

Comoros

Comoros has witnessed a great development in its Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector over the last 5 years, but fixed and broadband penetration rates are still one of the lowest in the region, with high prices and low affordability. Currently with two competing operators, the ICT sector is starting to move ahead and it is expected that the prices are to go down with the launching of 3G and LTE services.

Mobile services: Mobile-cellular penetration is far below the average penetration in Arab States countries and globally. The same applies to mobile-broadband penetration. This can be attributed to the absence of competition up to 2015, when the National Authority for Regulation of ICT (ANRTIC) awarded a 15 year licence to Telco SA, a consortium composed of Telma Madagascar, SOFIMA and NJJ Capital, operating under the name Telma, thus removing the long-held monopoly of incumbent Comores Telecom (CT). Comores Telecom was the mobile operator through its mobile arm Huri, which rolled out a GSM network in 2003. Telma has launched commercial mobile voice and 3G and LTE data services in Comoros. By the end of 2016, it had rolled out 50 base stations in the capital Moroni and across the country (all of which are LTE-enabled), providing coverage to more than 60 per cent of the population. A variety 3G/LTE data tariffs are on offer.

Fixed services: Comoros has a low level penetration and high prices of fixed-broadband among Arab States countries and globally. Similar to the mobile market, Comores Telecom was the only fixed line operator in the country until ANRTIC awarded the second licence to Telco SA. The licence is valid for 15 years and will allow Telma to provide fixed and mobile (2G, 3G, LTE) services to the public upon full payment; however, as of 2017, Telma had yet not deployed a fixed network.

Government policy: In 2004, the President of Comoros issued a decree to reform the telecommunication sector. The Government of Comoros announced plans to separate the telecommunication functions of the national postal and communications operator SNPT to create a new company, Comoros Telecom (Comtel). ANRTIC is the state institution created by Decree N° 065 of 2009. It is responsible for ensuring the implementation of the ICT sector policy and the

Key indicators for Comoros (2017)	Arab States	World	
Fixed-telephone sub. per 100 inhab.	2.1	7.9	13.0
Mobile-cellular sub. per 100 inhab.	54.9	102.6	103.6
Active mobile-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	37.8	53.9	61.9
3G coverage (% of population)	89.8	88.0	87.9
LTE/WiMAX coverage (% of population)	73.0	50.9	76.3
Individuals using the Internet (%)	8.5	48.7	48.6
Households with a computer (%)	9.2	47.1	47.1
Households with Internet access (%)	5.6	50.1	54.7
International bandwidth per Internet user (kbit/s)	17.4	65.3	76.6
Fixed-broadband sub. per 100 inhab.	0.2	5.6	13.6
Fixed-broadband sub. by speed tiers, % distribution			
<i>-256 kbit/s to 2 Mbit/s</i>	81.9	30.7	4.2
<i>-2 to 10 Mbit/s</i>	16.5	33.8	13.2
<i>-equal to or above 10 Mbit/s</i>	1.6	35.4	82.6

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

law governing the sector throughout the national territory. In this respect, it aims to foster the creation of a healthy, fair and non-discriminatory competitive environment between operators, manage the frequency spectrum, control of tariff costs and quality of service, and work towards a policy of universal access and service. The move forms part of a wider plan to prepare the market for the privatisation of its national Public Telecom Operator (PTO). In January 2013, the Government of Comoros launched the privatisation of Comores Telecom via an international auction. The privatisation of the operator was one of the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund. In July 2013, an infrastructure company called Comores Cables was created by the decree N° 13-86 / PR. Comores Cables has as main role the management and marketing of international fibre optic cables EASSY and others in the future. The liberalization of the market in 2015 followed the licensing of the second telecommunication operator Telco SA. Through the Regional Communications Infrastructure Program, the World Bank is supporting Comoros' efforts to increase connectivity and lower prices for international capacity and extend the geographic reach of broadband networks.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion: The efforts made by the government in the last ten years have resulted in improved ICT status in the country. Comoros, in cooperation with the World Bank, has set a development policy, and one of the main pillars is enhancing competition in the ICT sector by licensing additional operators and introducing mobile and fixed broadband services.