

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia

Needs Assessment



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia: Needs Assessment



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Foreword

Serbia, an upper-middle-income country, is undertaking extensive reforms and development efforts as the Government forges ahead in consolidating a competitive market-based economy.

Trade, along with investment, is considered an essential element for achieving structural transformation and inclusive growth. Reforms accord priority to harmonizing non-tariff measures (NTMs). They also seek to remove regulatory and procedural trade barriers, which, by inflating transaction costs, have been undermining end-to-end supply chain efficiencies, employment generation and competitiveness of Serbian enterprises in domestic and global markets.

This study sheds light on the root causes of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in Serbia, drawing on extensive primary information collected during face-to-face interviews with supply chain actors, including traders, freight forwarders, enterprise support institutions and State agencies, using UNECE evaluation methodology. The study also provides action-oriented recommendations that address immediate and long-term capacity building needs for removing the identified barriers.

The recommendations were developed in consultation with the Government and take into account the comments of national stakeholders submitted to UNECE. The emphasis is put on reform achievements to date; complementing the Government's development strategies with a view to increasing the contribution of trade, particularly NTMs to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and informing technical assistance activities by United Nations agencies and development partners.

Together with the UNECE COVID-19 impact assessment, "The impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation in Serbia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of small and medium enterprises", UNECE considers this study as a reference framework for guiding its support of Serbia's trade and development efforts, and for informing inter-governmental discussions under the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

This study was undertaken as part of the Programme of Work of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and presented to the 6th session of the Steering Committee in June 2021.

The Secretariat looks forward to working closely with the Government of Serbia to support the successful implementation of the recommendations and the country's efforts to build back better post-pandemic. This includes supporting the outcomes of the 69th session of the UNECE Commission and member States' commitment to step up efforts to promote circular economy approaches.



Preface

Since 2010, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has been undertaking demand-driven national studies of regulatory and procedural barriers to trade to help countries achieve greater regional and global economic integration, to inform donors as to where assistance might be required, and to support policy discussions within the UNECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (formerly the Committee on Trade) and its subsidiary bodies on where additional work is required.

This study summarizes the key findings of the ninth study, which focuses on Serbia. It was carried out pursuant to the Government's request to support ongoing efforts to increase the trade sector's contribution to development and the implementation of the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The study was prepared by the UNECE secretariat in close consultation with public and private-sector stakeholders, drawing on a comprehensive survey-based assessment using the UNECE evaluation methodology. The study integrates the comments and suggestions submitted in writing by the principal stakeholders in June 2020 and February 2021.

The findings emerging from this study formed the basis for the UNECE COVID-19 impact assessment, titled "The impact of COVID-19 on trade and structural transformation in Serbia: Evidence from UNECE's survey of MSMEs", which was carried out May-October 2020 pursuant to General Assembly's Resolution on Global Solidarity to Fight the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (A/RES/74/270) of 2 April 2020. The impact assessment was financed through the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), Tenth Tranche project, "Strengthening the national capacities of selected ECE countries for evidence-based regulatory and procedural trade policies to achieve SDGs", and contributed to the United Nations system wide Global Initiative Towards Post-Covid-19 Resurgence of the MSME Sector.

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This study was prepared by Ms. Hana Daoudi (UNECE, Economic Affairs Officer, Market Access Section, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division) under the supervision of Mr. Mika Vepsäläinen (UNECE, Chief, Market Access Section, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division). UNECE would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Business Support Network (Belgrade, Serbia) and its experts, particularly Messrs. Dusan Korunoski and Dragoljub Rajic, who conducted the face-to-face interviews with the traders and major freight forwarders operating in Serbia. UNECE would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Veaceslav Sterbet, UNECE regional consultant, for carrying out the business process analysis of dried fruits and vegetables.

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