



Governance for Development Initiative (GfD) in Arab Countries

Working Group 2 on E-Government and Administrative Simplification

MEETING REPORT

**3RD HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR ON PERSONALISED SERVICE PORTALS AND SPECIAL
SESSION ON EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES IN E-GOVERNMENT**

**Pierre Mendès France Conference Centre
Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry
Paris, France
11 December 2006, 9.30-18.00**

GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT (GfD) INITIATIVE IN ARAB COUNTRIES

HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR ON PERSONALISED SERVICE PORTALS and SPECIAL SESSION ON EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES IN E-GOVERNMENT

Paris, 11-12 December 2007

Seminar report

Overview

The OECD and the French Ministry of Finance, Economy and Industry organised a two-day event in Paris in the framework of the Governance for Development (GfD) Initiative in Arab countries. The **first day** featured a High Level Seminar on Personalised Service Portals hosted by the **General Directorate for Modernisation (DGME)** of the French Ministry of Finance, Economy and Industry. The objective of the seminar was to exchange experiences and build capacity on **implementing personalised e-government portals**, moving from the experience of France and other countries in this area. The **second day** served to provide Arab countries with the opportunity to exchange experiences with OECD country participants on the basis of the current OECD programme of work in the area of e-government.

The seminar was chaired by Mr Jean-Jacques Leandri, Advisor for E-Government of the French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry, while the briefing meeting was chaired by Christian Vergez, Head of the Innovation and Integrity Division of the OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate. Mr. Vincenzo Schioppa, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs co- and Co-chair of the Working Group 2 on E-government and Administrative Simplification, co-chaired the two events. Fifteen experts and delegates from seven Arab countries (including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Tunisia, UAE) and four OECD countries (including Belgium, France, Italy, and Portugal) attended this event. Bruno Lanvin, WB's senior advisor on e-strategies and regional coordinator for Europe and Central Asia, also participated in the events and actively contributed to the discussions.

The seminar was closed by Mr. Frank Mordaq, Director General for State Modernisation of the French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry. He reminded that according to the latest benchmarking annual report published by the European Commission, France was ranked in the top 5 countries in terms of level of sophistication. Mr Mordaq further argued that one-stop shop service delivery and personalized portal will become the two main features of the next generation of services. The project for the personalized portal named "my public-service (mon service-public)" will allow citizens to have a numeric vault where they may store all personal administrative documents. The deployment for this project in France is planned for early 2008.

The seminar took place as a response to a demand from Arab countries expressed at the last meeting of Working Group 2 in March 2006 where several Arab countries mentioned the theme of personalized portals as being one of the common regional challenges that should be discussed among practitioners in the context of a regional capacity building seminar. Discussions during the seminar focused on **portal development as one example of how ICT can be used to transform public administration**. In particular the following were addressed: preconditions to set up information portals (e.g. institutionalisation and regulatory framework); managing personal data (e.g. opportunities and limits imposed to the use and reuse of data); how to move from information to transaction portals; harmonisation

of practices across government; strategies to increase user access and accessibility; skill development within the administration.

Outcomes

The discussion led to a strong agreement on the benefit of such kind of exchange between Arab and OECD countries and to a request to continue this regional dialogue in support of the implementation of the national action plans. In particular, it was proposed activities in the following areas:

-- *Regional high level seminars*: a number of countries proposed themes to become the topic of the next round of high level seminars: 1) Identity management and E-procurement (Italy), 2) E-government in the context of state modernisation (Tunisia), focussing on what needs to be done to translate the central vision for e-government into sectoral strategies at ministry level, 3) Management of e-government projects (Morocco); 4) How to mainstream e-government in sectoral ministries (Morocco); 5) How to increase accessibility of e-government services (Morocco). Morocco offered the availability to host one of these seminars in June 2007 back-to-back with a national event on e-government.

-- *Peer - to - peer learning activities*: It was suggested by the participants that the OECD should take the initiative to organise peer-to-peer study visits which would allow public officials from a limited number of interested Arab countries to participate in study visit in OECD countries focusing on identified themes of Arab country interests (e.g. learning from the experience of a given country with service portals). The results of this peer-to-peer visit could be shared with other Arab countries.

-- *Training seminars*: It was also proposed that training seminars targeting high level officials responsible for e-government in ministries and agencies should be organised in Arab countries with the assistance of OECD country experts. This training seminar could take the form of an in-depth technical exchange of knowledge focused on a particular aspect of e-government implementation.

ANNEX

Meeting discussion

1) High Level Seminar on Personalised Service Portals (11 December, Ministry of Finance, Economy and Industry, Paris)

Each session of the seminar was opened by a presentation of the French experience in implementing a personalised e-government service portal. The purpose was to provide a structured framework for the meeting discussion based on the practical experience of France.

The **first session** served to introduce the topic of personalised service portal and to identify the principles and objectives that support its creation, implementation and development, as well as its link with the overall e-government strategy. For example, the project to develop a personalised portal in France (*mon.service-public*) became an integral element of the national e-government strategy (ADELE) in 2004 and corresponding building blocks were defined around the principle of improved accessibility for users, personalisation of information provided (e.g. by life event), unique authentication, and security of access and safe transmission of data stored in an electronic vault (*coffre fort électronique*).

While countries agree on the importance of setting clear objectives guiding the implementation of service portals (e.g. simplified access to and better quality e-services), their achievements require an all-of-government approach which goes beyond the idea of government portals as simply e-service enablers but as an opportunity to transform the way government operates (back office change).

Participants identified a series of challenges that need to be addressed by Arab countries when developing service portals. Some of these issues which emerged from the discussion are not only relevant to portal development but focus on the framework conditions that need to be established to use ICT as a tool to transform government structures and operations. These are:

- Set up the institutional and legislative framework conditions
 - Define a governance/institutional framework for project with identifiable project staff and responsibilities and ensure that knowledge is transferred across the administration (Morocco, Egypt, and Palestinian Authority)
 - Introduce the necessary legislation to allow for online transaction (e.g. legislation on e-signature) and develop the e-banking sector (Lebanon)
- Understand the cost associated with establishing portals (the business model)
 - Develop a set of tools and indicators that allows a constant monitoring and evaluation of portal development and achievement of its objectives not only ex post but during the implementation phase
 - Understand the cost and benefits of setting up partnership between the private and public sector for portal development
- Develop a common vocabulary and language among countries which could lead to better understanding and response to common challenges
- Define innovative ways to work together which focus on integrating people (knowledge communities), technology (standards) and processes (policies, regulations, guidelines) (Egypt).
- Go beyond simply monitoring available technologies (e.g. WiFi, Wi Max) and focus on understanding how they could be concretely integrated and used in support of the delivery of services
- Manage the “political risk”: maintain focus on the modernisation agenda regardless of political changes.

The **second session** looked at the strategies to improve **access and take up** of online information and services. Participants discussed the opportunities that personalised service portals offer to improve the

access, convenience and quality of online services and the challenges related to implementing service strategies, such as promoting single points of contacts in view of eliminating dispersions, integrate public channels (e.g. web and phone), and organising and coordinating services around life cycle events. Examples from Arab and OECD country experience were provided with a focus on the challenges and solutions adopted to overcome them. In Tunisia the national portal is organised “by theme” with 10 themes serving three different populations: businesses, citizens and citizens abroad. This thematic architecture requires strong coordination between different actors involved in portal management. This has been achieved by identifying a theme coordinator which ensures the synchronisation among themes and promotes collaboration among theme administrators. Efforts are now being directed towards further simplifying this heavy thematic architecture, ensuring regular updates and improving the search engine.

Discussion also focused on portal service delivery strategies. While countries recognised that providing the largest number of services online doesn’t translate in and by itself in a higher take up, they have adopted different approaches in service provision ranging from starting with essential or/easy-to-develop services (e.g. obtain information / download forms) to focusing on high volume-high value services (e.g. tax collection). For most Arab countries the next round of challenges will be moving from standardising and putting government forms online (information stage) to developing transactional services (transactional stage). This will require a better alignment of back office systems with front office service delivery, developing authentication systems and developing e-payment solutions.

Participants also recognised that strategies to improve the quality of online information cannot be effective without the involvement and close collaboration of all public agencies. Portugal has created a taskforce, composed of officials from institutions across the public sector, to ensure the participation of public administration in the content development and updating of the citizen portal. Delegates stressed the importance of developing a whole-of-government approach to portal development with a well identified governance structure and mechanisms to push agencies to work together.

In the **third session** participants discussed aspects related to the **reorganisation of the back office** needed to develop personalised service portals and on the management of multiple service provisions channels. Countries recognised the importance of focusing as early as possible in the e-government development process through setting up an interoperability framework, common horizontal business processes and an IT infrastructure allowing for communication and exchange of data between organisations.

In the **fourth session**, participants discussed issues related to the management of data including aspects related to **privacy and security** of data exchange and compliance of data management with existing national legislation. Participants discussed the issue of how to ensure each individual access to own personal data stored in government databases while protecting it from unauthorised or fraudulent access. The experience of many countries shows that it is difficult for the users to accept that their personal data is stored in government-managed electronic databases. In addition, while in certain countries data matching is allowed under certain conditions (Italy), other countries have a more strict legislation which poses some limits to the possibility of data matching. In France, which has a more strict legislation in this regard, data matching has now been made possible on limited cases and under strict conditions following the introduction of ad-hoc legislation.

Assessing the user’s ICT preparedness has also been identified as a key element to avoid major project failures. The type of technological solution allowing for secure transaction needs to take into account the level of ICT skills of users. For example, the use of a sophisticated authentication system (e.g. using smart card readers) may be perceived by users as a too complex and costly solution, making investments for its development unjustified.

In the **fifth session**, countries discussed the different steps and mechanisms involved in the process of experimentation of a portal. At this stage associations and users group play a fundamental role in evaluating the level of accessibility and user-friendliness of a portal. Participants stressed the importance of the experimentation process as instrumental to strengthen the relations between service users and public administration and fundamental for refining investment plans.

2) Session on exchange of experiences on the basis of OECD work on e-government (12 December, Annex Monaco, OECD Headquarter, Paris)

The second day offered the opportunity to Arab countries to review the results of the work carried out in the context of the WG 2 programme of work (Governance for Development Initiative). In particular the Italian WG 2 chair stressed the importance to take the national action plan forward and assist Arab countries in implementing them. Arab countries agreed that marketing national action plans has been limited so far in their countries and will increase efforts.

This half-day meeting gave Arab countries the possibility to share their experiences related both to current and planned project carried out by the OECD E-government Project namely in the area of 1) transformation, 2) e-service take up, 2) partnerships across levels of government for e-government implementation 3) process and outcomes indicators, 4) benchmarking e-government expenditures, 5) cost/benefits analysis for shared services, and 6) ROI in ICT-enabled applications. Arab countries expressed an interest in being closely associated to the work of OECD in e-government, in particular in the area of indicators and transformation.