

2020 E-Government Survey Regional Launch

Webinar Series

E-Government Development in the Arab Region

Organized jointly by

*The United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
In collaboration with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) of the United Arab Emirates*

Date: 23 September 2020
03:00 PM – 05:00 PM (Beirut Time)
08:00 AM – 10:00 AM (EDT, New York Time)

Background

Since 2001, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) has published the United Nations E-Government Survey. Over the past ten editions it has established itself as both a leading benchmarking reference on e-government and a policy tool for decision makers. The Survey is the only global report that assesses the e-government development status of all United Nations Member States and serves as a benchmarking and development tool for countries to learn from each other, identify areas of strength and challenges in e-government and shape their policies and strategies in this area. It is also aimed at facilitating and informing discussions of intergovernmental bodies, including the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the High-Level Political Forum, on issues related to e-government and to the critical role of ICTs in sustainable development.

The survey analyzes both global and regional trends in e-government development and provide insights on specifics of regional challenges and opportunities. The Arab region, in particular, displays an array of differences in e-government development among its countries reflected in EGDI values ranging from low to very-high levels. Four countries in the region are least developed (LDCs), 8 have low or lower-middle-income economies, while others are in upper-middle and high-income level groups. These divergences necessitate targeted policy interventions and strategies for advancing the overall e-government development and bridging the digital divides.

The current COVID19 pandemic has laid bare also the structural weaknesses in public institutions at the national, regional and global levels, including in e-government. The pandemic has affected all Arab countries, including those with higher national incomes, albeit in a differentiated manner. Some countries have readily deployed the digital technologies (e.g. tracing and tracking Apps, robots and

drones) to manage spread of the virus, while others have struggled to offer even basic government services online, facing serious challenges because of the high levels of humanitarian and refugee needs in tandem with their weak health infrastructures and technology and living conditions that may be conducive to a rapid spread of the pandemic.

In such environment, the resources needed for digitization of the government may contract and set the regional e-government development back. According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic will lead the contraction of the economy in the Arab region, and according to ESCWA, 8.3 million people will fall into poverty in the Arab region due to COVID-19¹. In 2020, Arab Gulf Countries will be impacted by another shock, that of the sharp decline in oil prices, which will in turn exacerbate the economic sequel of COVID-19 in GCC countries as well as the Arab region in general. It is projected that the decline in real GDP growth will be by 1.1% in Kuwait, 12% in Lebanon, and 60% in Libya. As highlighted by ESCWA policy brief, the impact of Corona has led to a continuing decline in oil prices and the region has lost nearly \$11 billion in net oil revenues from January to mid-March 2020². The pandemic's economic effects will most likely unleash further contraction even as the health threat recedes, especially hitting the most vulnerable groups in most Arab countries.

This event will be organized back to back with the Eighth Meeting of the Arab e-Government Directors.

Objectives

The webinar is organized jointly with ESCWA and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in the UAE to focus on the e-government development trends in Arab region, the digital responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for in-depth discussion of policy implications for advancing digital transformation in the region in upcoming years.

The webinar will also explore how countries deployed digital technologies in the region during the pandemic and beyond and will aim at producing recommendations for bridging digital divides based on the findings of 2020 E-Government Survey.

Format

The Webinar for the Arab Region will run for two hours and will be conducted in English and Arabic, to the extent possible. A panel of experts including, but not limited to representatives from UNDESA/DPIDG, UN ESCWA, TRA of the U.A.E, and the directors of Arab e-Government will participate in the discussions. The webinar will then be followed by a Q&A session using video conferencing tools such as Cisco WebEx and Live Facebook.

The recordings and the presentations will be posted on the website after the conclusion of the Webinar. The follow-up actions, including key recommendations and knowledge products, will be disseminated through the UN DESA and UN ESCWA websites.

¹ See <https://www.unescwa.org/news/new-escwa-brief-83-million-people-will-fall-poverty-arab-region-due-covid-19>

² See <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/escwa-covid-19-economic-cost-arab-region-en.pdf>

Targeted Audience

The target audience of the Webinar Series includes government officials who are in charge of the e-government development and digital transformation of their respective countries. Officials coordinating and leading the national efforts to fight the COVID-19, and government officials from line ministries (such as health sector, disaster management agencies, and local government officials at the frontline) will also be invited. The Webinar also intends to involve civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and regional/international organizations dealing with digital government in the region.

Expected Results

The Webinar aims to disseminate the findings of the 2020 E-Government Survey, focusing particularly on the Arab region. It will aim at strengthening effective digital governance by enhancing integration, collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders on issues related to adoption and use of digital technologies. The Webinar will result in a) a set of recommendations for policy-makers on advancing digital government in the region, and b) information sharing through the UN DESA and UN ESCWA website and other means of e-government development trends in the region.

Key questions to be addressed during the webinar

- What are the key findings of the 2020 E-Government Survey on global and regional trends?
- What are the trends, challenges and opportunities for digital transformation in the Arab region?
- How did Arab countries deploy digital technologies when faced with this unprecedented pandemic?
- What are the obstacles to an effective COVID-19 response in the Arab region, especially in utilizing digital technologies?
- What are the opportunities for digital cooperation between countries in the Arab to address digital divides?

Agenda

Time (EDT)	
03:00-03:10 pm (Beirut Time)	Moderator <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UN DESA/UN ESCWA
8:00-08:10 am (New York time) (10 mins)	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Juraj Riecan, Cluster Leader, Statistics, Information Society and Technology, UN-ESCWA• Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro, Chief, Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/UNDESA• Mr. Salem El Hosani, Acting Deputy Director of e-Government Sector, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates

<p>03:10-4:00 pm (Beirut Time)</p> <p>8:10-9:00 (New York time)</p> <p>(50 mins)</p>	<p>Main Session:</p> <p><u>Presentation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro, Chief, Digital Government Branch, DPIDG/UNDESA • Ms. Nibal Idlebi, Chief of Innovation Section, UN-ESCWA <p><u>Panel Discussion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Abdelkader Batayneh, Managing Director – Policies & Information, Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, Jordan. • Mr. Hisham Alsheikh, Deputy CEO, Yesser e-Government Program, Saudi Arabia • Ms. Fadia Souliman, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Communication and Technology, Syrian Arab Republic. • Mr. Khaled Sellami, e-Gov Unit Director, Prime Ministry, Tunisia. • Mr. Tariq Al Hawi, Director Digital Adoption & Enablement, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates.
<p>4:00 – 4:45 (Beirut Time) (45 mins)</p>	<p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN ESCWA <p>Open Discussion, Q&A</p>
<p>4:45 – 5:00 (Beirut Time) (15 mins)</p>	<p>Wrap-Up & Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN ESCWA

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UNDESA Focal Point

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