ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

GUIDELINE ON FOSTERING INNOVATION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR OF THE ARAB REGION

Chapter VI: Recommendations

VI.   RECOMMENDATIONS

A.   INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The study on Fostering Innovation in the Public Sectors of the Arab Region has attempted to explore the issue of public sector innovation in a holistic manner, and bring forward resources, instruments, examples and discussion that may effectively help the public sectors of ESCWA member countries in the Arab Region to further develop the capacities required for pursuing their innovation efforts.

At the same time, in the context of work for this study it has become clear that there are countries in the Arab region who find themselves able to have advanced in public sector innovation more than other countries. This can be attributed to several reasons, and so much so to reasons that, beyond public sectors, have to do with the broader realities faced by many ESCWA member countries.

B.   KEEPING THE PUBLIC SECTORS OF ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES TOGETHER

A first recommendation of this study would be to continue working with all possible instruments towards the goal of bringing the public sectors of ESCWA member countries together, in the context of regular events and lasting frameworks that encourage exchange of experience, sharing and uptake of innovation achievements. This is considered of paramount importance to help countries less advanced in public sector innovation gain from the experience of fellow countries, as well as countries more advanced in public sector innovation appreciate the difficulties of fellow countries, which may be faced by parts of their own constituencies as well.

C.   JOINT WORK ON PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION

A second recommendation, in this same line of thought, would be to explore and foster possibilities of joint work on innovation between public sectors of ESCWA member countries across different stages of advancement. Such efforts could initially be envisaged in the form of targeted small-scale pilots, that would allow to demonstrate feasibility and showcase how the difficulties encountered can be resolved, with a view to leading up to joint projects of greater ambition.

D.   MONITORING EXAMPLES AND PERCEPTIONS

A third recommendation has to do with the importance of monitoring public sector innovation advancements in ESCWA member countries, as well as having in place a diagnostic instrument for the evolution of perceptions related to public sector innovation. These two goals can be served by workshops and other events regularly organized by ESCWA. At the same time, the corresponding questionnaire instruments that have been developed in the context of this study could be used as complementary means. The information collected through these instruments could help build up a permanent online repository, as a sharing and diffusion platform available to the public sectors of ESCWA member countries.

E.   CONSULTATION AND TRAINING ON METHODOLOGICAL INSTRUMENTS

A fourth recommendation concerns the methodological instruments developed as capacity-building tools in the context of the study. The IDEA lifecycle for public sector innovation efforts, the IPTTM conceptual model for studying the different dimensions of such efforts, the IPEG empirical guide to the characteristics and applicability of different innovation process types in different contexts, as well as the EIPwiz tool for identifying preferred innovation processes, all comprise methodological work undertaken in this study with outcomes open to improvement. In this line of thought, the possibility of inviting expert-based and public sector-wide consultations on these tools could have important added value for helping them reach increased levels of maturity and user acceptance. Alongside such consultation exercises, the possibility of organizing training workshops based on these instruments could greatly help in their uptake, as tools for gaining better practical understanding and capacities for innovation.

F. Catalogues and methodology for knowledge and tool resources

One more recommendation has to do with the knowledge and information resources catalogued in the context of this study. Making these resource catalogues online available to public sectors of ESCWA member countries, and browsable/searchable in non-linear ways that would allow running queries targeted at specific needs, could result in a practical and valuable information asset for innovation work. At the same time, the IKRx and ITOCIx exercises through which these resources have been developed in the context of the study, which are themselves documented in the study in a descriptive form, could also feed consultation and training actions, with the twofold purpose of maturing into corresponding methodologies on the one hand, and fostering the capacity of public sectors to identify the knowledge and tool resources that they need in the context of their innovation work on the other.

G. Interactive training by examples

An additional recommendation concerns the examples for public sector innovation that have been identified and discussed in this study, with a double association to different aims and scope, as well as different process types. This corpus of examples could be used to feed training workshops explicitly targeted at innovation with specific aims, or at innovation along specific process types, that would allow participants to gain important insights and practical knowledge readily applicable to their innovation work.

H. A focus on bringing in more stakeholders

As the results of this study have shown, on top of the multiple process types recognized in the literature for innovation efforts, a whole spectrum of process modalities is emerging with a view to bringing in more stakeholders in innovation building processes. It is recommended therefore that these new modalities, which in terms of the study are mentioned as challenges for linking innovation to new ways of pervasive, playful and other forms of participation, be further explored. This could be envisaged along a mixed-methods approach, encompassing study, workshop, training, consultation, as well as innovation prize and hackathon components, both at Arab Region-wide and at national level, involving expert, public sector as well as private sector, academia and civil society stakeholders.

I. A special focus on bringing in women

As this and other studies show, examples of public sector innovation explicitly bringing women into the picture certainly exist, but are not proportionate to the fact that women represent half the capacity of the population and have many needs for new services, better services and better access to existing services. It is recommended, therefore, that public sector innovation efforts place a special focus on bringing in women into the innovation process. This could mean innovating by women, with women and, most importantly, for women, and can be pursued with a variety of actions. Like for the previous recommendation, this could be envisaged along a mixed-methods approach, encompassing study, workshop, training, consultation, as well as innovation prize and hackathon components, both at Arab Region-wide and at national level, involving expert, public sector as well as private sector, academia and civil society women stakeholders.

J. Focusing further work on specific challenges

Two last recommendations are made with reference to the I-unLoC list of challenges for public sector innovation which has been developed in the context of this study. This list of challenges, which covers several aspects and issues for public sector innovation, could be used to identify priorities and select specific challenges of public sector innovation as a focus for further work.

K. Challenge-specific studies, workshops, awards and hackathons

Studies could be used as instruments for working further on selected challenges to public sector innovation. At the same time, as complementary means for opening this work to public sector and additional contributors,

coming from academia and research, the private sector and/or the civil society, three more instruments could be envisaged: training workshops, innovation awards and innovation hackathons. These could be targeted to specific challenges selected from the I-unLoC list, and they could be Arab Region-wide in scope, or launched by specific countries for their own constituencies. In all cases such instruments targeted at specific challenges, rather than on public sector innovation overall, could prove of essential value as a means for mobilizing contributors and getting back original ideas and proposals.