Fast-tracking eTrade Readiness Assessment Implementation

A snapshot of UNCTAD's support

CONTEXT

Born in 2017 as a spin-off from the eTrade for all initiative, the eTrade Readiness Assessments (eT Readies) provide countries with detailed diagnostics and policy advice to foster an enabling environment and build sound e-commerce ecosystems in developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

THERE IS A GROWING INTEREST FROM BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND DONORS IN eT READY IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT ACTIVITIES.

The number of eT Ready beneficiaries has reached 29 in 2021. Most of them are LDCs but there is a steadily increasing demand from Governments of other developing countries. There is also growing interest from the core donors of UNCTAD's E-commerce and Digital Economy (ECDE) programme — Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland — in ensuring that recommendations made are implemented. This demonstrates the relevance of the ECDE programme and usefulness of eT Readies for **building institutional capacity across various stakeholders.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has given impetus to businesses and consumers to move online and to governments to faster embrace e-commerce and digital technologies; but it has also exacerbated pre-existing digital divides and bottlenecks, especially in LDCs. **UNCTAD's eT Ready Implementation Support Mechanism (ISM)** aims to support the implementation of eT Readies recommendations. Such efforts can spur reforms and investments to help developing countries chart their way towards a **robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, leverage the potential of e-commerce** and digital trade to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNCTAD'S eT READY IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT MECHANISM (ISM) IN A NUTSHELL

Background

The eT Ready ISM was put in place in 2020 primarily to review the implementation of eT Ready recommendations in beneficiary countries. Thanks to our network of eT Ready Focal Points and resource persons, we are able to keep track of progress, identify gaps and have an updated view on country priorities to further tailor implementation support initiatives.

Key takeaways

The first implementation review in 2020 revealed that most eT Ready beneficiary countries are taking follow-up actions, although at varying speed.

The review helped to raise awareness about the need to fast-track the implementation of recommendations for greater development impact. It underscored the need to increase inter-ministerial coordination, public-private dialogue, and enhance development partners' commitments for better policy planning, identification of project priorities as well as the effective mobilization of technical and financial support.

Way forward

UNCTAD continues to monitor progress and act as a catalyst to support the implementation of priority recommendations upon request, tapping into available UNCTAD's and eTrade for all partners' expertise, as well as in-country resources that can be mobilized in cooperation with a wide network of development partners.

UNCTAD'S INTEGRATED OFFER ON E-COMMERCE TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF eT READY RECOMMENDATIONS

Connecting the dots through multi-stakeholder dialogues and development partners' roundtables

The eT Ready ISM has access to **a large pool of knowledge resources and expertise**, primarily available from UNCTAD and eTrade for all partners. In addition, through connections with development partners in eT Ready beneficiary countries, the ISM can leverage a wide range of resources via these networks. Based on countries' needs and requests, targeted multi-stakeholder dialogues and development partners' roundtables can act as **enablers for better collaboration, resources mobilization and scaled up support** to accelerate the implementation of eT Ready recommendations at the country and regional level.

Preparation of national and regional e-commerce strategies

UNCTAD assistance aims at shaping holistic visions at both national and regional levels, through inclusive processes where **public-private coordination and policy dialogue** enable developing countries to harness e-commerce for transformative and sustainable growth. **eT Readies have increasingly triggered initiatives** of countries and regional blocks to undertake e-commerce strategies, providing a sound diagnostic and implementation plans.

## Digital government for business facilitation

UNCTAD's Business Facilitation programme helps governments to **map, simplify and automate complex admin-istrative procedures** required to import, export, create a business and obtain all necessary licenses to operate legally. UNCTAD's **online single windows** allow businesses to be fully incorporated within hours rather than weeks, and halve the steps required to obtain licenses. The programme helps businesses to save significant time and money, boosting business creation and trading activity, particularly for small and medium entrepreneurs.
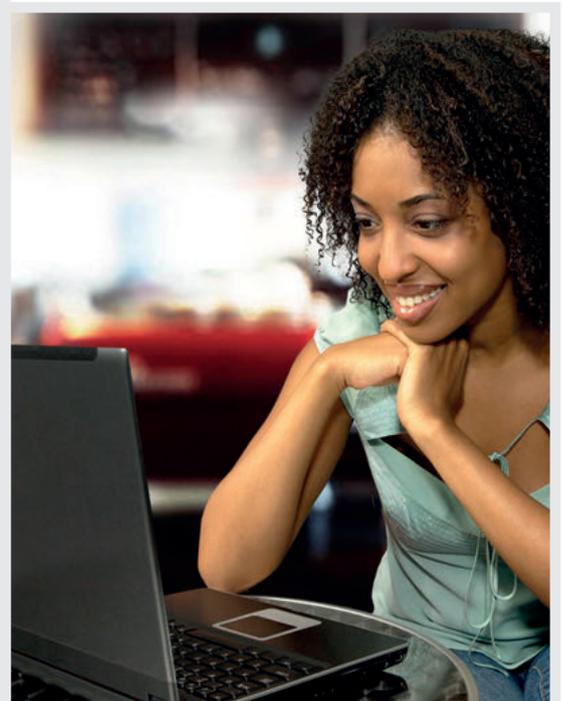
The new edition of the Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy can **guide statisticians from developing countries** across all the steps involved in the production and dissemination of statistics related to e-commerce and the digital economy. UNCTAD's technical assistance in this area takes the form of regional and national trainings.

Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Digital Economy
2020
Revised Edition
UNITED NATIONS
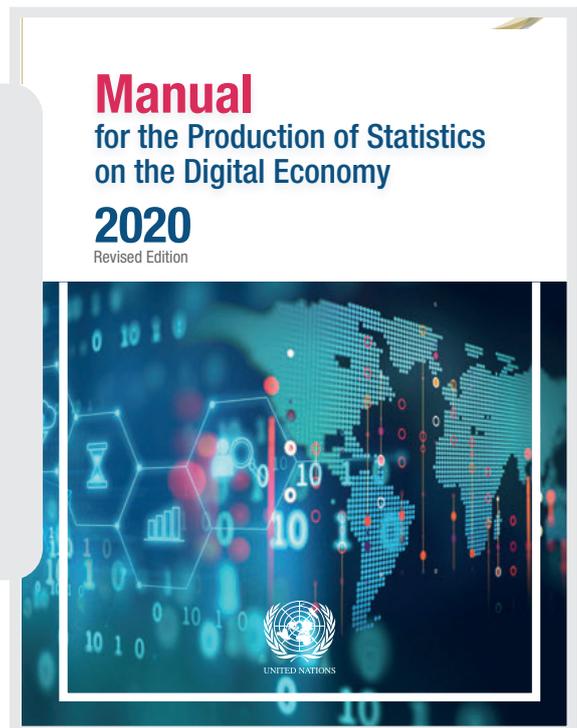
Facilitation of cross-border e-commerce – implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and other related agreements

The WTO TFA and a number of regional and sub-regional trade agreements contain provisions on trade facilitation reforms such as transparency, pre-arrival processing, single window, expedited shipments, transit and authorized operators, among others. These can assist facilitate a more agile and efficient cross-border e-commerce environment for traders and consumers. National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) are coordinating the implementation of reforms in line with the WTO TFA. **UNCTAD provides capacity building and training** to stakeholders involved on the implementation of such reforms, while also **connecting NTFCs with stakeholders involved in eT Ready implementation.**
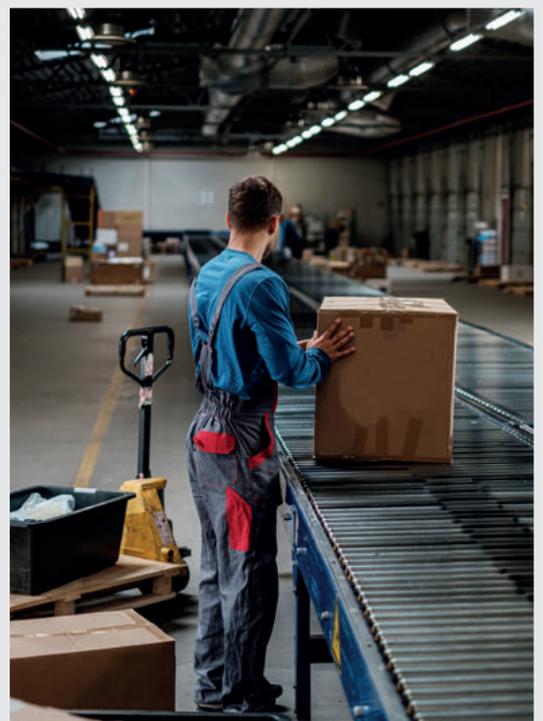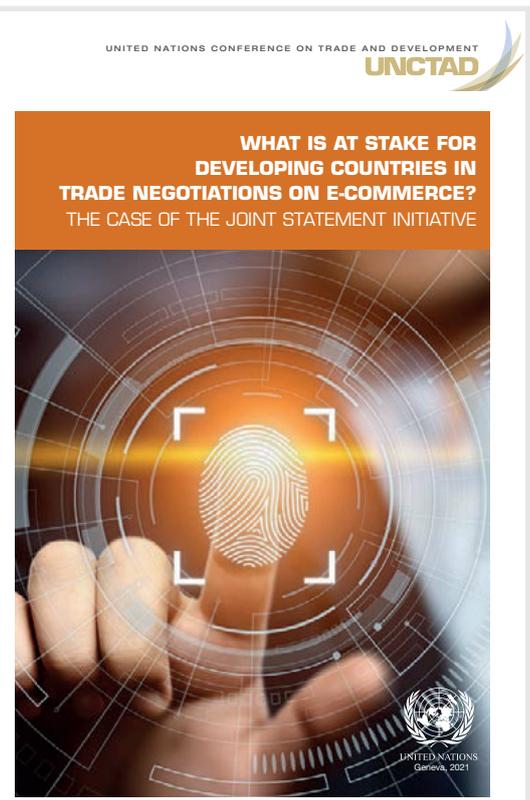
Facilitation of cross-border e-commerce — integrated support for efficient customs procedures

As a mandatory hub for all cross-border trade data, customs' role in e-commerce cannot be overestimated. **UNCTAD's ASYCUDA programme provides governments with automated and integrated support in the eight critical aspects** identified by the World Customs Organization's resolution on the guiding principles for cross-border e-commerce, notably: Advance Electronic Data and Risk Management, Facilitation and Simplification, Legislative Frameworks, Safety and Security, Revenue Collection, Measurement and Analysis, Partnerships and Public Awareness, Outreach and Capacity Building.
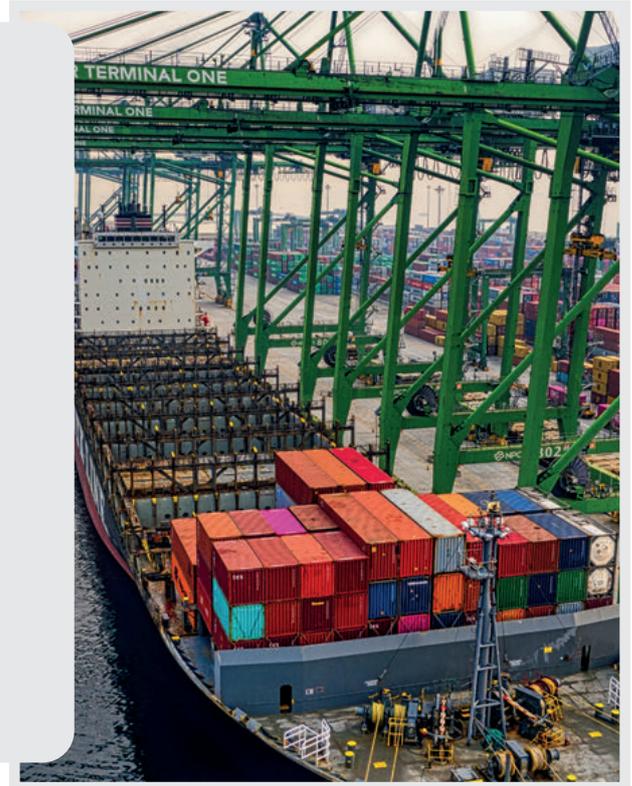
Enhancing countries' readiness to deal with e-commerce in trade negotiations

Engagement of developing countries in such initiatives, at bilateral, regional and plurilateral level, requires a thorough understanding of what is at stake for developing countries in trade negotiations on e-commerce. Upon request, UNCTAD can assist with **advisory support, e-commerce-related services policy reviews** and other **tailored-made capacity building** aimed at enhancing countries' informed participation in such negotiations and analyzing the possible development implications of various provisions included in the e-commerce/digital trade chapters of trade agreements.


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WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN TRADE NEGOTIATIONS ON E-COMMERCE?
THE CASE OF THE JOINT STATEMENT INITIATIVE

UNITED NATIONS
Geneva, 2021

Assistance on legal reforms

UNCTAD monitors the adoption of supportive legal frameworks through the Cyberlawtracker, and supports reforms aimed at building secure electronic interactions between businesses, consumers and public administrations. Support in this area can cover the organization of **regional and national capacity-building workshops, law revisions, legal thematic studies and regional comparative reviews** on e-commerce legislation.

Strengthening competition and consumer protection

UNCTAD, as the focal point on competition and consumer protection within the United Nations, provides technical assistance to **implement and review existing consumer protection and competition policies** and accommodate the special features of the digital economy. It also organizes capacity building and awareness raising activities to **empower government authorities, businesses, and consumer groups** to thrive in open and fair digital markets.
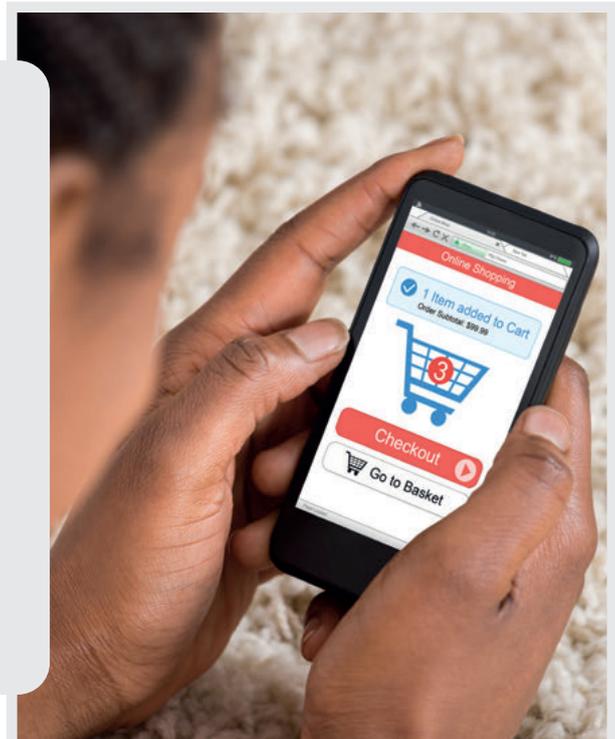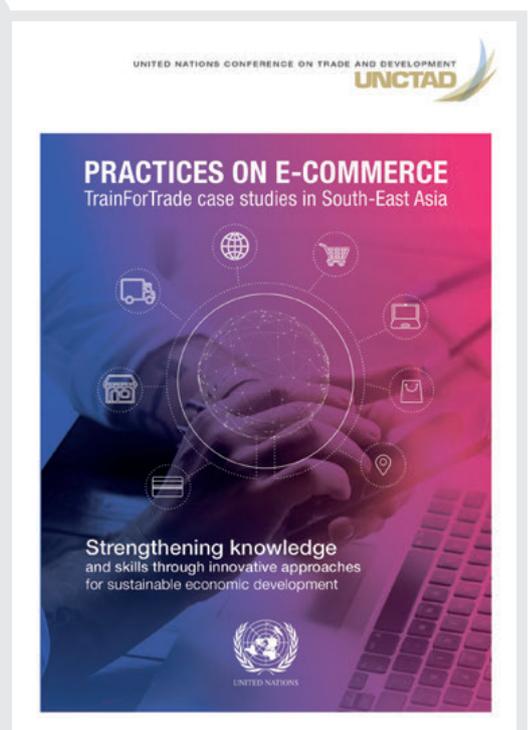
Empowerment of women digital entrepreneurs

UNCTAD champions the eTrade for Women initiative, a second spin-off from the eTrade for all partnership. It aims at making women digital entrepreneurs a force for inclusive wealth creation. Support in this area ranges **from building skills to networking and community development** activities, inspired and supported by its eTrade for Women Advocates. The initiative helps women digital entrepreneurs to **build more inclusive ecosystems, including at the local level.**

Nina Angelovska   Mona Ataya   Helianti Hilman

Clarisse Iribagiza   Pierangela Sierra   Patricia Zoundi-Yao

Skills development

The TrainForTrade programme (TFT) helps developing countries in **building sustainable networks of knowledge**, developing trade-oriented policies and promoting ICT solutions and innovative thinking to enhance the capacities of international trade players, while supporting South-South and triangular cooperation. The e-commerce component covers issues such as the **legal aspects of e-commerce, digital identity for trade and development, e-commerce best practices and case studies.**

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PRACTICES ON E-COMMERCE
TrainForTrade case studies in South-East Asia

Strengthening knowledge
and skills through innovative approaches
for sustainable economic development

UNITED NATIONS

In addition to UNCTAD's in-house expertise we can leverage a wide range of support from 34 eTrade for all partners under the following development solutions.

PARTNERS	ETRADE FOR ALL POLICY AREAS						
	E-commerce strategy	ICT infrastructure	Payment solutions	Trade logistics and facilitation	Legal frameworks	Skills development	Financing SMEs
ACSIS						✔	
AfDB		✔		✔	✔		
BSI					✔		
Commonwealth Secretariat	✔				✔	✔	
Consumers International					✔	✔	
CUTS						✔	
DiPLO						✔	
ECA	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	
ECLAC	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	
EIF	✔	✔					
ERIA	✔					✔	
ESCAP		✔	✔	✔		✔	
ESCWA		✔		✔	✔	✔	
E-Residency			✔		✔		
IAP					✔	✔	
ICAO				✔	✔		
IDB		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔
ILO					✔	✔	
ISOC		✔				✔	
ITFC		✔	✔		✔		✔
ITC	✔			✔		✔	✔
ITU		✔			✔	✔	
South Centre					✔	✔	
UNCDF			✔			✔	✔
UNCITRAL			✔		✔		
UNCTAD	✔			✔	✔	✔	
UNECE				✔	✔	✔	
UNIDO				✔	✔	✔	
UPU	✔		✔	✔			
WBG	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
WCO				✔	✔		
WEF						✔	
WIPO					✔		
WTO				✔		✔	

Note : list of eTrade for all partners who could assist in the various policy areas in accordance to their mandate and expertise.

The value of the eT Readies will be maximized only if countries implement the recommendations; experience so far has shown varying levels of efforts across countries. This brochure has been prepared to help stakeholders involved in the eT Ready implementation process to **match country policy and project priorities with assistance provided by UNCTAD and eTrade for all partners.**

Engage with us and we will try to find the most suitable solution to respond to your specific country's requests and needs!

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eTrade for all
Connecting the dots