

Trade agreements should recognize the critical issue of interoperability between Single Window (SW) systems. This is one of the main conclusions of a new published [joint report](#) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The report notes that while many trade agreements, including the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, support the use of SW systems to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, only a small number of recent trade agreements address the issue of interoperability between such systems.

Accordingly, most of SWs developed at national level operate in isolation and do not dialogue with the SWs of other States. Building bridges between such platforms or developing common cross-sectoral or cross-jurisdictional approaches is needed to enable global flows of electronic data and documents.

In particular, the interconnection of Single Window systems or the development of regional SWs linking all the SW systems developed at national level by the members of a specific region or commercial block (as it is the case in the [APEC region](#)), is an important trade facilitation tool that should be addressed by all trade agreements, as it would enable trade and customs documents transmitted by traders to the exit country to be used as entry documentation in the entry country, avoiding any duplication in the transmission of such information.

Unfortunately, apart from a few cases, this is not what happens in the reality, as the exchange of information between SW systems continues to rely on physical documents to fulfil the requirements of trading partners, counterparts and authorities across borders. An example of Regional Trade Agreement that includes specific provisions on interoperability between SWs is the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), that at Article 7 of [Chapter 7 \(Customs administration and trade facilitation\)](#)

, after mandating each Party to establish or maintain a single window system for the electronic submission through a single entry point of the documentation and data required for importation into their territories, at paragraph 6 requires the Parties to *“work towards a harmonization, to the extent possible, of data elements and customs processes that facilitate use of a single transmission of information to both the exporting and importing Party”*.