

Call for study proposals: Readiness assessment for cross-border paperless trade (country level)

Deadline 30 April 2021

[Download application form](#)

United Nations ESCAP is issuing a **call for study proposals on readiness assessment for cross-border paperless trade of any economy in Asia and the Pacific region member of ESCAP** (except for 9 economies where the assessments have already been completed or being conducted – see Eligibility section below). The study should cover technical and legal readiness assessment, recommendations, and an individual action plan for the chosen country to move forward towards cross-border paperless trade. The study should be based upon the Legal and Technical Readiness Checklists and Readiness Assessment Guide for Cross-border Paperless Trade.¹ The selected proposals will be given a consultancy budget of up to USD 12,000.

Background

Trade is recognized as an important Means of Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and paperless trade can help make trade more inclusive and sustainable. This led ESCAP members to negotiate and adopt the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA), a UN treaty to accelerate and support the digitalization of trade procedures.² Paperless trade has also been recognized as an effective way to mitigate trade disruptions during the COVID-19 crisis and to build back better, providing for more seamless and resilient trade opportunities for our region and beyond.

Since its finalization and adoption in 2016, the Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and its Legal and Technical Working Groups³ have focused on preparing a draft road map and supporting documents for the implementation of the substantive provisions of the CPTA. One of the supporting documents are Legal and Technical Readiness Checklist.⁴ Furthermore, ESCAP, in collaboration with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), have developed an online platform to facilitate cross-border paperless trade readiness self-assessments.⁵

The checklists, as well as the guide can support countries to conduct self-assessments of their legal and technical readiness for cross-border paperless trade. The readiness assessment is relevant to all member States globally, as it can support the implementation of not only the CPTA, but also the full digital implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA). The readiness assessment, in turn, will provide a first step towards developing a concrete action plan for implementation of the CPTA (Article 12) and overall strategies for improving the country's environment for cross-border paperless trade.

¹ <https://unnexnext.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20legal%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf>; and <https://unnexnext.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20technical%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf> ; and <https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org/>

² For more details on CPTA: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific>

³ <https://communities.unescap.org/cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation>

⁴ Legal readiness checklist: <https://unnexnext.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20legal%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf> and technical readiness checklist: <https://unnexnext.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20technical%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org/>

Methodology

The readiness assessment should be conducted using the Legal and Technical Readiness Checklists⁶ and Readiness Assessment Guide for Cross-border Paperless Trade.⁷

The consultant will be required to conduct the study with the following steps:

1. Acquire full understanding of the checklists and the guide – virtual training/consultation will be provided.
2. Finalize a study plan (based on the draft plan submitted as part of the application) in consultation with ESCAP secretariat and focal point agency.
3. Distribute the checklists to relevant agencies and stakeholders.
4. Organize individual consultation sessions per agency/stakeholder as necessary (for additional data and information collection and verification).
5. Draft a country report based on the collected data and information, including a draft action plan
6. Organize national consultation for validation of collected data, as well as for adopting the action plan
7. Finalize the country report based on the discussions at the national consultation as well as liaising with the focal point agency for validation (as feasible)

The duration of the study may vary from 3 to 5 months by each study for the period of 1 May – 31 December 2021.

Study output

A country report of 10,000-14,000 words excluding tables, figures, references and appendices, with the completed and consolidated legal and technical checklists as one of the annexes. It should be free of grammatical and stylistic errors – guidance on format and writing styles will be provided to the selected consultants but should follow those of published country reports.⁸ Based on previous experience, it is expected the report would undergo several rounds of reviews, and the consultant should be ready to address feedback in a timely manner.

Benefits

Successful applications will receive:

- A consultancy budget of up to 12,000 USD will be issued to carry out the readiness assessment of each selected country. In case of organizing physical national consultation, the expenses for venue and other logistical arrangements could be supported, in addition to the consultancy budget (confirmation and details to be discussed with ESCAP secretariat).
- Support from senior UNNExT experts, who will provide virtual training/consultation on conducting the readiness assessment, as well as peer reviews of the study
- Publication of the study, subject to United Nations standards and publication guidelines

⁶ Legal readiness checklist: <https://unnex.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20legal%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf> and technical readiness checklist: <https://unnex.unescap.org/sites/default/files/CBPT-a%20technical%20readiness%20checklist-ver1.0-2020.pdf>

⁷ <https://readiness.digitalizetrade.org/>

⁸ <https://www.unescap.org/resources/readiness-assessments-cross-border-paperless-trade>

Eligibility

Applicants can be individual and/or team of experts and/or researchers as well as institutions. The lead applicant must into one of the following categories:

- Not-for-profit organization
- Government entity
- United Nations entity or multi-lateral organization
- Individual researcher

Applicants should be nationals of and/or based in the country of the study. It is open to all ESCAP member States (except those countries where a readiness assessment have already been conducted or is being conducted, i.e.: Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Uzbekistan).

Proposal submission (deadline: 30 April 2021)

Individual(s) and/or institutions with relevant expertise are invited to submit proposals at any time before 30 April 2021 to Mr. Yann Duval, Chief of Trade Policy and Facilitation, ESCAP duvaly@un.org with a copy to Ms. Soo Hyun Kim kim51@un.org.

The submission should include:

1. [Proposal application form](#)
2. Resume/CV's of all project team members involved in the project

Selection criteria

The criteria used to evaluate the proposals will be:

1. Relevant expertise and experience (60%)
2. Feasibility of the proposed study plan, including ability to link with key informants and relevant government agencies for action plan development (20%)
3. Countries priorities and value for money (20%)

Notes:

- 1) Only selected candidate(s) would be contacted.
- 2) You are welcome to make a proposal of your research jointly with other researchers and/or practitioners to maximize synergy and complementarity of expertise (for covering both legal and technical aspects). However, a lead researcher should be agreed and to be the submitter of the proposal.

For further information:

Please email Ms. Soo Hyun Kim at kim51@un.org should you have any questions.
