Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

Ninth session
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Item 3(b) of the provisional agenda
Programme of work
Draft programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2025 and
outline of key components of the programme of work for 2026

Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Trade subprogramme for 2026*

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1.   This document presents an outline of key components (objective, strategy and deliverables) of the programme of work of the Trade subprogramme subprogramme ("the subprogramme") for 2026. These components are based on the subprogramme-related section of the ECE proposed programme budget for 2025, with modified or new elements highlighted in track changes. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards ("the Committee") is invited to consider this information and provide recommendations on these components, as necessary. Those modifications and/or member States' recommendations agreed by the Committee and included in its decisions will be reflected in the proposed programme plan of the subprogramme for 2026. It will be prepared by the secretariat at the end of 2024 and included in the ECE proposed programme budget for 2026.

I. Objective

2.   The objective, to which the subprogramme contributes, is to strengthen trade facilitation and electronic business, regulatory cooperation and standardization policies, agricultural quality standards and trade-related economic cooperation in the ECE region and beyond.

II. Strategy

3.   The responsibility for the subprogramme is vested in the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of ECE.

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* This document has not been formally edited by ECE.

4.	The strategy of the subprogramme is to strengthen efforts to harness the power of trade for sustainable development, by supporting international policy dialogue on reducing regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, including those caused by cumbersome trade procedures and paperwork, by differences in trade procedures, standards and documents, or by divergent regulatory approaches and product standards; to facilitate the development of standards and recommendations in the areas of trade facilitation and electronic e-business, agricultural quality standards and regulatory cooperation; and to provide capacity-building and enable the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

5.	To contribute to the objective, the subprogramme will:

(a)	Promote simple, transparent and effective processes for sustainable, inclusive and resilient global trade through its normative work to develop standards and recommendations in the areas of trade facilitation and electronic business;

(b)	Facilitate international policy dialogue on establishing digital trading environments and on compliance with the multilateral trading system requirements, including the dissemination of standards, recommendations and guidelines;

(c)	Promote the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable and resilient value chains and the enhanced traceability of supply chains, e.g. minimizing waste and maximizing the use of natural resources towards circular economy through studies, policy dialogues, capacity building, and technology-based pilot initiatives such as blockchain-based traceability for textile relevant value chains;

(d)	Strengthen regulatory cooperation and promote standards and best practices in regulatory frameworks, risk management, conformity assessment and market surveillance to facilitate a predictable and harmonized regulatory environment;

(e)	Provide practical ways forward for standards bodies wishing to mainstream a gender perspective in standards and throughout the quality infrastructure for trade, notably through. The subprogramme will further support capacity-building, sharing of best practices and dissemination on the use of standards and regulatory cooperation, notably with its Standards for Sustainable Development Goals Portal (https://standards4sdgs.unece.org/) and its initiative on education on standards (https://learnqi.unece.org);

(f)	Promote up-to-date agricultural quality standards and explanatory guidelines through its normative work and promote awareness of food loss reduction through policy dialogues, partnerships with international organizations and technology-based initiatives to address food loss and waste;

(g)	Identify regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and assist Governments in setting action-oriented recommendations for implementing the instruments developed by the subprogramme through analytical evidence-based studies, including with the objective of pursuing ECE-wide cross-cutting priority themes;

(h)	Deepen its international policy dialogue, normative, technical assistance and capacity-building activities on the digitalization of trade processes in order to support efforts to harness the power of trade for sustainable development. a sustainable and resilient recovery.

6.	The above-mentioned work is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 5, 8, 9, 12 and 17 and to result in:

(a)	Increased implementation of simplified trade processes, and the digitalization of member States' trading environments, leading to greater productivity;

(b)	Increased transparency and traceability of the value chains and reduction of waste, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns;

(c)	Increased uptake of international standards by countries to enable the implementation of internationally harmonized regulatory processes;

(d)	Improved gender equality in trade through the increased participation of women traders;

(e)   Enhanced digitalization of trade procedures (e.g. progress towards adoption of trade related digital services like single window) to support the public and private sectors' efforts in member States to facilitate trade.

III.   Deliverables to be implemented in 2025

7.   The table below lists all deliverables of the subprogramme.

Category and subcategory	2025 planned	2026 planned
A. Facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert bodies		
Parliamentary documentation (number of documents)	**102**	**96**
1. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards	13	10
2. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	14	14
3. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards	60	60
4. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business	15	12
Substantive services for meetings (number of three-hour meetings)	**96**	**96**
5. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and its Bureau	4	4
6. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies, its Bureau and related expert bodies	13	13
7. The Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards and its specialized sections	26	26
8. The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business	53	53
B. Generation and transfer of knowledge		
Field and technical cooperation projects (number of projects)	**5**	**5**
9. On ~~enhancing usage and uptake of standards for sustainable development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls~~ quality infrastructure, risk management, education, and gender and trade	1	1
10. ~~—~~On agricultural standards, trade and food loss reduction in ~~agriculture~~ supply chains	1	1
11. On enhancing usage and uptake of international policy recommendations, e-business standards and supporting tools for sustainable and digital trade facilitation, fostering sustainable, inclusive and resilient supply and value chains in critical sectors for the green and digital transitions ~~On trade facilitation~~	3	3
Seminars, workshops and training events (number of days)	**18**	**16**
12. Seminars on quality infrastructure, risk management, education, and gender and trade ~~Workshops for policymakers and experts in low- and middle-income countries in the ECE region on trade procedures, supply chain management, conformity assessment and market surveillance, and women's entrepreneurship~~	6	4
13. Seminars ~~for standardization and inspection agencies and other stakeholders in transition economies and developing countries in the ECE region or beyond~~ on ECE agricultural quality standards, trade and food loss reduction	3	3
14. Seminars ~~for policymakers and experts in countries with economies in transition and developing countries in the ECE region or beyond on support for the implementation of~~ on trade facilitation-related standards, recommendations and guidelines	9	9
Publications (number of publications)	**9**	**9**
15. On regulatory and procedural barriers to trade ~~in a country to be decided~~	1	1
16. On ~~trade standard guidance in the following areas:~~ quality infrastructure, risk management, education, ~~sustainable development~~and gender and trade	2	3
17. On mainstreaming a gender perspective in standards	1	0
18. On agricultural trade, supply chains and food loss and waste	1	1
19. On trade facilitation recommendations, standards and strategies	4	4
Technical materials (number of materials)	**8**	**8**
20. Guidelines on cross-border trade	1	1
21. Training material and guidelines on trade standards and/or regulatory cooperation	2	2
22. Standards and guidelines on agricultural quality	4	4

Category and subcategory	2025 planned	2026 planned
23. Training material on trade facilitation and electronic business	1	1
Fact-finding, monitoring and investigating missions (number of missions)	**3**	**3~~1~~**
24. Fact-finding missions on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization, and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade	3~~3~~	1~~13~~

C. Substantive deliverables

Consultation, advice and advocacy: advisory services to government officials and other stakeholders ~~in at least 10 ECE member States~~ on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization, and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.

Databases and substantive digital materials: ECE databases for sustainable and digital trade facilitation based on the biannual survey conducted jointly with UN Regional Commissions and UNCTAD; and annual release of updates to UN/CEFACT information exchange standards, including UN/CCL and BSP RDM, UN/EDIFACT, UN/FLUX, UN/LOCODE, UNTDED, and XML schema library and code lists. ~~databases for e-business standards and codes.~~

D. Communication deliverables

Outreach programmes, special events and information materials: booklets, promotional materials, fact sheets and information brochures ~~reaching at least all programme countries in the ECE region and for more than 1,000 public and private sector experts~~.

External and media relations: press releases, publication launch events and articles in external newsletters intended for government officials and experts working on trade.

~~**Digital platforms and multimedia content**: website of the subprogramme, promotional videos and social media.~~