

## **Government-Business Cooperation in Managing Trade Barriers: Evaluating Mechanisms for Information Dissemination and Reporting**

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Trade facilitation and effectively managing potential trade barriers are fundamental goals of any nation's foreign relations branch. Knowing what other nations do to effect communication between government and industry members is key in developing one's own mechanisms. To this end, at the request of a government's trade bureau, we researched various mechanisms from several countries and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. These include formal mechanisms which the government implements with the specific goal of facilitating trade, as well as informal mechanisms which have the incidental effect of achieving the same goal.

Governments use online trade portals as an easy way to spread information about investment treaties, trade deals, and other countries' obligations when engaging in international trade. There are also a number of other online mechanisms, such as ePing (operated by the World Trade Organization) and RapEx (a nongovernmental organization) which catalogue measures which (potentially) affect trade. Beyond online means, governments will organize seminars, "road shows" where trade officials speak to industry members, publish newsletters and executive summaries about treaties and trading, and establish national contact points or points of single contact to help industry members find information more easily.

There are a number of ways for the government to pull information in from industry, including the same online portals which disseminate information. Technical Barriers to Trade networks are another way, involving communication between various government agencies to quickly and efficiently alert the relevant official about a potential barrier. Other means include parliamentary standing committees, registered lobbying, and political mobilization.

Using 5 criteria, we evaluated the mechanisms. These criteria were: user-friendliness, accessibility, effectiveness, user confidence, and specificity. We ultimately reached these conclusions: Conclusion 1: communication between various government agencies is paramount. It does not matter if dialogue is ongoing if the information does not reach the right official. Conclusion 2: the "open doors" strategy is the best option. Assuming that information is channeled the right way, having more avenues of communication is better than fewer. Conclusion 3: information is best pushed specifically, not generally. Targeting a specific audience with seminars and presentations is more effective than a non-tailored approach. Conclusion 4: information can also be collected specifically from major industries. Communicating specifically with officials from major industries and sectors is a valuable way of gaining information about the most significant parts of a country's economy. Conclusion 5: detailed, specific instructions are important when collecting data. This helps with user-

friendliness as well as user confidence, and it is essential that the government receive the information they need to investigate a claim.