



ECOWAS COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Provision of Technical Assistance to improve data collection on cross-border e-commerce in the ECOWAS region

I. CONTEXT

E-commerce and the digital economy offer new opportunities for regional integration, economic growth, industrial diversification and job creation in the ECOWAS region. Increased use of the Internet over the last 10 years mirrored in the increase in mobile Internet coverage, and a strong commitment by governments in the region to digital transformation to deliver on economic, social and environmental development goals, highlight the region's ambitions and the progress achieved. The ECOWAS region has 41% Internet penetration this is a great stride from a mere 2% in 2005. More people are using the Internet for commercial purposes. This increase has partly been influenced by a rise in Internet penetration, the adoption of mobile devices, the development of innovative payment systems and a growing youth population.

Despite all positive factors that create an optimistic forecast for e-commerce in the region, there are still gaps when the prerequisites for cross-border e-commerce in each of the 15 ECOWAS member States are considered. These challenges relate to barriers that hamper trade facilitation, costly and unequal access to ICT infrastructure and services, insufficient online consumer protection and confidence, the low uptake of business and e-commerce skills, as well as the absence of specific data on e-commerce-related activity in the region. In addition, to provide evidence-based policy direction to advance adoption and innovation in the sector.

In July 2023, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) developed the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy (ECS) with the objective to support ECOWAS Member States in their efforts to use technology to accelerate structural change and development, and foster regional integration, including through economic diversification, job creation and more inclusive trade activities.

The strategy is guided by all ECOWAS, African Union (AU) and African-led initiatives in e-commerce and digital development (such as the African Union's vision 2063, the African Digital Transformation Strategy), the African Continental Free-Trade Area (AfCFTA), and other relevant programmes/projects implemented by the eTrade for all Initiative and other

development partners and will also directly support the Community's efforts to promote regional cooperation and integration.

The strategy is composed of the follow four strategic goals: (i): Institutional Strengthening; (ii) Secure trust along the e-commerce supply chain from producers to consumers; (iii) e-commerce intelligence: Improve access to e-commerce statistics and market information in ECOWAS; and (iv) Foster inclusion for e-commerce development in ECOWAS with a focus on Women, Youth, people with disabilities, and informal cross-border traders (ICBTs).

Improving data collection on cross-border e-commerce in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region is essential for understanding market dynamics, identifying trends, and formulating effective policies to support e-commerce growth.

The ECOWAS Commission, with the support of the World Bank, is seeking to recruit a consultant to improve data collection on cross-border e-commerce in the ECOWAS region.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of the assignment is to provide Technical Assistance TA to improve data collection on cross-border e-commerce in the ECOWAS region.

The TA would support the ECOWAS Commission and Member States in enhance data collection that would aid formulating effective policies to support e-commerce growth.

III. DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Working under the overall guidance of the Commissioner for Economic Affairs & Agriculture at the ECOWAS Commission, and under the direct supervision of the Director of Trade Directorate, the consultant is expected to perform the following activities:

- a. Support establishment/ operationalization a regional e-commerce observatory
- b. Centralize and reconcile e-transactions and data from e-commerce.
- c. Develop standardized data collection mechanisms specifically designed to capture information on cross-border e-commerce transactions.
- d. Promote the automation and centralization of e-transactions from e-commerce platforms operating in Member States.
- e. Provide reports and data analytics regarding e-commerce market trends within ECOWAS countries and between ECOWAS countries and the rest of the world.
- f. Support Member States in improving their capacity to collect and report on e-commerce related data.
- g. Harmonize data standards and classification systems across ECOWAS Member States, reviewing relevant guidelines and standards regarding e-commerce trade statistics (WTO, UNCTAD, OECD, EU etc.¹).

¹ E.g. Measuring the Value of E-Commerce (UNCTAD, 2023); Handbook on Measuring Digital Trade (WTO, 2023)

- h. Foster partnerships between government agencies, private sector stakeholders, academic institutions, and international organizations to collaborate on data collection initiatives.
- i. Gather information on the size, scope, and characteristics of cross-border e-commerce activities in the ECOWAS region
- j. Leverage technology, such as data analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, to enhance data collection and analysis capabilities.
- k. Design incentives for businesses to comply with data reporting requirements, such as streamlined customs procedures or access to government support programs.
- l. Raise awareness among e-commerce businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the importance of data collection for informing policy decisions and promoting cross-border trade.
- m. Establish a system for regular reporting and monitoring of cross-border e-commerce data, with periodic updates on key indicators and trends.

IV. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The following deliverables for this assignment are as follows:

#	Deliverables	Timeline	Payment schedule
1	E-Commerce Market Trends and Cross-Border E-Commerce Activities Report in the ECOWAS Region	Week 4	5%
2	Regional E-Commerce Observatory Establishment Plan and Operational Manual	Week 8	10%
3	Centralization, Reconciliation, and Standardized Data Collection Framework for Cross-Border E-Commerce, including automation strategy.	Week 14	35%
4	Capacity Building Plan and Workshop aimed at member states personnel on e-commerce data collection and reporting	Week 20	25%
5	Awareness Campaign Plan and Incentives Strategy to comply with data reporting requirements	Week 22	20%
6	Partnership Strategy to promote collaboration on data collection initiatives	Week 24	5%

V. EXPECTED DURATION AND LOCATION

The expected duration of the assignment is one hundred and twenty (120) days.

The consultant can work remotely but is expected to travel to Abuja when required. All travel costs and DSA will be paid separately according to prevailing WBG rules and regulations.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Qualifications and skills

- Advanced university degree (i.e. master's degree) in Trade, Law, Economics, Development Studies or related field with relevance for the assignment

Professional experience

- Ten (10) years of proven experience in trade policy formulation, regional integration and development, or related areas
- Seven (7) years of experience in statistics or data analytics be included as working experience
- Five (5) years of proven experience in Digital Trade/ ECommerce

Language

- English, French and Portuguese are the working language of the ECOWAS Commission.

VII. CONTACT

For further information, please contact Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Acting Director – Trade at ksofola@ecowas.int