



ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

ESCWA Activities on the Progress Made on the Implementation of and Follow-up to WSIS Outcomes

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REGIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR BUILDING THE IS IN WESTERN ASIA



Created in 2005, the RPoA originally included 10 programmes and 38 projects. In 2007, it was enriched with additional projects that were proposed by the League of Arab States and other regional stakeholders. The RPoA was last reviewed and updated in 2009 during a conference entitled "Regional Follow-up to the Outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society.

REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY



- During 2013, ESCWA-ICTD produced the latest edition of the *Regional Profile of the Information Society in the Arab Region* (RPIS). The 2013 edition of RPIS is the sixth in a series that had been previously produced in 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2011. It examines the status of implementation of information societies in the Arab region, measures the progress made in building such societies and compares the performance of the region with that of other regions and the rest of the world.
- In 2006, ESCWA started development work on the Information Society Portal (**ISPER**). ISPER was created as a follow-up activity to the outcomes of WSIS. This dynamic, bilingual (English/Arabic), database-driven, open-source application provides stakeholders with essential information on the current status of the information society in the ESCWA region and facilitates cooperation and regional integration.

C1: The role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development

- ESCWA published in 2005 a study entitled “Towards an Integrated Knowledge Society in the Arab Countries: Strategies and Implementation Modalities”
- ESCWA organised in 2006, in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), a workshop entitled “ICT Policy Making in ESCWA Member Countries”
- ESCWA organised two interlinked workshops on the “Delivery of e-Services in Civil Society”. The first took place at the end of 2009 while the second followed a little less than year later in 2010.
- In 2007, ESCWA organized with the Jordanian Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MoICT) a workshop entitled “Establishing Public Private Partnerships for ICT Initiatives”
- In 2007, ESCWA organised an expert group meeting (EGM) entitled “Regional Networking and Partnership for Information Society Development”

C2: Infrastructure

- In 2005 ESCWA published a study entitled “Improving the Communications Infrastructure, Services and Policies in ESCWA Member States”
- In 2007, ESCWA produced with Alcatel-Lucent a joint publication entitled “Broadband for Development in the ESCWA Region: Enhancing Access to ICT Services in a Global Knowledge Society”.

C3: Access to information and knowledge

- ESCWA launched in 2006, a project entitled "Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities)"
- In 2006, ESCWA started implementing a project entitled "Promoting New Technologies for Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the ESCWA Member Countries"
- In 2006, ESCWA organized an event entitled "Expert Group Meeting on Open Source Software Solutions for the Public Sector in the Arab Region"
- During 2007, ESCWA held a meeting entitled "Regional Stakeholders' Meeting on Knowledge Networks Strategies, Mechanisms and Tools for the ESCWA Region".
- During 2009, ESCWA partnered with telecentre.org in organising the "Telecentres' Leaders Forum".
- During 2010, ESCWA organized a "Workshop on the Management and Sustainability of Knowledge Hubs"

C4: Capacity building (1)

- In 2004 ESCWA implemented a project entitled “The Iraqi Networking Academies”
- In 2010 ESCWA organized a workshop for staff members of the Iraqi ministry of education to build their capacity to design and equip new ICT training centres in accordance with established norms and standards.
- In November 2009 and in January 2010, ESCWA organised two complementary workshops- that aimed at developing the capacity of member countries to establish science, technology and innovation observatories (STIOs).
- ESCWA organised during 2009 and 2010 several workshops that were aimed at promoting the importance of statistics and data collection.
- During February 2012, ESCWA, the Arab Lawyers Union (ALU) and the Arab Center for the Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI) organized a capacity building workshop entitled "ESCWA Directives of Cyber Legislation in the Arab Region“.

C4: Capacity building (2)

- During October 2012, ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates University College of Law organized a capacity building workshop entitled “Cyber Legislations in the Arab Region”.
- In November 2013, ESCWA, The United Nations University (UNU), and the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) of the Government of Lebanon jointly organized a training workshop on e-governance policies, infrastructure and measurement.
- In February 2013, ESCWA started implementing a project entitled Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the ESCWA Region (AIGLE).
- ESCWA created a study entitled Impact of ICT on Arab Youth: Education, Employment and Social Change.

C5: Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs

- ESCWA developed and published in March 2009 a study entitled “Building Trust in E-Services in the ESCWA Region.”
- In 2010, ESCWA held a workshop entitled "Building Trust and Confidence in Arabic e-Services“

C6: Enabling environment

- In 2007, ESCWA published a study entitled “Models for Cyber Legislation in ESCWA Member Countries”.
- In 2007, ESCWA organised a get-together for regional legal experts entitled “Peer Consultation Meeting on Cyber Legislation in the ESCWA”
- ESCWA launched in 2009 a project entitled “Regional Harmonisation of Cyber Legislation to Promote the Knowledge Society in the Arab World.”
- ESCWA also developed a cyber legislation policy note

C7: ICT applications

- In 2008, ESCWA and UN-DESA a capacity-building workshop entitled "Electronic/Mobile Government (e/m-government) in Arab States: Building Capacity in Knowledge Management through Partnership".
- During 2009, ESCWA organised an expert group meeting (EGM) entitled "ICT Applications and e-Services in the Public Sector."
- In 2013, ESCWA organised a "Regional Workshop on e-Government Best Practice".
- In 2013 ESCWA published a study entitled "E-Government Strategies in Arab Countries: Current Status and Development Prospects".

C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

- During 2009 and continuing in 2010, ESCWA collaborated with ITU, the League of Arab States, the Syrian government and various other regional and international organisations in the compilation of ICT terms and submitted the compiled terms for review by language experts.
- During 2005, ESCWA published a study entitled "Digital Arabic Content: Opportunities, Priorities and Strategies"
- In 2007, ESCWA organized an on-line workshop on "Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry."
- In 2007, ESCWA launched a related field project entitled "Promotion of the Digital Arabic Content Industry through Incubation".
- In June 2008, ESCWA and partner incubators from Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen held "The Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Competition"
- From 2003 to 2010, related ESCWA endeavours have included the formation of the Arabic Domain Names Task Force (ADNTF) and of the Arabic Script in Internationalized Domain Names Working Group (ASIWG).

C8: Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content

- In 2007, ESCWA launched a project entitled “Promotion of the Arabic Domain Name System (ADNS)”
- During 2012, ESCWA published a study entitled "Status of the Digital Arabic Content Industry in the ESCWA Region“
- Preparing a study titled "Business Models for Digital Arabic Content"
- In 2012, ESCWA launched The second phase of the project entitled “Promoting the Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Industry through Incubation”
- ESCWA cooperated with LAS to apply for two generic Top Level Domain Names (gTLDs), namely ".arab" and its equivalent in Arabic, ".عرب".
- ESCWA developed during 2013 a study entitled “Business Models for Digital Arabic Content”

C11: International and regional cooperation

- League of Arab States
- UN-DESA
- UNODC
- UN specialized agencies
- United Nations University
- ITU
- Union of Arab Banks
- Arab Lawyers Union
- Arab Center for the Rule of Law and Integrity
- Jordanian Royal Scientific Society
- UN Regional Commissions
- Universities
- Private Sector

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Advancing and applying the concept of partnership** between the various stakeholders of the information society, i.e. national governments, the private sector, NGOs and international organisations, to achieve the stated goals of WSIS;
- Promoting the **benefits of regional integration** to national governments by drawing their attention to successful models of regional alliances and by highlighting the advantages of common initiatives such as the development of high-speed regional network backbones, the harmonisation of cyber legislations and the development of an Arabic Domain Names Systems (ADNS);
- Measuring the impact of national ICT and/or information strategies and plans by **bolstering the bodies and mechanisms** necessary for data collection, measurement and analysis;
- Ensuring the **relevance of ICT** and/or information society strategies and plans by adapting them to constantly changing realities in accordance with data collected by and from all WSIS stakeholders;

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Maximising user accessibility** by lowering access prices which could be achieved through the liberalisation of the telecom sector, the fostering of competition between access providers, increased investment in the sector by the private and public sectors, improving broadband access and the implementation of inexpensive-faster-to-deploy wireless solutions in regions where telecommunication infrastructure projects would be costly and time-consuming;
- **Democratising access to knowledge** by increasing the number and services of public access centres in regions where ICT is not affordable and by supporting the development of local digital content that would address the needs of local communities;
- **Building a knowledge-based culture** by instilling awareness of the developmental role of new and traditional knowledge and by training communities on how to gather, create, store, share and use data, information and knowledge which would enhance their quality of life and help them become active players in knowledge-based economies;

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



- **Persuading reluctant users to start using e-services** by attempting to build trust in their minds and hearts with regular mass media campaigns that are aimed at debunking the false theories and tall tales that are behind their most common fears and at teaching them how to deal with and overcome real and perceived online threats, by encouraging the development of trustworthy, citizen-centric e-services and by the creation and enforcement of effective cyber legislation
- Becoming **active** information society players instead of **passive** consumers by devising and supporting research and development initiatives, establishing science and technology parks, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship in the ICT sector, integrating advanced ICT subjects in educational systems and curricula and by encouraging graduates and researchers not to emigrate with the facilitation of better work opportunities and the provision of better social benefits.

For more details:

- View ESCWA paper on ESCWA's Activities on the Progress Made Since 2005 on the Implementation of and Follow-up to the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) submitted to 17th Session of the CSTD
- Visit ESCWA website: www.escwa.un.org



Thank you