

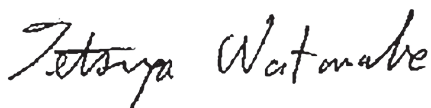
Foreword

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has placed significant emphasis on trade facilitation to promote economic integration across Southeast and East Asia. The ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 aims to promote greater alignment in trade facilitation amongst ASEAN Member States and to establish international best practices. Translating and prioritising the agenda in a practical and measurable manner, the ASEAN Economic Ministers agreed in 2017 to achieve the short-term target of reducing the cost of trade transactions by 2020. The ASEAN Seamless Trade Facilitation Indicators (ASTFI) and Trade Transactions Cost (TTC) were developed by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Trade Facilitation Joint Consultative Committee, to keep track of progress in trade facilitation within ASEAN by using a set of ASEAN-specific indicators.

Since the baseline ASTFI-TTC study was conducted in 2018–2019, the world has experienced revolutionary changes with implications for ASEAN's trade facilitation agenda. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic caused much economic pain and human loss, but also accelerated digitalisation. Many governments quickly introduced innovative and flexible measures to keep trade flowing across borders. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, which came into force on 1 January 2022, has further deepened economic integration between ASEAN and its five Dialogue Partners. Continuous updates and evaluations of current trade facilitation practices are needed to achieve further reductions in trade transaction costs by 2025.

This book is a follow-up to the baseline ASTFI-TTC report published in July 2021. It provides policymakers and other stakeholders with information for assessing the achievements and identifying areas of improvement in trade facilitation in ASEAN. It will be imperative for conversation amongst policymakers and other stakeholders to move towards global best practices. As the book highlights, the focus of reforms should include improving time efficiency by using technologies, promoting electronic transactions, enhancing transparency and certainty in intra-regional trade, aligning with international best practices or regional certifications, and improving coordination amongst government agencies.

ERIA remains committed and looks forward to extending its partnership with ASEAN in a region-wide collective effort to strengthen Southeast and East Asia economic integration.



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Disclaimer

This is a preliminary draft book submitted to the ATF-JCC for comments and feedback. The opinions expressed are solely those of the study team and do not represent the official views of any ASEAN bodies, ASEAN Member States, or ERIA.