



# Fast-tracking implementation of eTrade Readiness Assessments

SECOND EDITION



UNITED NATIONS  
**UNCTAD**





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Geneva, 2022

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## NOTE

Within the UNCTAD Division on Technology and Logistics, the E-Commerce and Digital Economy Branch carries out policy-oriented analytical work on the development implications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-commerce. It is responsible for the preparation of the Digital Economy Report (DER) as well as thematic studies on ICT for Development.

The Branch promotes international dialogue on issues related to ICTs for development and contributes to building developing countries' capacities to measure the information economy and to design and implement relevant policies and legal frameworks. It also monitors the global state of e-commerce legislation (UNCTAD Cyberlaw Tracker). Since 2016, the Branch has coordinated a multi-stakeholder initiative entitled eTrade for all ([etradeforall.org](http://etradeforall.org)), which aims to improve the ability of developing countries, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), to use and benefit from e-commerce. The initiative is also behind the UNCTAD eTrade Readiness Assessment and eTrade for Women (eT4W) programmes, launched respectively in 2017 and in 2019.

Reference to companies and their activities should not be construed as an endorsement by UNCTAD of those companies or their activities.

The following symbols have been used in the tables:

Two dots (..) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

Rows in tables have been omitted in those cases where no data are available for any of the elements in the row.

A dash (-) indicates that the item is equal to zero or its value is negligible.

Reference to "dollars" (US\$) means United States of America dollars, unless otherwise indicated.

Details and percentages in tables do not necessarily add up to the totals because of rounding.





## PREFACE

The COVID-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a surge in e-commerce and uptake of digital solutions by businesses and consumers. It has also underscored the significant divides that exist in terms of digital readiness, hampering many countries' ability to harness e-commerce and the digital economy.

UNCTAD's eTrade Readiness Assessments (eT Readies) have already helped 29 countries, mainly Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to identify the main barriers and opportunities for e-commerce development. But the assessments are only the beginning. Their real value comes to fruition when moving from policy recommendations to implementation. That is why UNCTAD set up the eT Ready Implementation Support Mechanism (ISM) in 2020. Since then, several capacity-building, knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement activities have been organized to strengthen in-country implementation capacities and better empower in-country Focal Points, that are playing a pivotal role in mobilizing national stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, although not without challenges.

This report, the second to review the implementation of the recommendations contained in the assessments, has highlighted 140 new achievements from 14 countries, featuring an average implementation rate of 59 per cent, a nine per cent gain compared to the first review. Despite significant progress and valuable support provided by eTrade for all partners, this 2<sup>nd</sup> Implementation Review highlights areas for improvement. For example, it points to the need to strengthen national implementation arrangements, streamline policy coordination mechanisms and enhance synergies among development partners' interventions. It documents many good practices, policy impacts and lessons learned that can inspire countries and pave the way for further support. It stresses once more the urgency to accelerate e-commerce enabling reforms and investments to help foster economic recovery from the pandemic and increase the resilience to cope with new shocks. The report provides a solid basis to help mobilize the much-needed support to advance the e-commerce development agenda in eT Ready beneficiary countries.

I would like to thank the Government of Germany for its contribution to the eT Ready ISM, the Netherlands and Switzerland, which are the core donors of UNCTAD's work on e-commerce and the digital economy. Let me also thank our eTrade for all partners who are contributing with their respective expertise in the eTrade Readiness Assessments and renew my call for greater engagement in the implementation of priority recommendations. From our side, we will advocate for a more coordinated approach, especially at the country level to enhance synergies, and will continue to leverage the role of UN Resident Coordinator Offices to ensure an effective dialogue on the ground and full integration of countries' priorities in UN Cooperation Frameworks, national development plans and COVID-19 recovery plans. We will continue to connect the dots for a truly global inclusive trade, leaving no one behind in the digital economy.

**Shamika N. Sirimanne**  
**Director, Division on Technology and Logistics**



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