

DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE

Cross-Border E-commerce in Africa: Benefits, Barriers and Businesses with a focus on Portuguese speaking Countries

Start: 27 September - End: 25 October

Live sessions every Wednesday from 16:00 to 17:00 EAT

In Portuguese, with simultaneous translation for Anglophone participants

Registration Closes 11 September

Organized by the African Trade Policy Centre of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
In partnership with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and coordination with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



Background Information

Recent global events like the Covid-19 pandemic, subsequent supply chain constraints, and the war in Ukraine have forced businesses, including Micro-Small and Medium Sized Businesses (MSMEs) in Africa to operate in an unprecedented environment. For example, during the height of the pandemic mitigation measures forced business owners and customers apart and changed consumer purchasing habits/preferences, supply chain constraints added further stress by limiting the availability of goods and the war in Ukraine has contributed to price increases and additional uncertainty. Emerging from these difficulties digital trade, and more specifically e-commerce, have proven themselves critical mitigation tools for businesses, especially MSMEs, to adapt to these difficulties, to maintain commercial and customer relationships, and reach new markets that were previously unattainable.

Yet, while e-commerce (and cross-border e-commerce) is present in all African countries its power and reach remain limited. Africa, in fact, remains the global region with the lowest level of internet penetration and utilization of digital tools. It is in this context that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, through the African Trade Policy Centre has embarked on a project to design a virtual course to build capacity amongst actors in Africa's digital marketplace, with a particular focus on Portuguese speaking African countries. To help businesses succeed in the Africa's cross-border digital marketplace it is key to build the capacity of policy makers, stakeholders, and business owners by helping them understand all aspects of the digital economy and enabling them to engage in the digital transformation.

With the growing importance of digital technology and cross-border e-commerce in mind this course seeks to answer several in-depth questions about e-commerce beginning with 'what is e-commerce?' and 'what is digitalization and the digital transformation?'. It then explores other topics relevant to helping African businesses integrate the digital world into their business models like data privacy and protection, the competition landscape, logistics, and inclusivity.

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What are the objectives of the course?

Specifically, this course seeks to build capacity amongst policy makers, stakeholders such as civil society, and private sector actors and MSME business owners interested in engaging in cross-border e-commerce. The course explores various aspects of e-commerce and the digital marketplace through five interactive modules with individual lessons. The topics covered through the various modules are:

- **Module 1- Introduction to e-commerce:** This module seeks to introduce e-commerce and provide the participant with a broad understanding of the elements associated with engaging in cross-border e-commerce operations. It also analyzes recent trends in e-commerce, discusses the participation of MSMEs in e-commerce in Africa, and provides an overview of the institutional structure surrounding e-commerce.
- **Module 2- The Digital Transformation:** Module 2 seeks to introduce the digital transformation, as distinguished from digitalization itself. It also attempts to help the participant understand MSME cross-border digital strategies, and the key areas businesses must build capacity in to enter the e-commerce ecosystem.
- **Module 3- E-commerce Logistics:** Without the ability to deliver digital goods, or physical goods ordered digitally e-commerce would not exist. In this sense, module 3 explains the logistics chains for cross-border e-commerce and discusses the roadblocks and opportunities present in African logistics chains.
- **Module 4- Data & Digital Platforms:** Data is crucial for cross-border e-commerce because without data MSMEs would not know who their customers are or how to engage with them. Likewise, e-commerce platforms must place their goods on a digital platform that is readily available for customers. This module explores both of these issues, from data availability, privacy and regulation to the mechanisms available for MSMEs to use data strategically to advance their businesses.
- **Module 5- Competition, Dispute Management & Inclusivity:** E-commerce is a platform that can enhance inclusivity and reach everyone, yet, just like traditional businesses e-commerce companies compete and, at times, have disputes. This module seeks to help the participant understand how MSMEs can use competition policy to their advantage, explain mechanisms available when disputes arise, and discuss the opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups that e-commerce presents.

Methodology: This is a distance learning course meaning it is completely online. The course operates through the African Institute of Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) online platform. The five thematic modules can be accessed through this platform and contain lectures, videos, tutorials, and interviews. The course, which runs approximately 5 weeks, will also have interactive classes once per week to facilitate learning and engagement with the material. Each module ends with a short quiz to evaluate acquired understanding. The course will be given in Portuguese.

The course will be given in Portuguese, however, all materials will be available in both Portuguese and English. During live lectures, interpretation will be provided for English speaking participants.

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Profile of Participants:

The target participants for this course are:

- Officials from National Ministries (mainly Ministries of Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Social Affairs, Infrastructure), provincial departments and local authorities
- African Union officials including AUDA-NEPAD, AfCFTA Secretariat and Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
- Diplomats from Permanent Missions and Ministries of Foreign Affairs
- Private Sector Professionals and Civil Society Organizations
- Officials of the United Nations System and other organizations, regional and international, including multilateral financial institutions
- Faculties, researchers and students
- All other interested citizens including business owners and MSMEs

Duration of the course:

The course will run for 5 weeks from late September 2023 through October 2023. Each module will be contained to 1 week, individually.

Cost:

There is no cost for participation in this course.

Technical Requirements:

Internet access is an essential requirement for participation with the specifications below. Participants are kindly requested to check with their network and/or system administrators to ensure their system meets the below requirements:

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or higher; Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X; Linux
- Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free hard disk space
- Software:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader
 - Adobe Flash Player
 - Microsoft Office (Windows or Mac) or Open Office
- Browser: Google chrome, Firefox 36 or higher or Internet Explorer 7 or higher
- Modem: 56K
- Pop-ups JavaScript, Cookies and Pop-ups must be enabled

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Facilitators:

Rita Carneiro



Rita Carneiro is an experienced consultant in international trade and regional integration, assessment and promotion of the business climate (namely, within the scope of EPA agreements, EDIC and export promotion policies). She also has extensive experience in analyzing MSME-related regulatory challenges; private sector development (micro and SMEs), support for value chain development, business support services for MSMEs (integrated electronic platforms), in the area of entrepreneurship development and business incubation; institution-building and organizational change; finance, market analysis and product development in both European and African environments. She has a Master's in Law from the Catholic University of Lisbon and a Master's in International Relations and Diplomacy (Development Economics and Commercial Strategies) from Schiller International University.

Marie-Louise Aren



Marie-Louise Aren is an International Trade & Investment Lawyer and Policy Researcher. Her main areas of expertise and research interests cover International Trade & Investment Law/Policy; Digital Trade; International Tax Law; and Policy; Sovereign Debt; and Climate Change Law, as it relates to Africa's Economic Development and Integration. Marie-Louise has worked as a Principal Law Research Officer at the Law Reform Commission and Legal Consultant to the World Bank Group.

Jason McCormack



Jason McCormack is an Associate Economic Affairs officer at the African Trade Policy Centre of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. His primary areas of expertise cover trade policy analysis, specifically as it relates to the nexus between trade and the digital economy and trade and the environment. Prior to working for the Economic Commission for Africa he worked in private wealth management at Bank of America (2010-2021) and as a professor of Economics for St. Joseph's University (2014-2021) and Lehman College (2018-2022). He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Fordham University in New York.

Primary Contacts:

Rita Carneiro-

maria.carapetomoreiracarneiro@un.org

Jason McCormack-

Jason.mccormack@un.org

Register here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/94nkBGAZHS>