

# Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in ASEAN

Results of the UN Global Survey 2017



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United Nations publication  
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Printed in Thailand  
ST/ESCAP/2805

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# Executive Summary

Reducing trade costs is essential for developing economies to effectively use trade as an engine of growth and sustainable development. As a result, trade facilitation and the digitalization of trade procedures have taken increasing importance as evidenced by the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), as well as the growing number of regional and subregional initiatives for facilitating the electronic exchange of information along international supply chains, including the ASEAN Single Window Agreement (ASWA) and the more recent Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (FA-CPT).

This report presents an analysis of the results of the United Nations Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation for ASEAN countries. The Survey, conducted between January and July 2017, provides information on the implementation of selected measures under the WTO TFA, as well as on the implementation of innovative, technology-driven measures aimed at enabling trade using electronic rather than paper-based data and documentation - otherwise referred to as “paperless trade”. The 2017 Survey also covers specific trade facilitation measures targeted at small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the agricultural sector and women. The report reveals that:

- ASEAN implementation rate of the measures stands at 64.3%, well above the Asia-Pacific regional average (50.4%). Apart from Australia and New Zealand, ASEAN’s implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade is second only to that in East and Northeast Asia (73.7%).
- ASEAN has made good progress. Implementation rate of ASEAN as a group improved from 59% to 64% between the first and second Global Surveys conducted in 2015 and 2017. Myanmar made the most rapid progress in advancing implementation: its implementation rate increases by 15% during that period.
- Implementation in ASEAN remains quite heterogeneous. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand achieve world-leading implementation rates of over 80%, while implementation in Myanmar stands at about 40%. Cambodia and Lao PDR lead all other Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries, with implementation rates approaching 50%.
- ASEAN countries have already implemented many of the WTO TFA related measures, in particular transparency measures. However, cross-border paperless trade implementation remains low despite ASEAN having taken an early global lead in this area through the ASWA in 2005.<sup>1</sup>
- Implementation of “inclusive” trade facilitation measures to promote SME and women participation in trade remains low and ASEAN may further promote such measures in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The report also includes an analysis of the impact on trade cost of increasing implementation rates in ASEAN. Achieving basic ASEAN-wide compliance with the WTO TFA may reduce trade costs of the group by about 5-6%, while a more ambitious strategy involving digital trade facilitation and cross-border paperless trade could reduce trade costs by approximately 20%. Going forward, the ASEAN members may further accelerate implementation of the ASWA and related measures. To do so, all ASEAN members are encouraged to actively participate in the FA-CPT, the new UN treaty dedicated to advancing regional cross-border paperless trade through pilot projects, information sharing and coordinated adoption of international standards and implementation models.

This ASEAN report may best be read in conjunction with the global and Asia-Pacific reports on the results of the UN Global survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade. These reports, together with an interactive online database, are available at: <http://bit.ly/2h8SQbG>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Agreement to Establish and Implement the ASEAN Single Window* was signed in December 2005. It is available at: [http://asean.org/?static\\_post=agreement-to-establish-and-implement-the-asean-single-window-kuala-lumpur-9-december-2005-2](http://asean.org/?static_post=agreement-to-establish-and-implement-the-asean-single-window-kuala-lumpur-9-december-2005-2)

# Acknowledgements

Under the supervision of Mia Mikic and Yann Duval from the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) the report was prepared by Tengfei Wang, Yann Duval, Chorthip Utoktham and Zhang Yuhua from the same Division. Contribution from Luca Status-Ghib during his internship at ESCAP is gratefully acknowledged.

Le Quang Lan and Brasukra G. Sudjana from the ASEAN secretariat, as well as members of the ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee (ATF-JCC), substantially contributed to the preparation of the report by providing comments and support for data validation. The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT),<sup>2</sup> a knowledge community supported by ESCAP and Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), also greatly facilitated initial data collection. Comments and suggestions received from participants of the 8th ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee meeting (Singapore, 20 - 22 June 2017) and United Nations Regional Commission (UNRC) side event to the 6th Global Review on Aid for Trade (Geneva, 12 July 2017)<sup>3</sup> are gratefully acknowledged.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://unnex.t.unescap.org>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/devel\\_e/a4t\\_e/aid4trade\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/aid4trade_e.htm)

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