ECONOMIC PROPECTS AND DIGITAL CHALLENGES

“In spite of the digital divide, the continent is showing creative emerging technologies and countries are making progress in improving data penetration”

AFR-IX telecom



Photography: "Moving Shadows", Girma Berta

What does AFR-IX Telecom do?

AFR-IX Telecom is a telecommunications and infrastructures operator founded in 2013 with headquarters in Barcelona. It owns the Barcelona Cable Landing Station, an open port that is scheduled to be commissioned during the first quarter of 2022, with the goal of becoming

a landmark digital port in the Mediterranean, with capacity for up to eight submarine cables. AFR-IX also owns the new Medusa submarine cable, which will connect the North African countries with southern Europe, and will also make East-West connections from Egypt to Portugal on the Atlantic.

On the African continent, AFR-IX is a telecommunications operator with licences in countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger and Cameroon. AFR-IX offers data, MPLS, SDN and advanced managed solutions to telecommunications companies and operators in Africa.

What strategy have you followed for internationalising in sub-Saharan Africa?

Beyond expanding AFR-IX's business on the African continent, we have always sought to create alliances with local operators, as we believe that it is the best way to meet Africa's telecommunication needs. We could say that they provide the local knowledge and we provide the tools. We started operating in Africa in 2013, with operations in three countries in the Gulf of Guinea, coinciding with activation of the ACE cable. In the space of just 5 years, our services were already reaching 70% of the African continent. In addition, in 2018, we opened AFR-IX's first offices in Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, and one year later we made another big jump, opening regional offices in Ghana, Mali and DRC. Final consolidation took place in 2020, with the branches in Cameroon and South Africa. Another important factor is the availability of a pan-African network of IXPs (internet exchange points). AFR-IX currently has six IXPs in the region: NAPAfrica (South Africa), IXPN (Nigeria), DjIX (Djibouti), Asteroid IXP (Kenya), KinIX (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and MOZ-IX (Mozambique). Our ultimate goal is to improve communications between all countries on the African continent, and between Africa and Europe and the United States.

What is your experience in this region?

With a relatively short business trajectory, the results achieved have been very satisfactory: licences in nine countries and branch offices. We are also proud to have a multinational staff, with a team of African professionals. This is an added value for truly understanding the market's specific needs.

What would you highlight about the African market?

Africa is a continent where the digital divide is still very wide. With 453 million users, internet penetration only reaches 34% of the population. Although this is 10% more than in 2019, there is still an enormous digital divide if we compare with the figures in Europe, where internet penetration stands at 84%. Internet penetration on the African continent is also well below the global average (59%), which has increased 7% since 2019. In spite of this, in spite of this digital divide, the continent is showing creative emerging technologies and the countries are making progress in improving data penetration, both at individual

and business level. AFR-IX's goal has always been to improve companies' connectivity in Africa. Thanks to the new terrestrial and subsea connections that connect Africa to the other continents, the global internet network has improved considerably and is particularly important for driving African countries' economic growth. As experts in the local reality, by working onsite in African countries, we can say that Africa's connectivity is unstoppable and we are very proud to have contributed, as a private enterprise, to a more prosperous future for the territory, which has been unfairly neglected by the ICT industry.

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AFR-IX telecom is a licensed telecommunications operator that delivers Data, MPLS, SDN and advanced Managed solutions in Africa to Corporates, International Carriers and Telecommunication Operators in Africa. AFR-IX Telecom already holds licenses in Spain, Portugal, USA, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, DRC, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger and Cameroun. AFR-IX telecom has the most reliable and largest Metro Ethernet Pan African Network and offers global coverage services in Africa. Thanks to its more than 50 POPs in Africa, Europe and America, AFR-IX provides reliable and resilient connectivity with countries connected by subsea and terrestrial cables.