



Digitalization and Territorial Attractiveness: A Benchmarking Study between Casablanca-Settat (Morocco) and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France)

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of digitalization as a key driver of territorial attractiveness through a comparative benchmarking analysis between the Casablanca-Settat region in Morocco and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region in France. The study highlights the initiatives, achievements, challenges, and future perspectives of both regions in their pursuit of digital transformation. Findings reveal that while Casablanca-Settat has made significant progress in fostering digital entrepreneurship, PACA demonstrates a more advanced digital ecosystem with stronger infrastructures, higher foreign investment attraction, and robust innovation policies. The paper provides recommendations to strengthen Casablanca-Settat's digital competitiveness by leveraging best practices from PACA and addressing structural, regulatory, and technological barriers.

Keywords: Digitalization; Territorial Attractiveness; Casablanca-Settat; Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur; Benchmarking; Regional Competitiveness

Introduction

In the era of globalization and digital transformation, territories are increasingly competing to attract investment, talent, and innovation. Digitalization has become a crucial factor in enhancing regional competitiveness and strengthening territorial attractiveness. By enabling the modernization of infrastructures, improving governance, and fostering entrepreneurship, digital transformation represents a strategic lever for sustainable socio-economic development.

This paper investigates the digitalization process of the Casablanca-Settat region in Morocco, a leading economic hub in North Africa, and compares it with the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region in France, one of Europe's most dynamic territories in terms of digital innovation. Through a benchmarking approach, the study explores initiatives, achievements, challenges, and future perspectives of both regions in their journey towards digital competitiveness. The objective is to identify best practices that can inform policy decisions and support the strengthening of Casablanca-Settat's position as a digitally attractive region at the national and international levels.

Section I: International Benchmarking

From an international perspective, this section undertakes a comparative analysis between the Casablanca-Settat region in Morocco and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region in France. While the data related to Casablanca-Settat have already been carefully collected and analyzed in previous chapters, the present objective is to confront and compare them with those of PACA. This approach seeks to provide a comprehensive—if not exhaustive—overview of best practices in digitalization across the two regions.

I. Methodology of the Comparative Study

This comparative research adopts a qualitative design combining semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. In Casablanca-Settat, 16 interviews were conducted with representatives from public institutions (ministries, urban agencies), development organizations (CRI, ADD), and private companies (CGEM). Participants were selected based on their expertise in digitalization and their influence on territorial attractiveness.

For PACA, due to logistical constraints and limited access to local stakeholders, the study relied on documentary sources, including institutional reports, strategic documents, and statistical datasets (INSEE, 2022; Région Sud, 2023). Although direct fieldwork would have provided more contextual insights, the triangulation of secondary sources ensures both reliability and validity.



1. Data Collection

The empirical investigation in Casablanca-Settat was based on semi-structured interviews with 16 key stakeholders, including representatives of public institutions (ministries, urban agencies), development organizations (CRI, ADD), and private companies (CGEM). These actors were selected for both their expertise in digitalization and their influence on regional attractiveness.

In contrast, for PACA, logistical and geographical constraints limited direct access to local actors. Consequently, the study adopted a documentary approach, drawing on reports and strategic documents produced by regional and international institutions.

2. Data Processing

For both regions, data were structured around a common semi-structured interview guide addressing three main themes: (i) perceptions of digitalization, (ii) its role in enhancing territorial attractiveness, and (iii) the main challenges encountered.

The interviews conducted in Casablanca-Settat lasted on average 55 minutes, were recorded, and transcribed in full using Audacity to ensure an accurate interpretation of the participants' narratives. In addition, secondary sources—including institutional reports and policy documents—were mobilized to contextualize ongoing reforms and triangulate the findings from interviews.

II. Presentation of the Regions

1. Overview of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region

According to its official website, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, located in southeastern France, is composed of six departments: Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Hautes-Alpes, Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Var, and Vaucluse. Historically, these departments correspond to the former provinces of Provence, the County of Nice, the Comtat Venaissin, and part of Dauphiné.

Marseille, the second-largest city in France, serves as the regional capital. Created in 1960 under the name "Provence-Côte d'Azur-Corse," the region was renamed "Provence-Côte d'Azur" in 1970 following the separation of Corsica, and finally adopted its current name in 1976. Bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the south and by the Italian regions of Liguria and Piedmont to the east, PACA also neighbors Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes to the north and Occitanie to the west.

Since 2018, the Regional Council has frequently used the communication label "Région Sud Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur" (shortened to "Région Sud"), although the official designation remains unchanged. The region enjoys a privileged geographical position, combining Mediterranean coastlines with Alpine landscapes. This duality makes it both a major tourist destination and a leading economic and cultural hub.

Economically, PACA is the third-ranking French region in terms of generated wealth. As of July 2022, it hosted approximately 548,000 enterprises, employing around 1.97 million people (INSEE, June 2022). Its diverse and dynamic economic fabric reinforces its role as a key driver of national competitiveness.

2. Overview of the Casablanca-Settat Region

Casablanca-Settat is a strategic Moroccan region covering 20,166 km² (2.8% of national territory) and home to 7.7 million inhabitants, representing 20.9% of the country's population. It generates 35% of Morocco's GDP (HCP, 2024; Ministry of Economy, 2023).

The region hosts the country's main infrastructures, including the Port of Casablanca, Mohammed V International Airport, and the high-speed rail line (LGV). It also accommodates 70% of corporate headquarters in Morocco (Casa Invest, 2024). Its economy combines advanced industries (automotive, aeronautics), Africa's leading financial center, and high-performing agriculture accounting for 30% of national cereal production.

Despite challenges such as high population density (382 inhabitants/km²) and territorial inclusion, Casablanca-Settat remains a driving force of Moroccan development. Its ecosystem comprises 12 industrial zones, 3 technopoles, and an annual output of 60,000 graduates, making it a strategic laboratory for reconciling growth and territorial balance (ONDA, 2024).

III. Data Sources for the PACA Region

For PACA, the research relied primarily on secondary sources due to logistical and geographical constraints that prevented direct qualitative fieldwork. Official regional reports and studies provided by institutions such as the Regional Council (<https://www.maregionsud.fr/>), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (<https://www.paca.cci.fr/>), the Regional Agency for Innovation and Internationalization of Enterprises (<http://www.ari-paca.com/>), INSEE (<https://www.insee.fr/fr>), the World Bank (<http://www.banquemonde.org>), and the Regional Digital Observatory (<http://www.orn.paca.cci.fr/>) were mobilized.



These documents offer valuable insights into the region's economy, culture, and tourism assets. By analyzing these sources, it was possible to identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities. Although in-depth qualitative fieldwork could have yielded more contextualized perspectives, the documentary approach proved to be both efficient and reliable, enabling the collection of objective data on digitalization as a key driver of territorial attractiveness while optimizing time and resources.

1. Data collection

For the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, we chose to conduct a study based on the analysis of previous reports and studies. Our choice was motivated by logistical constraints and limited access to local stakeholders. Due to the geographical distance and the difficulty of traveling to the region, conducting a direct qualitative study was impractical.

To overcome these constraints, the use of documentary sources such as official reports from the region or international organizations becomes a relevant alternative. These documents provide valuable information on various aspects of the region, painting a comprehensive picture of its economy, culture, and tourist attractions. By exploiting this pre-existing data from official websites (Official website of the PACA region: <https://www.maregionsud.fr/>, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of the PACA region: <https://www.paca.cci.fr/>, the Regional Agency for Innovation and Internationalization of Businesses (ARI): <http://www.ari-paca.com/>, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE): <https://www.insee.fr/fr> the World Bank <http://www.banquemondiale.org>, and the Regional Digital Observatory (ORN): <http://www.orn.paca.cci.fr/>, ... etc.), we consider ourselves to be in a position to gain an in-depth understanding of the region, identifying its specific trends, challenges, and opportunities. Although a qualitative field study could have provided a more contextual perspective and region-specific information, logistical and geographical constraints made this approach unfeasible. Therefore, analyzing previous reports and studies proves to be an effective method for obtaining objective and reliable information on digitalization as a key digital marketing tool and its impact on the region's attractiveness, while saving time and resources.

a. Digitalization, a digital marketing tool

The analysis of regional digitalization in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur will focus on the following key aspects, including initiatives in the region, the impact of digitalization on regional attractiveness, the challenges associated with its implementation, and the future prospects for digitalization in the PACA region.

• Initiatives undertaken to promote digitalization

According to the source "dataregionsud.fr," the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region has implemented a digitalization strategy called the **Smart Region** Strategy. This initiative aims to deploy ultra-high-speed broadband (THD) throughout the region. The goal is to position the region as Europe's leading "Smart Region" by promoting connectivity, demonstrating innovation, and setting an example in the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement. Here is an overview of the region's main strategies and objectives, and the functions it performs.

Network infrastructure: Deploy ultra-high-speed broadband and mobile telephony throughout the region to ensure fast and reliable Internet access.

Innovative digital services: Promote the emergence and deployment of innovative digital services based on data, open innovation, and artificial intelligence. These services are supported by the region or its partners.

Digital inclusion: Promote the inclusion of citizens in the digital society and reduce the digital divide by providing training and resources to enable everyone to access and benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technology.

The Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur region also incorporates European, national, and regional guidelines on digital infrastructure, services, and uses. It is developing a common strategy for digital development in line with these guidelines.

Among the concrete initiatives implemented are:

The DataSud regional program: This program aims to develop a regional infrastructure for open, geographic, and smart data, as well as to facilitate a network of data stakeholders. It also supports public and private initiatives in the field of mediation and the organization of data-related events. The objective is to promote innovation and the digital transformation of territories and businesses.



Digital development of regions: The region has adopted a common digital development strategy to accelerate fixed and mobile broadband coverage, ensure control of data and networks by public stakeholders, and mobilize the potential of digital technology to modernize public action and support citizens, employees, and businesses in their use of digital technology.

The regional strategy for artificial intelligence: The region has developed a strategy aimed at streamlining the job market and supporting career development paths through the use of artificial intelligence. Innovative solutions are being prototyped to analyze opportunities and career paths in relation to skills.

The Parcours Sud Smart Territoires program: This program aims to support local authorities in their transformation into "smart territories" by using digital solutions to provide innovative services to users. Inter-municipal authorities are participating in this program in order to develop digital and innovative projects that respond to the challenges of economic and sustainable development.

• **The success and impact of digitalization on the region's attractiveness**

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region has had several notable successes. First, it has successfully rolled out high-speed broadband, providing opportunities for economic growth by creating direct jobs in the digital sector and stimulating business competitiveness. In addition, PACA has seen strong growth in business creation, which is continuing to increase, demonstrating its attractiveness and entrepreneurial dynamism. Finally, the region has experienced significant growth in the establishment of foreign investment projects.

High-performance electronic communications infrastructure:

According to the regional economic development, innovation, and internationalization plan (2022-2028), the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region has high-performance electronic communications infrastructure. It aims to cover its entire territory with very high-speed broadband by 2025. Marseille, as a global telecoms hub, plays a key role in hosting numerous submarine cables, which earned it 7th place worldwide in 2022. These cables are connected to 43 countries, offering a potential 4.5 billion users. Marseille is thus positioning itself as a gateway between Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, with prospects for development towards Latin America, West Africa, and South Africa.

Below is a summary table of data relating to Marseille's submarine cables and their economic impact:

Table 1: Data on Marseille's submarine cables (2022)

Criteria	Data
World ranking	7 th
Number of connected cables	43
Connected countries	43
Potential users	Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia

Source: SRDEII for the PACA region. (2022-2028)

Despite the fact that data centers located near the landing points of these cables consume a lot of energy and create few direct jobs, their deployment is of geostrategic importance for the future economy and attractiveness of the region.

The deployment of very high speed broadband (VHSB) has a threefold positive economic impact:

- Direct job creation through the digital sector.
- Stimulating growth by providing widespread access to ultra-fast broadband for households, enabling the development of new uses and services, thereby strengthening the competitiveness of businesses.
- Facilitation of the deployment of digital solutions in the regions, promoting the development of optimized and resource-efficient services, while contributing to the structuring of markets for businesses.

Growth in business creation:

According to the Business Creation Observatory. (2022), According to data from the Business Creation Observatory, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region has seen a significant increase in the number of new businesses created. In December 2021, 7,950 new businesses were created, an increase of 9.8% compared to December 2020. In addition, the cumulative number of start-ups since the beginning of 2021 reached 104,068, an increase of 25% compared to the period from January to December 2020.

Table No. 2 illustrate the evolution of business creation in the PACA region:



Table 2: Changes in business creation in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in December 2021 and cumulative figures since the beginning of the year

	December 2020	Monthly average (2017-2020)	Cumulative total since January 2021	Annual average (2017-2020)
Business start-ups	7,950	5,697	104,068	72,854

Source: Based on data from the Business Start-up Observatory. (January 2022), Retrieved from https://bpifrance-creation.fr/system/files/OCE_FSM_Provence-Alpes-Cote_dAzur_202211.pdf

Efforts to promote digital transformation have also helped to simplify administrative procedures and support entrepreneurs in the use of technological tools. As a result, the region has been able to attract investors thanks to its competitive advantages, such as its strategic location, high-quality communications infrastructure, and international connectivity.

Attractiveness for foreign investment:

In the same vein, according to the PACA region's 2022 review, the region has experienced strong growth in terms of attractiveness and economic development. The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region's " " (Southern Region), known as the Région Sud, has succeeded in attracting a record number of foreign investment projects, leading to the creation of numerous jobs. Table No. 3 illustrate this growth in investment:

Table 3: Evolution of foreign direct investment in 2021 and 2022 in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region

Year	Number of investments	Jobs created or maintained
2021	96	2,213
2022	124	4147

Source: Created by us based on the PACA region activity report. (2022)

In total, the region welcomed **124** investments in 2022 from **30** different **countries**. These projects created 4,147 jobs, demonstrating the region's growing appeal to international investors. Over the last decade, it is worth noting that the number of projects and jobs generated has more than doubled, highlighting the region's positive momentum.

This record reflects the growing interest of foreign investors in the South region. Among the factors contributing to this attractiveness are the region's geostrategic positioning, its sectors of excellence, and its thriving industrial ecosystem. In addition, the region has adopted a proactive policy and made a concrete commitment to climate action, which is an additional asset in attracting investors.

Compared to the previous year, the 2022 results show a significant increase in the number of projects attracted (+20%) and direct jobs created in the region (+87%). These foreign investments involve various types of projects, such as the creation of new businesses, the expansion of existing businesses, the acquisition of businesses, and the takeover of activities.

It is important to note that more than half of these projects are decision-making or research and development (R&D) centers, which strengthens the region's capacity for innovation. This reinforcement confirms the positioning of the Southern region as a welcoming place for international investments focused on research and innovation.

Among the main investors, the United States ranks first with 22 projects in 2022. Tunisia has also entered the top three with 13 projects, followed by the United Kingdom with 11 projects. These investments from different countries contribute to the economic diversification of the region and strengthen its presence on the international stage.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the RisingSUD agency and other regional stakeholders, the South region has consolidated its position as an attractive destination for foreign investment, as evidenced by the results for 2022. This success stems from a targeted prospecting strategy and effective support for foreign companies. As a key player in this ecosystem, the RisingSUD agency actively promotes innovation and digitalization in the region. Its support for companies in their digital transition strengthens their growth and competitiveness, which attracts new investment and generates local job creation. This has solidified the economic development of the South-Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

Furthermore, the RisingSUD agency makes it a point of honor to ensure that this economic expansion is accompanied by a commitment to climate transition. By respecting environmental commitments, it contributes to the establishment of a sustainable and attractive environment for investors and businesses. In this way, the RisingSUD agency plays a key role in creating a dynamic ecosystem that combines innovation, economic



growth, and environmental sustainability, thereby enhancing the overall attractiveness of the South Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region.

• Challenges to be overcome in implementing digitalization in the region

According to the SRDEII report (2022), the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region faces a number of significant challenges in its digitalization process, as identified by the regional report. These challenges include:

Generational and cultural adaptation: The transition and shift to digital may encounter resistance due to the gap between different generations and cultures. It is essential to raise awareness throughout the organization of the benefits and impacts of digital technology.

Managerial commitment: The commitment and willingness of leaders are essential for a successful digital transformation. Leaders must play a leading role in driving change by promoting a clear vision of digitalization and actively encouraging the adoption of new technologies.

Corporate culture and resistance to change: The existing corporate culture can be an obstacle to digitalization. It is crucial to overcome resistance to change and promote a corporate culture that is conducive to innovation and flexibility.

Costs of digitalization: Implementing digitalization often involves significant investments in equipment, training, infrastructure, and maintenance. The costs associated with these aspects can be a barrier, especially for small and medium-sized businesses with limited financial resources. It is necessary to find economically viable solutions and optimize investments.

Technical skills development: Digitalization requires technical skills and adequate training to enable employees to use new technologies effectively. It is essential to implement appropriate training and education programs, encourage continuous learning, and recruit talent with the necessary digital skills.

Cybersecurity and system protection: Protection against cyberattacks is a crucial issue. It is therefore necessary to increase the visibility of risks, diversify defense strategies against increasingly sophisticated attacks, and strengthen confidence in the security of systems and connected objects.

By overcoming these challenges, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region will be able to maximize the benefits of digitalization and strengthen its economic growth while remaining competitive in an ever-changing digital world.

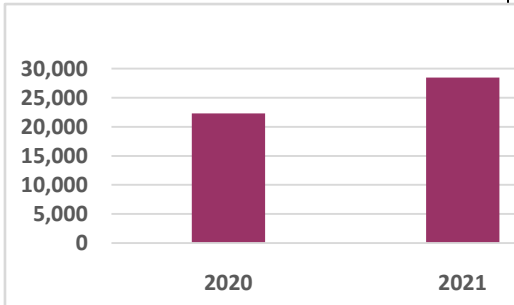
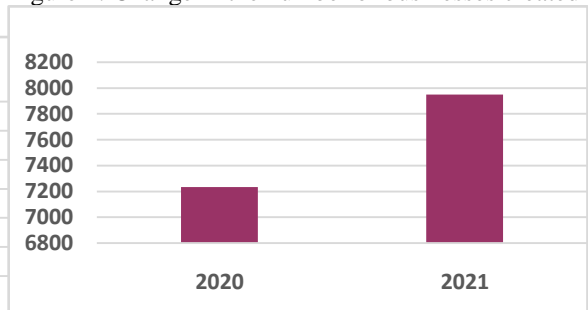
IV. Comparing regions: Casablanca Settat versus Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur

By taking a closer look at the best practices of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region in terms of digitalization, the Casablanca-Settat region can benefit from these examples to increase its attractiveness in the future. By analyzing in detail the progress made by the PACA region and identifying opportunities for improvement, we can implement similar strategies to promote digital transformation in our own region. By adopting innovative approaches and leveraging lessons learned, we will be able to strengthen our competitiveness, attract new businesses and investments, and create an environment conducive to economic growth and innovation. Digitalization is thus becoming an essential lever for developing the long-term attractiveness of the Casablanca-Settat region. Table No. 4 compares the criteria selected for the Casablanca-Settat and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur regions. It allows the actual data associated with each criterion for each region to be visualized, facilitating comparison and analysis of the data.

Table 4: Comparison of digitalization and its impact on the attractiveness of the Casablanca-Settat and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur regions

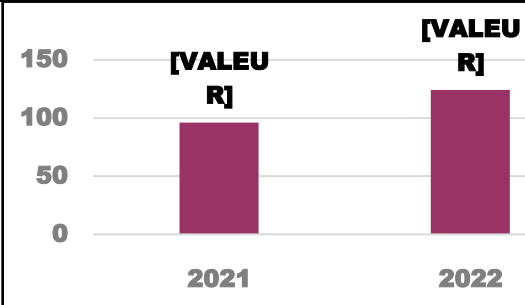
Comparison criterion	Casablanca-Settat region	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region
Strategies and initiatives	The Casablanca-Settat region has implemented various strategies and initiatives to promote digitalization, such as awareness programs, technology incubators, and partnerships with private sector players. Digital Startups Initiative: Support for digital startups and innovative entrepreneurs	Among the initiatives to digitize the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, making it more attractive to businesses and investors, we can mention: Smart Region Strategy: The rollout of ultra-fast broadband promotes connectivity and innovation. Innovative digital services: the development of innovative digital services based on data, open



	<p>in the region.</p> <p>Smart Region Project: Digital transformation of the Casablanca-Settat region to create a smart region.</p> <p>Digital Skills for All Program: Training and strengthening the digital skills of the population.</p> <p>Industry 4.0 Strategy: Modernization and digitization of the industrial sector.</p> <p>Digital Campus Project: Creation of an advanced digital learning environment in partnership with universities.</p>	<p>innovation, and artificial intelligence.</p> <p>Digital regional development: The digital regional development strategy, aimed at accelerating fixed and mobile broadband coverage, improves the region's digital infrastructure.</p> <p>DataSud regional program: The development of a regional open and intelligent data infrastructure.</p> <p>Regional strategy on artificial intelligence: developing a strategy to use artificial intelligence to streamline the job market and support professional development.</p> <p>The development of the "MyProvence" mobile app to promote regional tourism.</p> <p>the creation of the "La Ruche qui dit Oui" platform to support local products, and investments in digital infrastructure.</p>
Successes and impact	<p>Casablanca-Settat has seen a significant increase in the number of businesses created since the digitization of procedures. <i>According to OMPIC data, the number of business creations rose from 22,272 in 2020 to 28,469 in 2021, representing an increase of nearly 27.0% over this period.</i> Figure 1 illustrates this increase:</p> <p>Figure 1: Change in the number of businesses created</p>  <p>Source: OMPIC Barometer (2023)¹</p> <p>This growth reflects the success of the digitalization initiatives implemented in the region. The digitization initiatives implemented in the Casablanca-Settat region have attracted many technology companies and startups, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth. Digitization has facilitated business processes, improved operational efficiency, and fostered innovation. Thanks to these efforts, the region has become an attractive technology hub and a booming economic center.</p> <p>Regarding the evolution of FDI in the Casablanca-Settat region, there is no data available on the number of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Morocco for the</p>	<p><i>The PACA region has seen a significant increase in the number of new businesses created.</i> According to the regional economic development, innovation, and internationalization plan SRDII (2022), in 2021, the number of new businesses created increased by 9.8% compared to the previous year, from 7,233 in 2020 to 7,950. Figure 2 shows this trend:</p> <p>Figure 2: Change in the number of businesses created</p>  <p>Source: adapted by us based on SRDII 2022</p> <p><i>The PACA region attracted a record number of foreign investment projects, leading to the creation of many jobs.</i> Figure 43 below shows that in 2022, it welcomed 124 new businesses from 30 different countries, creating 4,147 jobs. These investments reinforce the region's attractiveness as a preferred destination for international investors.</p> <p>Figure 3: Evolution of FDI establishments in 2021 and 2022</p>

¹ 2023 data concerning companies created up to April 30, 2023 for both regions



	Casablanca-Settat region; the relevant organizations only report on the evolution for Morocco as a whole and in terms of volume.	 <p>Source: Created by us based on the PACA activity report. (2022)</p> <p><i>The region aims to cover its entire territory with ultra-high-speed broadband by 2025. Marseille plays a key role in hosting numerous submarine cables.</i></p>
Challenges and solutions	The Casablanca-Settat region faces several challenges in its digital transformation. These challenges include resistance to change and cultural barriers, financial constraints, vertical organizational structures, technological gaps, and regulatory constraints.	The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region must overcome several challenges to achieve a successful digital transformation. These challenges include generational and cultural adaptation, managerial commitment, corporate culture, costs, technical skills training, and cybersecurity.
Future prospects	For the Casablanca-Settat region, the future outlook in the field of digitalization includes strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem, adopting emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, and pursuing partnerships with international players.	To meet the challenges of digitalization, the PACA region can focus on: awareness and training, leadership and engagement, innovation and flexibility, financial support and investment optimization, strengthening digital skills, and security and trust. These prospects will enable the region to thrive in the digital economy.
Overall Assessment	Overall, the Casablanca-Settat region has made significant progress in its digitalization, attracting investment and promoting innovation. However, some challenges remain and require ongoing attention.	The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region is at a more advanced stage of development. It has made significant progress in its digitalization, attracted investment, and fostered innovation. Nevertheless, challenges remain and require ongoing attention to ensure a complete and optimal digital transformation.

Source: Created by us based on our qualitative and documentary study

1. Analysis of international benchmarking results

As part of our comparative analysis between the Casablanca-Settat region and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region in terms of digitization, it is interesting and even useful to highlight the differences and similarities between the two regions.

The Casablanca-Settat region has implemented several initiatives to promote digitization. These include the "Digital Startups" initiative, which supports digital startups; the "Smart Region" project, which aims to transform the region into a smart region; the "Digital Skills for All" program, which focuses on training the population in digital skills; the "Industry 4.0" strategy, which aims to modernize the industrial sector, and finally the "Digital Campus" project, which encourages advanced digital learning in partnership with universities. These initiatives demonstrate the region's commitment to promoting digitalization and the digital economy.

As for the PACA region, it has also promoted and implemented digitization initiatives that make it attractive to businesses and investors. These include the "Smart Region" strategy, which promotes connectivity and innovation through the rollout of ultra-fast broadband. In addition, the region is developing innovative digital services based on data, open innovation, and artificial intelligence. It is also implementing a digital development strategy for the region to significantly improve digital infrastructure. Finally, the PACA region is committed to developing a regional open and intelligent data infrastructure, as well as an artificial intelligence strategy to support professional development.



In terms of the successes and impact of digitalization, the Casablanca-Settat region has seen a significant increase in the number of businesses created thanks to the implementation of digital initiatives. This growth reflects the success of the digitalization programs promoted by, which have attracted many technology companies and startups, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

The region has become an attractive technology hub and a booming economic center. Reforms aimed at improving the legal framework, simplifying administrative procedures, and setting up electronic platforms have also contributed to Morocco's improved ranking in the Doing Business report. In just 10 years, the country has climbed 75 places to reach 53rd, demonstrating its commitment to improving the business climate and promoting technological innovation. So many opportunities that make them reliable assets These successes offer new prospects and opportunities to further strengthen the digitalization and attractiveness of the Casablanca-Settat region. Figure 4 illustrates and reflects this remarkable development.

Figure 4: EVOLUTION OF MOROCCO'S RANKING IN DOING BUSINESS



Source: Based on data from the National Business Environment Committee (CNEA) From

<https://www.cnea.ma/fr/communiqués-de-presse/doing-business-2020>

According to the National Committee for the Business Environment (CNEA.2023) on the World Bank's official website, the Casablanca-Settat region has been a successful example of process digitization, digital development and transformation, brand image promotion, and territorial attractiveness. Of course, according to the Doing Business report, Morocco moved up seven **places** in the Doing Business 2020 ranking published on October 24, 2019, by the World Bank Group, climbing to **53rd place** globally among 190 countries with a score of **73.4 out of 100**. This commendable promotion marks significant progress towards Morocco's goal of reaching the top 50 by 2021, thanks to the progress made particularly by the Casablanca Settat region. Over the past ten years, Morocco has significantly improved its ranking, rising from 128th to 53rd place thanks to the implementation of more than 30 reforms. These reforms aimed to improve the legal and regulatory framework for business, simplify and digitize administrative procedures related to businesses, and create electronic platforms and one-stop shops, particularly in the Casablanca-Settat region.²

According to the UN (2020), despite these advances, the Casablanca-Settat region acknowledges that it lags behind international metropolises in its digital transformation, particularly in terms of territorial coverage, digitalized administration, and the digital and innovation ecosystem. This situation is confirmed by sources such as the UN EGD index (2020), the World Bank, and the BCG survey on government digitalization and citizens in 2020.

In terms of e-government rankings, Morocco ranks 106th according to international rankings. In 2020, the satisfaction rate for digitalized public services stood at 40%, compared to 78% in India and China. In terms of research and development (R&D) spending, Morocco devoted approximately 0.7% of its gross domestic product (GDP) to these activities in 2018, which is lower than countries such as Turkey, which allocates 1% of its GDP to R&D.

In terms of start-up financing, approximately \$29 million was raised in 2021 by Moroccan start-ups in transactions exceeding \$100,000. This reflects a certain entrepreneurial dynamism in the start-up sector in Morocco.

These data highlight the progress made by Morocco in the digitization of public services, while also highlighting the persistent challenges in terms of e-government development, R&D spending, and start-up financing. It is essential to continue investing in these areas in order to improve Morocco's performance in terms of digital transformation and promote the country's economic and social development.

²It should be noted that the latest official Doing Business report is from 2020. Subsequent rankings have been marred by fraud and irregularities, calling into question their reliability and objectivity.



For its part, the PACA region has seen a significant increase in the number of businesses created. It has attracted a record number of foreign investment projects, which has consistently led to the creation of numerous jobs. It is widely recognized that investment enhances the region's attractiveness as a preferred destination for international investors.

However, both regions face challenges in their digital transformation. The Casablanca-Settat region must overcome obstacles such as resistance to change, financial constraints, and technological gaps. For its part, the PACA region must address challenges such as generational and cultural adaptation, costs, technical skills training, and cybersecurity.

Looking ahead, the Casablanca-Settat region plans to strengthen its entrepreneurial ecosystem, adopt emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, and pursue international partnerships. The PACA region, meanwhile, can focus on aspects such as awareness and training, leadership and engagement, innovation and flexibility, financial support and investment optimization, digital skills development, and security and trust.

In summary, both regions have made significant progress in their digitalization, attracting investment and promoting innovation. However, the PACA region is more advanced in its development, benefiting from an increase in the number of businesses created and greater attractiveness for foreign investment. Nevertheless, challenges remain in both regions and require ongoing attention to ensure a complete and optimal digital transformation.

V. Outlook and recommendations for improving the territorial attractiveness of the Casablanca-Settat region

Based on our in-depth analysis, which includes a comparison between Casablanca-Settat and the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima regions at the national level, as well as the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region at the international level, we have identified best practices that could be beneficial for the Casablanca-Settat region. These practices aim to overcome the regulatory, financial, vertical, and technological challenges and obstacles identified in our study.

To promote a culture of change, it is necessary to implement awareness and communication programs aimed at encouraging a culture of openness to change and promoting the adoption of new practices. It is also important to actively involve employees at all levels of the organization by training them in new technologies and including them in decisions related to digitalization.

To mobilize financial resources, it is recommended to encourage the development of public-private partnerships in order to mobilize additional resources to support digitization initiatives. At the same time, it is essential to facilitate access to financing by establishing financial support mechanisms specific to digital transformation projects.

In order to foster internal collaboration, it is essential to promote a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing at all hierarchical levels of the organization. In this context, the creation of coworking and innovation spaces is proving to be a particularly relevant measure for stimulating collaboration and encouraging the emergence of innovative ideas. Inspired by the experience of the Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur region, the creation of such spaces will offer entrepreneurs, startups, and digital professionals a place to meet, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on joint projects. This initiative will foster the emergence of a dynamic and creative community, where ideas can feed off each other and synergies between digital players are encouraged.

When it comes to technological barriers, it is essential to invest in improving digital infrastructure. This includes expanding telecommunications networks and upgrading technology platforms, as well as promoting high-speed internet access throughout the region. By working in collaboration with Internet service providers, efforts can be made to improve connectivity and ensure fast and reliable Internet access in both urban and rural areas. This measure will help create an environment conducive to the emergence and development of digital services. At the same time, it is essential to provide technical support and adequate training to businesses in order to facilitate the adoption and effective use of new technologies.

Finally, to overcome regulatory barriers, it is recommended that existing regulations be assessed to identify potential obstacles to digitalization. Adjustments conducive to innovation may be proposed. It is also crucial to work collaboratively with the relevant authorities to develop a flexible regulatory framework that is adapted to the challenges of digital transformation.

These recommendations aim to stimulate regional digitalization and facilitate the adoption of new technologies for the economic development of the Casablanca-Settat region. It is important to adapt them to the specific context of the region and the needs of local stakeholders.



Conclusion of the chapter

To conclude this benchmark chapter, we conducted an in-depth qualitative and quantitative study on the territorial digitization of the Casablanca-Settat region, as well a documentary study of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region. These analyses have given us a comprehensive overview of the practices and challenges associated with digitalization in these regions.

In our qualitative study of the Casablanca-Settat region, we identified the main regulatory, financial, vertical, and technological barriers hindering the digitization process. These obstacles include inadequate regulations, difficulties in accessing financing, overly rigid hierarchies, and gaps in technological infrastructure. At the same time, our quantitative study enabled us to collect data on the current state of digitalization in the region, including the adoption of digital technologies by businesses, connectivity rates, and the use of online platforms. This data highlighted areas where improvements are needed to enhance the region's digital attractiveness.

Our documentary study of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region allowed us to discover the region's successful initiatives in terms of territorial digitalization. We identified concrete examples of the creation of coworking and innovation spaces that foster collaboration and the emergence of innovative ideas. These spaces provide an environment conducive to meetings and exchanges between entrepreneurs, startups, and digital professionals.

Even in the face of the challenges identified, it is worth highlighting the remarkable progress made by the Casablanca-Settat region in the field of digital marketing and its impact on its attractiveness. By integrating these different studies, we have been able to formulate concrete recommendations to promote digitalization in the Casablanca-Settat region. These recommendations include the creation of coworking and innovation spaces, the promotion of a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing, the mobilization of financial resources, and the adaptation of regulations to facilitate the transition to a dynamic digital economy. We are convinced that implementing these recommendations will help strengthen the digital attractiveness of the Casablanca-Settat region by encouraging businesses to adopt digital technologies, stimulating innovation, and creating a dynamic digital ecosystem.

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