

Dien Bien

Provincial performance in implementing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

Average

BAND 5 OF 6

PERFORMANCE TIER

Average

Band 5 of 6 — **21st of 34** assessed provinces and cities.

OVERALL SCORE

19.38

 / 40

Below the national average of 21.66 by **2.28 points**.

CENTRAL CHALLENGE

34/34

Enterprises' understanding of the legal framework and their actual FTA utilisation both rank last nationally.

FOUR PILLARS AT A GLANCE

A INFORMATION ACCESS

RANK 6 / 34

6.34

 / 10 **+1.55 vs national average**

B LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION

RANK 11 / 34

6.03

 / 10 **+0.82 vs national average**

C SUPPORT POLICIES

RANK 10 / 34

6.42

 / 10 **+0.60 vs national average**

D SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

RANK 15 / 34

6.70

 / 10 **+0.73 vs national average**

★ LEADING INDICATORS

- #1 A2 / C3 — Authorities providing FTA information / FTA utilisation activities
- #2 B2 / C4 — Frequency of local-authority guidance / FTA commitments utilised
- #3 A3 / B7 / C5 / D6 — Information channels, uptake of enterprise feedback, barriers and support formats
- #4 B6 / C8 / C9.1 / D4 — Enterprise feedback, support needs, trade promotion and local-authority support

KEY BUSINESS-CAPABILITY GAPS

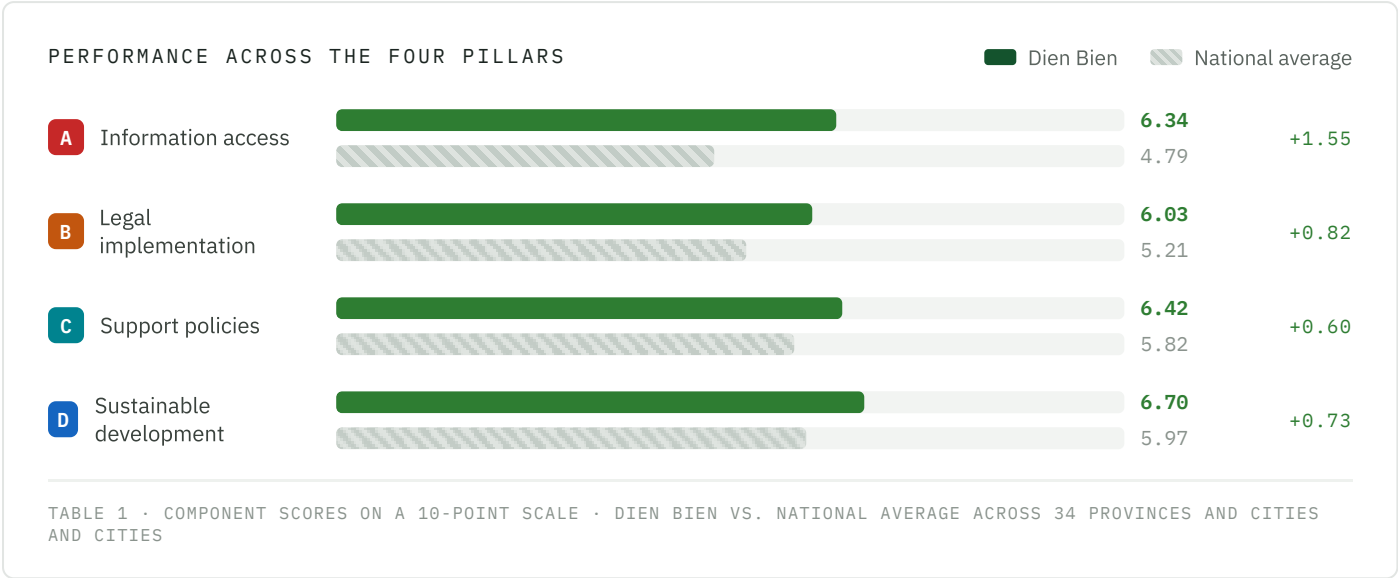
- #34 B1 — Understanding of legal documents
- #34 C1 / C7 — FTA utilisation / Effectiveness of FTA support policies and programmes
- #34 D1 — Understanding of sustainable development commitments
- #30 B4 — Complexity of compliance with legal documents

SOURCE: FTA INDEX 2025, PREPARED BY FOREIGN TRADE UNIVERSITY FOR THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE; SURVEY OF 4,066 EXPORTING AND IMPORTING ENTERPRISES. COMPONENT SCORES ARE ON A 10-POINT SCALE AND THE OVERALL SCORE IS ON A 40-POINT SCALE. RANKINGS COVER 34 PROVINCES AND CITIES.

01 Overview of results

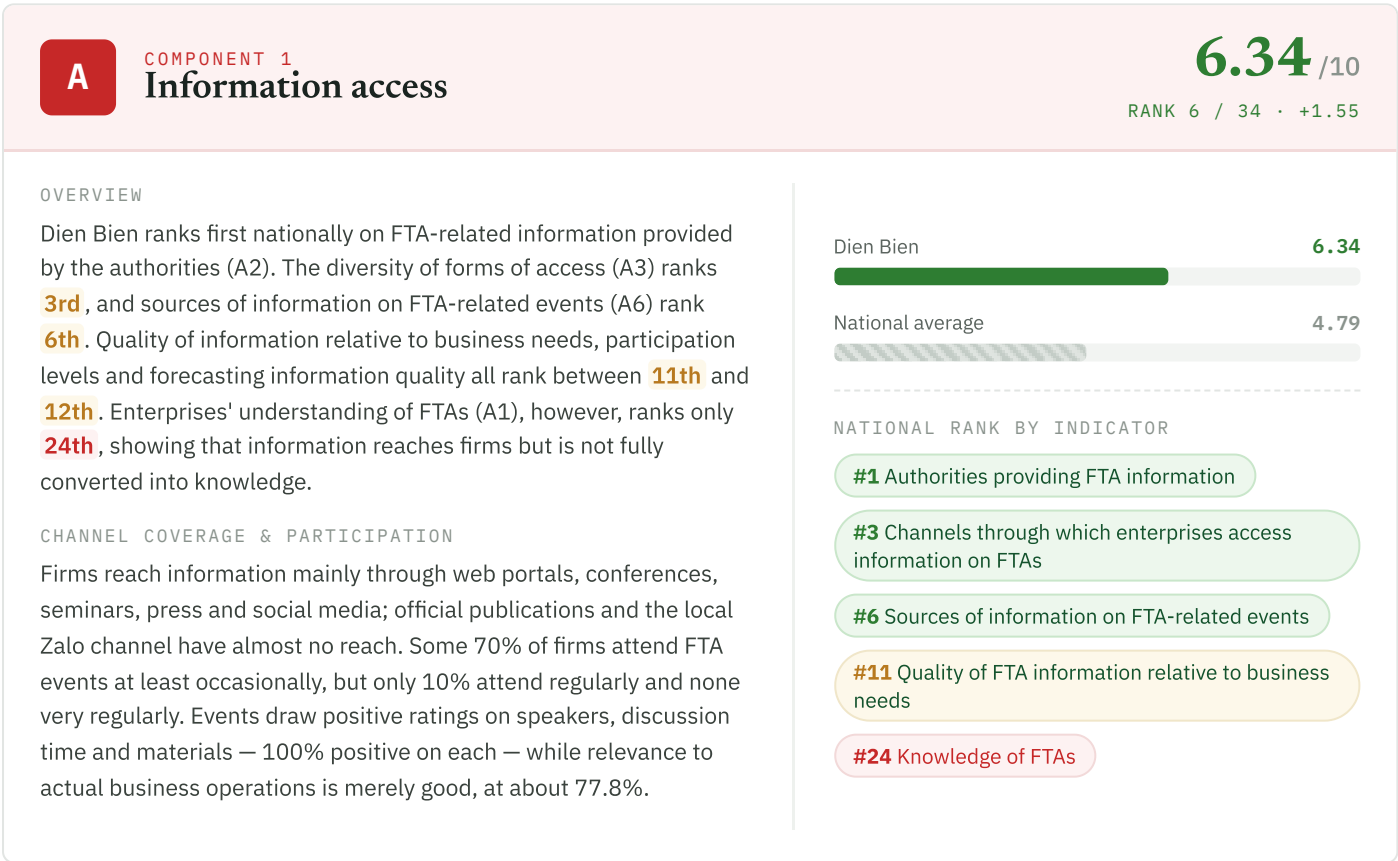
Dien Bien shows a stark contrast between the government's support effort and firms' capacity to absorb it. Many indicators on information provision, legal guidance and sustainability support sit among the highest in the country. Yet firms rank last nationally on understanding of the legal documents and on actual FTA utilisation. The bottleneck is therefore not an absence of government activity but the ability to convert information and guidance into knowledge,

skills and action within a business community that is mostly small and thinly resourced. Policy focus needs to shift from “supplying information” to “helping firms understand, apply and exploit it”.



02

Detailed analysis by component





COMPONENT 2

Implementation of Legal Documents

6.03 /10

RANK 11 / 34 · +0.82

OVERVIEW

The indicators covering government activity sit in the leading group: frequency of guidance on legal documents (B2) ranks **2nd**, uptake of enterprise feedback by local authorities (B7) ranks **3rd**, business participation in feedback and consultation (B6) ranks **4th**, and the quality of guidance on those documents (B3) ranks **6th**. Firms' understanding of the legal documents (B1), however, ranks **34th** and complexity of compliance (B4) ranks **30th**. Guidance is therefore delivered fairly systematically, but its content and format do not match firms' capacity to absorb it.

THE GAP BETWEEN GUIDANCE AND GRASP

Only 10% of firms have a clear grasp of each legal area surveyed, while some 80–90% know nothing or hold only a basic understanding. The gap appears in the core commitments — tariff preferences and rules of origin — as much as in specialised areas such as intellectual property and labour and environmental rules. The priority is therefore not simply more guidance but simpler content, real-world examples, and step-by-step support.

Dien Bien 6.03



National average 5.21



NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#2 Frequency of local-authority guidance on legal documents

#3 Uptake of enterprise feedback by local authorities

#6 Quality of guidance on legal documents

#30 Complexity of compliance with legal documents

#34 Understanding of legal documents



COMPONENT 3

Policies Supporting Enterprises' FTA Utilisation

6.42 /10

RANK 10 / 34 · +0.60

OVERVIEW

The indicators diverge sharply. FTA utilisation activities (C3) ranks first nationally, the FTA commitments utilised (C4) ranks **2nd**, barriers to utilisation (C5) rank **3rd**, the need for FTA support programmes and policies (C8) ranks **4th**, and trade promotion activity ranks between **4th** and **5th**. By contrast, self-assessed actual FTA utilisation (C1) and support policy effectiveness (C7) both rank **34th**. A small group of firms therefore exploits FTAs across many dimensions, but uptake across the wider business community remains very low.

UTILISATION MIX BY FIRM GROUP

Utilisation concentrates in the areas demanding the most compliance capacity — SPS (90%) and the labour and environmental commitments (70% each) — while tariff preferences reach only 20% and rules of origin 10%. Every firm surveyed struggles to find partners in FTA markets; the next barriers are limited technological capacity (60%), market information (50%) and meeting rules of origin (40%). Trade promotion programmes rate well on materials and relevance, yet this has not translated into broad FTA utilisation across the province.

Dien Bien 6.42



National average 5.82



NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#1 FTA utilisation activities

#2 FTA commitments utilised

#3 Barriers to FTA utilisation

#34 FTA utilisation

#34 Effectiveness of support policies and programmes implemented by local authorities



OVERVIEW

Government support stands out: the effectiveness of support from local authorities (D4) ranks **4th**, the forms of support available (D6) rank **3rd** and the perceived importance of complying with import-market sustainable development commitments (D5) ranks **6th**. Enterprises' understanding of sustainable development commitments (D1), however, ranks only **31st**, and readiness to comply (D3) ranks **32nd**.

KNOWLEDGE & READINESS

Once again the result exposes a wide gap between the quality of government support and firms' capacity to absorb and act on it. Firms lack the knowledge and resources to turn guidance into an independent compliance plan. The next phase of policy should focus on direct technical assistance, firm-by-firm planning, and the requirements most relevant to the province's export products.

Dien Bien

6.70

National average

5.97

NATIONAL RANK BY INDICATOR

#3 Forms of support for compliance with sustainable development commitments

#4 Effectiveness of support from local authorities

#6 Perceived importance of compliance with import-market sustainable development commitments

#31 Understanding of sustainable development commitments

#32 Readiness to comply with sustainable development commitments

03 Conclusions & implications

STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON

- **The government's support effort is among the strongest in the country**, with FTA-related information provided by the authorities ranking **1st**, guidance frequency **2nd**, uptake of enterprise feedback by local authorities **3rd** and sustainability support effectiveness **4th**.
- **A segment of firms exploits FTAs across many forms and commitments**, with FTA utilisation activities ranking **1st** and FTA commitments utilised **2nd**.
- **The information and support infrastructure is reasonably well established**, giving a base from which to shift focus onto firms' absorptive and implementation capacity.

WEAKNESSES TO ADDRESS

- **Firms' grasp of the legal rules ranks last nationally**, showing that guidance is not being converted effectively into knowledge and the ability to apply it.
- **Actual FTA utilisation ranks 34th**, even though a small group of firms exploits FTAs across many dimensions.
- **Knowledge and readiness on sustainable development are very low**, at **31st** and **32nd** respectively, leaving firms unable to comply independently.

Action agenda

shift from supplying information to helping firms understand and apply it

NOW • 0–12 MONTHS

NEXT • 1–3 YEARS

1

Simplify the guidance material

Produce short, visual, hands-on material that walks firms through the FTA rules step by step.

B1 • 34 → improve rank

2

Widen the base of firms using FTAs

Bring more firms into FTA use so results are not confined to a small, already capable group.

C1 • 34 → improve rank

3

Build a base of specialised knowledge

Equip SMEs with practical knowledge and skills on sustainable development, rules of origin, SPS, TBT and the FTA commitments.

D1 • 31 → improve rank

4

Raise the capacity to absorb and apply support

Deliver firm-by-firm advice and help build compliance documentation and plans, closing the gap between the government's support system and firms' ability to implement.

Goal: capacity to absorb support

TARGET



Lift Dien Bien from the “Average” tier to “Fair”, shifting focus from supplying information to helping firms understand, apply and make effective use of the FTA-related support mechanisms