Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

IGED Consultation: Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) Prototype
Online meeting, 24 August 2021

Preliminary information note

Background

Although Arab countries are increasingly committed to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities, those in the Arab region are still among the most marginalized population groups, facing multiple barriers which hinder their ability to participate in society on an equal basis with others. Research shows that in terms of literacy, education and employment, persons with disabilities remain disadvantaged. Women with disabilities in rural areas are particularly marginalized. For instance, they are more likely to have lower access to education, health and employment.

In parallel, it is worth mentioning the vital role that digital technologies can play for people’s empowerment and in promoting better access for all towards building more inclusive societies. In the Arab region, the ICT sector has fortunately made some positive strides in development in the past few years and, as a result, can have a great impact in digital inclusion throughout the region.

In this context, ESCWA has launched in 2020 the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) project to support policy makers in the Arab counties to develop/improve their national policies and guidelines for enhanced e-Accessibility. This would help to bridge the digital divide and enable all society members to access and use ICT.

Under the framework of the ADIP project, ESCWA has developed in 2020 two templates that were discussed during an online consultative meeting (held by ESCWA on 10-11 November 2020), namely:

- National E-accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region.
- National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility for the Arab Region.

The National E-accessibility Policy Template for the Arab Region focuses on developing a general framework for a national policy in order to support enabling access of persons with disabilities to information and communication technology (ICT) and public services, for a more inclusive society.
Based on sound and practical international standards, the National Technical Guidelines on E-Accessibility for the Arab Region prepared under the framework of the ADIP project and range from the simple and easy to implement to the more challenging and harder to follow. Adopting these guidelines by governmental policymakers will definitely make the lives of persons with disabilities easier and more productive in spite of having minimal functionalities in websites accessibility and accessible digital platforms.

In the same context, ESCWA team is working on developing the ADIP online platform to assist Arab policymakers in using those templates. A first prototype is currently ready and includes the developed toolkits, best practices, and other related material, and an online community of practice dedicated space for disability focal points.

This dedicated restricted-access space for the Inter-sessional Expert Group on Disability (IGED) would be accessible only to the IGED members allowing them to share news, updates, events and open thematic discussions on the different policy areas they work on. It provides an online space to foster peer-to-peer learning, and South-South cooperation.

The meeting will present the ADIP online platform prototype, its components and will mainly focus on the IGED dedicated space and related features for members.

**Objectives**

The main objective of the online consultative meeting is to review the prototype of the ADIP online platform to get feedback and suggestions of the IGED to further develop it. Their feedback is also key to finalize the IGED dedicated space.

**Format**

This online “IGED Consultation: Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) Prototype” will run over 1.5 hours on 24 August 2021 and will be conducted in English and Arabic.

**Expected Results**

The main outcome of the event will be an update of the prototype of ADIP online platform taking into consideration the recommendations and feedback proposed by participants.

**Discussion topics**

*Prototype of ADIP online platform*
- Overall layout and structure
- Digital accessibility features
- Substantive themes and content

*IGED dedicated space*
- Layout and functions
ESCWA Focal Points

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