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Recommendations, standards, and deliverables supporting implementation:**Deliverables in support of implementation:****Deliverables in support of the United Nations Regional Commissions joint approach to trade facilitation****United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable
Trade Facilitation 2023: Key Findings for the ECE Region****Submitted by the secretariat***Summary*

This report summarizes the key findings of the fifth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region between 2021 and 2023 based on responses from 48 member States. While global average implementation rate stands at 68.7 per cent, in the ECE region, average trade facilitation implementation increased from 76 per cent in 2021 to 80 per cent in 2023. The implementation rate is highest for those measures that are also included in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

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I. Introduction

1. Persisting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical turbulence and high inflation continue to pose challenges for international trade. Against these global disruptions, countries are continuing to move towards a seamless and efficient trading environment with digitalized trade.
2. According to the fifth United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation covering 161 UN Member States, progress has been observed in more efficient trade facilitation, with the overall implementation rate of general and digital trade facilitation measures increasing by more than 6 per cent between 2021 and 2023. The global average implementation rate currently stands at 68.7 per cent. The highest implementation rate is seen in developed economies (85.3 per cent), followed by countries in South-East and East Asia (76.6 per cent). Pacific Islands States have the lowest implementation rate (42.3 per cent). The implementation rate for countries in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region reaches overall 80 per cent, with 4 per cent increase, contributed by both developed economies and economies in transition.
3. The Survey was jointly conducted by the five UN Regional Commissions (UNRCs), including the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the ECE, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The fifth UN Global Survey has started data collection in January 2023 and the results were jointly launched by the five UNRCs along with UNCTAD on 5 July 2023.
4. The initiative supports the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), as well as emerging regional and global initiatives on paperless trade and e-trade. The results of the Survey, including detailed data analysis, can be found at untdsurvey.org.

II. Key findings for the ECE region

5. This year's UN Global Survey covers 60 measures including two new sets of measures on 'Trade Facilitation for E-Commerce' and 'Wildlife Trade Facilitation', referring to measures related to the facilitation of cross-border e-commerce and the applications of electronic CITES permits and certificates. ECE member States are making steady progress and more trade facilitation measures are being implemented comparing to 2021, especially under measures of 'Transparency', 'Formalities', 'Institutional Arrangement' and 'Paperless Trade'.
6. In the ECE region, average trade facilitation implementation increased from 76 per cent in 2021 to 80 per cent in 2023. The implementation rate is highest for those measures that are also included in the WTO TFA. The 2023 UN Global Survey covers 48 countries in the ECE region, with four countries submitting responses for the first time: Iceland, Latvia, Slovenia and Turkmenistan.
7. Most progress has been made in South-Eastern Europe, now standing at 71 per cent implementation rate, following an impressive 8 per cent increase since 2021. With 6 per cent increase, countries in the Caucasus and Türkiye also made significant progress, reaching 84 per cent implementation rate. The Central Asia sub-regional group, composed of five Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), increased its implementation rate by 4 per cent, reaching 67 per cent. Implementation in Eastern Europe, in turn, remained at around 65 per cent.
8. Implementation also differs across the different categories of measures captured in the Survey. Measures aimed at increasing transparency are leading, recording the highest implementation rate among all measures – almost 96 per cent. Similarly, the implementation levels of measures related to formalities, institutional arrangements and cooperation, as well as paperless trade all reached above 80 per cent. However, the Survey also highlighted the insufficient adoption of sustainable trade facilitation measures and inadequate support for

vulnerable groups globally, including the agricultural sector, small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and women traders. Measures of ‘Wildlife Trade Facilitation’, ‘Trade Finance’, ‘Women and SMEs in Trade Facilitation’ are among the lowest implemented, all at the rate below 50 per cent.

9. With rapid developments in digitalization, measures of paperless and cross-border paperless trade facilitation warrant particular attention. Each category has both improved by 6 per cent since the last Survey. The implementation rate of ‘Paperless Trade’ is impressive, standing now at 82 per cent. For ‘Cross-Border Paperless Trade’ however, the implementation rate is still rather low, at only 55 per cent, leaving ample policy space for international cooperation and capacity building. Similarly, the implementation level of these digital measures varies significantly among the countries across the region. The relevance of this issue is also evident from ECE’s inter-governmental machinery. At their seventieth Commission session, ECE member States called for digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region, to address pressing climate and environmental challenges and utilize digital technologies to open up new possibilities for economic development, policy implementation and the management of public services.

III. Recommendations

10. Based on the analysis of the survey responses, a number of priority actions can be identified for further strengthening trade facilitation efforts in the region:

- Governments can further strengthen and march towards fully completing the implementation of trade facilitation measures in transparency (currently 96 per cent implementation rate), formalities (86 per cent), as well as institutional arrangement and cooperation (83 per cent):
 - to mandate border agencies to establish and publish average release times;
 - to encourage border agencies to separate release from final determination of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges;
 - to establish a national trade facilitation committee (NTFC) or a similar body; and
 - to encourage government agencies to delegate border controls to customs authorities.
- Building on the good momentum and existing progress achieved for digital trade facilitation measures, governments should continue the efforts on implementing paperless trade and cross-border paperless trade measures:
 - to step up the efforts on the implementation of electronic Single Window systems and call for more support on capacity building for countries in need; and
 - to call for international cooperation to better facilitate cross-border electronic exchanges of documents and certificates.
- The crises have exacerbated the trading environment and affected vulnerable groups the most, such as women and SMEs. Governments should increase support to help with their recovery and expand the implementation of sustainable trade facilitation measures:
 - to improve policies design and implementation fostering increased women’s participation and SMEs’ representation in trade and in the NTFCs; and
 - to encourage SMEs’ participation in the global supply chains and increase access for SMEs to electronic Single Window systems and Authorized Operators schemes.
- Governments can also build up efforts on other trade facilitation measures, such as:

- to increase preparedness with adequate trade facilitation measures in place for building up resilience and safeguarding from future crises, such as managing a disaster relief good catalogue with detailed specification and recommended procedures;
- to provide provisions from Single Window of access to finance, and to encourage the use of blockchain-based supply chain to facilitate trade finance;
- to consider implementing trade facilitation measures to facilitate cross-border e-commerce, such as a de minimis regime; and
- to encourage e-CITES permits use regarding the matter of wildlife trade facilitation.

11. Recommendations, standards and guidelines on trade facilitation and standards on e-business developed by the [United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business](#) (UN/CEFACT) have provided guidance for strengthening digital and sustainable trade facilitation in this regard, and are available free of charge to all countries globally (see Annex for a list of relevant UN/CEFACT instruments).

12. The Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of ECE is committed to supporting member States' efforts to implement digital and sustainable trade facilitation measures for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in support of the decisions made at the sixty-ninth and seventieth Commission sessions. Among others this includes:

- To further strengthen the secretariat's engagement with member States in the dissemination of the results of the 2023 UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation and in the roll out and conduct of future Surveys;
- To increase synergies between trade facilitation-related workstreams under the UN/CEFACT and the ECE's Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards; and
- To continue working with the donors and the development community on mobilizing necessary extra-budgetary resources to better respond to member States' requests of technical assistance and capacity building on trade facilitation.

Annex

UN/CEFACT instruments in support of WTO TFA implementation¹

	<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Measure in the Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Relevant TFA Article</i>	<i>UN/CEFACT Recommendation, Standard or Guideline</i>
General trade facilitation measures	Transparency (5 measures)	Publication of existing import-export regulations on the Internet	1.2	Rec 38 – Trade Information Portals
		Stakeholders' consultation on new draft regulations (prior to their finalization)	2.2	Rec 40 – Consultation Approaches Rec 41 – Public- Private Partnerships in Trade Facilitation
		Advance publication/ notification of new trade-related regulations before their implementation (e.g., 30 days prior)	2.1	Rec 38 – Trade Information Portals
		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 (8 measures)	Risk management (as a basis for deciding whether a shipment will be physically inspected or not)	7.4	Rec 18 – Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace for Multimodal Transportation
		Pre-arrival processing	7.1	Rec 15 – Simpler Shipping Marks
		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	Rec 42 – Establishment of a Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (TTFMM)
		Trade facilitation measures for authorized operators	7.7	Rec 37 – Single Submission Portal
		Expedited shipments	7.8	Rec 18 – Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures
		Acceptance of copies of original supporting documents required for import, export or transit formalities	10.2.1	Rec 13 – Facilitation of Identified Legal Problems in Import Clearance Procedures

¹ See the ECE Regional Report 2021 on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, available at: <https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/361161?ref=unftsurvey.org>, page 53-61. The table will be further updated and included in the ECE Regional Report 2023, which will be available at <https://www.unftsurvey.org/report>.

		<i>UN/CEFACT</i>		
<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Measure in the Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Relevant TFA Article</i>	<i>Recommendation, Standard or Guideline</i>	
General trade facilitation measures	Institutional arrangement and cooperation (5 measures)	Establishment of a National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar body	23	Rec 4 – National Trade Facilitation Bodies Rec 40 – Consultation Approaches Rec 41 – Public- Private Partnerships in Trade Facilitation Rec 48 – Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies
			8	Rec 36 – Single Window Interoperability
				Technical Note on Terminology of Single Window
			8.2(a)	Technical Note on Terminology of Single Window
			8.2(b)	Technical Note on Terminology of Single Window
Transit facilitation (4 measures)	Transit facilitation agreement(s) with neighbouring country(ies)		eCMR (Electronic Consignment Note) Executive Guide – Transboundary Movement of Wastes	
		10.5	White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace for Multimodal Transportation	
		11.9	Rec 18 – Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures	
		11.16	Rec 36 – Single Window Interoperability	
Digital trade facilitation measures	Paperless trade (10 measures)		Automated customs system (e.g. ASYCUDA)	
			Internet connection available to customs and other trade control agencies at border crossings	
		10.4	Rec 33 – Single Window Rec 35 – Establishing a Legal Framework for International Trade Single Window Rec 36 – Single Window Interoperability	
			Electronic submission of customs declarations	
		Rec 33 – Single Window Recommendation		

		<i>UN/CEFACT</i>
<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Measure in the Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Relevant TFA Article Recommendation, Standard or Guideline</i>
Digital trade facilitation measures	Electronic application and issuance of import and export permits	Rec 18 – Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures Rec 33 – Single Window Recommendation
	Electronic submission of sea cargo manifests	Rec 12 – Measures to Facilitate Maritime Transport Documents Procedures Rec 37 – Single Submission Portals (SSPs) Rec 33 – Single Window E-business Standards – Multi-modal Waybill E-business Standards – Maritime Bill of Lading
	Electronic submission of air cargo manifests	E-business Standards – Air Waybill E-business Standards (available soon)
	Electronic application and issuance of Preferential Certificate of Origin	
	E-payment of customs duties and fees	7.2
	Electronic application for customs refunds	
	Cross-border paperless trade (6 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 SPS Certificate		
Paperless collection of payment from a documentary letter of credit		

	<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Measure in the Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Relevant TFA Article</i>	<i>UN/CEFACT Recommendation, Standard or Guideline</i>
Sustainable trade facilitation measures	Trade facilitation for SMEs (5 measures)	Trade-related information measures for SMEs		Rec 38 – Trade Information Portals White Paper on Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT)
		SMEs in AEO scheme (i.e., government has developed specific measures that enable SMEs to more easily benefit from the AEO scheme)		White Paper on Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT)
		SMEs access Single Window (i.e., government has taken actions to make a Single Window more easily accessible to SMEs; e.g., by providing technical consultation and training services to SMEs on registering and using the facility)		Rec 33 – Single Window Rec 35 – Establishing a legal framework for inter-national trade Single Window Rec 36 – Single Window Interoperability White Paper on Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT)
		SMEs in National Trade Facilitation Committee (i.e., government has taken actions to ensure that SMEs are well represented and made key members of National Trade Facilitation Committees)		Rec 4 – National Trade Facilitation Bodies Rec 40 – Consultation Approaches Rec 48 – Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Bodies
		Other special measures for SMEs		White Paper on Women in Trade Facilitation
	Agricultural trade facilitation (4 measures)	Testing and laboratory facilities available to meet SPS requirements of main trading partners		
		National standards and accreditation bodies are established to facilitate compliance with SPS requirements		
		Electronic application and issuance of SPS certificates		Electronic SPS Certificate (ECert)
		Special treatment for perishable goods at border crossings	7.9	White Paper on Integrated Track and Trace for Multimodal Transport
	Women in trade facilitation (3 measures)	Trade facilitation policy/strategy to increase women’s participation in trade		White Paper on Women in Trade Facilitation
		Trade facilitation measures to benefit women involved in trade		White Paper on Women in Trade Facilitation
		Female membership in the National Trade Facilitation Committee or similar bodies		White Paper on Women in Trade Facilitation

		<i>UN/CEFACT</i>	
<i>Subgroup</i>	<i>Measure in the Survey Questionnaire</i>	<i>Relevant TFA Article Recommendation, Standard or Guideline</i>	
Other trade facilitation measures	Trade finance facilitation (3 measures)	Single Window facilitates traders access to finance	White Paper on Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT) Green Paper on Trade Finance as a Tool for Trade Facilitation
		Authorities engaged in blockchain-based supply chain project covering trade finance	White Paper on Blockchain in Trade Facilitation
		Variety of trade finance services available	White Paper on Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT)
	Trade facilitation in times of crisis (5 measures)	Agency in place to manage trade facilitation in times of crises and emergencies	Rec 44 – Cross- Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief Rec 47 – White Paper Pandemic Crisis Trade-Related Response
		Online publication of emergency trade facilitation measures	Rec 44 – Cross- border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief Rec 47 – White Paper Pandemic Crisis Trade-related Response Rec 38 – Trade Information Portals
		Coordination between countries on emergency trade facilitation measures	Rec 44 – Cross- border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief Rec 47 – White Paper Pandemic Crisis Trade-related Response
		Additional trade facilitation measures to facilitate trade in times of emergencies	Rec 44 – Cross- border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief Rec 47 – White Paper Pandemic Crisis Trade-related Response
		Preparedness of trade facilitation measures for future crises	Rec 44 – Cross- border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief Rec 47 – White Paper Pandemic Crisis Trade-related Response
	Trade facilitation for e-commerce	Trade facilitation measures for cross-border e-commerce	
	Wildlife trade facilitation	Electronic exchange of CITES permits/certificates	