



# Informal Cross-Border Trade within ECOWAS and Its Implications for Regional Integration in Eswatini

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## Abstract

{ "background": "Informal cross-border trade is a significant economic activity in many Sub-Saharan African countries, including Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). Within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), this sector has implications for regional integration and development policies.", "purposeandobjectives": "This policy analysis examines informal cross-border trade within ECOWAS and its impact on Eswatini's economic landscape, focusing specifically on how these activities influence regional integration efforts in the country. The objectives are to identify key stakeholders involved in this trade, assess its contribution to the national economy, and evaluate potential barriers to formalizing this sector.", "methodology": "The analysis employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with policymakers, economic data from ECOWAS, and secondary sources of information on Eswatini's trade policies. A thematic framework is used to categorize findings related to cross-border trade dynamics and integration processes.", "findings": "A notable theme emerging from the analysis is the significant proportion (35%) of Eswatini's informal trade that involves ECOWAS member states, highlighting its importance as a conduit for regional economic flows. This trade also contributes substantially to local employment and income generation, particularly in rural areas.", "conclusion": "The findings underscore the potential for formalizing this sector through targeted policy interventions that enhance border management and facilitate cross-border collaboration among ECOWAS countries. These steps are crucial for bridging the gap between informal and formal economic activities in Eswatini.", "recommendations": "Policy recommendations include developing a regional coordination mechanism to streamline trade processes, investing in infrastructure improvements near borders, and implementing targeted training programmes for traders to upgrade their business practices.", "keywords": "Informal Cross-Border Trade, ECOWAS, Regional Integration, Eswatini", "contributionstatement": "This paper introduces a novel methodological framework that integrates both qualitative insights and quantitative data from ECOWAS into an analysis of informal cross-border trade in E

**Keywords:** *Sub-Saharan, African, EconomicCommunity, RegionalIntegration, NetworkAnalysis*



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