



Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report **2021**

Based on the United Nations Global Survey
on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation



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Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report 2021

Based on the United Nations Global Survey on Digital
and Sustainable Trade Facilitation





FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on people and economies across the globe. It has also highlighted the importance of trade facilitation and the need to streamline trade procedures. Given the essential role of international trade and supply chains play in accessing essential supplies, many countries have renewed their efforts to simplify and digitalize trade, as suggested by the findings of this report.

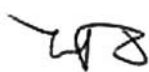
This report presents the results of the fourth UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. It brings together information from countries worldwide on the implementation of a wide range of trade facilitation measures, going beyond the set of measures included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The report aims at enabling countries and development partners to take a forward-looking approach to trade facilitation, better understand and monitor progress, support evidence-based public policies, share best practices, and identify emerging capacity-building and technical assistance needs.

The fourth Global Survey builds upon the earlier editions and an expanded collection of measures on trade finance facilitation and trade facilitation in times of crisis. The latter category was incorporated to gather information on the implementation of short-term measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as long-term measures in preparation for future crises and pandemics. The crucial role of trade digitalization has been emphasized not only for increasing regulatory compliance and reducing illicit financial flows, but also as an effective means to mitigate trade disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth Global Survey also pays special attention to sectors and groups with special needs, such as the agricultural sector, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women traders, as international trade is one of the key means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As all economies now strive to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, still more needs to be done to make trade easier for all. We hope that this report and the associated interactive database at untfsurvey.org will prove helpful in making trade simpler, cheaper, more resilient and sustainable through the application of technology and innovation to international trade procedures.



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The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) – an intergovernmental body serviced by the ECE – and 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 – greatly facilitated data collection. Inputs to the expert group meeting on trade facilitation in times of crisis and epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region (virtual, July 2020). In addition, the results from a pilot survey on trade facilitation in times of crisis and pandemic – conducted in 2020 for the Asia-Pacific countries, the results of which were published in a regional report in January 2021 – contributed to the development of the additional measures on trade facilitation in times of crisis. Comments and suggestions received from participants at the Launch of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 (virtual, July 2021), at which the 2021 survey results were presented, are gratefully acknowledged. The authors are also grateful to the following organizations and individuals for their inputs and suggestions for the development of the 2021 survey: Alexander R. Malaket, formerly from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Banking Commission and Andrew Wilson from the ICC for the trade finance facilitation component; Candice White from the World Economic Forum (WEF); and Alexandre Larouche-Maltais and Sijia Sun from UNCTAD for the women in trade facilitation component.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reducing trade costs is essential for enabling economies to effectively participate in regional and global value chains, and for them to continue using trade as an important engine of growth and sustainable development. According to the ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, trade costs remain high in many regions of the world. The international supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent surge in shipping costs have put additional pressure on importers and exporters. Trade facilitation, which is aimed at enhancing efficiency through streamlined and digitalized processes, can help to lower trade costs and increase economic welfare, particularly in developing and emerging economies.

Based on the 2021 UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, this report reviews the progress of trade facilitation reforms across 144 countries. The analysis is based on 58 trade facilitation measures that are classified into four groups (“General Trade Facilitation”, “Digital Trade Facilitation”, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” and “Other Trade Facilitation”) and a further 11 sub-groups covering both binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures, as well as measures beyond the scope of WTO TFA.

The global average implementation rate of 31 general and digital trade facilitation measures stands at 64.7%. Despite the grave impact of COVID-19 on global trade, significant progress has been observed in more efficient trade facilitation over the past two years. The overall implementation rate of measures increased by more than 5 percentage points between 2019 and 2021. Implementation still varies greatly around the world, with developed economies achieving the highest level at 81.8%, while the Pacific Islands have the lowest implementation rate (40.1%). Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa is 49.1%, second to the Pacific Islands. South Asia recorded the most progress, with more than 10 percentage point increase since 2019. Sub-Saharan Africa (6 percentage points), Developed Economies (5.2 percentage points) and Pacific Islands (4.9 percentage points) also made substantial progress, despite the significant challenges and trade disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

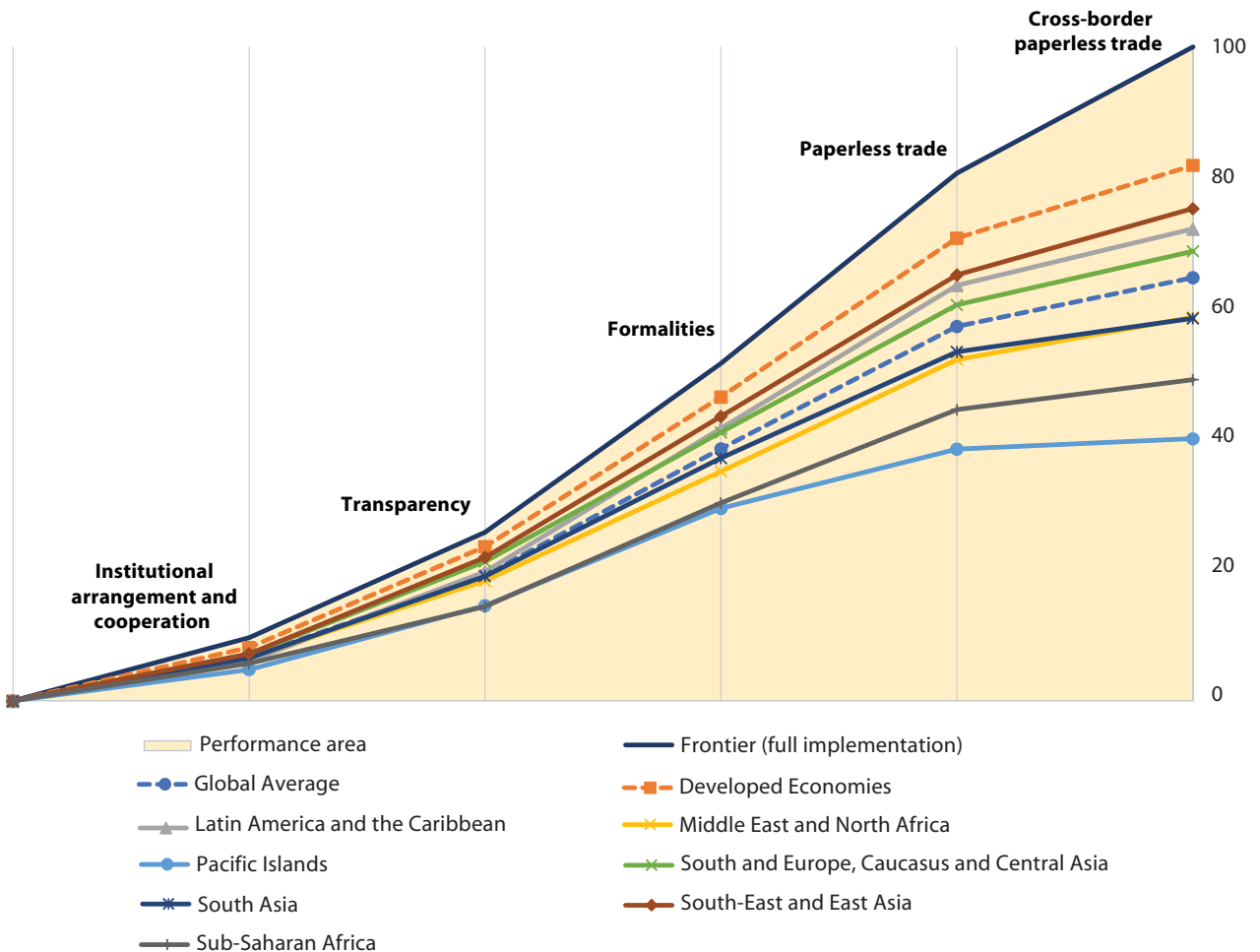
In general, WTO TFA-related measures are relatively well-implemented globally. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the acceleration of digital transformation, with the implementation of ‘Paperless Trade’ standing at 64%. However, the implementation level of ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ is substantially low at 38%, with bilateral and subregional paperless trade systems remaining either mostly partial or on a pilot basis. Nonetheless, progress in the implementation of ‘Paperless Trade’ and ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ measures is remarkable, with increases of 6.3 and 5.4 percentage points over the past two years, respectively – the highest improvement in these areas since the introduction of the survey in 2015.

International trade is an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction, and sustainable trade facilitation is one indispensable dimension of trade facilitation. However, while ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ measures have been comparatively well-implemented, the implementation of trade facilitation measures aimed at SMEs and women in business face big challenges, with average implementation rates of 41% and 31%, respectively. Given their importance in achieving sustainable and inclusive development, particularly in times of crisis, trade facilitation strategies should be designed in a more holistic and inclusive manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many weaknesses of the trading system. The survey results show that most countries have implemented short-term crisis measures. However, the overall implementation level of measures in the ‘Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis’ section stands at only 41%, essentially because many countries still lack long-term trade facilitation plans to enhance preparedness for future crises. Continued and sustained efforts should be made to further enhance cooperation, make trade information transparent, and strengthen the capacity of countries to contribute to recovery and prepare to adequately safeguard against future crises.

Moving forward, trade facilitation implementation may be seen as a step-by-step process, based on the groups of measures included in the survey – i.e., enhancing the institutional arrangement; establishing transparency; implementing efficient trade formalities; and the development of paperless trade systems. This is followed by enabling trade data and documents within these systems, including national Single Windows, to be safely and securely used and reused by authorized stakeholders along the international supply chain (see the following figure). Countries need to work together to develop and implement the legal and technical protocols required for the seamless exchange of regulatory and commercial data as well as documentation within and between countries. In this regard, regional and subregional initiatives – such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA), the expansion of the ASEAN Single Window Agreement, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement – could support countries in gradually moving to less paper and then to paperless and cross-border paperless trade by providing a dedicated, inclusive and capacity-building intergovernmental platform. Indeed, the report finds that digital trade facilitation measures serve as a great catalyst for trade cost reduction. Empirical evidence shows that full digital trade facilitation implementation beyond the WTO TFA commitments could cut the average trade cost by more than 13%, 6.7 percentage points more than that could be expected from meeting requirements of the WTO TFA.

Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Note: The figure shows global cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores for different regions in the five groups of trade facilitation measures included in the survey. Scores are based on the equally weighted implementation of 31 trade facilitation measures, but the number of measures varies in the five groups. Full implementation of all measures = 100.

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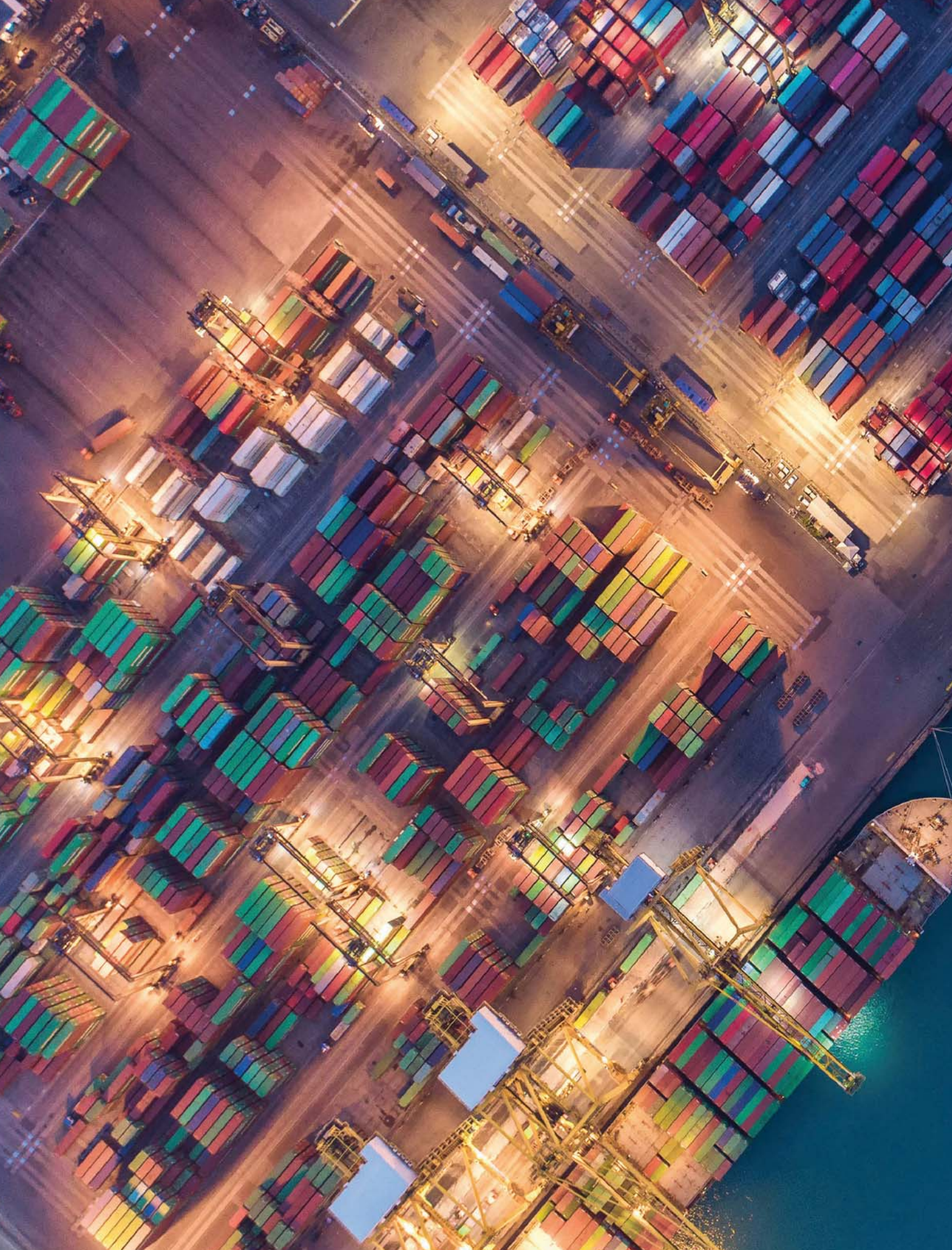
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Abbreviations

AACE	The African Alliance for Electronic Commerce
ACDD	ASEAN Customs Declaration Document
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Authorized Economic Operator
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AMAK	Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASW	ASEAN Single Window
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
BoE	Bill of Entry
CPTA	Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CBIC	Central Board of Indirect Taxes
DGTS	Directorate-General of Tax Payer Services
DGF	Directorate-General of Foreign Trade
EAC	East African Community
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
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
BG	Banker's Guarantee
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
ERC	Export Registration Certificate
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IRC	Import Registration Certificate
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least Developed Country
LLDC	Landlocked Developing Country
MOU	Memorandums of Understanding
NCTS	National Computerized Transit System
NTMs	Non-Tariff Measures
NSW	National Single Window
NTFC	National Trade Facilitation Committee

OCO	Oceania Customs Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RSW	Regional Single Window
SADC	South African Development Community
SARSO	South Asia Regional Standards
SARTFP	South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program
SEED	System of Electronic Exchange of Data
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TFA	Trade Facilitation Agreement
TIID	Trade, Investment and Innovation Division
TIDOs	Trade Information Desk Offices
UCC	Union Customs Code
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
VPoA	Vienna Programme of Action
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WFP	World Food Programme





1

Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

Reducing trade costs is essential to enabling economies to effectively participate in global value chains, and to continue using trade as an important engine of growth and sustainable development. According to the latest data from the ESCAP-World Bank International Trade Cost Database, the overall cost of trading goods among the three largest European Union economies is equivalent to a 41.4% average tariff on the value of goods traded (table 1). In contrast, trade costs among the middle-income members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which have actively pursued regional integration through trade and investment over the past decades, still stand at a 76.7% tariff equivalent. Amidst the current COVID-19 pandemic, shipping and air freight costs were pushed up and significant challenges for supply chains globally were posed. The crisis has had an impact on key components of trade costs, particularly those related to travel and transport. In addition, high levels of uncertainty magnify the impact on trade costs. The increasing visibility of traditional trade barriers as well as the surging trade and transport costs pose risks for the recovery of the global economy. While reversion of many of the changes in trade costs is expected once the pandemic is brought under control, some effects may persist.¹

¹ WTO, 2020, Trade Cost in The Time of Pandemic. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/trade_costs_report_e.pdf

Table 1. Intra- and extra-regional comprehensive trade costs (excluding tariff costs)

(Unit: %)

Region	ASEAN-4	East Asia-3	South Asia-4	LAC-4	NAF-3	SSA-3	West Asia-3	EU-3	North America
ASEAN-4	76.7 (3.9)	79.4 (6.8)	135.2 (5.1)	151.8 (-1.8)	218.6 (-12.0)	214.8 (6.7)	181.2 (11.4)	103.8 (-3.2)	103.4 (0.1)
East Asia-3	79.4 (6.8)	56.9 (9.8)	125.4 (1.0)	113.2 (3.4)	169.7 (2.4)	166.3 (1.3)	164.2 (4.0)	85.2 (0.3)	78.5 (3.1)
South Asia-4	135.2 (5.1)	125.4 (1.0)	128.4 (13.4)	196.8 (4.5)	204.5 (8.4)	228.7 (15.8)	168.8 (3.9)	113.7 (-0.5)	117.7 (0.9)
LAC-4	151.8 (-1.8)	113.2 (3.4)	196.8 (4.5)	102.8 (6.6)	243.1 (-1.1)	309.2 (13.0)	235.7 (4.9)	112.8 (-0.6)	92.6 (-3.4)
NAF-3	218.6 (-12.0)	169.7 (2.4)	204.5 (8.4)	243.1 (-1.1)	168.4 (-16.9)	259.8 (-2.7)	135.2 (6.0)	140.6 (8.6)	189.3 (13.6)
SSA-3	214.8 (6.7)	166.3 (1.3)	228.7 (15.8)	309.2 (13.0)	259.8 (-2.7)	216.3 (16.8)	223.5 (11.6)	148.1 (17.4)	176.5 (6.3)
West Asia-3	181.2 (11.4)	164.2 (4.0)	168.8 (3.9)	235.7 (4.9)	135.2 (6.0)	223.5 (11.6)	95.6 (22.3)	152.5 (6.3)	157.1 (2.9)
EU-3	103.8 (-3.2)	85.2 (0.3)	113.7 (-0.5)	112.8 (-0.6)	140.6 (8.6)	148.1 (17.4)	152.5 (6.3)	41.4 (-5.9)	76.2 (-0.5)
North America	103.4 (0.1)	78.5 (3.1)	117.7 (0.9)	92.6 (-3.4)	189.3 (13.6)	176.5 (6.3)	157.1 (2.9)	76.2 (-0.5)	29.6 (-2.1)

Source: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database, updated July 2021. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/escap-world-bank-trade-cost-database>

Note: Trade costs may be interpreted as tariff equivalents. Percentage changes in trade costs between 2008-2013 and 2014-2019 are in parentheses. ASEAN-4: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; East Asia-3: China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; South Asia-4: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; Latin America-4: Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay; North Africa-3: Morocco, Egypt and Sudan; Sub-Saharan Africa-3: Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana; West Asia-3: Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia; North America: Canada and the United States of America; EU-3: Germany, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The trade costs associated with non-tariff measures (NTMs) are estimated to be more than double those of tariffs.² Thus, tackling non-tariff sources of trade costs becomes the key to further trade cost reductions. This includes improving transport and logistics infrastructure and services as well as simplifying cumbersome regulatory procedures and documentation. Trade facilitation covers the full spectrum of border procedures, from transparency and simplification of border procedures to the electronic exchange of data about shipments. Trade facilitation, including paperless trade, helps to lower overall trade costs and increases economic welfare,

particularly for developing and emerging economies. It also benefits small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), for which the costs of trading can be disproportionately high. The importance of trade facilitation is evidenced by the entry into force of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and regional initiatives such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.³

Under the Joint UNRCs Approach to Trade Facilitation and following extensive discussions at the Global Trade Facilitation Forum 2013,⁴ it was decided that

² ESCAP, 2019. The Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: Navigating Non-tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development

³ For details, see <https://www.unescap.org/kp/cpta>

⁴ The Global Trade Facilitation Forum was organized jointly by all the UNRCs in Bangkok in November 2013.

the regional surveys should be conducted at the global level jointly by all UNRCs. Since 2015, the UNRCs have systematically collected and analysed information on the implementation of trade facilitation measures around the globe. The present report, which is a continuation of this global effort, features the results of the fourth global survey conducted in 2021, which covers 144 economies from eight different regions worldwide.

Following the introduction to the survey instrument and methodology, a global overview of the implementation of trade facilitation measures across the developed economies and seven developing regions as well as groups of countries with special needs is provided in Section 2. This is followed by a closer look at the implementation levels of various groups of trade facilitation measures in Section 3. Finally, Section 4 of this report highlights the key findings and proposes a way forward for advancing trade facilitation.

1.2 Survey instrument and methodology

The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 was prepared according to the final list of commitments included in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), supplemented by forward looking measures included in the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. It also includes sustainable trade facilitation measures as well as measures on trade facilitation in times of crisis and trade finance facilitation.

The survey covers 58 trade facilitation measures, which are classified into four groups and eleven sub-groups. The first group, “General Trade

Facilitation Measures”, includes many of the WTO TFA measures with sub-groups of ‘Transparency’, ‘Formalities’, ‘Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation’, and ‘Transit Facilitation’. The second group, “Digital Trade Facilitation Measures” includes two sub-groups, ‘Paperless Trade’, and ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’. The third group, “Sustainable Trade Facilitation Measures”, includes three sub-groups, ‘Trade Facilitation for SMEs’, ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ and ‘Women in Trade Facilitation’. Given the increasing role that trade finance plays in facilitating global trade, and by virtue of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 the UNRCs introduced a new group, “Other Trade Facilitation”, which includes two sub-groups, ‘Trade Finance Facilitation’⁵ and ‘Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis’. The ‘Trade Finance Facilitation’ sub-group is added with considerations given to the role that trade finance plays to facilitate trade flows. In addition, COVID-19 has shaken global trade and posed enormous challenges to the global supply chain. To “build back better”, sustainable and resilient recovery practices are required in order to avoid future systemic vulnerabilities. In this context, immediate emergency responses and long-term action plans for trade facilitation in response to pandemics and crises have been incorporated into the 2021 survey (table 2).

The overall scope of the survey goes beyond the measures included in the WTO TFA. Most paperless trade measures, particularly cross-border paperless trade, are not specifically featured in the WTO TFA. However, their implementation in many cases would support better implementation of the TFA and in digital form. Most measures in the “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” and “Other Trade Facilitation” groups are also not specifically included in the WTO TFA, except for some of the ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ measures.

⁵ Trade Finance Facilitation was an optional subgroup in the 2019 survey and three of the UNRCs (ESCAP, ESCWA and ECE) used it for their survey. In 2021, this sub-group was updated in cooperation with the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and surveyed across all regions.

Table 2. Grouping of trade facilitation measures and correspondence with TFA articles

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
General Trade Facilitation	Transparency (Five measures)	Publication of existing import-export regulations on the Internet	1.2
		Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	2.2
		Advance publication/notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation (e.g., 30 days prior)	2.1
		Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	3
		Independent appeal mechanism (for traders to appeal customs rulings and the rulings of other relevant trade control agencies)	4
	Formalities (Eight measures)	Risk management (as a basis for deciding whether a shipment will be physically inspected or not)	7.4
		Pre-arrival processing	7.1
		Post-clearance audits	7.5
		Separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges	7.3
		Establishment and publication of average release times	7.6
		Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators	7.7
		Expedited shipments	7.8
		Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities	10.2.1
	Institutional arrangement and cooperation (Five measures)	Establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) or similar body	23
		National legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation	8
		Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	
		Alignment of working days and hours with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(a)
		Alignment of formalities and procedures with neighbouring countries at border crossings	8.2(b)
	Transit facilitation (Four measures)	Transit facilitation agreement(s) with neighbouring country(ies)	
		Customs authorities limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	10.5
		Supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation	11.9
		Cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit	11.16
	Digital Trade Facilitation	Paperless trade (Ten measures)	Automated Customs System (e.g., ASYCUDA)
Internet connection available to Customs and other trade control agencies at border-crossings			
Electronic Single Window System			10.4
Electronic submission of Customs declarations			
Electronic application and issuance of import and export permits			
Electronic submission of Sea Cargo manifests			
Electronic submission of Air Cargo manifests			
Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin			

Table 2. (continued)

Groups	Sub-groups	Measures	Relevant TFA Articles
Digital Trade Facilitation (continued)		E-payment of Customs duties and fees	7.2
		Electronic application for Customs refunds	
	Cross-border paperless trade (Six measures)	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions are in place (e.g., e-commerce law, e-transaction law)	
		Recognized certification authority issuing digital certificates to traders to conduct electronic transactions	
		Electronic exchange of Customs declaration	
		Electronic exchange of Certificate of Origin	
		Electronic exchange of Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Certificate	
		Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit	
Sustainable Trade Facilitation	Trade facilitation for SMEs (Five measures)	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	
		SMEs in AEO scheme (i.e., a Government has developed specific measures that enable SMEs to benefit from the AEO scheme more easily)	
		SMEs access Single Window (i.e., a Government has taken action to make a Single Window more easily accessible for SMEs (e.g., by providing technical consultation and training services to SMEs on registering and using the facility)	
		SMEs in NTFCs (i.e., a Government has taken action to ensure that SMEs are well-represented and made key members of NTFCs)	
		Other special measures for SMEs	
	Agricultural trade facilitation (Four measures)	Testing and laboratory facilities are available to meet SPS of main trading partners	
		National standards and accreditation bodies established to facilitate compliance with SPS	
		Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	
		Special treatment for perishable goods at border crossings	7.9
	Women in trade facilitation (Three measures)	Trade facilitation policy/strategy to increase women's participation in trade	
		Trade facilitation measures to benefit women involved in trade	
		Women's membership in the NTFC or similar bodies	
	Other Trade Facilitation	Trade finance facilitation (Three measures)	Single Window facilitates traders access to finance
Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance			
Variety of trade finance services available			
Trade facilitation in times of crisis (Five measures)		Agency in place to manage trade facilitation in times of crises and emergencies	
		Online publication of emergency trade facilitation measures	
		Coordination between countries on emergency trade facilitation measures	
		Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	
Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises			

Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

The UNRCs adopted a three-step approach to develop the dataset (box 1). Data were collected, verified and validated between January and July 2021. Each of the trade facilitation measures included in the survey was rated as “fully implemented”, “partially implemented”, “pilot state”, “not implemented”

or “don’t know” (see Annex 1 for the definition of the various stages of implementation). A score of 3, 2, 1, 0 and DK,⁶ respectively, was assigned to each implementation stage in order to calculate implementation scores for individual measures across countries, regions or groups.⁷

Box 1. A three-step approach to data collection and validation

Step 1. Data submission by experts: The survey instrument was sent by the UNRCs to trade facilitation experts (in Governments, the private sector and academia) to gather preliminary information. The questionnaire was also made publicly available online and disseminated with the support of the ADB, ASEAN, CAREC, ITC, OCO, UN/CEFACT, UNCTAD and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport for Asia and the Pacific (UNNEXT).

Step 2. Data verification by the UNRCs Secretariat: The UNRCs cross-checked the data collected in Step 1. Desk research and data sharing among UNRCs and survey partners were carried out to further check the accuracy of data. Face-to-face or telephone interviews with key informants were arranged to gather additional information when needed. The outcome of Step 2 was a consistent set of responses per country.

Step 3. Data validation by national Governments: The UNRCs sent the completed questionnaire to each national Government to ensure that the country had the opportunity to review the dataset and provide any additional information. The feedback from national Governments was incorporated in order to finalize the dataset.

The survey covers 144 countries which are divided into the following eight groups:

Developed economies (30 countries): Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland the United Kingdom.

Latin America and the Caribbean (21 countries): Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Middle East and North Africa (11 countries): Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia.

Pacific Island (11 countries): Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (17 countries): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

South Asia (8 countries): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

⁶ DK, “don’t know”, is treated as “no implementation” (0) for calculation of the implementation rate.

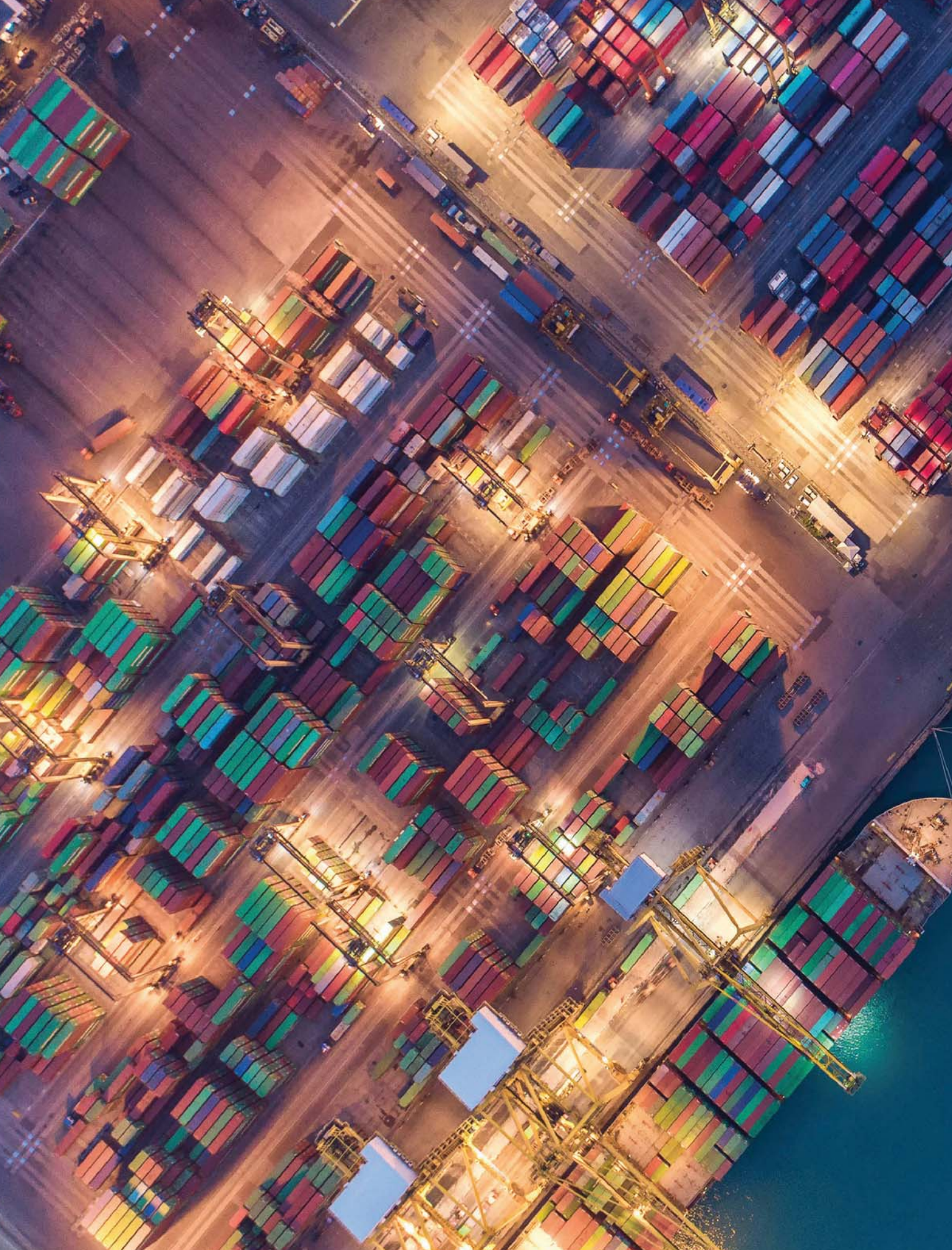
⁷ For more details on the calculation of the scores and the methodology, see <https://www.unftsurvey.org/files/documents/2021-Survey-Methodology.pdf>

South-East and East Asia (14 countries): Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Sub-Saharan Africa (32 countries): Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

1.3 Utilization of report and data

To make the survey as transparent and useful as possible, regional and global datasets have been made available online on the dedicated survey website at untfsurvey.org. Use of the data by researchers and policy analysts to advance understanding of the impact of different trade facilitation measures and derive evidence-based policy advice is strongly encouraged. Stakeholders interested in submitting information that may help to further improve or expand the dataset may contact the UNRC focal points listed on the dedicated website. Subject to the availability of resources, the UNRCs and other willing partners will endeavour to conduct the survey on a biennial basis.





2

Trade facilitation implementation: Overview

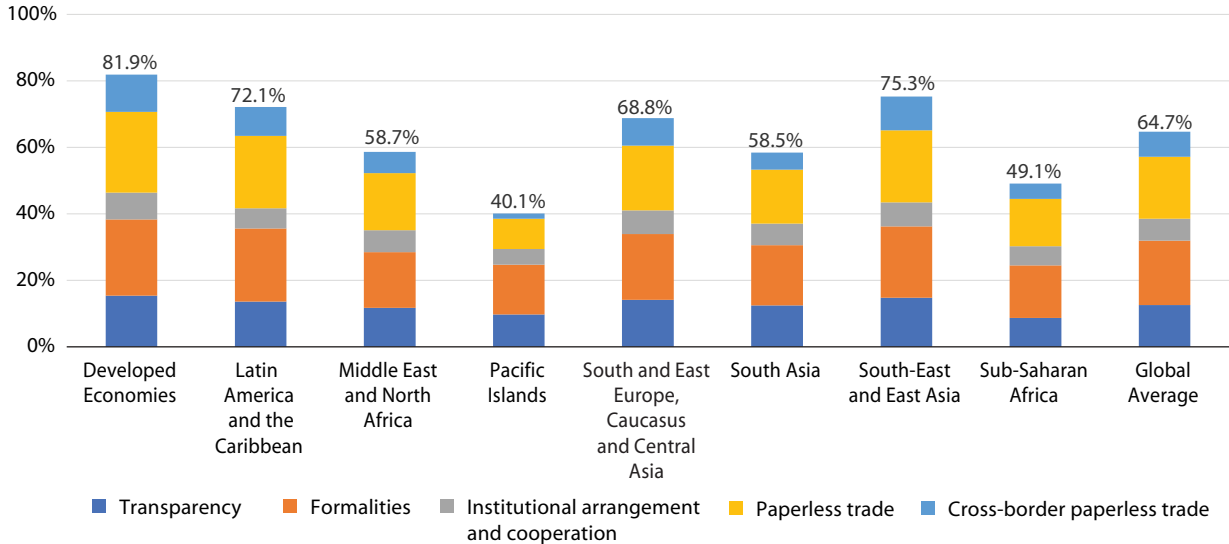
Figure 1 shows the average rates of implementation of trade facilitation in the developed economies and seven developing regions mentioned above. The implementation rates are calculated based on 31 trade facilitation measures relevant to all 144 economies included in the survey and spanning five sub-groups from transparency to cross-border paperless trade.⁸

The global average implementation rate stands at 64.7% (figure 1).⁹ Developed economies have the highest implementation rate (81.8%), while the Pacific Islands have the lowest (40.1%). Among the developing regions, South-East and East Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean achieve high implementation rates at 75.3% and 72.1%, respectively. The implementation rate in Sub-Saharan Africa which includes some of the poorest countries in the world – is 49.1%, second to the Pacific Islands.

⁸ Among the 58 measures surveyed across UNRCs, three measures including Electronic Submission of Sea Cargo Manifests, Alignment of Working Days and Hours with Neighbouring Countries at Border Crossings and Alignment of Formalities and Procedures with Neighbouring Countries at Border Crossings are excluded when calculating the overall score as they are not relevant to all countries surveyed. Four Transit Facilitation measures are also excluded for the same reason. In addition, Sustainable Trade Facilitation and Other Trade Facilitation are excluded, as these are newly-added groups of measures not included in the original United Nations Survey.

⁹ A few countries participated in the 2019 Global Survey but did not respond to the 2021 Global Survey. Data of these countries were duplicated from the 2019 Survey for illustrative purposes. These countries are: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Brazil, El Salvador, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago (Latin America and Caribbean), and Tanzania (Sub-Saharan Africa) and Tunisia (Middle East and North Africa). An alternative global average excluding those countries is 65.2%.

Figure 1. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures around the world

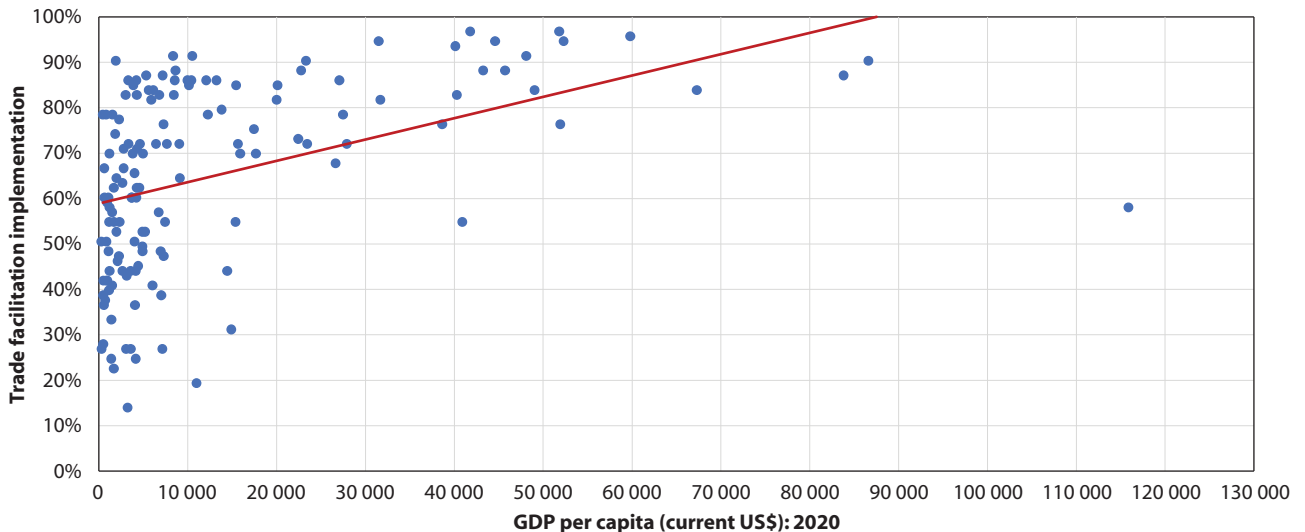


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

Trade facilitation implementation rates for individual economies are provided in Annex 3. Implementation varies greatly across regions and economies within the same region. For example, implementation rates in South-East and East Asia range from 24.7% (Timor-Leste) to 95.7% (Singapore). Similarly, in Latin America, the implementation level varies from the lowest 44.1% (Antigua and Barbuda) to the highest 91.4% (Mexico).

In terms of specific countries, Australia and New Zealand (96.8%) tie for first place as the highest overall performers, followed by Singapore (95.7%), Belgium, the Netherlands and the Republic of Korea (tied, each with an implementation rate of 94.6%). Among developing regions, Singapore (95.7%), the Republic of Korea (94.6%) and China (91.4%) lead in South-East and East Asia. Mexico (91.4%) leads Latin America and the Caribbean, while Saudi Arabia (84.9%) leads the Middle East and North Africa

Figure 2. Average trade facilitation implementation rates and GDP per capita



Sources: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org; World Bank World Development Indicators, accessed July 2021.

region. Azerbaijan (86%) and Russian Federation (84.9%) lead the South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region, while India (90.3%) leads the way in South Asia.

In general, advanced economies perform better than developing economies due to their well-developed infrastructure and stronger established trade institutions. However, this is not always the case. About 60 countries with a GDP per capita lower than US\$ 10,000 have achieved implementation rates higher than 50% (figure 2).

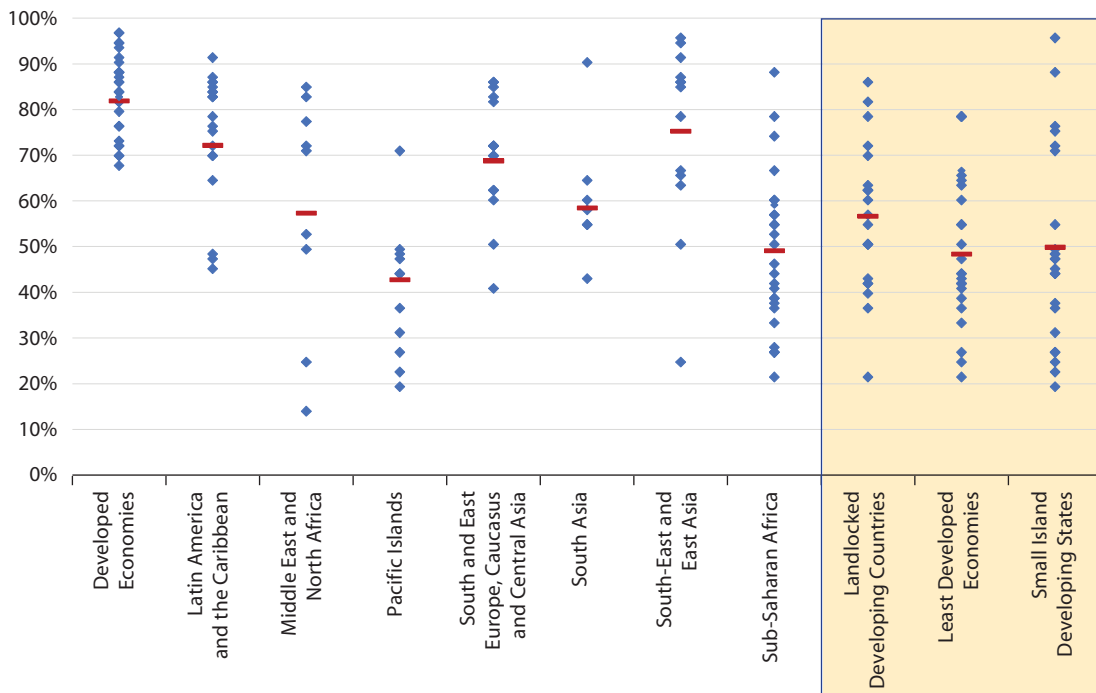
2.1 Implementation in countries with special needs

Figure 3 presents an overview of trade facilitation implementation in different regions, including three groups of countries with special needs, i.e., Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (see Annex 2 for grouping of countries with special needs). LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS are the world’s most vulnerable countries and face a number of connectivity barriers. LDCs

represent the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the international community, with poor infrastructure and capacities, despite the special treatment and flexibilities embedded in the WTO rules, including the TFA. LLDCs lack direct access to the sea, resulting in more complex trade logistics and higher trade costs. Many SIDS also face high communication and logistics costs. In addition, COVID-19 mitigation measures and subsequent export restrictions have had a disproportionate impact on these countries. The efforts that LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS make towards TF implementation should be supported through addressing their needs and enhanced cooperation by the international community.

The red bars in figure 3 indicate the average level of implementation for each group of countries, while the diamonds show the implementation rates for individual economies within each group. All three groups of countries with special needs show similar implementation rates, ranging between 48% and 56%. This is significantly below the global average implementation rate (64.7%). This result confirms the need to provide LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS with special technical assistance and capacity-building support to help them bridge their existing implementation gaps.

Figure 3. Average trade facilitation implementation rates by region and in countries with special needs



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

2.2 Most and least implemented trade facilitation measures

All countries are engaged in implementing various measures to enhance the transparency of trade procedures and reduce unnecessary formalities associated with them. Implementation levels vary significantly across countries for all sub-groups. The gaps are particularly wide for paperless trade and cross-border paperless trade measures (table 3).

In general, ‘Transparency’ measures (including measures such as stakeholders’ consultations on new draft regulations) have the highest implementation rates (an average 78%) followed by ‘Formalities’ and ‘Transit Facilitation’ (both standing at 75%). Post-clearance audits (82%), risk management (81%) and separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges (81%), are the most implemented measures in ‘Formalities’, while significant room for improvement exists for measures such as establishment and publication of average release times (57%) (figure 4).

The implementation rate for institutional arrangements and cooperation is 69%. The level of implementation of National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) or

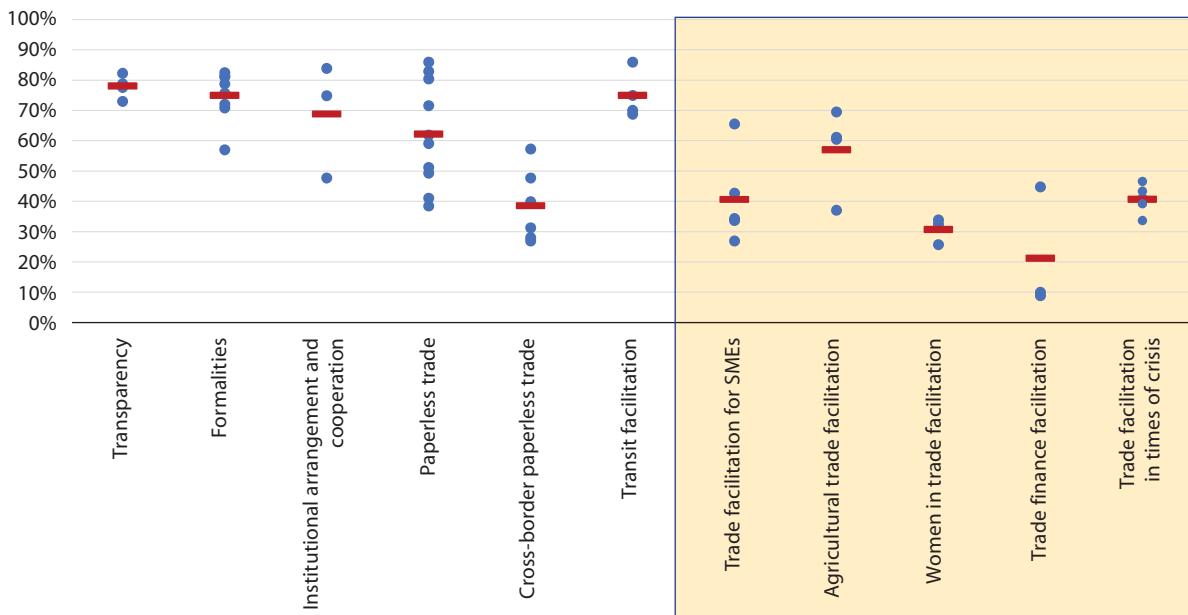
similar body stands at 84%, while the implementation level of government agencies delegating controls to customs authorities is only 48%.

The global average implementation level for ‘Paperless Trade’ stands at 64%. The implementation rates vary greatly, depending on the individual measures considered. The levels of implementation of automated customs system and internet connection available to customs and other trade control agencies reach 86%, while electronic application for customs refunds is only at 38%.

The implementation level for ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ (38%) is substantially lower than measures in other sub-groups, which highlights the need for closer intergovernmental cooperation on cross-border paperless trade.

The expansion of international trade can also help to address critical development challenges. “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” is the group that aligns trade facilitation with sustainable development goals for inclusive economic growth and increases opportunities for sectors and groups with special needs. ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’ measures have been relatively well-implemented. On the other hand, the implementation of measures to increase

Figure 4. Implementation rates of different sub-groups of trade facilitation measures



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

opportunities for SMEs and women remains low (41% and 31%, respectively), showing a lack of awareness and policies that address inclusiveness in trade facilitation.

The average implementation of 'Trade finance' is only 21%. The absence of data partly explains this low implementation rate for about half of the countries. Many respondents from Customs, other trade agencies and private sector trade professionals could not complete the three questions covered under this sub-group. This suggests a lack of awareness of

trade finance processes among trade policy and facilitation specialists as well as pointing to significant room for improvement in this area.

'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis' is slightly better implemented (41%). The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented disruption to global trade. Many immediate policy responses such as agency in place to manage trade facilitation in times of crises and emergencies and online publication of emergency TF measures have been implemented to a certain extent to keep global supply chains going,

Table 3. Most and least implemented measures

Sub-groups	Most implemented (% of countries)		Least implemented (% of countries)	
	Measures	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)	Measures	Implemented fully, partially and on a pilot basis (%) / full implementation (%)
Transparency	Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	93.8 / 61.1	Advance ruling on tariff classification and origin of imported goods	85.4 / 54.2
Formalities	Risk management	97.2 / 56.3	Establishment and publication of average release times	77.1 / 29.9
Institutional arrangement and cooperation	National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	91.7 / 70.1	Government agencies delegating border controls to Customs authorities	60.4 / 25.7
Paperless trade	Automated Customs System	95.8 / 68.8	Electronic Application for Customs Refunds	50.0 / 20.8
Cross-border paperless trade	Laws and regulations for electronic transactions	72.9 / 30.6	Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit	40.3 / 14.6
Transit facilitation	Limit the physical inspections of transit goods and use risk assessment	72.2 / 56.3	Transit facilitation agreement(s)	63.9 / 37.5
Trade facilitation for SMEs	Trade-related information measures for SMEs	81.9 / 38.2	SMEs in AEO scheme	36.8 / 16.7
Agricultural trade facilitation	Special treatment for perishable goods	84.7 / 41.7	Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates	53.5 / 13.2
Women in trade facilitation	Women membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies	50.7 / 13.2	Trade facilitation policy/ strategy incorporates special consideration of female traders	38.2 / 9.0
Trade finance facilitation	Variety of trade finance services available	59.0 / 23.6	Single window facilitates traders access to finance	13.9 / 2.8
Trade facilitation in times of crisis	Agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies	59.0 / 13.9	Plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises	43.8 / 16.0

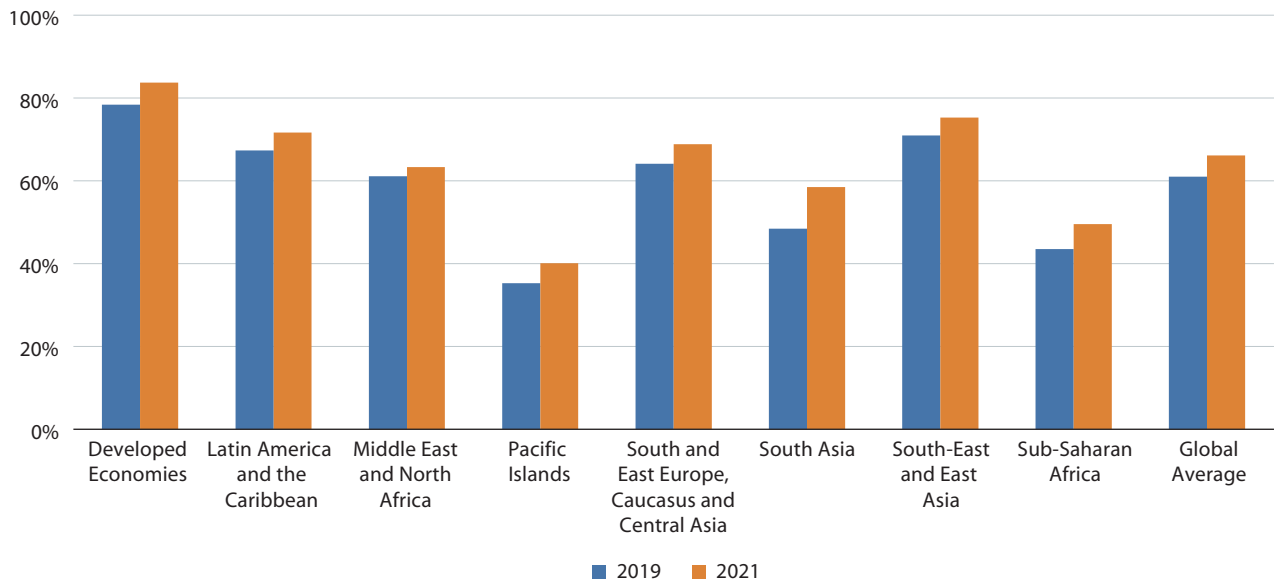
especially for essential goods. However, many countries still lack long-term trade facilitation plans to enhance preparedness for future crises. Improvement of sustained and long-term measures, such as plan in place to facilitate trade during future crises (34%), is also critical to improving resilience and reducing the likely impact of future crises.

2.3 Progress in implementation of trade facilitation measures since 2019

A total of 144 countries participated in the Fourth UN Global Survey, of which 128 countries had also participated in the Third UN Global Survey in 2019. Only countries covered in both surveys are analysed to assess progress in the implementation of trade facilitation measures over the previous two years to make the samples comparable.¹⁰

Despite the grave impact of COVID-19 on global trade and the decline of trade flows in 2020, significant progress has been observed towards more efficient trade facilitation during the past two years. The implementation rate at the global level has increased by more than 5 percentage points.¹¹ The most progress is observed in South Asia, where implementation rates have increased by more than 10 percentage points. A substantial improvement is also observed in Sub-Saharan Africa (6 percentage points), Developed Economies (5.2 percentage points) and Pacific Islands (4.9 percentage points). The progress made by Sub-Saharan Africa and Pacific Islands is particularly pronounced, as the two groups are very vulnerable and less resilient to global trade disruptions due to existing gaps and lack of infrastructure. Nevertheless, the pandemic has spurred countries to accelerate their efforts to ensure smoother trade flows and improve their current trade facilitation practices in the regulatory, institutional and technical spheres. Comparatively, progress has not

Figure 5. Progress of implementation of trade facilitation measures by various regions, 2019 and 2021



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

¹⁰ See Annex 4 for details, including country list and comparison of average implementation rates by region using the full (144 countries) and limited (128 countries) datasets.

¹¹ The global average implementation rate of the 128 countries in 2021 and 2019 are 66.1% and 60.9%, respectively.

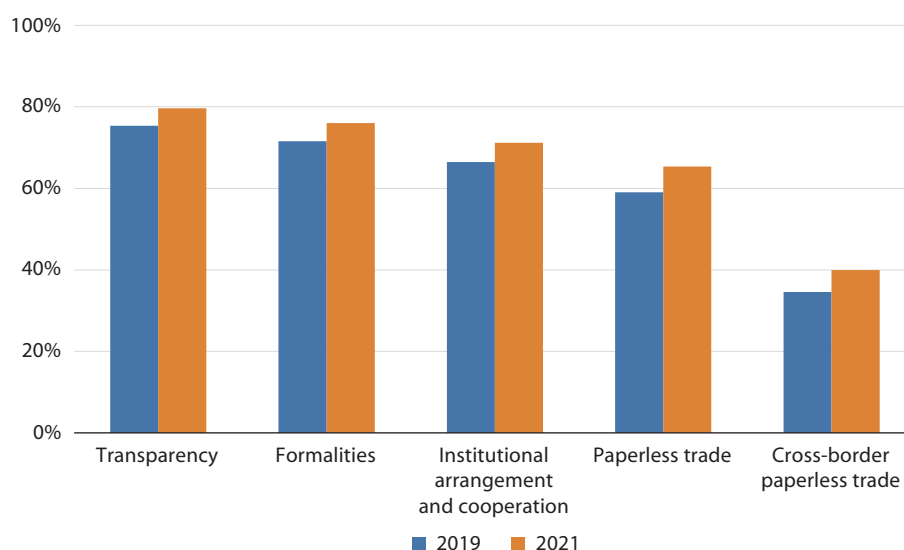
been significant in the Middle East and North Africa, where an increase of only 2.3 percentage points has occurred (figure 5).

Progress has been made at more or less the same pace across different groups of measures. The most progress has been made in improving “Digital Trade Facilitation” with ‘Paperless Trade’ and ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’, with increases of 6.3 and 5.4 percentage points, respectively. This is the first time since the introduction of the UN Global Survey that measures in “Digital Trade Facilitation” have shown the highest level of improvements. This could be due to the fundamental shift of preference towards digital systems and accelerated implementation of paperless trade.¹² Meanwhile, the average

implementation rates for ‘Transparency’, ‘Formalities’, ‘Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation’ have increased by 4.3, 4.5 and 4.7 percentage points, respectively (figures 6 and 7).

Figure 7 shows improvements in different regions across all five main sub-groups. It shows that South Asia has made significant progress across all sub-groups (India has undertaken ambitious reforms during the past two years). Pacific Islands have made particularly good progress in implementing ‘Transparency’ and ‘Formalities’. Sub-Saharan Africa has made noticeable progress in ‘Formalities’, ‘Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation’ and ‘Paperless Trade’. Developed Economies have also made pronounced progress in ‘Paperless Trade’.

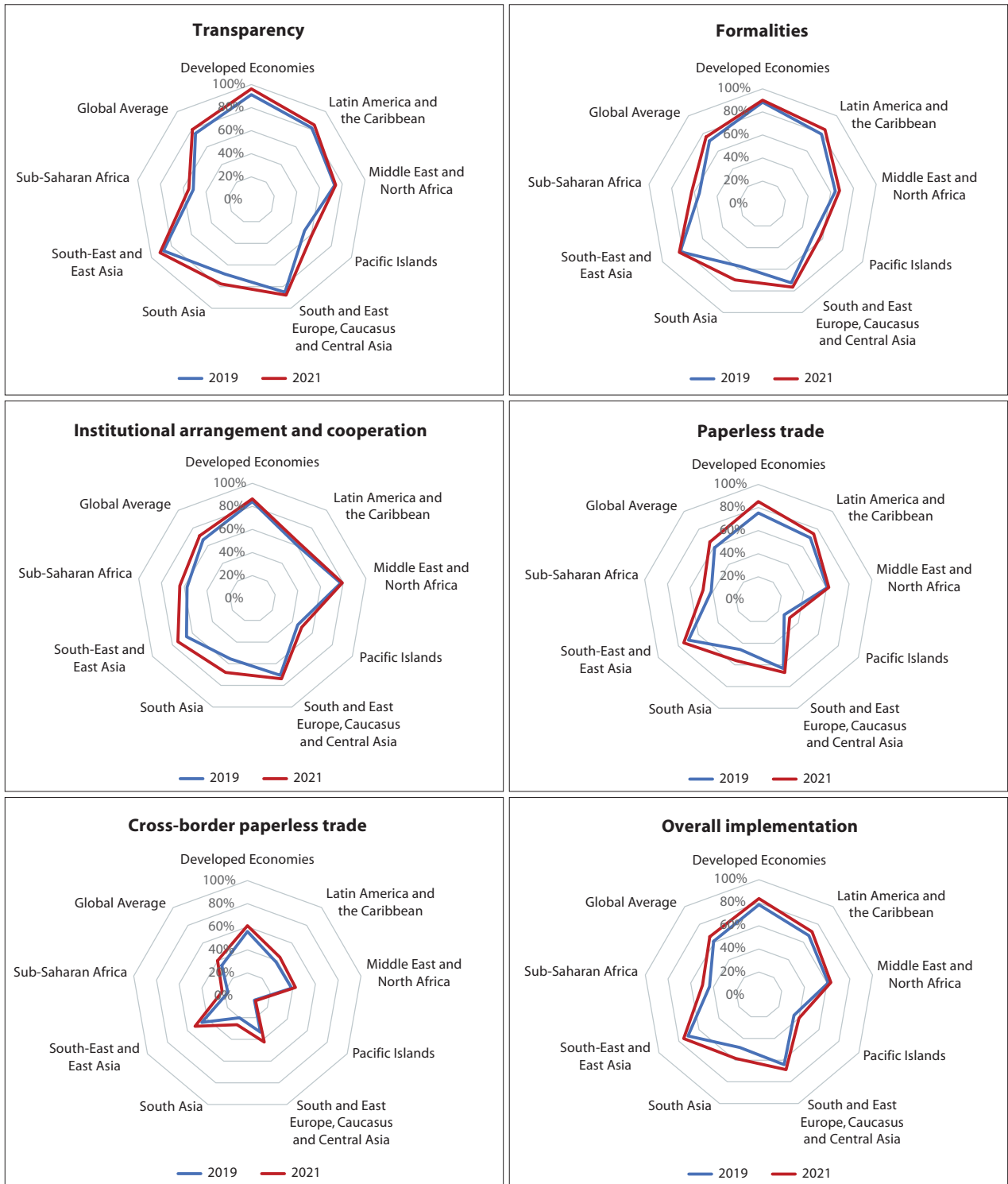
Figure 6. Progress of global implementation of trade facilitation measures, 2019 and 2021



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

¹² ESCAP, 2021, Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Pandemic: Practices and Lessons from the Asia-Pacific, available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Regional%20report-Trade%20facilitation%20in%20times%20of%20crisis%20and%20pandemic_0.pdf

Figure 7. Progress of implementation of specific group of trade facilitation measures in various regions, 2019 and 2021



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org



3

Implementation of trade facilitation measures: A closer look

3.1 General trade facilitation measures

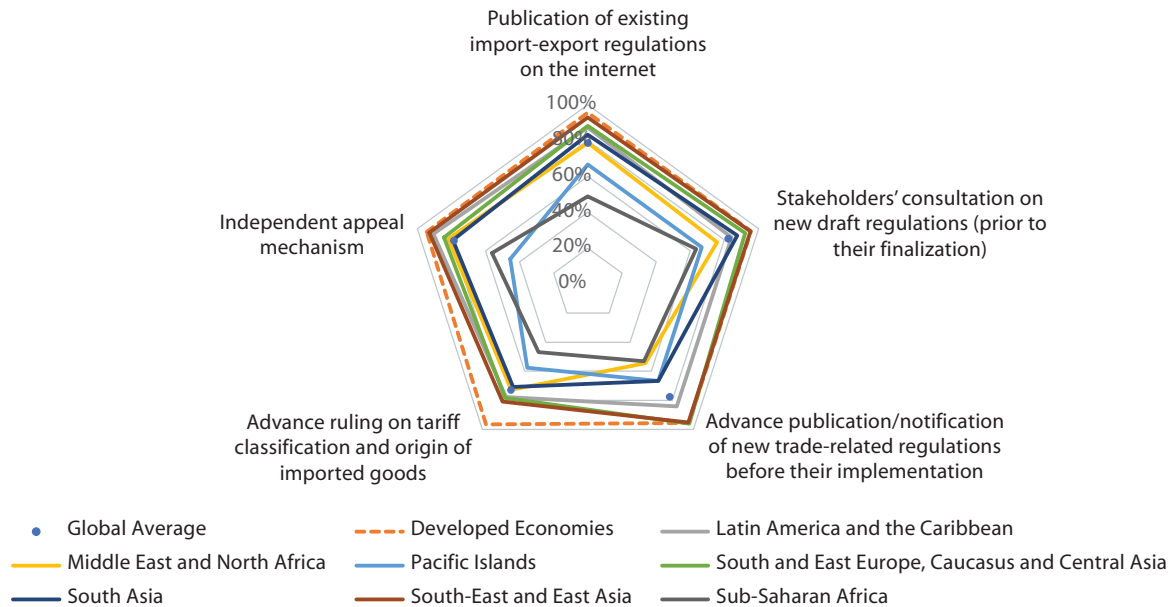
3.1.1 Transparency

Transparency is a critical obligation for WTO members and the fundamental principle of the multilateral trading system. It stipulates that a country's policies and regulations affecting trade should be communicated to its trading partners. The main provision dealing with transparency can be found in GATT Article X on the publication and administration of trade regulations. Transparency is also recognized as an essential element of trade facilitation. It has been re-emphasized in Articles 1-5 of the WTO TFA. Five trade facilitation measures included in the survey are categorized in 'Transparency'.

The global average level of implementation of all five transparency measures exceeds 70% (figure 8). However, the implementation levels of these measures vary widely across regions.

While the developed economies, South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, South-East and East Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, have almost fully implemented these measures, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Islands lag far behind, especially on the

Figure 8. Global implementation of transparency measures in various regions



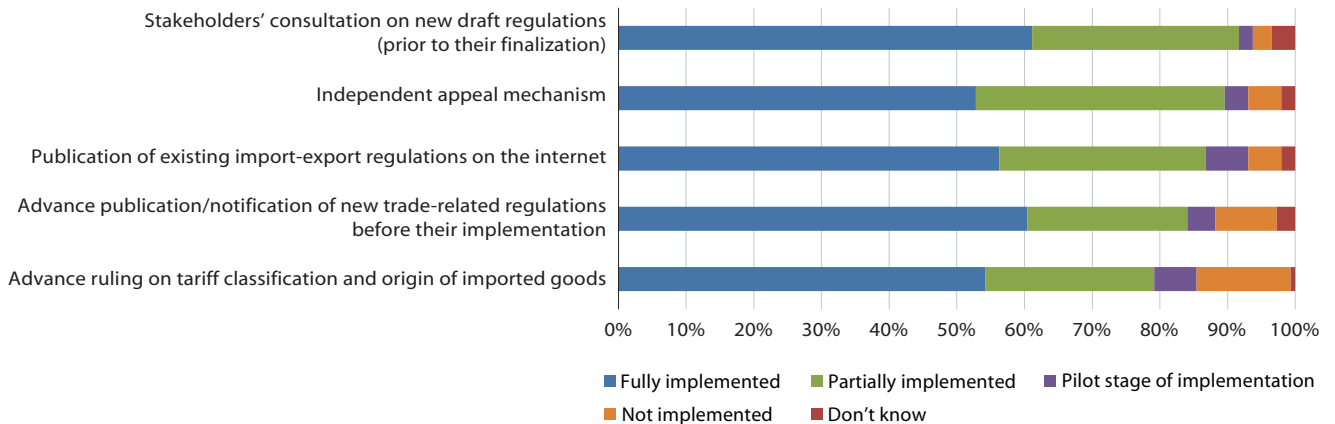
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

implementation of advance rulings on tariff classification and origin of imported goods and independent appeal mechanism (figure 8).

Figure 9 shows the percentage of countries that have fully implemented, partially implemented, or piloted in the ‘Transparency’ measures, which are generally well-implemented. More than 90% of the countries surveyed have introduced measures of stakeholders’ consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their

finalization), independent appeal mechanism and publication of existing import-export regulations on the internet. The measure of advance publication/ notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation has also been implemented by nearly 90% of the countries. The issuance of advance rulings on tariff classification and origin of imported goods is the least implemented Transparency measure, and it has been implemented by approximately 85% of the countries surveyed.

Figure 9. State of implementation of transparency measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

3.1.2 Formalities

The 'Formalities' sub-group consists of eight general trade facilitation measures in relation to Articles 7 and 10 of the WTO TFA and GATT Article VII, titled Release and Clearance of Goods.

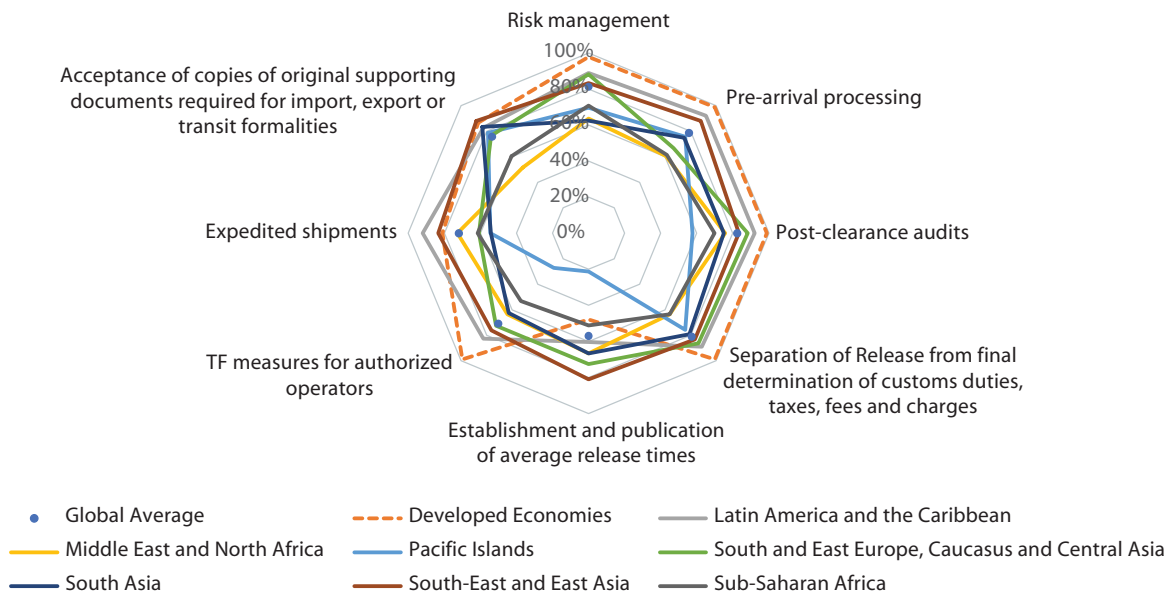
The level of implementation varies significantly across regions when it comes to measures in this sub-group (figure 10). The implementation of the measures for risk management, post clearance audit, separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges, and acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities is well underway in most regions.

The implementation of trade facilitation measures for authorized operators, and the establishment and publication of average release time, remains challenging in many regions, particularly the Pacific Islands. It is worth noting that the implementation of establishment and publication of average release time is notably low for developed economies. This may be explained by the fact that they already have well-established release and clearance mechanisms, and follow-up studies on release time might have been overlooked. On the other hand, many developing

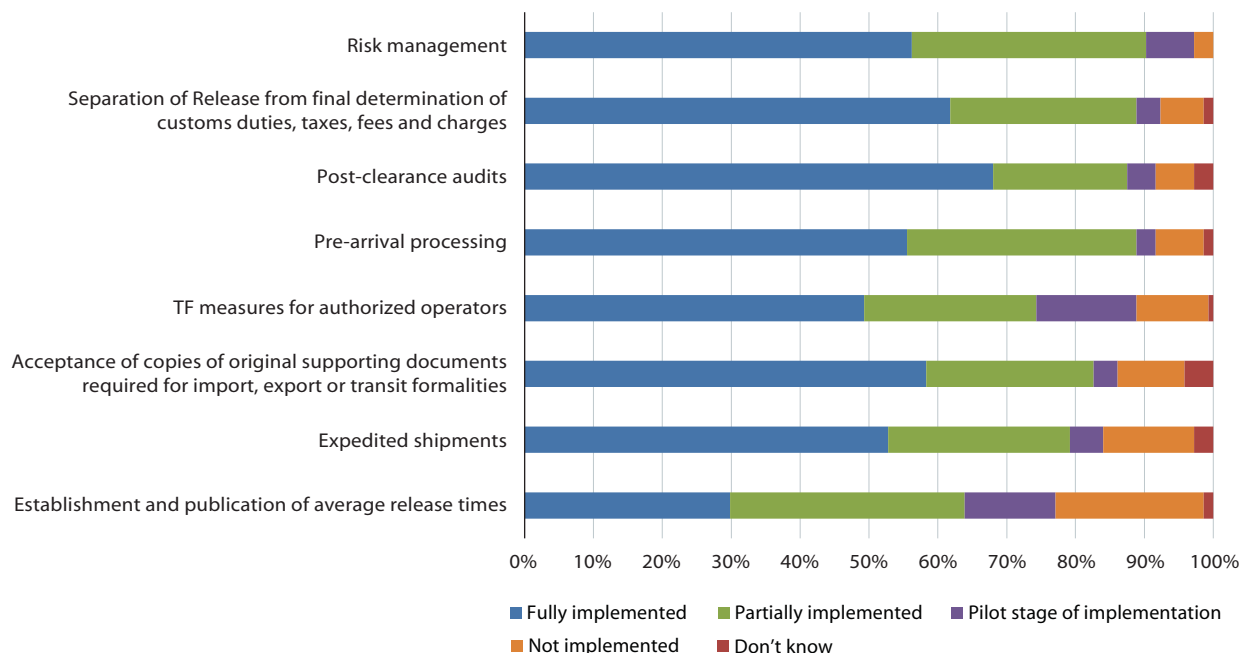
countries have introduced TRS with the assistance of relevant regional and international organizations. For example, WCO and ADB supported TRS development in some countries with special needs in the Asia-Pacific region. That said, when the assistance project ended, such studies were discontinued in certain countries. This reflects the fact that countries with special needs could be over-reliant on regional and international organizations for technical assistance. For sustainability, national or regional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms could be established. Being the least implemented measure under this sub-group, more than 70% of the countries have implemented this measure, at least on a pilot basis. That said, full implementation has taken place in less than 30% of the economies surveyed (figure 11).

Most of the countries surveyed have implemented measures to reduce unnecessary formalities that impede trade. Figure 11 illustrates that the measures for risk management, the separation of release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges, post clearance audits, and pre-arrival processing have been well-implemented. More than 90% of the countries have, to some extent, implemented these four measures.

Figure 10. Global implementation of formalities measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unftsurvey.org

Figure 11. State of implementation of formalities measures globally

Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

3.1.3 Institutional arrangements and cooperation

Institutional arrangements are an organizational framework for efficiently managing governmental activities and coordinating with other border agencies to fulfill their mandate. Three trade facilitation measures featured in the survey are grouped under 'Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation'. These measures are stipulated by Articles 8 and 23 of the WTO TFA that require the establishment of a national trade facilitation body and ensuring cooperation and coordination among trade-related government agencies.

Figure 12 shows that the national legislative framework and institutional arrangement available to ensure border agencies cooperated with each other, and National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) measures have been extensively implemented globally. In contrast, the implementation of government agencies delegating controls to customs authorities varies across regions. This measure does

not appear to be a common practice in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands.

Most countries surveyed have started implementing national legislative framework and/or institutional arrangements for border agencies cooperation, and NTFC or similar body measures. Nearly 90% of the countries surveyed have at least partially implemented these measures. It has been observed that an increasing number of countries have fully established a NTFC during the past two years. The role of NTFCs or similar bodies in the global economic recovery following COVID-19 has been crucial and repeatedly emphasized by the international community.¹³ Enhancing the capacity of NTFCs or similar bodies and increasing their visibility are actions countries need to consider. This measure will also be read with a measure of agency in place to manage TF in times of crises and emergencies in the newly incorporated 'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis' measures. Last, approximately 60% of the countries have initiated government agencies' measures to delegate controls to customs authorities (figure 13).

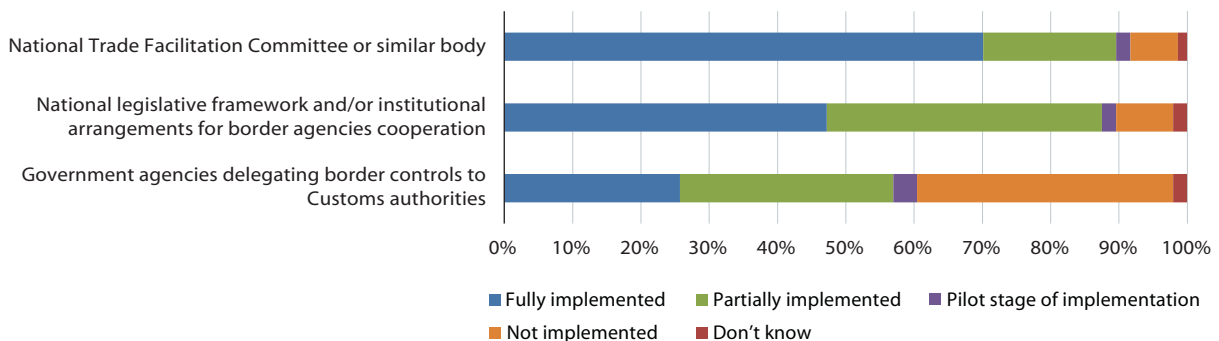
¹³ UNCTAD has introduced several NTFC empowerment trainings and technical assistance during the COVID-19 crisis. More information at <https://unctad.org/news/role-national-trade-facilitation-committees-global-economic-recovery-following-covid-19>

Figure 12. Global implementation of institutional arrangement and cooperation measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Figure 13. State of implementation of institutional arrangement and cooperation measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

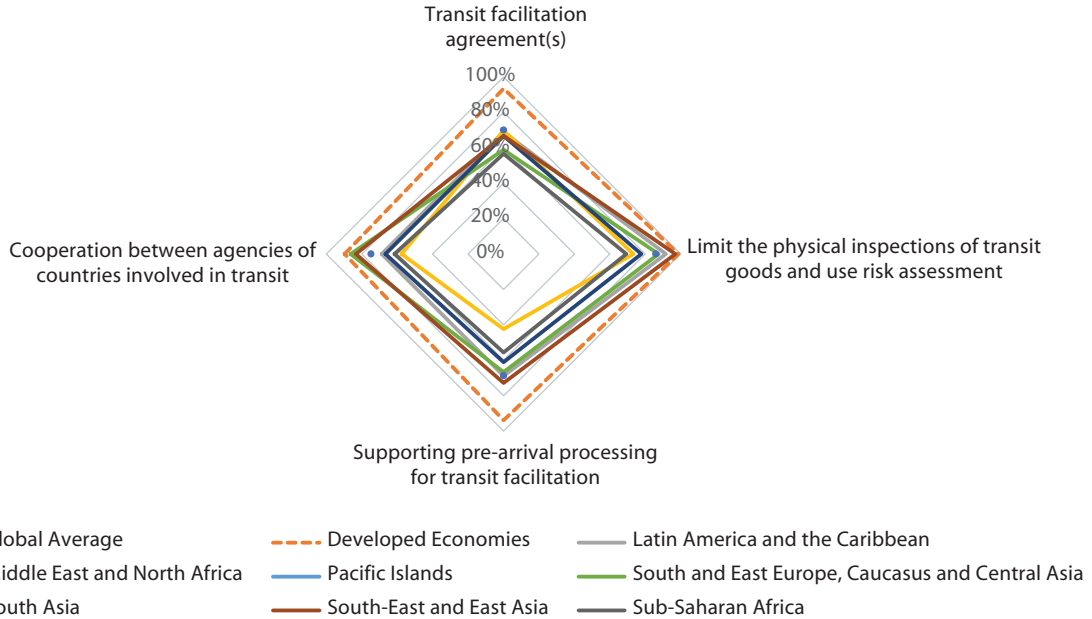
3.1.4 Transit

A functional transit system is essential for trade connectivity. It also meets substantive needs, both of landlocked and transit countries. Transit facilitation could benefit from active engagement of Governments on regional and global cooperation. Four measures covered in Transit Facilitation included in the survey relate specifically to WTO TFA Article 11 on Freedom of Transit. These measures are intended to reduce, as much as possible, the formalities associated with transit trade, thereby allowing the swift flow of goods from one country to another. Efficient transit will be

the key to unlocking the potential of landlocked countries to be better integrated into the supply chain. It will also accelerate regional integration as well as boost regional and international trade.

As shown in figure 14, the global average implementation level for transit measures exceeds 69% for all the measures. The average implementation level in developed economies is significantly higher than that in developing regions, particularly with regard to supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation and transit facilitation agreements. The Middle East and North Africa are

Figure 14. Global implementation of transit facilitation measures in various regions



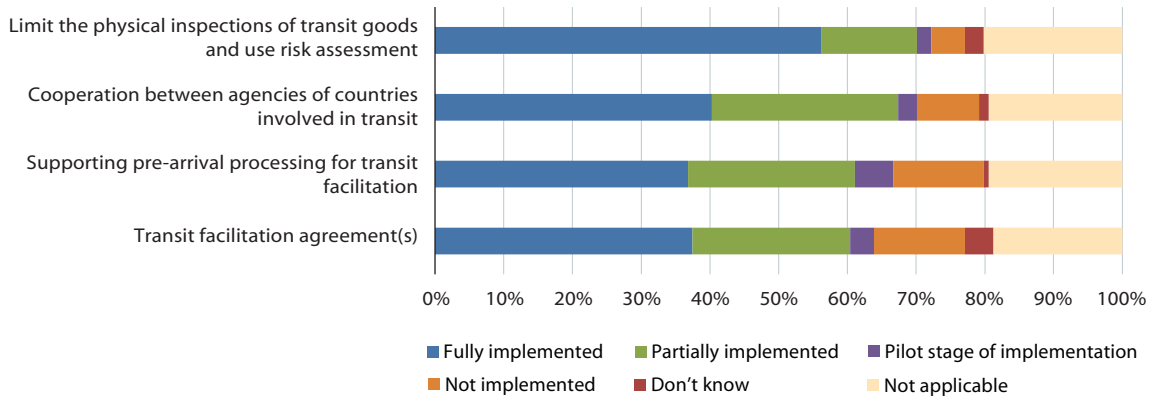
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

the regions with the lowest score, most notably regarding measures for supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation, and cooperation between agencies of countries involved in transit.

countries for which transit is applicable, at least on a pilot basis, although the implementation has mainly been incomplete. Less than half of the countries involved in transit have fully implemented the measures supporting pre-arrival processing for transit facilitation as well as transit facilitation agreement with neighbouring countries.

Figure 15 shows that all the transit measures considered have been implemented by most

Figure 15. State of implementation of transit facilitation measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

3.2 Digital trade facilitation

Digital trade facilitation refers to the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) and digital solutions to automate and simplify trade procedures. Rapid technology developments on digitally enabled services, supported by a range of new data-driven services, also facilitate the rise of cross-border trade. There are two interconnected sub-groups. ‘Paperless Trade’ includes measures that transform traditionally paper-based documentation systems into an electronic format to speed up trade and ease the cost of doing business. It has become an essential component of governmental efforts to improve the efficiency of customs controls and trade administration processes. ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ is the next step that enables cross-border mutual recognition, and exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form through institutional arrangement and operational mechanisms.

The digital transformation of custom procedures could significantly reduce the time and costs required for trading. Acceleration of trade digitalization could mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 and further harness the recovery process beyond the current crisis. Notwithstanding that, the pandemic has

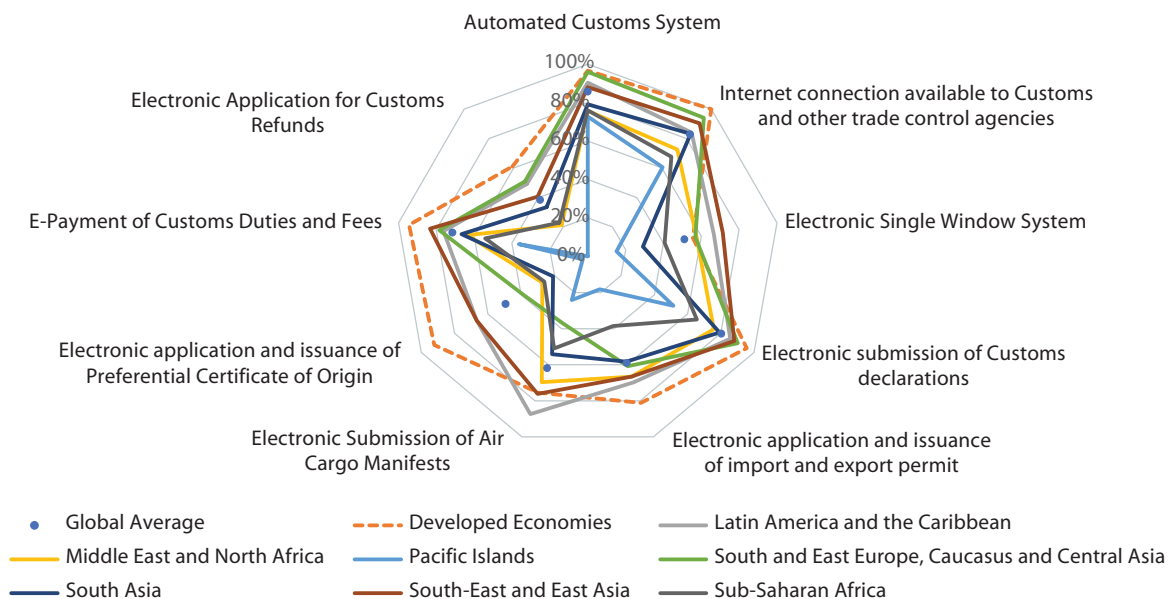
accelerated the digital transformation and underscored the importance of paperless trade. Achieving cross-border paperless trade across the region is expected to be a long and difficult process, and it cannot be achieved without close collaboration between countries.

3.2.1 Paperless trade

The ‘Paperless Trade’ measures relate to the application of modern ICT to trade-related services at the national level. Measures in this sub-group range from the availability of Internet connections at border crossings and the automation of Customs systems to fully-fledged electronic Single Window systems. Many of the measures are identified in Articles 7 and 10 of the WTO TFA and in the text of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

The average regional levels of implementation for the nine ‘Paperless Trade’ measures vary widely, as shown in figure 16. The implementation of automated customs systems and Internet connection available to customs and other trade control agencies is generally good in all regions. Developed economies have achieved 97% and 100%, respectively for these two measures. Also notable is that Pacific Islands,

Figure 16. Global implementation of paperless trade measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

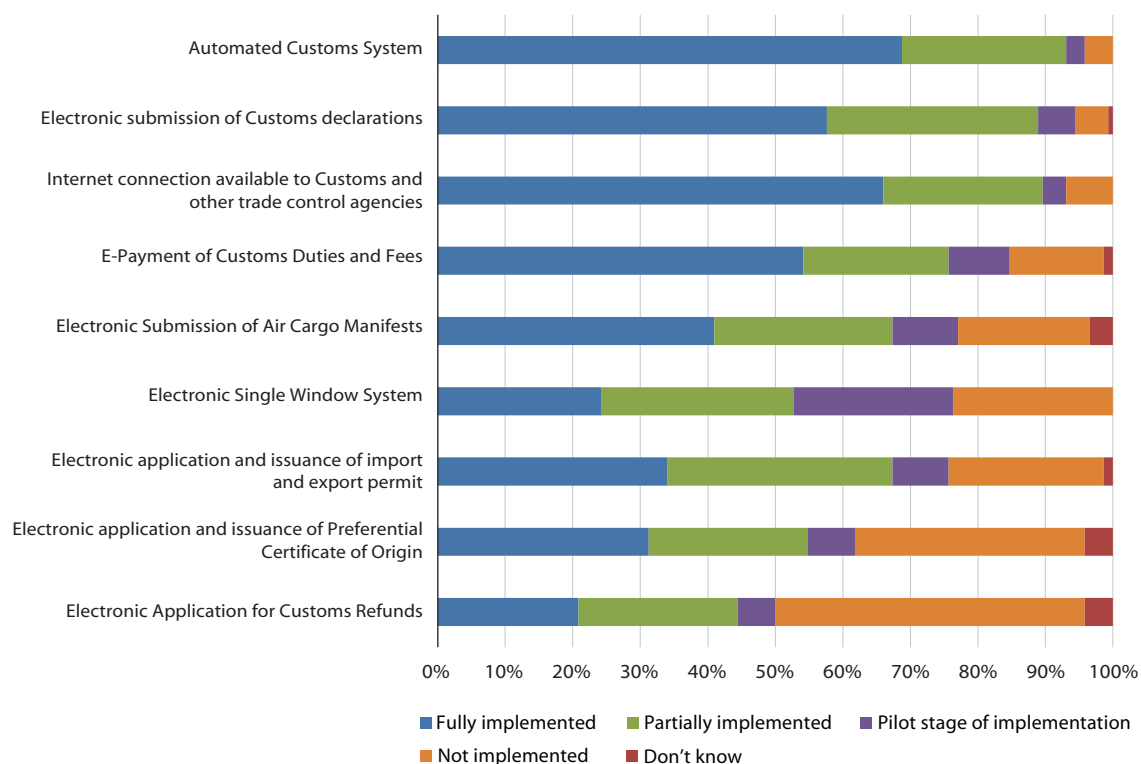
which lag far behind in all other Paperless Trade measures have also reached a score of more than 70% for the automated customs system. This could be attributed to the capacity-building programmes of PACER Plus to assist in implementing and upgrading automated customs systems.¹⁴

Figure 17 highlights the gaps when it comes to the implementation of different measures within the sub-group. The measures of automated customs systems, electronic submission of customs declarations, and internet connection available to customs and other trade control agencies have been implemented, at least on a pilot basis, by more than 90% of the countries surveyed, and full implementation has been reached by more than half of the countries. Similarly, more than 80% of the countries have at least piloted e-payment of customs

duties and fees. These results indicate that most economies have been actively developing ICT infrastructure and services, which are essential for achieving an efficient paperless trade system

Approximately 70% of the countries surveyed have, to some extent, engaged in electronic submission of air cargo manifests, electronic Single Window systems and electronic application and issuance of import and export permits. However, implementation of these measures is mostly partial or on a pilot basis. The implementation of electronic application and issuance of preferential certificate of origin as well as electronic application for customs refunds are still a challenge. Only half of the countries surveyed can proceed with refunds electronically. It is still common among many countries for refunds to be made with paper documents (figure 17).

Figure 17. State of implementation of paperless trade measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

¹⁴ See <https://www.ocosec.org/enhancing-regional-integration-through-customs-automation/>

3.2.2 Cross-border paperless trade

At the cross-border level, six measures are included under the ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ as shown in figure 18. Law and regulations for electronic transactions’ and ‘recognized certification authority are basic building blocks to be used towards enabling the exchange and legal recognition of trade-related data and documents, not only among stakeholders within a country but also between stakeholders along the entire international supply chain.

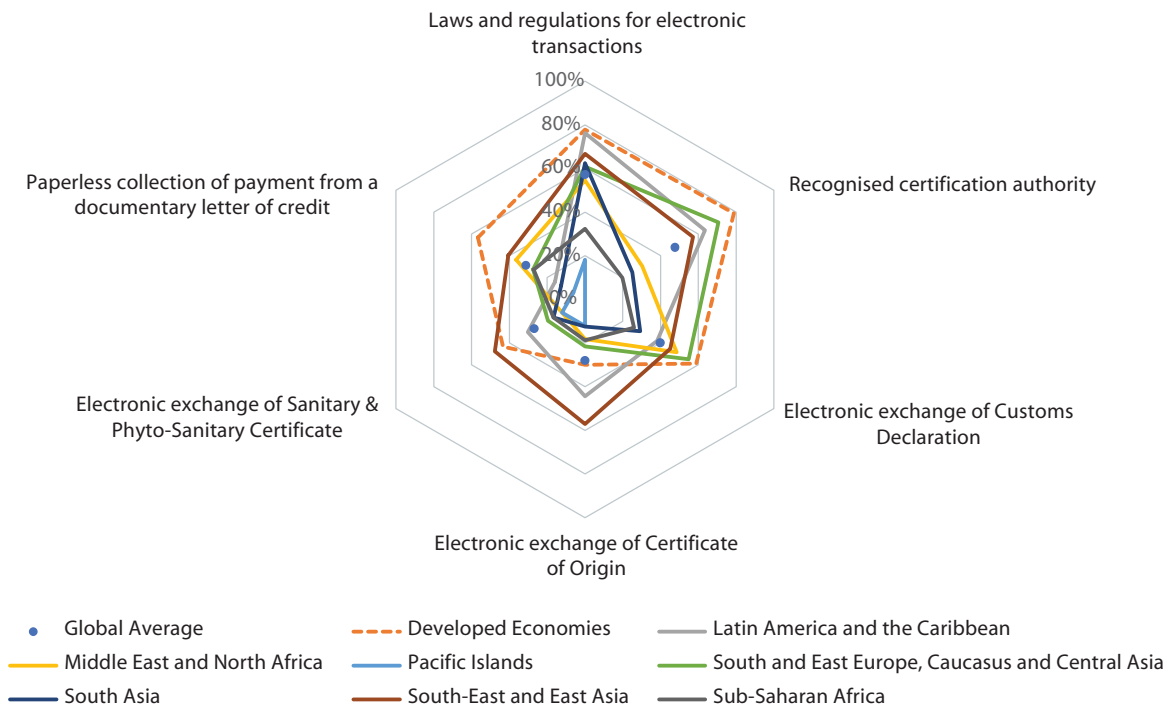
The other four measures relate to the exchange of specific trade-related data and documents across borders needed for achieving a fully integrated paperless transformation. Figure 18 shows the average scores for implementing measures under ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ across regions. At the global level, the implementation of these measures has been comparatively low. In particular, countries in the Pacific Islands and Sub-Saharan

Africa indicate significant challenges in implementing these measures.

Progress has been made in establishing laws and regulations for electronic transactions. However, the implementation levels of other measures in the group are very low. South-East and East Asia lead the other regions when it comes to implementing measures related to the cross-border electronic exchange of trade-related documents, including exchange of certificates of origin, and sanitary and phytosanitary certificates. This due to the continued efforts to develop the ASEAN Single Window, which enables the cross-border electronic exchange of Customs declarations, certificates of origin and SPS certificates.

Developed economies notably received lower implementation rates than some developing economies, particularly with regard to the measures regarding electronic exchange of certificates of origin and electronic exchange of SPS certificates.

Figure 18. Global implementation of cross-border paperless trade measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

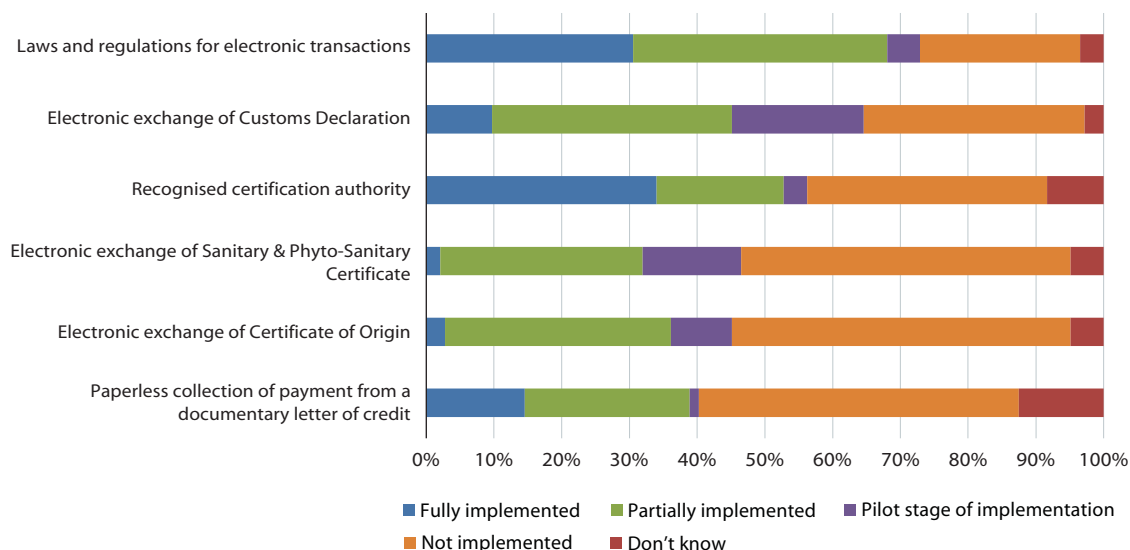
European Union members consist of a large proportion of the developed economies covered in the survey. Eurostat revealed that most trade happens within the European Union,¹⁵ where a certificate of origin is only necessary for importing from/exporting to a third country. That said, the patchwork of disconnected national portals could undermine the Single Market and Customs Union and create confusion for traders. In late 2020, the European Union Single Window initiative was proposed to unify and simplify customs formalities and enable information exchange among European Union members. This implies that developed economies, including the European Union have started acting on the need to transition to harmonized digital solutions.

Figure 19 reveals that more than 70% of the countries surveyed have taken steps to establish legal and regulatory frameworks for electronic transactions. However, only 30% of the countries

have such legal frameworks fully in place, affecting the legal recognition of electronic data and documents across borders. Less than 60% of the countries have a recognized certification authority in place. This partly explains why the full electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents (such as Customs declaration, certificates of origin and SPS certificates) is limited. Implementation is essentially on a pilot or partial basis.

During the past two years, paperless trade systems have helped to keep trade flowing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis has also accelerated the regional integration and the implementation of some regional Single Window initiatives. The regional Single Windows create a mechanism that could handle trade-related regulatory requirements within a given region as well as provide additional levels of functionality for shared trade and customs procedures within a region (box 2).

Figure 19. State of implementation of cross-border paperless trade measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

¹⁵ The value of intra-European Union trade in goods was 1.5 times as high as the value of extra-European Union trade in goods in 2020. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_trade_in_goods_for_the_EU-an_overview&oldid=534985

Box 2. Good practices in cross-border paperless trade

[ASEAN] All ASEAN members have joined the ASW Live Operation, which allows the granting of preferential tariff treatment based on the ATIGA e-Form D exchanged through the ASW. Recently, Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand started the exchange of the ASEAN Customs Declaration Document (ACDD) through the ASW, and the remaining ASEAN members are expected to join by the end of 2021. The system opens opportunities for more trade-related documents (e-SPS, e-AH, e-FS) to be exchanged electronically.

Source: ASEAN Single Window, Available at <https://asw.asean.org/>

[Africa] The African Alliance for Electronic Commerce (AACE), with 18 member countries, seeks to promote the SW concept in compliance with the recommendations of international institutions. One of the Alliance's key projects is establishing a Regional Single Window (RSW) that will interconnect all national platforms (NSW) to smoothen trade and enable African countries to be more competitive in the global market. The RSW will be built on a simple organizational model. National Single Windows will exchange data via the regional platform. Then, each NSW is responsible for the exchanges with its local users. Thus, it will not be possible for a Customs administration or economic operator to directly connect to the RSW, except when otherwise authorized by the NSW. Moreover, the RSW can be developed and hosted *ad hoc*, or simply derive from one of its members that has the technical capacity to offer services to the others.

Source: http://www.swguide.org/single_window/about_aace.php

[Kenya] Kenya has implemented a single maritime window system as part of its efforts to improve efficiency at the port of Mombasa and address the perennial challenge of congestion that has seen importers incur losses due to demurrage charges. The system allowing shipping agents to submit vessel pre-arrival and pre-departure declarations electronically went live on 2 June 2021. Implementation of the system is in line with the International Maritime Organization Convention on facilitation of maritime traffic (known as the FAL Convention), which makes it mandatory for Governments to introduce electronic information exchange between ships and ports.

Source: <https://maritime-executive.com/article/kenya-adopts-single-window-system-for-port-efficiency>

[European Union] The recent development of the “New Computerized Transit System” (NCTS) includes the European Union, the “European Free Trade Association” (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland), Turkey, North Macedonia and Serbia. It is an electronic declaration and processing system that traders must use to submit a transit declaration electronically. For transit shipments between participating States this system provides a single procedure from the start of transportation to the final destination, with all the customs authorities linked electronically. Other ECE countries that have shown an interest in participating in the NCTS system for transit include Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and the Republic of Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

IPPC launched an important initiative in 2017 to develop a “trusted third party” system to support the government-to-government (G2G) exchange of sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) certificates electronically. This initiative aims to reduce the resources required in every country to develop electronic tools for producing and receiving electronic certificates as well as negotiating agreements with trading partners to allow for their exchange. This system allows SPS certificates to be exchanged, downloaded or viewed directly on the web. The system “e-Phyto Hub” is now operational in the European Union. All European Union member States are now able to communicate with the IPPC ePhyto Hub in order to receive and process electronic data from phytosanitary certificates transmitted by non-EC countries through the IPPC ePhyto Hub.

Source: ECE, 2021, Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity, available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/2015779_E_web.pdf

[Pacific Alliance] Since 2016, the four members of the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru) have been exchanging preferential certificates of origin and SPS certificates through their respective electronic Single Windows. They are now working on enabling the cross-border electronic exchange of customs declarations.

Source: Country responses in the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021.

[Central America] Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama electronically exchange Customs declarations and preferential certificates of origin. They are now working on enabling the cross-border electronic exchange of SPS certificates.

Source: Country responses in the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021.

3.3 Sustainable trade facilitation

In today's interconnected world, Governments face new regulatory challenges in managing issues arising from trade disruption as well as ensuring that the opportunities and benefits from international trade can be realized and shared inclusively, especially in the digital trade environment. Digital trade provides an opportunity for sectors and groups with special needs to gain better access to international markets and global supply chains. On the other hand, it could widen inequalities among people, firms and locations. Many SMEs are lagging in digital transformation in that they do not have enough capabilities or financial resources to access and effectively use digital instruments. Gender inequalities also exist in many different areas, creating distinct barriers to women and preventing integration into international trade. A recent ECA study in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region showed that female small-scale traders, often informal, face gender-related non-tariff barriers more often than their male counterparts. Such barriers include physical and sexual harassment, personal safety

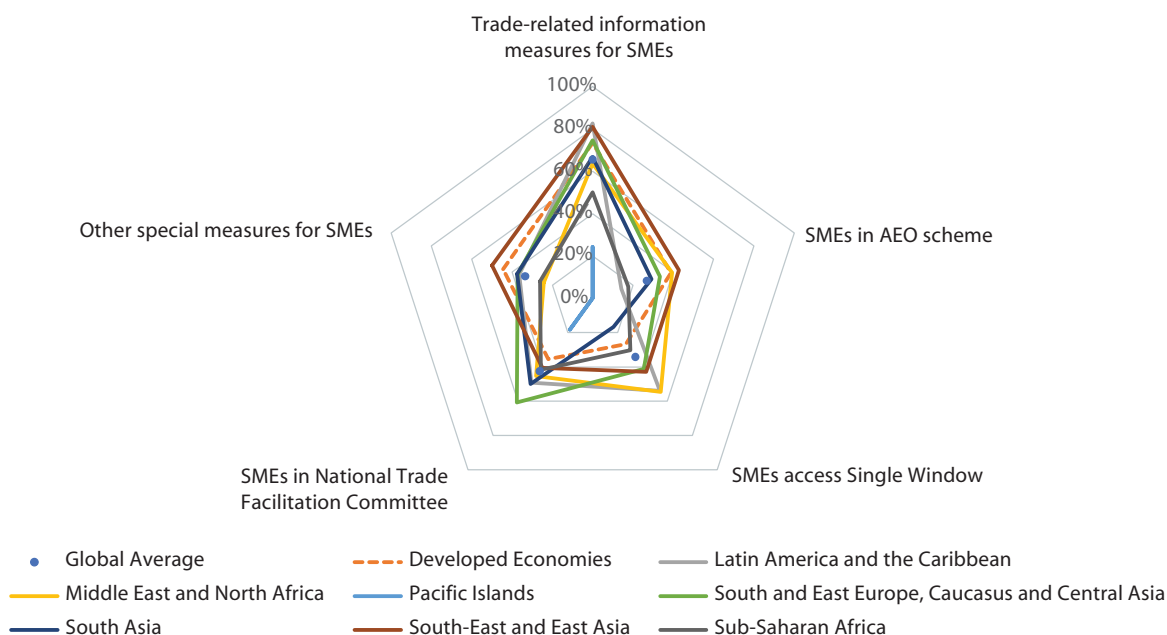
issues, bribery and corruption, time-consuming trade procedures, and documentary requirements.¹⁶

To make trade facilitation more sustainable and inclusive and mainstream trade facilitation to attain sustainable development goals in the digital era, "Sustainable Trade Facilitation" is an essential pillar of the UN Global Survey, incorporated since 2017. Measures under three sub-groups 'Trade Facilitation for SMEs', 'Agriculture Trade Facilitation' and 'Women in Trade Facilitation' are included in this group.

3.3.1 Trade facilitation for SMEs

A trade agenda that explicitly recognizes and acts on the facilitation of SMEs can be a strong force for inclusive trade. Figure 20 shows the average scores for implementing the 'Trade Facilitation for SMEs' measures across regions. The implementation of measures in this sub-group is generally low and varies widely across regions. Developed economies, which have achieved higher implementation rates for other sub-groups, have received comparatively lower rates for measures under this sub-group (see box 3 for good practices).

Figure 20. Global implementation of trade facilitation for SMEs measures in various regions



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

¹⁶ ECA, 2020, Africa Trade Report 2020: Informal Cross-Border Trade in Africa in the Context of the AfCFTA. Available at <https://afr-corp-media-prod.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/afrexim/African-Trade-Report-2020.pdf>

Box 3. Good practices on trade facilitation for SMEs

SMEs in AEO Scheme

[Australia and Hong Kong, China] SMEs in Australia have access to their AEO programme. The Government of Australia distinguishes SMEs from other actors and provides a risk profile for SMEs that is different from the one for larger businesses. Hong Kong, China grants additional benefits to AEO-certified companies that actively promote AEO certification among SMEs providers and which have developed outreach strategies to promote the inclusion of SMEs.

Source: Inter-American Development Bank, 2020, *AEO in APEC Economies: Opportunities to Expand Mutual Recognition Agreements and the Inclusion of SMEs*.

Source: https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/AEO_in_APEC_Economies_Opportunities_to_Expand_Mutual_Recognition_Agreements_and_The_Inclusion_of_SMEs.pdf

SMEs in NTFC

[India] In India, many actions have been taken to benefit SMEs. Webinars are conducted regularly by the Directorate-General of Tax Payer Services (DGTS) and the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade (DGF) create awareness among SMEs. The dedicated outreach working group is part of the National Committee on Trade Facilitation that is responsible for driving such agendas.

Source: Webinars available at <https://www.dgft.gov.in/CP/?opt=webinar-under-niryaat-bandhu-scheme>; Directorate General of Taxpayer Services, *GST MSME*, available at https://www.cbic.gov.in/resources/htdocs-cbec/gst/MSME_Flyer.pdf

SME access to a Single Window

[Azerbaijan] Business incubators created by the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan offer various services to business start-ups, and each incubator's services differ. Primary business incubator services mainly provide necessary office equipment, maintenance of accounting and filing, advice on business development strategy, exploration of investment opportunities, and various training workshops and seminars on successful business operations. The Center for Analysis Economic Reforms and Communication has also made the Single Window more accessible to SMEs.

Source: Country responses in the Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021; see also <https://azexport.az/> <https://smb.gov.az/en> <https://dth.az/>

Other measures for SMEs

[Paraguay] The EXPORTAFACIL (Easy Export) system simplifies exports for SMEs by using the postal system's logistics infrastructure. Beneficiary firms must be SMEs registered in the Export Single Window. Benefits include reduced shipping rates, simplified export procedures and technical support, among others.

Source: Country response in the Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021 and EXPORTAFACIL's website https://www.mic.gov.py/exporta_facil/marcolegal.html (in Spanish).

[COMESA] Trade Information Desk Offices (TIDOs) have been set up under the Great Lakes Trade Facilitation Project (GLTFP) to continue facilitating cross border trade beyond the timelines of the main project to boost trade. Busia and Malaba are among the border points where officials are stationed to assist traders, especially small-scale traders to use physical and modern ICT tools to make trade easier. The TIDOs also collect vital information on small scale cross-border trade which would otherwise be missed by Customs.

Source: <https://www.comesa.int/study-on-the-sustainability-of-trade-information-desk-underway>

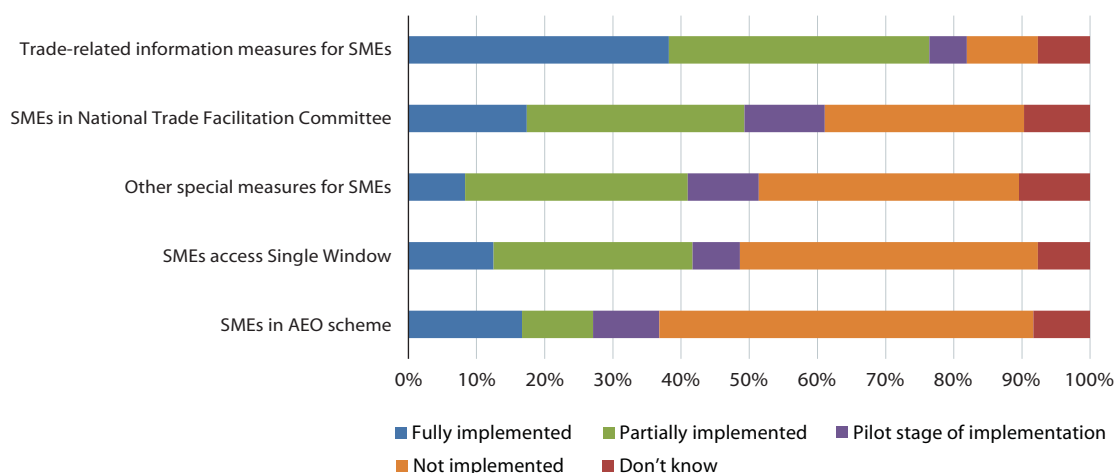
[Republic of Moldova] The Republic of Moldova announced a new measure for Digitalization of the economy and public services, supported by a large number of ministries and government authorities, and also a new initiative to support in particular the digitalization of SMEs. It also launched a virtual platform for SMEs to facilitate e-commerce, to mitigate the effect of the disruption in supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure's initiative to support digitalization of SMEs aims to expand their access to both the domestic and the global market.

Source: UNECE, based on United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021.

Figure 21 shows that although 80% of the countries have, to varying extents, introduced trade-related information measures for SMEs, less than half of the countries surveyed have included SMEs in their NTFCs. Measures that specifically target SMEs to overcome the challenges they face in trade such as Facilities for SMEs access to Single Window, SMEs access to Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) scheme, and other special measures for SMEs (such as the provision of deferred duty payment or developing a specific action plan dedicated to trade facilitation measures for SMEs) are carried out on

a limited basis. Albeit the number of AEO Mutual Recognition Agreements signed during past years has increased considerably, the position of SMEs *vis-à-vis* AEO has been recognized as a special case and warrants attention. The entry barriers to SMEs' AEO certification could be disadvantageous for the participation of SMEs in AEO certification and diminish the effects of AEO benefits. There is a clear need to enhance AEO training for SMEs and to assist their involvement in the AEO programmes, so that they can contribute better to supply chain security, integrity, and resilience.

Figure 21. State of implementation of trade facilitation for SMEs measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

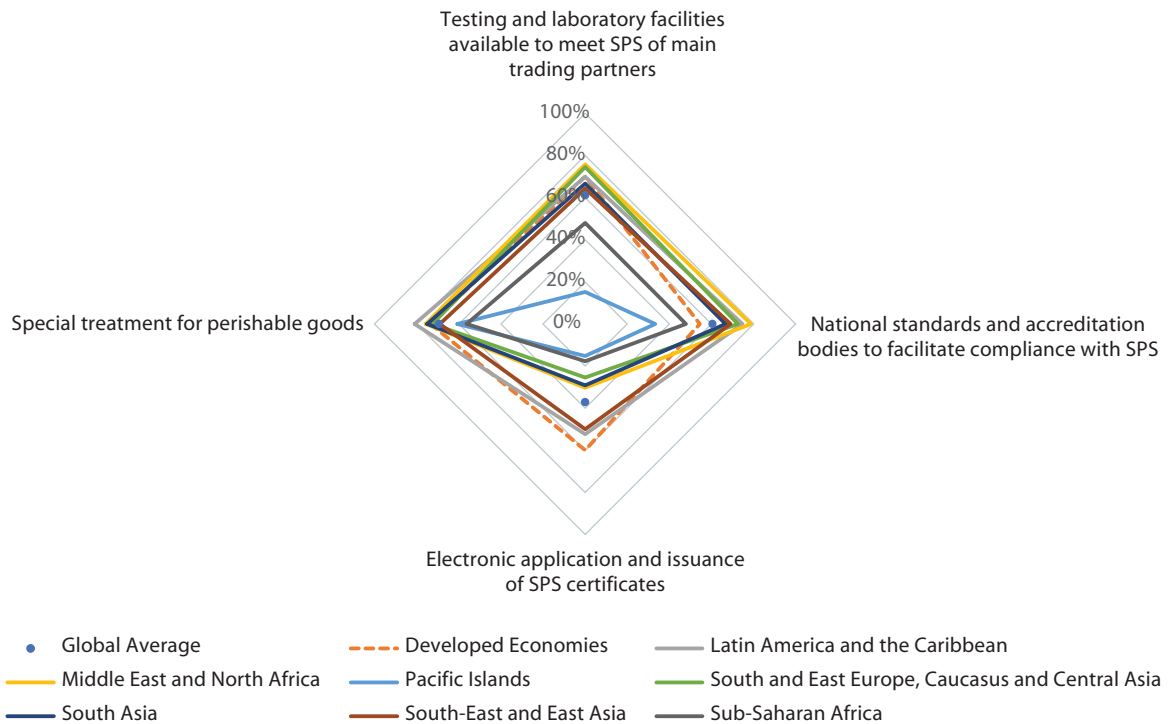
3.3.2 Agricultural trade facilitation

Much of the agricultural trade in certain regions is informal trade and, as such, not captured formally. Targeting the agricultural sector, which represents a considerable proportion of small-scale traders and SMEs, can also increase the positive impact of trade facilitation on sustainable development. Measures in this sub-group are generally better implemented than other measures in “Sustainable Trade Facilitation” except for the measure for electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates, which is also relevant to paperless trade (figure 22). The swift movement of trade goods may be more important for agricultural products, especially perishable ones, than other industrial products. Agriculture is the backbone industry of Pacific Island economies, which have achieved a considerably good rate for the special treatment for perishable goods at border-crossings

measure. However, for other measures, the Pacific Islands are still lagging.

Figure 23 shows that many of the countries surveyed have, to some extent, implemented the measures under ‘Agriculture Trade Facilitation’ (see box 4 for good practices). Priority treatment of perishable goods is a core obligation provided by Article 7.9 of the TFA. More than 80% of the countries have implemented this measure on a pilot basis. Behind border procedures, such as meeting SPS standards and testing methods, are also critical for agricultural products. Therefore, national standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS standards as well as testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS requirements of main trading partners measures have been implemented at least on a pilot basis in more than 75% of the countries surveyed, although implementation is mainly

Figure 22. Global implementation of agricultural trade facilitation measures in various regions

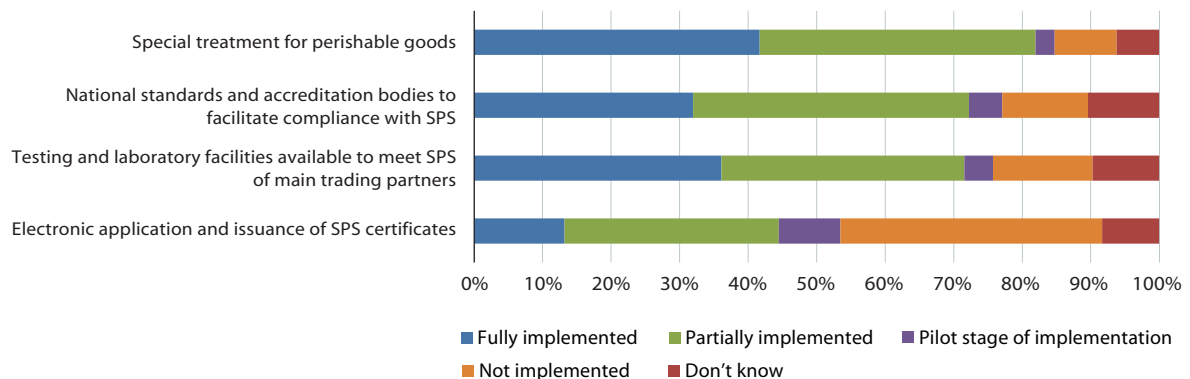


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

incomplete. The electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates is particularly challenging. Full implementation of this measure is only slightly over 10%. This may be partly explained by the fact that the current common practices on the import side remain for accepting only paper certificates. The low implementation level, when it comes to the electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates also

echoes findings of several cross-border paperless trade readiness assessment studies that the Customs are much more advanced than other trade-related government agencies in using electronic and automated systems for facilitating trade. SPS certificates are, in many countries, issued by agencies such as Ministries of Food and Agriculture.¹⁷

Figure 23. State of implementation of agricultural trade facilitation measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

¹⁷ Readiness Assessment for Cross-border Paperless Trade country reports are available at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/readiness-assessments-cross-border-paperless-trade>

Box 4. Good practices on agricultural trade facilitation

National standards and accreditation bodies to facilitate compliance with SPS

[India]: The Bureau of India Standards (BIS) has signed bilateral agreements with the national standards bodies of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brazil, France, Germany, Israel, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. BIS has also inked 21 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in “standardization and conformity assessment”. BIS has also actively engaged in regional forums, such as the South Asia Regional Standards Organization (SARSO) and the Pacific Asia Standards Congress.

Source: ADB, SASEC, 2020, *Potential Exports and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade: India National Study*. Available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/559296/india-exports-nontariff-barriers-trade-study.pdf> see also: <https://bis.gov.in/index.php/standards/technical-information-services>

Special treatment for perishable goods

[Bangladesh]: The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is finalizing a Statutory Regulatory Order to facilitate a faster release and disposal of perishable goods from ports. Customs will also be able to sell or transfer seized and unreleased perishable goods that could not be disposed of through auction due to various reasons to the State-owned agencies.

Source: NBR to frame rules for quick release of perishables, *Maritime Gateway*, 25 August 2020. Available at <https://www.maritimegateway.com/nbr-frame-rules-quick-release-perishables/>

Other agricultural trade facilitation measures

[Peru] Peru has integrated 12 agriculture-related trade procedures into its Single Window. Measures include the sanitary authorization of an establishment dedicated to the primary processing of agricultural food and animal feed, the inspection and verification report for the importation of agricultural inputs, and the certificate of sale of primary agricultural food and animal feed, among others.

Source: Available at <https://elperuano.pe/noticia/126621-mincetur-brinda-mas-facilidades-para-empresas-del-sector-agropecuario>

[Paraguay] Paraguay has launched a new platform and mobile application, “INTN Servicios”, to enhance transparency and facilitate trade in agriculture products. It will also provide technical assistance to simplify, modernize and harmonize the processes for the export, import and transit of agricultural products in Paraguay.

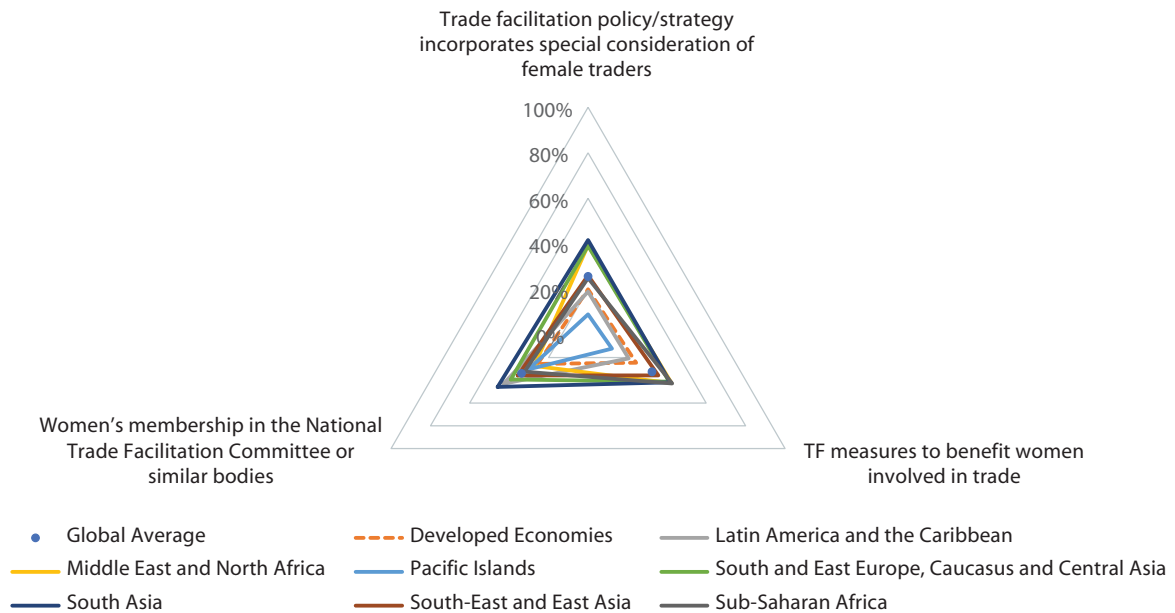
Source: Available at <https://www.ip.gov.py/ip/intn-lanza-plataforma-y-aplicacion-movil-para-agilizar-procesos-comerciales/>

3.3.3 Women in trade facilitation

Empowering women to engage in trade will lead to stronger growth and a more prosperous society. However, reducing gender inequality in trade facilitation is difficult because inequalities are not explicitly declared in trade procedures. The COVID-19 pandemic has further magnified the inequalities experienced by many vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, including women. Therefore, the inclusion of the gender dimension in trade facilitation is essential, with a wide range of solutions to reduce inequalities for women in trade

facilitation (see box 5 for good practices). Measures include women membership in NTFC or similar body, TF policy incorporating special consideration of women traders and TF measures benefiting women involved in trade (i.e., training programmes in place to ensure equal access to trade and related job opportunities). Figure 24 shows the global average level of implementation of three measures in ‘Women in Trade Facilitation’ is somewhat limited (less than 40%). Developed economies are also facing significant challenges in implementing measures under this sub-group.

Figure 24. Global implementation of women in trade facilitation measures in various regions

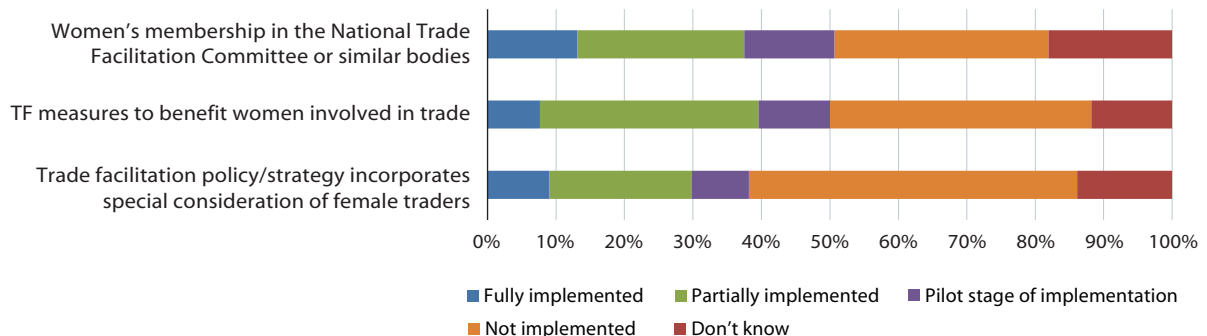


Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Figure 25 shows that approximately 50% of the countries have implemented women membership in NTFC or similar bodies and TF measures to benefit women involved in trade. The measure regarding how special consideration is given in trade facilitation policies/strategies of female traders is only implemented in less than 40% of the

countries. Implementation of all three measures is mostly on a partial and pilot basis, while full implementation is very limited. There is a strong indication that current policies are insufficient to ensure women’s rights, and more efforts are needed to emphasize gender inequality in trade facilitation.

Figure 25. State of implementation of women in trade facilitation globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Box 5. Good practices in women in trade facilitation

Women membership in NTFC or similar bodies

[Kiribati] National Women's Organization namely Aia Mwaea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK), coordinates the women's group under the direction of the National Council of Women. AMAK has representation in the National Trade Advisory Committee.

Source: Country response in the Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2021

Trade facilitation strategy incorporates special consideration of female traders

[India] The National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 2020-2023 promotes gender inclusiveness in trade. The Action Plan has conceptualized and developed a "Women in Global Business Program" that provides information, resources and mentoring programme to Indian businesswomen. Implementation of the action points under the NTFAP 2020-2023 has the following performance indicators: sharing of inclusiveness report; number of outreach programs conducted; and number of female members participating in Customs Clearance Facilitation Committee meetings

Source: India NTFC, Implementation of Trade Facilitation Agreement: National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 2020-2023, available at <https://www.cbic.gov.in/resources/htdocs-cbec/implmntin-trade-facilitation/NTFAP2020-23jk.pdf>

TF measures to benefit women involved in trade

[Australia] The Australian Government supports developing countries in addressing trade barriers and integrating into the global trading system. The South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program (SARTFP) supported with Australian investment, promotes gender-sensitive trade facilitation, infrastructure connectivity, improved livelihoods, and enterprise development. It challenges the assumption that trade is gender neutral and demonstrates why gender equality matters in regional trade facilitation and infrastructure connectivity. The program implements initiatives that promote women's participation in activities such as cross-border tourism, transport and infrastructure. It also includes initiatives that support female traders at selected land ports through public information campaigns on safety issues and education programs on trade legislation and their rights.

Source: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2017) *Australia Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment Through Aid, Trade and Economic Diplomacy*, available at <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-advancing-womens-economic-empowerment-aid-trade-economic-diplomacy.pdf>

[Kenya-Uganda] At the Busia border crossing, the needs of women traders addressed by installing sex-differentiated toilets, together with resting areas and dustbins, has helped to improve health and environmental conditions; constructing border markets for women traders – the vast majority of whom trade in agricultural goods – facilitates the selling and buying of goods at locations close to the border.

Source: Asmita Parshotam and Samuel Balongo, 2020, Women traders in East Africa: The case study of the Busia One Stop Border Post, available at <https://saiia.org.za/research/women-traders-in-east-africa-the-case-study-of-the-busia-one-stop-border-post/>

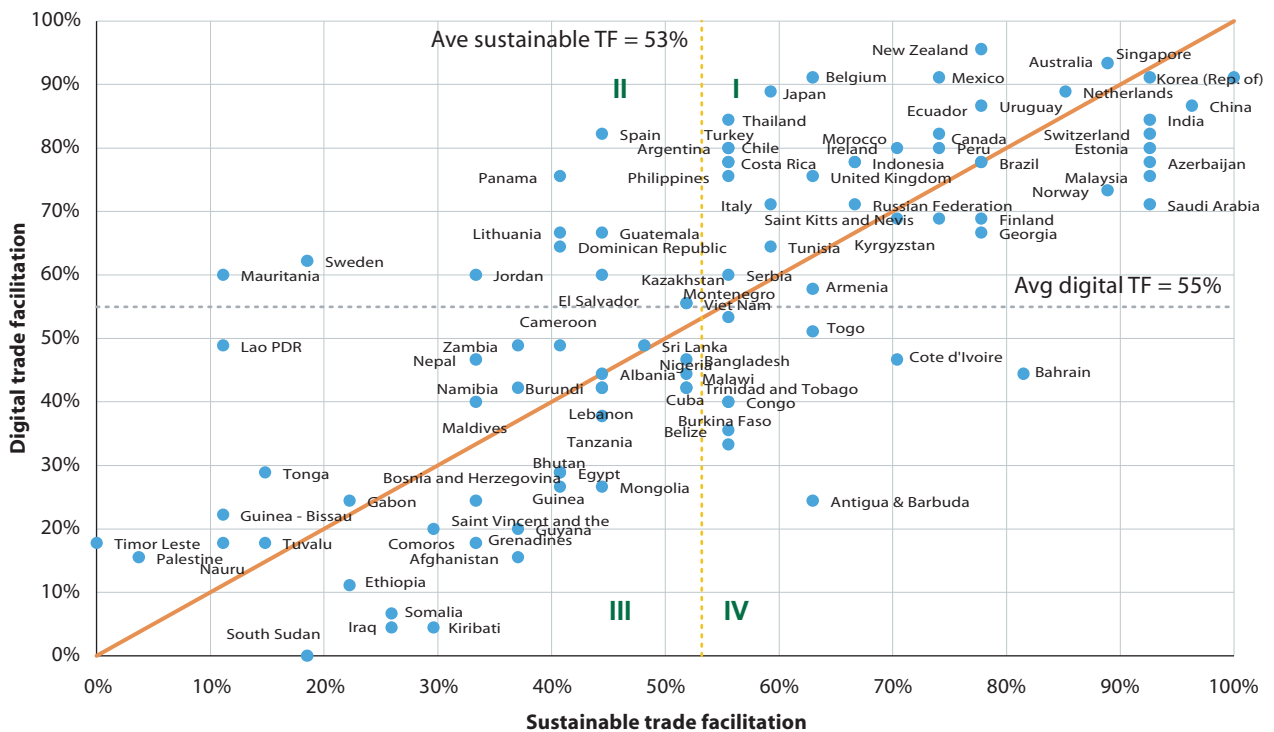
3.4 Implementation of digital versus sustainable trade facilitation

Digitalization and sustainability are the two interrelated components of trade facilitation. Digital transformation to (cross-border) paperless trade is the key to sustainability, while sustainable trade facilitation helps go reap the full development-related benefits from trade facilitation reforms. Given the linkage of the “Digital Trade Facilitation” and “Sustainable Trade Facilitation”, it is necessary to compare how countries have been implementing these two groups of trade facilitation measures.

Figure 26 shows that the global average implementation rates for digital and sustainable are

55% and 53%, respectively.¹⁸ In general, countries achieving higher implementation rates for “Digital Trade Facilitation” have also performed eminently in “Sustainable Trade Facilitation”, suggesting a highly positive correlation between the two groups. Overall, developed countries have performed better in both digital and sustainable dimensions than less advanced countries. Most developed countries are positioned in quadrant I, where the digital and sustainable implementation rates are above average. Most of the least developed countries fall into quadrant III, where the implementation rates of both are below average. Some developing countries, such as China and India, are among the best performers in sustainable trade facilitation, while the Republic of Korea and Singapore are top performers for both groups (figure 26).

Figure 26. Implementation of digital and sustainable trade dimensions of trade facilitation



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfstatsurvey.org

Note: For the sake of comparability, the study calculates implementation rate of sustainable trade facilitation by using data from 2 sub-groups, namely, ‘Trade Facilitation for SMEs’ and ‘Agricultural Trade Facilitation’. Rate of implementation is computed only if level of implementation (0-3) is available for all questions associating to both aforementioned sub-groups. For digital trade facilitation implementation, DK and NA are treated as zero and rate of implementation is calculated for all countries.

¹⁸ Data for Women in Trade Facilitation are not adequate enough to do an analysis. Therefore, it is excluded from calculating the implementation rate of the Sustainable Trade Facilitation group in this section.

3.5 Other trade facilitation

3.5.1 Trade finance facilitation

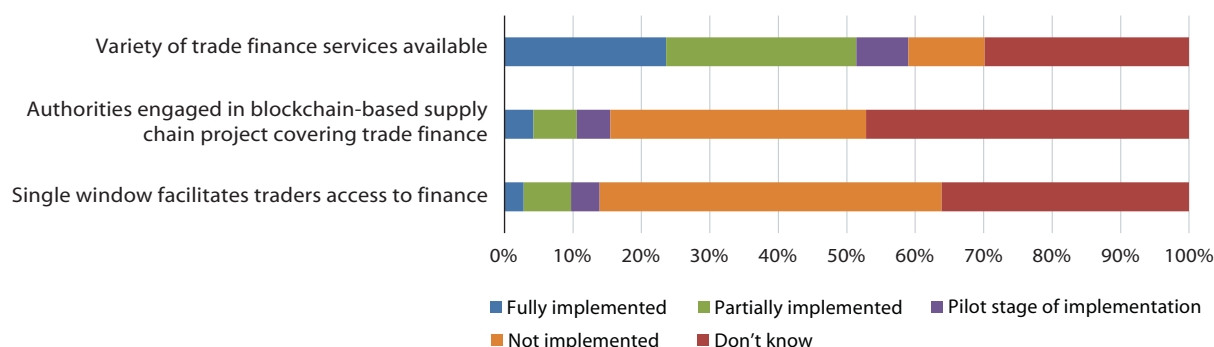
Trade finance has been a key catalyst in the expansion of international trade during the past century. Access to trade finance is a key to developing and including importers and exporters in regional and global supply chains. Given its importance as an enabler of international trade transactions,¹⁹ trade finance was incorporated for the first time into the 2019 survey on a pilot basis. It was further updated and included in the 2021 Survey in collaboration with the ICC.

Despite the importance of trade finance in boosting trade and the global economy, the global trade finance gap before the COVID-19 pandemic was estimated to be US\$ 1.5 trillion, mainly affecting SMEs in developing economies.²⁰ In the wake of the pandemic, access to trade finance has become even more difficult and costly. The priorities are to reduce trade costs for traders through easily available trade finance channels and more efficient trade facilitation and logistics.

Interpretation of results under this sub-group is subject to caution as information could not be

successfully collected for some trade finance measures in more than 40% of the countries surveyed. The most implemented measure is variety of trade finance services available. Data suggest that at least some trade finance services are available in about 80% of the countries for which data could be obtained. Fewer than 10 countries for which data are available have fully implemented authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance and Single Window facilitates traders' access to finance. Customs in most countries are taking the lead in developing Single Window systems to simplify trade procedures and expedite clearance. However, financing payments for international trade transactions may fall outside the mandate of Customs. The high "don't know" rates also reveal that trade facilitation experts and officials who provided or validated the survey are often unfamiliar with trade finance. The Single Window is an automated system linking relevant agencies with different roles through electronic means, whereas the connection of financial institutions (banks) and authorities (Foreign Exchange Authorities etc.) may not be readily available in many countries. Survey results suggest a need for greater coordination and cooperation between border agencies and those involved in developing financial and payment services (see box 6 for good practices).

Figure 27. State of implementation of trade finance facilitation measures globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

¹⁹ Trade finance enables the flow of money from buyer to seller and mitigation of associated risks, which greatly facilitates the flow of goods from seller to buyer. The flows of both money and goods are themselves enabled by the flow of data and documents between buyer and seller.

²⁰ ADB, 2019, Trade finance gaps, growth and job survey, ADB Brief 113.

Box 6. Good practices in trade finance facilitation

[Bangladesh] The Bangladesh Single Window supports banks in assessing information easily to support financing of exporters and importers. The Bangladesh Bank considers the Import Registration Certificate (IRC) and Export Registration Certificate (ERC) in order to easily identify traders applying for trade finance.

Source: Country responses in the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021.

[Singapore] The Singapore Customs Electronic Banker's Guarantee (eBG) Programme was implemented in November 2020 to provide a BG with a more efficient lodgement process. Under the eBG Programme, a participating bank will seek the entity's written consent of their clients, as the principal of the BG, in order to issue and digitally send the BG in electronic form (eBG) directly to Singapore Customs as soon as it is issued by the bank, instead of hardcopy BG.

Source: Available at <https://www.customs.gov.sg/businesses/new-traders-and-registration-services/registration-services/security-lodgement/electronic-bankers-guarantee-programme>

3.5.2 Trade facilitation in times of crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of global supply chains. Supply chain disruptions have had a devastating impact on global trade. Against this background, the global community has widely recognized that keeping trade flowing is essential to saving lives.²¹ Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Governments, border agencies, logistics companies and traders have been exploring how they can leverage existing trade and transport facilitation measures to keep goods moving across borders. The crisis has also stimulated the implementation of trade facilitation measures, especially when it comes to digitalizing trade procedures (see box 7 for good practices).

Based on good practices identified in 2020, a short survey on "Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Pandemic" was designed and pilot-tested in the Asia Pacific.²² Building upon it, a sub-group on 'Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis' was incorporated into

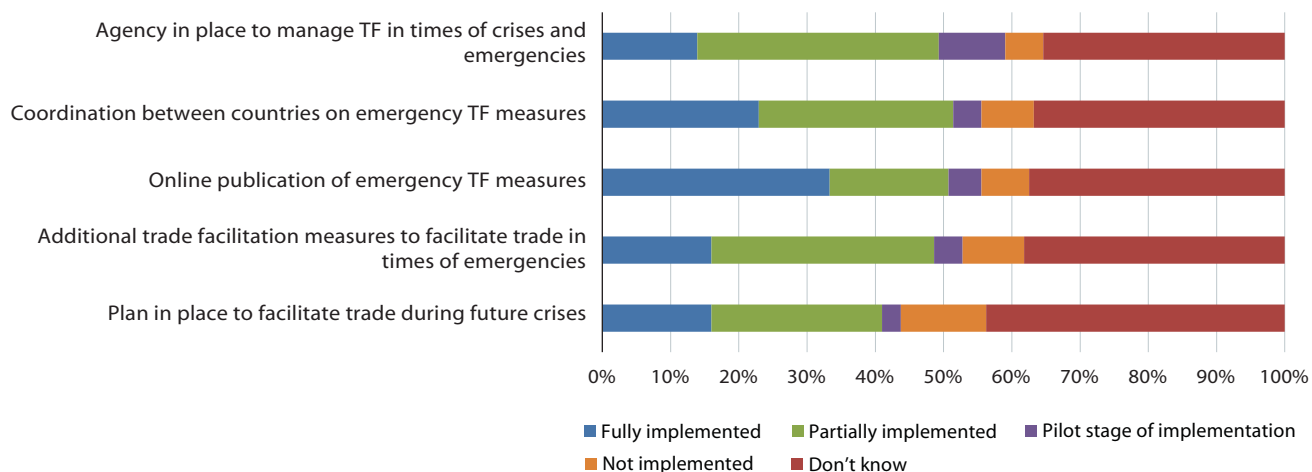
the 2021 survey, with a set of five measures covering both immediate crisis response and long-term resilient measures.

Most of the countries for which data are available have implemented, to some extent, the measures of agencies in place to manage trade facilitation in times of crisis and emergencies, coordination between countries on emergency trade facilitation measures and online publication of emergency trade facilitation measures. When it comes to long-term preparedness for a future crisis, only 23 countries have confirmed that they have a plan in place to facilitate trade during such a case. Another 36 countries have already started to explore (partially/on a pilot basis) how they can set themselves on the right trajectory to resilient recovery and preparation for future crises. One of the big lessons learnt is how to improve resource allocation to better prepare for future crises beyond COVID-19.²³ This should be a policy priority for countries that have not yet started making such plans.

²¹ See Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2021: Supply Chains of Critical Goods Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic — Disruptions, Recovery, and Resilience, available at <https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/APTF>

²² ESCAP, 2021, Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis and Pandemic: Practices and Lessons from the Asia Pacific Region, available at https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Regional%20report-Trade%20facilitation%20in%20times%20of%20crisis%20and%20pandemic_0.pdf

²³ Ibid.

Figure 28. State of implementation of Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis measures globally

Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at [unfpa.org](https://unfpa.org/survey)

Box 7. Good practices in trade facilitation in times of crisis

[Indonesia] To facilitate international trade during the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia intends to receive electronic/scanned Phytosanitary Certificates from all countries. Indonesia also kindly requests trading countries to officially inform Indonesia about implementing electronic/scanned Phytosanitary Certificates for their products exported to Indonesia. Electronic certificates will be supported with access to validate the document. This aims to accelerate inspection works of import documents at entry points in Indonesia. In line with this measure, Indonesia kindly requested reciprocal measures from trading partner countries to receive the electronic/scanned Phytosanitary Certificate from Indonesia and has developed a technique for validating the certificate through the IAQA portal.

Source: Available at <https://ppkonline.karantina.pertanian.go.id/checkcert>

[Georgia] For ensuring business continuity and providing information to economic operators, the Revenue Service has used all possible communication channels as a 24/7 operated hotline, SMS, e-mail, website, Facebook and TV programmes. Information leaflets are published in Georgian, English, Turkish, Azeri, Russian and Armenian languages and provided to all truck drivers. The Government of Georgia has set up a website to inform the public of all measures taken. The Revenue Service website provides practical information for traders and travellers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including temporary trade facilitation measures.

Source: Available at <https://rs.ge/Covid19-en?cat=1&tab=1>

[India] A centralized helpdesk for COVID-19 response to trade was established by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC). COVID-19 Helpdesk for “International Trade Issues” was also established on 26 March 2020 by the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade for extending immediate support to the trading community. Of 1,300 requests received by the helpdesk more than 900 were resolved.

In the face of COVID-19, India has implemented an E-delivery PDF-based Gatepass, and Out of Charge copy of the Bill of Entry (BoE) to custom brokers/ importers across India to support and expedite the contact-less Customs clearance process. A machine-based automated release of import consignments has also been launched across India.

Sources: Available at <https://www.cbic.gov.in/resources/htdocs-cbec/Indian-Customs-Fighting-COVID-19-summary.pdf>; Paperless Customs – Electronic Communication of PDF based Gatepass, and OOC Copy of Bill of Entry to Custom Brokers/Importers, available at <https://www.cbic.gov.in/resources/htdocs-cbec/customs/cs-circulars/cs-circulars-2020/Circular-No-19-2020.pdf>

Box 7. (continued)

[Australia] Australia introduced temporary alternative arrangements to use original paper import certificates for a range of imported plant-based, animal, biological and animal-based goods. Where an importer is unable to supply the original paper document from the exporting country as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the electronic copy is accepted.

Following the outbreak, in January 2020, the “Human coronavirus with pandemic potential” became a “listed human disease” by the legislative instrument under the Biosecurity Act. In accordance with subsection 477(1) of the Act, the Health Minister has made the Biosecurity (Human Biosecurity Emergency) (Human Coronavirus with Pandemic Potential) (Essential Goods) Determination 2020 (the Determination), which clearly defines “essential goods” and prohibits the practice of price gouging, and imposes requirements to ensure that those who breach relevant restrictions surrender these goods to law enforcement.

Sources: Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Australia, available at <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/import/industry-advice/2020/97-2020>; Australia Federal Register of Legislation, Explanatory Statement, available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2020L00355/Explanatory%20Statement/Text>

[Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova] In March/April 2020, the Republic of Moldova adopted measures with regard to public digital signatures. Azerbaijan set up services to verify the authenticity of digitally signed documents, one of the earliest of its kind in their subregion. As part of the Law on Consumer Protection in Kazakhstan, the Government plans to launch a unified platform for receiving complaints from consumers based on the Single Window principle.

Source: ECE (2021) *Regional Report on Post-Pandemic Recovery: E-commerce and Trade Facilitation*, available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC_2021_15E_RegReport-eCommerceTF.pdf

[Botswana and Zambia] The two countries cooperated in clearing traffic, which had built up at Kazungula during the first week that member States implemented national COVID-19 measures, by joint clearance and collaboration between border agencies as well as the use of a temporary construction bridge.

Source: SADC, 2020, SADC Regional Response to COVID-19 Pandemic, Bulletin No. 6.

[Kenya] According to the COVID-19 Supply Chain and Markets Update of 5 June 2020 by the World Food Programme’s Kenya Country Office, four of the eight assessed customs border stations reported completely normal operations, i.e., Busia (Kenya–Uganda), Lokichogio (Kenya – South Sudan), Moyale (Kenya – Ethiopia) and Lunga Lunge (Kenya – United Republic of Tanzania). For example, the Kenyan Ministry of Health sent a taskforce to the Webuye-Malaba highway to collect samples from queuing truck drivers. The samples are taken to either Moi Teaching Referral Hospital in Eldoret or Kisumu District Hospital for test results that require between 24 and 48 hours to process. This has reduced the length of the queues. An accelerated lane for truck drivers with a valid COVID-19 certificate has also been created, and the movement of inbound trucks into Kenya has been completely cleared.

Source: WFP, 2020, Kenya Country Office, COVID-19 Supply Chain and Markets Update, 5 June 2020.

[Kyrgyzstan] To combat and respond to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Kyrgyzstan has taken several measures. Among others, it established the State Council to implement economic measures to minimize the consequences of external shocks and stimulate economic development. A “green corridor” was created for imports of food and essential goods. Customs barriers, inspections and cost controls have been eliminated. As part of the “Plan of Measures” of 6 May 2020, the Government created an anti-crisis fund to subsidize domestic entrepreneurs, especially export-oriented companies. In addition, within the framework of the Act, “Towards New Economic Freedom and Development”, adopted on 30 April 2020, the long-term activities include simplifying the procedure and reducing the time for inspections by 2.5 to 3 times.

Source: National Trade Facilitation Roadmap of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2021-2025, available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/ECE_TRADE_464E.pdf

Box 7. (continued)

[European Commission] The European Commission has issued guidance on Customs issues related to the COVID-19 emergency in order to provide solid and practical solutions for all stakeholders in such exceptional circumstances and to ensure a uniform application of the Union Customs Code (UCC) even during this time of crisis.

Source: Available at https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/covid-19-customs-guidance-trade_en#heading_6EU

[Collective Response] As part of the collective response to combat COVID-19, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, the People's Republic of China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay have jointly committed to keep supply chains open and to remove any restrictive trade measures on essential goods, especially medical supplies.

Source: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/covid-19-and-trade/>

[Collective Response] To build resilience and safeguard from a future crisis, the Green Corridor has been formed between CEFTA/Western Balkan region and the European Union member States to support trade and transport facilitation and ensure a fast flow of goods during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Some crossing points at which Customs and other inspection agencies are present, have been designated as points at which the traffic flow of all essential goods is guaranteed 24/7, forming the so-called "Green Corridor" in the region. Prioritized movement of essential goods is secured through electronic dissemination of pre-arrival information within the IT system named "System of Electronic Exchange of Data" (SEED) used in the whole region.

Source: <https://www.wb6cif.eu/2021/04/27/establishment-of-green-corridors-between-cefta-wb6-and-eu-member-states/>

[COMESA] On 14 May 2020, Ministers responsible for commerce, trade and industry in the COMESA region agreed on guidelines to facilitate coordination and uniform application of measures across borders while ensuring public safety and safe trade. The Ministers agreed that the guidelines would be applicable during the COVID-19 pandemic period and reviewed as and when necessary. This has led to tripartite guidelines trade and transport facilitation adopted in July 2020, harmonising best practices in movement of goods and people across three regions: COMESA, the East African Community (EAC), and the South African Development Community (SADC). The African Union Commission has further built upon the success of this harmonisation to issue and adopt continental guidelines to facilitate free and timely flow of cross-border trade during the pandemic.

Sources: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, 2020, Guidelines for the Movement of Goods and Services Across COMESA Region During the COVID-19 Pandemic, 10 June 2020. Available at www.comesa.int/wpcontent/uploads/2020/06/Guidelines-for-the-Movement-of-Goods-Services-Across-COMESARegion.pdf ; <https://covid.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/TRIPARTITE-GUIDELINES-29-JULY-2020-signed-Aug-2020.pdf> ; <https://www.uneca.org/stories/africa%E2%80%99s-customs-chiefs-commit-implementing-new-continental-covid-19-trade-facilitation>



4

Conclusion and the way forward

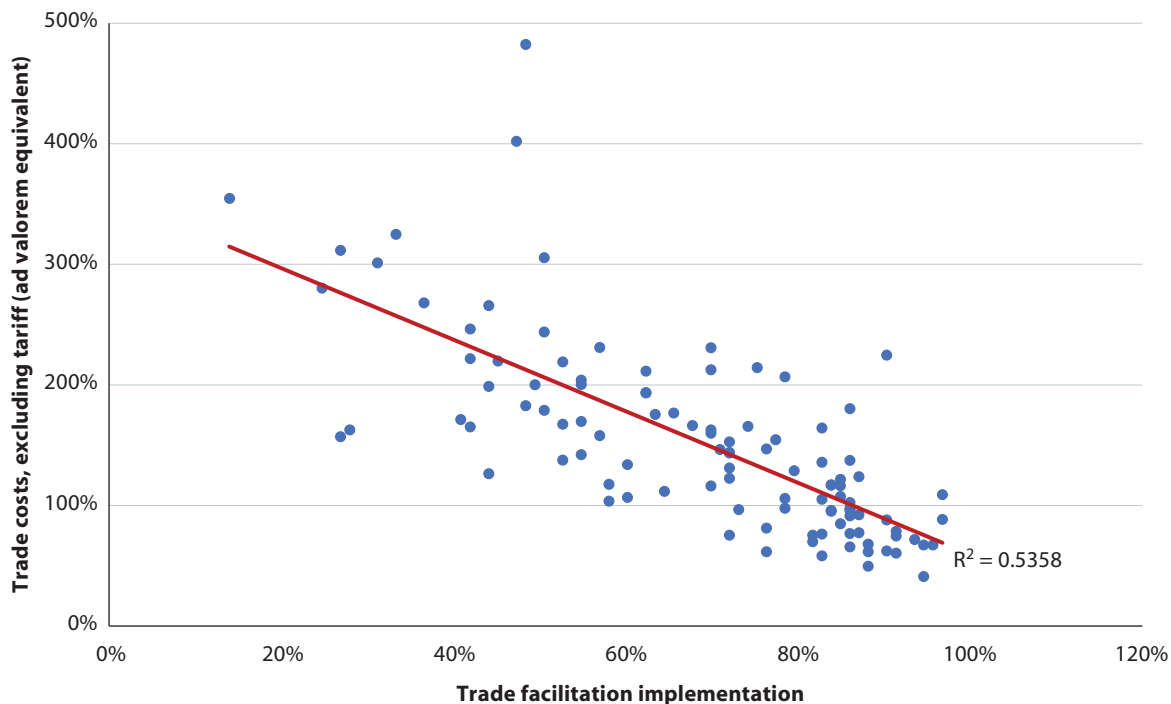
This report presents data on trade facilitation and paperless trade implementation from 144 countries around the world. The survey covers the implementation of general trade facilitation measures, including many of those featured in the TFA, as well as advanced ICT-based measures, sustainable trade facilitation measures catering to the special needs of SMEs, the agricultural sector, women and other measures that link trade finance and trade facilitation measures supporting inclusive and resilient trade.

Figure 29 confirms the strong negative relationship between international trade costs and the implementation of general and digital trade facilitation measures (also see box 8 for the impact of digital trade facilitation measures in trade cost reduction). In turn, based on the data collected, a strong positive relationship can be observed between logistics performance and trade facilitation implementation (figure 30).

The global average trade facilitation implementation rate stands at 64.7%. Most countries across the globe have implemented general trade facilitation measures to improve transparency, expedite and streamline formalities, and develop adequate institutional frameworks. This reflects the country commitments to implementing the WTO TFA.²⁴ The report reveals that most countries have been actively

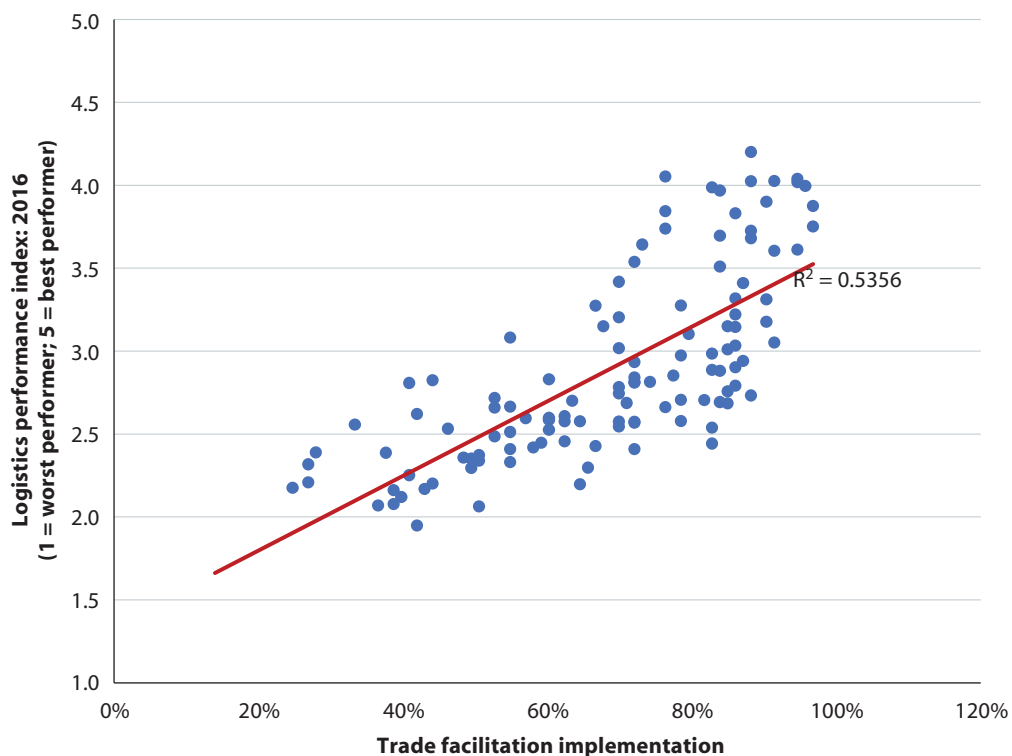
²⁴ A total of 17 of the 31 common measures discussed in this report can be directly related to TFA commitments (both binding and non-binding). This implies that the minimum implementation rate that an economy would need to achieve to be fully compliant with the TFA stands at almost 55% (17/31=54.8%). See also Annex 5 on the state of implementation of WTO TFA-related measures.

Figure 29. Trade facilitation implementation and trade costs



Source: ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database and the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Figure 30. Trade facilitation implementation and logistics performance



Source: World Bank Logistics Performance Index 2018 and the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Box 8. Assessing the impact of trade facilitation

Based on the survey data presented above, the impact of the implementation of trade facilitation measures on trade costs is estimated. Following ADB/ESCAP (2021), two econometric models are estimated to quantify the potential effects of different groups of trade facilitation measures (general and digital trade facilitation measures, as defined in table 2) on trade costs. Model 1 captures the impact of the overall implementation rate of 31 main trade facilitation measures, while model 2 separates general and digital trade facilitation measures. Results are presented in table 4. The estimated trade cost reductions are calculated based on all countries considered achieving different levels of trade facilitation implementation. The first two levels include partial and full implementation of only binding trade facilitation measures under WTO TFA, while the following two levels assume partial or full implementation of both binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures. The third level goes beyond the WTO TFA measures, with additional paperless and cross-border paperless trade facilitation measures implemented.²⁵

Model 1 shows that the implementation of WTO TFA binding measures only leads to a limited decrease in trade cost, with a 3.76% reduction when full implementation is achieved. This limited impact is explained by the fact that many countries have already implemented these measures. Non-binding measures under WTO TFA still have the potential to facilitate trade further and reduce unnecessary trade costs, as reflected by the moderate decreases in trade costs of 2.96% and 6.78% when partially and fully implemented, respectively. The most significant change in trade costs is estimated when paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures are incorporated into the scope of trade facilitation efforts, as the trade cost reductions reach 7.62% and 13.47%, respectively. Indeed, model 2 confirms that digital trade facilitation measures serve as a greater catalyst for trade cost reduction than general measures do.

Table 4. Changes in trade costs resulting from the implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade (per cent)

Global: trade costs model	WTO TFA (binding only)		WTO TFA (binding + non-binding)		WTO TFA+ (binding + non-binding + other paperless and cross-border paperless trade)	
	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
Model 1						
Overall trade facilitation	-1.52	-3.76	-2.96	-6.78	-7.62	-13.47
Model 2						
General trade facilitation measures	-0.55	-1.34	-0.89	-2.09	-1.06	-2.33
Digital trade facilitation measures			-1.27	-2.42	-8.13	-12.54

Source: ADB/ESCAP, 2021, Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Report 2021.

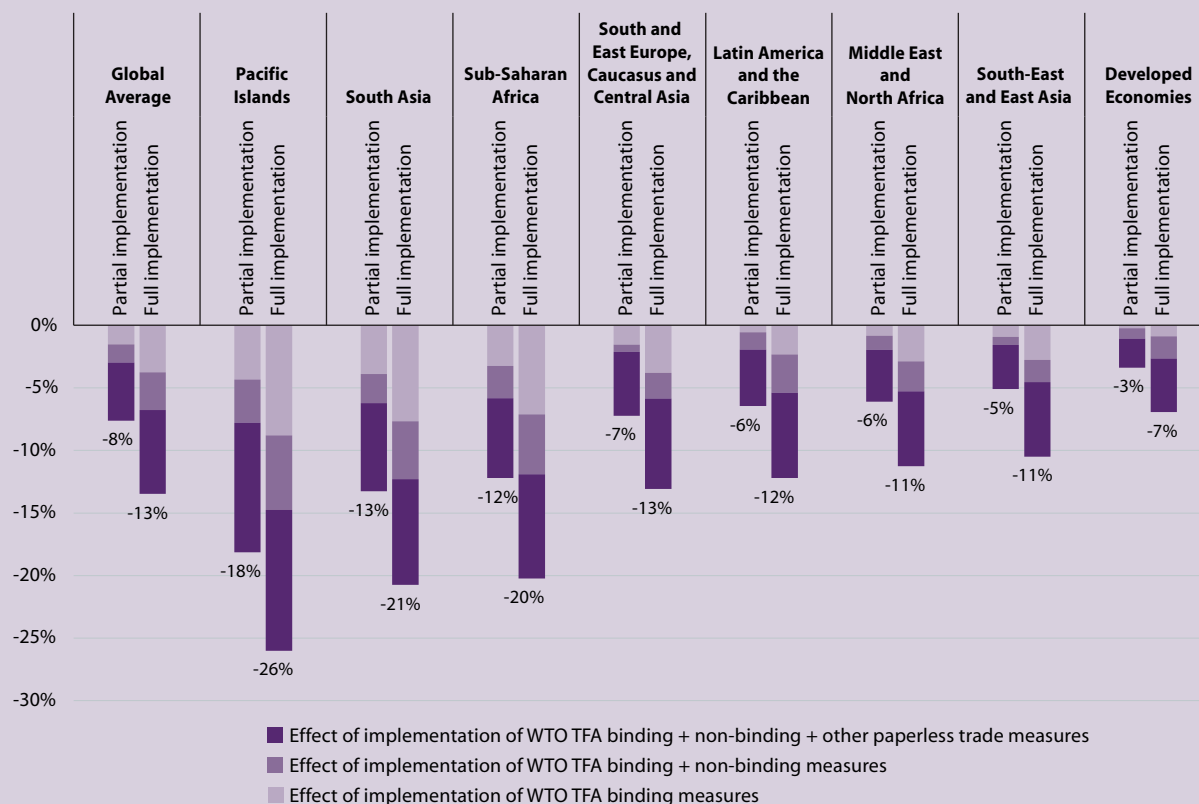
Figure 31 presents estimated trade cost reductions in various regions. Noticeably, differences in levels of trade cost reductions are pronounced, especially in the third scenario when paperless and cross-border paperless trade measures are implemented. Full implementation under WTO TFA + scenario, on average, could reduce trade costs

²⁵ In the partial implementation scenario, all countries who have not yet implemented any of the considered facilitation measures or are currently at the pilot stage, act and achieve at least partial implementation of these measures. In the full implementation scenario, all countries that have not yet fully implemented any of the considered trade facilitation measures act and achieve full implementation.

Box 8. (continued)

by 13 percent, ranging from 7 percent in Developed Economies to 26 percent in Pacific Islands. The varying extent of trade cost gains suggests that there is considerable room for improvement in terms of trade facilitation, such as streamlined processes and interoperability between Customs, among others. These improvements require strong cooperation between countries, which could be supported by regional initiatives such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation on Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.

Figure 31. Impact of trade facilitation implementation on trade costs in various regions



Source: United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfpa.org/survey

engaged in implementing measures to facilitate trade, despite the ongoing disruptions that COVID-19 pandemic put on international trade. As a result, the global average implementation rate has increased by approximately 5 percentage points compared with the 2019 survey result, suggesting a stable upward trend during the pandemic.²⁶

While the global average implementation of 'Paperless Trade' measures has exceeded 60%, the

global average implementation level of 'Cross-Border Paperless Trade' remains substantially lower than the other trade facilitation sub-groups considered in the survey. However, significant progress has been made in 'Cross-Border Paperless Trade' during the past two years. For example, the ASEAN Single Window has progressively expanded its scope and coverage during the pandemic, including more partners and enabling the exchange of more trade documents. That said, the implementation of 'Cross-Border

²⁶ The evolution is calculated based on the common 88 countries that participated in both the 2017 and 2019 surveys. The average implementation rate of those 88 countries in 2017 and 2019 was 56.3% and 64.4%, respectively.

Paperless Trade' remains largely incomplete in many regions and countries. This is not surprising given that, on one hand, many developing countries are at an early stage of developing paperless systems. On the other hand, more advanced countries face challenges in changing their existing systems for readily interoperable ones. In that regard, given the large potential benefits associated with the cross-border digitalization of trade procedures – amounting to US\$600 billion for the Asia-Pacific region alone.²⁷ It is in the interest of all countries to work together and develop the regulatory framework and technical protocols needed for the seamless exchange of trade-related data and documents in electronic form along the international supply chain.

While new technologies such as blockchains can help, strong political will and intergovernmental cooperation are essential to making real progress. Efforts in this regard include the Framework Agreement of the Pacific Alliance (which covers trade facilitation and Customs cooperation), the expansion of the ASEAN Single Window Agreement, the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement – which apart from removing tariffs on 90% of goods and services – requires the member States to implement trade facilitation reforms to remove non-tariff barriers and harmonize some of these areas. These initiatives promote the exchange and mutual recognition of trade data and documents in electronic form and strengthen the compatibility between national and subregional paperless trade systems. They will further enrich the cooperation in trade facilitation, enhance trade connectivity and contribute to faster post-COVID-19 economic recovery.

Moving forward, digitalization offers immense potential for improving trade facilitation implementation and further reducing trade costs. Figure 32 shows the

implementation of trade facilitation as a step-by-step process,²⁸ based on the groups of measures included in this survey. Trade facilitation begins with the setting up of the institutional arrangements needed to prioritize and coordinate the implementation of trade facilitation measures. The next step is to make trade processes more transparent by sharing information on existing laws, regulations and procedures as widely as possible, and consulting with stakeholders when developing new ones. Designing and implementing simpler and more efficient trade formalities is next. The re-engineered and streamlined processes may first be implemented based on paper documents but can then be further improved through information and communications technologies and the development of paperless trade systems.

Sustainable and digital are highly correlated dimensions of trade facilitation. When it comes to “Sustainable Trade Facilitation”, the implementation of inclusive measures to promote SMEs and the participation of women in trade remains low. SMEs represent about 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide,²⁹ yet trade facilitation measures tailored to SMEs are insufficient. SMEs are still facing disproportionate barriers to trade due to inadequate access to digital infrastructure, insufficient IT skills and a lack of financial resources. This is particularly the case in the context of COVID-19.³⁰ Recommendation 33 of UN/CEFACT recognizes the significance of the single window for trade generally and SMEs specifically. Facilitation for AEOs is also one of the two TFA measures that specifically mention SMEs. Therefore, building the capacity of SMEs and taking them into account in trade facilitation policies are of critical importance in achieving sustainable trade facilitation.

Similarly, there is a lack of awareness regarding the importance of gender mainstreaming in trade facilitation. Guiding women in understanding trade

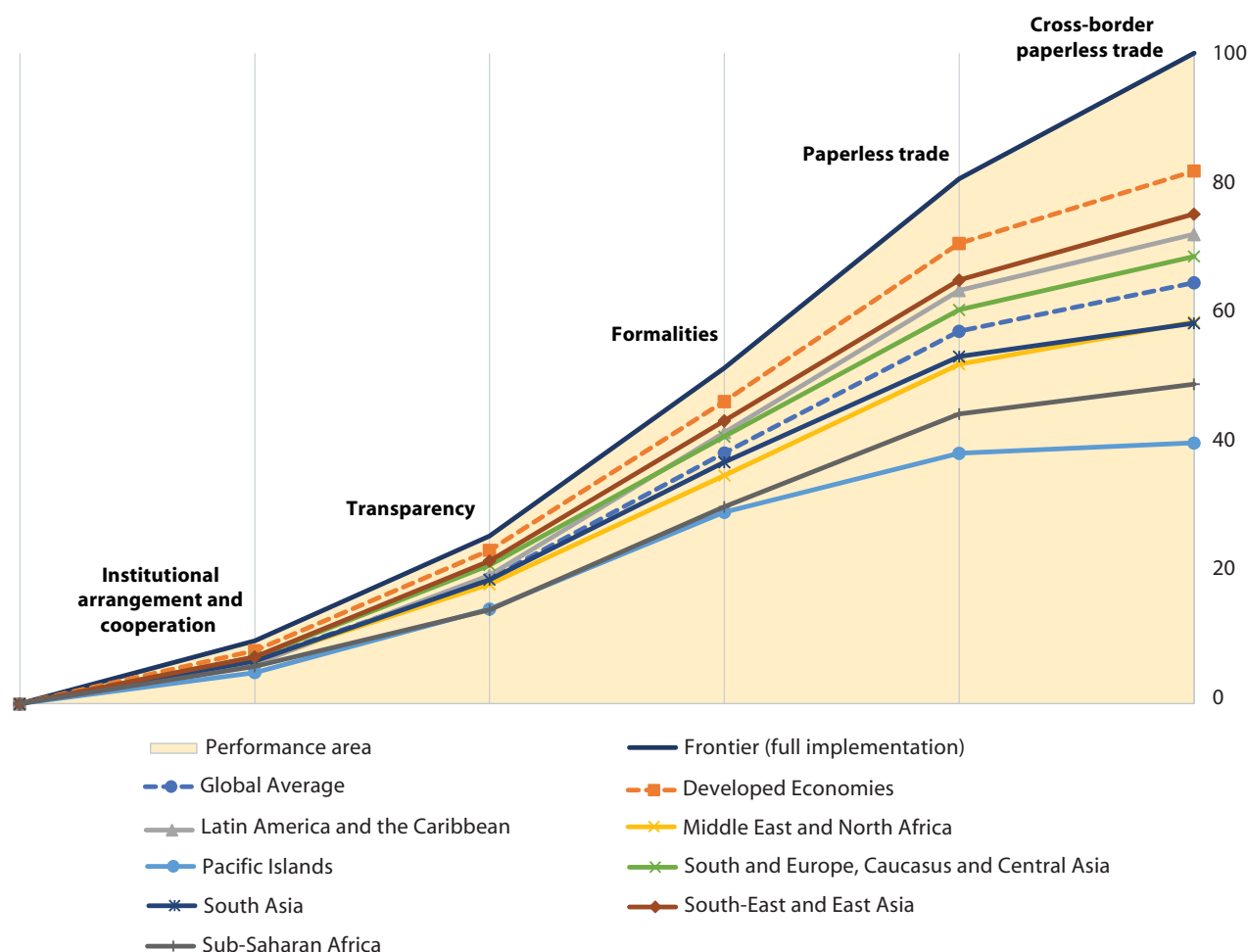
²⁷ See, ESCAP, 2017, Digital Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific. Available at <https://www.unescap.org/publications/digital-trade-facilitation-asia-and-pacific-studies-trade-investment-and-innovation-87>

²⁸ This step-by-step process is based on, and generally consistent with the UN/CEFACT step-by-step approach to moving trade facilitation towards a Single Window environment. In practice, however, trade facilitation measures are often very much interrelated across borders. It is not necessary to implement all measures in one category before moving to the next and, as explained in UNNExT Brief No.17 (see <https://unnex.unescap.org>). Much time and cost can be saved by adopting a more integrated approach based on a long-term vision.

²⁹ ITC, 2021, SME Competitiveness Outlook: Empowering the Green Recovery.

³⁰ WTO, 2020, World Trade Report 2020: Government policies to promote innovation in the digital age, available at https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/wtr20_e/wtr20_e.pdf

Figure 32. Moving up the trade facilitation ladder towards seamless international supply chains



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unftsurvey.org

Note: Figure 31 shows global cumulative trade facilitation implementation scores for different regions for five groups of trade facilitation measures included in the survey. The scores are based on the equally weighted implementation of 31 trade facilitation measures, but the number of measures varies in each of the five groups. Full implementation of all measures = 100.

procedures, setting guidelines for standards bodies to ensure a more balanced representation of the interests of women and men, and promoting the participation and decision-making of women in trade facilitation and standards-related activities, could have a significant impact on increasing exports and enabling women to achieve higher income opportunities.³¹ Given the importance of these groups with special needs in achieving sustainable and inclusive development of economies, particularly in

times of crisis, trade facilitation strategies should be designed in a more holistic and inclusive manner.

The availability and adequate provision of trade finance is essential for a healthy trading system. This is particularly true for developing economies and SMEs seeking to benefit from trade opportunities. However, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to trade finance has become more difficult and costly. Awareness of trade finance processes

³¹ ECE, 2017, Briefing note on the contribution of UN/CEFACT to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, Executive Committee, Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, twenty-third session.

appears to be limited among trade policy and trade facilitation specialists. Therefore, trade facilitation policymakers need to work together with stakeholders in the financial sector to see how trade finance can be made more easily available and integrated into trade facilitation implementation strategies, including Single Window development plans.

Last, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly exposed the weaknesses of the global trading system. Results of the newly incorporated Trade Facilitation in Times of Crisis group show that

countries are not sufficiently prepared at the national or regional levels, especially when it comes to long-term measures for a resilient recovery. It is imperative for regional connectivity to be enhanced through coordinated trade facilitation actions at this pivotal time. Continued and sustained efforts should be made to further enhance cooperation, make trade information transparent, and strengthen countries' capacity to contribute to recovery and prepare adequately for future crises. This includes the climate crisis, in which trade facilitation certainly has a mitigating role to play.³²

³² Duval and Hardy, 2021, A primer on quantifying the environmental benefits of cross-border paperless trade facilitation., ESCAP Working Paper No. 206. Available at <https://artnet.unescap.org/publications/working-papers/primer-quantifying-environmental-benefits-cross-border-paperless-trade>

Annexes

Annex 1. Definitions of the various stages of implementation

Stage of implementation	Coding/Scoring
<p>Full implementation: The trade facilitation measure implemented is in full compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions such as the Revised Kyoto Convention, UN/CEFACT Recommendations, or the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA); it is implemented in law and practice; it is available to essentially all relevant stakeholders nationwide, and supported by adequate legal and institutional frameworks as well as adequate infrastructure and financial and human resources. A TFA provision included in the commitments given under Notifications of Category A may generally be considered as a measure that is fully implemented by the country, with a caveat that the provision will be implemented by a Least-Developed Country (LDC) member within one year of the TFA agreement coming into force. If a country registers a positive response for all sub-questions concerning a given trade facilitation measure, that measure should be considered fully implemented.</p>	3
<p>Partial implementation: A measure is considered to be partially implemented if at least one of the following is true: (1) the trade facilitation measure is in partial – but not in full – compliance with commonly-accepted international standards, recommendations and conventions; (2) the country is still in the process of rolling out the implementation of the measure; (3) the measure is being used but on an unsustainable, short-term or ad-hoc basis; (4) the measure is implemented in some – but not all – targeted locations (such as key border crossing stations); or (5) some – but not all – targeted stakeholders are fully involved.</p>	2
<p>Pilot stage of implementation: A measure is considered to be at the pilot stage of implementation if, in addition to meeting the general attributes of partial implementation, it is available only to a very small portion of the intended stakeholder group (or at a certain location), and/or is being implemented on a trial basis. When a new trade facilitation measure is at the pilot stage of implementation, the old measure is often continuously used in parallel to ensure that the service is still provided even when there has been a disruption with the new measure. This stage of implementation also includes relevant rehearsals and preparation for the full implementation.</p>	1
<p>Not implemented: A measure has not been implemented at this stage. However, this stage may still include initiatives or efforts towards implementation of the measure. For example, under this stage, (pre)feasibility studies or planning for the implementation can be carried out; and consultation with stakeholders on the implementation may be arranged.</p>	0

Annex 2. Groupings of countries with special needs

The following countries are included in the three groups of countries with special needs considered in the survey.³²

Least Developed Economies (30): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Comoros, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea -Bissau, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu and Zambia.

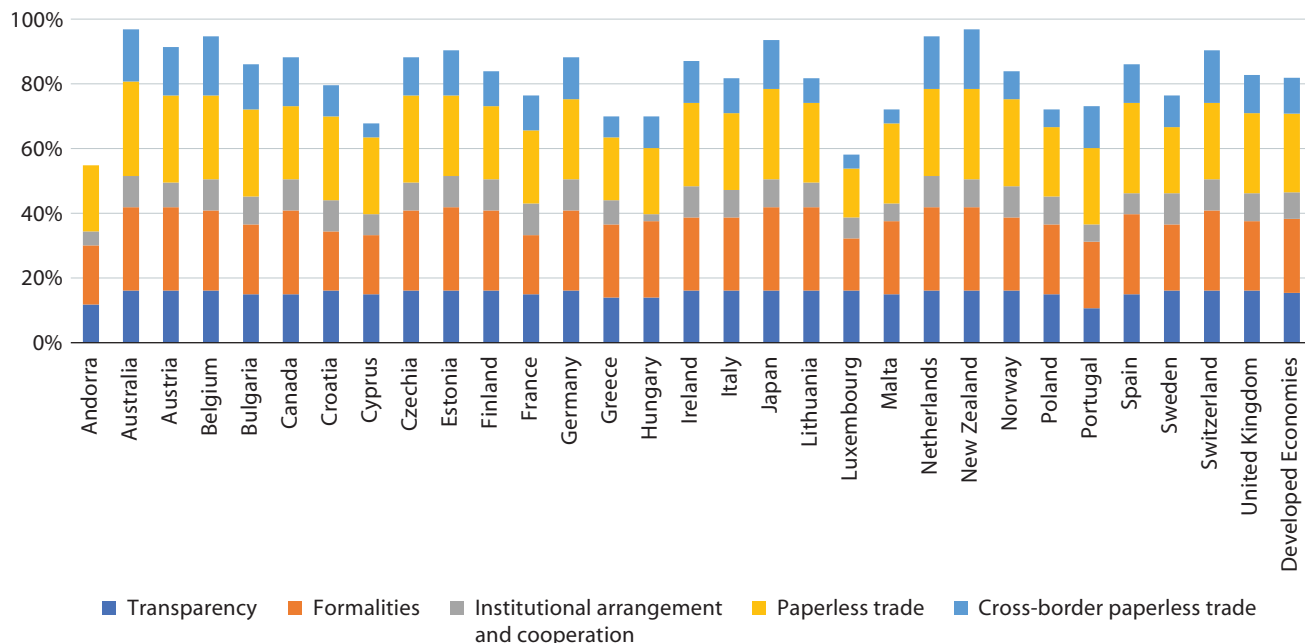
Landlocked Developing Countries (24): Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, North Macedonia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Small Island Developing States (26): Antigua and Barbuda, Bahrain, Belize, Cabo Verde, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kiribati, Maldives, Mauritius, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

³² More details are available at <http://unohrrls.org/>

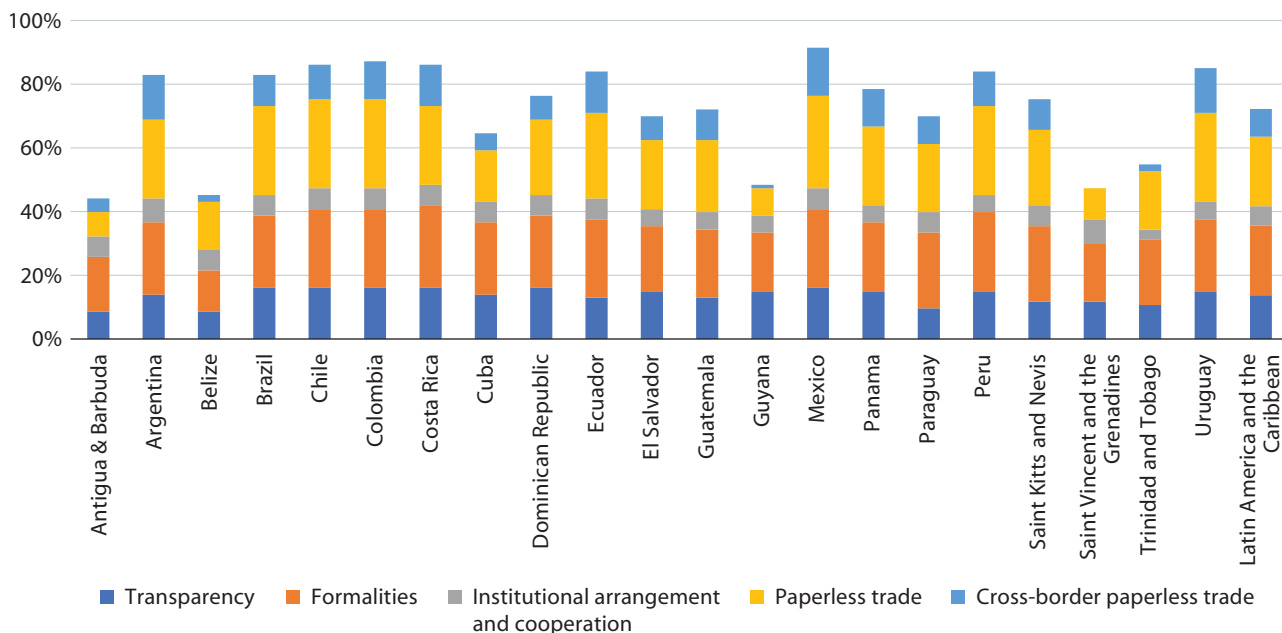
Annex 3. Trade facilitation implementation by countries in different groups (%)

Figure 33. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in developed economies



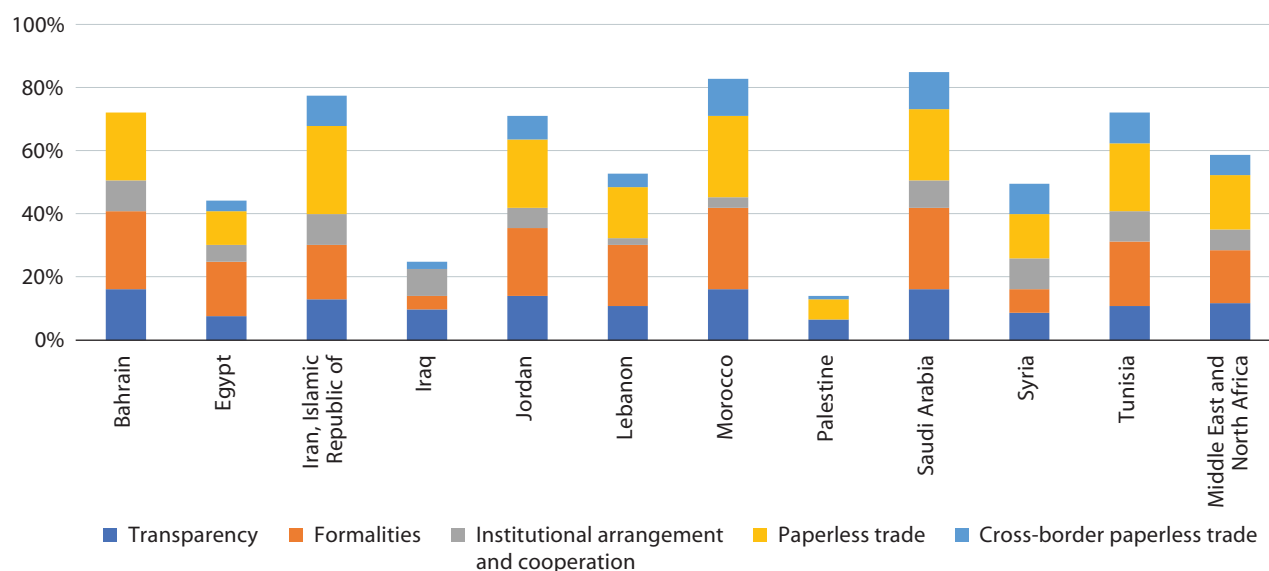
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unftrsurvey.org

Figure 34. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Latin America and the Caribbean



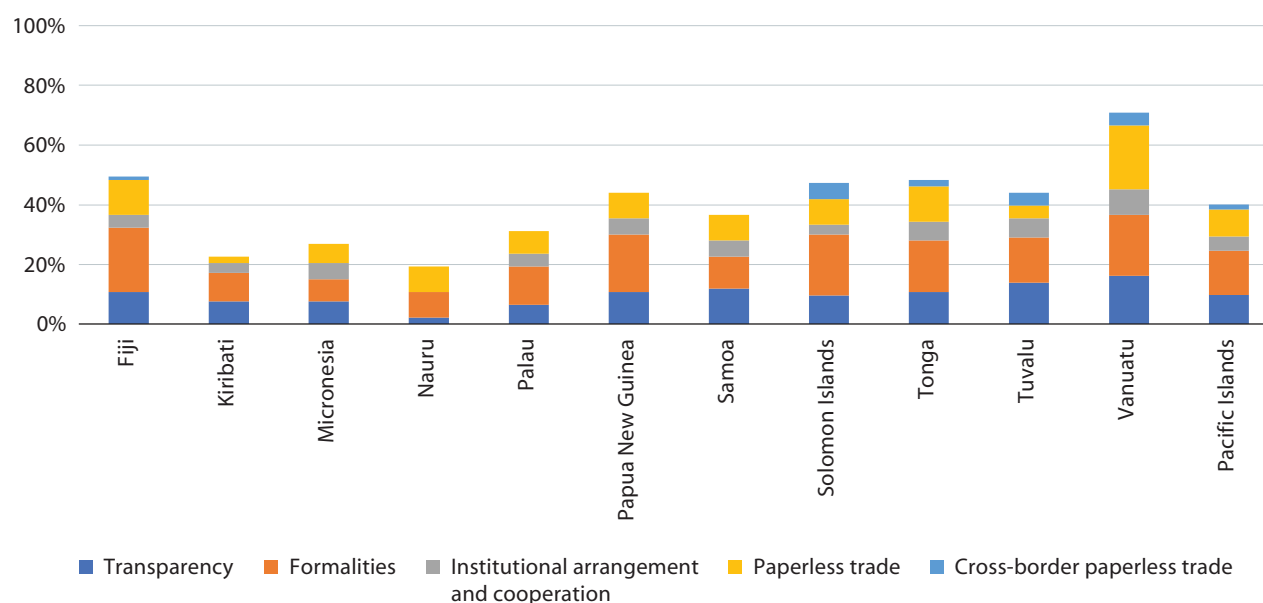
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unftrsurvey.org

Figure 35. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in the Middle East and North Africa



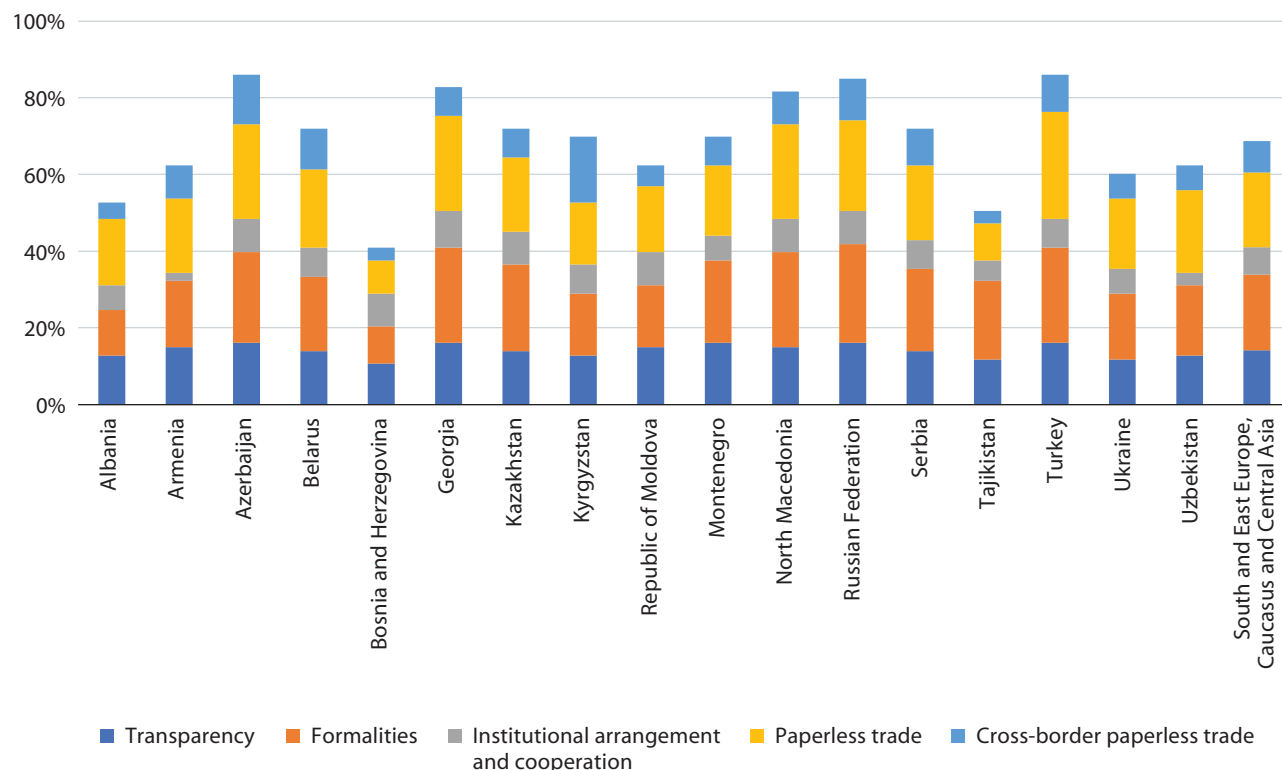
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

Figure 36. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in the Pacific Islands



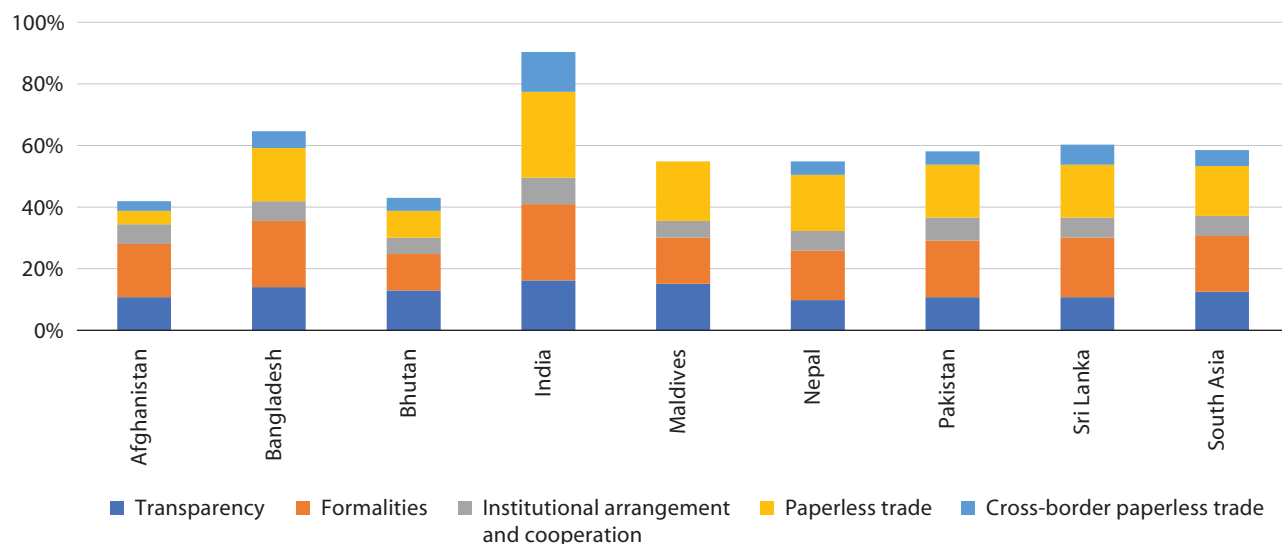
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfssurvey.org

Figure 37. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia



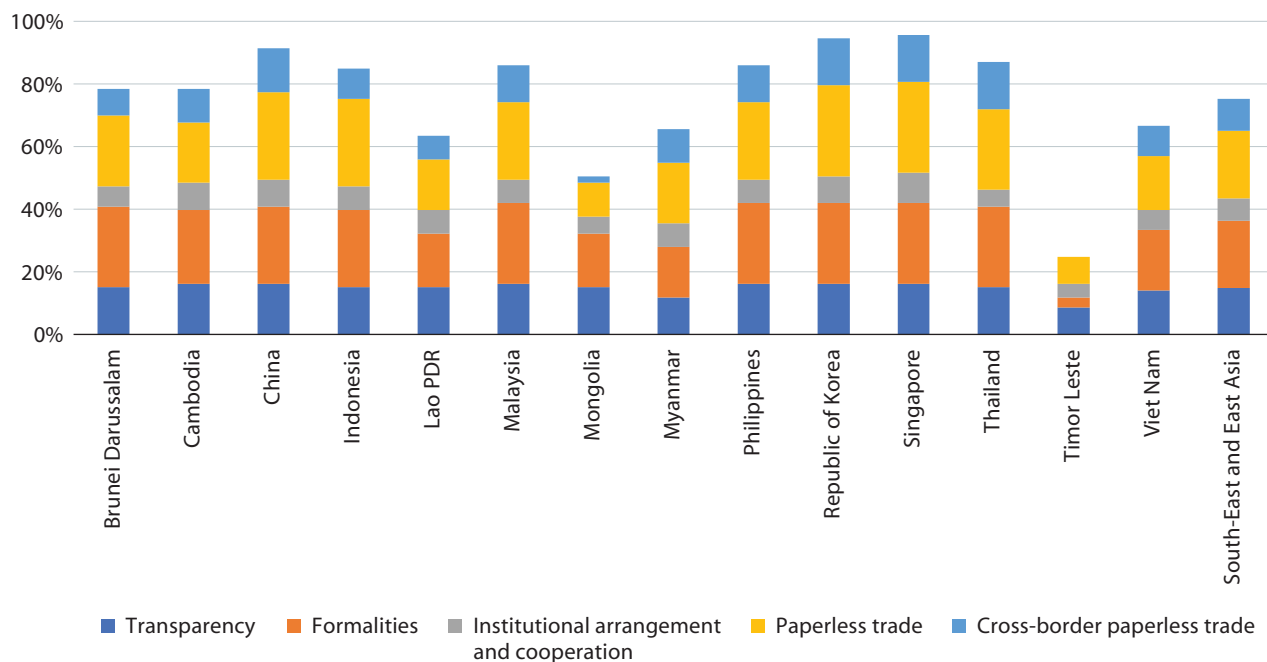
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at [untdsurvey.org](https://untdp.org/untsurvey)

Figure 38. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South Asia



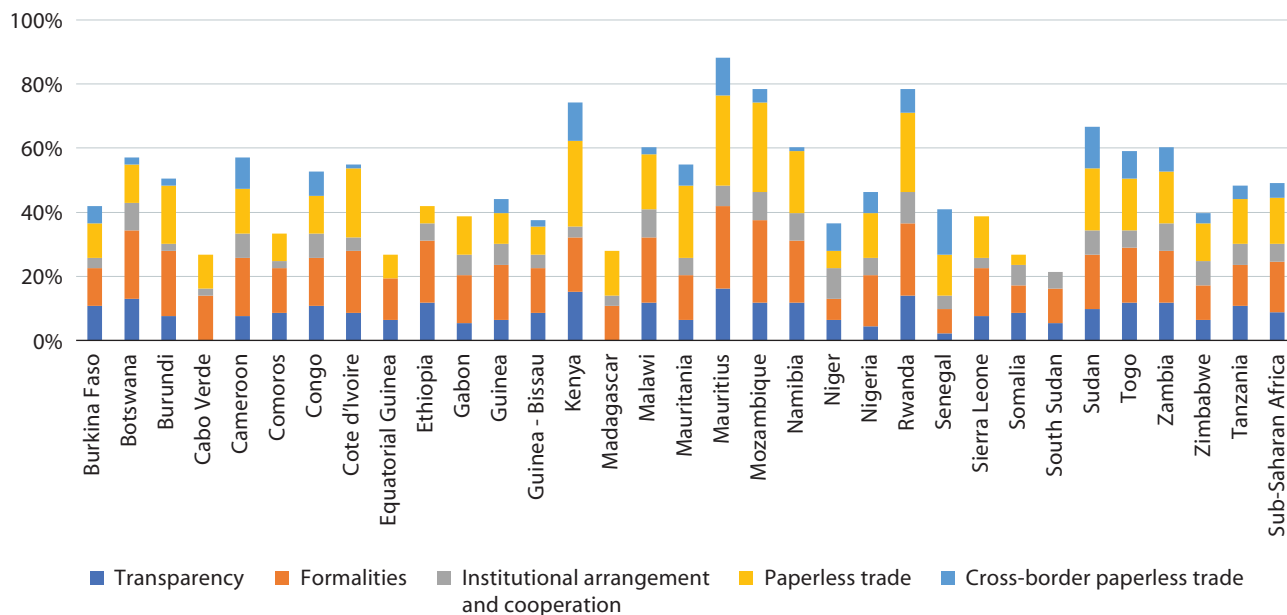
Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at [untdsurvey.org](https://untdp.org/untsurvey)

Figure 39. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in South-East and East Asia



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

Figure 40. Average implementation rates of trade facilitation measures in Sub-Saharan Africa



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at unfcsurvey.org

Annex 4. Trade facilitation implementation: Full dataset versus limited dataset

To track the progress made by countries in implementing trade facilitation measures since 2019, the analysis was limited to 128 countries that participated in both the 2019 and 2021 surveys (tables 5).

It was also checked whether the implementation rates of these 128 countries are a good representation of the entire dataset (144 countries). Table 6 shows that the difference is minor, indicating that these 128 countries were good representatives of the survey results of the 2021 survey.

Table 5. Breakdown of countries that participated in the 2019 and 2021 survey

Developed Economies		Latin America and the Caribbean		South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia		South-East and East Asia	
1	Andorra*	1	Antigua & Barbuda	1	Albania	1	Brunei Darussalam
2	Australia	2	Argentina	2	Armenia	2	Cambodia
3	Austria	3	Belize	3	Azerbaijan	3	China
4	Belgium	4	Brazil	4	Belarus	4	Indonesia
5	Bulgaria	5	Chile	5	Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	Lao PDR
6	Canada	6	Colombia	6	Georgia	6	Malaysia
7	Croatia	7	Costa Rica	7	Kazakhstan	7	Mongolia
8	Cyprus	8	Cuba*	8	Kyrgyzstan	8	Myanmar
9	Czechia	9	Dominican Republic	9	Republic of Moldova	9	Philippines
10	Estonia	10	Ecuador	10	Montenegro	10	Republic of Korea
11	Finland	11	El Salvador	11	North Macedonia	11	Singapore
12	France	12	Guatemala	12	Russian Federation	12	Thailand
13	Germany	13	Guyana	13	Serbia	13	Timor-Leste
14	Greece	14	Mexico	14	Tajikistan	14	Viet Nam
15	Hungary	15	Panama	15	Turkey		
16	Ireland	16	Paraguay	16	Ukraine		
17	Italy	17	Peru	17	Uzbekistan		
18	Japan	18	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines				
19	Lithuania	19	Trinidad and Tobago				
20	Luxembourg*	20	Uruguay*				
21	Malta	21	Saint Kitts and Nevis*				
22	Netherlands						
23	New Zealand						
24	Norway						
25	Poland						

Table 5. (continued)

Developed Economies		Pacific Islands		South Asia		Sub-Saharan Africa	
26	Portugal	1	Fiji	1	Afghanistan	1	Botswana
27	Spain	2	Kiribati	2	Bangladesh	2	Burkina Faso*
28	Sweden	3	Micronesia	3	Bhutan	3	Burundi*
29	Switzerland	4	Nauru	4	India	4	Cabo Verde*
30	United Kingdom	5	Palau	5	Maldives	5	Cameroon
		6	Papua New Guinea	6	Nepal	6	Comoros
		7	Samoa	7	Pakistan	7	Congo
		8	Solomon Islands	8	Sri Lanka	8	Cote d'Ivoire
		9	Tonga	Middle East and North Africa		9	Equatorial Guinea*
		10	Tuvalu			10	Ethiopia
		11	Vanuatu	1	Bahrain*	11	Gabon
				2	Egypt	12	Guinea
				3	Iran (Islamic Rep. of)	13	Guinea - Bissau
				4	Iraq	14	Kenya*
				5	Jordan	15	Madagascar
				6	Lebanon*	16	Malawi
				7	Morocco	17	Mauritania
				8	State of Palestine*	18	Mauritius
				9	Saudi Arabia	19	Mozambique
				10	Syrian Arab Republic	20	Namibia
				11	Tunisia	21	Niger*
						22	Nigeria*
						23	Senegal
						24	Sierra Leone
						25	Somalia
						26	South Sudan
						27	Sudan
						28	Rwanda*
						29	Togo
						30	Tanzania
						31	Zambia
						32	Zimbabwe

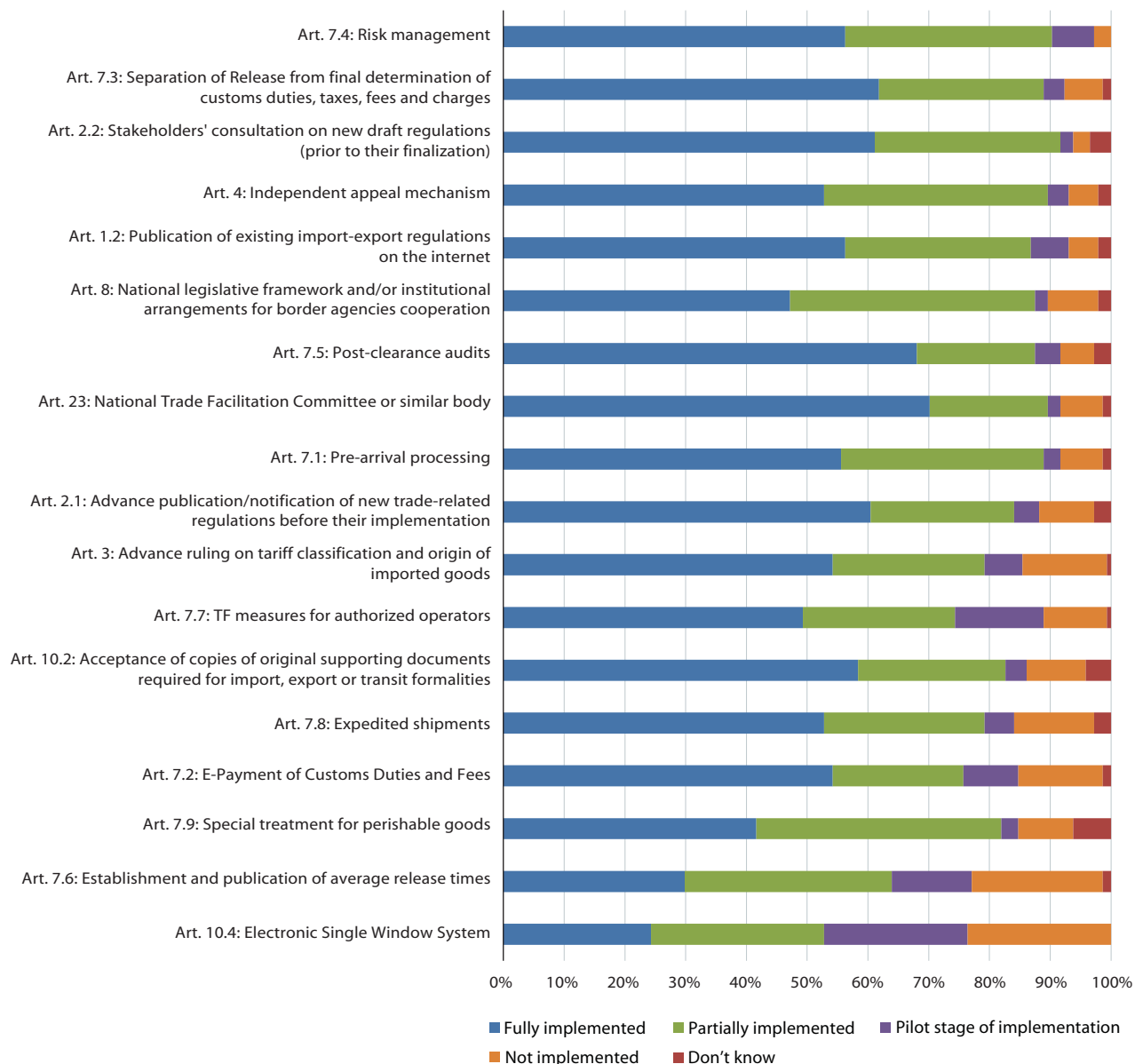
* Note: these countries participated in the 2021 survey but not in 2019 survey.

Table 6. Comparison of regional average – full versus limited dataset

2021 data	Developed Economies	Latin America and the Caribbean	Middle East and North Africa	Pacific Islands	South and East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia	South Asia	South-East and East Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global Average
Limited sample (128)	83.7%	71.7%	63.3%	40.1%	68.8%	58.5%	75.3%	49.6%	66.1%
Full sample (144)	81.8%	72.1%	58.7%	40.1%	68.8%	58.5%	75.3%	49.1%	64.7%

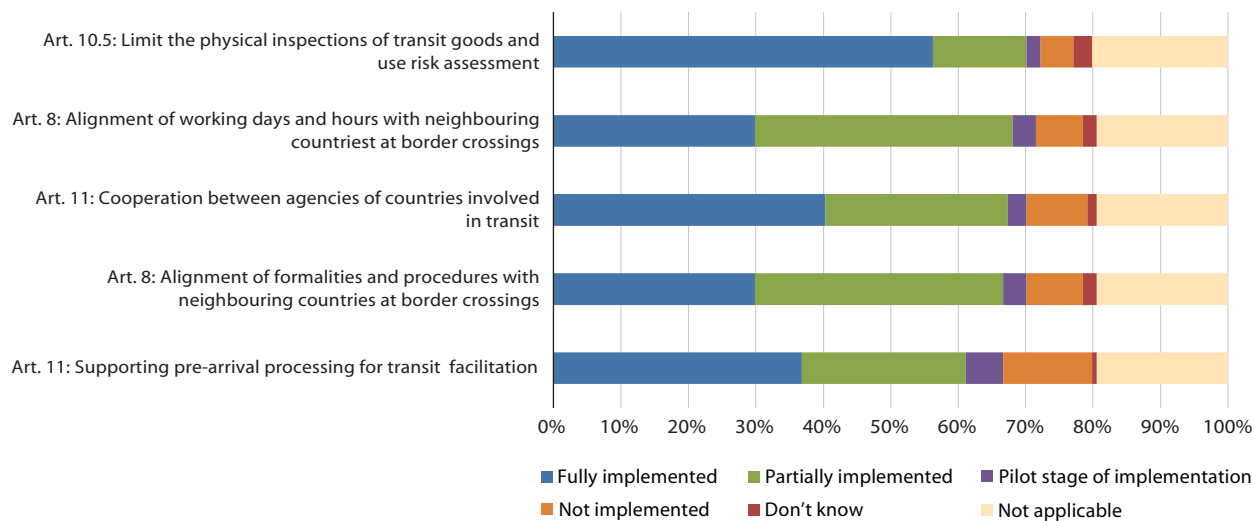
Annex 5. Implementation stages of selected WTO TFA-related measures globally

Figure 41. Implementation stages of selected WTO TFA-related measures in general trade facilitation and paperless trade globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

Figure 42. Implementation stages of selected WTO TFA-related measures in transit facilitation globally



Source: The UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, 2021. Available at untfsurvey.org

