



ECOWAS COMMISSION
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Original

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ENGAGEMENT OF A CONSULTANT TO CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ECOWAS LABOUR MARKET, MIGRATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Contracting Authority

ECOWAS Commission

Current Situation in the Sector

The Economic Community of West African States is one of Africa's most advanced regional economic communities in terms of mobility frameworks and regional integration ambitions. Since the adoption of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and its subsequent Additional Protocol, ECOWAS citizens are entitled to visa-free Entry, Residence, and Establishment across all Member States. This has resulted in one of the highest levels of intra-regional mobility in Africa, with migration largely driven by employment opportunities, informal trade, seasonal labour, and regional value chains.

However, despite this progressive mobility regime, the region faces persistent structural labour market challenges, including; high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, dominance of the informal economy (often exceeding 70–80% in several Member States), weak alignment between education systems and labour market demand, limited visibility of skills supply and demand across borders, gender disparities in access to labour market opportunities, increasing climate-induced mobility and displacement and insufficient data on labour migration, across Member States and related areas.

Currently, labour market and migration data across ECOWAS Member States are fragmented, inconsistent, and often not interoperable. While mobility is high, reliable, timely, and comparable data on labour flows, skills, and employment outcomes are scarce. Several countries maintain Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS) and migration databases, but these systems vary in scope, standards, and technological maturity.

Across ECOWAS Member States, labour market and migration data systems are characterized by i) fragmentation; LMIS, migration databases, and statistical systems operate in silos within and across countries, ii) lack of harmonization; countries use different occupational classifications, indicators, and data collection methodologies, iii) limited interoperability: systems are rarely designed to exchange data across borders or institutions, iv) heavy reliance on surveys: Labour force surveys are periodic and do not provide real-time insights and v) weak administrative data integration: data from employment services, border systems, and education institutions are not systematically linked.

As a result, policymakers at both national and regional levels lack actionable intelligence to monitor labour mobility trends within the ECOWAS region, identify skills shortages and surpluses across countries, design evidence-based employment and migration policies, operationalize the right of establishment under ECOWAS protocols and respond to labour market shocks and emerging trends.

JUSTIFICATION

The development of a regional ECOWAS Labour Market and Migration Information System (ECOWAS-LMMIS) is a strategic priority to support the region's integration agenda in getting evidence-based regional labour mobility by integrating and harmonizing data across Member States. It is in line with the ECOWAS Vision 2050 (economic integration and human capital development), the Free Movement Protocol, Regional Migration Policy, Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan and Continental initiatives under the African Union, including labour migration governance and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Furthermore, the system would provide real-time insights into cross-border labour flows, employment trends and skills availability. This would strengthen implementation of the free movement protocol by reducing information asymmetries between labour-sending and labour-receiving countries. Given that the ECOWAS region is moving towards deeper economic integration, including trade liberalization and regional value chains, labour mobility is not yet optimally aligned with regional production systems, thus, the Regional LMIS will support regional skills matching and economic integration, whilst facilitating cross-border job matching, improve recognition and portability of skills and qualifications and support private sector access to regional talent pools

Finally, the Regional LMMIS will strengthen migration governance and labour market by providing comparable and standardized indicators across countries, enable monitoring of regular and irregular migration flows, support compliance with regional and continental frameworks, including those of the African Union, support early warning systems for labour market disruptions, track return migration and displacement trends and inform targeted interventions for vulnerable populations.

RATIONALE FOR THE ASSESSMENT

Given the diversity of systems, capacities, and legal frameworks across ECOWAS Member States, a comprehensive technical and institutional assessment is required to establish a baseline of existing systems and capacities at Member State level, identify gaps and interoperability constraints, define a regionally appropriate, scalable, and sustainable architecture as well as ensure Member State ownership and data sovereignty

The assessment will therefore provide the foundation for designing a standards-based ECOWAS-LMMIS that reflects the realities and priorities of the region while enabling effective regional coordination.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSULTANCY

To assess existing systems, data ecosystems, and institutional frameworks at the National level to guide the development of a regional ECOWAS LMMIS.

Specific Objectives

- Map existing national LMIS and migration information systems in all ECOWAS Member States (visits to 3 countries)
- Assess data availability, quality, standards, and gaps
- Review institutional, legal, and governance frameworks for data sharing
- Evaluate ICT infrastructure and interoperability readiness
- Identify user needs and system requirements (policy makers, employers, job seekers, migration authorities)
- Propose options for system architecture and governance
- Develop a roadmap for implementation

SCOPE OF WORK:

The Consultant will undertake the following tasks:

Component 1: Inventory and Diagnostic of National Systems

- Map systems across all Member States, including:
 - LMIS platforms (public employment services, job portals)
 - Migration systems (visa, border management, diaspora databases)
 - Statistical systems (labour force surveys, census data) Document data sources (household surveys, administrative data, border systems, etc.)
 - Assess system functionalities and coverage
- Conduct system maturity scoring across:
 - Data availability
 - Digitization level
 - Integration capability
 - Governance structures

Component 2: Data Ecosystem and Standards Assessment

- Identify core datasets:
 - Employment/unemployment
 - Skills and qualifications
 - Vacancies and employer demand
 - Migration flows (inflows/outflows, regular/irregular)
- Assess:
 - Metadata standards
 - Classification systems
 - Data disaggregation (gender, youth, informal sector)
- Evaluate readiness for:
 - Real-time data ingestion
 - Administrative data integration
 - Big data sources (mobile, remittances, digital platforms)

Component 3: ICT Infrastructure and Interoperability

- Assess national ICT infrastructure:
 - Hosting (on-premise vs cloud)
 - Data centers and redundancy
 - Connectivity constraints
- Evaluate interoperability using:

- API readiness
 - Use of middleware / integration layers
 - Adoption of standards
- Assess cybersecurity posture:
 - Identity and access management
 - Data encryption practices
 - Incident response mechanisms

Component 4: Legal, Policy, and Data Governance Framework

- Review national and regional frameworks:
 - Data protection laws
 - Labour and migration policies
 - Cross-border data-sharing agreements
- Identify constraints to:
 - Data exchange
 - Personal data protection
 - Regional system hosting
- Propose:
 - Data governance model
 - Data-sharing agreements (DSAs)
 - Role-based access control frameworks

Component 5: Stakeholder and Institutional Analysis

- Map institutional actors:
 - ECOWAS Commission Directorates
 - National Ministries of Labour
 - Immigration authorities
 - National statistical offices

METHODOLOGY

The consultant should propose a robust methodology, which may include:

- Desk review of relevant documents and systems
- Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- Focus group discussions (FGDs)
- Surveys (if necessary)
- Technical system audits
- Comparative analysis with other regional systems (e.g., EU, AU frameworks)

DELIVERABLES

S/N	TIMELINE	DELIVERABLE	DESCRIPTION	% PAYMENT
1	Week 1	Inception report	Methodology, detailed work plan, Data collection tools, stakeholder mapping	
2	Week 4	Diagnostic and Assessment Report (Draft and Final)	• System mapping results • Gap analysis • Stakeholder analysis • Legal and institutional review	

			• ICT and interoperability assessment	
		LMMIS Design Framework	• Functional specifications • Technical architecture options	
		Implementation Roadmap	• Phased plan • Budget estimates • Risk analysis	
3	Week 7	Validation Workshop report including all comments and recommendations	Stakeholder feedback and recommendations received and included in the revised drafts	
4	Week 10	Final deliverables submitted	Final Workplan, M&E Plan, and Communication Strategy	

KEY OUTPUTS/EXPECTED RESULTS

- Regional blueprint for ECOWAS-LMMIS
- Harmonized data framework
- Interoperability model
- Implementation roadmap aligned with ECOWAS priorities

CONSULTANCY DURATION

The consultancy is for a period of thirty (30) working days across three (3) months from the date of the signing of the contract between the Consultant and ECOWAS.

REPORTING AND COORDINATION

The Consultant will report to the ECOWAS Commission through the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Consultant Profile

The Consultant should have the following experience, expertise and competences

- Advanced degree in Migration Studies, Development Studies, International Relations, Social Sciences, Communications or related field
- At least 7 years of professional experience in strategy development, labour migration, M&E, or communication in the context of regional integration or development in each thematic lead according to the three key deliverables
- Proven experience working with regional organizations (e.g., ECOWAS, AU, UN, ILO)
- Strong analytical, facilitation, and report writing skills
- Familiarity with ECOWAS institutions and regional labour migration dynamics is an asset
- Excellent communication skills in English and/or French (bilingual is preferred)

