

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index: Austria

Key findings

- The 2024 STRI of Austria is above the OECD average but relatively low compared to all countries in the STRI sample. The index remains unchanged compared to 2023.
- Austria's regulatory environment for services has been relatively stable in recent years.
- Courier services are the most open sector in Austria, while engineering services are the most restrictive, compared to the sectoral sample average.
- While the overall regulatory framework provides favourable conditions for trade in services, restrictions remain in several policy areas. For example, labour market tests are applied to workers seeking to provide services in Austria on a temporary basis.

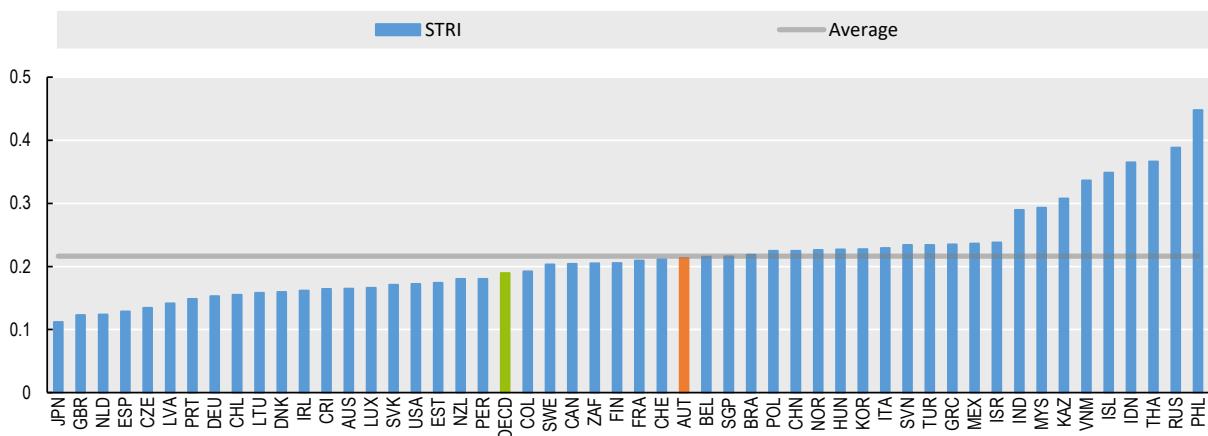
Recommendation

- Open and well-regulated services markets are essential to facilitate economic growth, create new employment opportunities and promote innovation. Streamlining regulations, lowering unnecessary barriers and enhancing transparency can unlock new opportunities for businesses and consumers alike. To realise these benefits, governments could strengthen efforts to revitalise international services trade discussions, undertake reforms at the national level, and set measurable targets, with active business involvement to ensure effective implementation.

This note highlights key country-specific findings and trends identified in the 2024 update of the OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI).

The 2024 STRI of Austria is above the OECD average, but relatively low compared to other countries in the STRI sample (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average STRI across countries, 2024



Source: OECD (2024). STRI and TiVA databases.

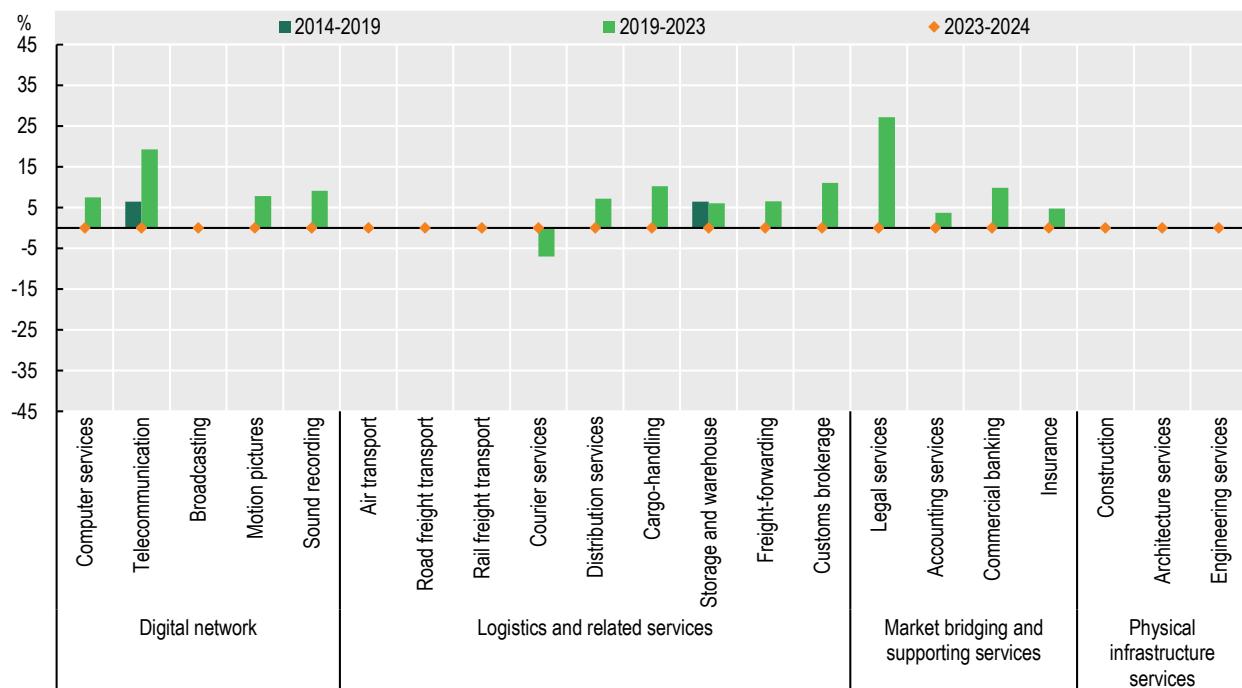
The 2024 STRI for Austria is partly shaped by economy-wide measures. For instance, labour market tests are applied to workers seeking to provide services in Austria on a temporary basis as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers, or independent services suppliers. Additionally, sector-specific restrictions contribute to the STRI score of Austria. In broadcasting services, eligibility for certain subsidies is limited to productions in which the directors and majority of the cast and crew are Austrian nationals, while commercial presence in Austria is required to provide engineering services.

The regulatory framework governing services trade in Austria has been relatively stable in recent years (Figure 2a). Between 2019 and 2023, the level of restrictiveness increased in 13 services sectors, while only one sector, courier services, recorded a reduction in its STRI score. Legal services experienced the highest increase during this period, primarily due to restrictions on the acquisition of equity capital in law firms. In 2024, the STRI indices remained unchanged in all sectors compared to 2023.

Across all services sectors, barriers towards suppliers from within the European Economic Area (EEA) are significantly lower than barriers applied on a Most Favoured Nation basis (Figure 2b). Austria maintains an open market for services suppliers from other EU Member States.

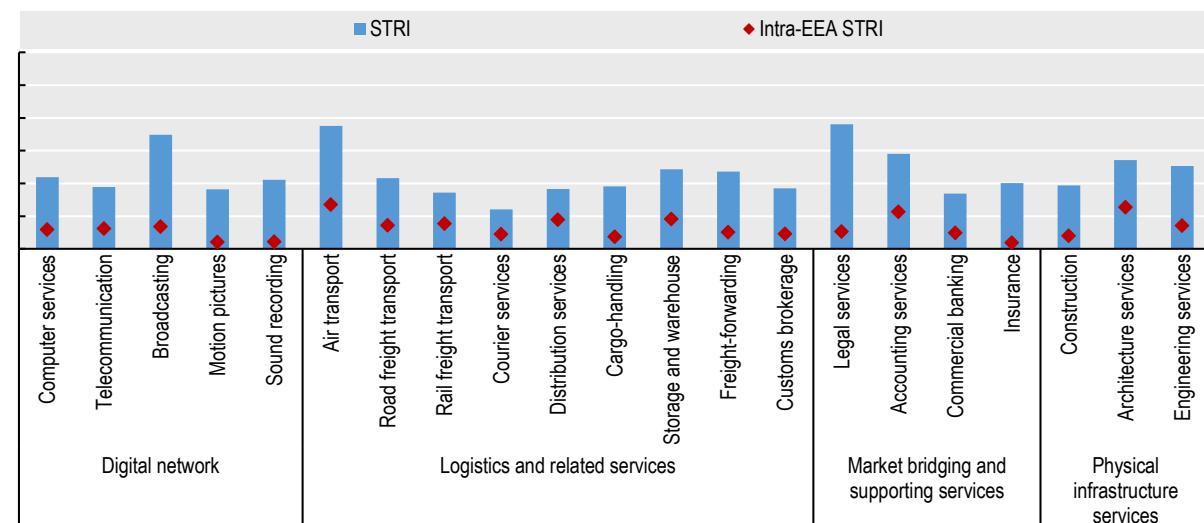
Figure 2a. Evolution of STRI indices by sector in Austria

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, percentage change over the period 2014-2019, 2019-2023 and 2023-2024



Source: OECD (2024). STRI database.

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

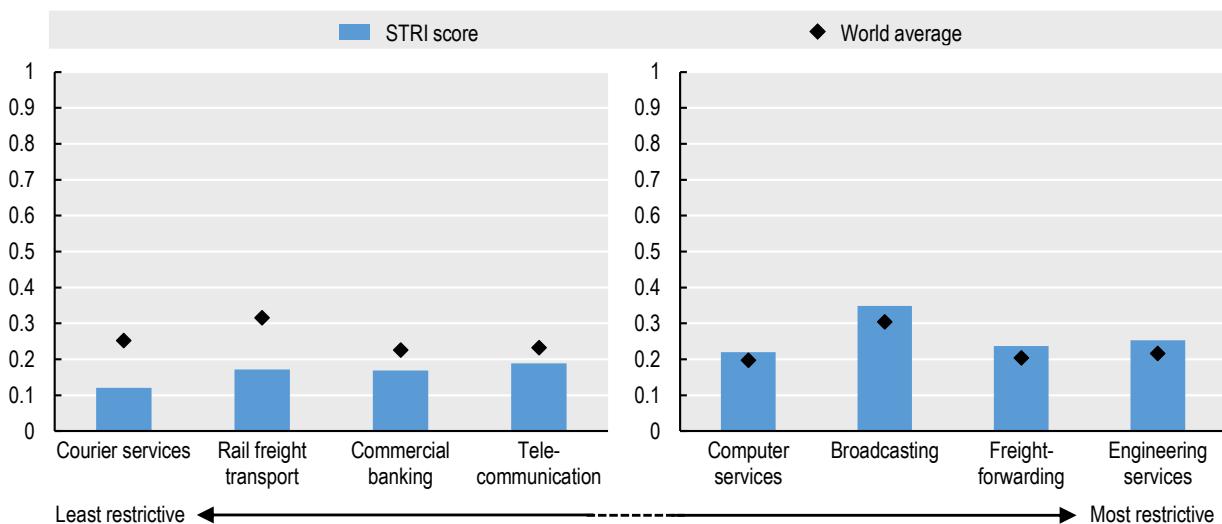


Note: The STRI indicates the level of restrictiveness on a most favoured nation (MFN) basis towards third countries, and the intra-EEA STRI indicates the level of restrictiveness towards EEA members. Intra-EEA STRI covers 24 countries (Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany,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

Source: OECD (2024). 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 lowest relative score. Conversely, computer services, broadcasting, logistics freight-forwarding and engineering services are the sectors with the highest relative score.

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



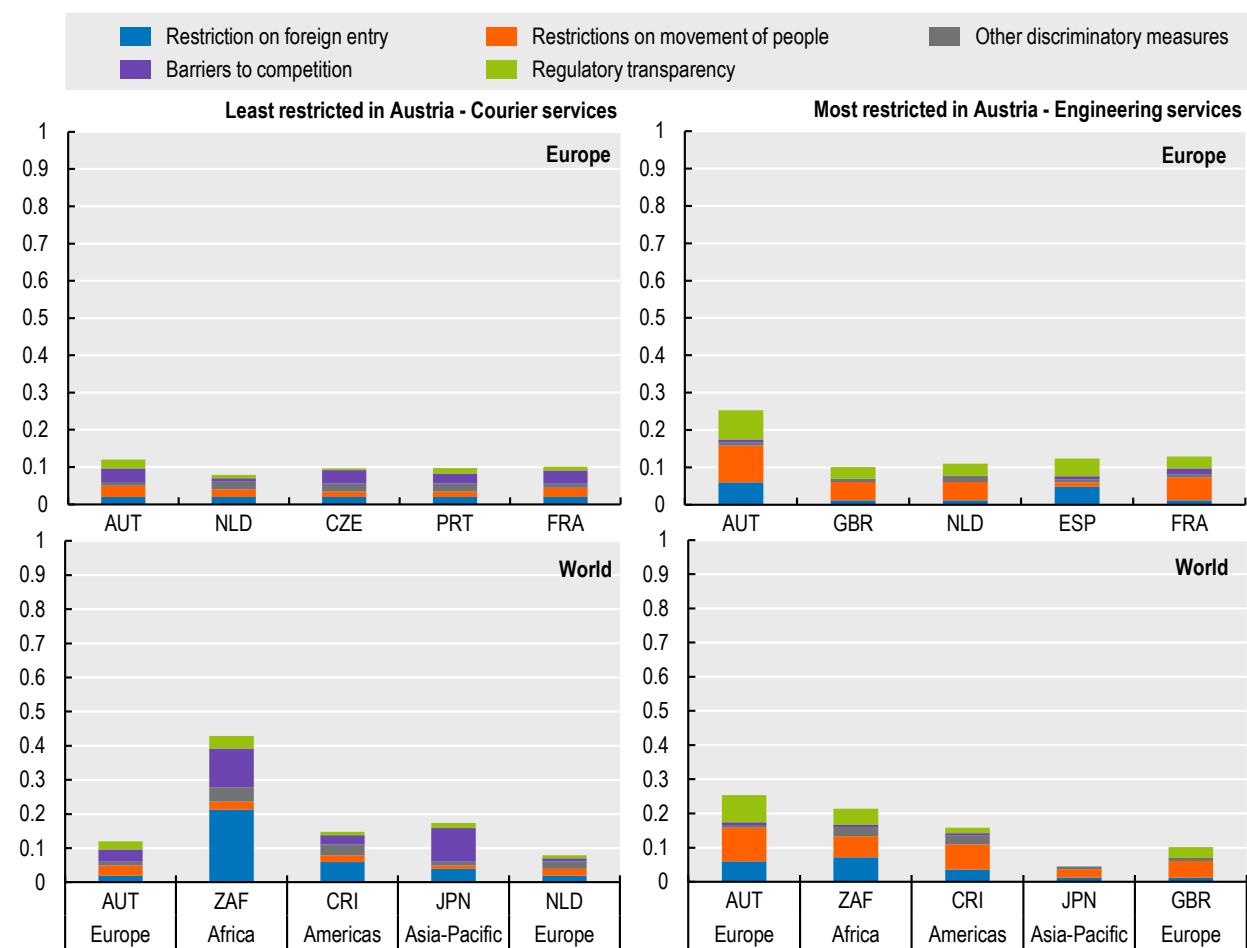
Note: Selection was made based on how far the sectors' score were from the world average score, as a percentage difference, i.e. $(\text{STRI}_{\text{country, sector}} - \text{STRI}_{\text{world average, sector}}) / \text{STRI}_{\text{world average, sector}}$.

Source: OECD (2024). 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 a relatively short initial 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 (2024). STRI database.

Key reforms

In 2024, the number of required documents to obtain a business visa decreased from 16 to 15.

Several recent changes affecting Austria were due to changes in EU law. On 11 June 2024, the cost of business visitor visas increased from EUR 80 to EUR 90 in countries participating in the Schengen area, pursuant to the entry into force of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1415.

In maritime transport, Regulation (EU) 906/2009 that allowed certain agreements between maritime enterprises to be excluded from the application of competition law ceased to apply on 25 April 2024. Under Commission Regulation (EU) 2023/1067 (in effect from 1 July 2023), certain categories of specialisation agreements that do not exceed 20% of the market share are exempted from general competition 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. At this stage, no implementing act restricting access to the EU procurement market has been adopted by the European Union. The Regulation applies to public procurement and concessions where the EU has not undertaken market access commitments in an international agreement.

More information

- » Access all country notes, sector notes, and interactive STRI tools at oe.cd/servicestrade.
- » Read more on evidence from ten years of monitoring services trade policies through the STRI in [Revitalising Services Trade for Global Growth](#).
- » Learn more about current services trade issues on the [OECD website](#).
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at stri.contact@oecd.org.

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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 made public by 31 October 2024 and in force on 31 December 2024. The STRI regulatory database covers the 38 OECD Members, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, 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.

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