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Universal energy access is a topic of increasing concern to the international community. It is a major challenge for developing countries and it has become even more acute in West Africa where access to electricity is only 30%, coupled with some of the highest prices in the world.

This challenge of access is posed in terms of availability, purchasing power, reliability and sustainability as well as the huge financial requirements.

ECOWAS has developed a regional strategy towards pooling the exploitation of primary energy resources within a regional electricity market framework in which regulation plays an important role. The strategy aims at creating at the national level, a conducive environment for private sector participation in developing energy infrastructure and at the regional level, an appropriate regulatory framework for a reliable, effective and sustainable regional market.

Regulatory cooperation is necessary to pool existing expertise, build capacity, promote regulatory governance and best practices through regional benchmarking and periodic peer evaluation. Regulatory cooperation also aims at the harmonization of national institutional frameworks and regulatory tools, facilitation of exchange of information and the promotion of stakeholder involvements thus increasing the confidence of stakeholders in the regulatory process.

In West Africa, regulatory cooperation is an important component of ERERA's strategic plan and is backed by a Community Directive.