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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW**  
**(VENICE COMMISSION)**

in cooperation with

**THE MINISTRY OF DIGITAL TRANSITION AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM OF THE  
KINGDOM OF MOROCCO**

**Regional seminar for senior administrative officials**

**16<sup>ème</sup> UniDem Med**

**"THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION "**

**hybrid format (online and in Rabat, Morocco)**

**23-24 November 2022**

**FINAL REPORT**

by

**Ms Nadia BERNOUSSI**

**(Professor of Constitutional Law, Mohammed V University, Rabat,  
Member of the Venice Commission on behalf of Morocco)**

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"Protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean"  
(South Programme V)

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**16<sup>ème</sup> UniDem Med regional seminar for senior officials  
23-24 November 2022**

**Summary report: Prof. Nadia Bernoussi**

In cooperation with the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform of the Kingdom of Morocco, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), had the pleasure and honour of inaugurating in Rabat the 16<sup>th</sup> UniDem Med regional seminar for senior civil servants under the theme :

"The digital transformation of public administration"

This 16<sup>th</sup> UniMed Dem regional seminar is supported by the European Union and the Council of Europe within the framework of the joint European Union-Council of Europe project "Protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the southern Mediterranean" (South Programme V).

This meeting, which took place in a hybrid format, saw the active participation of several countries and regional organisations, including representatives from Belgium, Egypt, France, Jordan, Switzerland, Palestine\* and the OECD. The mixed presence of academics and senior government officials, heads of ministerial departments, representatives of independent bodies, men and women, is also to be welcomed.

It should be recalled that UniDem Med seminars regularly contribute to consolidate links between public administrations from both shores of the Mediterranean and participate in the process of transformation and renewal of the public service through peer-to-peer exchanges.

In addition, this meeting is intended to establish long-term cooperation between Morocco and the Venice Commission through bilateral and regional cooperation projects such as UniDem Med; in this respect, the support of the European Union is essential to ensure the sustainability of the UniDem Med project and the tripartite cooperation between Morocco, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Such exchanges and cross-fertilisation of good practices could contribute to developing the modes of governance of the different countries and Morocco, as the host country, could present the achievements it has accumulated in institutional and normative matters, particularly in the field of the digitalisation of public services.

It is important to underline that for a decade, the UniDem Med Regional Seminar for senior administration officials has become a high-level meeting place for the administrative science and public management research community as well as a renowned think tank for all those interested in public governance and an efficient administration that is accessible and close to the citizens.

Hence the interest and topicality of the theme chosen this year, which will give regional players the opportunity to reflect together on innovative solutions in the field of dematerialisation, in order to adapt and renew the public service to the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with its challenges, its issues but also with its many opportunities.

The two sub-themes chosen are "Digital transformation of public services, good practices and challenges" and "What governance for a successful digital transformation?".

If it is indeed a subject of the moment, its abundant lexicon is proof of this and multiple expressions abound to define it: "electronic administration", "e-administration", "digitalisation", "digitisation", "digital trust", "digital transition", "digital transformation". Defined by the OECD as "the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), and in particular the

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\* This designation should not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of the Council of Europe and the European Union on this issue.

Internet, to improve the management of public affairs"<sup>1</sup>, digital has several advantages. It allows for a more efficient offer of services to users, generates cost optimisation, increases administrative transparency and is at the heart of the issue of modernisation of the administration and administrative reform, thus presenting itself as a tool for improving its procedures and functioning (decompartmentalisation, agility).

It is worth mentioning that these issues centred on digital technology and its impact on ethics, performance and accessibility place the citizen and the user of public services at the heart of the State's concerns and the modernisation of the administration. In this respect, His Majesty King Mohammed VI has in many speeches<sup>2</sup> recalled the virtues of a modern, efficient, honest, effective and responsible public administration. This was the case in the founding speech of 14 October 2016 in which the sovereign stressed that: "E-administration must be generalised according to an integrated approach allowing the various departments and services to have common access to information. The use of new techniques contributes to facilitating the citizen's access to services in the shortest possible time, without the need for frequent visits to the administration and friction, which is the main cause of the spread of the phenomenon of corruption and influence peddling"<sup>3</sup>.

For its part, the General Report on the New Development Model concluded that "the administration must place greater emphasis on the quality of service to citizens and businesses by speeding up the process of simplifying administrative procedures, digitising them completely and giving citizens access to public data in order to regularly assess the quality of services and to have possibilities for recourse in the event of disputes or abuse"<sup>4</sup>.

It is also worth mentioning the qualitative contributions of the 2011 Constitution, which in the preamble mentions the need to establish modern institutions, and then in the operative part in the form of articles, gives a significant place to good governance, and to the principles and rights with which the public service must comply in terms of equal opportunities and accountability.

In a recent report, the EESC<sup>5</sup> also addressed this issue by calling for the digitalisation of all administrative procedures by 2025 and arguing that this modernisation could generate savings of 10 billion DH, or nearly 1% of GDP.

It is necessary to recall with insistence the fallout of the health crisis which has strongly pushed in the direction of the dematerialisation of social relations in general, and administrative relations in particular, to such an extent that it is possible to say that there has been a before and after Covid. States, administrations and the private sector have adapted, particularly in the fields of telework and education. One informed player summed up the situation with the following formula: "the Cloud is the oil of this century and data is our key to progress"<sup>6</sup>.

Others warned vigilantly that "with digitalization, human transformation becomes an intrinsic consequence of the technological evolutions introduced. It is, in fact, unthinkable to resist today the structural transformations brought about by the digitalisation of our communication flows, our data and our organisation. In an increasingly connected world, digital is becoming

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<sup>1</sup> E-government: an imperative, OECD e-Government Studies, 28 October 2004, OECD Library.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Address to Parliament, 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 14 October 2016; Royal Address to the African Union Extraordinary Summit on the Free Trade Area, Kigali, 21 March 2018; Speech from the Throne, 29 July 2019; Royal Address to Parliament, 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 17 October 2022.

<sup>3</sup> From the Royal Address to Parliament, 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 14 October 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The New Development Model, Unleashing energies and restoring confidence to accelerate progress and prosperity for all. General Report, April 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Opinion of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (EESC), Towards a responsible and inclusive digital transformation, 29 April 2021, self-referral [www.cese.ma](http://www.cese.ma).

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed Iraqi (Advisory Systems Engineer Morocco and West Africa, Dell Technologies), during the last Matinales of Le Matin Group. Sovereign Cloud: the stakes for Morocco. [www.lematin.ma](http://www.lematin.ma), 6 March 2022.

the norm, an indispensable and expected component of any company's service offering. Managers no longer have a choice: Digitise or Disappear"<sup>7</sup> .

In fact, the use of ICT could be divided into three major stages:

- The first would be to make information available to citizens to simplify their administrative procedures ;
- The second allows users to carry out their procedures directly online. "However, the development of these digital services raises the question of their accessibility (Internet coverage of rural areas, deployment of high and very high-speed internet, vulnerable groups, etc.), as well as strong legal constraints in terms of personal data protection and individual freedoms ;
- The third is Open Data, the priority of the digital transition"<sup>8</sup> .

In short, the subject that has brought us together is an issue of major importance for public governance, transparency, efficiency and modernisation of the administration.

The seminar started with an opening session moderated by Ms Frédérique Privat de Fortunié (Venice Commission), during which the following people spoke and welcomed the participants:

Ms Sara Lamrani, Secretary General ad interim, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, Morocco

Mr Gianni Buquicchio, President Emeritus, Special Representative of the Venice Commission, Council of Europe

Mr Jean-Christophe Filori, Head of Cooperation, Minister Counsellor, Delegation of the European Union to the Kingdom of Morocco

Ms Carmen Morte-Gomez, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Morocco, Directorate General of Programmes

The general introduction, moderation and general conclusions were given by Ms Nadia Bernoussi, Professor of Constitutional Law, Mohammed V University in Rabat, Member of the Venice Commission in respect of Morocco.

The four sessions led by distinguished speakers, combining expertise from the field and the academic world, focused on the following themes: the digital transition of public services; the challenges of the digital dematerialisation of public services; change management and the factors for success in digital projects; the professions of the future and training in digital.

The first session examined the issue of digital transformation of public services and looked at how best to meet the needs and expectations of users while respecting the principles of good governance and transparency in public administration.

The session was ably animated by three speakers: Mr Jamal Salaheddine, Director of Administration Modernisation, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, Morocco; Mr Dieter J. TSchan, Representative of the Swiss Confederation for e-Government, Directorate of Digital Transformation and ICT, Switzerland; and Mr Ma'en Abu Arrah, Head of Data Administration Section, General Administration of Information Technology, General Staff Council, Palestine\* (online).

The second session looked at the challenges of dematerialisation, digital transformation of public services and digital inclusion and equal access to public services. This session highlighted some of the challenges facing public administration as a result of the

<sup>7</sup> Institut national des Postes et Télécommunications, Introductory report, Madinat Al Irfane, Rabat, 20 September 2017.

<sup>8</sup> ENA, L'administration électronique or E-administration, April 2017.

dematerialisation and digital transformation of services to users. This evolution, which was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has seen the emergence of risks such as dehumanisation, the increasing complexity of procedures, their unsuitability and even the alienation of certain categories of citizens and users. This session was an opportunity to report on these risks and to propose solutions to combat digital exclusion, the generational, educational or territorial divide, or illiteracy.

For this second session, the participants listened with interest to Ms Nassera Bechrouri, Policy Officer, Promotion of equality and access to rights, territorial action, training, access of young people to rights, Human Rights Defender, France and Ms Céline Girardot, Policy Officer, Human Rights Defender, France (online); Mr Nouredine Lasfar, Head of the Department of Digital Transformation of the Society, Digital Transformation Directorate, Digital Development Agency, Morocco; Mr Bouchaïb Bounabat, Professor, National School of Computer Science and Systems Analysis, Advisor to the President of the Mohammed V University of Rabat, UM5; and Ms Céline Girardot, Director of the Department of Social and Economic Development, Rabat. Bouchaïb Bounabat, Professor, École Nationale Supérieure d'Informatique et d'Analyse des Systèmes, Advisor to the President of Mohammed V University of Rabat for Innovation and Internationalisation, UM5, Rabat, Morocco and Ms Ghada Labib, Deputy Minister in charge of Institutional Development, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), Egypt (online).

The third session of the seminar focused on change management and success factors for digital projects in public administration. Implementing a successful digital transformation in the public administration requires complex internal processes and operating procedures that require trained leadership capable of driving change. This session looked at how to drive and coordinate these transformation policies at all levels to achieve results that would meet the needs of users and fulfil the performance and good governance objectives of the administration. What strategies should be implemented in the long term and what are the success factors?

To answer these questions, the audience listened to the brilliant interventions of Mr Frank Leyman, Head of International Relations, Digital Transformation Issues, Federal Public Service - Strategy and Support (FPS BOSA), Belgium (online); Ms Ikram Himmi, Head of the Division of Simplification of Procedures and Support to Ethics, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, Morocco; Ms Hadeel Abdallat, Head of Institutional Development, Institute of Public Administration, Jordan (online)

The fourth session focused on the jobs of the future and digital training in the public administration. The digital transformation of the public administration can only meet the criteria of efficiency, transparency and performance through a renewed human resources management capable of attracting new talent. The public administration must integrate these elements into its forward-looking management of jobs and skills to ensure that its staff are well trained and competent in digital issues. How can these new skills be developed among managers and digital project leaders? How can we attract these new talents?

This session was animated with great interactivity by Mr Benjamin Welby, Policy Analyst, Government and Digital Data Unit, Open and Innovative Government Division, Public Governance Directorate, OECD; Mr Mohamed Amor, Head of the State Human Resources Management Division, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, Morocco; Ms Siham Alkhaldeh, Director General, Institute of Public Administration, Jordan (online)

The last session on the monitoring of public administration reforms in the UniDem Med partner countries provided an interesting recap of the state of progress of reforms at national level on the topics discussed in previous UniDem Med seminars. The question of the effective and regulatory implementation of telework in the partner countries was the subject of stimulating discussions: what policies/strategies have been adopted? The practices and evaluation of its implementation in the short term? The right to disconnect? How has the Toolkit on Telework in Public Administration translated into Arabic been disseminated and used?

This last session included an update with Mr Mohamed Moussa, Acting Director of Information Systems, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform, Morocco and Ms Madeha Al-khateeb, General Administration of Appointments, General Personnel Council, Palestine\* (online).

What can we learn from the presentations and debates, which were intense in terms of their quality, their academic and practical expertise and their geographical diversity? The report on these two intense days does not constitute a summary of the equally rich presentations, but rather aims to outline the major issues and questions that emerged significantly during the discussions, whether in terms of the digital transformation of public services or in terms of governance for a successful digital transformation.

In this sense, four points have caught our attention: achievements, challenges, success factors of a digital strategy and the new lexicon used.

## **I- The achievements**

1. There is an almost general awareness of the necessity and legitimacy of dematerialisation, as well as the recognition of its essential nature, to the point of making it a real craze.
2. A belief in the centrality of the user in the digital process, who must be the pivot of any digital strategy. Notion of "co-creation", identification of needs and involvement of users for maximum support.
3. Unanimity on the importance of the legal and institutional framework: agency, council, laws, regulations, observatory, 2023 finance law, strategy, programme, government plan.
4. A welcome observation of the emergence of good practices: in Morocco, E-tamkeen, telework and guide, infomediary, Idarathon, fruit of digital innovation in the field of public administration, the Digital Development Agency; in Palestine\*: data integrity manual; in Jordan: the Mawareed system which has contributed to the improvement of relations between administrations and users and the Institute of Public Administration and what it is doing in the field of digital training

## **II- The challenges**

Implementation is uneven and differs from one regime to another, however, it is possible to detect the presence of the same challenges and constraints on digital:

1. In terms of the social divide: urban and rural, old and young, gender, people with disabilities and prisoners.
2. In terms of vertical and retentionist culture: systems resist and continue to operate in silos, there is a lack of coherence and convergence. There is a need to prioritise and focus on the user journey and not on the specificity of each administration, it is also important to develop a pro-digital culture and try to reach a digital government maturity.
3. In terms of political support: this must come from the top, it is necessary to obtain a will at the highest level of the State and to convince the politicians.
4. In terms of alternatives: digital cannot replace human beings, alternative solutions must remain to guarantee equal opportunities and consolidate inclusion by supporting those who cannot or do not want to access it. In France, after the closure of several counters, Maison France services were opened to help the "non-digitalized" categories in person; in Morocco, an administrative call centre was set up to provide information or guidance; in Egypt, Ali or the digital development agent was able to assist people suffering from illiteracy or users far from any digital proximity.

5. In terms of the "human rights" approach to digital technology, the discriminatory impact of digital technology on vulnerable groups who are denied their rights, such as prisoners and migrants, must be highlighted.

### III- Success factors of a digital strategy

Observation, adaptation, identification, management and protection of data, "co-creation", repeated training, diversification of channels, prioritisation of needs, distinction between the procedure and the user, training of digital ambassadors, such were the prerequisites identified for a good digital strategy. In short, it is recommended to adopt a single model, not to reinvent the wheel, because the standards exist, ten basic actions have been privileged from the Belgian experience:

1. Build national political consensus
2. Create a legal framework
3. Clean up your "authentic sources" => eID
4. Build the public sector back office
5. Connectivity layer
6. Communication layer
7. Create the "rules of the game" (proportionality & purpose)
8. Create tools for users and developers
9. Invest in recurrent communication & education
10. Connect with the rest of the world<sup>9</sup> .

In terms of strategy and action plans, Moroccan efforts have been commendable<sup>10</sup>. Thus, it is possible to list the Morocco 2010 Strategy, the Digital Morocco 2020 Plan, the creation of the Digital Development Agency in 2017<sup>11</sup>, the legislative arsenal and numerous initiatives taken by the Ministry of Administrative Reform, which is becoming the leader of other departments in this area (Idarati.com and its 2,700 published acts, electronic paraphoresis, portal for recruitments.ma). It is no coincidence either that the department of administrative reform has added "digital transition" to its title. In the same vein, other administrations have distinguished themselves in terms of digitalisation, such as the Ministry of the Economy and Finance; the national portal for local authorities (Ministry of the Interior); the Deposit and Management Fund; the National Register of Securities and Justice; the criminal record (Ministry of Justice); the Electronic Complaints Filing Service (Public Prosecutor's Office), the diw@nati platform (Customs and Indirect Tax Administration)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Frank Leyman, Digital challenges in public administration: the Belgian experience, Seminar on "the digital transformation of public administration", 24 November 2022.

<sup>10</sup> For Mohamed Amor, "93% penetration rate, 52M subscribers; 141% in 2021; 25M smart phones; 34M internet subscribers" in Programme e-Tamkeen: Renforcement des compétences des Fonctionnaires en matière du Digital, Seminar on "the digital transformation of the Public Administration", 24 November 2022.

<sup>11</sup> To this end, and as part of its mission to set up technical standards for digital services, the Digital Development Agency has put in place a guide of good practices for administrations in the design and digital transformation of public services based on the best international experiences and practices. In Lasfar Noureddine, Digital Development Agency, Seminar on "the digital transformation of the Public Administration", 23 November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> At the 14<sup>ème</sup> edition of the National e-Government Award "e-mtiaz 2021", organised by the ministerial department, several departments or directorates received incentives and awards for excellence, 22 March 2022.



## IV- The new lexicon

The new rights :

Right to connect or right to disconnect?

Internet access is a fundamental right. It is a right insofar as everyone must have equal access to digital technology, including in rural areas, and it is a state duty to combat exclusion. Digital remains a freedom in cases where the user cannot or does not want to connect, the State must be able to consider and maintain an alternative. The right to disconnect consists of being connected only during working hours, with teleworking having to comply with legal regulations; it should be emphasised that such a right remains difficult to implement in practice in the civil service.

Qualities required:

Interoperability, decompartmentalisation, coherence, precision, horizontality, simplification, transformation, transition, security.

New words:

Sovereign cloud, happiness index, multi-channel, illectronism, digital difficulty, e-proximity, open data, hakaton, e-tamkeen, e-reputation, e-tansik, smart city, moodle platform, machrou 3i, idarathon, etc.

Clarification of concepts:

Digital: the technical connotation of making information accessible through computers.

Digital: political connotation that concerns people, processes, strategies and cultural changes, it is a transformation of public relations and services due to digital technology through the logic of participation.

## Recommendations

1. Relying on political support and leadership essential to the success of a digital strategy
2. Consolidate the normative and institutional corpus in the field of dematerialisation
3. Putting the user's journey at the centre of digital and not the specificity of each administration to gain coherence and horizontality
4. Breaking down resistance and creating a pro-digital culture
5. Supporting administrations in the digital process by providing them with adequate technical and financial resources
6. Ensure that the social, generational, territorial and gender digital divide is eliminated
7. Use the human rights approach and provide alternative modes to digital to ensure equal opportunities, strengthen inclusion and fight against illiteracy and digital non-proximity
8. Considering digital as a fundamental right but also as a freedom
9. Opt for one model and not several to implement a digital strategy using recognised standards
10. Simplify before digitising
11. Observe, adapt, identify, prioritise needs, distinguish the procedure from the user, train digital ambassadors, co-create, involve, manage, protect, train, diversify channels
12. Continue to implement and exchange good practices
13. Establish a digital development officer(s)

14. Ensure that digital technology does not undermine equal opportunities in government and dehumanise relationships
15. Continue to encourage and promote pilot administrations in this area
16. Distinguish between digital and non-digital and appropriate the new terminologies used
17. Considering telework as a new management method and respecting the right to disconnect as a guarantee for a good personnel policy
18. Implementing digital training plans for the public service
19. Attracting digital talent
20. Developing digital leaderships capable of driving digital transformation
21. Cleaning up "authentic sources".
22. Connecting with the rest of the world

At the end of this 16<sup>th</sup> UniDem Med regional seminar dedicated to the digital transition of public administration, it is important to express our deepest thanks to the organisers and coordinators who spared no effort to make this meeting a success. Thanks to the Venice Commission, in the persons of Gianni Buquicchio, Caroline Martin, Frédérique Privat de Fortunié, and Haifa Addad, to the Delegation of the European Union in the person of Jean-Christophe Filori, and to the Council of Europe Office in Morocco, in the person of Carmen Morte-Gomez. Many thanks to the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform, to Sara Lamrani, Samir Bougar, and all the officials of the Ministry who enriched this event with their constructive and stimulating interventions, and thanks to the interpreters who did a remarkable job.

Finally, our warmest congratulations to all the speakers for their structuring presentations, contributions that allowed us to follow the evolution of the various administrative reforms in their countries live; thus, the Moroccan, Belgian, French, Swiss, Jordanian, Palestinian and Egyptian experiences seem more familiar to each other and the exchange of good practices more relevant.