

The digitalisation of trade-related documents and processes

Going paperless today, going paperless tomorrow

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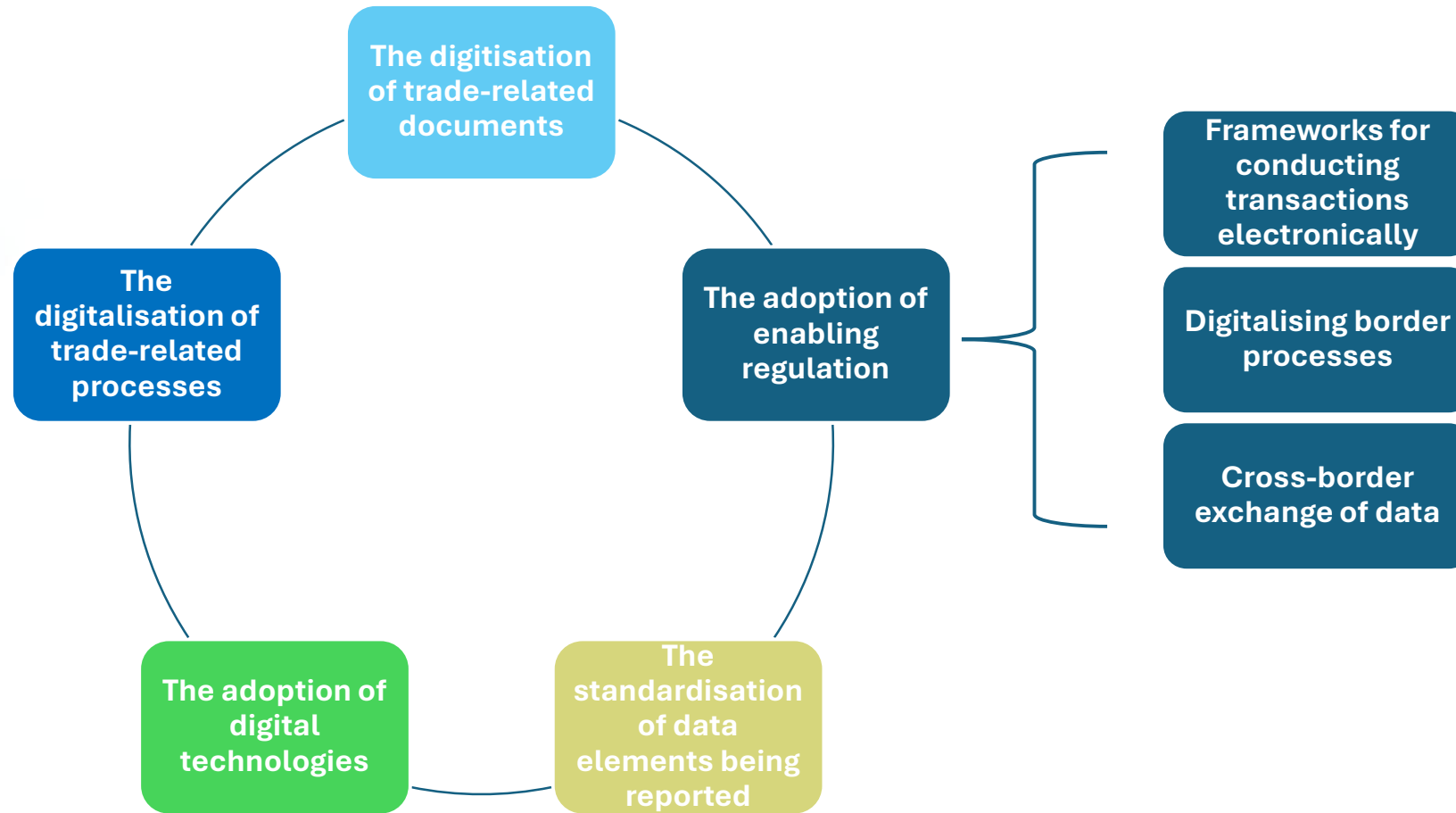
Context

- Countries are struggling to *go paperless*, which is why most of our trade remains paper based.
- This paper identifies the challenges that are faced, across the value chain.
- It also provides estimates of the economic benefits.



What are the issues for going paperless today?

The building blocks for *going paperless*



Source: OECD (2025 forthcoming), [The digitalisation of trade documents and processes – Going paperless today, going paperless tomorrow](#).



What are the issues for going paperless today?

Key pillars of the enabling regulatory environment for going paperless

Frameworks for conducting transactions electronically

- Electronic transactions frameworks
- Electronic transferrable records
- Electronic authentication
- Digital identity
- Electronic signatures
- Electronic payments
- Electronic invoices

Digitalising border processes

- Customs and other agencies regulatory requirements
- Pre-arrival processing
- Single Windows for trade
- Automated risk management
- Border inspections and clearance
- Border agencies coordination and information exchange systems

Cross-border exchange of data

- Data storage, retention and archiving
- Cross-border data flow
- (Cyber)Security

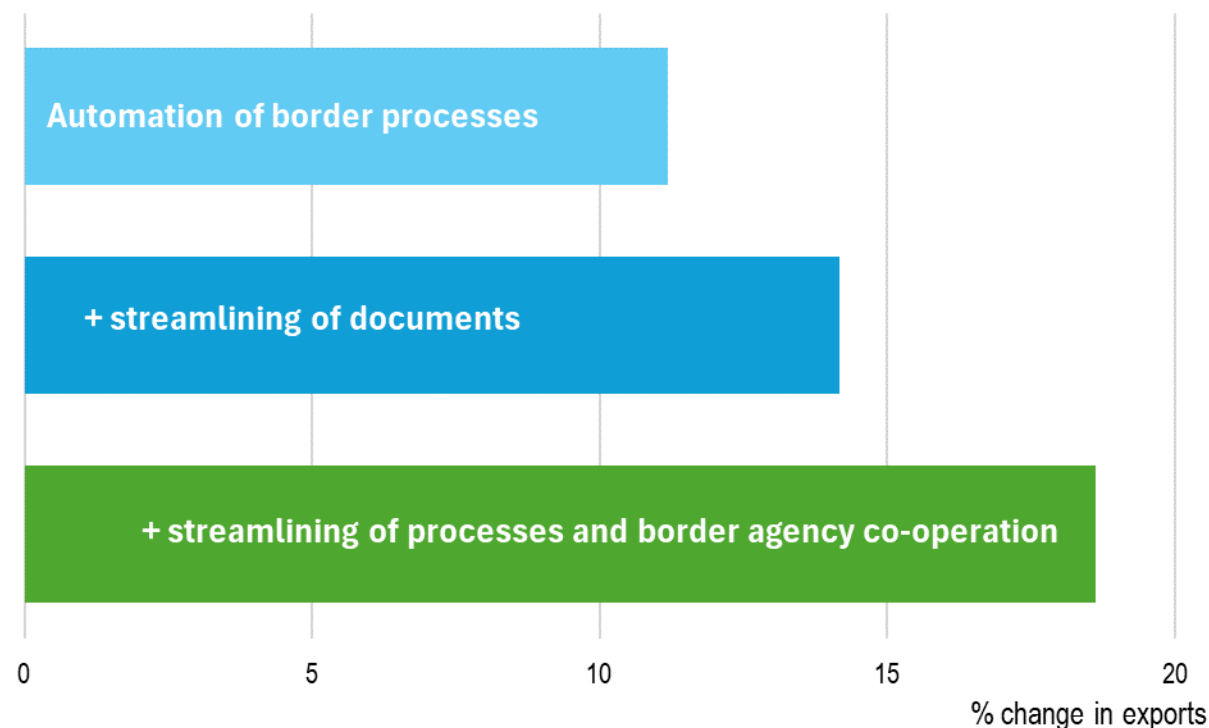


What are the *benefits* from accelerating reforms?

Implementing the right regulatory frameworks can generate important benefits

- A 10% improvement in the **trade facilitation policy measures that matter for going paperless** can deliver an increase of up to 18% in global goods exports
- The domestic and international regulatory landscape also matters in delivering these benefits: a 0.1-point reduction in the **barriers that affect infrastructure and connectivity, e-transaction frameworks and e-payments** is associated with an increase in exports of 37%

Impacts on global exports by policy areas



Note: The specification includes automation of border processes, streamlining of documents and procedures, and border agency co-operation drawing on the OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators. It also controls for the levels of OECD DSTRI and INDIGO. Using the USITC ITPD-E trade data for the 2012-19 period.

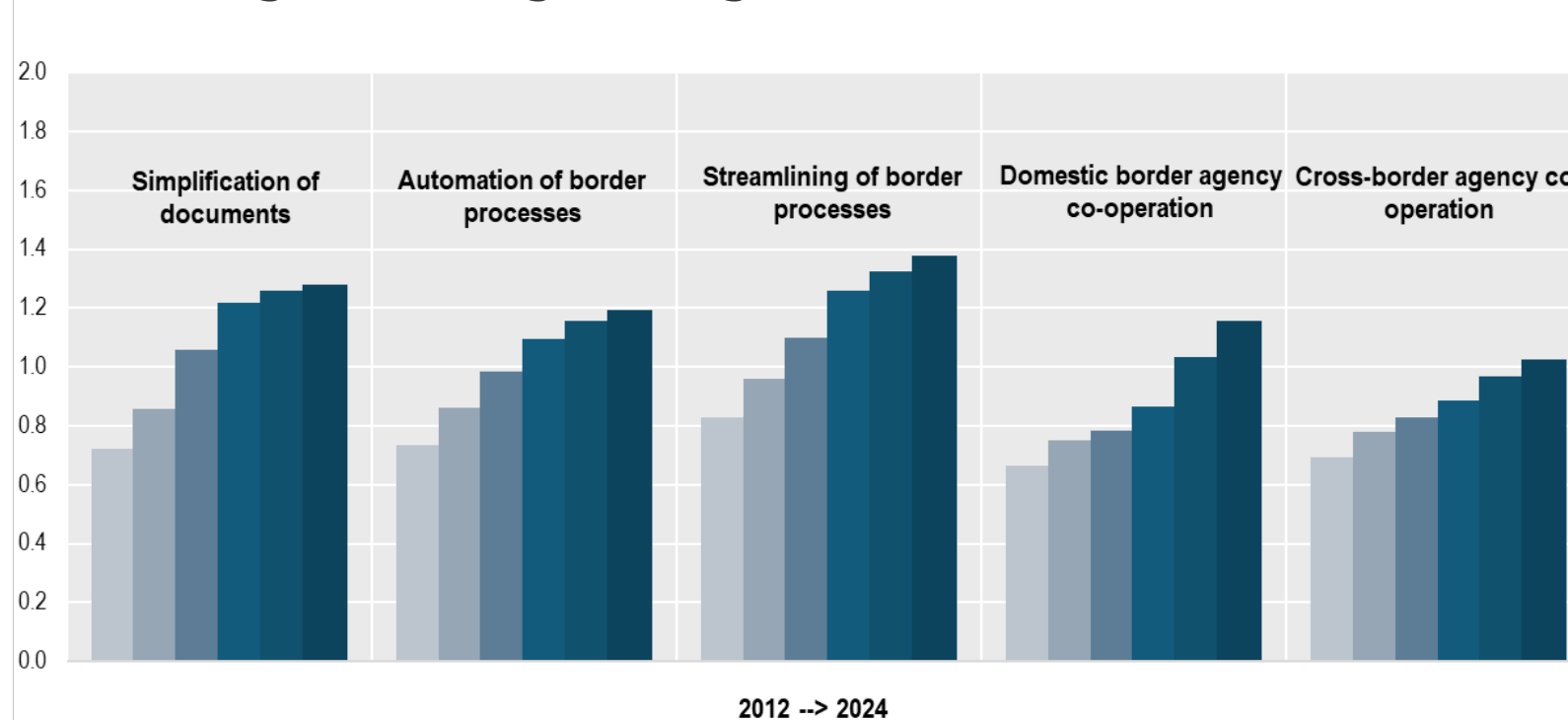
Source: OECD (2025 forthcoming), [The digitalisation of trade documents and processes – Going paperless today, going paperless tomorrow](#).



How has the policy environment been evolving?

Digitalising border processes

- OECD Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs) highlight improvements in automated pre-arrival processing, automated risk management, electronic payments of duties and charges, and digital Single Windows.



Note: The TFIs take value between 0 and 2, where 2 represent the maximum performance possible.

Source: OECD (2025 forthcoming), [The digitalisation of trade documents and processes – Going paperless today, going paperless tomorrow.](#)

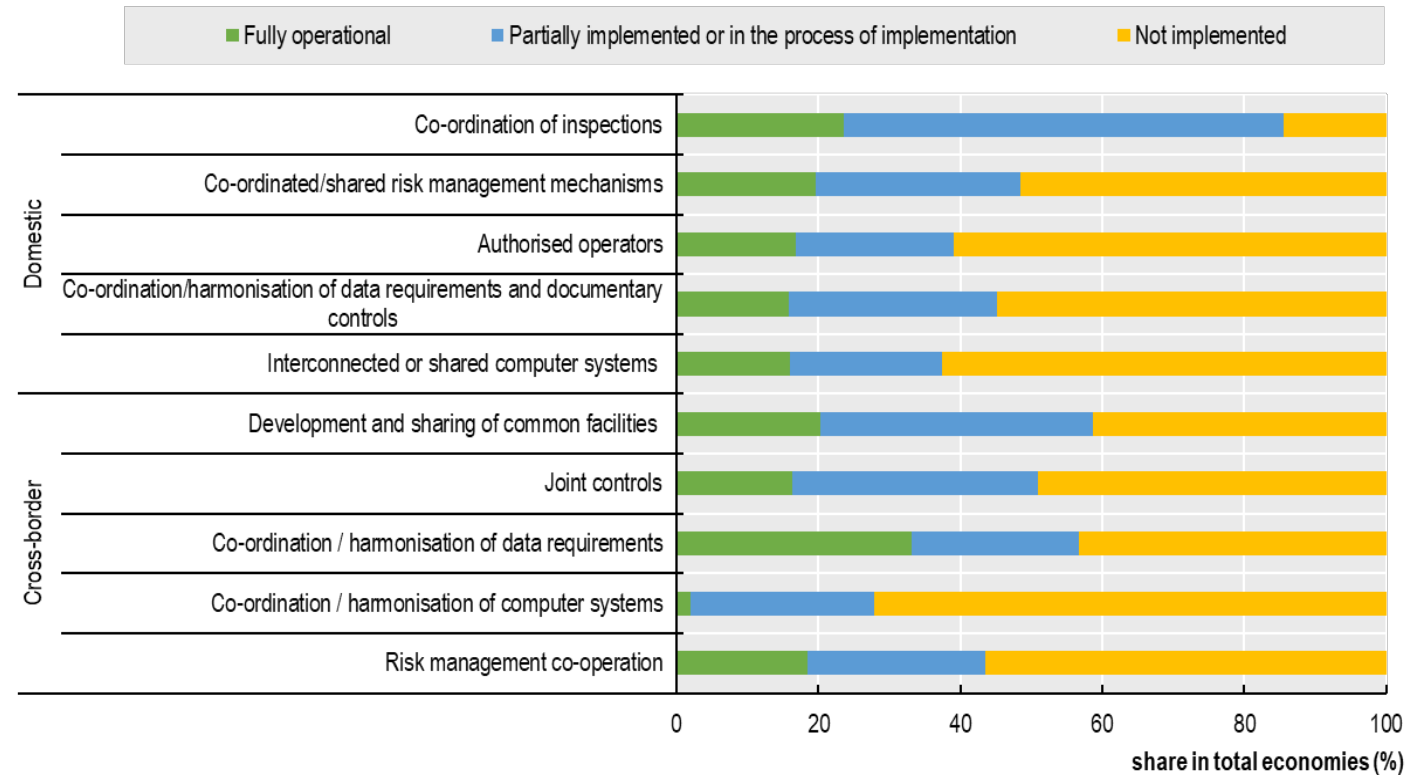
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How has the policy environment been evolving?

Digitalising border processes

- More progress needed on digital tools required for border agency co-operation.



Source: OECD (2025 forthcoming), [The digitalisation of trade documents and processes – Going paperless today, going paperless tomorrow.](#)

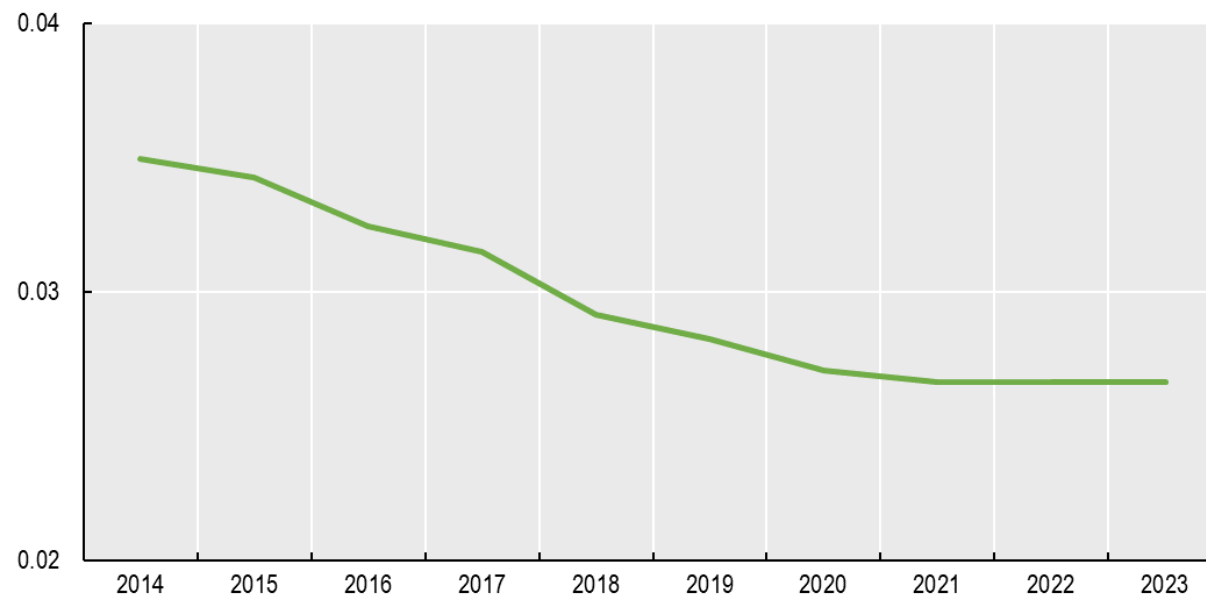


How has the policy environment been evolving?

Frameworks for enabling electronic transactions

- OECD Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (DSTRI) and OECD Indicator for Digital Trade Integration and Openness (INDIGO) highlight enabling frameworks (e.g. e-signatures, e-contracts etc) are increasingly being adopted.

The domestic regulatory environment is becoming increasingly supportive for electronic transactions



Note: The OECD DSTRI takes values between 0 and 1, with 1 being the highest level of restrictiveness. The figure includes data for 100 economies.

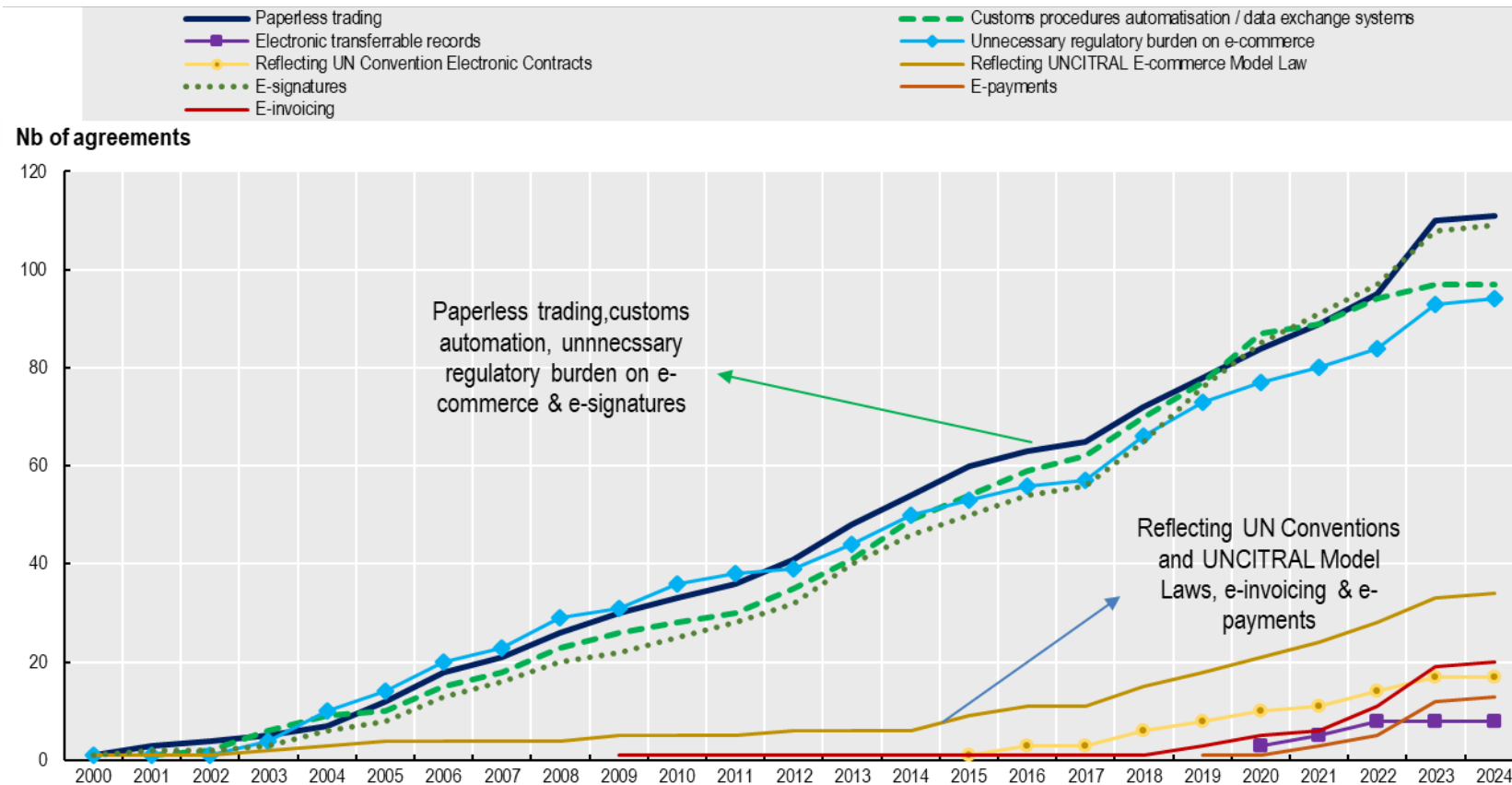
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How has the policy environment been evolving?

Frameworks for enabling electronic transactions

There is also an increasing coverage of *going paperless* elements in trade and digital agreements



Note: Based on TAPED database (November 2024 version) (Burri, Vasquez Callo-Müller and Kugler, 2024).

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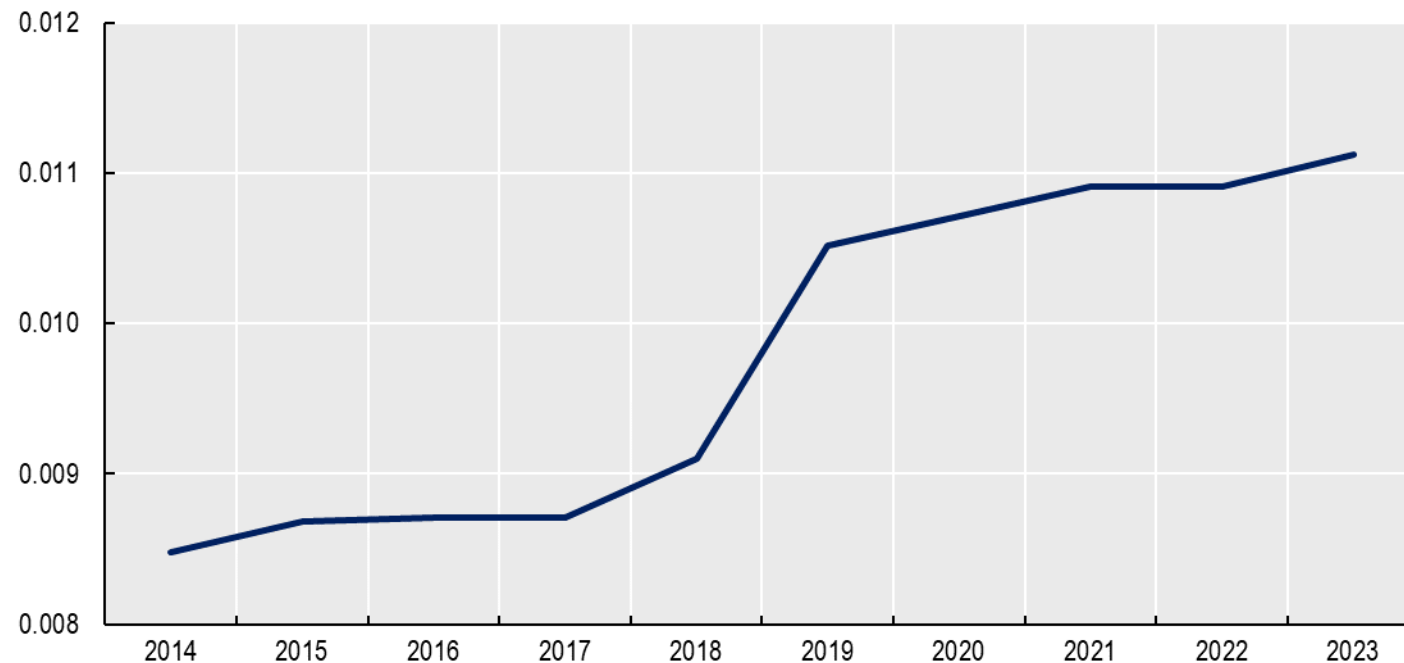


How has the policy environment been evolving?

Frameworks for enabling electronic transactions

- More progress needed on adoption of electronic transferable records and on domestic frameworks for e-payments.

Barriers affecting electronic payments are growing



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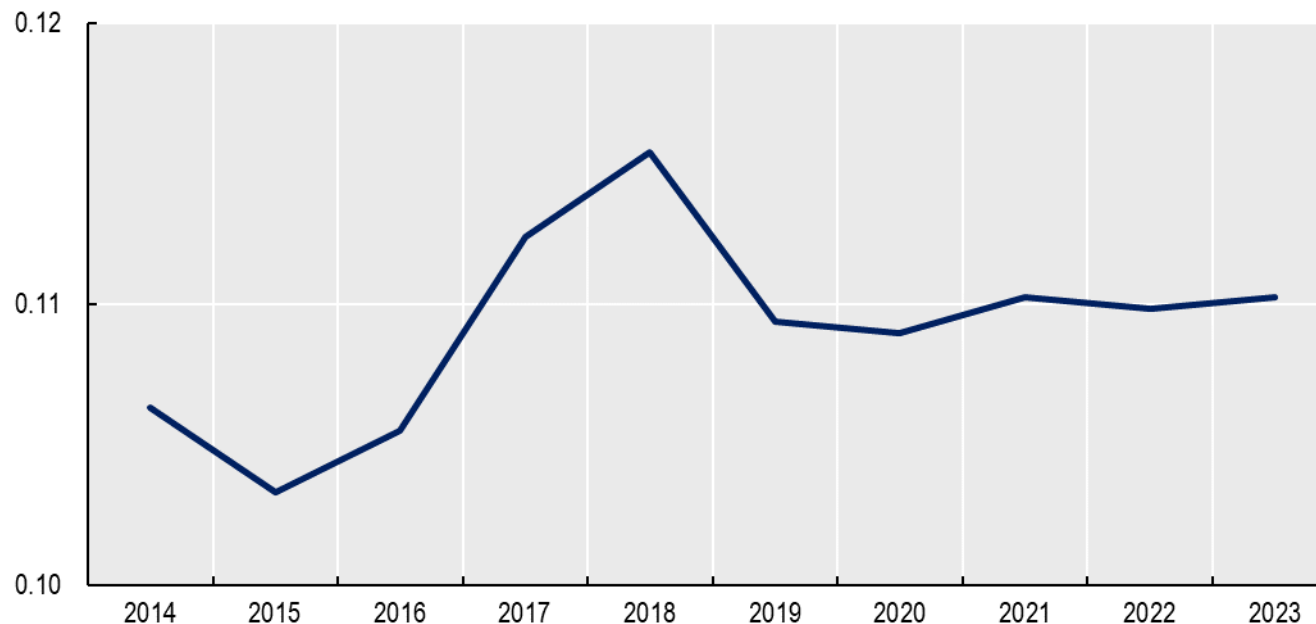


How has the policy environment been evolving?

Mechanisms for cross-border data exchange

- The regulatory environment for cross-border data flows is becoming increasingly complex -- for both personal or non-personal data.

Barriers affecting infrastructure and connectivity are increasing



Note: The OECD DSTRI takes values between 0 and 1, with 1 being the highest level of restrictiveness. The figure includes data for 100 economies.

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Key takeaways

- ***Going paperless* is important because it yields important trade cost reductions.** Further policy reforms can lead to increases in trade between 18% and 37%.
- **Beyond trade costs, *going paperless* is a critical enabler of broader policy objectives,** including greater visibility and resilience across supply chains, and improved compliance with international trade regulations and standards.
- **All building blocks for *going paperless* need to advance in parallel.** There is a significant leap in the value of digitalisation when border processes are also streamlined. There is also a strong case for domestic regulatory reform to enhance the effects of *going paperless* on export competitiveness.



Thank you for your attention!

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