



PAGE 3: B. ABOUT YOU

Q1: Respondent details

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Q2: Country or Customs territory

- INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Q3: Organization

Public sector

PAGE 4: C. ABOUT YOUR CASE STORY

Q4: Title of case story

Review of e-commerce legislation harmonization in the Economic Community Of West African States

Q5: Case story focus

E-commerce development and efforts to bridge the "digital divide".

Q6: Case story abstract

The objective of this capacity building program was to strengthen the know-how of delegates, review the current state of cyber legislation in the ECOWAS region, and discuss better ways to achieve the regions goal towards integration and the harmonization of its e-commerce legislation. Between the years 2013-2014, ECOWAS with the support and cooperation of UNCTAD conducted two online training sessions and three regional workshops. The sessions gave 315 policy and lawmakers and 69 representatives from ECOWAS member states a platform to discuss the legal aspects of e-commerce.

Q7: Who provided funding?

Multilateral organization

Q8: Project/Programme type

Regional

Q9: Your text case story

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Vision 2020, places as a priority the harmonization of telecommunication policies in the region in order to further its economic and monetary integration goals, and enable its citizens benefit from the fast evolving digital economy. Between the years 2013-2014, ECOWAS with the support and cooperation of UNCTAD conducted two online training sessions and three regional workshops. The sessions gave 315 policy and lawmakers and 69 representatives from ECOWAS member states a platform to discuss the legal aspects of e-commerce. The objective of this capacity building program was to strengthen the know-how of delegates, review the current state of cyber legislation in the ECOWAS region, and discuss better ways to achieve the regions goal towards integration and the harmonization of its e-commerce legislation. This process of harmonization, in addition to promoting a coherent legal-frame on e-commerce in the region, aims at enabling enterprises in member countries key into and compete in the digital economy. ECOWAS has the following Supplementary Act on e-transactions (Supplementary Act A/SA.2/01/10), Cybercrime (Directive 1/08/11) and personal data protection (Supplementary Act A/SA.1/01/10), but all member countries are yet to adopt and implement these regulations. The expectation is that a successful harmonization process will boost investments and increase e-commerce between member states.

Areas identified for further legislative harmonization

- Electronic transactions
- Data protection
- Computer crime
- Consumer protection
- Online content
- Domain names

Full report of review exercise can be found here: http://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/dtlstict2015d2_en.pdf

Q10: Lessons learnt

- Member States should continue the transposition and implementation of regional legislation on e-transactions, data protection and cybercrime with a clearly defined strategy and specific deadlines.
 - At the ECOWAS level, the process of harmonization should continue by considering all relevant areas, including e-money, online administration and new issues arising from cloud computing.
 - The existing legislation should be disseminated to stakeholders at all levels. This step would necessitate training or capacity-building for those tasked with the application of ICT regulation, including those in priority sectors such as the courts, the police force and parliamentarians.
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