



Leveraging Integration Frameworks for Trade in Services and CSOs in the EAC (LIFTED)

Increasing EAC, continental and further bilateral trade with EU in Trade in Services and civil society engagement in the framework of the AfCFTA for EAC integration.



Photo; Trade in Services

Background

The action “Leveraging Integration Frameworks for Trade in Services and CSOs in the EAC” (LIFTED) is jointly co-financed by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The Action is part of and contributes to the “Team Europe Initiative” supporting the African economic integration towards the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Support to Regional Networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Sub-Saharan Africa. It furthers the implementation of the regional economic integration agenda (EAC Customs Union and Common Market) with particular attention to free movement of services and enhanced participation of civil society, women and youth organisations for people-centred economic integration. With this focus, LIFTED aims at increasing business competitiveness, boosting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, attracting further investments, creating decent jobs, and increasing citizen’s participation in East African integration.

The Challenge

The East African Community (EAC) is the most integrated regional economic block in Africa according to the Africa Regional Integration Index and is at a critical point in its journey towards economic integration, particularly within the services sector, which represents a substantial portion of the region's GDP. Despite existing commitments by EAC Partner States to liberalise key service sectors, progress remains uneven. Trade barriers, such as regulatory restrictions, continue to obstruct the free flow of services, hindering regional economic growth.

Project name	Leveraging Integration Frameworks for Trade in Services and CSOs in the EAC (LIFTED)
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Lead executing agency	Secretariat of the East African Community
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Furthermore, the recognition of professional qualifications across borders is limited, creating significant challenges for skilled workers who seek opportunities in other EAC countries. Civil society engagement-including the participation of women and youth organisations in the regional integration process is inadequate, preventing the full realisation of inclusive and sustainable economic development. These challenges restrict the potential of the services sector to drive regional economic transformation and improve the livelihoods of East African citizens.



Photo; Tourists Attraction

Our Approach

LIFTED aims to increase EAC, continental and where applicable further bilateral trade with EU in trade in services in the framework of the AfCFTA, and boost civil society engagement for people-centred EAC integration. This is achieved through measures designed to increase services liberalisation and exports for selected services sectors through identifying and removing barriers that restrict TiS as well as supporting efforts towards increasing engagement of civil society, women and youth organizations in regional economic integration at the EAC and continental level.

Areas of support in the EAC

To address the identified challenges, LIFTED is implementing a multifaceted approach across several sectors:

Increased liberalisation of services (TiS): this is achieved through identifying and removing barriers that restrict cross-border TiS and defining commitments in additional sectors in line with Art. 23 of the Common Market Protocol (CMP), AfCFTA and relevant Economic Partnership Agreement provisions. In partnership with the East African Business Council, the programme supports the private sector to take advantage of opportunities arising from the EAC services liberalisation, by enhancing the capacity of service suppliers, particularly MSMEs and women and youth owned businesses, to maximise export potential.

Streamlining tourism operating requirements across all EAC Partner States: through simplifying and standardising the process for obtaining and maintaining tourism-related operating licenses in the region; and promotion of the EAC region as a single destination under the “Visit East Africa – Feel the Vibe” brand, thereby boosting the growth of the regional tourism sector.

Supporting efforts towards the implementation of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs): particularly for the engineering sector and other professional services to facilitate cross-border mobility. The programme supports the EAC and competent authorities in the Partner States to operationalise Annex VII (of the CMP) on the Regulations for Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications.

Facilitating the realisation of the EAC Treaty provisions on enhancing engagement of civil society in the economic integration process: through revitalising dialogue mechanisms between non-state actors, EAC, and Partner States as well as capacity development for CSOs on regional economic integration.

Fostering women and youth innovations in regional economic integration and empowerment of CSOs: through inclusion of women’ and youths’ rights in the integration process.

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