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. The Increased use of the Internet over the last 10 years, mirrored in the expansion of mobile Internet coverage, and a strong commitment by governments in the region to digital transformation, which aims to deliver on economic, social, and environmental development goals, highlight the region's ambitions and the progress achieved. Increasingly, more people are using the internet for commercial purposes. This increase has been partly 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 the positive factors that create an optimistic forecast for e-commerce in the region, there are still gaps when considering the prerequisites for cross-border e-commerce in each of the 12 ECOWAS member states. These challenges relate to barriers that hinder digital trade facilitation including costly and unequal access to ICT infrastructure and services, insufficient online consumer protection and confidence, the low uptake of e-commerce skills, as well as the absence of specific data on e-commerce-related activity in the region.

To provide evidence-based policy direction to advance adoption and innovation in the sector, in July 2023, at the 90th session of the Council of Ministers, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has taken a significant step towards harnessing the power of e-commerce for sustainable development with the official approval of the ECOWAS E-commerce Strategy (ECS). This strategic framework aims among others to supporting ECOWAS Member States in leveraging technology to accelerate structural change and development, foster regional integration, and promote economic diversification, job creation and inclusive trade activities.

The strategy is guided by all ECOpartners andUnion (AU) and African-led initiatives in e-commerce and digital development (such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, the African Union 2030 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 in addition 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) ecommerce intelligence including improving 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).

Furthermore, the necessity of detailed and accurate e-commerce data to monitor the e-commerce market and to provide insights supporting e-commerce activities development within the ECOWAS countries was recognized. 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.

In line with the above context, to improve data collection on cross-border e-commerce in the ECOWAS region, the Commission, with the support of the World Bank, is seeking to recruit a consultant to make an analysis of the region E-Commerce Market Trends and Cross-Border E-Commerce Activities, design a regional e-commerce observatory and build capacity for Member States on e-commerce intelligence.

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 to enhance data collection that would aid in 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 the direct supervision of the Director of the Trade Directorate, the consultant is expected to perform the following activities:

a. Analysis of the region E-Commerce Market Trends and Cross-Border E-Commerce Activities
    - Centralize and reconcile e-transactions and data from e-commerce.
    - Provide reports and data analytics regarding e-commerce market trends within ECOWAS countries and between ECOWAS countries and the rest of the world.

- Gather information on the size, scope, and characteristics of cross-border e-commerce activities in the ECOWAS region.
- Assess the scope of regulations in Member States which may support formalized collection of e-commerce data and identify gaps.

b. Design a comprehensive regional framework for the collection, harmonization, and monitoring of cross-border e-commerce data
    - Establish a framework for regular reporting and monitoring of cross-border e-commerce data, with periodic updates on key indicators and trends.
    - identify the relevant stakeholders to involve and define their role
    - identify the sources of the e-commerce data
    - identify and define the relevant data to be collected, including their description and calculation method
    - Harmonize data standards and classification systems across ECOWAS Member States, reviewing relevant guidelines and standards related to e-commerce trade statistics (e.g., WTO, UNCTAD, OECD, EU, etc.[1]).
    - Develop standardized data collection mechanisms specifically designed to capture information on cross-border e-commerce transactions.
    - Define the periodicity of the data collection and the time frame for the submission
    - Organise workshop(s) to promote Member States' harmonization on technical aspects on the regional framework including common definitions, periodicity, data collection methods etc.

c. Define the functional and technical requirements for the development and operationalization of a regional e-commerce observatory
    - Functionalities for aggregation and dissemination of e-commerce data
    - Technical needs for storage, data processing, data integration, data analytics, and data visualization
    - The technical specifications should leverage technology, such as machine learning, and artificial intelligence, to enhance the data collection and analysis capabilities
    - Support the technical consultant in the establishment and operationalization of a regional e-commerce observatory.

d. Enhance Member States capacity and capabilities on e-commerce intelligence
    - Support Member States in improving their capacity to collect and report on e-commerce-related data by developing training curriculum and other capacity building initiatives.

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

- Foster partnerships between government agencies, private sector stakeholders, academic institutions, and international organizations to collaborate on data collection initiatives.
- 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.

e. Promote the automation and centralization of e-transactions from e-commerce platforms operating in Member States.
f. Design incentives for businesses to comply with data reporting requirements, such as streamlined customs procedures or access to government support programs.
g. Any other responsibilities as may be assigned in relation to e-commerce development.

IV. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The following deliverables for this assignment are as follows:

#	Deliverables	Timeline
1	E-Commerce Market Trends and Cross-Border E-Commerce Activities Report in the ECOWAS Region	Week 4
2	Strategy for Centralization, Reconciliation, and Standardized Data Collection Framework for Cross-Border E-Commerce, and automation.	Week 10
3	Workshop for the Validation of the Strategy for Centralization, Reconciliation, and Standardized Data Collection Framework for Cross-Border E-Commerce, and automation	Week 14
4	Capacity Building Plan and Training programme aimed at enhancing the member states' personnel on e-commerce data collection and reporting	Week 16
5	TOR for the establishment of the Regional E-Commerce Observatory and Establishment Plan	Week 20
6	Awareness Campaign Plan and Incentives Strategy to comply with data reporting requirements	Week 22
7	Stakeholder engagement Strategy to promote collaboration on data collection initiatives	Week 24

V. EXPECTED DURATION AND LOCATION

The expected duration of the assignment is one hundred and twenty (120) days. This duration includes the submission and internal validation of deliverables. The provisional duration of internal validation of all deliverables is 30 working 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 ECOWAS or WBG rules and regulations.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Qualifications and skills

Advanced university degree (at least master's degree) in Trade, Law, Economics, Statistics, Development Studies or related field with relevance for the assignment

Professional experience

- Seven (7) years of proven experience in trade policy formulation, regional integration and development, or related areas
- Demonstrable technical proven experience in data collection and statistics or data analytics at national level.
- Professional experience in Digital Trade or eCommerce
- Proven experience in leading related multi-stakeholders' engagement and consultations
- Possess experience in preparing technical analysis and platform architectures for information systems

Language

- The Consultant should demonstrate proficiency in English and French. Knowledge of Portuguese will be an asset.

VII. CONTACT

For further information, please contact Mr. Kolawole Sofola, Director – Trade at ksofola@ecowas.int, with Mr. Alpha Bah at abah@ecowas.int in copy.