

https://dspace.org/

Editorial Note to AJIC Issue 14

Abrahams, Lucienne

2015-12-15
LINK Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/20341
Abrahams, L. (2015). Editorial Note to AJIC Issue 14. The African Journal of Information and Communication (AJIC), 14, 1. http://doi.org/10.23962/10539/20341

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

EDITORIAL NOTE TO *AJIC* ISSUE 14

Lucienne Abrahams
AJIC Corresponding Editor; Director, LINK Centre, School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM), Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Johannesburg

The electronic communications sector is now one of the most advanced infrastructure and services sectors on the African continent. However, it has had a propensity towards low levels of competition among telecoms operators. Advances in the sector include the opening up of the undersea cable markets to competition, the evolution of broadband markets, and high-speed broadband including Gigabit Internet. This gives rise to questions such as: To what extent is the electronic communications sector providing advanced infrastructures and services for communications that will impact well on transformation in other economic and social sectors – financial; real estate and business services; travel and tourism; business process outsourcing; the media; and audio-visual and entertainment sectors? And, to what extent is electronic communications infrastructure providing the networks for advanced research collaboration among African scholars and their American (North and South), Asian, Australian or European counterparts via dedicated national/regional research and education networks (NRENs and RRENs)?

So many challenges remain for policy-making and for regulators, including the urgent need for regulation of radio-frequency spectrum for mobile communications and mobile data access; digital migration in the broadcast sector; pricing of electronic communications services; regulation of mobile money transactions; consumer protection in mobile money environments; and broader challenges of regulating for the digital economy, including the appropriate regulation of environments that will promote e-health services and other initiatives in the transformation of economies and society.

Agricultural, industrial and services economies on the African continent could all become digital-based economies. Consideration of these change issues will require a significant amount of forward-looking and -thinking research from African scholars on subjects pertaining to economic and social policy and regulation with respect to telecommunications, broadcasting and audio-visual services, and advancement of e-commerce and e-government.

This research is needed to support the processes of policy-making and regulation, where innovation may otherwise continue to lag behind infrastructure deployment, as has been the case for much of the 21st century thus far.

There is currently limited scholarly publishing on the state of economic regulation in the electronic communications sector, in particular in African countries. One of the few is Rachel Alemu's conference paper titled Regulation of competition in the liberalised telecommunications sector in sub-Saharan Africa: Uganda's experience, available at http://www.compcom.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/south-africa-conference-on-competition-law.pdf

While useful and usable research is available from entities such as African Economic Outlook, BuddeComm, Genesis Analytics and Research ICT Africa, there is limited peer-reviewed material available. This issue of *The African Journal of Information and Communication (AJIC*) publishes a collection of articles on economic regulation in the electronic communications sector, developed from papers presented at the 2nd South African Economic Regulators Conference, 18-19 March, 2014. The articles provide some well-researched insights into topical issues in regulation, in particular the issue of regulatory performance. The journal seeks to solicit future contributions from African scholars writing on topics of competition matters and law, legislative change, pricing studies, regulatory performance, new business models such as those pioneered by over-the-top (OTT) services, issues in consumer protection and other topics. In particular, concurrent jurisdiction issues have become more important in the context of converged services, requiring new co-jurisdiction arrangements, for example, between the telecoms sector regulator and the banking and financial services regulator, in the case of mobile money transfers.