ECOWAS-EU-BMZ-UNITAR on "WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement & Regional Trade Facilitation Rules and Regulations"

Type:	Course
Location:	Web-based
Date:	24 Oct 2016 to 25 Nov 2016
Duration:	6 Weeks
Programme Area:	Public Finance and Trade
Website:	http://ecowas.unitar.org/
Price:	$0.00
Event Focal Point Email:	pft-elearning@unitar.org
Partnership:	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

BACKGROUND

The WTO members successfully negotiated the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) in December 2013 at the Bali Ministerial Conference, as a part of a wider 'Bali Package'. The domestic ratification process is currently underway, following the adoption of the Protocol of Amendments by the WTO members in November 2014. As the name suggests, the TFA contain provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods in transit, and sets out measures for

faster and more efficient custom procedures through effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and custom compliance issues. Interestingly, for the first time in history, the requirement to implement the TFA has been directly linked to the individual capacity of WTO member countries, and the TFA also contain provisions for capacity building and technical assistance in this regard.

This e-learning course aims to enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of the concept of trade facilitation, its impacts on trade flows and trade costs, with a focus on the impact of TFA on developing countries, businesses and custom authorities. The course will discuss the provisions of the Trade Facilitation Agreement in clear and jargon free language, explaining how developing countries can make use of the new rules as a platform to increase trade and decrease the cost and time of exporting and thus fully integrate into an increasingly globalized production system. The course will analyse, amongst other developing country or regional examples, the case study of ECOWAS, examining various obstacles to trade in the region, the significance of trade and reducing trade costs within the region, integration of the region in international value chains and the steps that can be taken by the policy makers to best utilise the trade facilitation measures to integrate in international value chains.

A successful completion of this course will enable participants to understand how the TFA will be implemented and its impact on developing and least-developed countries (with a special focus on ECOWAS region as a case study), anaylse the obligations and procedures imposed on custom authorities, assess particular trade and transportation facilitation needs and priorities of their individual countries/regions (such as ECOWAS), and identify possible development partners and technical assistance programs available to help them meet those needs. The course is designed especially for government officials, policy makers and custom authorities, but is also open to the general public who want to understand the process of trade facilitation, the WTO TFA and also to an extend the regional trade facilitation rules and regulations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- Explain the concept of 'trade facilitation' and its impact on trade flows and trade costs;

- Develop sound knowledge and understanding of the key provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and how this agreement will be implemented, including special and differential treatment provisions that developing countries may invoke;
- Use a reasonable judgment to assess their capacity building and support needs and priorities to implement the Agreement within their country/region;
- Understand the implications of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement for their country/region and their best approach forward, by analysing diverse case studies and implementation-related reports from other countries;
- Identify key technical assistance programs currently available for developing and least-developed countries; and
- Construct a clear picture of the strategy for best implementing the Agreement in their country/region and reap the benefits of trade facilitation for national competitiveness and integration into regional and global markets.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

This 5-week course will cover the following modules:

Module I – Introduction to the Concept of 'Trade Facilitation'

This Module will introduce the concept of 'trade facilitation', its principles and benefits. The Module will outline the generic approach for implementation of trade facilitation reforms and briefly discuss the existing trade facilitation instruments, including the regional trade facilitation rules and regulation (for instance, the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme). This Module will also identify various inter-governmental organisations that are invoked in work related to trade facilitation.

Module II – WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and its Implementation

This Module will begin with analysing the reasons for inclusion of 'trade facilitation' on the agenda of Doha negotiations and the change in trade patterns over the years. The Module will discuss the key provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and how this agreement will be implemented, including special and differential treatment provisions that developing countries may invoke.

Module III – Trade Facilitation and Regional Economic Integration: The Case of ECOWAS

This module will discuss the case of ECOWAS region with respect to trade facilitation and regional economic integration by examining various obstacles to trade faced by the region, the significance of trade and reducing trade costs within the region, and integration of the region in international value chains.

Module IV– Trade Facilitation: Support and Needs Self-Assessment

This Module will discuss measures to determine overall compliance level of a country (including, for instance, countries from the ECOWAS region as a case study) with the trade facilitation agreement and explore the Special and Differential (S&D) treatment needs of each country (which was examined as a case study). These include, for instance, measures needing more time to implement and technical assistance needs. The module will also discuss how to determine national priority level of measures and identify the steps to comply with each measure.

Module V –Case Studies and Implementation-related Reports

This module will analyse diverse case studies and implementation-related reports of trade facilitation measures undertaken by other countries in order to fully understand and examine the costs and benefits of implementing such measures for a country. Based on the analysis of these reports and case studies, the module will recommend various steps that can be taken by the policy makers of different countries/region to best utilise the trade facilitation measures to integrate in international value chains

METHODOLOGY

The courses will be internet-based, delivered over a 5-week period, moderated by international/regional experts, asynchronous, and puts an emphasis on online discussions, peer-to-peer review and self-paced learning. The participants will be primarily responsible for their own learning over the span of the course. The courses will consist of the following components:

- Compulsory and optional reading materials relating to the concept of trade facilitation, WTO trade facilitation agreement and implementation, regional trade facilitation and regulations, support and needs assessment.

- The case study of ECOWAS region with respect to trade facilitation and regional economic integration, examining the significance of trade facilitation measures for the region, trading issues faced by the region, various efforts and policies put in place to reduce trade costs within the region and to facilitate the integration of the region in regional and international value chains.
- Case Studies and implementation-related reports of trade facilitation measures undertaken by other countries in order to fully understand and examine the costs and benefits of implementing such measures for a country.
- External links to additional resources and websites related to the modules.
- A glossary of terms and acronyms provided as a learning tool throughout the course.
- A quiz at the end of each module.
- A Community Discussion Board will be available for participants to post questions or comments visible to the instructors and other participants. This discussion board will be moderated by the course mentor.

TARGETED AUDIENCE

This course is designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of government officials and policymakers from ECOWAS member-countries to successfully adopt and implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. This course is an intermediate level course for which the target audience are government officials, parliamentarians, policymakers, Ministries (especially ministry of trade and transportation), investigation and inspection agencies, custom officials, national trade and transportation facilitation bodies, businesses and other technical assistance agencies. The course will be highly interactive in which all registered participants will share their diverse experiences, best-practices and build their network with other professionals through UNITAR's e-learning portal.

The ECOWAS Member states are as follows:

- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Cabo Verde
- Côte d'Ivoire
- The Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea

- Guinea Bissau
- Liberia
- Mali
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Togo

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This course will be offered free of charge in English, French and Portuguese as part of training activities under Trade Directorate of the ECOWAS Commission. Limited slots are available and will be subject to a selection process conducted by ECOWAS, taking into account in particular, the geographical distribution and gender balance.

Participants will receive a Certificate of Completion if they have a passing grade of 80% on all the quizzes and have participated in the community discussion in a meaningful manner. Participants who remained active in the course but did not complete the certification requirements (completed at least 70% of the requirements) will receive a Certificate of Participation.

Recommended hardware and software requirements for taking this e-learning course:

- Platform: Windows XP sp3, Vista sp2, Windows 7 sp1, MacOS X.
- Hardware: 2 GB of RAM and higher for Vista and Windows 7.
- Software: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Powerpoint and Adobe Acrobat Reader (downloadable for free at adobe.com).
- Browser: Internet Explorer 8 or higher; Mozilla Firefox 8 or higher.
- Internet connection: 128kbps and higher.
- Note: JavaScript, pop-ups & cookies must be enabled.