



MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum

Annual conference + 13-14 November 2018, Tunis, Tunisia

EVENT CONCLUSIONS

From awareness into action

The MENA-OECD Women's Economic Empowerment Forum, launched in 2017, is a regional network which works to enhance women's access to economic opportunities across the MENA region. The theme of its 2018 annual event, held under the High Patronage of H.E. Youssef Chahed, Head of Government of Tunisia, was "*Awareness into action: Achievements and priorities for women's economic empowerment in MENA*".



The event brought together more than 175 participants from 11 MENA countries, 9 OECD countries and international and regional organisations (UN Women, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO, EU, IMF, UfM, CAWTAR and AfDB). It was opened by Mrs Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff, G20Sherpa and Special Counsellor to the Secretary-General, H.E. Nehiza Labidi, Tunisian Minister of Women, Children, Family and Seniors' Affairs, H.E. Zied Ladhari, Tunisian Minister of Development, Investment and International Cooperation and Co-chair of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme, and H.E. Marie-Claire Swärd Capra (left to right in photo).

Key messages

- ◆ **Gender specific data collection and analysis will enable the shaping of more effective and targeted policies to reduce the gender gap.** Reliable gender-disaggregated data is essential to effectively design, implement and monitor policies and legal frameworks to support Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE). It demonstrates the extent to which WEE is linked to higher per capita income, faster economic growth and stronger competitiveness. The reporting requirements under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as other international commitments (e.g. Africa Agenda 2063) offer an opportunity for countries to address gaps in monitoring and reporting on gender equality indicators.
- ◆ **Important legal reforms and supportive policy actions are underway in many countries and momentum for change is building across the MENA region.** While women in the MENA region are more educated than ever, the female labour force participation rate in the region continues to be the lowest in the world. Many national legal frameworks are still not in line with constitutional guarantees on gender equality and women's empowerment. When these favourable frameworks are in place, social norms and stereotypes sometimes prevent their correct interpretation and implementation. Progress across the region is heterogeneous and fragile but all economies of the region have success stories that can inspire change. Reforms that touch the private sphere are often considered the most difficult but at the same time have the greatest impact. Strong political leadership on WEE and the support of civil society to advance women's rights are essential.
- ◆ **Countries in the region are increasingly mainstreaming gender in their institutions, policies and programmes.** Applying a gender lens to all approaches is essential to ensuring that no policies are gender-blind. Some countries have developed extensive frameworks and indicators to measure success while others are just beginning to reflect on their particular methodologies. Even sectors that traditionally never considered issues related to gender equality are now engaging in gender mainstreaming (e.g. gender in trade and investment policies). The OECD Toolkit on Gender Mainstreaming can motivate and inspire people across government – political executives, public administrations, legislatures and judiciaries – to introduce new and innovative ways to promote gender equality.



Next steps

- ◆ **Enhance the capacity of countries on data collection and analysis in support of WEE.** OECD research on data collection and analysis in support of WEE shows that Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia could supply data on 8 of the 15 employment indicators and 9 of the 18 entrepreneurship indicators of the [OECD Gender Data Portal](#). The OECD will follow-up with these countries on the best approach to integrating this data into the OECD Gender Data Portal. OECD has also received requests from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Jordan to carry out a similar analysis. This process will build the capacity of different actors in these countries on data collection and analysis in support of WEE and is a step towards improved statistics.



- ◆ **The WEEF will continue to support legal reforms and complementary policy actions in support of WEE.** The OECD has started a research on 'Recent legal reforms and complementary policy actions in support of WEE in selected MENA countries', which will be finalized throughout the year and launched at the 2019 WEEF. The 2018 WEEF hosted several sessions on this theme, both through a high-level dialogue and a working session where participants presented the most important recent legal reforms and complementary policy actions in their countries in support of WEE, the key success factors of these reforms and the go-forward policy priorities. The recently launched [MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board](#) includes private sector representatives advocating for WEE who will ensure that private sector initiatives in support of WEE are included into this research.

- ◆ **Elaborate approaches to mainstream gender concerns into competitiveness policies.** The MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme will enhance the mainstreaming of gender in its different focus areas including investment and trade; resilience in fragile situations; business integrity; corporate governance; SMEs and entrepreneurship. These areas will further engage in analytical work on WEE in their respective fields, building the evidence base for policies that can adequately include gender considerations. WEE will receive special attention in each of the upcoming working groups of these focus areas.

- ◆ **Work with different countries on gender reviews through a peer learning approach.** At the 2018 WEEF, different countries expressed interest in an OECD gender review. Gender reviews adopt a peer learning methodology, which allows countries to analyse in-depth their policies and institutional frameworks from a gender perspective through exchanges with other countries in the region as well as with OECD countries. The reviews provide the evidence base to advance the gender equality agenda in a particular country and provide positive peer pressure to move forward. Based on countries' demand, the WEEF will propose this peer review mechanism.



The OECD: supporting women's economic empowerment in the MENA region and across the world

All countries stand to gain from empowering women to use their full economic potential: it directly impacts growth, competitiveness and social well-being. This remains a key challenge in the Middle East-North Africa region, where women's participation in the labour force is lowest in the world.

www.oecd.org/mena

© OECD 2018

Contact:

Charlotte GOEMANS
Policy Analyst
OECD Global Relations
Charlotte.Goemans@oecd.org

Carlos CONDE
Head of Middle East and Africa Division
OECD Global Relations
Carlos.Conde@oecd.org

Learn more about our work on Gender in the MENA region:

www.oecd.org/mena/competitiveness/women-empowerment.htm

