

ESCAP Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

To develop a feasibility study framework on the cross-border electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between Asian countries, review its application in selected countries, and develop a multi-country pilot project for consideration by Governments. Deadline for application: 11 March 2022

Background

Trade is recognized as an important means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Trade facilitation and paperless trade can help make trade more inclusive and sustainable. This led United Nations ESCAP members to negotiate and adopt the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (Framework Agreement), a UN treaty to accelerate and support the digitalization of trade procedures.¹ The Framework Agreement encourages implementation of pilot projects on cross-border paperless trade (Article 13), as a basis for capacity building of ESCAP developing member States and to achieve harmonization and interoperability between paperless trade systems.

In this context, the ESCAP Secretariat seeks to hire an individual consultant to support feasibility studies on the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between selected countries in South-east and South Asia, in particular between those that have been actively engaged in the development and/or implementation of the Framework Agreement.² The consultant will be required to (i) draft the framework for feasibility study, (ii) review feasibility studies conducted by national consultants, (iii) assess the interest and feasibility of the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between selected countries and identify low-hanging fruits; and (ii) define the scope and method for facilitating electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between these countries, including preparation and planning of a pilot project to be considered by target countries.

Work assignment

The consultant is required to perform the following tasks (with tentative timeline):

- a) Develop a draft framework for feasibility study for individual target countries on the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents:
 - a. The framework, when applied, should provide evidence-based guidance to member States on partner countries they may prioritize exchange of trade data and documents with, and the cost and benefits of exchanging specific documents or harmonizing systems.
 - b. The framework may feature the legal & technical readiness assessment as one of its components, avoiding unnecessary duplication.³

¹ Details on the Framework Agreement can be found at: <https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific>

² Potential target countries are those from South-East Asia, including Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand, pending liaison and confirmation of focal point(s)/agencies.

³ For details, see: (i) [Legal readiness checklist](#) (ii) [Technical readiness checklist](#) (iii) [Readiness Assessments for Cross-Border Paperless Trade](#) - 8 countries conducted in 2019, and more to be added.

- c. Other components of the framework may take reference from the Template for Initiating (Pilot) Cross-border Electronic Data Exchange,⁴ and other relevant documents.⁵
Delivery date: 28 April 2022
- b) Participate in an expert group meeting/workshop (virtual, tentatively 2-3 hours, scheduled in May 2022) to:
 - a. Present the framework for feasibility study
 - b. Collect comments and suggestions from participants
 - c. Finalize the framework for feasibility study
 Delivery date: May 2022
- c) Review national feasibility studies conducted by other (national) consultants, for further improvement and gap filling.
Delivery date: 30 July 2022
- d) Based on information from the national feasibility studies and other relevant sources, prepare a report assessing the interest and feasibility of the electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between selected countries, identifying low-hanging fruits and scope of potential projects; develop a plan for at least one multi-country pilot project on electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents between countries.
Delivery date: 20 August 2022
- e) Participate in a 1-day workshop (tentatively in the week starting 29 August 2022) to:
 - a. Present study results and the plan for a pilot project
 - b. Facilitate discussions among target countries and other participants, to develop further and/or to agree on the preliminary planning of a pilot project
 - c. Collect comments and suggestions from target countries and other participants
 Delivery date: 2 September 2022
- f) Prepare final report, by incorporating comments/suggestions received from the workshop
Delivery date: 30 September 2022

The consultant is expected to carry out the assignment during the period of 20 March 2022 – 30 September 2022.

Consultancy fee expected to range from 12,000 – 21,000 USD, depending on experience of the consultant, number of national feasibility studies to be reviewed, and final terms of reference (including possibility of the consultant to also conduct one of the national feasibility studies).

Requirements for the consultancy

A minimum 7-year work experience in the area of trade policy/facilitation/e-commerce/paperless trade is required. The consultant should preferably have relevant experience in implementing trade facilitation (including customs automation projects), developing frameworks/templates to assess feasibility of cross-border cooperation activities related to trade facilitation and the

⁴ https://unnext.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Template%20for%20initiating%20electronic%20data%20exchange_Version%2002.pdf

⁵ See existing work listed at <https://www.unescap.org/event-series/cross-border-paperless-trade-facilitation#Working-Documents>; and the Readiness Assessment Guide for Cross-border Paperless Trade at <http://readiness.digitalizetrade.org/>

electronic exchange of trade-related data and documents. He/she should have a good knowledge of trade facilitation and e-commerce/paperless trade in general. Previous work experience in Asia preferred.

EOI Submission (As soon as possible; deadline: 11 March 2022)

Individuals with relevant expertise are invited to submit EOIs to Mr. Yann Duval, Chief, Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, United Nations ESCAP (duvaly@un.org) with a copy to Mr. Yern Fai Lee (yernfai.lee@un.org).

The EOIs should include:

- (1) An email expressing interest, highlighting previous work experience, other related assignments, training or any useful experience relevant to the assignment.
- (2) Proposed work plan on how to carry out the assignment; and
- (3) Curriculum Vitae (CV), and any other evidence of relevant work.

Selection process

The criteria used to evaluate the consultants will be:

- (1) previous work experience in the areas related to the assignments, and
- (2) quality and scope of the proposed work plan

*Please note that only selected candidate(s) would be contacted.

For further information:

Please email Mr. Yern Fai Lee (yernfai.lee@un.org) with a copy to Mr. Yann Duval (duvaly@un.org) should you have any questions.