**Technical cooperation and training**

* **The WTO undertook technical assistance activities in 2020, including e-learning, national, regional and global training activities.**
* **A majority of activities was delivered virtually to address the challenges from Covid-19 and compensate for the travel restrictions.**
* **Least-developed countries (LDCs) participated in 50 per cent of all technical assistance activities.**

The WTO Secretariat undertook technical assistance (TA) activities in 2020 to help government officials gain a better understanding of WTO rules and the multilateral trading system. Despite the absence of presential training after the first quarter, some participants benefited from the programme. The number of online courses rose by 10 per cent to 87, showing a continuing shift towards online learning.

The WTO’s 2018-19 technical assistance and training plan follows a “results-based management” approach to ensure that training is delivered in the most effective way. Guidelines and benchmarks help to maintain a high standard of content for all training, consistent teaching methods and regular evaluation of all WTO technical assistance activities.

The WTO Secretariat participated in conferences and other events organized by partner institutions. The number of technical assistance activities in which LDCs participated was roughly unchanged – 50 per cent. More than 60 per cent of all participants accessed their training through e-learning resources on the WTO’s online platform.

The WTO continued to involve international and local partners in technical assistance activities to integrate a local perspective in the design of the training programmes.

per cent of activities were focused on African countries, per cent Asia and the Pacific, per cent Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, per cent Latin America, per cent Middle East countries and per cent the Caribbean (see Table 1). The mostly held in Geneva and aimed at participants from all WTO members and observers. In line with the demand-driven approach, just over per cent of all activities were delivered at the national level in countries where a specific need was identified.

**Table 1: Technical assistance activities by region in 2020\***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Target region** | **Regional** | **National** | **Global\*\*** | **Total** |
| Africa | 37% | 26% | 0% | 16% |
| Asia and the Pacific | 19% | 29% | 0% | 13% |
| Caribbean | 6% | 5% | 0% | 3% |
| Central and Eastern Europeand Central Asia | 13% | 20% | 0% | 9% |
| Global\*\* | 0% | 0% | 100% | 47% |
| Latin America | 14% | 15% | 0% | 8% |
| Middle East | 11% | 4% | 0% | 4% |
| **Total** | **100%** | **100%** | **100%** | **100%** |

\*Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

\*\*Activities under the “global” category do not target a specific region. They include Geneva-based activities, online courses, internship programmes and an advisory role on dispute settlement.

**Participation levels**

Women represented per cent of participants for all WTO technical assistance activities, an increase of percentage points on 2019. Roughly per cent of participants undertook technical assistance in English, per cent in Spanish and per cent in French. Another per cent benefited from multilingual training.

Technical assistance continued for countries seeking to join the WTO (see page 140), with approximately technical assistance events.

**Internship programmes**

In 2019, the majority of officials completing WTO internship programmes were from LDCs and other low-income countries in Africa and the Asia and Pacific regions. Nineteen candidates completed the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme, thirteen candidates are currently in the Netherlands Trainee Programme (which commenced in May 2019), five candidates completed the Regional Coordinator Internship Programme and eight completed the Accession Internship Programme.

WTO internship programmes offer government officials hands-on experience in WTO activities. The programmes give priority to applicants from Africa and LDCs, to small, vulnerable economies and to countries in the process of joining the WTO.

**Young Professionals Programme**

Following a merit-based selection process, 13 young professionals (seven men and six women) were recruited for the Young Professionals Programme in 2019. The programme was launched in 2016 to increase the representation of professionals from nationalities currently under-represented at the WTO Secretariat. Funded by the Global Trust Fund, the programme aims to improve the opportunities for the young professionals to be recruited by the WTO and/or other regional and international organizations.

All the young professionals came from members currently without any professional staff in the WTO Secretariat. The 2019 group comprised professionals from Afghanistan; Cambodia; Haiti; Honduras; Hong Kong, China; Liberia; Macao, China; Maldives; Namibia, Oman; Papua New Guinea; Sri Lanka; and Tajikistan. Their tasks ranged from contributing to WTO Secretariat working documents, attending meetings and preparing minutes to assisting in the organization of the WTO's Public Forum.

DG Azevêdo met with them in November to thank them for their good work and contribution to the organization. "This programme helps to strengthen the diversity at the Secretariat," he said. "This is very important in an organization like the WTO, where inclusivity and diversity are at the core of our activities."

**Financing technical assistance**

The bulk of the technical assistance programme is financed by the Global Trust Fund, which receives voluntary contributions from WTO members. Excluding some annual fluctuations, there has been a steady decrease in voluntary contributions for a decade. In 2020, total contributions were CHF 6.2 million compared with CHF 6.2 million in 2019.

Other funding sources include the WTO regular budget for Geneva-based courses and national technical assistance activities – CHF 4.5 million for 20120 – and contributions from other trust funds (such as the French and Irish Missions Internship Programme and the China Programme), which totalled CHF 2.5 million in 2020.

**Background on technical cooperation and training**

The Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation coordinates the WTO’s technical assistance programmes. Its activities include e-learning, global and regional training courses, academic programmes and workshops at national and regional level. The technical assistance programmes help WTO members better understand their rights and obligations in the multilateral trading system. This strengthens countries’ capacity to benefit from participation in the system.