



# Citizens' Voice: Effective public communication for enhancing open government and supporting the COVID-19 recovery



Federal Republic of Germany  
Foreign Office

Regional conference - 30 March 2021



## Overview of the 2021 MENA-OECD Ministerial Week

MENA-OECD Competitiveness Forum	MENA-OECD Governance Forum	MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development
<b>Government-Business Summit</b> 30, 31 March (13h-16h CET)	<b>Governance Forum</b> "Visions for Recovery" 30, 31 March	<b>Ministerial meeting</b> 1 April (13h-16h CET)
<b>Launch of the publication</b> "Middle East and North Africa Investment Policy Perspectives" (MENA IPP)	<b>Citizens' Voice:</b> Effective public communication for enhancing open government and supporting the COVID-19 recovery 30 March (11h-13h CET)	<b>Opening session</b>
<b>Economic integration at the core of recovery and growth</b> - Enabling a sound business climate and promoting investment - Enhancing trade, connectivity and value chains	<b>High-level conference for the European Neighbourhood South region on user-centric service delivery: "Putting users, citizens and businesses, at the centre" (with SIGMA)</b> 30 March (13h-15h CET)	<b>High-level Ministerial Panel:</b> Designing a Roadmap to Recovery in MENA
<b>A post-COVID economy delivering decent jobs</b> - An eco-system for youth economic empowerment - Moving away from informality to entrepreneurship, employment and social resilience	<b>Visions for Recovery:</b> Digital Governance and Rule of Law for more open, accessible and efficient public services (with MENA-OECD Training Centre of Caserta) 31 March (10h-12h CET)	<b>Closing session:</b> Way forward and adoption of the Ministerial Declaration
	<b>Visions for Recovery:</b> Delivering for the most vulnerable 31 March (14h-15h15 CET)	

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<https://www.oecd.org/general/data-protection.htm>

The OECD's configuration of the Zoom service reflects the following measures:

- Pre-registration, passwords, and the "waiting room" functions are enabled to prevent unauthorised access to the conference.
- Specific identity format (country, name) for remote participants for easy control of each attendee in the Waiting Room before admitting them into the meeting.
- Only the host (OECD) or co-hosts can enable a recording on their local computers.
- If the conference is recorded, a notice will show on the screen.
- No chats can be saved, and no private chats are permitted, except with the host or co-hosts.
- Participants enter the conference call muted and without video showing, unless and until they enable these features themselves.
- Avoid discussing any highly-sensitive matters
- Do NOT share your personal invitation link

## **The Citizens' Voice Project**

With the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the OECD has been accompanying countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since 2016 through phase I of this project, to promote strategic public communication that supports the open government principles of transparency, integrity, accountability and stakeholder participation. Through this cooperation, the OECD provided the governments of Morocco and Tunisia with actionable recommendations based on OECD good practices. These took the form of national reviews (Morocco and Tunisia) that built on surveys conducted with communicators across the government and interviews with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders conducted by the OECD Secretariat and peers from OECD countries. The project also empowered the existing network of public communicators in Tunisia and supported the creation of a similar network in Morocco, the first of its kind in the country, while equipping them both with knowledge and skills through a series of capacity building activities to support their role as open government actors.

As part of phase II (2019 - 2021) of the Citizens' Voice project, the OECD expanded activities to Jordan and Lebanon by analysing the state of public communication and media governance in each country with a view to developing actionable recommendations for the government. In addition, the OECD has been supporting networks of public communicators in both countries to play a more active role in open government efforts. Building on the impact achieved during phase I, the project is also expanding the scope of activities to support public communication at the local level in Morocco and Tunisia, as well as facilitating the implementation of selected recommendations from the national reviews of phase I. Finally, the project aims to enable the sharing of good practices among countries through dissemination conferences.

## **Objectives of the meeting**

Within the framework of the Citizens' Voice project supported by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, this online regional conference will focus on public communication and its role in promoting a more open government in the MENA region. This event will gather a group of representatives from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. It will provide an opportunity to take stock of the project achievements and identify how to build on the progress achieved, notably through the endorsement of the MENA Regional Charter on Public Communication.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related socio-economic crises have further highlighted the importance of effective and transparent communication to implement policy, encourage desirable behaviours, and combat disinformation. A discussion dedicated to the issue will also allow for a reflection on how communication can help governments counter disinformation, foster trust and engage more constructively with citizens on the path to recovery.

This regional event will provide an opportunity to:

- Discuss objectives, challenges and the way forward in fostering the contribution of public communication to open government principles and how countries' actions set the tone for implementing the regional Charter on Public Communication;
- Discuss challenges, opportunities and initiatives to combatting misinformation and disinformation, with a particular focus on the regional context and the response to COVID-19.

# Agenda

*Simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Arabic will be provided – All times in CEST*

**30 March 2021 (2 hours)**

## Opening Remarks

**11.00 – 11.30**  
**(CEST)**

- Hasna Ben Slimane, Minister for Civil Service, Tunisia
- Heike Thiele, Director for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Stabilisation, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany
- Janos Bertok, Deputy Director for Public Governance, OECD

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## Session 1 – A regional conversation on public communication objectives, challenges and the path toward recovery

**11.30 – 12.10**

- Introductory speech: Overview of key recommendations from the Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco reports and the Regional Charter on Public Communication (Craig Matasick, OECD)
- Q&A based conversation moderated by the Charlotte Denise-Adam, OECD
- Discussants : 3 representatives from Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia
  - ✓ Osama Salameh, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of State for media Affairs, Prime Minister’s Office, Jordan
  - ✓ Nasser Israoui, Director, Technical cooperation Unit, Ministry of State for Administrative Reform, Lebanon
  - ✓ Khaled Sellami, Director General, Electronic Administration Unit, Presidency of the Government, Tunisia

In this session, discussants from Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia will be invited to share their public communication objectives and challenges, setting the stage for the countries’ efforts to ensure public communication’s contribution to transparency and participation. In a panel Q&A, participants will discuss lessons from implementing relevant initiatives, notably regarding strategies, objectives, the use of digital tools, media relations, etc. Findings and recommendations of the OECD’s recent and upcoming reports in each country, as well as the Regional Charter on Public Communication, will inform the discussion.

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**12.10 – 12.15** **Coffee break**

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## Session 2 – Regional perspectives on combatting misinformation and disinformation

**12.15 – 12.55**

- Carlotta Alfonsi, OECD
- Ahmed Laamoumri, Secretary general, Ministry of Economy, Finance and Administrative Reform, Morocco
- Taha Darwish, Managing Editor of the Jordanian Media Credibility Monitor “AKEED”, Jordanian Media Institute, Jordan
- Ashley Winter, Head of Strategic Communications – International Projects, Prime Minister’s Office and Cabinet Office Communications, United Kingdom

Speakers will present practical initiatives and tools to respond to the challenges of misinformation and disinformation. Presentations will provide an overview of regional evidence collected in surveys for the OECD’s International Report on Public Communication, as well as present a regional overview of efforts to combat related challenges. Overall, the discussions will illustrate how initiatives to tackle misinformation and disinformation contribute to building more effective, open, and responsive government.

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**Closing remarks**

**12.55 – 13.00**

Alessandro Bellantoni, Head of the Open Government Unit, OECD

Ambassador Bernardini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OECD and co-chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme

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## The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation in which governments work together to find solutions to common challenges, develop global standards, share experiences and identify best practices to promote better policies for better lives.

## The Public Governance Directorate and Open Government Unit

The Public Governance (GOV) directorate supports policy makers in both OECD member and partner countries, by providing a forum for policy dialogue and the creation of common standards and principles. Policy reviews and practical recommendations target reform priorities of each government. The directorate provides comparative international data and analysis, to support public sector innovation and reform, building on networks that include government officials as well as experts from the private sector, civil society organisations and trade unions.

Within GOV, the Open Government unit supports countries in their efforts to build more transparent, accountable and participatory governments that can restore citizens' trust and promote inclusive growth. Through data collection, capacity building and the promotion of regional peer dialogue, the OECD provides in-depth analyses of open government strategies and initiatives, coupled with policy advice and actionable recommendations. The unit's work is based on the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government](#), the first international legal instrument on the topic, which defines the main tenets of the governance of open government strategies and initiatives and paving the way forward for this agenda across OECD members and partners.

## The International Report on Public Communication

The OECD is developing the first evidence-based [international report on public communication](#) covering 40+ countries. The report is financially and substantially supported principally by the United Kingdom's Government Communication Service International (GCSI), with additional support from the Korean Development Institute (KDI) and the German Foreign Office (in the context of an ongoing project on citizen's voice in Middle East and North African countries).

The report will further the analysis and understanding of how public communication and media efforts can support transparency, integrity, accountability and participation.

The objectives of the report are to:

- Bridge the evidence gap on the contribution of public communication to democracy, security and inclusive growth;
- Reinforce awareness and use of communication as a lever for improved policymaking and services, and open government promotion;
- Strengthen governments' resilience to disinformation; and
- Disseminate good practices, success stories and lessons learned.

The report builds on the existing work of the OECD Public Communication and Media Reviews, which identify success factors, bottlenecks and actionable recommendations to help governments use public communication more strategically.

# CONTACT

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