

MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

MR. JEROEN NIJLAND, DIRECTOR REGULATORY REFORM GROUP, MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, THE NETHERLANDS

- Important topic, not 'just a policy'. Good Governance framework
 - securing financial management,
 - quality of public service delivery,
 - facilitates transparency, integrity and gender equality,
 - and produces good quality regulation
- Such a framework is an enabler for all other policies, amplifier of public sector performance
- Now societal needs go up (employment, water, energy), and circumstances have deteriorated, we need this framework more than ever
- Good Governance framework should not be aiming at finding solutions for all problems within the public sector;
- Instead it should aim at enabling (empowering) citizens and businesses to participate and use their potential to find solutions
- Advantage is not only leverage (use their resources), but also participation, co-ownership and social responsibility

- A good Governance framework consists of three ingredients (three 'I's'):
 1. Instruments
 2. Institutions
 3. Incentives

I heard a lot of good examples on

- Code of conduct for integrity / ethics
 - Instruments to fight corruption
 - Approaches for rural development
 - Water management
 - Women's participation
- Excellent examples useful for all countries in region

Also challenges were presented:

1. First challenge is how to avoid initiatives dropping dead after political changes, when a new cabinet comes in and things have to be started all over again. This is where second ingredient comes in: institutions
 - Institutions, organisations are not only needed to take initiatives forward. It is also a way of embedding initiatives in the system, decreasing dependency on electoral and political cycles
 - On top of that: institutions are also needed for a whole of government approach. Laterally, at the central level, but also all the way down the chain, to the decentral level where citizens and businesses meet public sector.
2. Second challenge I heard was how to bridge the gap between planning and results. This is where the third ingredient comes in: incentives. A number of incentives were presented:
 - Making it mandatory
 - Performance based goal setting and targeting, creating transparency and accountability
 - Benchmarking, peer reviewing and joint learning

 - When developing instruments, stay close to existing values in society. That facilitates compliance as well
3. A good governance framework –instruments, institutions, incentives- is a complex framework and cannot be created overnight. So the third challenge is: how do we get there?

- Evidence in the region suggests that a bottom up approach –involving stakeholders, experiment, embedded- can be successful.
- This incremental approach has a number of advantages:
 - Ownership
 - Buying time for developing institutions and providing training
- It also brings with it some challenges: how to avoid a piecemeal or fragmented policy. The challenge here is to put the initiatives in a long term strategy, a systemic approach. This also calls for leadership and political determination
- Despite the challenges mentioned, I basically heard improvement and progress. This is encouraging. After we developed a common language –enabling dialogue- we now have experiences to share and have created a setting to do so: the MENA program.

Congrats to the region and OECD for this progress