

Paper: “**Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in Western Balkans Countries**”

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Corresponding Author: Katerina Tosevska

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Predrag Bjelić

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics and Business, Serbia

Reviewer 2: Sinamenye Jean Petit

National University, Burundi

Reviewer 3: Paskal Zhelev

University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Reviewer 4: Isaac Ogundu

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. Nigeria

# ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2024

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Reviewer Name: Predrag Bjelić	
University/Country: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics and Business, Serbia	
Date Manuscript Received: 13/05/2024	Date Review Report Submitted: 21/05/2024
Manuscript Title: <b>Digital and sustainable trade facilitation in Western Balkans countries</b>	
ESJ Manuscript Number: 54.05.2024	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: YES	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: YES	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: YES	

## Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Rating Result</i>
	[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Title correspond to the paper.</i>	
<b>2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i>	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Clearly written with a good command of English scientific language.</i>	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Authors use a standard Gravity model with standard factors, like distance and both GDP etc with addition of factors showing trade facilitation. This is very relevant for the analysis. Sources of data are credible.</i>	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>No, and are very good presented.</i>	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Conclusions are well coordinated with the quantitative analysis used in the paper.</i>	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>References are appropriate and current.</i>	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	<b>X</b>
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

The page 6 in the results table, how significant is  $\log(\text{PaperlessTrade})$ ? Are asterix missing?

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**

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Reviewer Name: Paskal Zhelev	
University/Country: University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria	
Date Manuscript Received: 13.05.2024	Date Review Report Submitted: 16.05.2024
Manuscript Title: DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE FACILITATION IN WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES	
ESJ Manuscript Number: 0554/24	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: Yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper:	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: Yes	

## **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.**

<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Rating Result</i></b> [Poor] <b>1-5</b> [Excellent]
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<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>4</b>
The title effectively encapsulates the main focus of the paper, which is an investigation into the digital and sustainable aspects of trade facilitation measures in the Western Balkans. It might benefit from specifying that it includes an empirical analysis to give potential readers immediate insight into the nature of the research.	
<b>2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.</b>	<b>5</b>
The abstract provides a concise overview of the research objectives, methods, and key findings. It highlights the significance of trade facilitation measures in the context of digital and sustainable trade, which aligns well with the content described in the full manuscript.	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
The manuscript is well-written with few typographical errors. However, there is a notable discrepancy in the terminology used on page 4. The text mentions conducting a "qualitative" analysis using the gravity model and regression analysis, which are typically quantitative methods. It would be more appropriate to refer to this as "quantitative" analysis to accurately reflect the methodologies employed.	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>4</b>
The description of the gravity model and its application in assessing the trade facilitation measures across the Western Balkans is comprehensively outlined. The authors provide a clear explanation of the variables included in the model, the sources of their data, and the rationale behind the choice of methodology. This detail facilitates a good understanding of how the research was conducted, which is crucial for replicability and transparency. However, the manuscript could benefit from a more detailed explanation of the statistical techniques used for the analysis, particularly regarding the handling of any potential multicollinearity among independent variables and the specific statistical tests used to ensure model robustness.	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>5</b>
The results section is detailed and transparent, with clear tables and statistical evidence supporting the conclusions. The findings are presented logically, linking back to the research questions and objectives outlined earlier in the paper.	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>4</b>
The conclusions drawn from the study are well-supported by the results and effectively tie back to the broader implications and potential policy recommendations. However, the paper could further benefit from a more detailed discussion on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>

The references are current and relevant, demonstrating a thorough literature review. The citation style is consistent, and the sources are authoritative, enhancing the credibility of the research.

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	<b>x</b>
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

Your manuscript provides a detailed and perceptive exploration of trade facilitation measures in the Western Balkans. To further refine your paper, a simple correction in terminology on page 4—from "qualitative analysis" to "quantitative analysis"—would more accurately reflect the gravity model and regression techniques used in your research. A deeper examination of the methodology to address any assumptions and potential biases would strengthen the robustness of your findings. Moreover, adding a discussion on the limitations of your study would offer a comprehensive view and set the stage for future research opportunities. Providing clear, actionable recommendations for policymakers based on your findings could significantly enhance the practical impact of your work. These modifications would polish your manuscript, reinforcing its contribution to the field of international trade.

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**

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Reviewer Name: Professor Isaac Ogundu	
University/Country: Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. Nigeria	
Date Manuscript Received: 13-05-2024	Date Review Report Submitted: 15-05-2024
Manuscript Title: <b>Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in Western Balkans Countries</b>	
ESJ Manuscript Number: 54.05.2024	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper:	<b>Yes</b>
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: <b>Yes</b>	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: <b>Yes</b>	

## Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Rating Result</i>
	[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Yes</i>	
<b>2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes, however the keywords are many and very verbose</i>	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes</i>	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes</i>	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes</i>	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes</i>	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Yes</i>	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	<b>X</b>
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

Keywords are many and verbose, a lot of abbreviations without their meanings, please let the author make the write more comprehensible. The tables did not state the year calculations were done. How would the issues of fraud be dealt with in the cross border paperless transactions?

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**