

# Foreword

Around the world, governments are increasingly struggling to address the complex economic and social challenges they face, due in part to structural governance flaws, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While public trust was already declining before the health crisis, the current context may further erode people's trust in their governments – at a moment when citizens are calling for transparent and accountable management of the recovery phase. This holds particularly true for the Arab region, where many people have been expressing grievances related to social injustice, political disenfranchisement, economic inequalities and corruption for some time.

More and more countries use open government reforms to respond to some of these challenges, better engage citizens and spur broader socio-economic change. Reflecting a shift in the understanding of the role of the state and of policy making, open government can help Arab countries increase public trust, reduce the risks of instability and implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Against this background, the OECD and UN ESCWA decided to join forces to develop this report, which builds on the OECD Recommendation on Open Government and ESCWA's Framework for fostering open government in the Arab region. It also contributes to the work of the MENA-OECD governance programme and ESCWA's open government project in Arab countries.

The main objective of this report is to demonstrate the economic and social impact of open government, mainly through selected good practices and lessons learnt from OECD and Arab countries. The study shows how the principles of transparency, accountability and citizen participation can translate into better social services, inclusiveness and socio-economic development, thus contributing to the achievement of the 2030 development Agenda and its SDGs. The cases from Arab countries were mainly selected through an OECD-ESCWA questionnaire administered in 2020, while those from OECD countries stem from ongoing research and the OECD 2021 Survey on Open Government.

Based on this overview and analysis, the report proposes a number of recommendations to support Arab countries in fostering open government legal and policy reforms in the region and, ultimately, benefitting from their positive impact.

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The report was co-ordinated by Alessandro Bozzini (OECD) and Nibal Idlebi (ESCWA).

From the OECD, it was mainly drafted by Alessandro Bozzini with contributions and comments from Alessandro Bellantoni, Michael Jelenic, Charlotte Denise-Adam, João Vasconcelos, Felipe Gonzalez Zapata, Jacob Arturo Rivera Perez, Cecilia Emilsson, Mariane Piccinin Barbieri, Ethel Tan, Jamie Berryhill, Miriam Allam, Amr Soliman, Lech Marcinkowski, and Nick Thijs.

From ESCWA, the main author is Samir Aita, President of the Circle of Arab Economists and an ESCWA consultant. The other authors are Nibal Idlebi, Younes Abouyoub and Lize Denner. Zahr Bou Ghanem and Rita Chaddad contributed to research while Mohamad Nawar Al Awa and Mirna Barbar provided comments on selected chapters.

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