Using open government data to create value in Tunisia
Open Government Data Seminar
Tunis, 27 April 2016

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The MENA-OECD Governance Programme, in collaboration with the OECD's Reform of the Public Sector Division, organised this Open Government Data Seminar in the framework of the OECD's Open Government Project, with the active support of the Government of Tunisia and the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). The OECD's Open Government project seeks to support countries in the design and implementation of open government reforms in collaboration with their citizens and civil society organisations. The Seminar took place on 27 April 2016 in the Sheraton Tunis Hotel with the participation of over 130 participants, including Tunisian civil servants, civil society organisations, OECD specialists and peers from the governments of France, Netherlands and Portugal.

The Tunisian Minister of Public Administration, Governance and Fight against Corruption, Kamel Ayadi, expressed once again the commitment of the Government of Tunisia to pushing forward open government reforms and leveraging open government data as a tool of good governance and the modernisation of the public sector.

Minister Kamel Ayadi offers welcoming remarks to the participants in the Open Government Data Seminar, 27 April 2016.

Open Government Data (OGD) provides the opportunity to create economic and social value and to improve public governance through greater transparency and accountability. The discussions throughout the day showed the relevance of data availability, the existence proactive public organisations fostering the reuse of the data and the strategic use of OGD with clear and tangible objectives, as necessary elements for public value creation.

The morning sessions, with the participation of international experts André Lapa, Government of Portugal, and Arie Scheer, Government of the Netherlands, highlighted the need for an adequate legal and regulatory framework and institutional capacities to implement OGD policies. In addition, the experts stressed that between theoretical principles and legal frameworks and the effective implementation there is often a whole world to be conquered in terms of promoting the required cultural change within the administration.

The delegate from the French Government, Guillaume Thibault, emphasised the importance for more collaborative ways of working as the administration tries to create a more dynamic OGD ecosystem. Indeed, as governments invest on OGD portals and data release, they should have a good understanding of their different audiences and the priorities of the different communities of data consumers. Governments should also develop and use new engagement tools, such as collaborative OGD platforms, hackathons, and regular consultation exercises. These different tools can facilitate the development of a long-term partnership based on an open dialogue between the administration and data consumers. Such partnership should be nurtured over time with mutual engagement to work collaboratively to find new solutions to existing problems. Holding a continuous conversation with data users allows the government to gain a better understanding of the different user communities, helping it better tailor data to needs. A functioning OGD ecosystem is a necessary pre-condition for OGD policies that deliver the expected impact.

Moving forward together

Open Government Data is a relatively new and innovative area of work full of opportunities and important challenges. It is also an area of strategic significance for Tunisia, and the whole MENA region, as it transitions towards an increasingly digital intensive economy. To favourably adapt to the new digital context, Tunisia will have to overcome significant obstacles in terms of building the required capabilities, developing the necessary governance frameworks and infrastructure, and fostering a culture of openness, collaboration and democratic governance.

The OECD will continue to support Tunisia in its efforts to implement open government reforms and welcomes the renewed focus on the use of digital technologies in the public sector and open data.