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Digital Trade Enablers and Barriers in the European Union

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to research the indicators of digital development in the EU that are preconditions for development of digital trade and also to confront them with the barriers for cross-border digital trade. The hypothesis is that countries differ in the digital society development that can be burden in their participation in digital trade activities. The preconditions are measured by comparing indicators/indexes that regards the e-commerce and/or to digital trade (i.e. B2C e-commerce index; Network readiness index, internet users, etc.) while the barriers are measured by Digital trade restrictiveness index and Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index. The analysis is focused to EU member states which are divided on two groups: EU14 (EU-15 – UK) and EU13 (new member states). The main findings indicate the EU member states are very heterogeneous due to the ICT development, and also, unexpectedly, some of the EU members put high restrictions for carrying out digital trade. The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Germany are the best performers in digital society development. At the same time, France and Germany are the most restrictive EU members. For the efficient exploitation of the ICT in conducting the trade activities, the EU should overcome the differences in regulatory framework of the member states but also it should: promote the investments in adequate infrastructure and skills and help businesses to be present on the digital platforms.

INTRODUCTION

The recent pandemic of Covid-19 (in Spring and in Autumn 2020) boosts the people to stay at home and to increase the purchase of necessary things via Internet. Thanks to technology development, decreasing the cost of ICT services, broadband internet connection, buyers are more oriented to buy products through the online platform and on the web shops. On the other hand, many businesses faced with the (temporary) closure of the doors of their shops and consequently with the declining in face-to-face trade but simultaneously they increase their sales on the web shops. Physical contact between buyer and seller is gradually disappearing and in the digital trade it doesn't exist. The statistics will surely indicate the increasing of such digital trading goods and/or services (e-commerce) especially for 2020.

Digital trade is not a new phenomenon and it is growing and sophisticating together with the development of information and communication technology (ICT). Lopez-Gonzalez and Jouanjean (2017) define the concept of digital trade with the explanation that digital trade encompasses digitally enabled transactions in trade in goods and services that can be digitally or physically delivered. Further, OECD (2019) considers digital trade as trade that is digitally ordered and/or digitally delivered. Digital economy accounts for 6–8 per cent of value added and 4 per cent in employment tops (IMF, 2018; OECD, 2014). Digital trade is growing very fast with the huge potential to partially replace the classical approach of buying/selling goods and services. Digital trade involves business-to-business (B2B) transactions within Global value chains (GVCs) where businesses are purchasing from each other through online platforms; as well as transactions between consumers (consumer to consumer, C2C); business to consumers (B2C); government to consumer (G2C). All of these transactions are underpinned by data, which is driver of digital trade. The uncovered area in this domain is in shortage of appropriate measurement of digital trade, no appropriate trade agreement(s) that will cover necessary issues related to digital trade, and unexpectedly, restrictiveness in providing digital trade (especially in services). From this area, motivation for providing more complex, systematic overview of digital trade enablers and barriers has arisen. The aim of this paper is to emphasize and start the discussion about some important questions related with the digital trade. The issues are focused to problems for measuring the digital trade readiness and characteristics of trade policy (agreements) in the area of digital trade. Special focus will be on EU member states that are interesting due to the Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe that is adopted in 2015. This strategy covers different aspects of digital economy and its availability and usage by people and businesses. Further, the EU Commission put the priority “A Europe fit for the digital age” among the six main priorities in the period 2019-2024. The Commission is determined to make this Europe's “Digital Decade”. “Europe must now strengthen its digital sovereignty and set standards, rather than following those of others – with a clear focus on data, technology, and infrastructure” (European Commission, 2020)¹.

The approach to these aspects of digital trade will include the reflections from theoretical and analytical point of view. The paper is structured through the four chapters: the second one is focused to defining the framework of digital trade and review of literature about the trade policy in that domain; the third one comprises: (a) some approaches to measuring the readiness and/or precondition for digital trade development and about digital trade barriers, and also covers (b) the analysis of digital trade (e-commerce) indicators in the EU and the data about barriers. The last one is conclusion.

1. FRAMEWORK OF DIGITAL TRADE REGULATION AND LIBERALIZATION

1.1 Digital trade and digital society

UNCTAD's World Investment Review (2017) defined the digital economy as ‘the application of digital technologies to the production and trade of goods and services’. There is a growing consensus that digital trade encompasses digitally enabled transactions in trade in goods and services that can be digitally or physically delivered (Lopez-Gonzalez and Jouanjean, 2017). Technology development, decreasing the cost of ICT services, broadband internet connection create preconditions for buying things through the online platform or from the web sales portal of selected suitable stores. On the other hand, many firms, especially SMEs can offer their products worldwide (Mitrovic, 2016). The USITC (2014) defines digital trade as domestic commerce and international trade in which the Internet and internet-based technologies play a particularly significant role in ordering, producing or delivering products and services. Such a definition includes commerce in most physical goods, such as goods ordered online, and physical goods that have a digital counterpart. The United States Trade Representative (USTR) argues that digital trade should be a broad concept that captures not only the sale of consumer products on the internet and the supply of online services but also the data flows that enable global value chains, services that enable smart manufacturing and a myriad of other platforms and applications (USTR, 2017).

¹ This priority covers a wide range of digital society areas: artificial intelligence; online platforms; European data strategy; cyber security; digital skills; connectivity; high performing computing; European industrial strategy.

It is necessary to distinguish between digital trade; digital goods and digital economy. Digital trade do not include just trade of ICT goods and services, it also includes purchases, of different goods and services, online through the widespread use of internet-enabled devices which provide consumers with direct access to online markets. Digital economy includes ICT sectors and parts of other sectors that have been integrated with digital technology (Zhang and Chen, 2019). For the moment the reliable statistical recording of the digital trade at the cross-country data doesn't exist. Instead, some estimates regarding the e-commerce (defined as digitally ordered transactions, whether digitally or physically delivered) indicate the value is close to US\$ 29 trillion for 2017, and 88 per cent of these sales are taking place between businesses (B2B). According to Europe 2020 – E-Commerce Region Report the European market is a very vibrant one. It consists of very demanding and different markets. The report includes 34 countries (grouped in five regions) where almost 90% of the residents have access to the Internet, 67% of which shopped online². The value of e-commerce reached the 636 billion euro in 2019 (14.2% increase from 2018). The forecast is that the e-commerce value will be 717 billion of euro in 2020 (Ecommerce Europe, 2020).

The positive impact of internet on the international trade development/rise has already been proven by Freund and Weinhold (2004), Clarke and Wallsten (2006); Lin et al. (2015); Liu and Nath (2013); Barbero and Rodriguez-Crespo (2018) and because of this it is important to overview the available indicators of digital society development and confront them with the barriers to be able to reach findings about EU readiness at the integration level and also at the level of the member states.

1.2 Liberalization of digital trade

Even the digital trade is not a new phenomenon; its importance is growing in the newest period. It is especially useful for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that faced limitation in participation in trade due to big cost for market entry, differences in regulation and standards, or access to information. Digital trade reduces costs of intermediate goods, as producers have access to a wider market and a larger number of possible suppliers. J. López González and J. Ferencz (2018) provide a detailed overview of the importance of trade policy on the multilateral and regional level to enable the digital trade. Additionally they warn that it is necessary to take measures for digital trade together with the services/policies that are related to the transport, border control of goods and services. It means digital trade is not influenced just by measures that deal with the digital connectivity but also it is impacted by the other measures important for shipping and delivery of goods and services that require to take into account a set of regulations (agreements). They also applied the gravity model and found the positive impact of digitalization on trade in goods and services (trade openness) for the developed countries.

R. Neeraj (2019, 15) discusses the problem of distinguishing goods and services in digital trade and conclude that “digital trade agreement, if facilitated by the WTO, must (a) bring legislative clarity to the classification of digital products; and (b) be mindful of the anticompetition concerns that prevail in the digital industry». Meltzer (2019) focuses on the role of governments in the digital era and emphasized their two key challenges: (1) “to maximize the opportunities from data flows for trade and the impact of data on growth and jobs”. The second challenge is connected with the impact of crossborder data flows on the achievement of other goals, such as the protection of privacy, cybersecurity, or the need to access data for law enforcement purposes. Chander (2019) also points that Internet of things (IoT) will increase the role of government where its concerns with respect to privacy, security, and standards should arise. IoT comprise goods and services that make trade negotiations and scope more complex, dealing with multiple disciplines. On the other hand, some authors have researched some obstacles to digital trade. V. Aturin et al. (2020) pointed out the areas of high uncertainty in the era of digital trade, such as: job market, data control, security, the environment, etc. that can produce shocks. The USITC survey identified the following obstacles to digital trade: “(a) localization requirements (use of domestic server suppliers, etc.), (b) other market access limitations (FDI requirements, trading rights, etc.); (c) data privacy and protection requirements in territories for cross-border transfer of personal data for governments that have such regimes, (d) intellectual property rights (copyright, trademark, patent, or trade secret infrin-

² The countries of SEE regions are named «up-and-coming markets»

gement); (e) uncertain legal liability rules, including for Internet intermediaries; (f) censorship (when services like Facebook are prevented from entering China); and (g) unclear or overly complicated customs procedures” USITC (2014).

O. Biryukova and A. Daniltshev (2019) have researched the need, preparation and timeliness of international organizations to regulate and create favourable (stimulating) and safe framework for digital trade performance. It implies creation of the new rules of trade policy. They found out that countries manage to regulate various aspects of e-commerce more comprehensively at the bilateral and plurilateral levels. These can be a way or tools that may facilitate the creation of future WTO agreements governing digital trade. On the multinational level, the World Trade Organization (WTO) should boost and promote the negotiations and trade agreement that will cover the e-commerce (digital trade) while at regional levels, regional integrations should create a framework for abolishing the barriers of digital trade. The General Agreements on trade in services (GATS) with the Annex on Telecommunications focuses on the importance of data communications to all services. *“It obligates governments to let service businesses transfer data – to use telecommunications networks and services to move information within and across borders and to access databases or other information stored abroad – in order to supply a service protected by a GATS commitment”* (Porges and Enders, 2016).

The Information Technology Agreement (ITA) was concluded by 29 participants at the Singapore Ministerial Conference of WTO in 1996 and it is connected partially with the digital economy. It regulates elimination on tariffs on a list of IT products. The number of signatories has grown to 82, representing about 97 per cent of world trade in IT products. In 2015 at the Nairobi Ministerial Conference, over 50 members concluded the expansion of the Agreement, which now covers an additional 201 products valued at over \$1.3 trillion per year. In 1998, in the ministerial conference of the WTO the Declaration on Global Electronic Commerce was adopted recognizing the growing role of e-commerce and pointing necessity to the establishment of a work programme on e-commerce. On the WTO official site there are no new information about these agreement and declaration. At the end of the December 2018 WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, trade ministers from 71 WTO member countries adopted a Joint Statement on E-commerce, which was circulated on 25 January 2019. Also there is no new information about the results of this statement. From these review it is obvious that there are some agreements regarding some aspect of e-commerce (digital trade, trade in ICT products) but there are no one comprehensive and systemic agreement to regulate digital trade all over the world.

1.3 Regulation of digital trade in the EU

In the framework of the strategy Europe 2020 that is implementing in the decade 2010-2020, the Digital Agenda is one of the flagship initiatives and it was focused to The Digital Single Market. It has three pillars: access to online products and services; conditions for digital networks and services to grow and thrive and growth of the European digital economy. It deals with the copyright law, rules for audiovisual media; cross-border sales, reforming telecoms rules etc. In the newest period, the EU has developed Digital strategy “Shaping Europe’s digital future” (European Commission, 2020, 1) to ensure *“technology that works for people, a fair and competitive digital economy and an open, democratic and sustainable society”*. These elements will improve the single market framework that should ensure fair and equal possibilities and rules for all participants (producers and consumers). Special attention to establishment of digital single market is also remarkable in the EU multiannual financial plan for the period 2021-2027 where the overall budget (for digital society) is more than €8.2 billion. It will shape and support the digital transformation of Europe’s society and economy. *«The programme will boost investments in supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society, including through Digital Innovation Hubs.»* (European Commission, 2020c).

Obviously, the good and ambitious framework is defined and it requires a lot of common efforts to reach the more homogenous achievements among member states.

2. RESEARCH – READINESS AND BARRIERS FOR DIGITAL TRADE

2.1 Methodology

Some institutions create different approaches in measurement the preconditions (readiness) for digital trade development. There is no unique way of measurement of digital trade and no developed statistical/accounting tools. There are indicators developed by some international organization, such as World Trade Organizations, World Economic Forum, OECD, ITU and UNCTAD, that provide some information about the digital trade development. World Trade Report (2018) is focused to digital trade and particularly on the issues of Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing and Blockchain. They also indicate that digital technologies influence on the lowering trade costs but also they create new concerns about market concentration, loss of privacy, productivity, intellectual property and the digital divide. OECD (2019) summarizes the existing tools for measuring some aspects of digital trade and pointed out the following approaches:

- E-commerce Readiness is developed by UNCTAD and it is focused on Business to Consumer (B2C) - online shopping (B2C) transactions, measures an economy's preparedness to support online shopping: web presence, possibility to pay online, and delivery reliability. It calculates the indexes for 152 countries based on four indicators with the same ponder: account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider; Individuals using the Internet (% of population); Postal Reliability Index and Secure Internet servers.
- Networked Readiness Index is developed by the World Economic Forum to measure the capacity of countries to leverage ICTs for increased competitiveness and well-being. It consists of subindexes: the enabling *environment*; a country *readiness* in terms of e. g. infrastructure and skills; the *usage* of ICT; and economic and social *impact*³. The new Network Readiness Index was developed by the Portulans Institute (2019) and consists of four pillars: technology (access, content and future technology); people (individuals, businesses, government); governance (trust, regulation, inclusion) and impact (economy, quality of life, SDG contribution).
- Global ICT Development Index is developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), it aims to measure the information society by combining 11 indicators on ICT access (an indication of the available ICT infrastructure and individuals' access to basic ICTs), ICT *usage* (including intensity of use), and ICT *skills*.
- Ma et al (2019) has created Index System for Evaluating National Digital Trade Development (NDTD) for 111 (developed and developing) countries where they include 13 indicators grouped in: internet level, payment solutions, logistics performance, e-commerce development, legal supervision and trade potential. Applying the factor analysis they found the trade performance of developed countries is much better than that of developing countries where the best ranking countries are mainly concentrated in Europe.
- For the European union, the important is also the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) that observe Europe's overall digital performance. It is a composite index that summarizes relevant indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracks the evolution of EU Member States, across five main dimensions: Connectivity, Human Capital, Use of Internet, Integration of Digital Technology, Digital Public Services⁴.

We did the comparative analysis of available indicators for the EU member states.

³ The last edition was published in 2016.

⁴ DESI overall index, calculated as the weighted average of the five main DESI dimensions: 1 Connectivity (25%), 2 Human Capital (25%), 3 Use of Internet (15%), 4 Integration of Digital Technology (20%) and 5 Digital Public Services (15%). The data are available for the period 2015-2020. More information about methodology and sources of data, <https://digital-agenda-data.eu/datasets/desi/indicators>.

2.2 Analysis on EU member states sample

Even the European Union (EU) represents common market and, in general, EU member states are among most liberalized countries; the member states differ between them selves regarding the reached scores and also there are some exemptions, such as telecomm services in France, Slovakia and Germany with the big share of state ownership in privatized telecom companies.

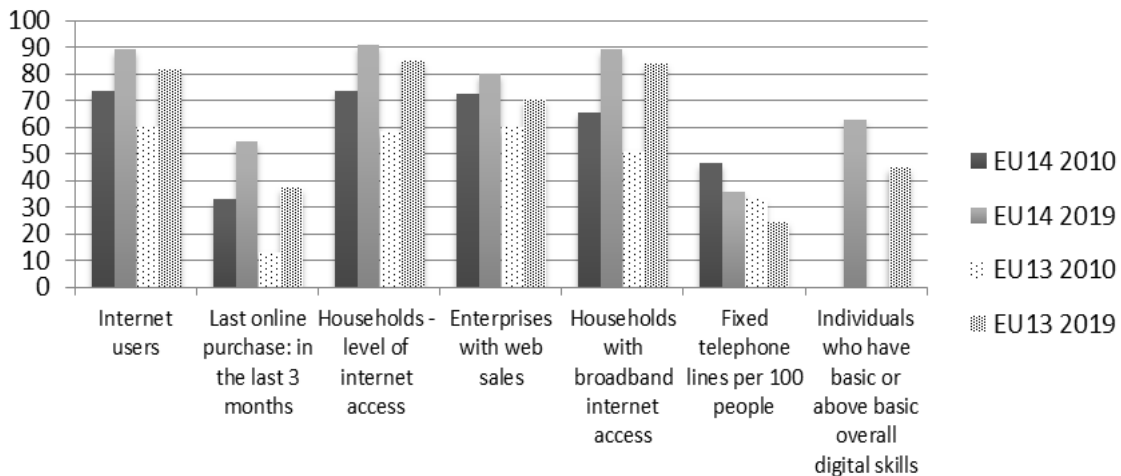


Figure 1. Indicators of ICT infrastructure and development in EU14 and in EU2013 in 2010 and in 2019

EU 14= EU15- UK

EU13= new EU member states

Source: Eurostat database, 2020.

From the Figure 1 we can emphasize: (1) the difference in achievements in selected indicators in 2019 in comparison with 2010 for EU14 (EU15- UK) and EU13 (new member states) countries and (2) to compare the performance of EU14 and EU13. In all observed variables, the EU14 has achieved better results: in average there are about 90 per cent of people who use internet, more than 50% of them have used internet for purchasing in the last 3 months, about 90% of households have internet access and almost all of them have broadband internet access; about 89% of enterprises have provided web sales. Fixed telephone lines per 100 people are decreasing in EU14 and in EU13 that is not strange due the availability of mobile Internet (internet is not connected with the number of telephone lines as it was the practice 20 years ago). Even the difference between EU14 and EU13 is just 10 percentage points in share of internet users, the difference is much higher in the share of internet users who use the internet for buying goods and services. The difference in enterprises with web sales, between EU14 and EU13, is about 10 percentage points in 2019 and it remains quite similar in 2019 as it was 2010. Regarding the skills, the data are available for 2015 and 2019 and the data for 2019 are presented in the figure. It is huge difference between these two groups of EU members where the average share of individuals who have basic or above basic overall digital skills for the EU14 is 63 and for EU13 just 45%.

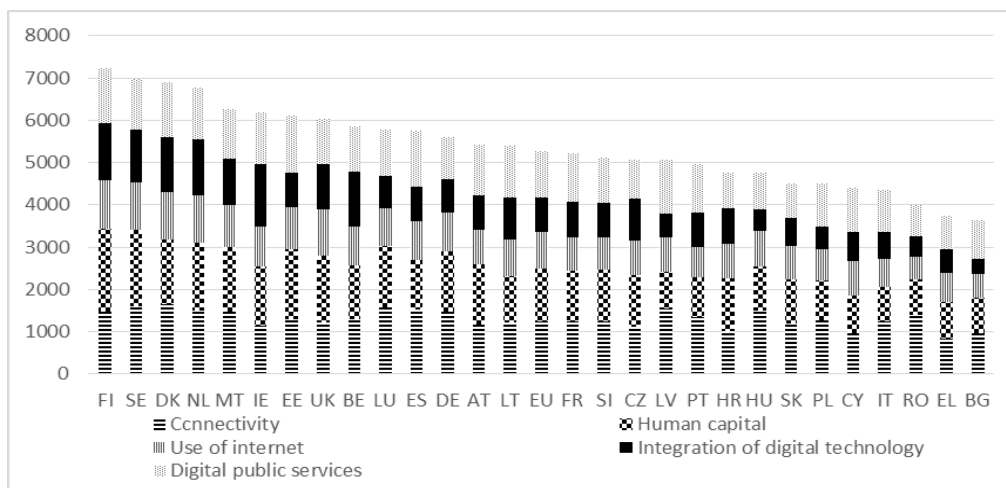


Figure 2. Digital economy and society index in 2020

Source: European Commission, 2020a.

The presented data (Figure 2) indicates the different readiness for participation in digital trade. The most competitive economies, such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands have the highest scores of digital society development. On the other hand the Bulgaria, Greece and Romania are at the end of the scale with huge gaps in all digital society components.

Table 1. Some indexes about ICT readiness and e-commerce

Countries	B2C e-commerce index 2019		Network readiness index 2020		National Digital Trade Development Rankings 2018 (comprehensive performance)	
	score	rank	score	rank	score	rank
Netherlands	96.4	1	81.37	4	1.224	6
Finland	94.4	4	80.16	6	0.924	18
Denmark	94.2	5	82.19	2	0.935	16
Ireland	93.3	8	72.13	19	0.715	23
Germany	92.9	9	77.48	9	1.567	2
Estonia	90.7	14	70.32	23	0.654	25
France	90.4	16	73.18	17	1.066	11
Austria	89.7	17	72.92	18	...	
Sweden	89.6	18	82.75	1	1.081	9
Belgium	87.9	20	70.67	20	0.995	14
Cyprus	85.5	23	60.67	36	0.173	40
Slovakia	85.3	24	60.78	35	0.454	30
Czechia	85.3	25	66.33	28	0.466	28
Croatia	84.3	27	55.94	43	0.186	38
Luxembourg	83.7	29	75.27	11	1.051	12
Lithuania	83.5	30	64.70	29	0.575	26
Poland	82.8	31	61.80	33	0.296	36
Slovenia	82.7	32	66.58	27	...	
Spain	82.4	33	67.31	25	0.756	21
Latvia	81.6	35	60.47	37	0.460	29
Italy	81.6	36	63.69	32	0.733	22
Hungary	78.9	38	60.05	39	0.305	35
Bulgaria	78.3	39	55.03	46	-0.005	46
Greece	77.6	41	55.20	45	0.041	45
Portugal	76.8	43	64.40	31	0.483	27
Malta	76.4	44	66.73	26	0.413	32
Romania	74.5	46	54.16	49	-0.048	51

Source: UNCTAD, 2019

The average value of e-commerce B2C index for the group of developed countries is 87 and the European economies dominate the top-10 list. The EU members are ranked mixed- some of them are in top 10 (Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Germany) and some of them have index below 87 – countries ranked after 20th position (17 EU member states). NRI provides analysis for 134 countries where EU members took a half of 20 best performers. Developed countries in North America and Europe dominate the top 30 countries in the comprehensive performance rankings. The EU member states are ranked differently and are ranked from 1st position (Sweden) to 49th rank (Romania). The score difference between the best and the worst performer in the EU is above 25 points.

The participation in digital trade is also determined with the restrictions that countries are faced in providing such kind of cross-border trade. Marel (2019) warns that digital protectionism is the biggest threat to globalization today (Pejanovic, 2020) and according to the Digital Trade Restrictiveness Index (DTRI), he found there are more than 1,500 measures listed restricting digital trade that is increase of 3% over the restriction on traditional trade of goods.

ECIPE created Digital trade restrictiveness index (DTRI) that includes four clusters of variables: fiscal restrictions, establishment restrictions, restrictions on data and trading restrictions. They cover 64 countries worldwide. The overall DTRI ranges from 0 (i.e. completely open) to 1 (i.e. virtually restricted) with increasing values representing higher levels of digital trade costs for businesses. It is emphasized that the DTRI is negatively associated with the level of economic development and also it is higher for the countries with lower level of ICT and digital capacities. The five most restrictive countries (within observed group) are: China, India, Russia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The most digitally open countries are: New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Ireland and Hong Kong.

Further, the OECD has also created the Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (which is based on Services trade restrictiveness index) with the aim to identify and quantify cross-cutting barriers affecting trade in digitally enabled services (Ferencz, 2019). DTRI includes five dimensions: infrastructure and connectivity; electronic transactions; payments system; intellectual property rights; other barriers affecting trade in digitally enabled services. Scoring go from value of 0 in case of absence of trade restrictions and a value of 1 when restrictions are in place.

Table 2. Restrictiveness in digital trade in the EU

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Digital trade restrictiveness index 2019</i>		<i>Digital Services Trade Restrictiveness Index</i>
	<i>Score</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Score</i>
Netherlands	0.17	54	0.10417
Finland	0.22	31	0.12262
Denmark	0.22	35	0.10417
Ireland	0.13	62	0.14387
Germany	0.33	13	0.14387
Estonia	0.18	51	0.08292
France	0.36	9	0.12299
Austria	0.19	45	0.20202
Sweden	0.20	40	0.14387
Belgium	0.22	33	0.16232
Cyprus	0.18	48	...
Slovakia	0.23	28	0.10133
Czechia	0.18	47	0.14103
Croatia	0.19	43	...
Luxembourg	0.17	52	0.08292
Lithuania	0.21	36	0.10417
Poland	0.22	34	0.26338
Slovenia	0.18	49	0.12262
Spain	0.26	21	0.12262
Latvia	0.17	53	0.22327
Italy	0.24	25	0.12583
Hungary	0.23	26	0.16553

Bulgaria	0.20	41	...
Greece	0.24	24	0.14428
Portugal	0.19	46	0.14455
Malta	0.16	55	...
Romania	0.27	19	...

Source: ECIPE, 2018; OECD, 2020.

According to DTRI, it is obvious that majority of EU member states impose low restrictions in digital trade. There are also some unexpected situations such as high level of protection in Germany and France, two high-developed countries while on the other hand new EU member states have lower level of barriers for digital trade activities. The high barriers are in the area: restrictions on data and in establishment restrictions (indexes higher than 0.40)⁵. European countries that rank high in digital openness are Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Latvia, Luxembourg and Estonia that points the most digitally open countries are small economies with a larger services sector compared to digitally restricted countries in Europe. France and Germany are most restrictive EU members.

The second indicator (DSTRI) indicates low level of barriers in the EU (only OECD members) but the indexes differs among countries and goes from 0.08292 in Luxembourg and Estonia to 0.26338 in Poland and majority of countries have this score in range between 0.10 and 0.20. According to this indicator, Germany and France are ranked in the middle with the values of 0.14387 (Germany) and 0.12299 (France).

CONCLUSION

Trade development highly depends on the accessibility, usage and skills to apply the possibilities that ICT offers. Even there are some measurements of e-commerce; still there is no adequate data about measurement of cross-border digital trade. Relevant institutions have developed indicators to measure the readiness of states to implement digital technology and on the other hand, the measurement of a set of imposed barriers those disable or make more expensive the trade between countries.

Analysis from this paper emphasized the heterogeneous level of ICT implementation in the EU member states. There is polarization between highly developed EU member states and EU new member states. The difference between countries is also very clear in presenting the indexes from different institutions. The best performers are countries from North and North-West Europe: Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland. Among EU new member states, Estonia is the best performers and according to its scores it belong to the group of leaders regarding the ICT development. It (together with Luxembourg) also has low level of barriers in comparison with the rest of the EU member states. Unexpectedly, Germany and France have high level of restrictions for the digital trade.

The heterogeneities among EU member states indicate that there is potential in the common (single) market that should be better exploited. It can be done only with the addressing the issues of increasing the digital literacy on all levels and for the all subjects. Additionally, the EU and its member states should promote the development and strengthening of consciousness that the presence (of businesses, government services, etc.) on the Internet, social networks (media - Baltezarevic, R. and Baltezarevic, I., 2020), specific platforms is not the question of choice, it is the necessity. European Commission will adress some critical, usolved areas in the domain of digital society in the next period and it will create the safe environment for all participant in the markets to conduct their business with the higher share of digitally ordered and/or delivered goods and services. Furthermore, all member states should strongly encourage the process of digitization of society, assuring additional efforts, funds and resources for creating a modern infrastructure, for educating people (ICT skills) and for promote companies in developing and expanding the online businesses. The success will depend on the synergies of activities in all levels.

⁵ Establishment Restrictions covering: Foreign Investment Restrictions, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) measures, Competition Policy, and Business Mobility. Restrictions on Data: covering Data Policies, Intermediate Liability, and Content Access (ECIPE, 2018).

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