

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Trade Facilitation Enquiry Points: Survey and Analysis and best practices for operating enquiry points

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Empowerment programme
for trade facilitation

➤ The Study

- Purpose: **Assess whether WTO-notified Enquiry Points are operational, accessible and responsive, and to provide recommendations for improving their effectiveness.**
- Methodology:
 - “**Mystery Client**” test email sent to 124 WTO Members (July 2024).
 - Measured the response rate, response time, format, quality of answers and usability (clarity, accessibility, and practical usefulness of response).
 - Focused only on email contacts as notified to WTO
 - Publish report with consolidated survey data, analysis, best practices and recommendations
<https://unctad.org/topic/transport-and-trade-logistics/trade-facilitation>
- Why it matters:
 - Predictability for traders, especially MSMEs
 - Transparency
 - Links with TIPs, NTFCs and overall TFA implementation.

➤ Main Findings

- 48 out of 124 WTO notified Enquiry Points responded
- **Centralized/Generic Mailbox** is more reliable and facilitates compilation of requests and knowledge transfer. Less affected by high turnover rates.
- Although **multiple enquiry points** can offer more specific answers to requests, it **can also lead to inefficiency** if the enquiry points are not properly framed.
- **Response times** ranged from immediate to several weeks, with around 23 days identified as the timeframe for a response to be practically useful and of quality.
- **Higher TFA implementation** correlates with **better responsiveness** but compliance does not guarantee functionality.
- Countries with **Trade Portals** or **national trade repository** were more **efficient and precise** when offering a response.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen Country Response**
 - Keep EP contacts updated, functional and centralized,
 - Improve response rates with SOPs, capacity building, auto acknowledgements and clear workflows,
 - Strengthen management through prioritization, interagency coordination, monitoring, and accessible services (FAQs, Multilingual, and Disability Inclusive)
- **Improve Response Quality**
 - Use standard templates, provide guides, attachments and visuals, and ensure language availability,
 - Integrate EP within TIP for easy navigation and ensuring that data is current.
- **Leverage TIPs and Technology**
 - Adopt AI, automation, ticketing, and translation tools to speed up responses.
 - Role of NTFCs for coordination, best practice sharing, and alignment across agencies

Way Forward

- Address the gap between compliance and functionality to ensure EPs are responsive, reliable and accessible.
- Need for centralization vs fragmentation
- Strengthen national coordination through NTFCs.
- Integrate EPs into TIPs and expand use of digital tools such as AI and automation.
- Develop standardized EP Framework, using study to guide targeted technical assistance and capacity building.
- UNCTAD to support countries through training, templates, digital integration support and practical M&E tools.

Thank you

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