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ESCWA

Survey on Open Government in the Arab Region

2016

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Objectives

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is in the process of implementing a project entitled "**Fostering Institutional Development for Participatory Approaches towards the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Western Asia**", which was launched in 2016. Fulfilling the objectives of this project requires building strong public institutions capable of formulating public policy, strategies and associated programs. These institutions should also be able to establish strong partnerships between the government, private sector, civil society and other stakeholders, so as to enable these parties to express their social, economic and political requirements, and actively participate in the search for and implementation of appropriate solutions to the challenges they face.

Free and open cooperation between the government and other stakeholders in society lead to the strengthening of public institutions and building a transparent and accountable public sector that is able to successfully serve citizens. Open government is seen as an option that allows the free flow of information and knowledge and the strengthening of cooperation and shared responsibility.

Within the framework of the abovementioned project, ESCWA plans to develop a study on open government in the Arab region, and propose a model/framework that will assist member countries in their transition to adopt open government. These studies require an assessment of the current status of open government in the region.

The following questionnaire aims to identify the status of policies, strategies and legislation of open government in the ESCWA member countries as well as measures and initiatives for open data and the use of technology in this regard, such as online portals. The questionnaire addresses the challenges facing implementation of open government. ESCWA will analyze the responses to the questionnaire as part of the study on "The Status of Open Government in the Arab region".

Definition of open government

The concept of open government is dynamic and is influenced by the nature of governments that seek to apply it. As such, an accurate and universal definition of open government is not available. However, it is understood that the concept of open government is closely linked to transparency, accountability, participation, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

One of the main principles of open government is improving transparency, accountability and participation in a sustainable manner. This requires changes in culture, values and current standards. It also requires governments to have serious leadership and political will towards the implementation of open government.

Implementing open government requires issuing policies vis-à-vis the government's position on transparency, accountability, participation, inclusiveness and effectiveness. It also involves the development of a legislative and regulatory framework to support the implementation of open government initiatives, such as open government data legislation, cybersecurity legislation, privacy of information; as well as guidelines for operational organs of the government.

Keeping up with new technological trends, particularly those that allow improved interaction between the government and other stakeholders, strongly supports the implementation of open

government. New technologies allow governments to develop and implement open government initiatives within frameworks and models for open data, open collaboration, engagement and open innovation.

The study based on this survey will analyze the status of open government, identify its concepts and attempt to harmonize the understanding of various associated concepts among Arab countries.

The questionnaire consists of seven parts and is addressed to ministries, public departments/administrations, state-owned economic enterprises and other relevant public institutions in the countries of the Arab region.

Please answer the following question and add supporting information and attachments whenever possible. Also please liaise with other agencies in filling this questionnaire if necessary¹.

For more information, please contact:

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Information about the respondent

The following section is intended for the official who will fill out the survey. ESCWA will ensure the respondent's anonymity and will not publish any personal information. However, this information will be useful in case ESCWA needs to follow-up or requires additional information.

- Country:
- Name:
- Institution:
- Position/title:
- Email:
- Telephone:

Note: This survey is available online at the following URL (*in Arabic*),
ESCWA also welcomes filling it online.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/escwa-open-gov>

¹ It should be noted that this questionnaire was inspired by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) questionnaire on Open Government Data (2014) with necessary customization to be inline with the Arab region context.

SECTION I - OPEN GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

This section addresses the availability of an open government policy or strategy, its content, goals and responsible institution.

Question 1 –

Does your government currently have an open government strategy or policy in place?

- Yes
- No
- The government is in the process of developing such policy/strategy
- I don't know

In case a policy/strategy does not exist, please move to Section II on page 8.

Question 2 –

a. Please indicate the name of the open government policy/strategy.

b. Which year did this policy/strategy come into effect?

c. Does this policy/strategy cover these topics?

Select all that applies.

- Transparency
- Management of government data and information
- Open government data
- Public sector modernisation programme
- Other (please specify):

d. Please mention the priorities of this policy/strategy.

e. Please mention the URL to access this policy/strategy online – if available.

f. Please mention any other useful information about this policy strategy (attach relevant documents).

Question 3 –

a. Which public institution is responsible for formulating the open government policy/strategy?

- Prime Minister Office
- The ministry responsible for public administration or administrative development
- The ministry for information and communication technology
- Other, please specify:

b. What is the email of this public institution?

c. What is the position of the official at this institution who is focal point for this policy/strategy – if available?

d. What is the email of this official - if available?

e. Is this public institution also responsible for coordinating or implementing the open government policy/strategy across governmental bodies?

- Yes
- No
- There is not coordination for this policy/strategy
- I don't know

f. If the institution in charge of coordination/implementation is different from the institution that formulated the policy/strategy, what is the contact information of the former (i.e. the email)?

Question 4 –

a. Is there a steering committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of the open government policy/strategy?

- Yes
- No

b. Who participates in the steering committee that monitors the implementation of the open government policy/strategy?

- Executives representing public administration departments
- Representatives of the private sector
- Representatives of civil society organizations
- Other (please specify):

Question 5 –

Is the institution or authority responsible for the open government policy/strategy also responsible for open government **data** policies?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 6 –

a. Is funding earmarked for the open government policy/strategy?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. What are the main sources of funding for the open government policy/strategy?
Select all that applies.

- Funds are allocated by the government
- Funded by each ministry or public institution involved
- Grants from the private sector
- Grants from the civil society
- Raised through advertisements
- Other (please specify):

Question 7 –

a. What is the value of the most recent annual budget approved for the open government policy/strategy (in local currency)?

b. What is the number of staff dedicated for the implementation of the open government policy/strategy?

Question 8 –

a. Is this policy/strategy in line with the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. Please explain more.

SECTION II – OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY POLICIES/STRATEGIES

This section addresses the availability of policies/strategies for openness.

a. Do you have a policy/strategy/initiative in your government for building the culture of **openness and transparency**?

- Yes
- No

In case such a policy/strategy/initiative does not exist, please move to section III on page 8.

b. What are the general objective(s) of this policy/strategy/initiative?

c. Whom does this policy/strategy/initiative target?

- Government employees
- The civil society and its institutions
- The private sector
- Citizens
- Others, please specify:

d. Which capacities does this policy/strategy/initiative aim to enhance in government employees?

- Processing data from various sources (big data processing)
- Interoperability among public institutions and data crosslink in order to produce shared content, services and policies between administrations
- Performing data analytics in order to develop public policy and improve service delivery
- Other capacities, please specify:

e. Please add any other useful information about this policy/strategy/initiative (attach documents as necessary).

SECTION III – OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA

This section addresses the availability of a national policy for open government data, its content, objectives and implementation

Question 1 –

a. Is there a single definition of **open data** across the public sector?

- Yes
 No

In case there is no single definition, please move to Question 2 below.

b. What is the source of open data definition?

- The definition is put by the government
 Internationally used definition

c. Please provide the definition of open data used in your public sector:

d. To which level(s) of government(s) does this definition apply?

Select all that apply.

- Central/federal government
 Regional/state government
 Local government
 The rest of the public sector (including public corporations)
 Others, please specify:

Question 2 –

a. To what extent do ministries and public agencies have their own open data strategy/policy/initiative in place?

- None of them
 Some of them
 Most of them
 I don't know

b. What are the names of these ministries and public agencies and their emails?

c. In each of these ministries and public agencies, what is the name and email of the official in charge of open data?

In case there is no open government data policy/strategy/initiative, please move to Section IV.

Question 3 –

a. Which year was the open data policy/strategy/initiative launched?

b. Please provide a short summary on the main goals of this open data policy/strategy/initiative.

c. Who are the partner institutions in implementing the open data policy/strategy/initiative?

Question 4 –

Which of the following elements are part of the open data policy/strategy/initiative?

Select all that apply.

- Standards/guidelines for information disclosure
- Standards/guidelines on data formats
- Standard/guidelines on licensing or publishing with respect to release/use of data
- Standard/guidelines on text and data mining requirements for public agencies to reuse data
- Guidelines/rules concerning charging of fees to access government data and/or information
- Standards/guidelines concerning privacy
- Standards/guidelines for open data portals/websites
- Communications/awareness initiatives targeting data users
- Generic training for civil servants or government employees on open data
- Training for civil servants or government employees on skills for data analysis and reuse
- Provision of incentives for civil society to reuse data
- Engagement of data users
- Other, please specify:

Question 5 –

Does your government provide incentives to employees or civil servants to increase data analysis in carrying out their tasks?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Question 6 –

a. Has your government appointed a Chief Data Officer?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. Please describe the mandate and responsibilities of the Chief Data Officer.

c. To whom does the Chief Data Officer report?

Question 7 –

a. Does the central/federal government regularly consult users on their needs and preferences for the types of data released?

- Yes
 No

b. Which users does the central/federal government consult to release data and through which channel?
Please select all that apply

	<i>Consultation channels</i>				
	Physical consultations	Online consultations	Social media consultations	Mobile applications consultations	Not consulted
Citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic & research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
please specify:					

Question 8 –

a. Is there a central entity that approves data publication for all central/federal ministries and agencies?

- Yes
 No, each ministry or agency is responsible for publishing its own data

b. If the answer is “Yes”, what is the name of this central entity?

c. How frequently is the data updated?

Question 9 –

Is there an inventory for government data?

- Yes, there is a single exhaustive data inventory held for the central government
 Yes, there is a data inventory but it is not exhaustive
 No, each organization produces its own data inventory
 No, only key individual agencies hold a data inventory
 No, there is no data inventory for the whole central administration

SECTION IV – OPEN GOVERNMENT PORTALS AND USED TECHNOLOGIES

This section addresses the existence of online open government portals, the responsible agency, and types and quality of data and services

Question 1 –

a. Do you have an online portal(s) for open government?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

b. What is the link(s) to this portal(s)?

In case there is no portal for open government, please move to Section VI.

Question 2 –

Which government agencies are responsible for the administration of online open government portal(s)?

- Prime minister's office
 Specific central/federal line ministry, please specify:
 Other, please specify:

Question 3 –

a. Did your government establish a special entity or taskforce responsible to further develop and expand the open government portal?

- Yes
 No

b. What is the name of this special entity/taskforce?

c. Is this special entity/taskforce also responsible for approving the data released on open government portal(s)?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

Question 4 –

a. What is recently approved annual budget (in national currency) allocated to the management of the open government portal(s)?

b. What is the number of employees working on the management of open government portal(s)?

Question 5 –

What are the main sources of funding of open government portal(s)?

- Funded by the ministry responsible for the management of the portal
- Pooling of funds from a number of ministries
- Fund provided by an international organization
- Other, please specify:

Question 6 –

a. Is there a harmonized quality control process(es) to ensure the quality of the data provided by all central/federal ministries and agencies on open government portal(s)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. If the answer is “Yes”, please provide more details on the data quality control process.

Question 7 –

Does the open government portal(s) publish data on:

Please select all that apply.

- National elections results
- Local elections results
- National public expenditures
- Local public expenditures
- Population census
- Postal codes of cities
- Vehicle registration statistics
- Results of user satisfaction surveys on government services
- Other data, please specify:

Question 8 –

Do you have an independent government transparency portal?

- Yes, separate from the online open government portal
- No, data on transparency can be found on online open government portal
- No, no data on transparency is available
- I don't know

Question 9 –

a. Are there regular statistics on the use of data in the online open government portal?

- Yes
- No

b. Please list the number of data sets on the online open government portal and their rate of use (most recent year).

c. Which of these items have data on the online open government portal?

	Available	Not available
Economics and finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport and roads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justice and crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

please specify:

Question 10 –

Which of the following features is currently available on online open government portal(s)?

- Search function
- Forums
- Ranking of most popular datasets
- User comment or feedback section
- Voting button for visitors to rate the usefulness and quality of the datasets
- Possibility to receive notification when specific datasets are added
- Accessibility options for vision impaired users
- Different language options for content
- User support/technical assistance
- Customization for mobile devices

Question 11 –

a. On the online open government portal(s), do you present or promote individual applications that reuse public data?

- Yes
- No

b. If the answer is “Yes”, please list a few examples.

Question 12 –

Does the open government portal(s) cover data on the following groups/topics to ensure inclusiveness?
Select all that apply.

- The youth
- Gender issues
- Marginalized communities
- Other social matters, please specify:
- I don't know

SECTION V – THE USE AND IMPACT OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

This section addresses the use of open government, its application, and how useful it is.

Question 1 –

What is the main charging/pricing model for government data access and reuse at the central/federal level? *Please select all that apply*

- All data can be accessed and reused for free
- Data is supplied for reuse with a charge at marginal cost
- Some data are made available for free, but there is a single fee applied for certain data
- Full cost recovery model (to ensure an appropriate rate of return for data and services)
- Freemium model is used, so basic data are free however advanced features require a premium fee
- Fees are charged for commercial use and reuse
- Other, please specify:

Question 2 –

Which of the below initiatives exist to promote the reuse of government data and information released as open data?

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Software development contests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information sessions for businesses and citizens	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of open government policies is considered part of performance indicators of organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geospatial tools available for users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data promotion to journalists	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training events for users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training for government employees to build capacities for data analysis and reuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incentives for civil servants or government employees to reuse data to create new services and value	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 3 –

a. Does the government track the economic and/or social gains resulting from open government?

- Yes
- No

b. If the answer is “Yes”, Please provide some details on you government’s methodology to track the economic and/or social gains from open government.

Question 4 –

a. Does the open government strategy/policy use social media channels?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

b. What is the purpose of the use of social media channels?

Please select all that apply

- Communicate with and reach out to the community
- Interact with the community
- Engage the community in value creation
- Other, please specify:

Question 5 –

a. Do you have data or statistics on the use of open government applications or access to open data?

- Yes
- No

b. Please indicate which applications are mostly used and the number of users.

Question 6 –

Please give examples of how citizens or other entities use open data.

SECTION VII – LEGISLATION AND REGULATION OF OPEN GOVERNMENT

This section addresses the availability of legislation and regulation relevant to open government.

Question 1 –

a. Does your country have legislation or regulation on access to government information?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

b. Do these legislations or regulations direct ministries and public agencies to publish governmental data and documents?

- Yes
 No

c. Do these legislations or regulations include a definition of open data?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

d. Please include other useful information on this subject such as the numbers of laws and their dates of enactment (please attach the text of the law as suitable).

Question 2 –

a. Does your country have legislation or regulation on privacy and data security?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

b. Please include other useful information on this subject such as the numbers of laws and their dates of enactment (please attach the text of the law as suitable).

Question 3 –

a. Does your country have legislation or regulation on engaging citizens in decision making?

- Yes
 No
 I don't know

b. If the answer is “Yes”, please list these laws/regulations.

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c. Please include other useful information on this subject such as the numbers of laws and their dates of enactment (please attach the text of the law as suitable).

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SECTION VII – OPEN GOVERNMENT CHALLENGES

This section addressed the most important challenges facing the implementation of open government.

Question 1 –

Which of the following would you consider the main **policy challenges** for further development of open government initiatives in your country?

- Lack of a self-standing open government strategy for the whole administration
- Lack of a sustainable operating model and overarching data policy framework
- Lack of a single effective data inventory for government open data
- Inconsistent application of guidelines on government open data release across organizations
- Other challenges, please explain:

Question 2 –

What are the main **technical challenges** hindering further development and implementation of open government initiatives in your country?

- Difficulty in identifying appropriate technologies in terms of cost and ease of use
- Inadequate infrastructure, bandwidth, hardware and software for implementing open government
- Data sets formats and standards are not harmonized
- Limited government data accessibility and re-usability
- Inadequate technical infrastructure to ensure privacy and security
- Data are incomplete and inaccurate
- Unavailability of online open government portal(s)
- Other challenges, please explain:

Question 3 –

What are the main **institutional/organizational challenges** hindering further development and implementation of open government initiatives in your country?

- Lack of adequately skilled civil servants
- Insufficient data integration across different parts of the administration
- Difficulty in balancing the autonomy and control of data release by the various administrations
- Insufficient culture of collaboration and sharing within the public sector
- Unnecessary internal barriers to access, use and re-use of data in the public sector
- Lack of robust models and strategies across the public sector to engage with data users
- Inadequate workflow within the public sector for data gathering, integration, validation, release, approval granting, update and promotion of re-use
- Lack of culture and practices of interaction with civil society organisations
- Lack of clear mandate for the institution coordinating open data
- Lack of incentives among government institutions to share data with other institutions
- Resistance to change in public authorities
- Other challenges, please explain:

Question 4 –

What are the main **cultural challenges** hindering further development and implementation of open government initiatives in your country?

- Insufficient skills among citizens for accessing open government data and services
- Insufficient awareness and preparedness on open data among government employees
- Insufficient awareness and preparedness on open data in the business community
- Insufficient awareness and preparedness on open data among civil society organisations
- Low level of participation of civil society organisations in the decision-making and policy cycle
- Other challenges, please explain:

Question 5 –

What are the main **legal challenges** hindering further development and implementation of open government initiatives in your country?

- Inconsistent legal framework impedes data accessibility and re-use
- Fragmented legislation concerning privacy and security leading to confusion and uncertainty for data providers and users
- Absence of the regulations needed to operationalise access to information laws
- Lack of legal clarity on who owns government data
- Other challenges, please explain:

Question 6 –

What are the main **financial challenges** hindering further development and implementation of open government initiatives in your country?

- Lack of budgets for implementing open government or limitations in the processes for allocating such budgets
- Lack of solid approaches in the national administration to appraise costs/benefits of opening government data
- High costs for upgrading infrastructure
- High human-resource costs associated with organising, posting and updating quality data
- High costs for converting large volumes of data into re-usable formats
- High costs for engaging data users
- Paying fees to access open data is unaffordable to citizens
- Other challenges, please explain:

SECTION VIII – ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please add other comments or suggestions as necessary.