
Joint United Nations Regional Commissions
Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade
Implementation Survey 2015

*Sub-Regional Notes –
North and Central Asia¹*

Prepared by



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Disclaimers:

This note is a complement to the more elaborate Regional (Asia-Pacific) Report. It should best be read in conjunction with it, as well as the associated Country Notes, which can be found at: <http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>

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1. Introduction

It is well understood that reducing trade costs is essential in enabling economies to effectively participate in regional and global value chains and continue to use trade as a main engine of growth and sustainable development. Recent studies suggest that much of the trade cost reductions achieved over the past decade have been through elimination or lowering of tariffs.² Further trade cost reduction therefore, will have to come from tackling non-tariff sources of trade costs, such as inefficient transport and logistics infrastructure and services, but also cumbersome regulatory procedures and documentation. Indeed, trade facilitation – the simplification and harmonization of import, export and transit procedures –, including paperless trade – the use and exchange of electronic data and documents to support the trade transaction process –, has taken increasing importance, as evidenced by the successful conclusion of the negotiations on a WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in December 2013, and the progress made at ESCAP on developing a complementary regional arrangement for the facilitation of cross-border paperless trade since 2012.

This note is part of a new global effort by all United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRCs), in cooperation with other interested international organizations³, to provide reliable and sufficiently detailed data on the implementation of trade facilitation in general - and single window and paperless trade in particular at the global level. It features the results of the 2015 UNRCs Joint Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade implementation for the North and Central Asian (NCA) sub-region, covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. **This note is a complement to the more elaborate Regional (Asia-Pacific) Report. It should best be read in conjunction with it, as well as the associated Country Notes.**⁴

The survey was prepared taking into account the final list of provisions included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as well as the content of the draft text of the regional UN treaty on cross-border paperless trade facilitation under negotiation at ESCAP. It covers 38 trade facilitation measures divided into four groups, namely, *General trade facilitation measures*, *Paperless trade*, *Cross-border paperless trade* and *Transit facilitation*.⁵ The *General trade facilitation measures* – as well as *Transit facilitation* measures – are essentially measures featured in the WTO TFA. In contrast, most paperless trade and, in particular, cross-border paperless trade measures, are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA, although their implementation in many cases would support the better implementation of many of the *General trade facilitation measures*. Survey results for the North and Central Asian sub-region are presented below.

² For example, see ESCAP (2011), Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2011, United Nations.

³ The survey has been conducted in close collaboration with OECD, ITC and UNCTAD, as well as several sub-regional organizations, such as SELA in Latin America, and OCO in the South Pacific.

⁴ More information is available in the regional, other sub-regional and national reports at:

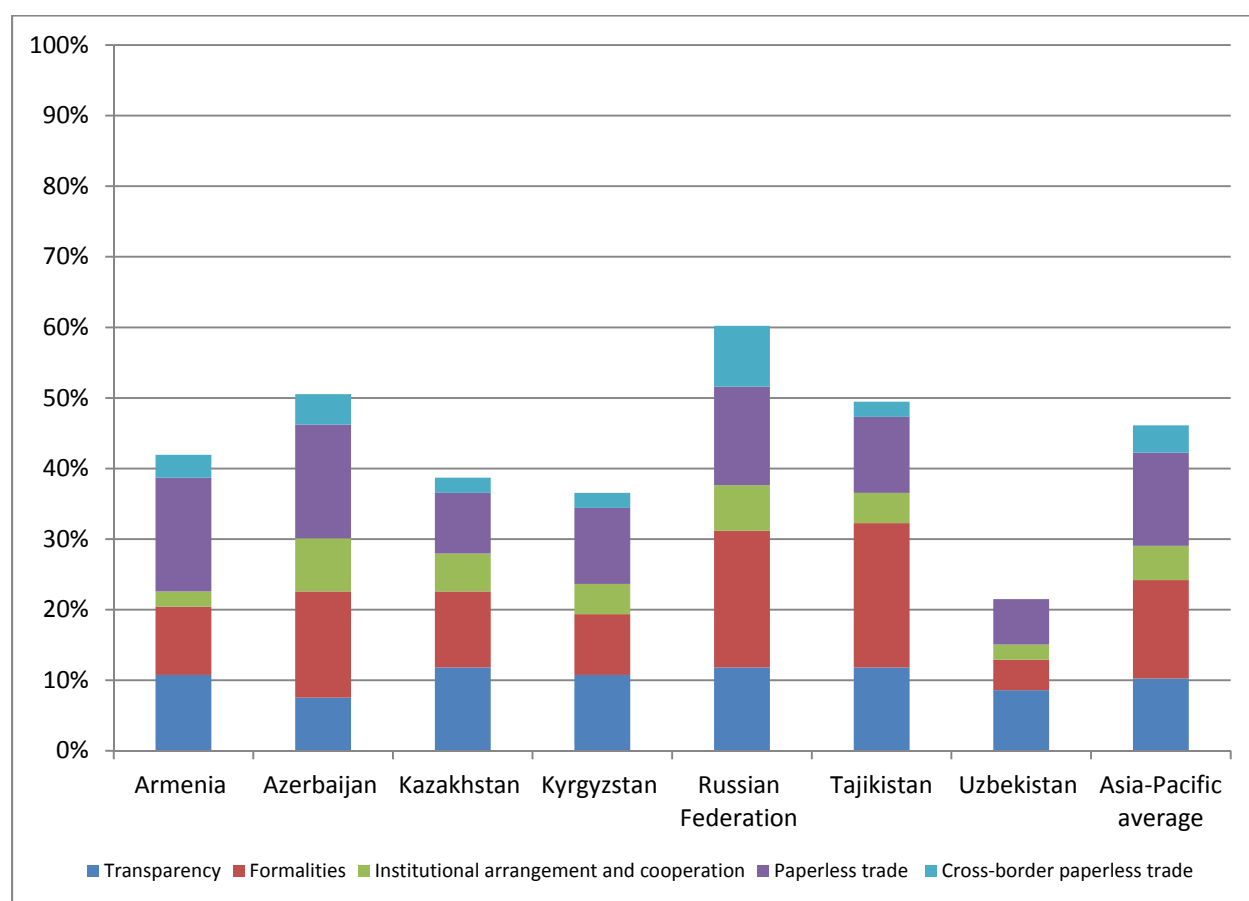
<http://unnex.unescap.org/UNTFSurvey2015.asp>

⁵ The survey questionnaire is available in full at: <http://unnex.unescap.org/tfforum14-survey.asp>

2. Trade facilitation implementation in North and Central Asia: Overview

Figure 1 shows the overall implementation levels of seven (7) North and Central Asian countries based on a common set of 31 trade facilitation and paperless trade measures included in the survey⁶. The sub-regional average implementation of this comprehensive set of trade facilitation measures stands at 41.5%, which is below the Asia-Pacific regional average (46.5%). The Russian Federation has the highest implementation rate at 60.2%, and – together with Azerbaijan and Tajikistan – has implementation scores higher than the regional average.

Figure 1: Overall implementation of trade facilitation measures in North and Central Asian countries

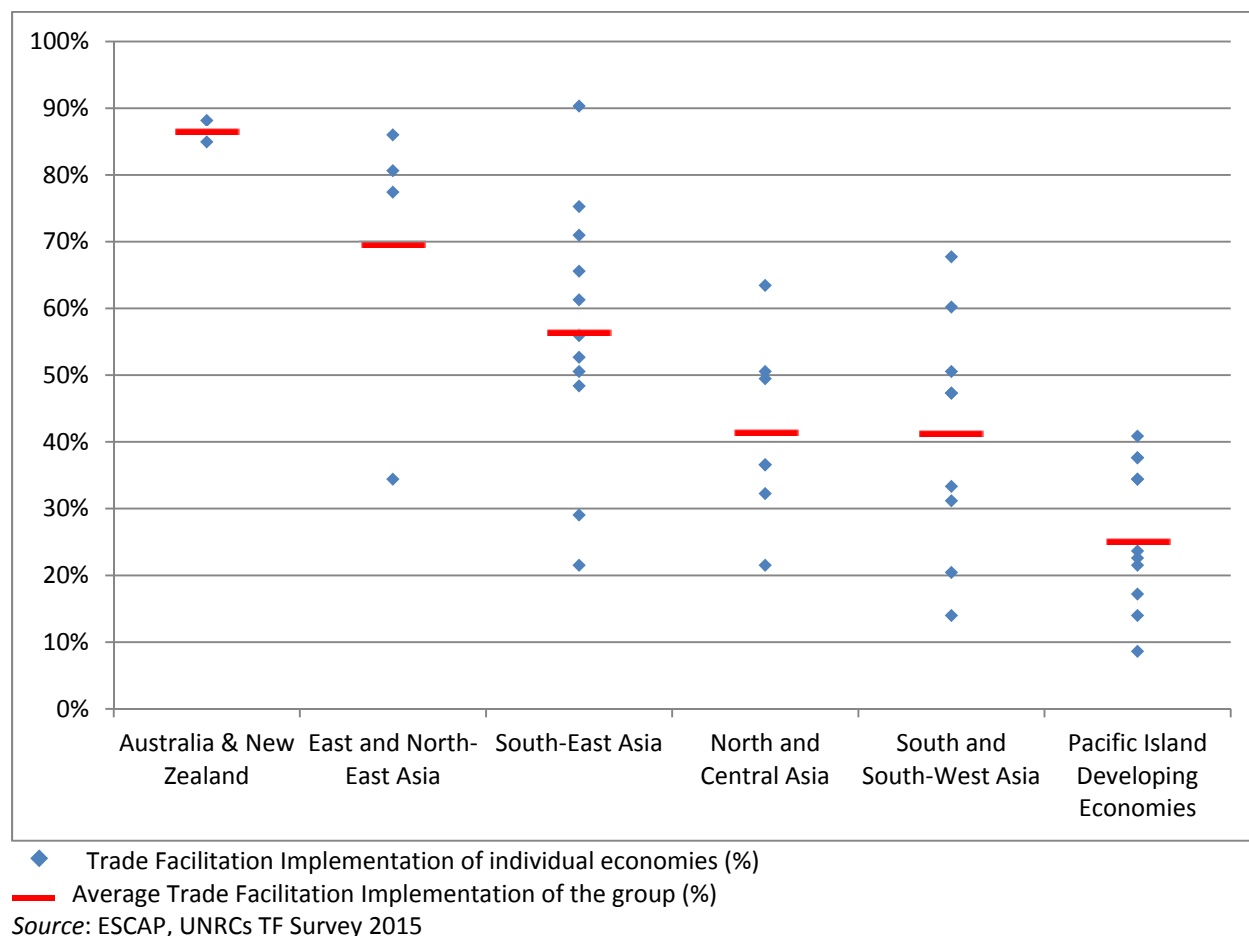


Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

⁶ Among 38 trade facilitation measures surveyed, three measures including 20. *Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests*, 33. *Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings*, and 34. *Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings* are excluded for calculating the overall score as they are not relevant to all countries surveyed. Similarly, four transit facilitation measures are also excluded. The overall score of each country is simply a summation of the scores of implementation (3,2,1 or 0) it receives for each trade facilitation measure. The maximum possible (full) score of a country is 93 and the average score across all 44 countries is 43.3 (or 46.5% in percentage term).

Figure 2 presents an overview of the implementation of trade facilitation measures (measured by percentage) in the different Asia-Pacific sub-regions as well as the average level of implementation of countries within each group. North and Central Asia has the fourth highest average level of implementation (41.5%) after South-East Asia.

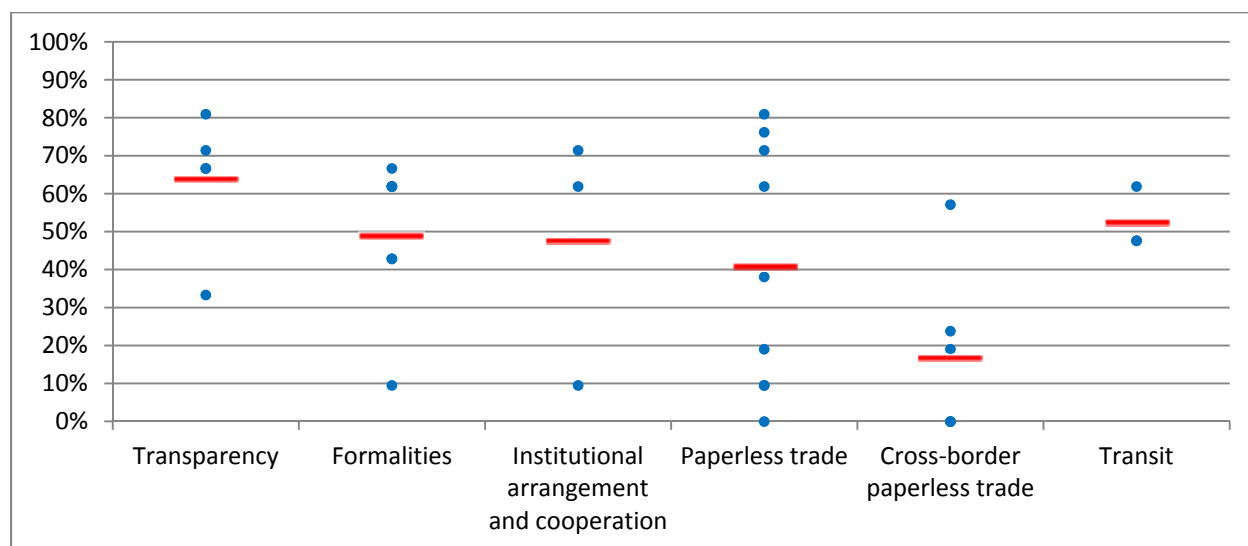
Figure 2: Trade facilitation implementation in Asia-Pacific sub-regions



2.1 Most and least implemented trade facilitation measures

In North and Central Asia, most trade facilitation measures including *Transparency, Formalities, Institutional arrangement and cooperation, Paperless trade, and Transit* are all relatively better implemented than *Cross-border paperless trade*, which lags behind the rest. Specific measures under each category are discussed in Table 2.

Figure 3: Implementation of different groups of trade facilitation measures: North and Central Asian average



Notes: Blue dots show regional average implementation level of individual measures within each group.
 — Average sub-regional implementation level by groups of measures.

Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

Table 1: Most and least implemented measures in North and Central Asia (within each group of trade facilitation measures)

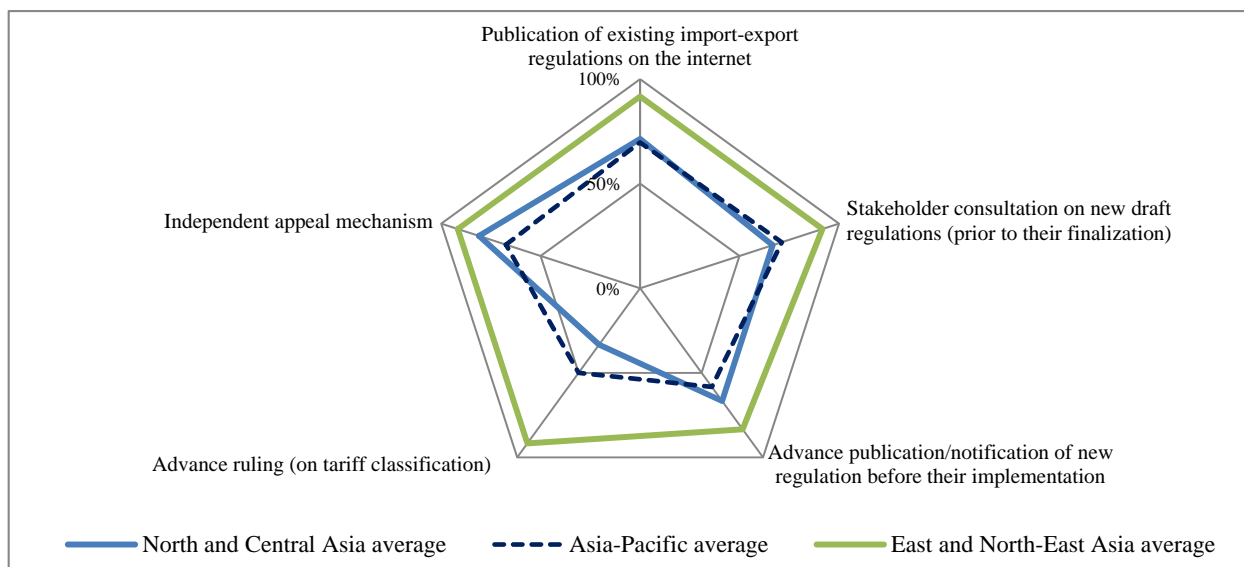
	Most implemented	Least implemented
Transparency	Independent appeal mechanism	Advance ruling (on tariff classification)
Formalities	Separation of Release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	Establishment and publication of average release times
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	Cooperation between agencies on the ground at the national level	Government agencies delegating controls to Customs authorities
Paperless trade	1. Electronic/automated Customs Systems 2. Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings	1. Electronic Application and Issuance of Trade Licenses 2. Electronic Submission of Air Cargo Manifests 3. Electronic Application and Issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin
Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	1. Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin 2. Electronic exchange of Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary Certificate 3. Banks and insurers retrieving letters of credit electronically

3. Implementation of trade facilitation measures: A closer look

3.1 “Transparency” measures

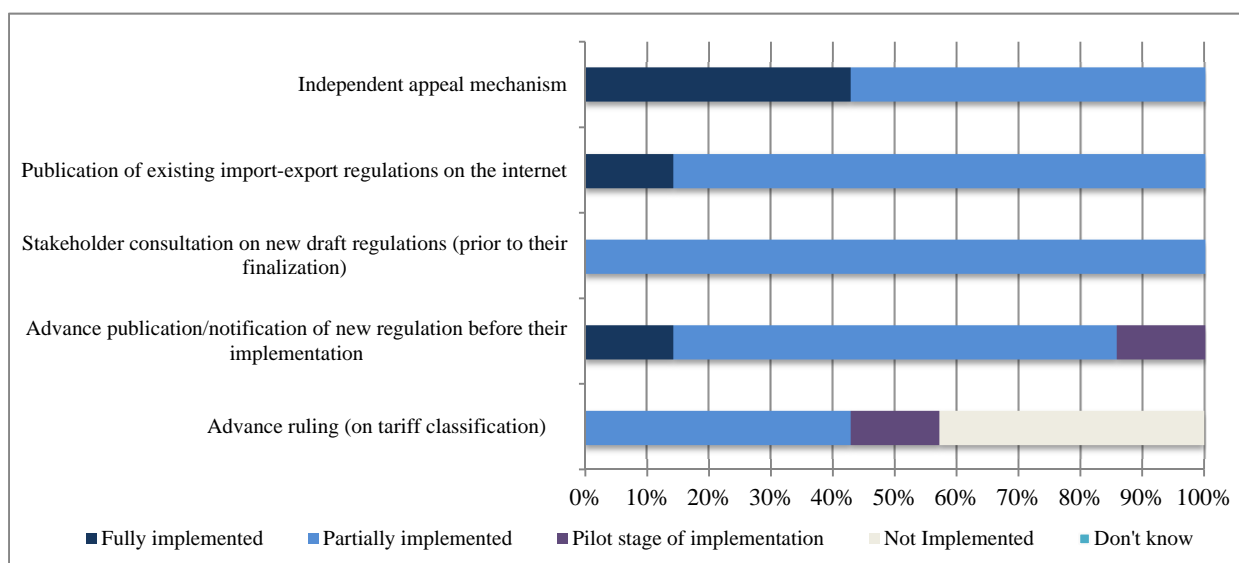
Five trade facilitation measures included in the survey can be categorized as “Transparency” measures. They relate to Articles 1-5 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article X on Publication and Administration of Trade Regulations.

Figure 4: Implementation of “transparency” measures: North and Central Asian average



Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

Figure 5: State of implementation of “transparency” measures for trade facilitation in North and Central Asia (in %)



Source: ESCAP, UNRCs TF Survey 2015

Figure 4 shows the average level of implementation of all five “transparency” measures across the sub-region, compared to the regional ones and taking the best performer among sub-regions, East and North-East Asia, as the benchmark. The average weighted implementation score of all five “transparency” measures across the North and Central Asian sub-region is around 63%, which is at par with the Asia-Pacific regional average, but below the East and North-East Asian sub-regional average.

Figure 5 shows that the most implemented measures are *Independent appeal mechanism*; *Publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet*; *Stakeholder consultation on new draft regulations*; and *Advance publication/notification of new regulation before their implementation*. They have been at least partially implemented in all countries in the sub-region, with the exception of *Advance publication*, which is in the pilot stage of implementation in one country (Azerbaijan). *Advance ruling (on tariff classification)* is the least implemented measure, and has been at least partially implemented in around 40% of all countries, and is in the pilot stage of implementation in one country (Armenia).

3.2 “Formalities” facilitation measures

Eight of the general trade facilitation measures included in the survey are categorized as “formalities” facilitation measures, aimed at streamlining and/or expediting regulatory trade procedures. They relate to Articles 6-10 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article VIII on “Fees and Formalities connected with Importation and Exportation”.

Figure 6 shows that the average weighted implementation score of “formalities” facilitation measures in this sub-region is around 54%, which is at par with the Asia-Pacific regional average, but lower than the East and North-East Asian sub-regional average. The implementation rates of “formalities” measures in the sub-region are presented in Figure 7. *Risk management*, *Pre-arrival processing*, *Post-clearance audit*, and *Acceptance of electronic copies* are the most implemented measures in the sub-region; they have been at least partially implemented in around 70 to 80% of all countries. *Risk management* and *Post-clearance audit* are also both in the pilot stage of implementation in one country (Kazakhstan). The least implemented measure is *Establishment and publication of*

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