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Mobile Telephony Boom in Algeria

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The reception of mobile phone services in Algeria has increased to a staggering 200% in the last four years. According to the European Research and Market Group, this increase accounts for more than 65% of Algerians using mobile phones.

The boom is expected to continue after the introduction of Third Generation Mobile technology.

So far Algeria has three major mobile operators who are competing for the country's market share of mobile users. In the leading position is Djezzy with 22 million users, followed by Mobilis, a subsidiary of the Algerian Telecom public enterprise with 9 millions users and 3 millions for Nedjma that is owned by Qtel.

Since the adoption of the country's telecommunications bill of 2000-03 that ended years of state monopoly, the ICT field has flourished in its different aspects. Broadband technology is now widely used and Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) is also developing and the fee of 50DZD for one hour of Internet access is the cheapest in Africa, according to the report.

Furthermore, Algeria has a huge network of fiber optics that 40,000km long but remains under utilised. Algeria has recently initiated African digital fiber optics connection to promote ICT cooperation with Nigeria and other neighbouring countries.

On the other hand, the report mentions that the opening of Algeria Telecom to the public will boost landline telephone services that are still lagging behind Morocco and Tunisia. Presently, there are less than 2 millions fixed lines with over 600,000 applicants still waiting to be connected.

According to industry analysts the time of 4 years and four months is indicative of what the ICT sector can deliver. In order to curb the huge deficit in this area, Algeria has authorised Lakom; and Orascom the country's second land line private operator to meet the needs of customers with high quality telephone services.

However, the report also suggests that with the opening of AT capital, another Lakom syndrome failure will not be repeated as fair and equitable competition will prevail. More than that, concludes the report AT will become a truly independent enterprise with proper levels of capital investment.

For his part, the Expert and DG of private ISP Gecos company Mr Younes Grar affirmed that the only alternative in boosting ICT and improve quality of services resides in the establishment of a genuine independent regulatory authority in line with international standards.

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