



Concept note on the first SIGMA ENI South Regional Service Delivery Conference “Administration for citizens and businesses”

14-15 November 2018, Marrakech, Morocco

I. General context:

Better services for citizens and businesses provided by a public administration are nowadays a common government objective. In our globalised world, where mobility of people and businesses is getting easier every day, the demands of administrative service-users are rapidly growing. In the worldwide competition for investment, with fragile economic growth, the way in which an administration provides services to citizens and businesses can be a decisive factor between success and failure. However, modernising administrative services is not easy: administrations tend to do things in traditional ways, they do not take full advantage of technological opportunities, nor efficiently engage citizens and businesses to design the services they need. Therefore, the approach to the reform to modernise, the willingness to set up and manage accountable and transparent governance machinery, the right mind-set for innovation and finding the right balance between ambition and the reality of public administration are all critical factors for getting better services for the citizens and businesses.

The European Neighbourhood South region is also part of these changes and challenges. Reforms of administrative services, modern technologies and digitisation are government priorities in many countries in the region.

The recognition of an accountable public administration as key to democratic governance and economic development is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals¹. Goal 16 refers to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. Furthermore, Goal 8 refers to the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The global commitment to eradicate poverty and leave-no-one-behind demand transformative approaches in public administration. Regarding SDG 16, improving service delivery requires proper accountability mechanisms to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (target 6) and ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative planning and monitoring processes at all levels (target 7).

Since 2008, the SIGMA Programme has been actively supporting the European Neighbourhood in reforming their public administration, including modernisation efforts for the delivery of administrative services, the relationship between service users and the state or the improvement of the quality of the services. In 2016 SIGMA introduced the Principles of Public Administration: A Framework for ENP Countries² that can give guidance to those ENP countries who want to adapt the administrative environment to the new needs of the citizens and economy, and to align governance practices with internationally recognised good governance principles and practices (four Principles in the area of “Service Delivery”).

¹ United Nations (2015): Sustainable Development Goals; <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

² OECD (2016), *The Principles of Public Administration: A Framework for ENP Countries*, OECD, Paris: <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/Principles%20-ENP-Eng.pdf>

Based on the results of co-operation during the past years and the increased similarities between countries of the region, SIGMA will provide a platform for the representatives of the region to discuss recent developments, key success stories and common challenges in relations to service delivery:

- *How can the administration ensure good results and successful and sustainable progress with provision of services to citizens and businesses?*
- *How can international experience be capitalised on in a given country context?*
- *How can one ensure a focused reform management?*
- *How does one manage the high expectations as well as the time and financial constraints?*
- *How does one engage with the users and listen to them when designing the reforms?*
- *What are the key enablers that governments need to focus on to improve their services?*
- *Can service delivery be improved without modernising the internal processes of the administration?*
- *What are the standards and principles to follow?*
- *How can the Principles of Public Administration be helpful in this regard?*

These and similar questions will be the focus of the first SIGMA ENI South Regional Service Delivery Conference. A solid knowledge base is being established for good international examples, innovative solutions and new ideas for approaching users of these services. Hence, learning from good examples is also easier than ever before. Success stories and common challenges regarding high-quality services of the state will be also discussed to share knowledge, identify common lessons learned, and provide inspiration for decision-makers and practitioners from the region.

II. Set-up and main themes of the conference

The **main objective** of the one-and-half day conference co-organised by SIGMA and the Moroccan Ministry of Administration Reform and Civil Service (MRAFP) is to provide a platform for peer-to-peer dialogue and exchange of ideas (practical reform examples and ideas, not concepts and strategies only) for representatives of the ENI South SIGMA partners (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Palestinian Authority³) and Libya, while also introducing comparative insight from an international perspective through the participation of representatives of the EU and the OECD as well as other international partners active in the region and on service delivery issues (e.g. GIZ, UNDP, the World Bank).

The **target audience** of the event is professional, non-political senior managers (heads of agencies, senior civil servants of ministries) of the invited partner jurisdictions, responsible for horizontal or targeted service delivery and service modernisation initiatives. Each participating economy is invited to be represented by up to three senior officials⁴. Together with the SIGMA, OECD and EC representatives the conference is planned for up to 50 participants.

The **set-up of the conference is interactive** and after the opening by H.E. the Moroccan Minister of Administrative Reform, the Commission Services and SIGMA and key-note speech, it will be organised under **three, half-day themes**, each discussed in a facilitated panel format with the participation of 2 or 3 ENI South partner representatives (selected for each theme in advance) and representatives of the OECD, an EU member country or another SIGMA partner country from a different region. Each panel is planned

³ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the European Union Member States on this issue.

⁴ The Moroccan administration can take part with more representatives, at their own expense.

for 1.5 hours with the opportunity for intensive contribution by the audience as well as a platform for questions and answers.

The topics are selected in a way that allows for all participating jurisdictions to contribute with targeted intervention, while maintaining the possibility to discuss these key issues from practical, real-life perspective. The three topics are all key enablers of developing citizen-centric, accountable administration and providing good administrative services corresponding to the regional context and adding to the sustainable development and competitiveness of these economies.

The three main topics are:

- i) The active role of citizens and businesses in modernising administrative services
- ii) Simplification of administrative procedures as a prerequisite for good services
- iii) Converting digital innovations into tangible results for service users: improving access to information

The three themes constitute a **logically interlinked umbrella for the event, with a deliberate sequencing** to demonstrate that service modernisation through – *inter alia* – simplification and digital government initiatives should be based on prior knowledge about the user needs and constant feedback for their enhancement that should serve as the basis for reviewing and re(designing) the procedures for the provision of administrative services and then providing digital or other solutions for their provision in accordance with the user needs and socio-cultural context, as well as administrative tradition. Briefly: not only improving services FOR the customers but also together WITH the customers.

The conference is more about “how to” introduce changes than “what changes” to introduce. There are abundant possibilities available to administrations but the international experience shows that the state-of-the-art solutions do not always fit. Speakers and panellists will be asked to share details of the change management processes, not only the impressive results they achieved. What worked and what didn’t work in specific circumstances, what challenges the administration faced and how it dealt with them, what were the lessons learned – these are the questions that help peers the most.

Under each panel, an international good example or outlook with practical case introduction by an EU or SIGMA partner representative will be followed by an ENI South-focused panel discussion that is complemented by international insight and perspective by SIGMA or other OECD representatives. Each theme will be facilitated by a member of SIGMA with pre-shared key questions that help the panellists to organise their short interventions around the focus of the subject under discussion.

The conference will also provide participants with the opportunity to meet informally, compare national experiences and discuss specific issues among peers; an initiative to establish a service delivery regional network for more regular exchanges will be considered.

Interpretation will be provided in Arabic, French and English.