



MENA-OECD Working Group on Open and Innovative Government

The 11th Annual Meeting of the Working Group II on Open and Innovative Government took place on 7 February 2016 in Dubai and was opened by the representatives of its chair and co-chair, respectively Mr. Wesam Lootah, CEO Dubai Smart Government Establishment, and Mr. Umberto Bernardo Deputy Head of Mission/Head of the Economic and Commercial Section of the Embassy of Italy to the UAE. The meeting took place back-to-back with the World Government Summit and was hosted by the UAE. It confirmed the important role of the WG to provide a regional forum for exchange to enhance national policies in the area of open government, digital government and public sector innovation. The participation of Costa Rica and Mexico, members of the OECD Open and Innovative Government Network in Latin America, gave a global dimension to the discussions.



Delivering on the conclusions of the Steering Group Meeting of the MENA-OECD Initiative, the OECD presented the preliminary version of the report “**Benchmarking Digital Government Strategies in the MENA region**”, which highlights regional trends and challenges. Delegates were encouraged to provide feedback and comments until the end of February. The report will be incorporated in the reporting to the OECD Council in 2017 on the work that followed up on the adoption of the [OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies](#). Delegates agreed that the future work of the WG should look in particular at the following challenges identified in the report and during the ensuing discussion: how to move from digital divide to digital inclusion; how to ensure the political support and availability of the needed resources to move from e-government to digital government and how to develop stronger capacities in the region to measure the impact of ICT projects. Furthermore, the WG agreed on the importance for the countries in the MENA region to develop a

framework to better understand the value of open government data as part of their Digital Government strategies' objective to rethink public services.

Given the ongoing decentralisation reforms in the region, this year's meeting focused on open government policies at the local level. The preliminary results of the OECD Open Government Survey highlighted the need to increase efforts and capacities of the subnational administrations to measure and enhance the impact of open government reforms and their uptake. Participants acknowledged the importance of including the MENA region in the global OECD Report on Open Government which will provide a roadmap to enhance the impact of reforms. Delegates endorsed the increased work with regional governments and municipalities in Morocco and Tunisia and welcomed the new Transition Fund Project in Jordan to support public governance and open government reforms in the decentralisation process.

In this session, the OECD presented the findings of the regional study "[Youth in the MENA region: How to bring them in](#)". Delegates confirmed the need for an in-depth analysis and the provision of tailored policy advice to enhance youth participation in policymaking, particularly at the local level, in order to overcome the challenges of youth inclusion in the socio-economic development of the region.



Finally, delegates discussed how to foster innovation in the public sector. The debate focused on which mechanisms need to be in place to promote change and to encourage public servants to be innovative. The delegates agreed on the importance of knowledge sharing on public sector innovation and on establishing a systematic exchange of experiences through the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation as well as participating in OECD empirical studies in this area.

Finally, the delegates congratulated the new mandate of the MENA-OECD Initiative and took note that the next Ministerial Meeting of the MENA-OECD Initiative will take place in the fall 2016 in Tunisia.