

OECD-MENA GOVERNANCE NEWSLETTER

Delivering Policy Tools for Reform

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◆ ABOUT THE OECD-MENA GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME ◆

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) comprises 30 member countries working with more than 100 other countries in order to raise living standards and promote economic growth and development worldwide.

The OECD-MENA Governance Programme aims at modernising public governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by strengthening the capacity of public officials in Arab countries to design, implement and monitor public governance reforms.

The programme is part of an overall OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development in the Middle East and North Africa. The OECD-MENA Governance programme implements the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative, which is jointly carried out by the OECD and the UNDP Programme on Governance in the Arab region.

The OECD-MENA Governance newsletter provides information about the programme's activities and governance reform trends in Arab countries.

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**OECD-MENA
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CIVIL SERVICE MODERNISATION

The Tunisian government has launched a national consultation process for the modernisation of the civil service. The government intends to review the statute of the civil service with the objective of enhancing its performance and ensuring transparent policies in Human Resources Management. In order to sustain the momentum of reform, the Tunisian Prime Minister and the OECD organised a seminar on Human Resource Management on 14-15 February 2008 in Tunis which was opened by Zouheir M'Dhaffar, Minister delegate to the Prime Minister in charge of the Civil Service and Administrative Development. Officials from Arab and OECD countries discussed the delegation of recruitment processes to line ministries. They also examined issues relating to flexible employment conditions in the public sector. Several sessions focused on the training of public sector staff as a crucial tool for capacity development, leadership and improved public services.

Bahrain also seeks to modernise the management of human resources in the public sector. Upon the request of Bahrain's Civil Service Bureau (CSB), the OECD organised a peer learning meeting on 26-27 May 2008 in Paris. Senior officials from three OECD countries shared their expertise with Bahraini civil servants and provided policy advice. The officials of the CSB were especially interested in OECD countries' experience with HR policy formulation, job evaluations, and the delegation of HR authority. Participants discussed how to downsize the civil service workforce, outsource manpower planning and job evaluation processes. They also addressed the importance of simplifying administrative procedures and regulations inside the government.

ENHANCING INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Public procurement is one government activity particularly vulnerable to corruption. Given the importance of public procurement in economic and strategic terms, governments have become increasingly alert to the risk of corruption in public procurement and to its prevention. At the invitation of the General Treasury of Morocco and the OECD, government officials from Arab and OECD countries met on 3-4 April 2008 in Rabat to share good practices for enhancing integrity in public procurement and to discuss the main findings and lessons learnt from the pilot Joint Learning Study (JLS) on

Integrity in Public Procurement in Morocco. This study is the first regional application of the OECD Principles for Enhancing Integrity in Public Procurement, currently approved as OECD Recommendation.



ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN REDUCTION

Burdensome legislation and inefficient administrative procedures are barriers to economic growth and social development. Improving efficiency through cutting red tape and administrative simplification is thus a policy priority for Arab and OECD countries. In this context, governments increasingly use a wide range of policy tools, such as e-government, as levers for a more efficient public sector. The main goal of simplification remains to ensure a citizen-focused, proactive and timely public service delivery. Several Arab countries participated in the first OECD E-Leaders conference on 6 March 2008 in the Hague and in a high-level seminar on overcoming barriers to administrative simplification on 18-19 June 2008 in Cairo. Participating delegates had the opportunity to learn from each other's experience in the development of sound simplification strategies. The OECD will shortly publish a guidance note for policy makers on how to overcome barriers to administrative simplification strategies.

E-GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

The realisation of e-government projects requires the combined availability of financial resources, infrastructure assets, ICT products and services, and human capacities which many individual government organisations cannot necessarily provide on their own. They have instead increasingly turned to other public and non-public entities through contractual partnerships and/or more informal collaborative arrangements in order to access specialised skills and knowledge, reduce the need of up front funding (or mobilise joint funding), and acquire the capacity to develop innovative solutions. Delegates from eleven Arab countries and seven OECD countries met on 27 May 2008 in Tunis to discuss different forms of

Egypt reinforces co-operation with the OECD

Over the last few years Egypt has developed close relations with the OECD and member countries within the context of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative which has been chaired since April 2005 by the Egyptian Minister of State for Administrative Development, Dr. Ahmed Darwish. In March 2008, Minister Darwish met with the OECD Secretary-General, Mr. Angel Gurría and addressed the OECD Council reporting on the state of Egypt's economic and public sector reform. In addition, Dr. Ashraf Abdelwahab, Egyptian Deputy Minister for Administrative Development briefed the Public Governance Committee at its 17 April 2008 meeting on Egypt's extensive governance and public sector reform processes, which are expected to provide an impetus to economic growth, social cohesion, investment and job creation. Egypt's reform process opens a window of opportunity for OECD countries in a region of critical importance to the global economy.

Increased co-operation between Iraq and the OECD

Within the framework of the International Compact with Iraq, collaboration of the OECD with the Government of Iraq started in October 2007 with investment and anti-corruption policies. Supported by the OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development in MENA, high-level meetings and capacity building workshops were organised on fighting corruption in the public and private sectors and on investment policies. At the high-level meeting on economic and governance policy reforms in the Republic of Iraq, organised by the OECD and UNDP Iraq on 8-10 July 2008 in Paris, preliminary findings of the OECD surveys on "Improving Transparency in Government Procurement Procedures in Iraq" and on "Fighting Corruption in Iraq: Sources and Challenges" were presented, discussed and agreed upon with Iraqi delegates. In order to provide better support to Iraq in its reform objectives, a back-to-back training session on anti-corruption issues has been organised for Iraqi participants at the French Anti-Corruption Agency.

Ambassador Hoornaert nominated as GfD Steering Group Co-chair

Ambassador Chris Hoornaert, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the OECD was nominated as new Co-chair of the Steering Group on 4 July 2008 on the occasion of the Steering Group meeting at technical level. Ambassador Hoornaert will fulfil this function together with the Egyptian Minister of State for Administrative Development, Dr. Darwish, who chairs the Steering Group. Ambassador Hoornaert succeeds Ambassador Gun-Britt Andersson, former Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OECD who held this position from May 2006 until July 2008.

collaborative arrangements for e-government and their areas of application. Participants recognised public-private partnerships no longer deal only with technical services, but have shifted to encompass the direct contribution by non-government entities to electronic services.



DRAFTING LEGISLATION AND OVERSIGHT BODIES FOR REGULATORY QUALITY

Anticipating the impacts of new regulations on economic and social development, adapting existing legislation to the needs of changing societies, and promoting enabling regulatory frameworks are major policy concerns in Arab and OECD countries. Governments thus seek to improve capacities so as to promote high quality regulation. At a seminar on 29-30 April 2008 in Jordan, delegates from Arab and OECD countries discussed key factors for quality law drafting and the available alternatives to improve capacities within government. Delegates identified stable

institutional backgrounds, training, manuals and guidelines as crucial elements for the improvement of law drafting capacities.

IMPROVING THE USE OF PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Urgent infrastructure needs and limited resources have, since the mid 1990's, led to a redefinition of the roles of the public and private sector in financing public investments in Arab and OECD countries. The private sector increasingly finances infrastructure projects and delivers services that have traditionally been provided by the public sector. At the Public Private Partnership Symposium on 20-21 May 2008 in Rabat and at the PPP Workshop on 28 April 2008 in Amman, delegates from Arab and OECD countries discussed the use of PPPs taking into account the concerns of value for money, economic affordability, allocation of risk between public and private sectors, competition, and transparency. Participants also addressed the importance of appropriate regulatory and oversight mechanisms and the institutional capacity to initiate and manage PPPs.

4TH WORKING GROUP MEETINGS AND STEERING GROUP MEETING

The OECD MENA Governance Programme consists of four thematic Working Groups, assigned to key governance reform areas. The Working Groups provide a regional forum

for exchanging experiences on implementing governance reforms among Arab and OECD countries. Each of the Working Groups met in spring 2008. Arab and OECD delegates had the opportunity to report on recent activities organised within the Working Group's respective thematic scope and jointly assessed future reform priorities based on the analysis of questionnaire responses. Participating delegates defined the activities to be implemented during the next three years and provided guidance for elaborating the 2008-10 programme of work. Subsequent to the Working Group meetings, the Steering Group met on 4 July 2008 in Paris to endorse the 2008-10 detailed programme of work for the Working Groups.

EXTENSION OF THE SIGMA PROGRAMME

The Sigma Programme (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) is a joint initiative of the European Union and the OECD, principally financed by the EU. In summer 2008, the OECD and the European Commission decided to extend the programme to the countries covered by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument/South including all the Arab Mediterranean countries. In a first phase, it is planned to focus Sigma's work on Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. As a complement to the OECD-MENA Governance Programme, and driven by demands from individual beneficiaries, Sigma provides technical co-operation to national reform efforts in order to reach operational results in the following public governance areas: Expenditure management, public procurement, financial control and external audit, civil service, administrative law, policy/regulatory capacities, and property rights. As part of the OECD's Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate (GOV), Sigma draws on GOV's expertise and network of public management experts and decision-makers in OECD member countries.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- Special Session of the OECD Working Party on Regulatory Management and Reform, 20 October 2008, Paris
- Joint Learning Activity on Electronic Identity Cards, 21 November 2008, Brussels
- First MENA Senior Budget Officials Meeting, 24-25 November 2008, Cairo

OECD PUBLICATIONS

- Recent OECD publications on public governance are available at www.oecd.org/governance