

OECD Citizens' Voice Phase III project Regional Engagement Activity

*Empowering Civil Society and the Media to Enhance Open
Government*

Online event

23 November 2021

13.00 – 15.30hrs (CET) / 14.00 – 16.30hrs (EET)



Objectives

Supported by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, this event in the framework of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme will initiate the regional component of activities linked to **Phase III of the OECD Citizens' Voice project**. It aims to bring together a selection of leading actors from civil society, media, academia and youth organisations to introduce the project and discuss the challenges and opportunities in the region to protect and promote a healthy media ecosystem in favour of a more open government. The meeting will also be an occasion to reflect on the state of mis- and disinformation in the involved countries and potential responses to prevent and combat this phenomenon.

Logistics

The meeting will be held online on **Tuesday, 23 November, 2021** with available interpretation in English and Arabic. Please use the following details to register for the event:

<https://meetoe.cd1.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcoduGpqjsuH9e85kLpsh2cZumfs7QMsdff>

Agenda

Tuesday 23 November 2021
13.00 – 15.30hrs (CET) / 14.00 – 16.30hrs (EET)

Session 1. Roundtable and open discussion on empowering civil society and the media to enhance Open Government in the region

- Opening remarks:
 - Sena Stauer, Desk Officer, Division 609: Cultural Relations Maghreb, Near and Middle East, Federal Foreign Office, Federal Republic of Germany
 - Alessandro Bellantoni, Head of the Open Government and Civic Space Unit, OECD

13.00 – 14.15
(CET)

- Roundtable discussion:
 - Karine Badr, Policy Analyst, OECD (moderator)
 - Daoud Kuttab, Founder and Director, Community Media Network
 - Suzanne El-Houssari, Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut
 - Nibal Thawabteh, Birzeit University Media Center

14.00 – 15.15
(EET)

- Open discussion

The OECD will present its work on public communication and media ecosystems as well as introduce the main objectives and focus areas of Phase III of the Citizens' Voice project. It will then moderate a round table discussion with three non-governmental representatives focused on these topics in the region, including the main institutional, regulatory and policy challenges facing the media and information landscape. The session will end with an open discussion among all participants to discuss relevant

regional opportunities, challenges, and ongoing activities that could support participants' efforts.

14.15 – 14.25
(CET)

Break

15.15 – 15.25
(EET)

Session 2. Preventing and countering mis- and disinformation

14.25 – 15.20
(CET)

- Craig Matasick, Policy Analyst, OECD
- Layal Bahnam, Maharat, Lebanon
- Rawan Damen, Director General, Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ)

15.25 – 16.20
(EET)

This session will present best practices regarding preventing and debunking mis- and disinformation. Experts in the field will present debunking initiatives, as well as examples of how organizations and individuals can work regionally to tackle such borderless threats. Participants will also be invited to reflect and share insights on their institutions' work to combat this phenomenon, highlight challenges and priorities, and propose avenues for future work.

15.20 – 15.30
(CET)

Closing remarks

- Craig Matasick, Policy Analyst, OECD

16.20 – 16.30
(EET)

The last 10 minutes will serve to summarize discussions and inform participants of next steps in the framework of the citizens' voice project.

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international body that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. It is composed of 38 member countries, a secretariat in Paris, and committees, drawn from experts from government and other fields, for each work area covered by the organisation. The OECD provides a forum in which governments can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems. It collaborates with governments to understand what drives economic, social and environmental change. The organisation also analyses and compares data to predict future trends.

The MENA-OECD Governance Programme

The [MENA-OECD Governance Programme](#) is a strategic partnership between MENA and OECD countries to share knowledge and expertise, with a view of disseminating standards and principles of good governance that support the ongoing process of reform in the MENA region. The Programme strengthens collaboration with the most relevant multilateral initiatives currently underway in the region. In particular,

the Programme supports the implementation of the G7 Deauville Partnership and assists governments in meeting the eligibility criteria to become members of the Open Government Partnership. Through these initiatives, the Programme acts as a leading advocate of managing ongoing public governance reforms in the MENA region. The Programme provides a sustainable structure for regional policy dialogue as well as for country specific projects. These projects correspond to the commitment of MENA governments to implement public sector reforms in view of unlocking social and economic development and of meeting citizens' growing expectations in terms of quality services, inclusive policymaking and transparency.

The OECD Open Government Unit

The [OECD Open Government unit](#) supports countries in their efforts to build more transparent, accountable and participatory governments that can restore citizens' trust and promote inclusive growth. Through data collection, capacity building and the promotion of regional peer dialogue, the OECD provides in-depth analyses of open government strategies and initiatives, coupled with policy advice and actionable recommendations. The unit's work is based on the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government](#), the first international legal instrument on the topic, which defines the main tenets of the governance of open government strategies and initiatives and paving the way forward for this agenda across OECD members and partners.

PHASE III: OECD CITIZENS' VOICE PROJECT (2021 – 2023)

Supported by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the project "***Citizens' Voice III: Empowering Civil Society and the Media to Enhance Open Government (2021-2023)***" seeks to help create, strengthen and preserve spaces that facilitate the participation of civil society and media in public life and promote dialogue between these actors and the government. As part of this work, the OECD will develop an assessment of existing legal, regulatory and institutional challenges in the country and provide recommendations on how to protect and promote a healthy and well-functioning media and information ecosystem. It will also support the creation of a network of civil society and media stakeholders to exchange good practices in this field and strengthen their capacities through a series of conferences and workshops. This project builds on our previous work in the framework of Phase I (2016-2018) and II (2019-2021) of the [citizens' voice project](#) supporting government communicators and is part of a broader regional initiative including Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

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