



Asia-Pacific Trade Briefs

Turkmenistan

Merchandise Trade: Merchandise exports in Turkmenistan grew robustly by 21.1% on average over the period 2010-2015. However, in 2015 the country experienced a sharp fall in exports by 20.0% which was higher than the Asia-Pacific average exports fall of 9.7%. As the world's 4th largest holder of natural gas reserves, the country is largest gas exporter in the subregion, and accordingly, natural gas accounted for 83.3% of goods exports. Gas exports from Turkmenistan were hit by a pricing dispute which began in July 2015 between Turkmengas and Russian Federation-owned Gazprom. Despite China being Turkmenistan's major export destination, Turkmenistan is dependent on the Russian Federation's pipeline network which placed the country in a difficult situation after the Russian Federation ceased purchasing gas from Turkmenistan in January of 2016. Similarly, merchandise imports in 2015 contracted sharply by 24.3% compared to an average robust growth of 8.2% over the period 2010-2015. The country mainly imports equipment and components for facilitating its gas exports, such as pipeline structures and iron rods, in addition to other consumer goods such as motor vehicles and medicaments. Weak prospects for gas exports, currency devaluations and currency crisis may explain the imports contraction.

Intraregional trade: In 2015, 93.8% of exports in goods were taken by ESCAP economies. China (79.0%) is the largest intraregional export market, followed by Afghanistan (6.4%) and Turkey (5.6%). Meanwhile, 71.1% of goods imports were sourced from ESCAP economies, with Turkey (34.1%), the Russian Federation (15.5%) and China (15.0%) as the largest intraregional import sources.

Foreign direct investment (FDI): FDI inflows into Turkmenistan in 2015 grew modestly by 2.1% compared to average inflows growth of 3.4% over the period 2010-2015. The country's FDI inflows growth over the five past years has been slightly below the Asia-Pacific average growth rates of 5.2% during 2010-2015. The main sectors which received investment are the hydrocarbons, petrochemicals and construction infrastructure and services sectors, with China (around \$195 million) as the largest foreign investor. Turkmenistan's FDI inflows totalled \$4.3 billion in 2015. Abundant hydrocarbon resources, especially natural gas, and recent Chinese investments into mega pipeline infrastructure projects, such as the Central Asia-China Pipeline System (2009-2018) may explain for the modest, but stable inflows growth. However, factors such as a restricted supply of foreign currency, unstable monetary and fiscal policies, and a continued lack of sufficient pipeline infrastructure and legal infrastructure for foreign investment remain major obstacles to increased FDI inflows growth.

Trade agreement: Turkmenistan has 9 preferential trade agreements (PTAs) in force, which is higher than the Asia-Pacific average of 7.6 agreements. Nine per cent of total exports are to PTA partners, compared to 33% for the Asia-Pacific, while 53% of total imports are from PTA partners, compared to 44% for the Asia-Pacific.

Figure 1. Key trade and investment indicators

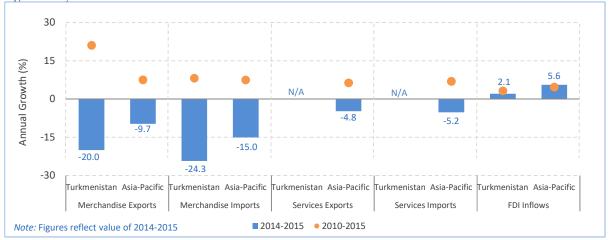


Figure 2. Top merchandise markets

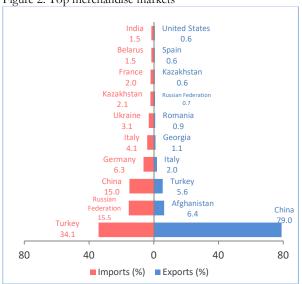


Figure 3. Top merchandise products

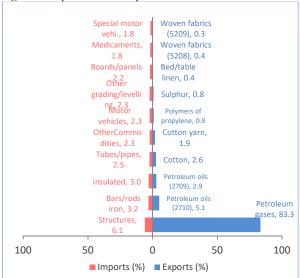


Figure 4. Trade within region and rest of the world

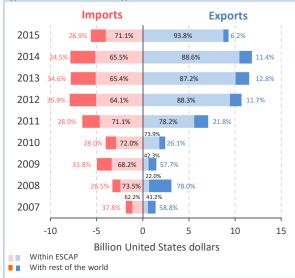
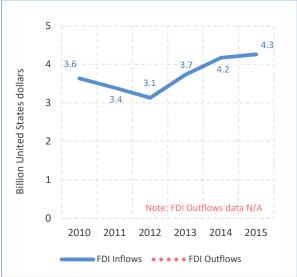


Figure 5. Foreign direct investment



Sources: Trade and tariff data were accessed through WITS. FDI data were accessed through UNCTAD stat. Trade costs data were based on the ESCAP-World Bank trade cost database.

Note: Data are based only on countries for which they are available. Merchandise trade data follow the HS2007 classification. Mirror data are used. Products are defined at the 4-digit level. Tariffs are simple average. Trade costs shown are tariff equivalents, calculated as trade-weighted average trade costs of countries with the four developing economies (China, India, Indonesia and Russian Federation). Trade costs for East Asia-3 comprises China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; trade costs for European Union-3 comprises Germany, France and the United Kingdom.

Definitions: MFN bound tariff is the maximum most-favoured nation (MFN) tariff permitted under WTO obligations. MFN applied tariff is the tariff applied to imports among WTO members. The effectively applied rate is the ratio of collected import tariff revenue and value of imports. Binding coverage refers to the share of bound tariff lines in the total number of tariff lines. For more details see escap-tiid@un.org.

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