Support to Enhanced Administrative and Public Economic Governance in Egypt

Policy dialogue on the role of access to information in support of Egypt Vision 2030 and the National Administrative Reform Plan

7-8 February 2024, Cairo
Summary Note

The EU-funded project **"Support to Enhanced Administrative and Public Economic Governance in Egypt"** is implemented by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for a period of five years (2022-2026). It aims to support the efforts by the Government of Egypt to strengthen the monitoring and implementation of priority public governance reforms. More specifically, the EU funded project addresses three priority areas through two components, namely support to the Egypt Vision 2030 and the National Administrative Reform Plan, as well as support to the effective and efficient execution of public finance systems. These objectives respond to the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2021-2027 and will be implemented through the strategic collaboration between the Government of Egypt, the EU, and the OECD.

Objectives of the Policy Dialogue

As part of the project, a policy dialogue on **the role of access to information in support of Egypt Vision 2030 and the National Administrative Reform Plan** was organised by the OECD on 7-8 February 2024 with the aim of facilitating an exchange of good practices from OECD Member countries and MENA countries and fostering mutual understanding of the value-add of access to information. The event served as a collaborative platform to discuss the potential benefits of developing guidelines for proactive and reactive disclosure of information to strengthen the transparency of public decision-making, in particular around Egypt Vision 2030 and the National Administrative Reform Plan (NARP). The dialogue provided an opportunity for officials from the Egyptian government and peers from OECD Member countries and MENA countries to share good practices and common challenges, discuss the benefits of developing such guidelines, and expected aims and outcomes of the proposed guidelines. The dialogue was attended by more than 35 public officials from MPED, CAOA, MCIT and NIGSD.

Key Takeaways

In the opening statement, Amr Soliman, Policy Analyst and Project Lead for the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, positioned the dialogue within the broader framework of the project and recalled that the idea of developing guidelines arose from the findings of the project and discussions with public officials. Emma Cantera and Marie Whelan, Policy Analysts from the Open Governance Unit, Innovative, Digital, and Open Government Division (INDIGO) then provided an overview of the OECD's work in this area and introduced fundamental concepts such as transparency and access to information (ATI), explaining the OECD's definitions and approach in this regard. Additionally, they highlighted the distinctions and complementarities between access to information and public communication as key tools in fostering transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation.

They also underlined that Egypt Vision 2030 has six strategic objectives that align with the SDGs, one of which is "enhanced governance and partnerships", which embodies the aims of SDG 16 on "peace, Justice and Strong Institutions". This SDG also recognises the importance of ATI, underscoring the need to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements".

The dialogue's first session delved into international trends in relation to transparency, with a focus on proactive and reactive disclosure of public information. Drawing from comparative data on access to information collected by the OECD, the presentation showcased good practices observed in countries across

the MENA region, placing a particular emphasis on the importance of access to information in supporting reforms, prioritising citizen involvement in public decision-making within the framework of Egypt Vision 2030 and the Administrative Reform Plan (NARP), and promoting inclusivity and accessibility, particularly for vulnerable groups and youth.

The first day focused on presenting the general framework of access to information in OECD countries and the MENA region, with examples of good practices from peers representing Morocco and Mexico. The peers highlighted the legal, policy and institutional frameworks pertaining to ATI in their respective countries as well as successes and challenges in integrating ATI into their own national reform agendas and adopting specific legislation on ATI. Morocco, for example, has undertaken reforms since 2012 aimed at promoting transparency and citizen participation – the country then adopted an access to information law in 2018 to build further upon these efforts. Mexico – led by the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information, and Personal Data Protection (INAI) – has also made strides in taking an "open by default" approach and in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of ATI, positioning itself as a leader in measuring access to information in practice across the public administration. Following the presentations, an open discussion took place in which participants had the opportunity to share insights and posed questions.

On the second day of the dialogue, the focus shifted toward presenting the various mechanisms, tools, and platforms used in OECD countries and the MENA region in support of ATI. In this regard, peers emphasised the importance of leveraging digital and institutional tools to promote transparency, inclusivity, and accessibility through access to information. The OECD offered examples of initiatives in different country contexts as well as examples of guidelines and guidance on access to information. The discussion also touched upon the distinction between the right to access to information and the right to privacy and as well as the need to find the right balance in promoting access to information, while safeguarding legitimate exceptions and exemptions, e.g. personal data protection, national security etc.

The last session of the dialogue focused specifically on the development of guidelines on access to information in Egypt. Participants were split into four groups to discuss the following aspects, which will inform the development of the guidelines: (1) defining and categorising the information produced by the four counterparts and identifying key sectors benefitting from proactive and reactive information disclosure; (2) determining the primary objective of these guidelines; (3) identifying the main users of the guidelines and their needs; and (4) outlining the essential elements that the guidelines should encompass. A summary of the key points discussed in each group was presented to all participants before the OECD delivered concluding remarks.

Next Steps:

- The policy dialogue played a vital role in identifying the gaps and challenges that the proposed guidelines will aim to address. Follow-up discussions will continue with the project stakeholders on the outline of the guidelines and next steps in the drafting process.

- Within the context of the policy dialogue, a dedicated platform and communication channel was created as an initial step in establishing a community on access to information in Egypt, with a view to promote a whole-of-government approach to raising awareness of key policies and services and enhance coordination efforts in that regard.

For more information:

Support to Enhanced Administrative and Public Economic Governance in Egypt (2022-2026)