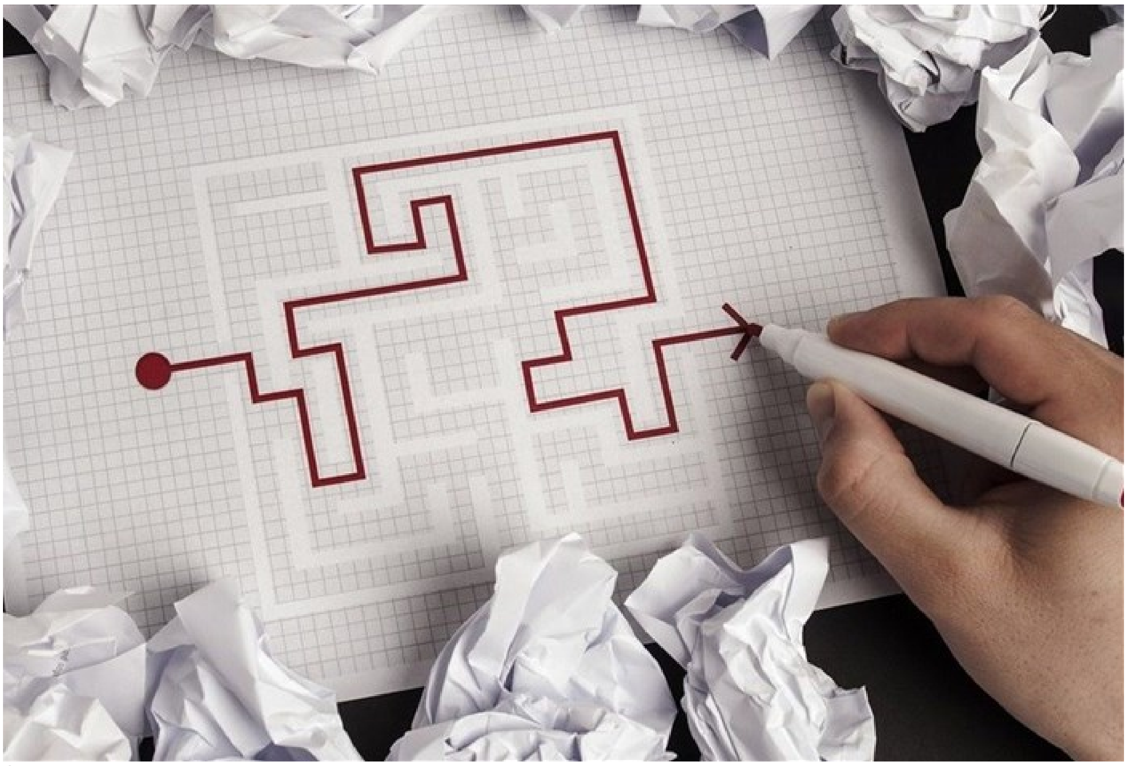
The road to 5G and challenges ahead

The introduction of 5G will have a considerable impact on the Middle East and Africa economy. So, what are the challenges that lie ahead?



Source: pixabay.com

Data traffic and mobile broadband subscriptions

The Middle East and Africa region have a unique position globally. While it has countries on the cusp of 5G roll-out, there are other parts of the region where the deployment of 3G and 4G is still in its infancy.

The region is forecast to see the highest mobile data growth globally, increasing by nearly nine times from 1.8 to 15.4 EB/month from 2018 to 2024. Mobile broadband subscriptions are predicted to almost double from 860 in 2018 to 1.630 million in 2024.

5G status

First commercial 5G deployments by leading service providers are expected by early 2019, and significant volumes in 2021. It is estimated that by 2024 there will be around 30 million 5G subscriptions in the Middle East and Africa.

The majority of the 5G subscriptions in the Middle East and Africa are expected to come from advanced ICT markets like the GCC countries Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar, while in Africa, considerable momentum is building in South Africa.

5G business opportunities

5G promises numerous opportunities besides enhanced mobile broadband, such as:

- Fixed Wireless Access (FWA)
- VR, AR and advanced media services

- Safety and security
- Industrial automation

The first wave of 5G introduction in the Middle East and Africa targets the FWA segment where operators utilise it as an alternative to fibre, with quick time to market, as well as being an additional revenue stream.

Mobile service providers need considerable support from regulators to carve out enough spectrum in existing mid and low bands.

High band and mmWave spectrum is needed for addressing ultra-low latency cases automation, AR and remote monitoring.