

## Benin

**This West African country looks forward to higher ICT uptake with the arrival of a new undersea fibre-optic cable. The Government aims to leverage this to develop a digital economy.**

**Mobile services:** There are four mobile operators in the country: MTN, a subsidiary of the South African mobile group; MOOV, a subsidiary of Maroc Telecom; GLO, a subsidiary of the Nigerian mobile company Globalcom; and Benin Telecoms, the State-owned incumbent operating under the brand LIBERCOM. The first two account for around 90 per cent of the market and have been at the forefront of introducing new services such as mobile-broadband and mobile money. In 2013, 78 per cent of households had mobile phones, 86 per cent in urban areas and 69 per cent in rural locations.<sup>97</sup> Following the award of universal licenses, MTN launched 3G in 2012, followed by MOOV in 2014. MTN launched LTE using 1 800 MHz in 2016.

**Fixed services:** Benin Telecoms, the State-owned incumbent operator, is the only fixed line telephone provider using both copper wire and wireless local loop lines. Fixed-broadband offered by Benin Telecoms includes CDMA, WiMAX and LTE fixed wireless, as well as fixed ADSL and fibre-optic connections for businesses. The maximum speed on offer for ADSL is 2 Mbit/s. In addition to the mobile-broadband operators, there are ten fixed wireless ISPs. Benin Telecoms' infrastructure manages the national backbone. The five-year project to develop telecommunications and ICT infrastructure, financed by a Chinese loan, will significantly extend the backbone, including fibre-optic links to all of the country's 77 communes. The country has been connected to the SAT-3 undersea fibre-optic cable since 2002, with Benin Telecoms (then called OPT) owning the landing rights for Benin. However, it was only with the arrival of ACE cable over a decade later that there was a substantial increase in international bandwidth with lower prices. A joint venture of local mobile operators and ISPs called Benin ACE GIE manages the ACE connection. Benin-IX (Benin Internet eXchange Point), launched in 2013, has six participants.

**Government policy:** The strategy of the sector is elaborated by the *Conseil du Numérique* chaired by the President of the Republic, with as executive arm *l'Agence d'Exécution du*

| Key indicators for Benin (2017)                            | Africa | World |       |
|--|--------|-------|-------|
| Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.                        | 0.5    | 0.9   | 13.0  |
| Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.                        | 78.5   | 74.4  | 103.6 |
| Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.                | 12.0   | 24.8  | 61.9  |
| 3G coverage (% of population)                              | 65.0   | 62.7  | 87.9  |
| LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)                       | 39.7   | 28.4  | 76.3  |
| Individuals using the Internet (%)                         | 14.1   | 22.1  | 48.6  |
| Households with a computer (%)                             | 6.2    | 8.9   | 47.1  |
| Households with Internet access (%)                        | 7.9    | 19.4  | 54.7  |
| International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)         | 32.5   | 11.2  | 76.6  |
| Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.                        | 0.3    | 0.6   | 13.6  |
| <b>Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution</b> |        |       |       |
| <i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>                             | 9.4    | 38.7  | 4.2   |
| <i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>                                     | 3.3    | 37.2  | 13.2  |
| <i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>                        | 87.4   | 24.1  | 82.6  |

Note: Data in italics are ITU estimates. Source: ITU (as of June 2018).

*Numérique* (ADN). Supervision for the sector is the responsibility of the Ministry of Digital Economy and Communications. This includes oversight over Benin Telecoms and the national posts and radio and television services. It also oversees the universal service agency and ICT agency, and is responsible for e-government. The government has adopted a Sector Policy Declaration (DPS 2016 -2021) whose strategic orientations for 2021 are: "Transforming Benin into West Africa's digital services platform for the acceleration of growth and social inclusion". The six flagship projects identified in the DPS are the deployment of high- and very high-speed Internet throughout the territory; the transition to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT); the implementation of intelligent administration (Smart Gov); the widespread use of e-commerce; the widespread use of digital technology through education and training; and the promotion and development of digital content.

**Conclusion:** The arrival of a second undersea cable ended the monopoly the incumbent had on international fibre Internet bandwidth, resulting in greatly expanded capacity at much lower prices. The Government now aims to seize on this by more tightly integrating ICTs into the country's social and economic development strategies.