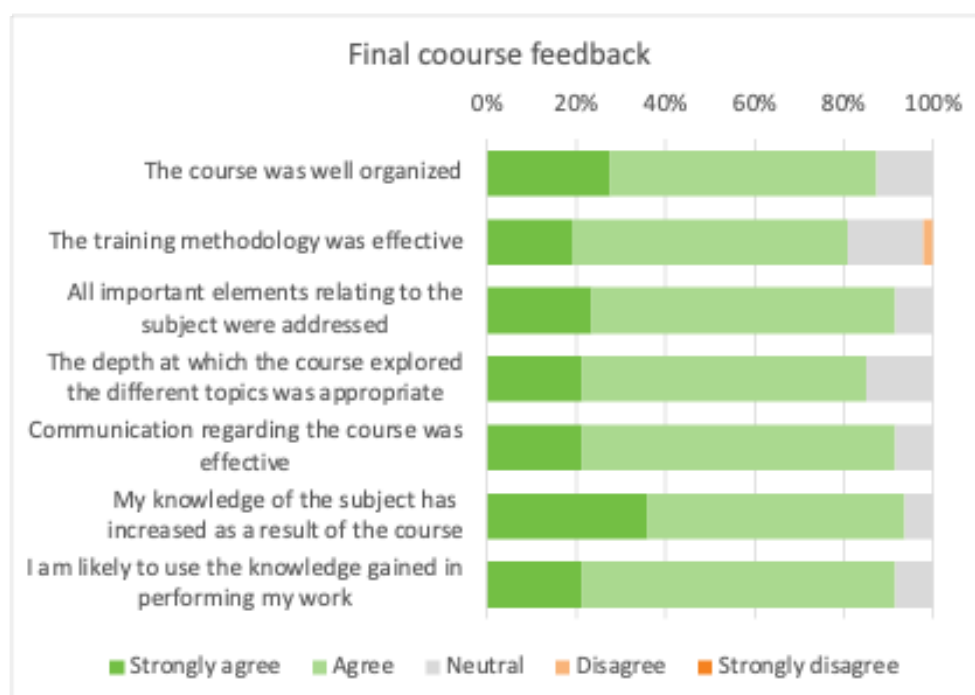
Before beginning the course, participants were given the opportunity to voluntarily evaluate their knowledge by completing a preliminary test based on questions used across the modules. The two scores for participants who completed both the preliminary test and module tests then had evaluation scores compared. The results showed a **substantial increase in the level of knowledge gained, with the average grade increasing from 61% to 74%**.

Figure 7. Preliminary test and average module test results
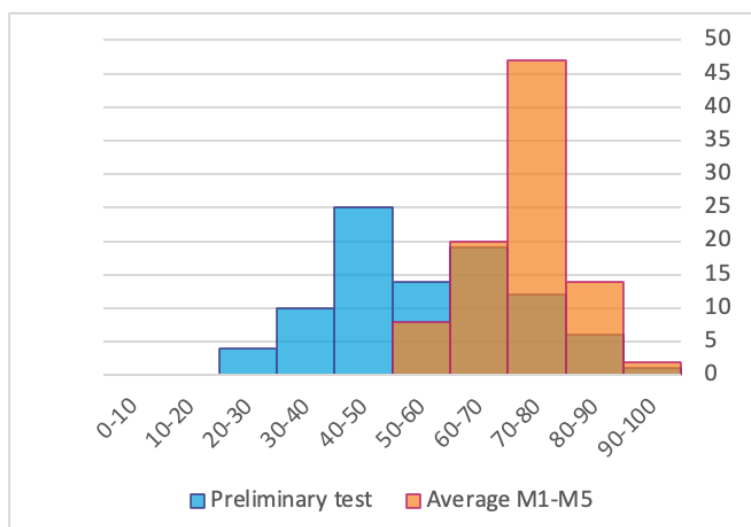
Strengths of the course

All aspects of the course, topic, training materials and methods, the case study opportunity and the webinar, generated positive feedback from participants. Participants were particularly satisfied with the flexibility the course offered via the e-learning platform and its self-paced layout. An appreciated aspect was the relevance and comprehensive nature of the topics for those from SIDs, including addressing the challenges they face in digital economy.

"The lessons and modules are well-organized, making it easy to follow the learning path step-by-step without feeling overwhelmed. The course incorporates up-to-date research, current industry standards, and relevant resources that help learners stay connected to real-world trends. It effectively develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and technical skills relevant to the field."

"The modular structure of this six-week course was thoughtfully designed, enabling participants to digest complex concepts systematically and build knowledge progressively. Each weekly module complemented the other while maintaining its distinct focus. The spacing between modules provided opportunities for participants to apply the learning and reflect on their own country experiences, effectively reinforcing learning outcomes."

"One notable strength of this course is its clear emphasis on the evolving nature of digital transactions. Another is the support for digital transformation: the course emphasized the role of statistics in enabling inclusive resilient digital economies, a clear priority for SIDS navigating global competitiveness."

Aspects to be improved

The course feedback also saw recommendations for improvements. The most popular suggestions provided were requests for more interactive elements. Several comments asked for more collaborative elements at all levels as well as clearer content and question linked to the manual. Many requested

more real-life examples specific to their region in order to assist with contextualizing the course content.

"Some of the content could be made more concise or simplified, in particular manual four on Data Compilation. It was very complicated to understand several concepts such as the linear extrapolation model, etc..."

"Cross-sector collaboration: The course emphasized technical roles in statistical offices but didn't fully explore the vital coordination between trade ministries, customs authorities, ICT units, and private sector actors. Example: In module 3 (Data Collection), stakeholder mapping focused on institutional categories but missed opportunities to highlight how non-statistical actors (e.g., e-commerce platforms, telecom regulators) can co-create data sources. Constructive suggestion: Introduce an intersectoral planning component, perhaps a mock coordination matrix, showing how different entities can align roles, standards, and reporting timelines to support integrated digital trade statistics. Recommendation: Include a module on building inter-agency data ecosystems, featuring real-world coordination strategies and shared governance models."

"The course content and pace were fine. It took some time to grasp the jargon which was a little different, but the concepts and definitions made the subject matter easier over time."

"It would be great if the manuals were more precise, as some questions were very tricky and hard to identify."

"Personally, my challenge was balancing being employed full-time, 40 hours per week, and keeping up with this course. However, I am happy for the asynchronous element where I was able to 'catch up' at my pace."

Testimonials

Many people regarded the course as being helpful and applicable to their professional work. The course illustrated that it clearly helped participants to better understand the digital economy. Additionally, several participants highlighted the importance of being a part of a global learning community for the opportunity to cross-collaborate during the course.

*"As a Trade Intelligence Officer in the Dominican Republic, **I believe the knowledge gained will be directly applicable in analyzing trends, informing decision-makers, and supporting exporters** in our region. The course has also enhanced my awareness of the strategic opportunities digital trade offers for growing economies like ours (…)"* — Paola Lilibeth Martinez Mejia, Ministerio de Industria, Comercio y Mipymes, Dominican Republic

*"I greatly appreciate the course for its well-structured content and practical focus, which has significantly enhanced my understanding of Digital Trade. **The training has equipped me with valuable knowledge and soft skills such as critical thinking, data analysis, and effective communication**. I am confident that I will apply these skills in my professional work by improving data quality, conducting more rigorous analyses, and contributing to evidence-based decision-making. Overall, this course has been an enriching experience that I believe will have a lasting positive impact on both my career and personal development."* — Somika Khushi Ryan, Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Fiji

*(…) For Small Island Developing States like mine - Jamaica - **digital trade offers tremendous opportunities to enhance our economic resilience, diversify our markets and deepen our integration into the global trading system**. Doing so requires robust and timely data. This course offered not only an introduction to the theoretical framework needed to better understand what statistics can be used*

to support our policymaking but allowed for knowledge exchanges among other officials working in the subject matter(...)"— Roshelle Henry, Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations, Jamaica

"I'd like to thank the organizers of this training on Statistics on the Digital Economy, E-Commerce, and Digital Trade. It has been a meaningful journey, learning about the important role of statistics in measuring growth in the digital economy, e-commerce, and digital trade. Importantly, we need to have stronger collaboration and coordination at national level when collecting, processing and analyzing, and disseminating statistics related to the three areas above. More resources need to be invested in statistics to ensure growth can be accurately measured." — Tristein Tapu Zutu, Solomon Islands Government, Solomon Islands

Follow-up webinars

The e-learning course was followed by a closing webinar held on 18 July 2025 at 14h00 CEST. All course participants were invited to present their national case studies. Of the 9 presentations submitted, the following 3 were featured in the webinar:

- Digital Trade in the Dominican Republic: Navigating Data Challenges, Ms. Maria Batlle (Central Bank of the Dominican Republic)
- Digital Trade & Data in the Port Sector, Ms. Sonia Chai-Hong (Port Authority of Trinidad & Tobago)
- Cuba: Digital Economy, E-commerce, Digital Trade Highlight, Ms. Olga Stolik & Mr. Alfonso Casanova (National Bureau of statistics and Information of CUBA (ONEI))

All course participants, as well as all previous participants of the other courses as part of this project, were invited to attend the webinar. **The total number of participants registered for the webinar was 158 people.** Aside from the above speakers, the webinars were joined by Mr. Markie Muryawan from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Ms. Petra Kynclova from UNCTAD Stats and Daniel Ker from UNCTAD. The event was moderated by Ms. Guadalupe Paz Coria and supported by UNCTAD consultant Mr. Thierry Coulet. Also present from UNCTAD/TrainForTrade were Mr. Mark Assaf, Mr. Dominique Chantrel, Mr. Tomasz Kulaga, and Ms. Clara Massas.
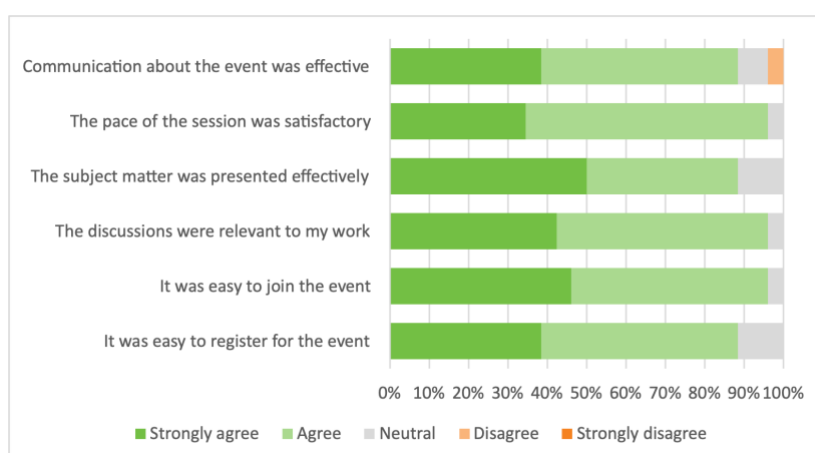
Figure 8. Screenshot of the closing webinar
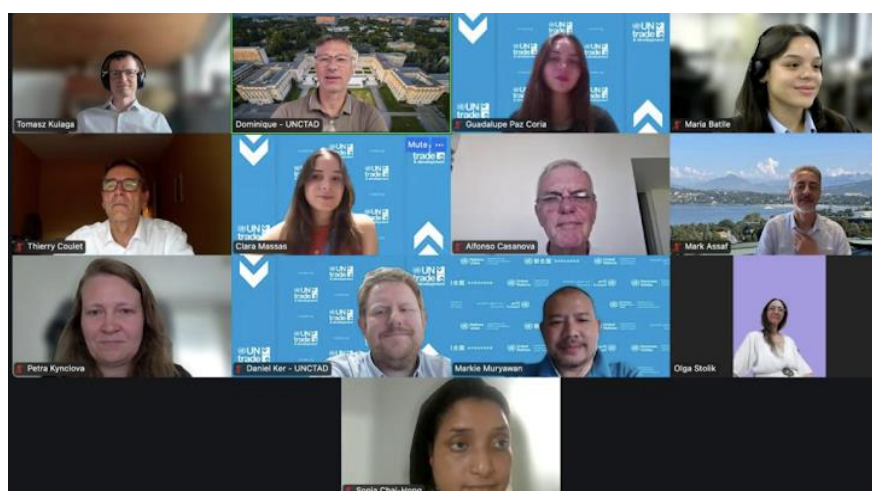
The webinars were conducted via the Zoom platform. The slides shared in the event, and its recording are available to course participants on the course platform.

Feedback

The satisfaction rate for the webinar was high at 92% with 26 responses (see figure below).

Figure 9. Evaluation of the webinar

Conclusions

The course improved participant knowledge and allowed them to exchange ideas and best practices alongside experts. According to the analysis of the course evaluation, the methodology used to offer the course tools and resources through the distance learning platform was successful in many areas, including the quality of the training material. The participants feedback highlighted the richness of the evaluations and innovative approaches of the course. The module topics provided added value thanks to the SIDS specific challenges addressed, relating directly to participants professions. Overall, the e-learning process was well adapted and organized.

Annex 1: Agenda of the course

Dates	Description
9-15 June	Module 1: Digital trade, digital economy and statistical concepts
16-22 June	Module 2: Setting the objectives, identifying the pre-requisites and defining a roadmap
23-29 June	Module 3: Data collection
30 June-6 July	Module 4: Data compilation
7-13 July	Module 5: Dissemination and analysis
14-20 July	Simulation game and conclusion
18 July at 14:00 CEST	90-minutes webinar on topics presented by selected course participants

Annex 2: Participants of the e-learning course

The following table summarizes participants and certified participants of the e-learning courses with the breakdown of participants' country of residence and gender (W for women and M for men).

#	Country	Participants			Certificates		
		Total	W	M	Total	W	M
1	Antigua and Barbuda	6	4	2	2	2	0
2	Aruba	1	0	1	0	0	0
3	Barbados	9	8	1	3	3	0
4	Belize	2	2	0	0	0	0
5	Cabo Verde	5	1	4	2	0	2
6	Comoros	1	0	1	0	0	0
7	Cuba	11	7	4	6	3	3
8	Dominica	11	10	1	8	8	0
9	Dominican Republic	17	8	9	11	5	6
10	Faroe Islands	1	0	1	0	0	0
11	Fiji	12	8	4	5	4	1
12	Grenada	8	7	1	5	5	0
13	Guyana	8	4	4	8	4	4
14	Haiti	18	4	14	13	2	11
15	Jamaica	18	13	5	11	7	4
16	Kiribati	9	7	2	1	1	0
17	Maldives	4	2	2	1	1	0
18	Martinique	1	0	1	1	0	1
19	Mauritius	9	5	4	4	3	1
20	Micronesia (Federated States of)	2	1	1	1	0	1
21	Montserrat	1	1	0	0	0	0
22	Nauru	2	2	0	0	0	0
23	Papua New Guinea	17	10	7	8	4	4
24	Puerto Rico	1	1	0	0	0	0
25	Saint Kitts and Nevis	4	3	1	1	0	1
26	Saint Lucia	3	2	1	1	1	0
27	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2	1	1	1	1	0
28	Samoa	4	4	0	2	2	0
29	Seychelles	1	0	1	0	0	0
30	Singapore	10	5	5	6	2	4
31	Solomon Islands	13	6	7	7	4	3
32	Suriname	2	1	1	1	0	1
33	Timor-Leste	3	1	2	1	0	1
34	Tonga	1	1	0	0	0	0
35	Trinidad and Tobago	20	14	6	14	9	5
36	Turks and Caicos Islands	1	1	0	0	0	0
37	Vanuatu	2	2	0	1	1	0
	International organization	21	13	8	6	3	3
	Total	**261**	**159**	**102**	**131**	**75**	**56**