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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

UNIDEM SOUTH MEDITERRANEAN PROJECT

6th NATIONAL COORDINATORS MEETING

Videoconference

27 May 2021

4.00pm - 6.30pm (GMT +2 - French time)

MEETING REPORT

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The sixth coordination meeting of the UniDem Med project took place by videoconference on 27 May 2021 in the presence of the national coordinators of the South Mediterranean or their representatives (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Palestine¹ and Tunisia). The representatives of Lebanon and Jordan² were excused.

The objective of this annual meeting was to take stock of the two UniDem Med seminars held by videoconference in 2020³, as well as to decide on the themes and host countries of the UniDem Med seminars in 2021.

Welcoming words

Ms Caroline Martin from the Neighbourhood Cooperation Division of the Venice Commission opened the meeting and welcomed the UniDem Med project coordinators and their representatives.

She recalls the mission of the UniDem Med project which is to accompany the participating countries in the process of reforming their public administration for greater efficiency and good governance in compliance with international standards in terms of human rights, rule of law and democracy. The vocation of the project remains unchanged: to exchange best practices and to support the participating countries in their public administration reforms.

Ms Martin informed the coordinators about the activities of the Venice Commission and in particular the celebrations of its 30 years of existence and its 1000th opinion during a year 2020 rich in activities despite the Covid 19 pandemic. She highlights the adoption on 16 December 2020 by the UN General Assembly of the "[Venice Principles](#)" on the institution of Ombudsman, making these Principles the international standard in force. She presents in more detail the bilateral activities of the Venice Commission in the Southern Mediterranean, which include, among others, the project of support to the Tunisian independent bodies (PAI-T), the continuation of the dialogue with the Moroccan authorities in the field of judicial reform, the participation in the conference organised on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Constitutional Council of Algeria or the participation in meetings and exchanges with the Organisation of Electoral Management Bodies of the Arab Countries.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda CDL-UD(2021)001prog was adopted unanimously.

UniDem Med 2020: What results and impact of the seminars?

On behalf of the Venice Commission, Ms Martin thanked all the national coordinators for their continued involvement in the organisation of the UniDem seminars in 2020, despite the difficult sanitary conditions.

Ms Martin recalled the importance of the tripartite cooperation between the participating countries, the Venice Commission and the European Union, which is co-financing the UniDem Med project in the framework of the [South Programme IV](#) "Regional support to reinforce Human rights, Rule of law and Democracy in the Southern Mediterranean". The South

¹ This designation should not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual position of Council of Europe member State on this issue.

² Jordan's coordinator is no longer in office, but the name and contact details of her/his replacement should be communicated to us as soon as possible.

³ Towards a user-oriented administration,
11th UniDem Med, 13-15 October 2020, Morocco.
Public administration reform: new challenges and new operating modes,
12th UniDem Med, 15-17 December 2020, Tunisia.

Programme IV is expected to end in February 2022, however the coordinators will be informed of the follow-up of the Programme as soon as it is made public.

Since 2015 and the launch of the project, 12 UniDem Med seminars have been organised on topics as diverse as human rights and public service, women in the labour market or innovation in the public service. As in previous years, the themes of the seminars in 2020 were decided in line with the national priorities of the participating countries.

As a reminder, the two seminars were held by videoconference in close cooperation with Morocco and Tunisia and dealt with the following topics

- Towards a user-oriented administration, 11th UniDem Med, 13-15 October 2020, Morocco.
- Public administration reform: new challenges and new operating modes, 12th UniDem Med, 15-17 December 2020, Tunisia.

The two webinars allowed to strengthen the legal capacity of more than 220 senior public officials from the South Mediterranean, namely Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine¹ and Tunisia. These seminars have largely shown that there are convergences between the two shores of the Mediterranean and have been the occasion of many rich and constructive exchanges. The 12th seminar alone brought together more than 170 participants thanks to the use of videoconferencing. This format also offered the possibility of inviting international experts beyond the borders of Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. In this context, the use of videoconferencing will be perpetuated to allow, in the future, the holding of seminars in "hybrid" format in order to widen the audience and the expertise proposed.

In the following round table discussion, the participants present the results and impact of the seminars at national level.

The national coordinator of Morocco, Mr Samir Bouggar, took the floor to thank the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission for organising the 6th meeting of the coordinators and expressed his satisfaction with the progress made since the project was initiated six years ago. The Kingdom of Morocco and the Council of Europe have a special relationship marked by a rapprochement at all levels, which is fully reflected in the policy of openness, modernisation and consolidation of the rule of law and good governance initiated by the country. The dynamics of this partnership are also in line with future accessions to Council of Europe agreements and conventions. Mr Bouggar confirmed the very positive results of the project, but also of the two seminars held in 2020 and the large number of topics that were dealt with.

Mr Moncef Bedairia, National Coordinator for Algeria, thanked the Venice Commission. He welcomed the opportunities for exchange and expertise that resulted from the UniDem Med seminars, which also allowed the participants to benefit from the experiences of the countries of the southern Mediterranean region. He reiterated his full satisfaction with the content of the seminars, which perfectly reflected the national priorities. He mentioned the undeniable impact they had on several reform projects underway in Algeria through the work of the Steering Committee for the simplification and improvement of administrative procedures, whose members participated in the seminars. He mentions, for example, the unification of the governance of institutional information systems, the interoperability of operating systems, the development of the national digital platform and a single web portal, the revision of the decree on relations between the administration and users, the reinforcement of the quality approach, the development of the charter of ethics for public agents and the re-launch of the National Observatory of Public Services.

For Mr. Sami Ben Romdhane, UniDem Med coordinator for Tunisia, the seminars were a great success despite the sanitary conditions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic. He strongly supports and welcomes the positive results of the methodology discussed during the 5th

coordinators' meeting, which aimed at defining the themes of the seminars by encompassing all the national priorities determined with local partners. He underlined that the online format was a great opportunity to increase the number of participants: for Tunisia, about ten representatives per ministry took part in the 12th seminar. Finally, Mr Ben Romdhane mentioned the presence of an expert from a private firm who presented the tool of forward-looking management of jobs and skills during the 12th seminar and suggested the possibility of repeating the experience during future seminars.

Ms Nisreen Zghaiar, UniDem Med national coordinator for Palestine¹, expressed her great satisfaction with the coordination and programming of the UniDem Med project, despite the health constraints. She proposed to open the seminars to civil society representatives in the future.

Mr. Ahmed El Khateeb, Head of Technical Office of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and representative of the National Coordinator of Egypt, conveyed the greetings of the Deputy Minister for Institutional Development, Ms. Ghada Labib, who unfortunately could not attend the annual meeting. He underlined the essential efforts of the participating countries to strengthen cooperation in the region with concrete results in the framework of the project. He also mentioned the very positive impact that the seminars had had at national level.

UniDem Med 2021 seminars

Ms Martin thanked the national coordinators for submitting their proposals for the themes of the 2021 seminars in advance. In the following discussions, the coordinators presented their national reform priorities⁴.

The representative of Egypt, Mr. Ahmed El Khateeb, presented orally the priority themes for Egypt, which are part of the context of simplifying the life of citizens and improving public services according to the principles of good governance. Mr El Khateeb mentioned as a main priority the modernisation and digital innovation in public administration. He proposes to reflect on how to take advantage of the digital transformation initiated by the Covid 19 pandemic to improve services to citizens and the user experience.

Following the presentation of the national priorities, two main axes emerge for the UniDem Med seminars in 2021:

- Public administration and the Covid 19 pandemic: modernisation and digital innovations
13th UniDem Med seminar, by videoconference, Palestine¹, 5 - 6 October 2021

Based on the experiences of the Covid 19 pandemic, the seminar will address the issues of digitalisation, modernisation, digital innovation in public administration and their impact on the simplification of administrative procedures and user experience. The lessons of teleworking, the issue of returning to the office, personnel management and the digitalisation of human resources including evaluation, training, recruitment and mobility will also be discussed.

⁴ See appendix for national proposals.

- Good governance and quality of public administration
14th UniDem Med seminar, in videoconference or "hybrid" format, Morocco, 1 – 2 December 2021

The seminar will address the issues of good governance of the public administration towards users and in particular issues related to ethics, deontology, quality charters, simplification of administrative procedures or the right of access to information. Topics related to good governance within the administration will also be discussed, such as internal deontology, ethics in human resources and skills management, evaluation, mobility, training, and well-being at work.

The participation of experts from the private sector suggested by the Tunisian coordinator and that of civil society representatives by the coordinator of Palestine¹ will be considered on a case-by-case basis when organising and developing the content of the seminars and according to the themes.

Ms Nisreen Zghaiar, coordinator of Palestine¹, proposed that a good practice guide be developed following the seminars and disseminated within the public administrations of the countries in the region.

The Moroccan representative proposed to hold three or four UniDem Med seminars each year using videoconferencing. Ms Martin regretted not being able to meet this request as the year was already well advanced, but proposed to study this option for next year and recalled that, for this year, the increase in the number of participants in each seminar was already an important step forward for the dissemination and sharing of good practices between the participating countries.

Communication and extension of the UniDem Med network

Ms Frédérique Privat de Fortunié, the new manager in charge of the UniDem Med project at the Venice Commission, presented the progress made in terms of communication and network extension. The visibility of the project is mainly achieved through the [website](#) of the Venice Commission and the [Facebook](#) page of the project which is followed by 443 subscribers and "liked" by 421 people.

The Facebook page allows participants to stay informed about the seminars and to keep in touch with each other after the seminars. Several proposals concerning the reinforcement of the visibility of the project results were made to the coordinators, such as the designation of a "communication" referent, the reinforcement of information sharing via Facebook, the highlighting of successful experiences at the national level, or the creation of a UniDem Med newsletter.

Coordinators are invited to comment on these proposals or make further suggestions in writing after the meeting. The Power Point presentation will be sent to the coordinators after the meeting for information.

The Moroccan coordinator recalled the proposal that had been made to prepare a compendium of recommendations from the seminars. Ms Martin took note of the proposal and recalled that recommendations in the strict sense of the word had not been formulated for all the seminars and that it was therefore difficult to compile them. She suggested using platforms such as the project's Facebook page to disseminate future recommendations and to reflect on the possible formats that this collection could take.

The Coordinator of Tunisia mentioned that he systematically invites participants to subscribe to the UniDem Med Facebook page and encourages other coordinators to do the same.

The representative of Egypt welcomed the Secretariat's efforts in communicating the project and invited it to emphasise past achievements as well as current and future actions.

Conclusions of the meeting

Ms Caroline Martin thanked the coordinators again for their participation in the 6th annual meeting and their involvement in the implementation of the project. She summarised the points decided at the meeting:

- The national coordinators decide to hold two UniDem Med seminars in 2021 on the following two axes
 - Public administration facing the Covid 19 pandemic: modernisation and digital innovations
13th UniDem Med seminar, by videoconference, Palestine¹, 5 - 6 October 2021
 - Good governance and quality of public administration
14th UniDem Med seminar, in videoconference or "hybrid" format, Morocco, 1 - 2 December 2021
- The "hybrid" format, allowing for a wider audience and expertise through video conferencing, will be considered more systematically for future seminars.
- Thanks to the "hybrid" format, more seminars can be organised from next year onwards.
- Experts from the private sector or representatives of civil society may be invited to participate in the seminars on a case-by-case basis.
- The coordinators take note of the proposals regarding the communication of the project and will make written proposals after the meeting directly to Ms Frédérique Privat de Fortunié.

Ms Caroline Martin concluded the meeting by welcoming the very good exchanges and the goodwill of the coordinators on the usefulness of the UniDem Med seminars. She concluded by reminding the participants that the Venice Commission is available for any request for legal advice in the drafting of laws, which is the core of its activity.

APPENDIX

Country / Pays	Themes (EN)	Thème (FR)
Algeria / Algérie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethics in public administration, deontology and codes of conduct for public officials; - The charter on the quality of public services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - L'éthique dans l'administration publique, la déontologie et les codes de conduite des agents publics ; - La charte de la qualité des services publics.
Morocco / Maroc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplification of administrative procedures; - Right of access to information; - Digitalisation of public administration after the COVID-19 pandemic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplification des procédures administratives ; - Droit d'accès à l'information ; - Digitalisation de l'administration publique après la pandémie du COVID-19.
Palestine¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obstacles and challenges faced the civil service during the epidemic of COVID 19. - Methodologies and mechanisms taken for recovery and returning to workplace. - Online (virtual) work verses in office work or mixed ones, advantages, disadvantages and recommendations. - Successful stories and experiences of different countries in having the best practices for managing the work during the epidemic. - The role of legislations in having flexibility and wellbeing in public institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obstacles et défis rencontrés par la fonction publique pendant l'épidémie de COVID 19 ; - Méthodologies et mécanismes adoptés pour la récupération et le retour au travail ; - Travail en ligne (virtuel) versus le travail au bureau ou mixte, avantages, inconvénients et recommandations ; - Histoires et expériences réussies de différents pays qui ont adopté les meilleures pratiques pour gérer le travail pendant l'épidémie ; - Le rôle des législations dans la flexibilité et le bien-être des institutions publiques.
Tunisia / Tunisie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telework in the public service; - The evaluation of public service employees; - Competence management in the public service; - The digitalisation of Human Resources Management processes; - Training and mobility in the public service; - ICT and the reform of public administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Le télétravail dans la fonction publique ; - L'évaluation des agents de la fonction publique ; - La gestion des compétences dans la fonction publique ; - La digitalisation des processus de Gestion Ressources Humaines ; - La formation et la mobilité dans la fonction publique ; - Les TIC et la réforme de l'administration publique.