

CONTRIBUTION OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY BOARD (ART) CAMEROON TO BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES: GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM FOR REGULATORS (GSR-21)

Theme: "Regulatory uplift for financing digital infrastructure, access and use".

1.a. Regarding new policy and regulatory tools, Cameroon proposes:

To adopt an incentive policy for the deployment of electronic communication infrastructure and its sharing that can lead to a reduction in the cost of digital services; to institute a customs policy aimed at facilitating imports of electronic communication equipment; to establish an industrial policy aimed at manufacturing electronic communication equipment locally; to introduce incentives for investment projects in landlocked/remote areas through the special telecommunication development fund.

1.b. Recognizing that there are no "silver bullets", the roll-out of ubiquitous connectivity should be ensured in the first instance through the deployment of infrastructure and services in unconnected areas supported by innovative financing mechanisms for the construction of community telecentres and access to community Internet terminals, and through user training. Moreover, collaboration and cooperation at the international, regional, subregional and bilateral levels with a view to drawing on positive experiences represent a lasting solution.

1.c. With the establishment of policies promoting lower prices for services and equipment intended for end users (regulatory measures for retail markets, lower customs duties for terminal equipment and lower taxes on digital services); through the promotion of public access points (community telecentres, schools, universities, libraries, etc.); by encouraging start-ups which develop innovative financial solutions that meet the needs of the population.

1.d. Aware that the use of digital technology is more global in scope as it affects all areas of activity, it would be advisable to encourage policy-makers and regulators in the different areas of activity to create co-regulation mechanisms that will result in new financing models, such as blended or pooled financing.

1.e. To establish a framework for collaboration between regulators, policy-makers and financial institutions with a view to proposing collaborative approaches for the benefit of all; to create regulatory incentives for new financing models that will help remove barriers to broadband deployment and promote infrastructure sharing, including among sectors; to encourage bilateral and subregional collaboration for project financing.

1.f. A change in the regulatory landscape for operators, particularly in terms of regulatory compliance and digital innovations is required. To this end, policy-makers and regulators should develop new regulatory models following a collaborative approach while ensuring that stakeholders' scope of action is defined. The partnership agreement protocols drawn up through consensus and monitored by the regulator should clearly and precisely define the roles, interests, responsibilities and spheres of action of each actor in the process.

2.a. The current financial difficulties on digital markets have led to the development of several innovative digital solutions (telecommuting, cryptocurrency, etc.). This has also made

markets more competitive for the benefit of consumers, who now enjoy a wide range of services adapted to their needs, in a responsible manner and at an affordable cost, but which are sufficient to guarantee their satisfaction. A large part of the world's population has been able to access digital technology to meet their daily needs.

2.b. The regulation of new digital services is a subject which is currently under discussion in Cameroon. The good practices and experiences of developed countries are paths to be followed that will encourage the establishment of regulations in this area. In the long term, it will be necessary to bring regulations and regulatory policies for electronic communications into line with socio-economic objectives. It will also be necessary to set objectives to encourage investment, innovation and healthy and fair competition, while bearing in mind the interests of consumers.

2.c. The creation of regulatory collaboration platforms will enable informed stakeholders to propose innovative tools, practices and initiatives that can unlock the power of new and emerging technologies. Legal and regulatory frameworks will need to be adjusted on an ongoing basis.

2.d. Regulatory sandboxes do provide a safe space for regulatory experimentation. The proximity between regulators and innovators ensures that both parties generate resilient ideas which, once combined, will help fine-tune models before full market entry takes place. Consideration will have to be given to setting up a participatory collaborative framework for designing and conducting Quality of Experience (QoE) testing, involving stakeholders in the development and implementation of the testing protocols. Nonetheless, a safe space can help fine-tune new business models and promote resilience insofar the regulatory expectations of primary digital stakeholders (consumers and regulators) form part of a predictable and sustainable approach.

2.e. The regulations in force in Cameroon provide for conditions of access, use, installation and deployment of networks, on an experimental basis, using innovative technologies or services aimed at the digital transition of smart grids and infrastructures for a maximum period of time, which may or may not be renewed. These regulatory "sandboxes" may also be regarded as innovative solutions that help to mobilize funding. Regulatory sandboxes offer regulators the opportunity to promote innovation without over-regulating, while protecting the interests of consumers. So yes, regulatory sandboxes are the answer.

3.a. In terms of co-regulation in Cameroon, there are subregional directives (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa – (CEMAC)), which serve as a compass and provide guidance for the States of the central African subregion on priority activities to be implemented. Despite the fact that we are witnessing the evolution of telecommunications and ICTs towards electronic communications through the convergence of networks and services and the emergence of digital services at the expense of analogue ones, it must be recognized that the existing structure will always have to be matched with and taken into account for the development of new regulatory models. Several traditional legal and regulatory frameworks are still relevant and remain open, adjustable, neutral, forward-looking and flexible enough to be able to leverage new technologies and innovative services.

3.b. Digital regulation is indeed multimodal by design, as required by innovations in digital technologies. Moreover, digital operators must comply with the legislative and regulatory provisions of the countries where they offer their services notwithstanding the harmonization of technical resources at the international level, the accessibility of multiple

networks worldwide, the existence of international fibre-optic networks and international connectivity links.

3.c Since there are no benchmark governance practices to provide an ideal interface for digital transformation, some of the more competitive socio-economic activities need to be transformed through the creation of synergies that will allow regulatory bodies to flourish in several areas of activity. This will prompt the emergence of co-regulation activities on technical, financial, legal and managerial aspects, through partnership agreements or normative texts between regulators and service providers in areas such as e-health and e-learning, as well as multilateral consultation frameworks and operator associations.

3.d. Collaborative consultations with financial institutions, innovators and academia will lead to optimal regulation. Such regulation must take account of technological developments and encourage the establishment of multisectoral, public-private and inter-State collaborative agreements and partnerships. It must be flexible and open enough to leverage new technologies and innovative services.
