

## OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI)

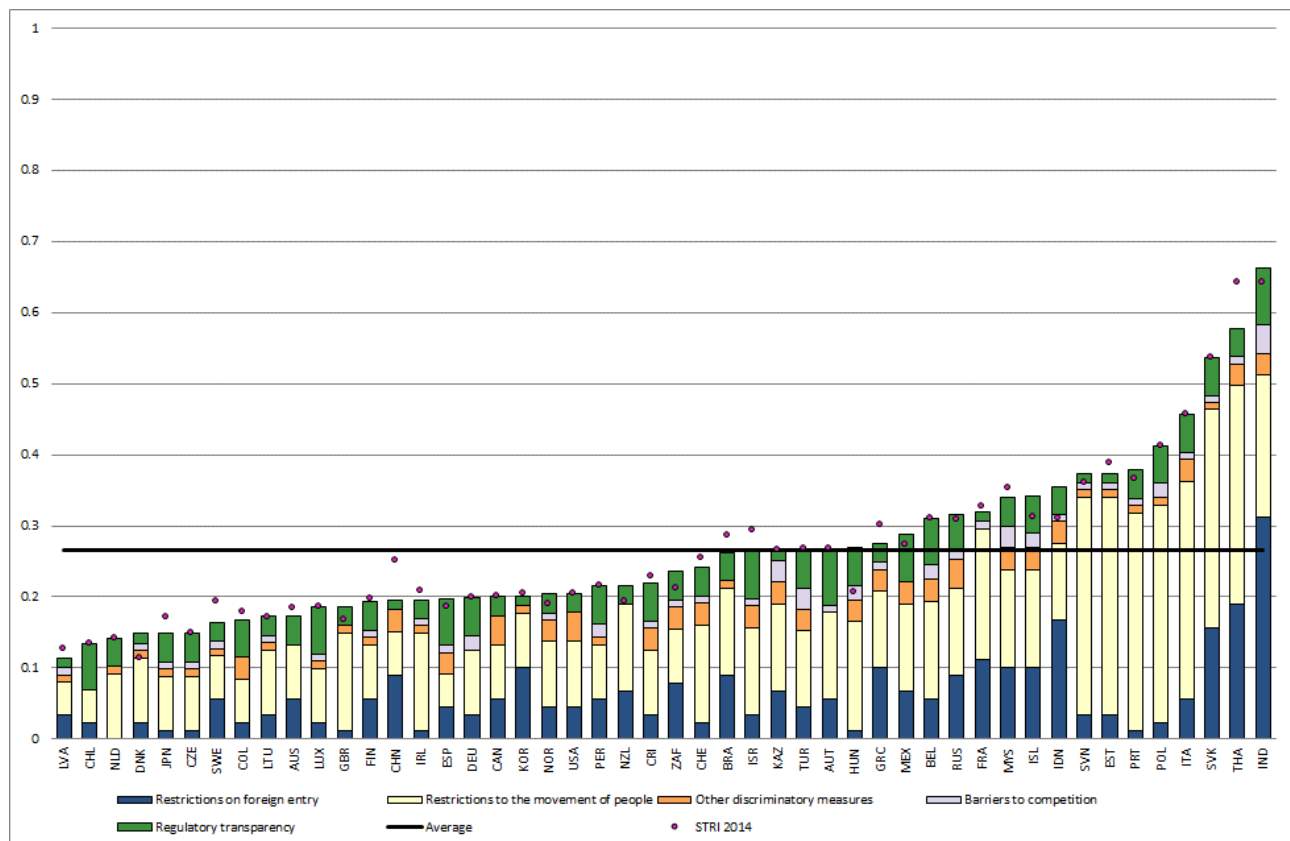
### STRI SECTOR BRIEF: ARCHITECTURE SERVICES

2020

This note presents the Services Trade Restrictiveness Indices (STRIs) for the 37 OECD countries and Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Costa Rica, India, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Thailand for architecture services in 2020.

The sector covers architectural services and related technical consultancy (ISIC Rev 4 code 711). These services constitute the backbone of the construction sector, with key roles in building design and urban planning. An important feature is the regulatory complementarity between architecture, engineering and construction services. Often, architectural and engineering activities are combined into projects offered by one company, and are sometimes subsumed in the building and construction sector.

#### STRI by policy area: Architecture services (2020)



*Note:* The STRI indices take values between zero and one, one being the most restrictive. They are calculated on the basis of the STRI regulatory database which records measures on a Most Favoured Nations basis. Preferential trade agreements are not taken into account. The indices are based on laws and regulations in force on 31 October 2020.

The 2020 STRI scores for architecture services range between 0.11 and 0.66, with an average of 0.27. The distribution according to restrictiveness is skewed towards the low end, as there are 29 countries below and 19 countries above the average. These services are less restrictively regulated on average than other accredited professional services, notably legal and accounting services.

The measures in the STRI database are organised under five policy areas as indicated in the chart. In architecture services, the results are driven primarily by *Restrictions on the movement of people*. This reflects the characteristics of these services, particularly the fact that they are skilled labour intensive. *Restrictions on foreign entry* have a large impact on a few countries, while the effects of the other categories of measures, albeit more limited, are more evenly distributed across countries.

Architects are affected by economy-wide limitations on natural persons seeking to provide services on a temporary basis as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers or independent services suppliers. 12 countries have quotas on one or more of these three categories, 35 countries apply economic needs tests to stays that last longer than 3-6 months and the duration of stay is limited to less than three years in 37 countries. In addition, architects are subject to issues related to licensing requirements. These include nationality and residency requirements to practice, as well as lack of recognition of foreign qualifications. Nine countries in the sample do not require a license to practice architecture. This does not necessarily mean that there is less government control during the process of designing and constructing a building or infrastructure projects. Regulation may in some countries be entailed in building codes, technical standards and the enforcement of these.

As regards *Restrictions on foreign entry*, several countries limit the ownership of architectural firms to locally-qualified architects. Ownership restrictions are often coupled with requirements that the majority of the board (or equity partners in the case of partnerships) and the manager of architectural firms must be locally qualified. Another impediment relates to restrictions on acquiring land and real estate. These may be particularly pernicious for architectural services in light of the complementarities with the building industry.

Some sector-specific restrictions under *Barriers to competition* remain in place in several countries, particularly on fee-setting and advertising. *Other discriminatory measures* contain regulation related to public procurement. Impediments to public procurement can play a significant role for architectural services in light of the link with construction. 22 countries have preferential measures for local suppliers or limit non-discriminatory access to public procurement to free trade agreement or WTO government procurement agreement (GPA) partners.

The *Regulatory transparency* policy area builds on information from administrative laws and regulations, information from the migration authorities on requirements for obtaining a business visa and the World Bank Doing Business Survey. The latter records time, cost and number of procedures required for establishing a company. These measures are benchmarked against a global threshold set at the 40 best performing countries. There are 31 countries included in the STRI database that are not among the 40 best performing countries on one or more of these measures. The score in the regulatory transparency area is largely attributed to this. In addition lengthy, costly and complex regulatory procedures related to obtaining a business visa contribute to the index for 23 countries.

Compared to 2014, denoted by the pink dots in the chart, the STRI index is unchanged for 13 countries, 20 have a lower (less restrictive) score, and 15 record a higher value of the STRI index (more restrictive) in 2020. Improvements in administrative procedures under the regulatory transparency area explain most of the changes in the STRI index for the countries with a lower index. Some countries have also implemented regulatory reforms affecting architecture services. Ireland has removed the requirement of a licence for managers; and Israel has implemented a temporary licensing regime for foreign architects. Most of the increase in the index stems from the introduction of quotas and labour market tests and shortening the duration of stay for temporary services suppliers.

## More information

- » Access all of the country notes, sector notes and interactive STRI tools on the OECD website at <http://oe.cd/stri>
- » Read more about services trade policies and their impacts in this publication: [Services Trade Policies and the Global Economy](#)
- » Contact the OECD Trade and Agriculture Directorate with your questions at [stri.contact@oecd.org](mailto:stri.contact@oecd.org).

*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.*