



Transparency, Trade Policy & The Global Trade Alert

FIW Trade Talks

Vienna University of Economics & Business

Simon J. Evenett, Professor of International Trade
& Economic Development and Founder
16 November 2021

**St. Gallen
Endowment**
for Prosperity through Trade

Transparency is a foundation of sound economic governance



- “Sunlight is said to the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman”—U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis (1963)
- “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.”—U.S. Senator and former Harvard Professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1983)

The woeful state of transparency in the world trading system



- Missing, incomplete, and late notifications by governments to the World Trade Organization on all manner of trade policies.
- G20 members starve WTO staff of information on trade policies.
- No international organisation has been given a mandate to systematically collect information on non-tariff barriers.
- No international organisation seeks to assemble comprehensive information on subsidies and related forms of state intervention.
- These outcomes are by design—they are not an accident. These outcomes were evident well before China bashing became frequent.

Problem 1: Governments publish lots of information that is not easy to find or to use.

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE
(Department of Revenue)**

Notification No. 42/2020-Customs

New Delhi, the 11th November, 2020

G.S.R. (E).- In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 25 of the Customs Act, 1962 (52 of 1962) and sub-section (12) of section 3 of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 (51 of 1975), the Central Government, on being satisfied that it is necessary in the public interest so to do, hereby makes the following further amendment in the notification of the Government of India, in the Ministry of Finance (Department of Revenue), No. 50/2017-Customs, dated the 30th June, 2017, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (i), *vide* number G.S.R. 785(E), dated the 30th June, 2017, namely:-

In the said notification, in the Table, against S. No. 515B, for the entry in column (4), the entry “5%” shall be substituted.

2. This notification shall come into force with effect from the 12th day of November, 2020.

▲ India: Import duty on parts used in the manufacture of open cells increased

[← back to the state act](#)

Inception date: 12 Nov 2020 | Removal date: open ended

▲ Import tariff

On 11 November 2020, the Indian Ministry of Finance through Notification No. 42/2020-Customs imposed a 5% import duty on the following goods used in the manufacture of Open Cell of Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) and Light Emitting Diode (LED) TV panels -

- Chip on Film
- Printed Circuit Board Assembly (PCBA)
- Cell (glass board/substrate).

The Notification is effective from 12 November 2020.

The import duty on these goods was reduced earlier on 17 September 2019 (See related State Act).

Problem 2: IOs collect incomplete lists of poorly structured information on trade policies

III. Overview of adopted COVID-19 trade measures (September 23, 2021)

Showing 1 to 388 of 388 entries

Measure on export
 Measure on import

Search:

| Enacting Country | Type Of Measure | Affected Products | Measure | Effect On Trade | Affected Partners | Status Of Measure | Start Date | End Date |
|------------------|--|---|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|----------|
| Albania | ● Licensing or permit requirements to export | medicines and medical devices ⓘ | Prohibition of export of medicines and medical devices. It will be allowed only upon the authorization of the Minister of Health. | Restrictive | All countries | Active | 2020/03/09 | Unknown |
| Algeria | ● Export prohibition | food products, medicines, medical supply products | List of products temporary suspended from exports. | Restrictive | All countries | Active | 2020/03/22 | Unknown |
| Algeria | ● Exceptional measures to facilitate imports | medical supply products ⓘ | Exceptional measures to facilitate import of medical goods and certain other products. | Liberalising | All countries | Active | 2020/04/01 | Unknown |

The Illusion of Information Access: Serious Adverse Consequences for Societies



- Fundamentally, the public is denied information to hold governments accountable—and the media doesn't have the resources anymore to carefully track government actions. Our democracies suffer as a result.
- Some politicians make false claims about foreign governments which are hard to counter due to a lack of reliable, trusted information. Mistrust deepens—which reduces flows of knowledge, ideas, and best practices and threatens prosperity and health.
- High quality information is hoarded by the powerful for the benefit of the few—this discredits globalization and the opportunities it creates for individuals.



How the Global Trade Alert collects information on trade policy

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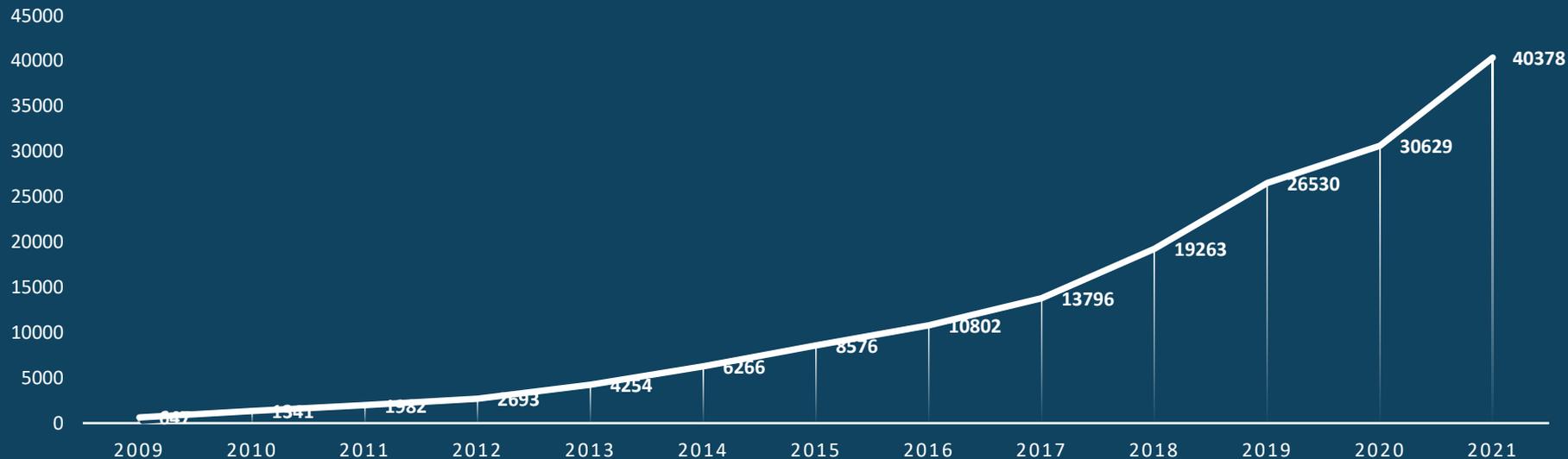
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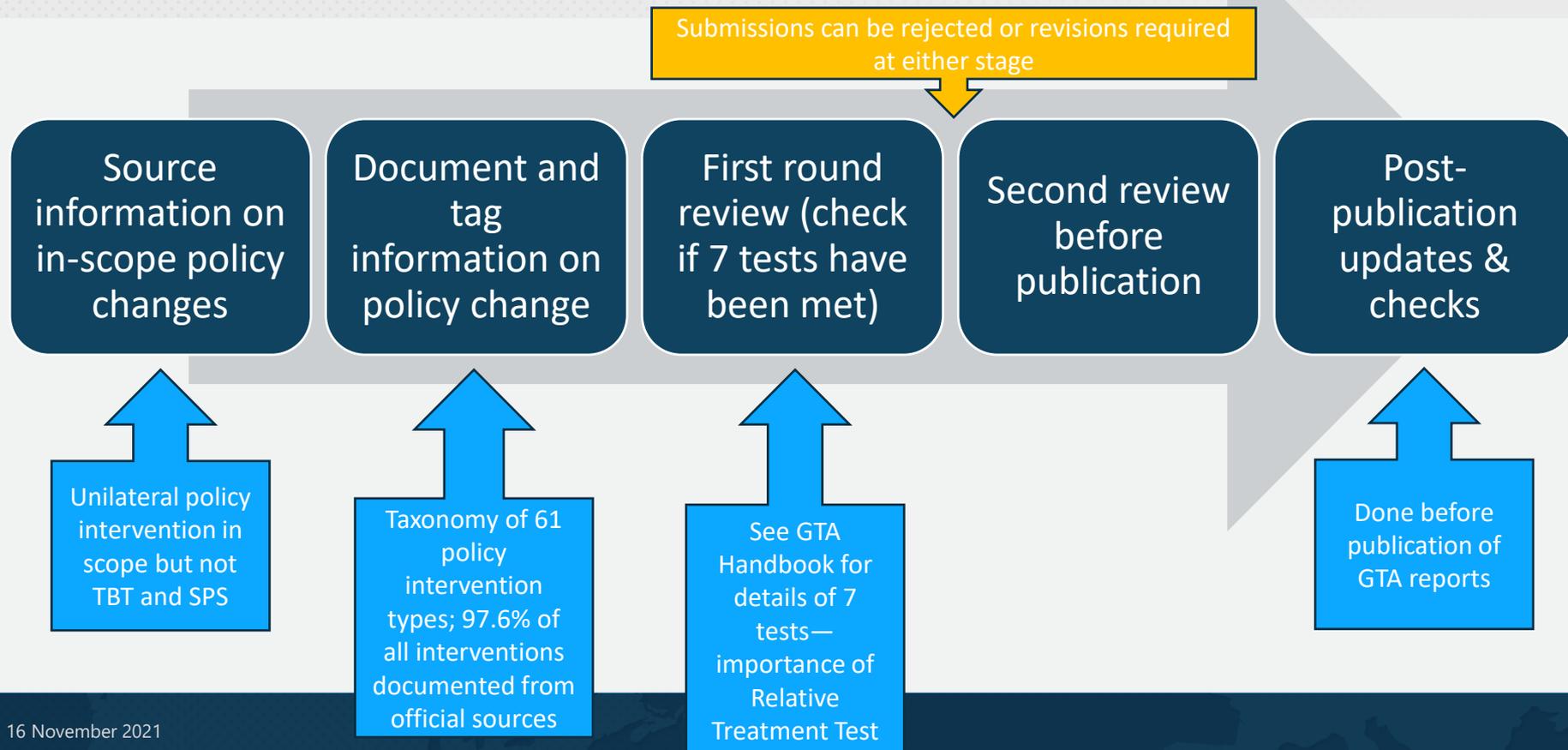
We've published over 40,000 reports on policy intervention affecting cross-border commerce



TOTAL NUMBER OF TRADE POLICY INTERVENTIONS PUBLISHED ON THE GTA SITE



How we collect and process information on relevant public policy changes



Most important tags on each policy intervention

- Implementing jurisdiction (customs territory).
- Level of government responsible.
- Type of policy intervention.
- Firms eligible.
- Date policy intervention came into force.
- Date policy intervention lapsed.
- HS codes implicated (where relevant)
- CPC sectoral codes implicated (where relevant).
- Assessment of change in relative treatment.

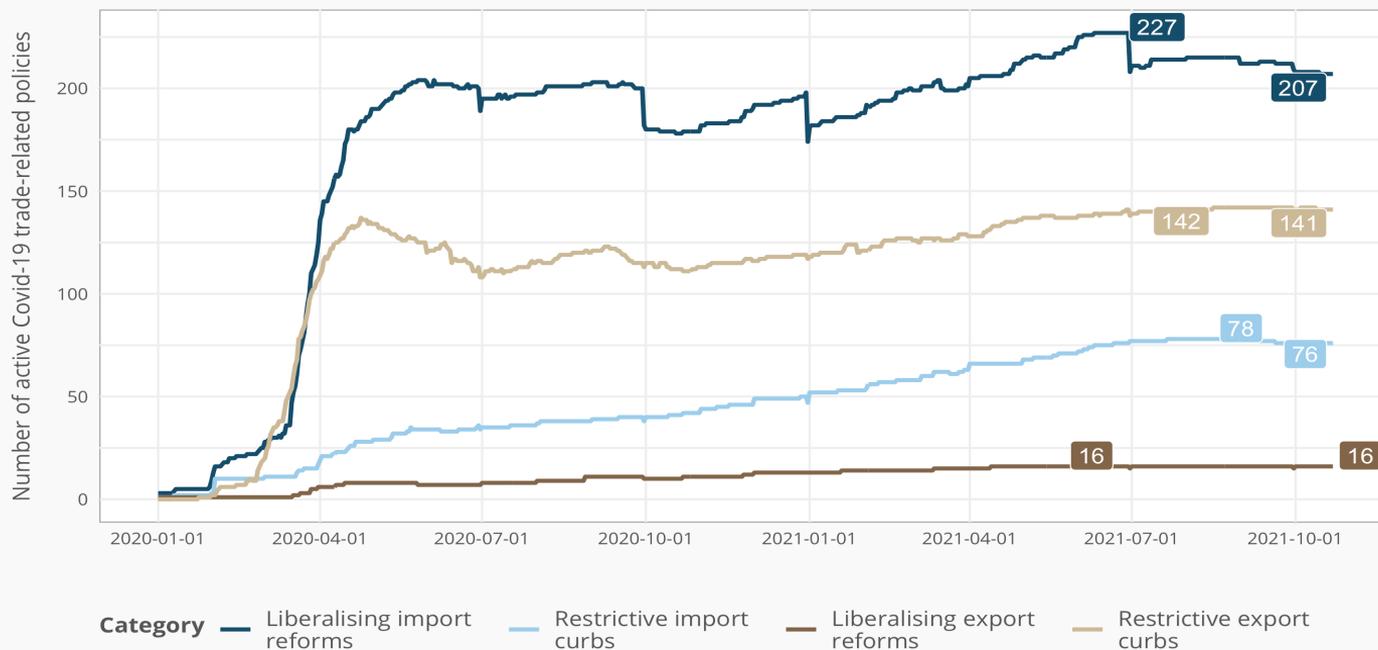
Where possible,
automated
identification of
Affected Trading
Partners follows

Three common uses of GTA data



Trade restrictions & the COVID-19 pandemic: Data from our latest monthly update

Build-up of new trade policies in force in COVID-19 medical goods sectors since 1 January 2020



Source: Global Trade Alert, November 2021 release

Let's take trade policy out of the Dark Ages



- The information base to guide trade policymaking is thin and very selective—it is that way because it suits the interests of many.
- The consequence is skewed trade policy assessments, unnecessary trade tensions, and, dare I say it, misleading academic analyses of trade policy and well-intentioned but misdirected training of students and officials.
- We can and must do better. Our prosperity depends in part on this.
- We need to join forces to bring the Enlightenment to contemporary commercial policy along the key dimensions of international trade.

Want to learn more?

- Use our website: www.globaltradealert.org
- Consult the GTA Handbook (scroll down this URL):
https://www.globaltradealert.org/data_extraction
- Extract full dataset from https://www.globaltradealert.org/data_extraction
- Read GTA analysis: <https://www.globaltradealert.org/reports>
- Use specially tailored GTA information collection projects—such as the Essential Goods Monitoring Initiative:
<https://www.globaltradealert.org/reports/54>
- Contact us for special data requests: data@globaltradealert.org