



Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

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 such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (FA-CPT) provide guidance on measures that should be considered for implementation.¹

In this context, this report presents results of the United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for 6 countries members of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan has been excluded from this report as the country did not provide any data for the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019.

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:

- SPECA implementation rate stands at 54% and it is slightly lower than the regional average (59.7%). Within the Asia-Pacific region, implementation rate of trade facilitation and paperless trade in SPECA countries comes after Australia and New Zealand, East and North-East Asia, South-East Asia, North and Central Asia and South and South West Asia.
- Implementation in SPECA is quite heterogenous. Azerbaijan achieved high levels of implementation, standing at 82%. In contrast Afghanistan stands at only 23% followed by Kyrgyzstan with an implementation rate of 38%.
- Most SPECA economies made faster progress in implementing trade facilitation reforms than the Asia-Pacific region over the past 2 years. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan made the most progress in streamlining formalities and moving towards paperless trade between 2017 and 2019.
- SPECA countries have implemented many of the WTO TFA related measures, in particular transparency and transit 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 related to agriculture are relatively well implemented (46%) whereas the regional implementation rate of measures targeted at facilitating women participation in trade or

¹ 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.

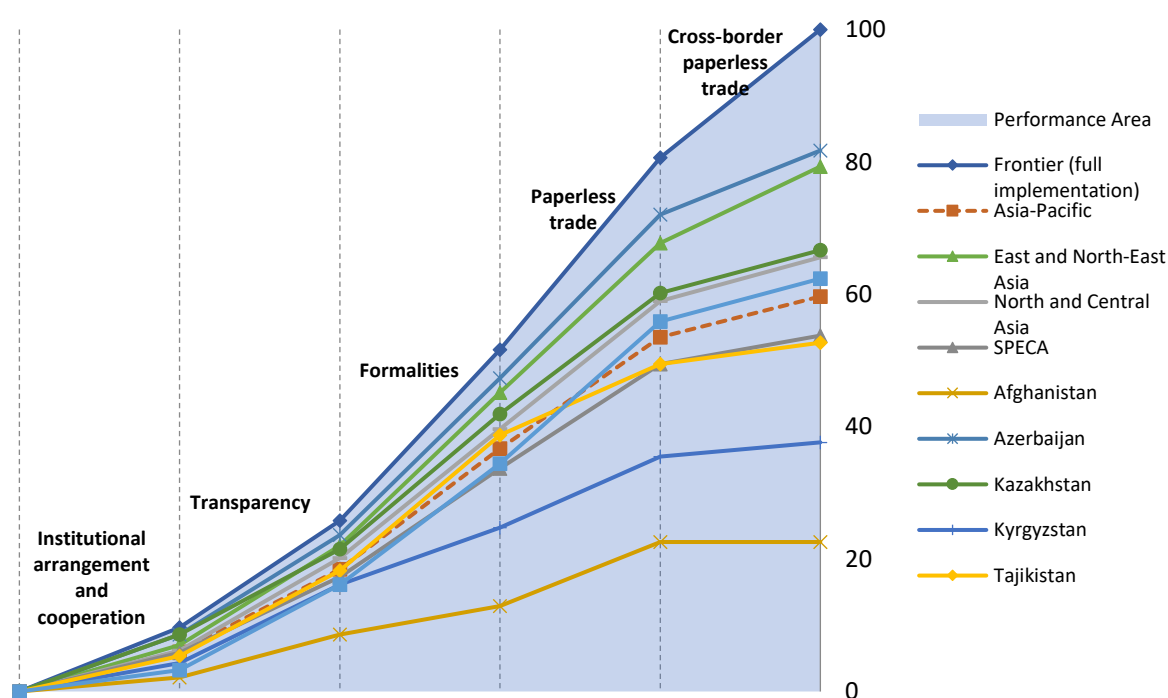
targeting SMEs are still relatively low (35% and 36%, respectively), showing that there is still plenty of room for improvement in this area.

- 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 costs from implementation of WTO TFA and other trade facilitation measures in SPECA. While full implementation of all TFA measures included in the survey result in a 15% reduction in international trade costs for SPECA, a TFA+ package of measures involving full digital implementation of the TFA together with enabling the seamless electronic exchange of trade data and documents across borders results in much larger trade costs reductions of 24%. The FA-CPT is a UN treaty open to all Asia-Pacific countries and already signed or acceded to by China and Azerbaijan, respectively. Other SPECA countries may also utilize the FA-CPT as an inclusive intergovernmental platform to accelerate implementation of harmonized and interoperable paperless trade facilitation solutions.

This SPECA 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/>.²

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

² 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. Maria-Theresa Pisani and Salehin Khan of the United Nations Economic and Commission for Europe (ECE), as well as Yuhua Zhang and Sangwon Lim from ESCAP also contributed to the survey efforts, 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
SPECA	United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
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

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