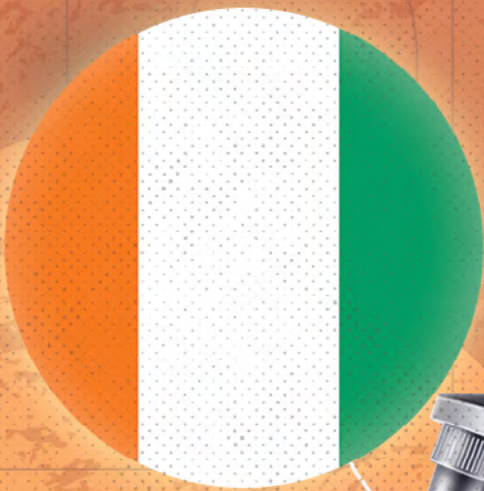


# LONDA

DIGITAL RIGHTS AND INCLUSION IN AFRICA REPORT

CÔTE D'IVOIRE



2022

# LONDA

**Digital Rights and Inclusion in Africa Report 2022**

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374 Borno Way, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria  
Email: [media@paradigmhq.org](mailto:media@paradigmhq.org)  
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# Côte d'Ivoire



## ► Executive Summary

This report is an overview of the state of digital rights in Côte d'Ivoire for the year 2022. Côte d'Ivoire is one of the highest ranked nations in West Africa in terms of digital maturity and advancement. According to the Net Reclassification Index (NRI) and Integrated Discrimination Index (IDI), it is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively.<sup>85</sup> The adoption of the 5G service for the year 2023, is a clear confirmation of the Ivorian government's desire to maintain this position. Quantitative and qualitative research has been done to help review several key elements to make advance internet connectivity, thus aspects such as access to the internet, social networks and disruptions, freedom of expression and media, the Ivorian legal framework on freedom of expression and privacy. This research has also made provision for an overall assessment to be drawn on the progress made by the Ivorian government in terms of cybersecurity and the protection of personal data.

This study also demonstrated that the Ivorian legal framework as a whole promotes freedom of expression and the media. However, significant efforts should be made with regard to the socio-political divisions that still weigh heavily in the Ivorian public space. The report concludes with key recommendations for government, civil society actors and citizens to improve the digital space and foster individual freedoms online and offline. This report also urges further promotion of freedom of expression, privacy, internet freedom and access to universal services. An appeal is made to the media and to citizens to show more ethics, tolerance and diligence in order to avoid disseminating unverified information and propagating hate speech.<sup>86</sup>

86 In <https://watra.org/fr/members/cote-divoire/> (accessed on January 19, 2023)



## Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire is a West African country located to the north of the Atlantic Ocean, between Ghana and Liberia. It is situated on an area of 322,462 km<sup>2</sup> with its population consisting mainly of young people estimated at to be 28,713,443 (as of 2022)<sup>2</sup>. Over the past five years, Côte d'Ivoire has recorded one of the highest economic growth rates in the world with 7.4 per cent in 2021 Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This growth is driven on the supply side by export agriculture, mining and manufacturing, construction and public works, transport and trade, and on the demand side by investment and consumption<sup>3</sup>. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are also an important aspect of Côte d'Ivoire's development process.

The World Bank has deemed the country's rapid growth of the digital economy as encouraging. *"In 10 years, the number of internet users has increased from nine per cent to 34 per cent of the population. The telecommunications services sector generated a turnover of 1.139 billion CFA francs in 2021, almost amounting to 2 billion CFA francs, which represents three per cent of GDP, approximately 3,000 direct jobs, and more than 100,000 indirect jobs created. The number of SIM cards has doubled to 40 million. All this is a great indication of the rise of digital in Côte d'Ivoire."*<sup>4</sup> ICT has developed rapidly from fixed telephones to cell phones, internet and computer systems have also infiltrated into everyday lives of public and private sectors, as well as the general population.

This adoption of technology is one reason why the Ivorian government is gradually working towards strengthening its legal and institutional framework in this area and also developing telecommunication infrastructure across the country. This promising new technological dynamic also gives rise to a new phenomenon that should be monitored in order to prevent possible disruptions or abuse of the internet. Freedom of expression and information, whether online or offline, embodies inalienable human rights that are the foundation of any democratic society.

These are essential conditions for political and social participation, vital for the media to truly exercise their status as a public body of criticism and counter to the powers that be. Access to high-speed internet also leads to the need to ensure that the normative framework of digital spaces is maintained acutely, not only for organisations but for citizens too. It is indeed important for African States to strengthen the supervision and regulation of freedom of expression. This is also noticeable through the progressive adoption of national and international legal frameworks, in particular the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa.

<sup>2</sup> The World Factbook / Côte d'Ivoire, in <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cote-divoire/> (accessed December 13, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> African Development Bank, "Economic prospects in Côte d'Ivoire", in <https://www.afdb.org/fr/pays-afrique-de-louest-cote-divoire/perspectives-economiques-en-cote-divoire> (accessed 13 December 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Yohou Djedje Hermann and Picarelli Nathalie, The Digital Sector, Vector of an Emerging Economy (French). Washington, DC: World Bank Group, June 13, 2022, Report available online at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099355005302211871/P177422081a7ac0b408ec30f8b1dd88ba40>

In the third chapter of this document, it is highlighted that: *"no individual shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his freedom of expression. Any restrictions on freedom of expression must be imposed by law, serve a legitimate purpose and be necessary for a democratic society"*<sup>5</sup> However, it is clear that there has been a growing culture of repression in recent years. A strong trend of physical attacks, arbitrary arrests and censorship has also been observed.

With the rapid development of digital technology, the penetration of the internet and the extensive use of social media, many governments have either initiated various amendments to existing laws or adopted new ones to monitor cybersecurity, access to information, or cybercrime. Unfortunately, while implementing these laws, they can also be used to stifle freedom of expression or restrict the actions of citizens in holding the government accountable. In a non-exhaustive manner, this report will address several issues related to freedom of expression in Côte d'Ivoire and propose relevant recommendations with the aim contributing towards the creation of a viable legal framework for the use of the internet and social media, guaranteeing freedom to individuals and the press. Issues to be addressed in this report are as follows: internet access, social networks and disruptions, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, the Ivorian legal framework on freedom of expression and privacy.

## Country Analysis



### INTERNET ACCESS, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DISRUPTIONS

Côte d'Ivoire has several Internet Service Providers (ISPs). According to GoAfrica Online. As of 2022, there were fifteen (15) Internet Service Providers<sup>6</sup>, of which the mobile telephone providers, Orange, MTN and Moov remain the leaders. The number of internet subscriptions is 9,981,052 for Orange (42 per cent), 8,912,884 for MTN (37 per cent), and 5,051,266 for Moov (21 per cent)<sup>7</sup>. The country recorded an internet penetration rate of 80.31 per cent in June 2022. That of fixed internet slightly rose from 1.2 per cent in 2021 to 1.25 per cent in 2022<sup>8</sup>. The Internet penetration rate is calculated based on the number of subscribers in relation to the total population. As such, it may not correspond to the actual level of internet access in the country. However, some people in urban areas frequently have inactive SIM cards,

<sup>6</sup> In <https://www.goafricaonline.com/ci/annonce/fournisseurs-acces-internet> (consulted on December 12, 2022) (accessed December 18, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> In <https://www.artci.ci/index.php/marches-regules/11-observatoire-du-secteurs-des-telecoms/service-internet/75-abonnes-service-internet.html> (consulted on December 11, 2022)

<sup>8</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), "Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa", April 30, 2019, in <http://www.caidp.ci/uploads/cde12820535ee68056105ea12cf22c93.pdf>

thus increasing the number of subscriptions without any real repercussions.

According to the *Digital Report 2022, We Are Social* and Hootsuite, the internet penetration rate in Côte d'Ivoire is estimated to be 36.3 per cent. In January 2022, 9.94 million internet users were identified, of which 6.40 million used social media<sup>8</sup>. The number of social media users at the beginning of 2022 was thus equivalent to 23.4 per cent of the total population a slight increase from the 22.1 per cent in 2021. Côte d'Ivoire ranks number nine in ICT across West Africa<sup>10</sup>.

According to Ookla, the internet speed rate indicates that the average speed of mobile internet connection via cellular networks is 9.37 Mbps while that of fixed internet connection is 32.39 Mbps. MTN Côte d'Ivoire was the fastest mobile operator with an average download speed of 16.73 Mbps<sup>11</sup>. Data from GSMA Intelligence also shows that there were 37.75 million cellular mobile connections at the start of 2022.

Facebook remains the most-used social media network in 2022 with 5.65 million users<sup>12</sup>.

Internet access and use are free in the country, however, the cost is considered prohibitive for all social classes, especially the vulnerable. According to Ange Ponou, "Côte d'Ivoire is one of the countries with affordable internet in the region (\$2.58 for 1 GB), however, it is still slightly expensive as compared to Senegal where the price of a GB costs on average 0.94 dollars"<sup>13</sup>.

Most network issues faced by providers are usually technical or natural<sup>14</sup>. The anticipated deployment of the 5<sup>th</sup> Generation (5G) on mobile networks is planned for 2023. With this initiative, the Ivorian government hopes to achieve better communication, enabling major advances in the fields of artificial intelligence (AI), energy, media, industry and health sectors<sup>15</sup>. Strategies to improve

the competitiveness of the Ivorian economy, strengthen technological innovation and facilitate the transformation of services have been put in place.

## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN IVORY COAST**

The right of access to information and freedom of expression offline and online are cited in articles 18 and 19 of the Ivorian fundamental law of November 8, 2016. Article 18 states that "citizens have the right to information and access to public documents, under the conditions provided for by law". And, article 19 states that "everyone has the right to express and disseminate his/her ideas freely"<sup>16</sup>. On this basis, the legal sphere of the press and freedom of expression can be considered free.

the participants from the consultative meeting believe that they have the freedom to express themselves on all information mediums (newspapers, television, radio, website and social media networks) compared to 43.6 per cent. When asked if the Ivorian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, 74.1 per cent answered in the affirmative while 25.9 per cent did not believe so<sup>19</sup>. In consideration of the views expressed, the legislative system related to the internet and freedom of expression online in Côte d'Ivoire can be considered progressive. Moreover, the government has shown some goodwill in making services accessible and ensuring good support for citizens.

In order to effectively protect and strengthen this right, on December 23, 2013, the country adopted Law No. 2013-867 on the right of access to information of public interest<sup>17</sup>. This law sets out the frameworks in which the citizen or any other entity can have access to information and clearly sets out the information that cannot be communicated under the law provided for this purpose. concerning the provision of information.

<sup>8</sup> In <https://www.artci.ci/index.php/marches-regules/11-observatoire-du-secteurs-des-telecoms/service-internet/75-abonnes-service-internet.html?tmpl=component&print=1&layout=default> (accessed January 12, 2021)

<sup>9</sup> We Are Social and Hootsuite, *Digital Report 2022*, in <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-cote-divoire> (accessed December 11, 2022)

<sup>10</sup> Mamadou SANOGO, "ICT sector, Ivory Coast 3rd in West Africa" in <https://www.7info.ci/secteur-tic-la-cote-divoire-3e-en-afrique-de-louest/> (accessed January 10, 2021)

<sup>11</sup> In <https://www.ookla.com/articles/global-index-cities-announcement> (accessed on December 12, 2022)

It also specifies the mechanisms of recourse in the event of failures of the public authorities. An online public consultation was conducted by the Working Group for the Fight against Disinformation in Côte d'Ivoire (WGFD-CI)<sup>18</sup>. According to the results obtained, 56.4 per cent of In addition to free access to the internet, social media networks do not suffer from any form of restrictions. However, like in other countries, the publication of fake news and its harmful effects tend to call into question the freedom of expression and the authenticity of the information published by the new media. In any case, it's difficult for the so-called traditional media to claim their status as a reliable source of information and to be the ultimate channel for the professional treatment of public information. The disruption caused by the online press greatly threatens traditional media, as Diomandé Karamoko and Jeremy Junior point out: *"The figures are a striking illustration of the free fall experienced by Ivorian newspapers. In the past 10 years, from 2011 to 2021, the turnover of press companies has fallen from six billion CFA francs to less than six billion CFA francs [...]."*

With regards to external causes, Bamba Franck<sup>20</sup> notes that there is a rapid development of the internet and its gradual penetration into the various spheres of Ivorian society. A fact that has been accompanied by the advent of social media networks, to which everyone has taken a liking to this day. He remarks with resentment to the new kind of journalism that has emerged due to the internet.<sup>21</sup>

The journalism sector has undergone significant changes with the rapid development of the internet and social media networks. The need for traditional media to reinvent themselves is becoming increasingly unavoidable due to changes in reality. The question of digital maturity in the country remains a challenge for the Ivorian government.

Internet connectivity was not disrupted during

the last elections in Côte d'Ivoire, unlike what was seen in other countries where citizens experience prolonged internet disruptions and blackouts. For example, citizens had access to the internet during the 2020 and 2021 election cycles<sup>22</sup>. Hate speech and cases of disinformation leading to physical violence certainly peaked during this period of tension, but the internet connection remained accessible with minimal disruptions<sup>23</sup>. Incidents of violations of freedom of expression online, dropped considerably in the year 2022, which was not an election period. **FREEDOM OF THE**



### **MEDIA AND PRESS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

Côte d'Ivoire made a monumental leap of 29 places in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranking in 2022. The country moved from 66 place in 2021 to 37 out of 180 countries in 2022.<sup>24</sup> This ranking clearly shows the progress in security and freedom of the press in Côte d'Ivoire. With diversity, the introduction of private television channels and the rapid development of online media, the Ivorian media landscape remains highly politicised and constituted as a stake.

<sup>12</sup> We Are Social and Hootsuite, Digital Report 2022, in <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-cote-divoire> (accessed December 11, 2022)

<sup>13</sup> A nge PONOU, "ECOWAS: The cost of internet more affordable in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal" in [https://www.sikafinance.com/marches/cedea-le-cout-dinternet-plus-affordable-au-ghana-au-nigeria-et-au-senegal\\_32828#:~:text=La%20C%C3%B4te%20](https://www.sikafinance.com/marches/cedea-le-cout-dinternet-plus-affordable-au-ghana-au-nigeria-et-au-senegal_32828#:~:text=La%20C%C3%B4te%20)

## A LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONSIDERED PROBLEMATIC

Although it does not have an implementing decree, Law No. 2017-867 on the legal regime of the press governs the written press as well as the production of digital information. This law which decriminalises offenses committed through the press also contains articles that restrict freedom of expression. For example, article 92 stipulates that: *"Defamation committed by way of the press or by any other means of communication to the public towards the Courts or the Tribunals, the Armed Forces, the Constituted bodies and the Public Administrations is punished with a fine of 1,000,000 to 5,000,000 francs"*<sup>30</sup>.

This article restricts freedom of expression because it reduces the possibility of publishing information on *"courts, tribunals, armed forces, constituted bodies and public administrations"*. This prevents journalists from denouncing the abuses observed even if they would respectfully exercised their practice. The term *"defamation"* used in the article is not clearly defined.

According to article 93, *"Shall be punished with the penalty provided for in the preceding article of this law, defamation committed through the press or by any other means of communication to the public, against one or more members of the Government, one or several members of the National Assembly, a citizen in charge of a public service or mandate, a judge because of their function or their quality, or a witness because of his deposition"*.



exposed to partaking in corruption. Journalist Noel Kouadio Konan is a perfect example of a journalist who was convicted of defamation by a court in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d'Ivoire, under article 89 of the law on the press and was fined three million CFA francs (\$4,600) *"for a tweet dated June 29, 2022"*<sup>31 32</sup>.

The case relating to a big financial scandal involved former President of the Republic Henri Konan Bédié as well as the NSIA bank. The journalist was allegedly summoned by the Ivorian police, and his crime cited under the Platform for the Fight against Cybercrime as *"defamation on social networks"*. He was ordered to disclose his sources of information, which he refused to do so. *"The commissioner of Daoukro police and the head of the agency asked*

[d'Ivoire%20made,in%20average%200%2C94%20dollar](#) (accessed December 14, 2022)

<sup>14</sup> Alex K. PAYNE, "Disturbance on the telephone network: Orange Côte d'Ivoire explains and reassures", in <https://www.linfordrome.com/economie/77094-perturbation-sur-le-reseau-telephonique-orange-cote-d-ivoire-explains-and-reassures> (consulted on December 10, 2022)

<sup>15</sup> CGECI, "Deployment of 5G in 2023: Côte d'Ivoire adopts a roadmap", in <https://cgeci.com/deploiement-de-la-5g-en-2023-la-cote-divoire-gets-a-roadmap/> (accessed December 22, 2022)

<sup>16</sup> Law No. 2016-886 of November 08, 2016 on the Constitution of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, in [https://senat.ci/recueildocs/Constitution%20de%20Co%CC%82te%20d'Ivoire\\_Recueil%20des%20textes%20du%20Se%CC%81nat\\_24%20mars%202022.pdf](https://senat.ci/recueildocs/Constitution%20de%20Co%CC%82te%20d'Ivoire_Recueil%20des%20textes%20du%20Se%CC%81nat_24%20mars%202022.pdf) (accessed December 18, 2022)

<sup>17</sup> In <http://www.caidp.ci/uploads/1039c02cbb4760940c49ff8a1656fb8e.pdf> (accessed December 18, 2022)

<sup>18</sup> The Working Group for the Fight against Disinformation (WGFD-CI) is an advocacy project for the improvement of the legal framework for the fight against disinformation in Côte d'Ivoire created with the support of NDI Côte d'Ivoire within the framework of the NED-funded program to fight disinformation in political processes in Côte d'Ivoire. We contributed as a consultant to the implementation of this project. More info at <https://gtldci.org/>



me to reveal to them my sources of information and their intention. Which I refused. They stayed for two hours insisting that I must reveal my sources to them. It was later that they forced me to go with them to the police station so that I could be interviewed there without any legal assistance", he declared<sup>33</sup>. Reporters Without Borders condemned these methods as the protection of sources is an important pillar of freedom of the press.

Although a new Bill had been adopted to better regulate the practices of online press, the last quarter of 2022 was marked with unprecedented news related to the online press. This article is problematic, as it makes the aforementioned categories of people untouchable before the law. Offenses against the President of the Republic are also maintained with a fine of 3,000,000 to 5,000,000 francs.

According to Reporters Without Borders, since the January 1, 2022, no journalist or media practitioner has been killed or imprisoned. The year 2022 was marked by a significant improvement for journalists as there were no prison sentences handed down by the courts. However, during their practice, journalists face security problems, intimidation and are also

According to article 26 of this Bill, the director

of publication will be "civilly responsible" for these comments. Any breach is liable to a fine of up to 40 million FCFA<sup>34</sup>. This Bill, which generally concerns bloggers, influencers, cyber activists and web-comedians, has raised strong criticism in connection with freedom of expression, especially from bloggers and influencers. In fact, the latter draining a lot of people on their various platforms had not yet been covered by a formal framework concerning their profession.

According to the Minister, it is in no way a matter of deprivation of liberty because "*this text invites compliance with the rules of ethics and professional conduct and the great principle of audio-visual communication which are principles and rules that existed*"<sup>35</sup>. Despite numerous criticisms, the Bill was approved by the majority of deputies. A second reading will take place in the Senate, after which the law will be promulgated by the President of the Republic within 30 days.

## **THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

With the increased usage of the internet, the daily use of smartphones and other Information Communication Technologies (ICT), the Ivorian authorities have taken up important decisions both at the legal and infrastructural levels. At the

[net/2022/01/27/la-presse-ecrite-dans-la-galere-en-cote-divoire/](https://www.connectionivoirienne.net/2022/01/27/la-presse-ecrite-dans-la-galere-en-cote-divoire/) (accessed 17 December 2022)

<sup>21</sup> Diomandé Karamoko and Jeremy Junior, "The written press in the galley in Ivory Coast" <https://www.connectionivoirienne.net/2022/01/27/la-presse-ecrite-dans-la-galere-en-cote-divoire/> (consulted on December 17, 2022)

<sup>22</sup> AEDH et Al., Digital Security in Côte d'Ivoire, December 15, 2021, in <https://www.ritimo.org/Fiche-pays-securite-numerique-Cote-d-Ivoire> (accessed December 19, 2022)

<sup>23</sup> Constant KONAN, "Report on digital rights and inclusion in Côte d'Ivoire", in <https://paradigmhq.org/report/londa-report-2021/> (accessed on December 13, 2022)

<sup>24</sup> In <https://rsf.org/fr/pays/c%C3%B4te-divoire> (consulted on December 22, 2022)

This polarisation of the media and the press is closely linked to the sensitive political context of the country due to the electoral crisis of 2020 and 2021<sup>25</sup>. According to Reporters Without Borders, media was a great influence due to certain political parties and leaders. RTI<sup>26</sup> remains a State media platform serving the image of the government and the President of the Republic<sup>27</sup>. The print and digital press are regulated by the National Press Authority (ANP)<sup>28</sup>, and radio and television by the High Authority for Audio-visual Communication (HACA)<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> According to the RSF report, the three private television channels are all owned by people close to the political power in place. In <https://rsf.org/fr/pays/c%C3%B4te-divoire>

<sup>26</sup> Ivorian Television Broadcasting

<sup>27</sup> In <https://rsf.org/fr/pays/c%C3%B4te-divoire> (consulted on December 22, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> <https://anp.ci/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.haca.ci/>

<sup>30</sup> In <http://www.caidp.ci/uploads/01981c9a7d883c4321811e8725ca4c2c.pdf> (accessed December 21, 2022) <sup>31</sup> In <https://twitter.com/malmos2006/status/1542070311331532801> (consulted on December 22, 2022 at 03:21 min)

<sup>32</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "Ivorian journalist Noël Konan imprisoned overnight, fined for a tweet" in <https://cpj.org/fr/2022/08/le-journalist-ivoirien-noel-konan-imprisons-from-day-to-the-day-after-sentenced-to-a-fine-for-a-tweet/> (accessed December 22, 2022)

<sup>33</sup> In <https://rsf.org/fr/c%C3%B4te-d-ivoire-rsf-d%C3%A9nonce-la-pression-sur-un-journalist-d-investigation-pour-r%C3%A9v%C3%A9ler-ses-sources> (consulted on December 16, 2022)

legal framework, three main laws have been disseminated. These are Law No. 2013-546 of July 30, 2013, relating to electronic transactions, Law No. 2013-451 of June 19, 2013, relating to the fight against cybercrime<sup>36</sup> and Law No. 2013-450 of 19 June 2013 on the protection of personal data<sup>37</sup>. About 30 decrees accompany these laws in their application. At the infrastructure level, the Telecommunications/ICT Regulatory Authority of Côte d'Ivoire (ARTCI which is broken down into several monitoring and control entities has also been set up. Among these is the Côte d'Ivoire Computer Emergency Response Team (CI-CERT).

CI-CERT is the national cybersecurity focal point and acts as the primary coordination centre for security incident response and national critical infrastructure protection. At the international level, it collaborates with all the focal points of the CERT ecosystem<sup>38</sup>. The entity in charge of managing and monitoring personal data is the Protection Authority<sup>39</sup>. Established by a law adopted in 2013, which notably provides for the prohibition of the transfer of personal data to foreign States, the Protection Authority is responsible for authorising or not authorising, any new company, the collection, storage and exploitation of users' personal data on Ivorian territory<sup>40</sup>. These bodies, beyond their initial missions, carry out activities to popularise their institutions and raise public awareness<sup>41</sup>. Although the country has several legal instruments, the African Union Convention

of June 27, 2014, also known as the Malabo Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, has not yet been ratified by Côte d'Ivoire is now positioned as a major strategic hub in the West African region in terms of cybersecurity. The obvious interest in digital technology and the broad thematic field of ICT is the result of the large-scale development of the phenomenon of cybercrime which, in the course of the 2000s, greatly tarnished the image of the country outside its borders<sup>42</sup>. With the proliferation of online fraudsters, the country has set out to build a successful cybersecurity ecosystem to deal with the growing number of this new type of advanced threat. With the aim securing its cyberspace, the Ivorian government set up the Platform for the Fight against Cybercrime<sup>43</sup> (PLCC) in 2011 in order to effectively fight against cyberattacks.

According to the government, nearly 5,000 cases were resolved in 2021, compared to 2,408 complaints in 2017 and 150 in 2011. The resolution rate for cybercrimes is 50 per cent<sup>44</sup>. With regards to cybersecurity, Côte d'Ivoire has become, *"a country at the forefront, on a continent where losses due to cybercrimes are estimated at 4.2 billion dollars in 2021, thus according to the Kenyan consulting firm Serianu"*<sup>45</sup>. More still needs to be done, but the State, combined with the overall prospects which are quite promising, will implement positive actions in the Ivorian digital sector.

<sup>19</sup> In <https://gtldci.org/consultation-publique/> (accessed December 19, 2022)

<sup>20</sup> Bamba Franck MAMADOU, Director of publication of the daily "Notre Voie", in <https://www.connectionivoirienne.the> Ivorian government.

<sup>34</sup> RFI, "Ivory Coast: MPs adopt a bill to better regulate online comments" in <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221124-c%3%B4te-d-ivoire-the-d%3%A9put%C3%A9s-adopt-a-bill-to-better-regulate-online-comments> (consulted on December 13, 2022)

<sup>35</sup> "The new press law imposes ethics and professional conduct on all news broadcasters (Minister)", in <https://news.abidjan.net/articles/715805/la-nouvelle-loi-sur-la-presse-imposes-ethics-and-deontology-on-all-information-disseminators-minister> (consulted on December 18, 2022)

<sup>36</sup> In [https://www.artci.ci/images/stories/pdf/lois/loi\\_2013\\_451.pdf](https://www.artci.ci/images/stories/pdf/lois/loi_2013_451.pdf) (accessed on December 20, 2022)

<sup>37</sup> In [https://www.artci.ci/images/stories/pdf/lois/loi\\_2013\\_450.pdf](https://www.artci.ci/images/stories/pdf/lois/loi_2013_450.pdf) (accessed on December 15, 2022)

<sup>38</sup> In <https://www.cicert.ci/index.php/a-propos/missions> (accessed December 21, 2022)

<sup>39</sup> In <https://www.autoritedeprotection.ci/mission/> (accessed December 21, 2022)

<sup>40</sup> Quentin VELLUET, "Cybersecurity: how Côte d'Ivoire has become a regional hub", in <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1347215/economie/cybersecurite-comment-la-cote-divoire-est-devenue-un-hub-regional/> (accessed December 21, 2022)

<sup>41</sup> In <https://www.artci.ci/index.php/secteurs-regules/protection-des-donnees.html> (consulted on December 21, 2022)

<sup>42</sup> Constant KONAN, Cybercrime in Côte d'Ivoire: Between social crises and technological drifts, 2020, European University Editions

<sup>43</sup> Available online via: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/cybercrime/Cybercrime-March-2019/Comments/Cote\\_Divoire.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/cybercrime/Cybercrime-March-2019/Comments/Cote_Divoire.pdf) (accessed December 20, 2022) <sup>44</sup> GOUV-CI, "Fight Against Cybercrime In Ivory Coast: Convincing Results" in [https://www.gouv.ci/\\_actualite-article.php?recordID=13088](https://www.gouv.ci/_actualite-article.php?recordID=13088) (consulted on December 21, 2022)

<sup>45</sup> Quentin VELLUET, "Cybersecurity: how Côte d'Ivoire has become a regional hub", in <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1347215/economie/cybersecurite-comment-la-cote-divoire-est-devenue-un-hub-regional/> (accessed December 21, 2022)

# Conclusion and Recommendations

This study reiterates that freedom of expression remains a fundamental principle that drives the political, economic and social dynamics of a country. Citizens must therefore be able to express themselves freely in any medium. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press online and offline are stable achievements in Côte d'Ivoire. The legal framework, as established, guarantees freedom of expression on the internet and social networks, the protection of individuals and institutions against cyberattacks, and the protection of personal data.

Journalists and other critical voices are prosecuted for publishing information deemed to be defamatory or false and therefore incur exorbitant fines. This situation represents an attempt at self-censorship and intimidation of a voice that could be considered potentially critical and fundamental to public and democratic life. Other governments must upscale their actions and take note of the major changes brought about by the irreversible digitisation by the Ivorians.

The following recommendations have been put forward in order to improve access to and use of the Internet, freedom of the press, freedom of expression online and offline:

GOVERNMENT	MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS	TELECOMS
<p>To the Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Put in place a public policy for the regulation of digital platforms that guarantees individual freedoms, freedom of the press and freedom of expression on the internet;</li> <li>▪ Do a massive awareness to alert citizens of digital rights, data protection and other issues related to digital technologies;</li> <li>▪ Provide financial and institutional support to universities in order to carry out various research projects in the various digital fields (artificial intelligence, robotics, etc.);</li> </ul>	<p><i>Media and journalists:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administrators of online platforms must respect freedom of expression and always adhere to the principle of neutrality in order to offer users optimal conditions of confidentiality, free and transparent access to the network;</li> <li>▪ Honestly ensure rigorous moderation of content published on discussion forums in order to identify and censor publications calling for hatred, xenophobia or likely to disturb public order;</li> <li>▪ Ensure compliance with ethics and duty by building the capacity of journalists</li> </ul>	<p><i>Telecommunications companies and other Internet service providers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensify efforts to improve internet access service offers and make the cost of mobile broadband internet access affordable in line with the Universal Internet Index.</li> </ul>

GOVERNMENT	MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS	CIVIL SOCIETY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratify the Malabo Convention;</li> <li>• Adopt a specific law related to misinformation in Côte d'Ivoire;</li> <li>• Take action to combat online hate speech, invasions of privacy and the physical and moral integrity of citizens before, during and after elections.</li> </ul>	<p>and creating bodies for monitoring and regulating online journalistic activities (digital media observatory, monitoring platform, etc.)</p>	<p><i>Civil society:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to play an important role in respecting and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms by protecting individuals from abuse by those in power. (actions of surveillance, analysis, alert, intellectual and political mobilization to provide responses that make it possible to maintain or improve the rights and freedoms in question);</li> <li>• Educate members of virtual groups or forums on the legal provisions repressing the dissemination of false news and hate speech;</li> <li>• Create forums for citizen exchanges on social networks to make users aware of democratic culture</li> </ul>

## INTERNET USERS

*Internet users:*

- Use the internet and social media responsibly and avoid publishing false information or information whose background cannot be tracked.



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