



# Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in East and North-East 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.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, the report presents results of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for 4 countries in East and North East Asia (ENEA), namely China, Japan, Republic of Korea and Mongolia. 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:

- East and North-East Asia implementation rate stands at 79.3%, well above the Asia-Pacific regional average (59.7%). Within the Asia-Pacific region, implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade is second only to that in Australia and New Zealand (93%).
- Implementation in East and North East Asia remains quite homogenous, with the exception of Mongolia. Japan and the Republic of Korea achieve world-leading implementation rates of over 90%, followed by China standing at 83%, whereas Mongolia stands at approximately 46%.
- East and North-East Asian countries have implemented many of the WTO TFA related measures, in particular transparency 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 regarding agricultural trade facilitation achieve very high levels of implementation standing at 85.2%. Measures regarding trade facilitation for SMEs have a relatively high rate of implementation, standing at nearly 67% whereas measures targeted at women in trade are quite low, standing at approximately 36%.
- 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 cost of increasing implementation rates of the WTO TFA in East and North-East Asia. Full implementation of binding measures results in a

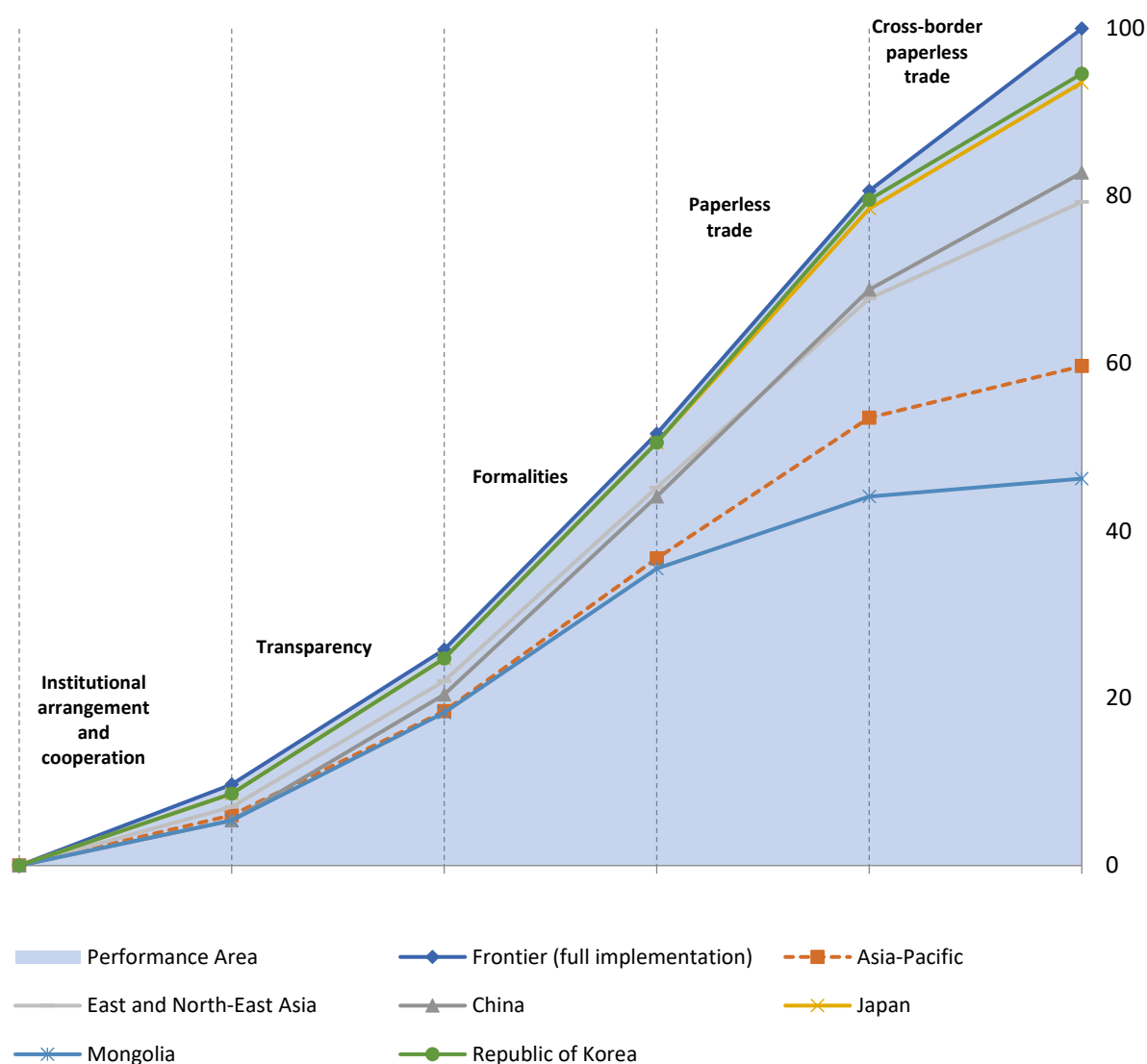
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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific was signed or acceded to by six countries, namely, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Islamic Republic of Iran, and Azerbaijan. 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.

decrease of trade costs of about 1-2%, while full implementation of all TFA measures results in a 4% reduction. Paperless implementation of the TFA measures together with enabling the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders results in much larger trade costs reductions, averaging nearly 10% for East and North-East Asia as a whole.

This East and North-East 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/>.<sup>2</sup>

### 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

<sup>2</sup> 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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The report was prepared by Chorthip Utoktham, Danijel Bajt, and Vasan Narang under the guidance of Yann Duval and the overall supervision of Mia Mikic, all from the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division (TIID) of ESCAP. Yuhua Zhang and Sangwon Lim from ESCAP also contributed to the report, in particular by facilitating data collection from relevant experts as well as data validation in several countries. The active participation of the participants to the Asia-Pacific Forum on Trade Digitalization for Sustainable Regional Integration and the interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-Border Paperless Trade Facilitation, held on 12-15 March 2019, in the initial data collection effort is gratefully acknowledged. The United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific (UNNExT), a knowledge community supported by ESCAP and ECE, also greatly facilitated data collection.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Authorized economic operator
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
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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