

Towards open municipalities in Tunisia: public communications for a more open government

REPORT OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON LOCAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

HELD IN TUNIS ON 4 MARCH 2020



Karine Badr
@KB1b111

Great to be back in #Tunis today with 12 Tunisian municipalities 📺 We're working on developing more strategic communication 🗣️ that can support their new #opengov commitments #oecdog #coms4og



OECD Governance and 4 others

10:25 AM · 04/03/2020 · Twitter for Android

1 Retweet 16 Likes

Tweet by Karine Badr, Policy Analyst at the OECD's Open Government Unit and Project Coordinator.

Since 2016, the OECD has accompanied the Government of Tunisia through its MENA-OECD Governance Programme to promote the role of public communication and the media in the service of open government as part of the Citizens' Voice project, with generous support by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. During Phase II, the project has expanded to include a scan of public communication at the level of 12 selected Tunisian municipalities involved in the country's new Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan and a series of capacity-building activities. This phase of work was successfully launched with a two-day seminar in the city of Sousse in October 2019.

On 4 March 2020, the OECD held a one-day capacity building and validation workshop on public communications for open government at the municipal level in Tunis. The workshop brought together representatives from the 11 selected municipalities, an OECD peer from the town of Liffre, in France, and partners from the Tunisian Ministries of Public Service, Administrative Modernization and Public Policies for a training and practical exercise targeting development of communication strategies, based on the priorities identified during the previous peer review mission. More than 30 participants and stakeholders joined the workshop, which the national media covered.

Following welcome remarks from Khaled Sellami, Director of the Digital Government Unit of the Public Service Ministry, and Karine Badr of the OECD, the workshop opened with a training session on best practices for developing effective communications strategies and plans. The session had the goal of bringing a more strategic focus to the municipalities' communications that optimizes the use of limited resources. The latter was identified as a primary challenge by the municipalities' representatives during the Sousse workshop. It provided practical guidance on how to design



Welcome remarks from Khaled Sellami, Director of the Digital Government Unit of the Public Service Ministry, and Karine Badr of the OECD

and implement a communication strategy with clear defined objectives, communicate with targeted audiences, elaborate key messages and improve communication activities, as well as a purpose-oriented use of social media. Such guidance was supplemented by good practices from OECD countries.



OECD peer from the town of Liffré share the city's open government and strategic public communication initiatives

The Director of the Communication Department of the French city of Liffré and member of the Confederation Of Towns And Municipalities Of Europe (CTME) Anne Sarrazin-Borde presented how Liffré developed and implemented its communication strategy, managed the budget for this function, and outlined best practices especially for handling the separation between political and public communication. The latter topic was a source of multiple questions and debate among participants. Ms Sarrazin-Borde additionally provided insights on the employment of diverse channels of communications emphasising the importance of leveraging social media and establishing relations

with the media for more efficient communication and citizen participation. A partner from the United Kingdom's Government Communications Service International (GCSI), Ms Sahar Ben Hazem, provided another concrete example of strategic communications by presenting on a recently completed campaign in Tunisia that addressed tax contributions at the local level.

Building on the theory illustrated in the first session, the second part of the workshop entailed a practical approach where participants were invited to apply these new competencies in developing their own strategy document. The interactive session allowed for peer exchanges around the formalization of communications around the municipalities' Open Government Partnership action plan commitments. Rim GARNAOUI commented that the practical workshop offered "an excellent opportunity to support the implementation of the OGP Action Plan at the level of the 12 municipalities through the consolidation of the network of focal points in charge of monitoring this programme and the strengthening of their capacities in the field [of communication]."

A majority of participants suggested that the knowledge and competencies acquired during this workshop will positively impact their professional activity, and showed inclination for adopting some new practices and focus on preparing communication guides and strategies to make their activities more focused and effective. They also expressed their desire to continue the exchange with peers and OECD technical assistance through capacity-building workshops on communication and open government tailored to the municipalities' specific needs. The event strengthened the network of municipal officials, allowing them to sustain the discussions from this experience and share useful resources in their future practices.

The event concluded with a validation session focused on the main findings and recommendations of the draft OECD scan of local public communication in Tunisia. This session offered an opportunity for deeper exchange on the relevance and feasibility of the recommendations and clarified the next steps of the project.



Representatives from the 12 municipalities share their comments on the recommendations of OECD's draft scan of local public communication in Tunisia.