

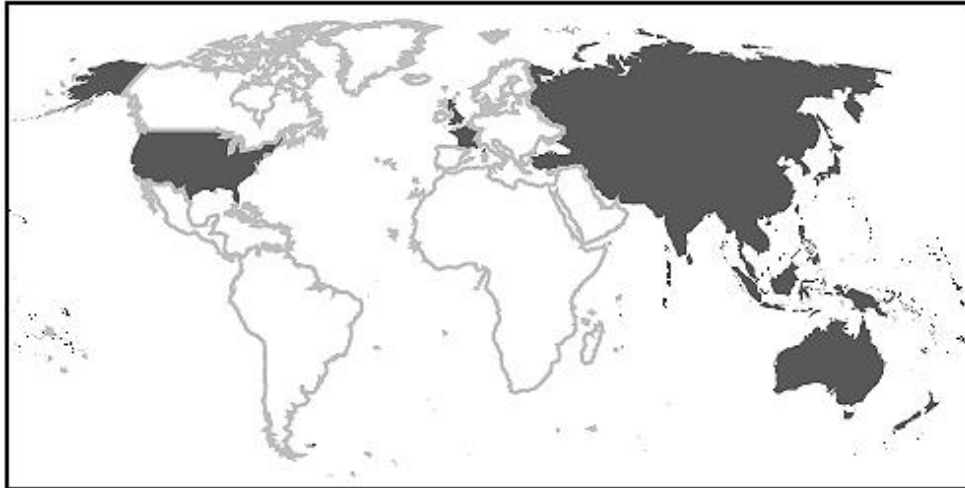


Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in North and Central Asia

Sub-Regional Report 2019

Based on the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reducing trade costs is essential in enabling economies to effectively participate in regional and global value chains and for them to continue to use trade as an important engine of growth and sustainable development. Reducing non-tariff sources of trade costs, including cumbersome regulatory trade procedures and documentation, is essential to lower trade costs and make trade more inclusive. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and new regional trade digitalization initiatives provide guidance on measures that should be considered for implementation.¹

In this context, this report presents results of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for 8 countries in North and Central Asia, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan has been excluded from this report as the country did not provide any data for the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019.

The WTO TFA+ Survey was conducted during the first half of 2019 and covered 53 trade facilitation measures divided into four categories: “General Trade Facilitation”, “Digital Trade Facilitation”, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” and “Trade Finance Facilitation”. The report reveals that:

- North and Central Asia implementation rate stands at 65.6% and is slightly higher than the regional average (59.7%). Within the Asia-Pacific region, implementation rate of trade facilitation and paperless trade in North and Central Asia countries comes after Australia and New Zealand, East and North-East Asia and South-East Asia.
- Implementation in North and Central Asia is quite heterogeneous. The Russian Federation and Azerbaijan achieved high levels of implementation, both standing at over 80%. In contrast Kyrgyzstan has an implementation rate of 38%.
- Most North and Central Asian economies made faster progress in implementing trade facilitation reforms than the Asia-Pacific region as a whole over the past 2 years. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan made the most progress in streamlining formalities and moving towards paperless trade between 2017 and 2019.
- North and Central Asian countries have implemented many of the WTO TFA related measures, in particular transparency, transit and formalities related measures. However, cross-border paperless trade implementation remains still relatively low compared to the implementation levels of the other measures.
- Measures under the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” category are very diversely implemented. These measures are not specified in multilateral and/or regional agreements but need to be further emphasized to ensure trade facilitation benefits a wider range of stakeholders. Measures related to agriculture or targeting SMEs are relatively well implemented (60% and 44% implementation rates, respectively) whereas the regional implementation rate of measures

¹ For example, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific was signed or acceded to by six countries, namely, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Azerbaijan. About 20 other States are at various stages of the treaty accession process and also participate annually in the interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, a body that spearheaded the negotiation of the treaty and is now supporting its implementation.

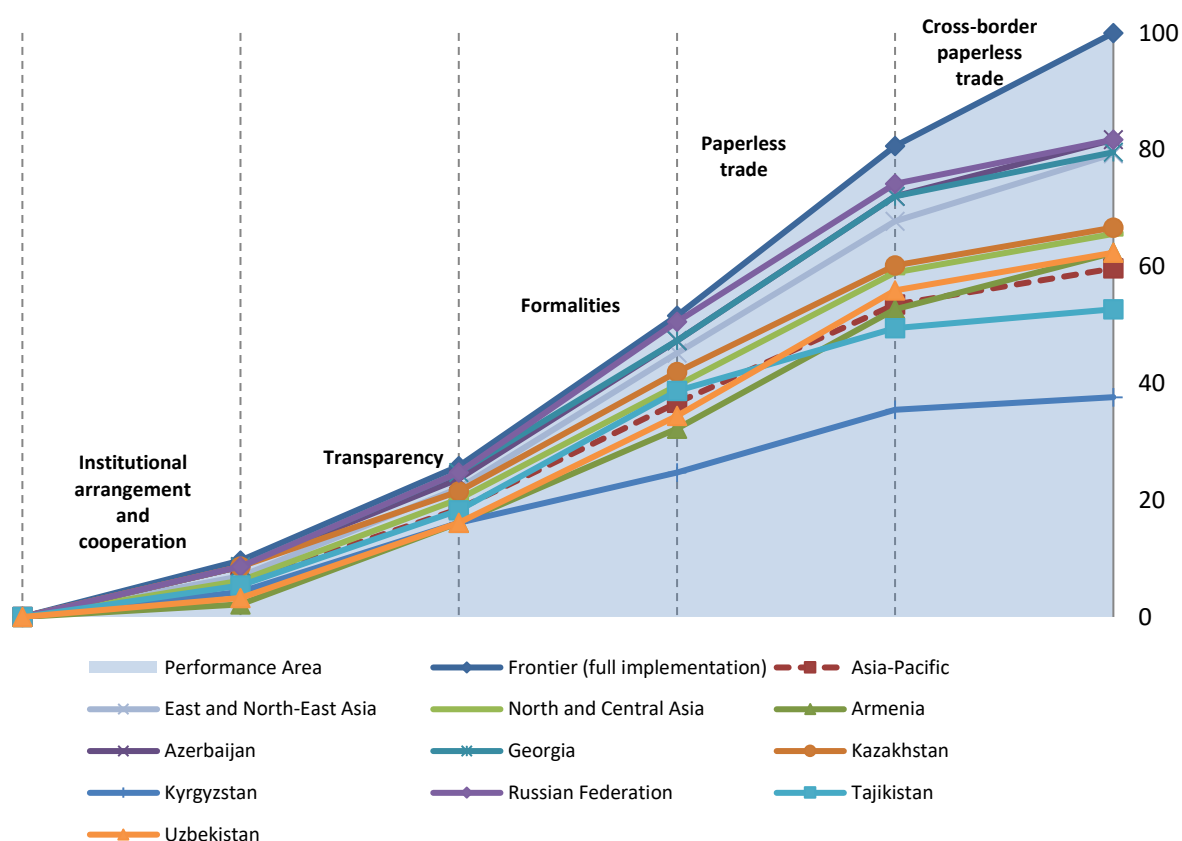
targeted at facilitating women participation in trade, approximately 32%, shows that there is still plenty of room for improvement in this area.

- Data on implementation of “Trade Finance Facilitation” measures were collected for the first time this year and does not provide a complete picture. It suggests, however, a serious lack of awareness about the importance of these measures and how they could be integrated in trade facilitation strategies.

The report also includes an analysis of the impact on trade costs from implementation of WTO TFA and other trade facilitation measures in North and Central Asia. While full implementation of all TFA measures included in the survey result in a 11% reduction in international trade costs for North and Central Asia, a TFA+ package of measures involving full digital implementation of the TFA together with enabling the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders results in much larger trade costs reductions of over 19%.

This North and Central Asia report may best be read in conjunction with the Global and Asia-Pacific reports on the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019, available at <https://untfsurvey.org/>.²

Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Note: the figure shows cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores of Asia-Pacific sub-regions for 31 common trade facilitation measures included in the survey. Full implementation of all measures =100.

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, untfsurvey.org, 2019

² See also ADB-ESCA Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2019: Bridging Trade Finance Gaps through Technology. Available at: <https://www.adb.org/publications/asia-pacific-trade-facilitation-report-2019>

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Authorized economic operator
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ENEA	East and North-East Asia
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ICT	Information and communications technology
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least developed country
LLDC	Landlocked developing country
NCA	North and Central Asia
NTFC	National trade facilitation committee
OCO	Oceania Customs Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIDE	Pacific Island Developing Economies
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEA	South-East Asia
SELA	Latin American and Caribbean Economic System
SIDS	Small island developing states
SSWA	South and South-West Asia
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
UN/CEFACT	United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNNExT	United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific
UNRC	United Nations Regional Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization

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