Trade information portals (TIPs) are electronic platforms that guide businesses in cross-border trade by offering them a one-stop-shop with comprehensive information on procedural steps needed in order to complete an import, export and transit operation and the relevant regulation. Offering a free access to regulations and procedures to be followed in order to complete an international trade transaction with a single, clear and unequivocal description of steps that traders need to put in place, responds to a principle of administrative transparency: the simpler is to understand rules, procedures and formalities related to international trade operations, the easier will be for traders to engage in them.

Available on the UNCTAD website at this link , the Roadmap for Building a National Trade Information Portal is largely based on the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)   Recommend ation No. 38/2021
, that gives among others a definition of TIPs:
"…a website that aggregates and publishes all trade-related regulatory information originating from the government agencies that perform a control function in relation to imports, exports, transits or trans-shipments and that allows importers, exporters or anyone involved in international trade to easily find and understand any legal requirements and procedures pertaining to specific commodities that are necessary to comply with national obligations for clearings goods at the border as well as before or after clearance"
.

The UN/CEFACT recommendation No. 38/2021 further specifies that a Trade Information Portal may also provide any other pertinent information available nationally or internationally that may facilitate the trade of goods or services across borders including highlighting external market access opportunities or impediments. Although TIPs are currently used also by many African countries to provide their traders with updated information on regulatory requirements needed to undertake international trade transactions, they however rarely include information on transport regulation. Among the few ones, the Zambia TIP is an example, as this portal includes applications for obtaining permits to be used in cross border road transportation and for international driving permits, although the relevant instructions are still yet to be introduced.

It must be noted that also the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) urges WTO members to adopt such portals by *"making available through the internet, and update to the extent possible and as appropriate, procedures on importation, exportation, and transit, including the main regulation applicable and forms and documents required"*   (Article 1.2.1).

The UN TIP model is based on UNCTAD's eRegulations technology and methodology, an e-government system developed to assist governments of developing and less developed countries in promoting public awareness on a wide range of administrative procedures, with the aim of facilitating business, trade and investment activities in their territories.The first country to use UNCTAD's TIP platform is Kenya, which launched in November 2017 the InfotradeKenya
platform.