

The 9th annual meeting of the MENA-OECD Working Group on Open and Innovative Government titled *“Open government and innovation for better public services”*, jointly organised by the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and the United Arab Emirates, gathered participants from both MENA and OECD countries to share good practices in implementing open and innovative policies with a focus on high-quality service delivery. The meeting, which was held on 9 February 2014, was hosted by the UAE Prime Minister’s Office and organised back to back to the UAE Government Summit on *“Leading Government Services”* featuring 3500 government officials from the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the broader MENA region.

The meeting, held under the chairmanship of Dubai, and co-chairmanship of South Korea and Italy, looked at the means to achieve successful implementation of open government policies and how they can affect public sectors innovation and the delivery of e-services. Round table discussions witnessed participation from ministers, directors and managers of e-government and open government policies. Speaking on the occasion, His Excellency Ahmad Bin Humaidan, Director-General of Dubai Smart Government, underlined the importance of the Working Group as a platform to share knowledge and experiences.

The first session on **Open Government** highlighted the current engagement of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and of the OECD on how to implement successful public sectors reforms aimed at achieving more openness, transparency and citizens’ participation in policymaking. The session presented OECD work in the area of Open Government and offered a platform for MENA countries to share their good practices with each other as well as with experts from the OECD and the academia. Participants agreed that governments should put a particular focus on including the youth in their activities in these fields, building on the enthusiasm shown by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Arab region to participate in the current efforts to fight corruption and increase the overall integrity of their national public sectors.



With **Open Government Data** becoming a critical element in the efforts to support economic growth, improve public services and promote government transparency and accountability, the second session focused on the role of Open Data in the public and private sectors of MENA and OECD countries. The session pointed out that while many governments are working towards making political commitments and launching open data portals, the majority have yet to demonstrate full awareness of the benefits of open government data, let alone prepare the plans to realise and measure them.



During the third session, the OECD presented the ongoing work to formalize the new **OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies**. Participants stressed how they would constitute an important contribution to the standardisation of internationally recognised guidelines for e-government policy design and implementation.

In the same session, the recent OECD **m-Government** report was also the focus of intense discussions as it provides valuable insights on how governments can become more agile in their service delivery through the use of mobile services, especially in a region with such as high use of mobile phones, especially among the youth.

Finally, in the last session on Public Sector Innovation, the OECD introduced its **Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI)**, highlighting that it is meant to systematically collect, categorise, analyse and share innovative practices from across the public sector via an online interactive database. The session highlighted the relevance of the Observatory for the MENA region, especially in the area of innovation in public service delivery and to improve the general performance and responsiveness of the public sector.

### Next Steps

- In 2014, the Working Group will continue its active role in assisting MENA countries integrate the principles of open and innovative government in their national reform plans by supporting policy dialogue and the sharing of good practices and by providing policy advice and recommendations to support the implementation of these principles, in particular within the context of the Deauville Partnership and of the Open Government Partnership.
- In addition, in line with the demands expressed by the Steering Group of the MENA-OECD Open Government Programme in his last meeting in 2013 and upon requests of the participants, the OECD will strengthen the thematic focus of the activities of the Working Group on the topic of Youth and will produce a regional report based on the application OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies in the MENA region.
- Finally, the OECD will explore the possibility of conducting ad hoc technical meetings throughout 2014 to facilitate a deeper and more systematic policy exchange and sharing of good practices among the MENA and OECD countries.