

The [African Regional Integration Report](#) (2019) is the first edition of a series of yearly reports of the African Union Commission that provides a comprehensive review of the status of integration and of innovative policies for accelerating the ongoing regional integration process in Africa, describing projects, initiatives and best practices developed within each of the eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) officially recognised by the African Union (Arab Maghreb Union/UMA; Community of Sahel-Saharan States/CEN-SAD; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa/COMESA; East African Community/EAC; Economic Community of Central African States/ECCAS; Economic Community of West African States/ECOWAS; Intergovernmental Authority on Development/IGAD; and Southern African Development Community/SADC), and analysing the main obstacles to a closer regional integration among African economies, as a crucial driver for the realization of Africa's development agenda.

A section of the report describes the lessons learned from ASEAN, the EU and other regional economic groupings that have succeeded in their regional integration efforts.

The overlapping membership by some African nations in many RECs is indicated as one of the most significant challenges to a deeper regional and continental integration, as this factor not only exacerbates persistent funding and human capacity problems in support of regional programmes, but also leads to challenges of effective coordination of policies and programmes, which are currently little aligned with each other, and are largely misaligned with the continental agenda for Integration, which includes the Abuja Treaty, Agenda 2063 and its ten-year implementation plan.

While some progress has been achieved, significant bottlenecks stand in the way of deeper integration, including narrow markets, poor infrastructure networks, cumbersome administrative procedures that impede trade integration, as well as in diversified production bases coupled with weak backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry, as well as weak institutional and legal mechanisms for implementing regional and continental programmes and projects. Intra-African trade remains low, if compared to other commercial blocks outside Africa, being estimated by the report in about 12% of the total African trade.

Other challenges for a deeper regional and continental integration are the reluctance of African states to cede sovereignty to key organs of the African Union and the persistent conflicts in some African regions (namely, Central Africa, Horn of Africa, Northern Africa and West Africa).

