

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

(Consulting Services - Selection of a Consulting Firm)

Selection of a consultant (firm) to conduct a feasibility study for the establishment of a regional Internet exchange point for the West Africa region.

Reference Number: ECW/PPDU/2023/QCBS/01

Final ENG_EOI_Regional Internet Exchange Point 110923

1. Introduction

Articles 32 and 33 of the revised ECOWAS Treaty form the basis for the region's engagement in the field of information and communication technologies to achieve its ideals of regional integration. Article 33 calls on Member States to "develop, modernize, coordinate and standardize their national telecommunications networks in order to ensure reliable interconnection between Member States, and to coordinate their efforts to mobilize national and international financial resources through the participation of the private sector in the provision of telecommunications/ICT services". Guided by this vision, we have made substantial investments in the telecommunications sector, particularly in the provision of broadband Internet services. Currently, ten (10) submarine cable systems with thirty-three (33) landing points connect ECOWAS to the rest of the world. The average internet penetration rate in the region is 41%.¹

Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) are a key infrastructure within the Internet service delivery

ecosystem. IXPs allow local networks to efficiently exchange information/data within a country, avoiding routing local Internet traffic through foreign/overseas territories. Therefore, an IXP is a key component of Internet infrastructure that can make the Internet more affordable and of better quality for local communities. Except for Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, all ECOWAS member States have successfully established their own IXPs.²

Beyond national territories, regional Internet exchange points are important, especially for the ECOWAS region.

With the aim of supporting the strengthening of existing IXPs and the emergence of new IXPs in Africa, the African Union (AU) has implemented the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project. In addition to supporting the establishment of a national IXP in countries that do not have one, the project also aims to support the establishment of at least one RIXP in each of Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

In addition, given its regional integration objectives, ECOWAS has launched several digital economy initiatives whose success depends on the efficient exchange and transfer of data among member States.

These projects include the implementation of affordable regional mobile roaming, the operationalization of the Regional Customs Network for Transit Trade (ALISA) and the operationalization of the ECOWAS e-commerce strategy. The establishment of a RIXP infrastructure or national IXP interconnection throughout the region is therefore important for the successful implementation of these initiatives and ensures efficient routing of intra-regional Internet traffic...

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