



Institutional Support to ECOWAS

Enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of ECOWAS programmes in West Africa

The Challenge

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is one of the political and economic organisation promoting the creation of a community of peoples across national borders in West Africa.

ECOWAS and its financial institution, the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) operate with public funds provided by member states and other public donors. Therefore, there is the need to demonstrate transparent and accountable management of these funds through compliance with international standards.

Over the last years, both the ECOWAS Commission and EBID have constantly improved internal processes and financial controls. Despite successes during the institutional reform process, key elements for effective internal control are still missing. These are related to the digitalisation of internal control processes at both institutions. For ECOWAS more specifically, these also concern elements of HR Management and the roll-out of an ethics programme. These challenges deny the ECOWAS Commission and EBID the access to contribution agreements with the European Union to implement activities through indirect management. ECOWAS and EBID are therefore making efforts to comply with the EU Pillar Assessment standards which would allow them to access more funding from the EU and other donors. Ultimately, this will create more opportunities for programmes to promote regional and economic integration in West Africa.

Our Approach

The Action Institutional Support to ECOWAS (ISE) is jointly funded by the European Union and the BMZ. It is part of the overall project “Support to the ECOWAS Commission on Organisational Development” commissioned by the BMZ. The ISE provides technical assis-



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Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the European Union
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Project Area	ECOWAS Region including 15 Member States
Executing Body	ECOWAS Commission and EBID
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tance for institutional reforms at the ECOWAS Commission and the EBID in the preparation process for the EU pillar certification. The objective of the Action is to prepare both institutions for a successful certification. This includes coaching and technical advice for ECOWAS and EBID managers in the coordination of the pillar certification process.

Specifically, the objectives of the ISE include:

- Develop selected systems and processes required to strengthen integrity and ethical values;
- support and enhance capabilities to effectively manage ECOWAS Human Resources in compliance with international standards;
- improve the training of ECOWAS staff on internal management processes;
- support EBID and ECOWAS to programme and implement a tool that provides information on the respective institution’s readiness for pillar certification

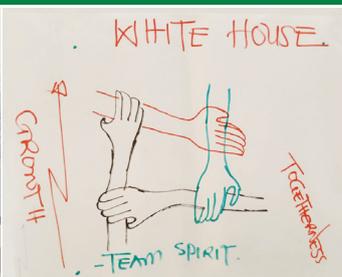


Implemented by



Photo left: ECOWAS Commission HeadQuarters, Abuja, Nigeria

Photo right: ECOWAS Finance Department Retrea, Nassarawa, 2021



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*Photo left: Team-building
task at the retreat for
ECOWAS finance staff*

*Photo right: Group activity
– team building*

To fulfil these objectives, the ISE focuses on the following core interventions:

- Providing technical expertise to support the development of regulations, policies and processes
- Developing and coordinating targeted stakeholder consultations
- Providing a range of capacity building measures on all levels of the organisation
- Supporting the mock pillar assessment to simulate and prepare the final certification process
- Setting up a training unit developing and implementing trainings and other in-house capacity building measures
- Improving HR management processes
- Supporting the configuration of digital systems for internal control at ECOWAS and EBID

The ISE collaborates with the GIZ initiative – Alliance for Integrity – to exchange on best practices and support ECOWAS in building an improved ethics system.

The Pillar Assessment

The pillar assessment is an institutional compliance assessment set by the European Commission. Partner organizations are required to pass it before they can independently manage funds received from the European Commission. The pillar assessment is usually carried out by an independent auditor. The process ensures that all systems, controls, rules, and procedures comply with European Union standards for transparency and accountability.

Partners and Direct Beneficiaries

The action provides advisory services to managerial and technical staff at the ECOWAS Commission and EBID. The action supports the improvement of internal processes of these two institutions. Activities are implemented at the ECOWAS Commission together with the Department of Human Resources, the Office of the Secretary-General and its Ethics Office as well as the Department of Finance. In addition, the action strengthens capacities at the newly created ECOWAS Office of the Auditor General. For EBID, activities

are being planned and implemented together with the Directorate of Internal Audit and Evaluation of Operations.

Effects in numbers

The project supports the Human Resource Department to establish an internal ECOWAS training unit and an in-house training curriculum. Across hierarchies, 150 employees (including 40 women) of the ECOWAS Commission will be trained annually on internal processes such as service-oriented organisational culture and gender mainstreaming. Uniform knowledge of the ECOWAS management model for the administration of projects according to the standards of the EU pillar evaluation will be acquired. In addition, online trainings will be offered to allow altogether roughly 1000 employees of the ECOWAS community to have access to up to date know-how for their daily work.

Effects in stories

ECOWAS has created a clear steering structure, defined a detailed roadmap, and set ambitious targets for the pillar certification process. Today, ECOWAS staff involved in the process are sensitized on the various steps ahead. The readiness of the organization is currently being stress tested through an independently conducted mock audit.

Envisaged Impact

Through the targeted support outlined above, the ISE aims to enhance the effectiveness of the ECOWAS Commission's contribution to the implementation of regional and continental strategies. The achievement of the pillar assessment would increase the confidence of Member States and donors, in effect creating the opportunity for better resource mobilization for both the ECOWAS Commission and EBID. The project thus contributes directly and indirectly, to the establishment of effective, responsible, and transparent institutions and therefore to the implementation of SDG 16 of the Agenda 2030. Furthermore, policy coherence, strategy and implementation capacities will be improved, and the cooperation of social actors strengthened (SDG 17).

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