



AUSTRIA – 2023

Key findings

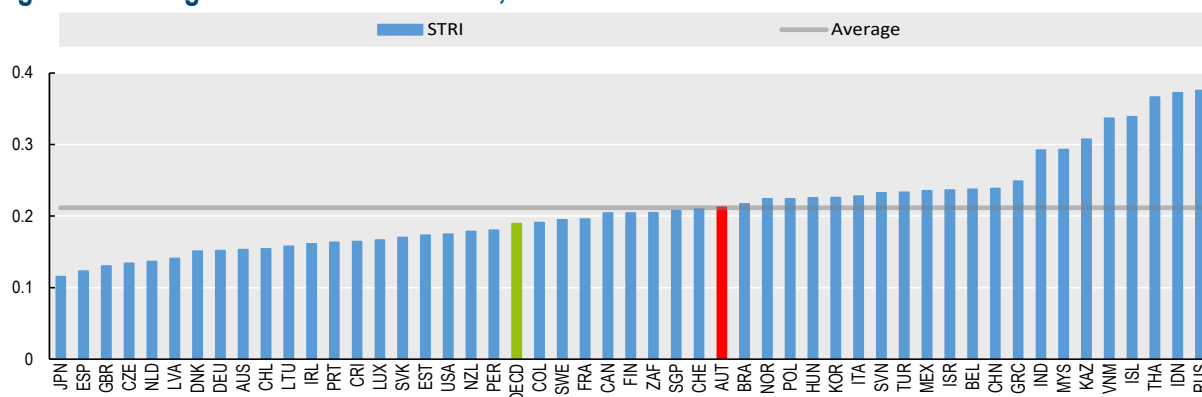
- The 2023 STRI of Austria is above the OECD average and relatively on par with the full STRI sample average. The indices remained unchanged compared to 2022.
- Courier services are the most open sector in Austria, while regulation is most trade restrictive regarding engineering services compared to the sectoral sample average.
- Austria's regulatory environment for services has been relatively stable over the past years.
- While the overall regulatory framework provides favourable conditions for trade in services, restrictions remain in several policy areas, for example regarding screening of foreign direct investments.

Recommendation

- Trade in services strengthens resilience across supply chains, facilitating environmental sustainability and promoting greater inclusiveness. To ensure the benefits of open markets and a rules-based international trading system, national and multilateral action is needed to lower barriers and reduce trade costs, promote greater regulatory interoperability, and facilitate the digital transformation of economies.

The 2023 STRI of Austria is above the OECD average and relatively on par with the full STRI sample average (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average STRI across countries, 2023ⁱ



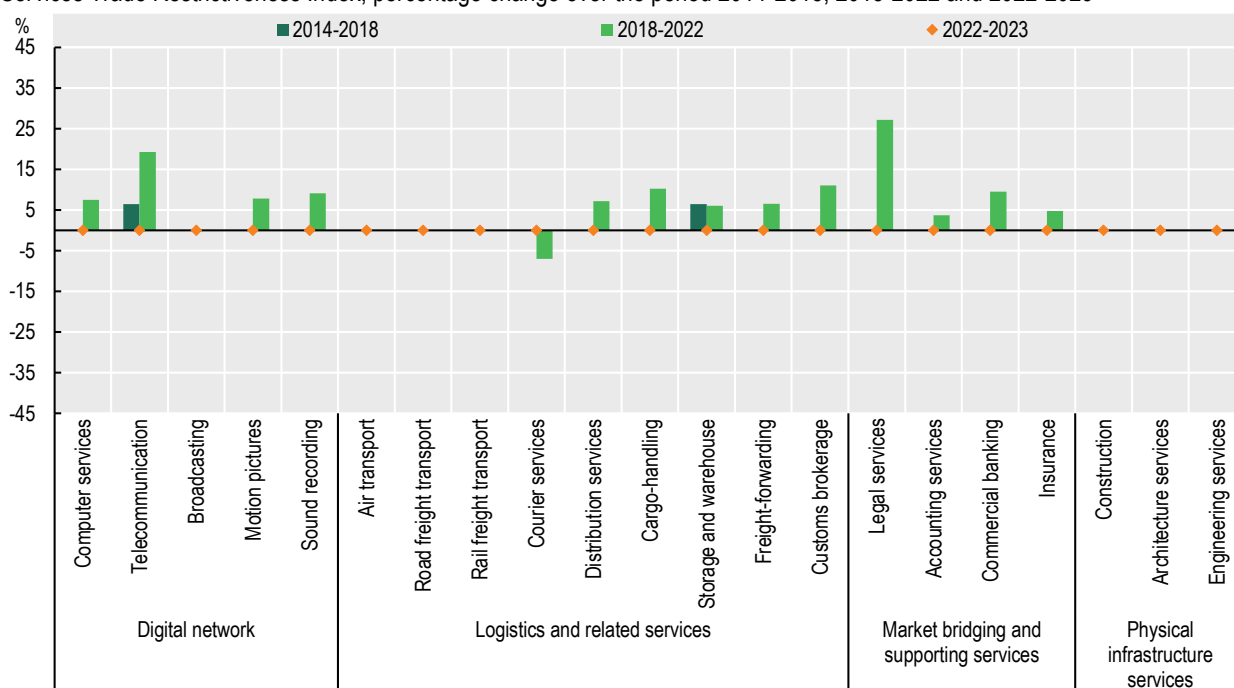
Source: OECD (2023). STRI and TiVA databases.

The 2023 indices are partly shaped by horizontal measures applying to all sectors. For example, labour market tests are applied for workers seeking to provide services in the country on a temporary basis as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers, or independent services suppliers. In addition, sector-specific restrictions contribute to the STRI score of Austria. Regarding sound recording and broadcasting services, eligibility for some subsidies is limited to productions in which the directors and majority of the cast and crew are Austrian nationals. Furthermore, commercial presence in Austria is required to provide engineering services.

The Austrian regulatory framework for services trade has been relatively stable in recent years (Figure 2). Yet, thirteen services sectors saw increases in the level of restrictiveness between 2018 and 2022. By contrast, only one sector has experienced a reduction in the STRI score during the period 2018-2022. As Austria did not implement any policy changes in 2023 affecting the STRI score, the indices remain unchanged in all sectors compared to 2022.

Figure 2. Evolution of STRI indices by sector in Austria

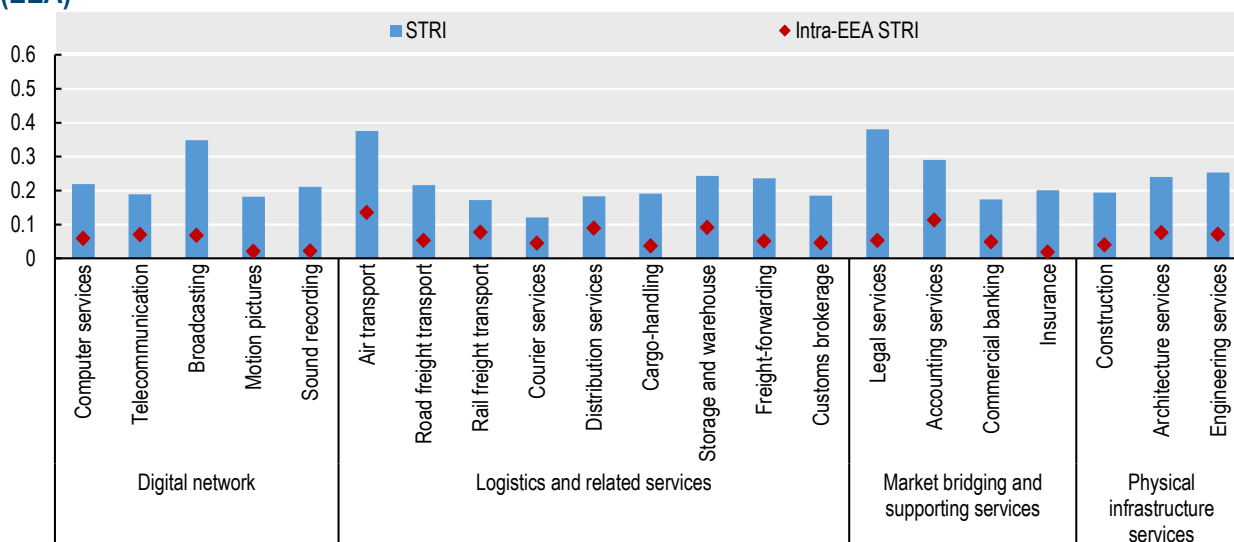
Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, percentage change over the period 2014-2018, 2018-2022 and 2022-2023



Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Services trade barriers are significantly lower within the European Economic Area across all services sectors (Figure 2b). Austria maintains an open market for services suppliers from other EU Member States.

Figure 2b. Regulatory barriers affecting services trade within the European Economic Area (EEA)



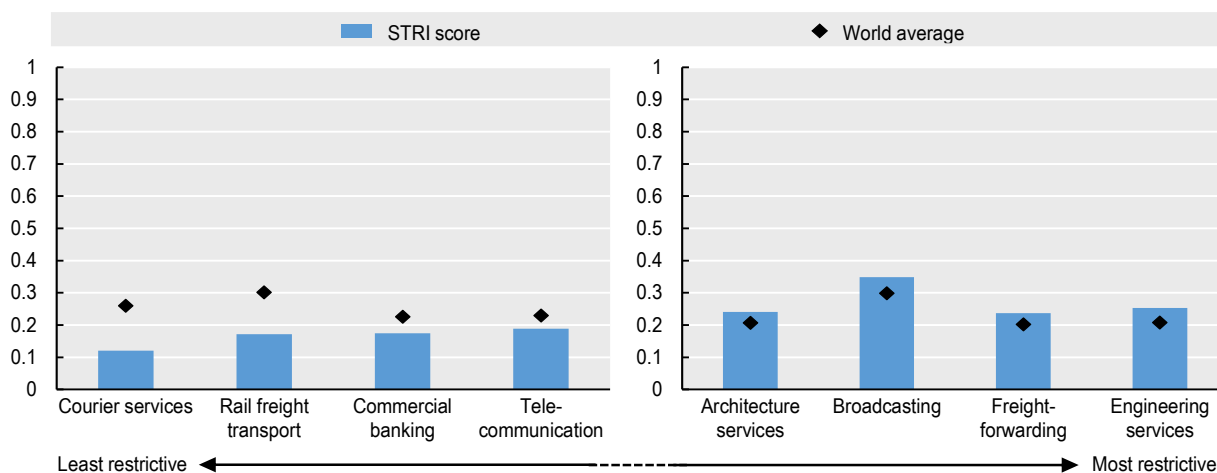
Note: The traditional STRI indicates the level of restrictiveness on a most favoured nation (MFN) basis towards third countries, and the intra-EEA STRI indicates the level of restrictiveness towards EEA members. Intra-EEA STRI covers 24 countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden).

Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Figure 3 ranks Austria's sectors relative to the respective sector's world average. Courier services, rail freight transport, commercial banking and telecommunications are the sectors with the relatively lowest

scores. Conversely, architecture services, broadcasting, logistics freight-forwarding and engineering services are the sectors with the relatively highest score.

Figure 3. Sectoral breakdown - The least and most restricted sectors in Austria compared to world average



Note: Selection was made based on how far the sectors' score were from the world average score, as a percentage difference

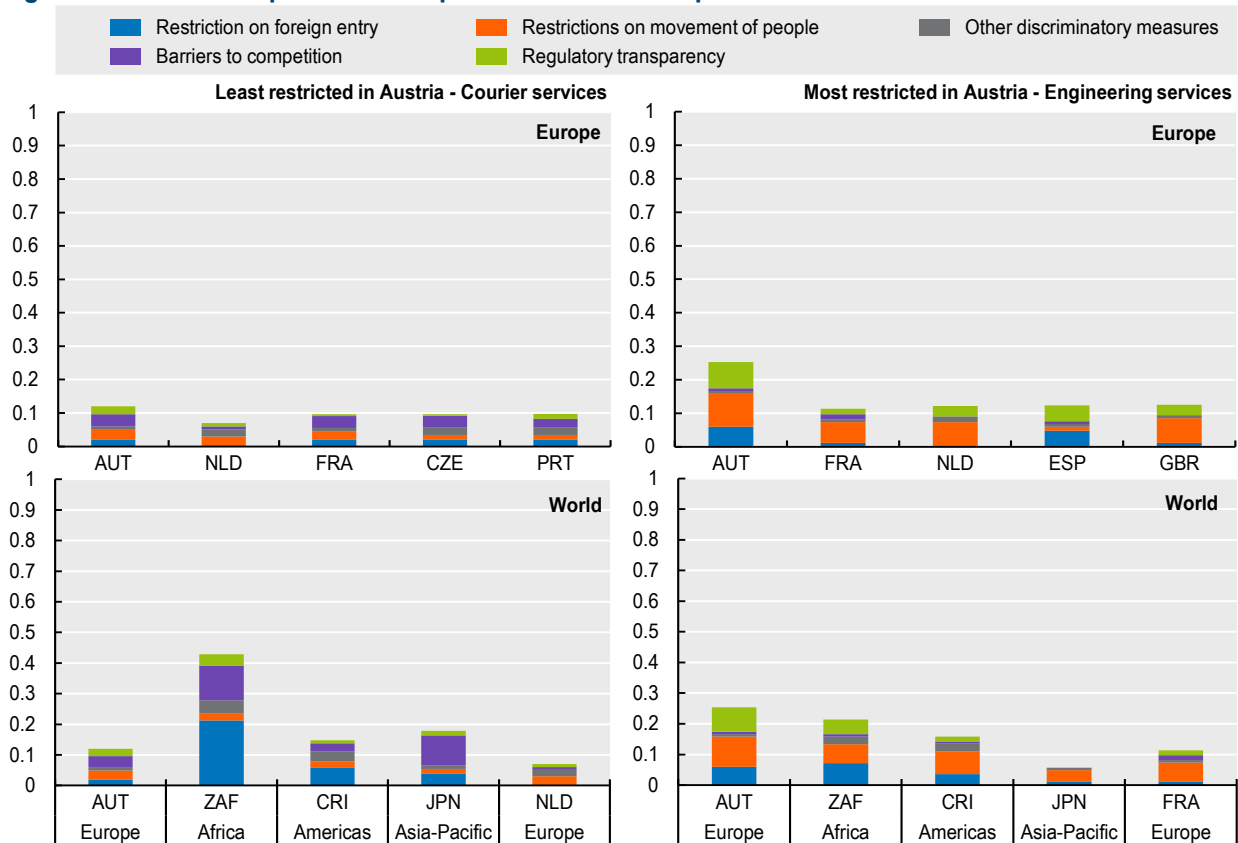
i.e. $(\text{STRI}_{\text{country, sector}} - \text{STRI}_{\text{world average, sector}}) / \text{STRI}_{\text{world average, sector}}$

Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Courier services are the least restricted in Austria compared to the average STRI across all countries. Compared to its regional best performing peers in Europe, the Austrian regulatory framework for this sector could be improved regarding regulatory transparency. Examples of the measures that contributed to Austria's score in this sector include government control of major firms, minimum capital requirements, and limitations on the duration of stay for contractual services suppliers.

Engineering services are the most restricted services sector in Austria. Restrictions affecting the temporary movement of engineering professionals are significant compared to European best performers. Among the measures that contributed the most to Austria's STRI in this sector are labour market tests for contractual services supplies, independent services suppliers and intra-corporate transferees, a relatively short initial duration of stay for contractual and independent services suppliers, and a requirement for foreign engineering professionals to take a local examination to obtain a license to practice (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Austria compared to Europe and World's best performers



Source: OECD (2023). STRI database.

Recent policy changes

In telecommunications, a local presence requirement for the cross-border supply of services was introduced in 2021. In addition, several recent changes affecting Austria were due to changes in EU law. In August 2022, Regulation 2022/1031 (EU) entered into force, aiming to regulate access of third-country (non-EU) goods and services to the EU's public procurement and concession markets. No relevant measure has been adopted by the European Union at this stage. The Regulation applies to public procurement and concessions where the EU has not undertaken market access commitments in an international agreement.

In air transport, a series of temporary rules allowing airlines to retain historic slots, despite not using their slots according to the 80/20 grandfathering rule, were in place from 1 March 2020 to 25 March 2023 on grounds of reduced air traffic levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 26 March 2023, such slot relief rules are no longer in force.

In telecommunications, maximum Union-wide voice termination rates defined by Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/654 took effect on 1 July 2021. These maximum termination rates do not, however, generally apply to calls originating from countries outside the EU.

From 1 July 2021, the EU abolished the VAT de minimis regime for goods valued under EUR 22. In maritime transport, Commission Regulation (EU) 2020/436 extended the existing block exemption to liner shipping consortia from competition law until April 2024.

More information

- » Access all country notes, sector notes, and interactive STRI tools at <http://oe.cd/stri>
- » Read more about [Services Trade Policies and the Global Economy](#)
- » More information about measuring the regulatory environment for services trade in the Intra-EEA region: oe.cd/intraeeaSTRI
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at stri.contact@oecd.org

¹Note: The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive. The STRI database records measures on a Most Favoured Nation basis. Air transport and road freight cover only commercial establishment (with accompanying movement of people). The indices are based on laws and regulations in force on 31 October 2023. The STRI regulatory database covers the 38 OECD Members, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand and Viet Nam. The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.