Eswatini

The small, landlocked kingdom has been making steady progress in extending ICT coverage and services, taking steps towards sector reform and market liberalization, with the reduction of tariffs a key policy goal.

Mobile services: There is one provider of mobile services in the country, Swazi MTN, a joint venture of the South African group (49 per cent) and the State-owned incumbent Eswatini Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (EPTC)[183] (51 per cent), which launched in 1998. Things soured between the stakeholders when EPTC launched a competing full mobility CDMA service. It was sued by MTN, with the International Court of Arbitration ruling in MTN's favour. EPTC was subsequently ordered to terminate the service, with the Government taking control of EPTC's stake in MTN. In addition, 19 per cent of MTN's stake in MTN Swazi was sold to Swazi Empowerment Limited, a government investment holding. Despite the mobile monopoly, GSM coverage is high in the small, landlocked country, with household mobile phone penetration at 96 per cent (98 per cent in urban areas and 94 per cent in rural ones), the second-highest in sub-Saharan Africa.[184] MTN launched 3G in 2011 and LTE was launched in 2016 using the 1 800 MHz band.

Fixed services: Incumbent EPTC offers fixed-telephone services through the SwaziTelecom brand. Fixed-telephone offerings include copper fixed lines and wireless local loop telephone service. SwaziTelecom offers fixed-broadband through ADSL with connection speeds of up to 5 Mbit/s. It also provides wholesale ADSL access to resellers. There is a nationwide fibre-optic backbone infrastructure with connections to the SEACOM undersea cable through Mozambique and the EASSy undersea cable through South Africa for redundancy. The Mbabane Internet Exchange Point was launched in 2014.

Government policy: The Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology was established in 2009 with responsibility for sector policy. The Communications Commissions Act of 2013 created the Swaziland Communications Commission (SSCOM), taking over responsibility for regulation from EPTC. The Electronic Communications Act of 2013 lays out the framework for regulation of the sector covering competition and licensing.

Key indicators for Eswatini (2017)		Africa	World
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	*3.0*	0.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	*76.9*	74.4	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	*13.1*	24.8	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	*54.0*	62.7	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	*54.0*	28.4	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	*30.3*	22.1	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	*21.4*	8.9	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	*27.0*	19.4	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	*6.0*	11.2	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	*0.6*	0.6	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s	*21.0*	38.7	4.2
-2 to 10 Mbit/s	*78.8*	37.2	13.2
-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s	*0.3*	24.1	82.6

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2018).

In 2016, both MTN and EPTC were issued new full-service licenses allowing them to provide any service. The National Information and Communication Infrastructure Plan 2012–2016 lays out the policy and implementation for aligning ICT with national development goals, and was the thrust behind the launching of the Electronic Communications Act and creation of SSCOM. The Plan targets nine priority areas (human resource capacity, infrastructure development, education, strategic ICT leadership, financial services sector, ICT industry, legal/regulatory frameworks, environmental management and media). There is a particular emphasis on education to promote both basic digital literacy and advanced skills for those working in ICT. This includes incorporating computer education in the school curriculum, ensuring ICTs in schools and developing the online learning environment. Secondary school graduates would need to have ICT proficiency before progressing to tertiary institutions, and a programme will be launched in vocational schools targeting those already out of school.

Conclusion: Eswatini's move toward sector reform – including a new electronic communications law, creation of a regulator and issuance of full-service licenses – aims to intensify competition in order to lower prices and deepen ICT access, not to mention the country's concentrated efforts to enhance digital skills.