



## **Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)**

### **Research on selected topics in paperless trade and trade facilitation**

**(Deadline: 15 April 2021)**

Recognizing the importance of trade as an engine for sustainable development and the potential for paperless trade to make international trade more efficient and transparent while also improving regulatory compliance, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted a UN treaty to accelerate and support the digitalization of trade procedures in 2016 - the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA).<sup>1</sup> The CPTA entered into force in February 2021 and research to support evidence-based implementation of the agreement is needed. In that context, the ESCAP Secretariat invites interested experienced researchers and practitioners to make proposals to carry out studies on trade facilitation and cross-border paperless trade. Five priority research topics are provided below, but relevant proposals on other topics will also be considered.

#### **PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS/TOPICS**

##### **1. Social and environmental impact of trade facilitation and paperless trade**

In support of sustainable trade facilitation, the study is expected to focus on investigating the social and/or environmental impact of trade facilitation and paperless trade. The study may cover 1) how trade facilitation and paperless trade measures can accrue social and environmental benefits, including relevant literature review, 2) proposed method/methodology for quantifying social and environmental benefits of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures, and 3) analysis case: application of proposed method/methodology for deriving social and environmental benefits of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures at national and/or regional level in Asia and the Pacific.

##### **2. Trust and mutual recognition mechanism in electronic communication environment (transactions based on exchange of electronic data)**

Trade transactions based on exchange of electronic data requires different operational arrangements from paper-based transactions. The study may cover 1) factors making it difficult to create a trust in electronic communication environment, compared to paper-based transaction environment, including at the institutional and operational levels, 2) meaning and scope of mutual recognition scheme in information/data life cycle (creation, exchange, processing, archiving, etc.) to help creating trust, 3) difference between mutual recognition and interoperability, 4) potential solutions and 5) a case study on successful case of creating electronic communication environment (domestic and/or cross-border) throughout the whole

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/resources/framework-agreement-facilitation-cross-border-paperless-trade-asia-and-pacific>

(to the extent possible) data process cycle (creation, exchange, archiving and even possibly presenting it as evidence in a court dispute case), including lessons learned.

### **3. Advancing digitalization of trade documents**

Some trade regulatory (Business to Government or B2G) documents, such as Customs declaration, needs to be accompanied by other business to business (B2B) documents, such as commercial invoice, before they can be processed. As regulatory agencies implement paperless trade systems, submission of B2G documents is increasing digitalized. If submission of the accompanying B2B documents can be digitalized, trade transactions can be further streamlined. In that context, the study may cover 1) Analysis of current practices on submission of B2B documents, including pros and cons of different practices and B2G documents requiring accompaniment of B2B documents, and 2) possible arrangements and models for digitalization of these B2B documents, including process re-engineering, change of regulation, different arrangement options ranging from practical transitional measures to innovative/revolutionary approaches with application of emerging technologies.

### **4. Electronic certificate of origin implementation**

Certificate of origin is a trade document used for proving origin of products for the purpose of either giving a tariff preference (preferential) or simply proving product origin (non-preferential). Certificate of origin itself or selected data elements of a certificate of origin can be exchanged electronically for the purpose of reduction of time and costs and simplified process. The study should cover 1) analysis of process for exchanging a certificate of origin and data requirements, 2) compilation and analysis of existing cases of electronic exchange of a certificate of origin, both preferential and non-preferential, including business (exchange) model and benefits gained/lessons learned, and 3) way forward for further advancement, including issues and challenges of current approaches for wider adoption, closer interaction with other regulatory processes and application of emerging/disruptive technologies. The study is expected to include organization of an online workshop with ESCAP and relevant partners, to gather relevant information and feedback from experts, to be incorporated in the final version of the study.

### **5. Other topics for advancing trade facilitation or cross-border paperless trade**

Other research proposals that can support evidence-based implementation of trade facilitation and cross-border paperless trade in the region will also be considered.

## **RESEARCH DURATION, BENEFIT AND OUTPUTS**

1) Duration: 1 May – 30 Sep. 2021

2) Output: A research paper (tentatively 8,000-12,000 words, excluding annexes).<sup>2</sup>

3) Consultancy fee: up to USD 10,000/paper, depending on proposal scope, methodology and experience of the researcher<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Format and style in writing a paper will be provided to the selected proposals. Research #4 also includes support to organization of workshop as specified.

<sup>3</sup> Duration and consultancy fee for freely proposed topics will be decided.

#### 4) Other benefits for selected proposals

- Presentation of findings in UN ESCAP events on trade facilitation and cross-border paperless trade, where relevant;
- Publication of research findings in UN publications or through ESCAP regional networks, including ARTNeT and UNNExT, where relevant and suitable.

### EOI SUBMISSION

**Please apply as soon as possible; deadline: 15 April 2021**

Individual(s) with relevant expertise are invited to submit EOIs to Mr. Yann Duval, Chief, Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, United Nations ESCAP ([duvaly@un.org](mailto:duvaly@un.org)) with a copy to Mr. Sangwon Lim ([lim6@un.org](mailto:lim6@un.org) and [nattabhon.narongkachavana@un.org](mailto:nattabhon.narongkachavana@un.org)).

As some topics are related to each other, applicants may combine some of the listed topics in a proposal. The EOIs should include:

- (1) An email expressing interest in one or more of the listed research topics;
- (2) In 500 words or less, proposed research plan, including 1) summary of the research, including scope, methodology and expected content of paper, 2) research schedule/timeline and 3) main expected outcome/finding/recommendation<sup>4</sup>, and;
- (3) Curriculum Vitae (CV), and any other evidence of relevant work.

### SELECTION CRITERIA

The criteria used to evaluate the proposals will be based on feasibility of the proposed research plan (75%), with heavy bearing on expected outcome/findings: and previous work experience of applicant(s) in the areas related to the research topic (25%).

#### Notes:

- 1) Only selected candidate(s) would be contacted. If there is no feasible proposal on certain topic, research on that topic would NOT be carried out.
- 2) Considering specialized nature of topics, successful proposals are expected to come from researchers who already have work/research experience in the area.
- 3) 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 FURTHER INFORMATION:

Please email Mr. Sangwon Lim ([lim6@un.org](mailto:lim6@un.org)), should you have any questions.

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<sup>4</sup> Excepted outcome/findings should include elaboration on actual outcome/findings, though partial/incomplete/preliminary, so that the applicants demonstrate they have already worked/pondered on the issue(s) with certain level of understanding or their capacity to come up with concrete outcome/findings.