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# Youth at the Centre of Government Action

*SUMMARY of the meeting of the MENA-  
OECD Youth Empowerment Network*



23 June 2022 at the MENA-OECD Governance  
Programme Training Centre in Caserta, Italy



## Context and Objectives of the meeting

Young people have demonstrated resilience to shocks and led positive change in their communities across the MENA region. At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis has underscored the need to place the considerations of young people at the centre of an inclusive and resilient recovery.



The **meeting of the MENA-OECD Youth Empowerment Network**, organised by the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and its Training Centre of Caserta, brought together around **130 high-level government officials, youth policy makers, and young people, both in-person and online, from 33 countries.**<sup>1</sup> Participants engaged in a policy dialogue on measures and good practices to place young people's considerations at the centre of policymaking in the context of the recovery from COVID-19 crisis and in light of global challenges, notably climate change. The meeting was organised in the context of the OECD regional project **COVID-19 Response and Recovery in the MENA region**, financed by Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Participants were welcomed to the meeting by **Professor Paola Severino**, President of the National School of Administration of Italy, who stressed the importance of a digitally-savvy, cooperative, effective and

efficient public administration in supporting societies, including its younger members, and **Mr. Martin Forst**, Head of the Governance Reviews and Partnerships Division in the OECD Public Governance Directorate, who highlighted the significance of the Network as a community of practice and platform for policy dialogue and mutual learning.



The meeting was opened by a high-level panel that launched the OECD report **“Youth at the Centre of Government Action: A Review of the Middle East and North Africa”** with:

- **Ms. Fabiana Dadone**, Minister for Youth Policies of Italy, who shared Italy's experience on engaging young people in policy making by hosting youth consultations which informed Italy's COVID-19 national response and recovery plan.
- **H.E. Shamma Al-Mazrui**, Minister of State for Youth Affairs of the UAE and co-chair of the Network, who shared the UAE's experience on creating opportunities for dialogue with young people in developing and implementing its National Youth Agenda.
- **Ms. Marilette Van As**, Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations of the

<sup>1</sup> Including from the MENA region: Egypt, Iraq (online), Jordan, Kuwait (online), Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar (online), Saudi Arabia (online), Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Including from the OECD: the Czech Republic, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in person.

Netherlands and co-chair of the Network, who highlighted the importance of youth-friendly public communication and shared the Netherlands's experience on engaging young people consistently through the Dutch National Youth Council.

- **Mr. Moutasem Abu Hamdan**, Opinion Without Borders from Jordan, who stressed that real political will for youth participation requires cooperation across ministries and youth-friendly public communication.
- **Ms. Khadija Amahal**, member of the Youth Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands from Morocco, who stressed that meaningful youth participation requires real political will and adequate resources.

The meeting was closed by **Ms. Ines Kharrat**, Presidency of the Government of Tunisia on behalf of the Co-Chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, who emphasised the importance of reinforcing trust and partnership between young people and decision-makers, and **Ambassador Massimo Gaiani**, National School of Administration of Italy, who encouraged participants to transform the Network into a community of practice.

The meeting benefitted from contributions of the OECD Directorate for Public Governance, the Environment Directorate, and the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs.



### Key takeaways of the meeting

#### *Empowering young people in MENA*

This session discussed ways to place young people at the centre of government action to support their transition to an autonomous life, increase their participation and representation in public and political life and build capacities to mainstream their perspectives in policymaking. Participants pointed to the importance of:

- Whole-of-government approaches based on inter-ministerial co-ordination mechanisms and integrated youth strategies, supported by political commitment and adequate resources.
- Capacities within public administrations to deliver for young people, including by creating an enabling environment for young public officials and the use of impact assessments focused on youth outcomes.
- Meaningful youth participation and representation in public and political life, including in local-level elections as well as through structured, continuous and impactful engagement mechanisms and platforms supported by youth-friendly public communication and digital tools.

#### *Engaging young people in shaping a greener future in MENA*



In light of the impact of climate change on the well-being of today's young people and future generations, this session explored how young people across the MENA region can be engaged in shaping a greener future.

**Min. Plen. Alessandro Modiano**, Special Envoy for Climate Change of Italy, stressed the importance of engaging young people in tackling climate change, including their participation in national development strategies and in monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants shared experiences and practices to engage young people in climate change at:

- The international level, including through permanent youth climate platforms; the forthcoming COP 27 and COP 28 hosted in Egypt and the UAE were highlighted as key opportunities.
- The national level, including through youth advisory climate councils, youth consultation and engagement in national development strategies, whole-of-society approaches and promoting environmental education among young people.
- The local level, by supporting youth centres, youth organisations, youth-led initiatives and youth volunteering activities for climate action.

### Next steps

Participants discussed the future directions and programme of work for the MENA-OECD Youth Empowerment Network, in line with the 2021 MENA-OECD Ministerial Declaration.

Following a presentation of the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People, **Ms. Jana Ticháčková**, Ministry of Interior of the Czech

Republic, presented the strategic priorities of the OECD Public Governance Committee in the areas of youth empowerment, governance for inclusiveness and strengthening trust.

Participants called for further OECD engagement in collecting and analysing comparative evidence and supporting policy dialogue, in particular in the areas of:

- Creating an enabling environment to strengthen young people's trust in public institutions and for young people's political and civil participation and representation;
- Delivering integrated policies and public services for young people in vulnerable situations, including youth with disabilities;
- Tackling mis- and dis-information among young people;
- Evaluating the impact of policies on young people and integrating considerations of intergenerational justice across functions of government;
- Supporting young people as agents of peace and stability; and
- Engaging young people in tackling global challenges, including climate change, food security and digitalisation.

### For more information

[Youth at the Centre of Government Action: A Review of the Middle East and North Africa](#)

[OECD standard and work on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice](#)

- [Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People](#), OECD/LEGAL/0474

- OECD (2022), "[Delivering for youth: How governments can put young people at the centre of the recovery](#)"
- OECD (2021), "[Youth and COVID-19: Response, Recovery and Resilience](#)"
- OECD (2020), "[Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?](#)"

### **OECD work on youth empowerment in the MENA region**

- OECD (2021), "[Empowering Youth and Building Trust in Jordan](#)"
- OECD (2021), "[Renforcer l'autonomie et la confiance des jeunes au Maroc](#)"
- OECD (2021), "[Renforcer l'autonomie et la confiance des jeunes en Tunisie](#)"

### **MENA-OECD Governance Programme**

- [2021 MENA-OECD Ministerial Declaration](#)
- [Brochure on regional networks and programme of work](#)
- [Activity Report 2019-2020 and Programme of Work](#)