



**OECD Public Governance Reviews**

# **JORDAN**

**TOGETHER FOR AN ACCOUNTABLE  
AND TRANSPARENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**





# OECD Public Governance Reviews: Jordan

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AND TRANSPARENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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# Foreword

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, as elsewhere, the reform of public governance arrangements has become a priority in a context of increasingly complex and multidimensional policy challenges. The importance of strengthening public governance frameworks, tools and capacities to deliver for citizens has been underscored by a series of events over the last decade, including the 2010-11 Arab uprisings, the COVID-19 crisis, the evolving conflicts in the Middle East and the repercussions of Russia's continuing war of aggression against Ukraine.

In recent years, Jordan has demonstrated its political commitment to improving transparency, integrity and accountability, which are essential for addressing policy challenges and fostering trust and inclusive development. This has culminated in the recent wave of political, economic and public administration reforms highlighting the country's aspirations to improve governance and support sustainable economic development. A series of constitutional amendments and electoral and political party laws were implemented to strengthen the role of political parties, following the recommendations of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System. The general elections that took place on 10 September 2024 reflected both this political commitment and citizens' growing interest in participating in democratic processes. The key reforms are captured in the Economic Modernisation Vision, the Political System Modernisation Plan and the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap.

As Jordan steps up its efforts to modernise its public sector, this *OECD Public Governance Review: Together for an Accountable and Transparent Public Administration in Jordan* (hereafter, the Review) provides an overview of the government's capacity to design and implement more responsive, transparent and accountable policy outcomes, with the goal of building trust in government and fostering inclusive development. The Review also examines the extent to which strategic policy objectives are implemented. Drawing on the OECD's expertise and global good policy practices, the Review supports the improvement of strategic planning and public sector performance management, which are crucial for optimising resource allocation and service delivery. This Review also provides tools for promoting a culture of transparency, facilitating access to information, ensuring greater citizen participation in public decision-making processes and determining how accountability frameworks can be strengthened to better meet the needs of women and young people.

The Review was carried out as part of the "Ma'an – Together for an accountable and transparent public administration in Jordan" project, funded by the European Union. The project assists Jordan in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and is implemented under the aegis of the OECD Public Governance Committee (PGC) by the MENA-OECD Governance Programme. This Public Governance Review is complemented by an OECD Integrity Review, which provides a holistic assessment of the public sector integrity environment in Jordan with tailored policy recommendations.

The Review is part of the OECD Programme of Work and Budget 2023-24 and of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme to support public sector efficiency in the MENA region. In line with the strategic priorities of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and the PGC, it identifies key issues and lessons learnt in implementing public sector reforms to unlock social and economic development and meet citizens'

growing expectations in terms of quality services, inclusive policymaking and transparency in the MENA region.

This Review was approved and declassified by the OECD Public Governance Committee on 14 November 2024 and prepared by the Secretariat for publication.

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Tonaina Ngororano co-ordinated and provided strategic guidance in the preparation, drafting and publication of the review, with the support of Gamze Igriglu, Gonzalo Rosillo Odriozola, and Pia Hecher from the OECD Secretariat. The Amman based team of local consultants comprised of Dr. Ola Alzawati, Suhair Alkayed, Luna Obaidat, Rimaz Abuzead, Haneen Al Rashdan, and Mohammad Nasereddin also played a critical role in coordinating and consolidating the review.

Chapter 1 of the review was co-authored by Arnault Pretet, Misha Kaur, Johannes Klein, Simon Callewaert, and Elina Smetanina; Chapter 2 by María Pascual Dapena and Emma Cantera; Chapter 3 by Marie Whelan and Emma Cantera; Chapter 4 by Moritz Ader, Paulina López Ramos, Ollin Perez Raynaud and Sara Razai; Chapter 5 by Giulia Morando. Ciara Muller with the support of Francesca Romani prepared the manuscript for publication and controlled the quality.

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>ATI</b>	Access to Information
<b>CoG</b>	Centre of government
<b>CPJ</b>	Committee to Protect Journalists
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>DU</b>	Delivery unit
<b>EMV</b>	Economic Modernization Vision
<b>FATF</b>	Financial Action Task Force
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign direct investment
<b>GBA Plus</b>	Gender-based Analysis Plus
<b>GBD</b>	General Budget Department
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GCHR</b>	Government Coordinator for Human Rights
<b>HAC</b>	High Administrative Cost
<b>HRU</b>	Human Rights Unit at the Prime Minister's Office
<b>IBP</b>	International Budget Partnership
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>ICNL</b>	International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law
<b>IMC</b>	Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment
<b>IPA</b>	Institute of Public Administration
<b>JIACC</b>	Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission
<b>JNCW</b>	Jordanian National Commission for Women
<b>JONAP</b>	Jordanian National Action Plan
<b>KACE</b>	King Abdullah II Center for Excellence
<b>KPI</b>	Key performance indicator
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MoDEE</b>	Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship
<b>MOPIC</b>	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation
<b>MOPPA</b>	Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs
<b>NAP</b>	National action plan
<b>NCHR</b>	National Centre for Human Rights
<b>NII</b>	National Integrity Index
<b>NSW</b>	National Strategy for Women in Jordan
<b>OBS</b>	International Budget Partnership Open Budget Survey
<b>OGCHR</b>	Office of the Government Coordinator for Human Rights
<b>OGP</b>	Open Government Partnership
<b>PAC</b>	Primary Administrative Court
<b>PB</b>	Participatory budgeting
<b>PMDU</b>	Prime Minister's Delivery Unit
<b>PMIO</b>	Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernization Project Management and Implementation Office
<b>PMO</b>	Prime Minister's Office
<b>PSD</b>	Public Security Directorate

<b>PSMR</b>	Public Sector Modernization Roadmap
<b>RS</b>	Reform Secretariat
<b>RSF</b>	Reporters Without Borders
<b>SAI</b>	Supreme audit institution
<b>SDG</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SPAC</b>	Service and Public Administration Commission
<b>UN ESCWA</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>UNSCR</b>	UN Security Council Resolution

# Executive summary

In 2021, the Jordanian government launched a ten-year, three-track political, public sector and economic modernisation programme. This reform programme emerged from the overall objectives of democratising political life and moving closer to a parliamentary style of government, including the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth, consolidating sustainable economic growth, improving living conditions and reinforcing the effectiveness and accountability of government.

Progress in modernising the public sector can already be seen. In 2023, 90% of the approved priorities were achieved, including digital government, public service delivery, organisational structure, civil service management and institutional culture.

This Review provides an analysis of progress on these reform priorities as well as policy recommendations to build on, and sustain, this momentum going forward.

## Key findings

### ***Strategic planning***

Jordan's reforms are guided by a new generation of comprehensive national strategic documents. These are supported by executive and action plans, dedicated support and monitoring units, and a new planning law that can help consolidate functions. The government aspires to improve the complementarity of strategic plans, and focus on implementation and public sector capacity. However, the lack of clear roles and responsibilities, and complementarity among its numerous strategic documents risks hindering the monitoring and evaluation of the policies outlined in the plans. Reform efforts, like the new planning law, could contribute to clarifying roles, ownership and guidance.

### ***Transparency and access to information (ATI)***

Jordan has recently amended its ATI Law and has also established transparency as a central principle and objective of public sector modernisation. Jordan has the opportunity to harness the positive amendments to the law to reinforce information disclosure mechanisms and the institutional framework for ATI oversight.

### ***Citizen and stakeholder participation and responsiveness of the public administration***

There is a high-level commitment to directly involving citizens and other stakeholders in public decision-making across the public administration. Mechanisms have been introduced to educate citizens about elections, political parties, and ways to activate their role in public life as well as promote digital participation. Lastly, efforts have been made to improve the enabling environment for civil society organisations (CSOs). The current reform agenda provides an opportunity to translate this commitment into concrete action to respond to citizens' needs and expectations while partnering with them and other stakeholders to achieve shared objectives that are greater than the sum of their parts.

## ***The role of young people in public sector integrity, accountability and policymaking***

Nearly a third of Jordan's population is aged between 15 and 29. Jordan has taken important steps to promote young people's participation in political life through the 2022 Political Parties Law and Election Law, new commitments to engage young people in the implementation and monitoring of government plans, and a national youth strategy to deliver youth-responsive programmes and services. While these measures are important steps, additional efforts are needed to systematically consult and engage young people across all areas of policymaking and in the design and implementation of measures to promote integrity. Moreover, building awareness and skills among national and local decision-makers and young people will be critical to enhancing their participation in politics – as voters, candidates and elected officials.

## ***Accountability and oversight for gender equality***

The government of Jordan has undertaken institutional reforms and developed strategic documents to improve public sector accountability with respect to gender equality, such as the National Strategy for Women and its Action Plan. Moreover, there is growing awareness of the importance of involving women in policymaking. Nevertheless, greater horizontal co-ordination is needed among responsible institutions to drive progress on gender equality and mainstreaming, and in advancing on previous recommendations in this area. In addition, there are limited mechanisms for managerial accountability in the public sector to promote gender equality and mainstreaming, as well as a limited role of independent oversight institutions in promoting gender equality.

## **Policy recommendations**

- Reinforce the policy framework for **strategic planning** and the implementation of strategic documents by streamlining national and sectoral plans. This could also imply cancelling obsolete or irrelevant documents to ensure coherence and complementarity and facilitate implementation. A robust monitoring and evaluation system is needed at the sectoral level, as many sectoral strategies lack implementation documents and key performance indicators, making it difficult to measure progress. Additionally, Jordan could consider strengthening the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of implementation by responsible institutions.
- Build on the momentum generated by the amendment of the **Access to Information (ATI) Law** to ensure full implementation, promote proactive and reactive disclosure of information, and reinforce the institutional framework for ATI. In addition, consider complementing the ATI Law with regulation in line with international practices. Jordan would also benefit from improving inter-agency co-ordination, increasing the number of information officers and committees appointed across the administration, and fostering greater awareness and trust in this law's benefits among both public officials and citizens.
- Ensure an enabling environment for **citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs)** to actively participate in policy design and delivery, and enhance public administration response systems. Developing a CSO strategy, and facilitating registration processes and access to funding would support this. To enhance responsiveness across the public administration, Jordan could improve co-operation among bodies with a mandate on civic freedoms, guiding public officials in responding to human rights complaints and streamlining complaints and feedback mechanisms on policies and services. In addition, citizens and stakeholders could be more systematically involved in decision-making processes, including through innovative means such as the new e-participation platform.
- Create an enabling environment for **young people** to partner with government, and hold them to account, protecting their rights and promoting their participation across all areas of policymaking. Jordan could establish structured opportunities to consult and engage youth stakeholders across the policy and service cycle, scale up local youth-led initiatives to monitor public service quality and

invest in youth-responsive public communication. Jordan could also improve co-ordination among awareness- and capacity-building programmes targeting youth, and establish effective systems for collecting, using and disseminating age-disaggregated data. Jordan could further consider promoting the participation of young people in political life in line with the objectives of its political reform agenda, notably by rolling out formal and informal programmes to promote young people's civic and citizenship literacy, addressing financial constraints and supporting young elected officials to perform their duties and act as role models in line with the highest standards of integrity.

- Strengthen government and managerial accountability for **gender equality and mainstreaming** and the oversight role of relevant institutions. Further efforts could be made to ensure that the government provides Parliament with timely information on gender equality policy to fulfil its oversight role, while other oversight institutions, such as the Audit Bureau, could have their function strengthened. Finally, Jordan could reinforce citizen participation channels to improve gender equality outcomes and accountability.

# 1

## Strategic planning and public sector performance management in Jordan

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Jordan drives its planning efforts through a series of strategic frameworks to modernise public administration and achieve key national objectives. This chapter delves into Jordan's legal and policy framework for strategic planning by reviewing essential documents such as the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (PSMR) and the Political System Modernisation Plan. It also introduces the revised Reform Matrix, an important follow-up strategic document connected to the EMV. Furthermore, it examines the institutional landscape for strategic planning, implementation and performance management, focusing on the roles and mandates of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), the Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernisation Project Management and Implementation Office (PMIO), the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) and the General Budget Department (GBD). Finally, based on good practices and OECD insights, the chapter identifies opportunities to further strengthen strategic planning, implementation and performance management to enhance transparency, accountability and public trust in Jordan's governance.

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## Introduction

### ***The importance of strategic planning for better public sector outcomes***

Strategic planning helps guide the vision, mission and actions of a government and its institutions. As an integral part of governing processes, planning helps to examine strengths and weaknesses, seeking ways to achieve desired outcomes with available resources (OECD, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). Moreover, as highlighted in the OECD *Steering from the Centre of Government in Times of Complexity: Compendium of Practices*, strategic planning can assist governments in prioritising and balancing investments of different objectives across various ministries and government agencies (OECD, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). This can help to mitigate silos, duplication and conflicting agendas. Therefore, strategic planning not only tells “what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does, and why” (Bryson, 2011<sup>[2]</sup>) but also facilitates the attainment of goals.

To ensure that plans are implemented effectively, evaluated and built upon, implementation support and ongoing performance monitoring are important components of the strategic planning system. Government performance management links strategic plans and their actions with implementation. It involves the systematic process of setting, monitoring and evaluating the performance of government ministries and agencies in achieving objectives set in planning documents.

Strategic planning is crucial for public sector transparency and accountability for several reasons.

- First, it provides a clear roadmap for the government’s goals, priorities and actions, making it easier for the public to understand what it intends to achieve. This transparency can help foster trust and confidence among citizens and government.
- Second, it establishes measurable objectives and performance indicators, allowing for the evaluation of the government’s performance. This accountability mechanism ensures public officials can be held responsible for their actions or inactions at all levels.
- Finally, it encourages efficient resource allocation, ensuring that public resources are used effectively to achieve the stated goals. This efficiency contributes to the responsible stewardship of public funds, reinforcing the government’s commitment to accountability.

Strategic planning thus enhances transparency by clearly communicating government objectives, providing a basis for accountability through measurable goals and promoting efficient resource management, all of which are essential for a transparent and accountable public sector.

Jordan aims to overcome strategic gaps and achieve the government’s priorities through improved complementarity of strategic plans, and a renewed focus on implementation and enhancing the public sector’s capacity. This will be achieved as Jordan embarks on a new reform path with a new generation of comprehensive national strategic documents, supported by executive plans and a set of new units and departments to support, prioritise and monitor the delivery of the respective plans’ objectives.

### ***Jordan’s strategic planning journey***

Over the past decades, Jordan has developed a wide range of national development plans and strategies. In the beginning, the country’s efforts mainly focused on creating public sector institutions and providing public infrastructure. Since the 1990s, when Jordan undertook economic liberalisation and privatisation endeavours, the kingdom has been seeking ways to become more competitive in the global economy. Overall, this has resulted in more than ten national and sectoral plans over the past three decades. This has included plans and programmes such as the Economic and Social Development Plan (1993-97; 1999-2003; 2002-04), the National Agenda (2006-15), the Executive Development Programme (2007-09; 2009-11; 2011-13; 2016-18), the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2013-20), the National Employment Strategy (2011-20), the Renaissance Plan (2018-20), the Economic Priorities Programme (2021-23), the Indicative Executive Programme (2021-24) as well as several other sectoral and ministerial reform plans.



In 2015, the government unveiled Jordan 2025 (also known as Vision 2025) as a long-term strategy that provided overarching directions to support the country's economic and social development. The strategy outlined the country's main challenges and introduced structural reforms, initiatives and programmatic improvements to be attained by 2025 in four different pillars: i) government; ii) business sector; iii) society; and iv) citizens. However, as noted during the OECD fact-finding interviews, for many, the vision has been superseded by a new set of strategic roadmaps. In addition, no budget in the national budget framework was allocated to the implementation of Jordan 2025.

Following a significant reform of national strategic planning endorsed by King Abdullah II in 2022, Jordan's development is currently guided by a set of national strategies targeting the economic, public administration and political sectors that frame Jordan's overarching policy framework. The government of Jordan aspires to improve citizens' living conditions through boosting economic growth and creating job opportunities. For more efficiency, the government acknowledges the need to modernise its public sector and align it with citizen priorities. In addition, the government of Jordan aspires to promote greater societal participation in politics. These objectives and achievements are supported by three national plans: the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (PSMR) and the Political System Modernisation Plan.

To address multifaced socio-economic challenges and foster their capacity to deliver, Jordan recognises that the principles of good governance, transparency and accountability are crucial. While transparency enables public sector employees to monitor and assess the planning process, accountability ensures that all public institutions involved are accountable for their actions. When both go hand in hand, greater support from institutions and public trust in public administration can be achieved, thus facilitating the fulfilment of the political agenda and delivery of quality services that improve citizens' lives.

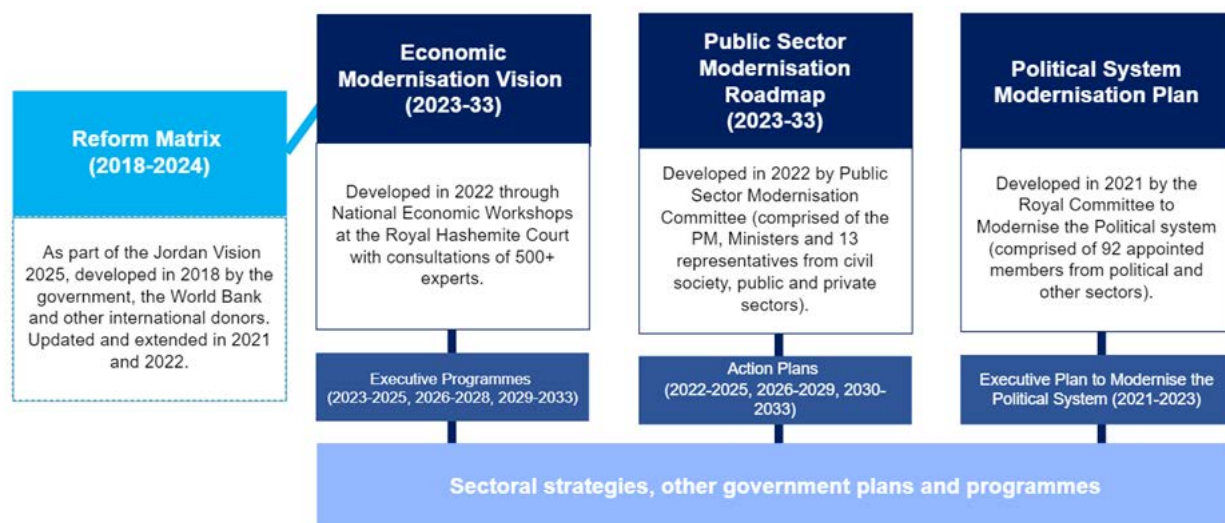
This chapter on strategic planning, implementation and performance management is structured into the three following sections:

- The chapter first describes Jordan's legal and policy framework for strategic planning by providing an overview of its key national documents: the EMV, the PSMR and the Political System Modernisation Plan. It also introduces the revised Reform Matrix, an important follow-up strategic document linked to the EMV.
- The chapter then assesses the institutional landscape for strategic planning, implementation and performance management by focusing on the roles and functioning of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), the Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernisation Project Management and Implementation Office (PMIO), the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) and the General Budget Department (GBD).
- The chapter concludes with policy recommendations to continue strengthening strategic planning, implementation and performance management for more transparent outcomes and accountable public institutions in Jordan.

## Jordan's legal and policy framework for strategic planning

The clear and explicit articulation of strategic planning instruments and documents allows the government to focus on a few policy priorities and ensure better and more consistent implementation in the face of resource constraints (OECD, 2023<sup>[3]</sup>). The comprehensive set of national economic, administrative and political planning instruments adopted by the government of Jordan in response to new complex challenges the country faces are summarised in Figure 1.1. Relevant documents are explained in greater detail below, including their respective development process as well as their operationalisation through action plans and executive programmes.

Figure 1.1. Jordan's national development plans and strategies



Source: Author's elaboration.

Although development and reforms are complex and evolving rather than linear processes in many countries, articulating strategic objectives across different timeframes is crucial to ensure plans promote synergies, avoid counterproductive efforts and provide a coherent vision for the country. In Jordan, the planning system is characterised by a multiplicity of national plans and strategies.

As shown in more detail below, the strategies were developed by different actors and processes and cover distinctive time frames, sectors and funding schemes. In addition, a number of sectoral strategies have been developed by line ministries in Jordan, for instance the Jordan Energy Strategy 2020-30, the Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2021-25 and the Investment Promotion Strategy 2023-26, noting that the content, structure and duration differ widely across documents. It appears that some sectors are lacking a strategy while strategic plans defined in other sectors are not systematically implemented. Some sectoral strategies, like the Jordan Energy Strategy 2020-30, define indicators and are accompanied by action plans or execution programmes while others do not.

While the roadmaps constitute overarching strategic documents, the high number of different national whole-of-government and sectoral strategies and their different formats make their implementation and ensuring coherence challenging and constitute a fragmented planning landscape. For instance, sectoral strategies do not refer directly to national plans and there is no cascading of policy measures of key performance indicators (KPIs) from national plans into the sectoral strategies. This can partly be explained by sectoral plans being developed before the national long-term plans. This is also due to the absence of formal inter-ministerial co-ordination committees that would support alignment across national plans and sectoral plans. Moreover, the exact hierarchy and linkage of the respective individual documents are not clearly determined, as Jordan has not defined a typology or hierarchy of strategic documents yet.

A unified approach, guidance and methodology, including templates and requirements for strategic documents and planning, could help address these issues. In Jordan, the King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE) (Box 1.12) has developed a series of core strategic planning elements, including the Three-dimensional Planning Interconnection and Integration Principle. This principle empowers institutions to develop and implement their plans based on national, sectoral and organisational roles while meeting broader administration needs. It could guide institutions in translating plans into actionable steps, ultimately enhancing Jordan's competitiveness. The government could, for instance, define the nature, time frame and scope of implementation documents, including executive programmes, development plans and action

plans. A stocktaking exercise could also help identify existing strategies that are implemented, as well as gaps and potential overlaps across strategies.

Aligning objectives and programmes through a review of the strategic plans or elimination of superfluous documents is crucial to supporting a consistent, unified strategic framework. To align planning documents operating across different time frames, all existing and future strategies should ideally refer to the long-term goals defined by the overarching roadmaps and should be cascaded down into sectoral medium-term objectives and short-term goals. Box 1.1 draws on the Polish experience to highlight how a government can streamline and rationalise the landscape of strategic planning documents in its country.

### **Box 1.1. Poland's stocktaking of its development strategies and programmes**

The Act on Development Policy (2006) was the first step in the evolution of Poland's development management framework. This legislation not only established an institution to define and co-ordinate the country's development policy but also used a series of interconnected action plans to deliver sustained and balanced national development, as well as to ensure regional socio-economic cohesion. This legislation – and the entire development management framework – was informed by a stocktaking exercise of Poland's development strategies and programmes between 1989 and 2006. The government determined that, over this period, the country's Council of Ministers had adopted no fewer than 406 national strategies (with varying scopes and degrees of implementation), of which only 120 remained relevant. Thus, in 2009, the country passed the Development Strategy Rearrangement Plan, which reduced and rearranged the number of binding strategies. All strategic initiatives developed since 2010 adhere to this new system.

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[4]</sup>), *Centre of Government Review of Brazil: Toward an Integrated and Structured Centre of Government*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/33d996b2-en>; adapted from OECD (2016<sup>[5]</sup>), *Public Governance Reviews: Peru Integrated Governance for Inclusive Growth*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264265172-en>.

Due to the existence of a large number of short- and long-term cross-governmental and sectoral strategies in Jordan, it is important to ensure transparency and easy access to information about existing strategic plans and related materials. By compiling all documents and information about strategic planning on one portal, website or register, governments can enhance transparency, foster accountability, facilitate consistencies and synergies across sectors, and promote knowledge and understanding about strategic planning. While initiatives to create a website took place in the past with the support of the United States Agency for International Development, MoPIC could consider developing an online registry of all existing strategic plans. The practice of establishing a registry of strategies, templates for strategies and a methodological guide in Czechia (see Box 1.2) could be of interest in this regard.

### Box 1.2. Czechia’s strategic planning registry

Czechia developed an online registry of existing strategies in 2012 that includes all strategic and conceptual documents. It clearly displays documents, their goals and measures, responsibilities for fulfilling them and indicators of success. Goals from the international level, through ministries and national institutions, down to the regional and local levels, can be connected thematically and functionally.

All line ministries and regions add their strategic documents to this registry. One of its main aims is to connect and align existing and new strategies to avoid duplication and find consistencies and synergies across proposed measures. This has not been achieved in practice.

The Strategies Database Working Group, composed of representatives from all line ministries and regions, is mainly facilitated by the Ministry of Regional Development. This working group was first established with its own statute and rules of procedure and, after the creation of the Expert Group for Strategy Work, was placed in its remit to act as a co-ordination tool.

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[3]</sup>), *Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic: Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/41fd9e5c-en>.

### The Economic Modernisation Vision

Launched in 2022, the EMV (2023-33) is one of Jordan’s three new national strategic plans. As defined in its strategic pillars, the EMV has two objectives: i) to boost the country’s economic growth; and ii) to raise citizens’ living standards. Both goals are underpinned and tied together with sustainability principles as Jordan aims to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and move towards a green economy. Being at the core of economic development in the country for the next decade, the EMV is expected to serve as “a reference for all sectoral strategies and related action plans” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>). Despite this aspiration for sectoral planning, the EMV does not explicitly specify how it relates to the other two national-level plans – the PSMR and Political System Modernisation Plan – as well as the Government Programme: the hierarchy and complementarity of documents remain undefined. However, the government has listed all of the priorities in the EMV’s new executive programme, which links the EMV to the government’s priorities included in other strategic planning documents. The EMV was developed following King Abdullah II’s public address on the country’s limited economic performance and a call for a National Economic Workshop at the Royal Hashemite Court. During the consultation stage, more than 500 experts from parliament, the public and private sectors, academia, civil society and the media were brought together to decide on long-term national objectives and provide an actionable roadmap. In addition, a survey of 2 500 Jordanian citizens was conducted to assess citizen satisfaction and define more specific goals for improving quality of life.

The EMV is set to be implemented through 8 key growth drivers in 35 sectors and sub-sectors, comprising more than 380 initiatives. Among its drivers, it lists high-value industrials, sustainable resources, a vibrant Jordan (urban development and quality of life), a green Jordan (green economy and living), investment in Jordan (foreign direct investments), a smart Jordan (education, data and innovation), future services and destination Jordan (tourism). All drivers and initiatives are accompanied by defined objectives, stakeholder roles, beneficiaries, a timeline for implementation as well as a methodology to track progress and execution. However, the number of initiatives monitored within the EMV has constantly expanded, making monitoring and implementation more challenging. Monitoring long-term strategic documents is challenging in many countries; Box 1.3 presents how other Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries are improving their monitoring efforts for long-term priorities.

### Box 1.3. MENA economies' efforts toward improved monitoring of long-term priorities

#### Egypt

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED) in Egypt is responsible for steering the strategic planning process to translate Egypt Vision 2030 into annual plans at the central and local levels. The MPED also reviews their implementation and monitors their performance by co-ordinating with ministries leading key programmes and reviewing data shared at the outcome level. In particular, the annual investment plan approved by the Cabinet outlines concrete sustainable development objectives, policies, programmes and activities along the dimensions of Egypt Vision 2030 with its respective indicators and foreseen effects on its various sectors and levels of government. While efforts to monitor the performance of these programmes have been gradually established, challenges persist in the differing quality of the contributions submitted by each ministry to inform the annual investment plan as well as the capabilities to implement the approved programmes therein. In addition, the National Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was established by executive decree to act as a high-level institutional body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. The primary mandate of the committee is to work collaboratively to ensure that Egypt achieves the United Nations 2030 Agenda. While it is currently composed of representatives from 17 ministries and state entities, this committee meets only on an ad hoc basis and its role in technical implementation and performance management could be enhanced. Egypt also started to establish a performance management framework focusing on assessing the outcomes of key strategies and achieving the SDGs with the Integrated System for Investment Plan Preparation and Monitoring and the National System for Monitoring and Evaluation (ADAA). Although these systems are thorough, there is an opportunity to embed KPIs to measure the outcomes and impact of SDGs and sectoral programmes, a common challenge that persists across various OECD member countries and partner economies.

#### Morocco

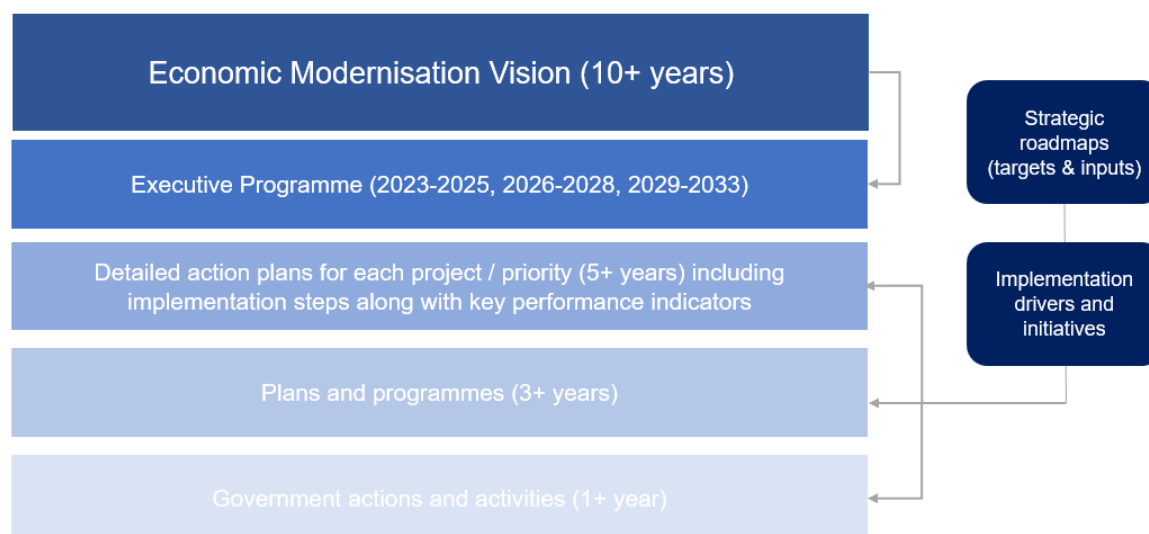
In Morocco, the New Development Model (NDM) is the country's long-term strategic plan developed under the aegis of H.E. King Mohammed VI. Along with the Government Programme, which defines priorities for a five-year governmental mandate, these documents were developed by different institutional actors, making alignment between these different strategic plans essential considering their complementary objectives. The Head of Government Services is focusing on building a general coherence between both strategic documents, ensuring that the implementation of the government programme supports the fulfilment of the objectives of the NDM. They are currently in the process of developing a strategic monitoring framework that will systematically analyse the contribution of each strategy and law to the objectives set in the two strategic documents. The NDM foresees the creation of a monitoring mechanism reporting to the king, which has yet to be implemented.

Source: (OECD, n.d.<sup>[7]</sup>); (OECD, 2023<sup>[8]</sup>); (Commission Spéciale sur le NMD, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>); (OECD, 2024<sup>[10]</sup>).

Over the course of implementation, the EMV has several phases and is supported by other plans and programmes. It has three implementation phases, with a planned review of progress at the end of each period. In the first phase, from 2023 to 2025, Jordan intends to execute a substantial portion of the plan's initiatives, thus calling it the "quick wins" period. The second phase (2026-29) and the third (2030-33) will capitalise on the progress achieved in previous phases. In the third phase, the vision also prescribes setting new long-term strategic goals for the next decade. While the EMV sets the country's long-term national

priorities and goals, it is also widely supported by various government action plans with different timeframes (Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2. The EMV's executive framework**



Source: Based on Government of Jordan (2022<sup>[6]</sup>), *Economic Modernisation Vision: Unleashing Potential to Build the Future*, <https://www.jordanvision.jo/img/vision-en.pdf>.

### **The Reform Matrix**

As implementation support to the EMV and closely developed in co-ordination with the World Bank, Jordan's Reform Matrix represents an integrated strategy for horizontal and vertical structural reforms. Launched during the London Initiative "Jordan: Growth and Opportunity" in 2019, its main objective is to strengthen and continuously enhance the co-ordination and delivery of comprehensive reforms in the country while closely co-operating with international donors and development partners. As such, the matrix aims to contribute to a number of government priorities, such as maintaining macroeconomic stability, improving the business environment, and growth of investments and exports. The document is comprised of 12 pillars in total, covering Jordan's fiscal, finance, governance, labour and social policies, as well as the main economic sectors (MoPIC, 2023<sup>[11]</sup>). The revised Reform Matrix also bolsters the country's climate and gender policies.

The Reform Matrix was initially launched in 2018 and updated and extended in 2021 and 2022 (World Bank, 2023<sup>[12]</sup>). It is not static and is periodically updated to promote results, as was done in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the enactment of the EMV. Through intensive internal and external stakeholder consultations, the MoPIC Reform Secretariat conducted periodic reviews and aligned the priorities set out in the matrix with the socio-economic situation, deepening reforms as part of the country's post-pandemic recovery. During the fact-finding interviews, government stakeholders reported that the updated Reform Matrix 2018-24 aligns with the government programme and the EMV.

The matrix's implementation is led and supported by MoPIC's dedicated Reform Secretariat established in 2019. The secretariat is the government's focal point for the Jordan Inclusive Growth and Economic Opportunities Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which is managed by the World Bank Group, co-chaired by MoPIC and currently funded by the governments of Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. Following the end of the current version of the Reform Matrix in 2024, government



institutions and international partners are expected to develop a new document to continue bolstering the priorities and plans enshrined in the EMV.

### ***The Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap***

Recognising institutional weaknesses and bureaucratic complexities in the public sector, the government of Jordan developed the PSMR (2023-33). As another plan of the 2022 strategic planning overhaul, the PSMR enacts a comprehensive public administration reform agenda, addressing key challenges. The overall objective of the roadmap is an “empowered and effective public sector working as a single unit to develop Jordan and achieve citizen wellbeing” that will enhance productivity and boost the internal capacity of the public sector to meet citizens’ expectations and support the public sector in its transformation process (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>).

Comprehensive work on the PSMR began at the end of 2021 when the Public Sector Modernisation Committee was established. Chaired by the prime minister, the committee comprised 13 representatives from the public and private sectors and civil society. A total of four ministers participated in the committee meetings. The committee’s work focused on examining the work of 97 civil service institutions (excluding municipalities, the armed forces and the security forces) and 3 main objectives: improving the quality of services provided to Jordan citizens and institutions (the services pillar), enhancing the institutional performance (the institutional pillar) and improving legislation concerning public administration (the legislation pillar). As for methodology, the committee carried out a desk review of existing documents, strategies and projects and held discussions in several specialised working groups, which helped to crystallise the modernisation framework and its seven components’ future directions and strategic objectives. Under the committee’s guidance, the roadmap itself and 7 guidance papers for each component were prepared with the contribution of more than 30 national and international consultants.

As highlighted by the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[14]</sup>) and the OECD-European Union SIGMA Principles of Public Administration, stakeholder engagement is key to ensure that the public sector modernisation vision, including its objectives and key steps, is shared by all stakeholders involved. In the case of the roadmap, the committee held over 100 stakeholder meetings and surveyed 2 400 public employees and more than 20 service centres to prepare the document. Among them was a study on the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration in Jordan carried out by the KACE in 2020-21, which served as one of the inputs to the roadmap. Despite the aim to consult with stakeholders, the consultations only took place once the government endorsed the roadmap. As such, the Economic and Social Council conducted national dialogue sessions across the country. In addition to three sessions in Amman, weekly sessions were held in each governorate to gather stakeholders’ feedback on the roadmap and receive input for recommendations and proposals. The results of these sessions were presented to the government (ESC, 2023<sup>[15]</sup>). During OECD fact-finding interviews, government officials also reported that the participation of a broader range of stakeholders in the committee could have resulted in higher levels of ownership across the government. No information was made available on how the feedback received was integrated into the new planning framework. There was no mechanism in place for the public to comment on the draft roadmap.

In total, the PSMR sets 33 objectives, including on government services, procedures and digitalisation, organisational structure and governance, policy formulation and decision-making, human resources, legislation and institutional culture. Each component has its own strategic goals and initiatives. Each roadmap component is complemented by a technical concept report containing a full analysis of the Jordanian context at the time of the plan’s adoption. It includes an assessment of Jordan’s strengths and weaknesses with regard to the respective component, a review of national and international reports and surveys, followed by a definition of the component’s strategic objectives and a roadmap of relevant initiatives for 2023-25. While the roadmap is generally well-aligned with other national strategic planning

documents, co-ordinating certain cross-cutting projects that touch upon different sectors and other strategic plans (for instance, related to the EMV) was reported to be challenging.

The PSMR was supplemented with a three-year action plan (2022-25) to implement the reforms in the coming years. As an execution programme for the first stage, the plan lays down 206 initiatives and procedures to be developed in the first 3 years of the public sector modernisation journey. Similar to the EMV, initiatives for periods 2026-29 and 2030-33 will be adopted after reviewing the success of the previous stages. While the committee proved instrumental in designing the PSMR, it was dissolved once this mission was achieved. Under the responsibility of the Minister of State for Public Sector Modernisation, the PMIO is tasked with facilitating and monitoring the roadmap's implementation. As of the end of 2024, PMIO has initiated development of an annual action plan for the consecutive 2026-29 phase. The Service and Public Administration Commission (SPAC), the entity that superseded the Civil Service Bureau, was also established in November 2023 to support public administration reform, principles and compliance (see section below) and has published its 2024-2027 Strategy to modernise the administration and deliver better services for citizens (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>).

### ***The Political System Modernisation Plan***

The Political System Modernisation Plan is the third strategic document of the 2021 planning overhaul. Among the three strategies, it was the first to be prepared and launched. As endorsed by the king in 2021, the overarching objective of this reform initiative is “to bring a qualitative shift in parliamentary and partisan life”, fostering greater participation rights for Jordanian citizens and “leading to a parliament based on programme blocks and parties” (Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System, 2021<sup>[17]</sup>). Overall, the king's vision encompasses three key directions: i) the creation of new election and political party laws and consideration of constitutional amendments related to both laws; ii) the development of legislation to promote the participation of local administration in decision-making; iii) the creation of a legislative and political environment that promotes the role of young people, women and disabled people in public life.

In response to the king's vision, the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System was established, tasked with providing comprehensive recommendations for reform. Chaired by the prime minister, the committee was comprised of 92 members from political and other sectors. Its work was organised across six thematic committees: election law, political parties' law, local administration, women's empowerment, youth empowerment and constitutional amendments. Guided by unanimously agreed procedures, each thematic committee reviewed legislative documents related to its respective topic. Based on this analysis, they proposed amendments to existing laws or developed new legislation or criteria for improvements.

Among the numerous recommendations, the royal committee's work resulted in proposing drafts for new election and political party laws. These drafts were presented to the National Assembly for consideration and adoption. In addition, consultations in all governorates were held before launching the plan. To effectively implement the recommendations outlined by the committee, the government developed the Executive Plan to Modernise the Political System (2021-23).

## **Jordan's institutional landscape for strategic planning, implementation and performance management**

This section assesses the institutional landscape for strategic planning, the implementation of strategic plans and performance management in Jordan. As the head of state, the king of Jordan is responsible for setting the general direction of the country and the Royal Hashemite Court serves as a liaison between the king and the state institutions (government, legislative, judicial, armed forces and security forces), ensuring that directions set by the head of state are translated into strategic plans and action.



While as of the period of drafting Jordan is still working on developing a single national framework for strategic planning for instance through the implementation of the new Planning Law, this section focuses on the roles and functioning of the institutional actors involved in strategic planning within Jordan's centre of government (CoG) and provides an analysis of the current developments in the strategic planning framework. The composition of the strategic planning entities in the CoG may vary between countries, with different institutions and agencies across OECD member and partner countries being responsible for cross-cutting governmental functions, like strategic prioritisation, planning and co-ordination and public administration reform steering and co-ordination (Box 1.4).

### Box 1.4. What is the Centre of Government (CoG)?

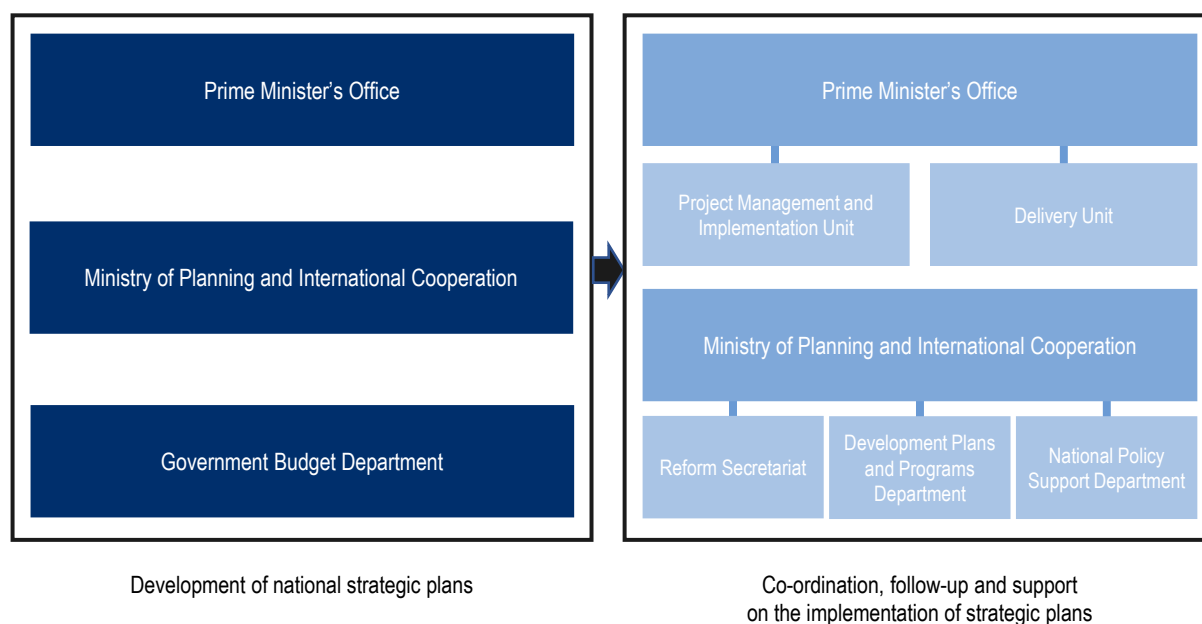
The CoG is “the body or group of bodies that provide direct support and advice to Heads of Government and the Council of Ministers, or Cabinet”. As a key institution of the executive branch, it is mandated to ensure elected politicians make decisions informed by coherent evidence and expert analysis, and facilitates co-ordination across government siloes. However, the CoG concept does not denote any specific organisational structure: the composition of the CoG can vary depending on the constitutional order, the political system, contextual and historical factors and the Head of Government's preferences. Therefore, no two countries are identical in their approach to their CoG's institutional and decision-making arrangements. Functional definitions of the CoG can include institutions or agencies that perform core cross-cutting governmental functions, such as planning, co-ordination, prioritisation and policy leadership role as well as preparations of Cabinet meetings, whole-of-government regulatory policy and legal compliance, and public administration reforms. In general, the role of the centre of government has expanded from purely procedural and agenda-setting functions to playing a more strategic leadership role of supporting the Head of Government and Cabinet.

Strategic planning is an essential function of the CoG, particularly on the formulation of long-term vision and strategic priorities, on coordinating whole-of-government strategic efforts and alignment and on ensuring the implementation of the priorities. Institutional models differ widely, ranging from a single unit or entity in the Prime Minister Office or State Chancellery to multiple entities and agencies responsible for strategic planning, or specific line ministries in charge, such as Ministry of Planning or Economy.

Source: Adapted from (OECD, 2020<sup>[18]</sup>) and (OECD, 2023<sup>[19]</sup>).

In Jordan, the CoG model for exercising the strategic planning function is polycentric as it involves several entities with different roles and responsibilities in the process, including Prime Ministry (and its entities such as PMDU and PMIO), the MoPIC, and Ministry of Finance with its GBD on the link between planning and budgeting. Additional bodies can also be considered as part of the CoG in Jordan as they carry out classic CoG functions on legal compliance and review and on public administration reform, in particular the Opinion and Legislative Bureau and SPAC. While the high turnover of ministers has hampered the smooth alignment and implementation processes of strategic plans, these institutions are the key actors developing and implementing the strategic plans and have seen their role and structure evolve to better steer and deliver on strategic plans and objectives (Figure 1.3). The new planning law is one of the latest examples of these efforts and could help clarify MoPIC's roles and responsibilities for strategic planning but might not provide an integrated framework for all documents, including national plans (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[20]</sup>).

**Figure 1.3. Overview of Jordan's main institutional actors involved in strategic planning, implementation and performance management**



Source: Author's elaboration.

### ***Roles and functions of institutions responsible for strategic planning***

#### *The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation*

MoPIC takes a central place in Jordan's institutional architecture for strategic planning by spearheading the formulation and co-ordination of national whole-of-government development plans and supporting the development of sectoral strategies by line ministries. Created as a governmental entity in 1984, Ministry of Planning replaced the National Planning Council and carried out its tasks until it was renamed MoPIC in 2003 (MoPIC, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>). MoPIC's mission was guided by the Planning Law of 1971 until 2024, when the government of Jordan adopted a new Planning and International Cooperation Law. The new law focuses on the role of MoPIC and line ministries in the strategic planning system, strengthening MoPIC's positions and responsibilities within the system (Box 1.5). Overall, MoPIC aspires to "promote a culture of excellence, good governance, sustainable development" (MoPIC, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>).

#### **Box 1.5. Jordan's new Planning and International Cooperation Law No. (10) of 2024**

Superseding the Planning Law of 1971 and its amendments, the new Planning and International Cooperation Law No. (10) of 2024 reinforces and harmonises the country's regulation of and system for strategic planning.

The law designates MoPIC as the central body for strategic planning and endorses its roles in contributing to the identification of national priorities and the development of national policies, as well as supporting other ministries and public agencies in strategic planning and policy development. This includes framing and supporting the formulation and development process of national policies, developing methodologies and guidelines, building the capacity of ministries and public agencies in

policy monitoring and evaluation, as well as steering and enhancing policy co-ordination and coherence by establishing (or reinstating) formal co-ordination mechanisms. The law also refers to incorporating evidence into strategic planning, aligning plans with budget processes and promoting participatory planning across different government agencies.

It also prescribes the establishment of co-ordination instruments: MoPIC should form a committee, including ministries and public or official institutions, to prepare and monitor the implementation of national plans and executive programmes. In addition, the law tasks line ministries with creating internal planning, coordination and follow-up committees that can help drive and support their activities on strategic planning.

Based on the experience of OECD member and partner countries where strategic planning framework is enshrined in legislation, Jordan could benefit from supporting its new law by incorporating additional elements that are typical components of planning laws, particularly planning principles, timeframes, hierarchy, typology and territorial scope of planning documents. This would involve defining a hierarchy of planning documents between national documents, sectoral and regional plans over different time horizons. The law could further clarify the typology of documents between national strategic plans, programmes, policies, sectoral plans and executive programmes, and does not currently specify the strategic planning process, procedures and the roles of the Prime Minister's Office and other central government institutions in reviewing and approving strategic documents, which could be developed in separate documents (rules of procedures or strategic manual). In practical terms, these additional changes can be made through implementing amendments within the law or developing additional legislation, such as a bylaw, that derives from the Planning and International Cooperation Law No. (10) of 2024.

Source: Government of Jordan (n.d.<sup>[20]</sup>).

While MoPIC remains integral to the systematic and co-ordinated development of Jordan's national strategies, its role has undergone a shift. Previously, MoPIC was central in approving national strategies and plans. Now, temporary councils and fora, such as the Economic Workshop and the Public Sector Modernisation Committee, as well as government units such as PMIO and PMDU play a more prominent role in the area. However, it is important to note that MoPIC continues to play an important role within this new environment, contributing its expertise and experience to ensure the effective implementation of policies. Moreover, the responsibility of developing and co-ordinating sectoral strategies now lies within line ministries.

MoPIC serves as a key entity in facilitating co-operation and domestic and international partnerships that can support the funding and implementation of strategic initiatives and plans. It works closely with line ministries, public agencies and governorates. In collaboration with the GBD, MoPIC prepares the development budget as part of the annual government budget. The ministry often mobilises resources through its Foreign Aid Unit, including international technical assistance and funding, to support the country's development projects and programmes.

MoPIC is comprised of seven departments and ten units reporting directly to the secretary-general and two additional units, the internal Performance Monitoring Unit and the Internal Auditing Unit, which directly report to the minister (MoPIC, n.d.<sup>[22]</sup>). Implementing the reform objectives of the PSMR, MoPIC is currently revising its existing organisational structure, including developing the National Policy Department.

### **The Reform Secretariat**

Following the launch of Jordan's Reform Matrix in 2019, MoPIC established the Reform Secretariat to support the implementation of the set economic reforms (MoPIC, 2023<sup>[23]</sup>). The secretariat directly reports to the secretary-general as a separate entity within the ministry. While it was expected to end with the Reform Matrix in 2024, new plans to update and prolong the Reform Matrix would lead the Reform Secretariat's continued existence.

As the main facilitator of the Reform Matrix's implementation, the Reform Secretariat monitors and reports on the progress of reforms and takes the lead in specific reforms involving multiple stakeholders (MoPIC, 2023<sup>[23]</sup>). As such, in its work with multiple public stakeholders, it follows up and co-ordinates the implementation of policy reforms and provides support through technical expertise to agencies. The broad range of areas covered in the Reform Matrix requires substantial co-ordination with other entities across government. It also acts as a focal point between implementing agencies and international partners. Furthermore, the Reform Secretariat continues to manage the World Bank's development policy loans and oversee the implementation of other World Bank-financed projects.

Alongside the Reform Matrix, the secretariat also supports the government's work. By collaborating with public agencies on their plans and engaging different stakeholders, it participated in the creation of the Government's Economic Priorities Programme (2021-23) (MoPIC, 2022<sup>[24]</sup>). The Reform Secretariat follows up on the priorities in the economic programme and designs programmes that boost economic growth and job creation. In addition to regular reports to the prime minister, the secretariat provides technical progress updates and inputs to the PMDU and is "considering further structuring its co-ordination and engagement mechanism with the Unit" in the future (MoPIC, 2022<sup>[24]</sup>). Lastly, the secretariat pursues communication tasks highlighting the government's work on reforms.

### **The Development Plans and Programmes Department**

Through its Development Plans and Programmes Department, MoPIC is tasked with supporting line ministries and agencies for the development of their sectoral strategies and plans. In addition, it enhances participatory planning on both local and national levels. The Development Plans and Programmes Department is one of the seven MoPIC departments that supports the formation of national development plans and indicators. It aims to prepare, revise and update Jordan's long-term plans and participate in formulating implementation programmes related to these plans. The department also plays a crucial role in supporting the PMDU in monitoring and aligning the EMV economic programme's KPIs and initiatives.

By working closely with line ministries and agencies, the department overviews the harmonisation process of different national plans and programmes, aligning them with socio-economic objectives. It participates in the preparation of sectoral strategies and policies that are aimed at achieving national objectives. Moreover, the department has to adopt planning mechanisms and tools to increase the planning capacity of the executive agencies, which are currently missing in Jordan. This includes its involvement in the ongoing Comprehensive Strategic Planning Programme and the development of the national comprehensive strategic planning framework.

The department also has functions related to international co-operation. It identifies national development priorities that will be reached with external assistance from donors and international organisations, which will call for close co-ordination with the Reform Secretariat.

### **The National Policy Support Department**

The main aim of MoPIC's National Policy Support Department is to strengthen national policymaking in Jordan by co-ordinating and supporting national strategic and policy planning, providing guidance and building technical capacity in line ministries. To ensure that MoPIC is the focal support point in policymaking, the department was established following the adoption of the PSMR and, since then, it has

undergone several changes in its structure and functions. While the new Planning Law does not define precisely the typology of strategic and policy documents, the department must cover both policies and strategies.

Apart from national policymaking, the department covers two other areas: competitiveness and international indicators, and gender policies and women's empowerment. In that regard, complementarities between policymaking and Jordan's priorities on competitiveness and enhancing its position in international indicators can be fostered through co-ordination within the department, as better national policies and strategies are ultimately aimed to achieve the long-term strategic objectives of Jordan.

The National Policy Support Department can specifically support strategic planning and policymaking in the following:

- Developing a general framework for the process of public policymaking and institutionalisation by drafting and publishing a guide for public policymaking to be disseminated to all stakeholders by international best practices.
- Acting as the main point of contact in the government for all matters related to national policymaking and contribute to reaching consistent views on policies within the government administration.
- Building the capacity of government policy agencies with regard to methodologies and tools for policy formulation, analysis and follow-up.
- Contributing to achieving an effective partnership for citizens and stakeholders outside the public sector, including scientific and research centres and academic institutions.
- Developing an enabling regulatory framework to ensure the quality of public policy design, implementation and evaluation.

As the department still ramps up, it can help further structure, formalise and strengthen Jordan's strategic planning landscape and processes. The department can help co-ordinate efforts on strategic planning, ensure alignment between national and sectoral plans, better define preparations, review and adoption processes of planning documents, enhance the quality and consistency of strategic plans, foster the development of implementation plans and indicators, and build capacities and network on strategic planning in line ministries. Furthermore, it can promote strategic planning benefits and principles across the administration and how they can ensure the implementation of national priorities and objectives as set in key national strategic documents. It can ultimately help better structure and organise the strategic planning cycle from the conception of strategic documents to their approval, implementation and evaluation.

In that regard, the department must be equipped with certain capabilities and instruments to deliver on its missions and enforce a more unified strategic planning system in Jordan. This involves analytical capabilities, inter-ministerial collaboration mechanisms, review and challenge functions on the quality and alignment between documents, guidance, methodologies and templates on strategic planning for the whole of government, and implementation and monitoring tools. Useful tools given the department's mandate could include a registry of existing strategies, a strategic planning manual describing the required connections across strategic plans and documents, the methodology and expectations for the content of a strategic plan and templates of strategic plans and implementation documents. For instance, Czechia, Egypt and Latvia have developed such strategic planning manuals (Box 1.6).

### Box 1.6. Latvia's strategic planning manual

Developed by the Latvian centre of government, the Policy Development Manual (hereinafter the Manual) is a concise document that provides a practical overview and guidance for policymakers at all levels, including politicians, public administrators and local decision-makers. It aims to foster a shared understanding of policymaking principles and procedures and enhance co-ordination.

The Manual dives deep into the various types and hierarchical structures of planning documents in Latvia. As such, it thoroughly describes the operational level (local, regional or national) and timeframe (short, medium or long term) for each planning instrument. It stresses the importance of vertical and horizontal integration of all planning tools, as this should be considered when developing a new plan. Moreover, the Manual briefly describes each possible type of strategic plan in the country, outlining its position within the planning system, key objectives and development procedures. International documents and their integration into national planning are also addressed.

Beyond clarifying the typology and hierarchy of documents, the Manual helps unravel Latvia's planning system and procedures in several other ways. Notably, it discusses the core policymaking principles such as sustainable development, interest alignment, public participation, financial resources and territorial development. These principles are crucial for the Latvian development of plans and thus should be addressed in planning tools. The Manual also provides a concise overview of key actors involved in policymaking and their respective roles. Additionally, it guides users on how policy objectives should be defined, provides a glimpse into policy impact assessment and evaluation, and includes real-world examples.

Numerous call-out boxes are placed throughout the Manual. These boxes offer helpful tips, highlight key points, provide practical examples and pose insightful questions to consider while developing new planning tools. For example, intervention logic – a tool that helps structure policy and enhance the achievement of goals – is broadly discussed in the Manual.

Source: Interviews with the State Chancellery of Latvia.

A number of OECD member and partner countries have established strategic planning units with broadly similar roles and activities over time, such as Egypt and Finland (Box 1.7). They play a crucial role in ensuring that government priorities are identified, reflected in all national and sectoral strategies and delivered across the government, that strategic plans are aligned at the national and sectoral levels, and that high-quality, harmonised and consistent strategic plans are prepared and implemented consistently and effectively.

### Box 1.7. Strategic planning units in OECD member and partner countries

#### The Government Strategy Department in Finland

The Government Strategy Department (GSD) in Finland is located in the Prime Minister's Office and performs strategic co-ordination and planning activities for the whole of government. The GSD was established in 2018 and carries out wide-ranging functions: strategic co-ordination and alignment, preparation and monitoring of the government programme, its operationalisation into an action plan, co-ordination of government work on research and foresight, the monitoring and delivery of key government long-term priorities (United Nations Agenda 2030) and the oversight and support of a ministerial working group on government priorities for which it usually plays the role of secretariat. These

activities are reflected in the structure of the GSD, with a dedicated team working on each of these topics.

The GSD actively engages with line ministries on strategic topics and co-ordinates inter-ministerial working groups and networks, including foresight, research and key government priorities.

### **The Strategic Management Unit in Egypt's MPED**

The MPED has broadly similar functions and tasks in Egypt to the Jordanian MoPIC. As a central planning institution within the Egyptian administration, the MPED is mandated to steer and co-ordinate the strategic planning process to translate the country's vision for sustainable development into annual actionable plans. It develops plans across different timeframes and ensures that sectoral strategies are consistent with national plans, the state budget law and other budget implementation laws. It is also responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of plans, diversifying funding sources for plans and programmes, and promoting partnership mechanisms with the private sector, civil society and international partners.

In particular, the MPED Strategic Management Unit supports the ministry's strategic planning efforts. The unit has been instrumental in the recent revision of Egypt Vision 2030 and leads the co-ordination with other strategic planning units across line ministries. It provides guidance and support. Among its practical works is a manual that provides guidance on how to build effective planning processes and the importance of strategic planning to reach long-term goals such as the SDGs and Egypt Vision 2030. This manual was published on the MPED portal to assist and guide public administration units through the strategic planning process.

Sources: OECD (2023<sup>[19]</sup>), "Strengthening strategic planning and the role of PlanAPP in Portugal", <https://doi.org/10.1787/95f819e8-en>; OECD (OECD, n.d.<sup>[7]</sup>), *OECD Public Governance Reviews: Egypt*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

### *The General Budget Department*

The GBD prepares, co-ordinates and carries out the budget process in Jordan and, more prominently, the General Budget Law and the Government Units Budget Law. The GBD also supports the implementation of modern concepts and methodologies in budget management and capacity building in line ministries (GBD, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>). It aims to play a pivotal role in strategic planning by overseeing financial matters and resource allocation, which are crucial to any strategic initiative. It is responsible for developing and managing the national results-oriented budgeting, ensuring that financial resources are allocated in alignment with the country's strategic priorities and development goals as well as its financial policies (Government of Jordan, 2024<sup>[26]</sup>). Leveraging results-oriented budgeting, the GBD oversees harmonising institutional strategic plans with their budgets and systematically monitors performance against expenditures.

Throughout the budget process, the GBD reports active engagement with line ministries and MoPIC to develop the budget and ensure the alignment of financial allocations with government priorities and financial policies (Government of Jordan, 2024<sup>[26]</sup>). The GBD annually reviews line ministries' plans, including cost estimates, to ensure that they align with the government's national plan and verify the budget proposals before issuing the budget circular. Once it has issued the budget circular outlining the budget ceiling, it ensures that all draft budgets submitted by line ministries fall under the budget ceiling before submission to the Prime Minister's Office. MoPIC also reviews these plans, focusing on executing the Modernisation vision and roadmaps, ensuring that funds are allocated to necessary activities.

The collaboration between the GBD and MoPIC is crucial to ensure that projects and activities related to the Modernisation vision are included in the budget and to support the connection between strategic planning and budget. This link is a key challenge across all OECD member countries, particularly due to



the lack of a structured framework and system to connect financial allocations with strategic objectives and priorities, creating funding and implementation gaps in strategic plans and policies (OECD, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). Several countries, like Estonia and Latvia, have established formal mechanisms to support this alignment. To this end, in Latvia, the Budget Expenditure Review Working Group brings together the Ministry of Finance, the State Chancellery, the Bank of Latvia and the State Audit Office to develop, submit and review financial proposals expenditures for line ministries. Similarly, in Estonia, strategic review meetings between the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office and the authoring line ministries facilitate discussions on the costing of strategic plans from the inception of each key strategy. Such mechanisms could also support the alignment between planning and budget in Jordan, along with capacity-building activities for line ministries, including costing measures and preparing financial proposals.

### ***Roles and functions of institutions responsible for implementation support and performance management***

Following years of strategic planning, the government of Jordan has reformed its strategic planning system with the launch of a new generation of national strategic plans in 2022. The government established two new units at the Prime Ministry – PMIO and PMDU – responsible for performance management and implementation of these national strategic plans introduced as part of these reforms. Additionally, a network of delivery units was established across ministries and governmental institutions to reinforce these efforts. The following sections aim to provide an overview of their current work, highlighting both progress achieved and areas of opportunity for further institutionalisation and improvements. Moving towards a unified planning system in Jordan would call for aligning the roadmaps and all strategic plans.

#### *The Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernisation Project Management and Implementation Office*

Establishing a lead institution for public sector reform and modernisation can be crucial for ensuring co-ordinated efforts across government, efficient implementation and sustained progress. A designated lead institution may serve as a focal point, streamlining communication and collaboration among various government agencies involved in the modernisation process. Better alignment and co-ordination ensure the focus on priorities and targets, reduce redundancies, minimise resource wastage and promote synergy. Additionally, a lead institution enhances accountability by clearly defining roles and responsibilities, making tracking progress and addressing challenges easier. Overall, a well-defined lead institution is instrumental in driving the systematic transformation of the public sector, promoting innovation and fostering a more responsive and effective government.

The OECD-EU SIGMA Principles of Public Administration (2017<sup>[27]</sup>) thus recommend “designat[ing] one institution with overall responsibility for leading and co-ordinating public administration reform policy and implementation” (OECD-EU SIGMA, 2017<sup>[27]</sup>). With the aspiration to effectively implement the PSMR and following a goal included therein to task a unit at the Prime Ministry's Office with “following up on government performance, removing barriers related to the speed of achievement, and enhancing accountability in plans and strategies” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>), Jordan established the Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernisation Project Management and Implementation Office (PMIO) in 2022. It was created through the prime minister's administrative bylaw (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[28]</sup>), which introduced changes in the administrative setup of the Prime Ministry.

Following the governmental changes in 2024, the PMIO has experienced an institutional change and now reports to the newly established Minister of State for Public Sector Development, who reports directly to the Prime Minister. While it is too early to assess the new model, this institutional setting could help strengthen the political visibility and the convening power of the PMIO on steering and co-ordination public administration reform efforts, and support decision-making on key priorities, measures and issues on implementing the PSMR.



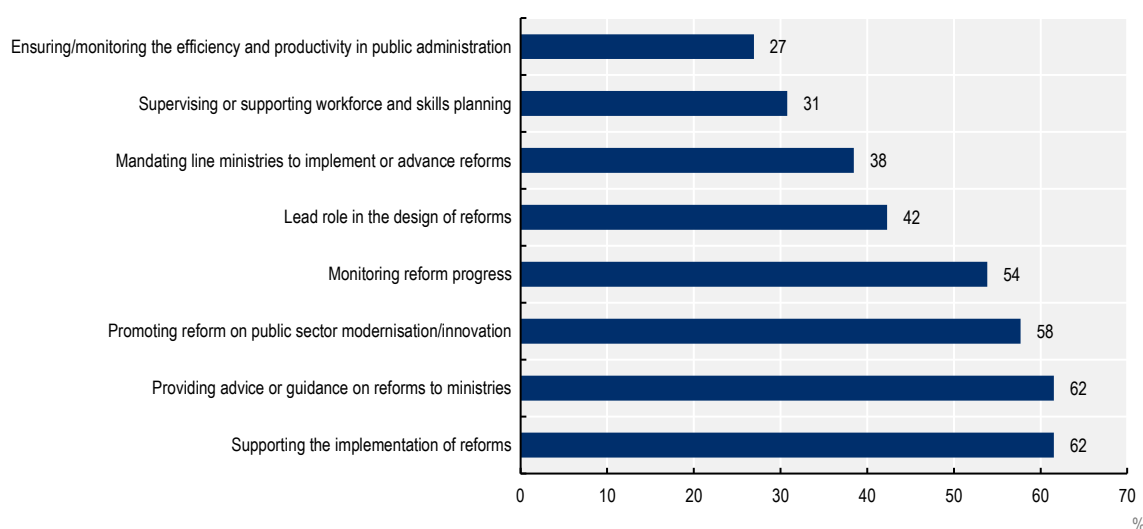
Under the previous setting, the PMIO had regular meetings and a formalised discussion on public sector modernisation with the prime minister to review progress and initiate required changes. Interviews confirmed that the PMIO currently counted on a high level of political support to steer the implementation process and focus on results. Moreover, the PMIO provides biweekly updates to the crown prince and monthly status updates to the king. This political support has led to the allocation of the budget, which is complemented by financial support from international donors. The appointment of a new Minister for Public Sector Transformation could modify the reporting lines and could further reinforce the relations and communications with the Prime Minister.

While the PSMR provides strategic initiatives and goals for the country to achieve, the PMIO is entrusted with coming up with tangible solutions, proposals and programmes to reach the objectives set out in the strategic document. The PMIO currently assumes four functions to varying extents:

1. Facilitating work of and providing technical implementation support to line ministries and agencies.
2. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the PSMR.
3. Implementing selected priority projects included in the PSMR: for instance, introducing principles for regulatory impact analysis.
4. Promoting and communicating the PSMR across and beyond government through the development of a communication strategy as well as plans and programmes to enhance institutional culture and change management across public administration.

While the PMIO currently concentrates on providing technical support to line ministries and implementing selected projects, its tasks for public sector modernisation reflect the four most frequently found responsibilities centres of governments play in public administration reforms across the OECD. As shown in Figure 1.4, in a majority of surveyed OECD countries, centres of government (typically the Prime Minister's Office, government offices and/or presidential administration) support the implementation of reforms, provide advice or guidance on reforms to ministries (62%), promote reforms (58%) and monitor the progress of reforms (54%) (OECD, 2024<sup>[11]</sup>).

**Figure 1.4. Roles centres of government play in public administration reforms in OECD countries**



Note: n=26. Respondents to the survey were asked: "What activities does the centre of government do in public administration reforms in your country?"

Source: OECD (2024<sup>[11]</sup>), *Steering from the Centre of Government in Times of Complexity: Compendium of Practices*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/69b1f129-en>.

To support the implementation of the PSMR, the PMIO provides capacity, resources and guidance to line ministries and agencies. For the 51 priorities chosen for 2023, the PMIO developed project cards that constitute action plans, detailing the institutional responsibility, donor support as well as implementation milestones. Moreover, the PMIO sometimes hires external consultants to provide expertise and support ministry work, while in other cases, they organise capacity building and training. Initially, this relatively new approach was reported to be met with resistance. However, following the consolidation of the work and political support, the PMIO is now perceived to bring value to the work done by line ministries and agencies.

The PMIO's latest institutional structure is organised around the priorities and components of the PSMR and of public administration reforms in Jordan, particularly on digitalisation. One unit supervises the digital transformation of the public sector while the Public Sector Modernization Program Management and Implementation Unit is structured around three teams working on government services, HR and institutional development. Under the latter unit, a dedicated office is also tasked with following-up and evaluating the implementation of PSMR. While the structure corresponds to the key missions and activities of the PMIO, it will be important to ensure that the PMIO has the authority, political support and capacity to deliver on its priorities across the administration.

The PMIO has reported at the end of 2024 on the progress and achievements made under the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap for 2024. The creation of Service Centres and the further digitalisation of services, with 60% of all services digitalised as of 2024, are contributing to the enhancement of government services for citizens. The overall public sector model is currently being modernised and restructured to enhance its impact, effectiveness and capacity. As part of these efforts, ministries are being restructured, including the Ministry of Investment and MoPIC with new models and units. In particular, MoPIC is currently developing a new structure and its capacities, with the aim to reinforce its role, mandate and capabilities in strategic planning. Capabilities across the administration are being enhanced, including on data with the creation of the National Interactive Data Center that could further support evidence and data-based policymaking, and on HR and public administration reform with the development of SPAC and of new HRM systems and tools. Further efforts to implement these new developments in the following years, particularly in the strategic planning and public administration reform systems, will be crucial to ensure the achievement of long-term objectives of Jordan.

### **Towards monitoring and evaluating the implementation of public sector modernisation**

A key responsibility of the PMIO, which is still in the process of being fully developed, is the implementation of the PSMR. Setting up a monitoring system across numerous ministries and agencies for the plethora of objectives included in the roadmap is a significant task that requires time and expertise. Together with its designated counterparts in each ministry, the PMIO has developed project cards to track the progress made on the roadmap through regular updates, requests for evidence of implementation and verification of the reports. A particular challenge for tracking progress that was reported during interviews is the definition of suitable and sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) indicators. Providing counterparts with guidelines and training on collecting, managing and reporting implementation data and evidence could help ensure monitoring quality and contribute to developing a more sustainable monitoring ecosystem.

The PMIO could consider formally setting up a network of liaison staff working on public sector modernisation in line ministries and agencies. By designating liaison staff and setting up a network, the PMIO could establish a structured and organised mechanism for sharing information, updates and feedback, enhancing the efficiency of the monitoring process. This formal network can ensure that relevant data and insights are systematically communicated among stakeholders, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the monitored activities. It also promotes the exchange of experience and practices, fosters co-operation and helps maintain consistency in monitoring methodologies, contributing to a more effective and cohesive monitoring effort.

In terms of tools, the intra-PMIO plans to replicate the PMDU's new monitoring dashboard to track progress on the EMV, which could significantly ease the PMIO's work, help set up an efficient monitoring system and create further momentum for public sector modernisation. Regular automatic updates on implementation could inform the technical and political counterparts in ministries, complement the current monthly reporting to a unit in the Royal Hashemite Court's economic department and help flag delays and challenges with implementation.

With regard to the evaluation of public sector modernisation initiatives, the PMIO has started work to determine their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and impact. A mid-term review of the PSMR's implementation, which includes an evaluation of the initiatives implemented to date, is underway.

### **Further institutionalising the PMIO and co-ordinating with SPAC**

Jordan's PMIO was created by a Prime minister's administrative bylaw that defines the unit's mandate and has helped steer and ensure the implementation of the PSMR since its establishment. Several areas of opportunity emerged from OECD-led interviews and exchanges with stakeholders: indeed, the government of Jordan may consider supporting the further institutionalisation of the PMIO's work, especially given the new changes in reporting mechanisms. In addition, while the bylaw is publicly available, it must be widely known across government and with regard to counterparts and international donors to strengthen the unit's legitimacy and promote accountability and transparency.

Enshrining an institution's roles and responsibilities, in particular related to tasks and processes that span the administrative boundaries of one or more institutions, can be beneficial for several reasons. First, a law, bylaw, regulation or policy document can provide a (legal) foundation for the institution's work, clearly defining its purpose, functions and authority, which is essential to establish legitimacy to work across government and maintain accountability and transparency. A clear mandate ensures that the institution operates within defined parameters, preventing arbitrary actions and promoting consistency. Additionally, having a clearly defined mandate strengthens the unit's legitimacy, instils public trust and helps safeguard against undue political influence. It also offers a basis for evaluating the unit's performance and holds it accountable to both the government and the citizens it serves. Overall, embedding a unit's mandate in a legal or policy document establishes a robust framework for its existence, operation and adherence to established principles, contributing to the overall stability and effectiveness of the government. A mandate could also help ensure that "the division of functions and responsibilities between institutions involved in implementing and co-ordinating [public administration reform] is clear, and there is no duplication or overlap; institutions involved are aware of their functions and responsibilities" (OECD-EU SIGMA, 2017<sup>[27]</sup>).

Temporary government co-ordination and implementation units for public administration reform can be established to strategically focus and expedite reform initiatives to ensure efficient co-ordination and timely execution within a defined timeframe. At the same time, the establishment and maturation of new government units often take considerable time due to the complexities involved in organisational structuring, resource allocation, personnel recruitment and the development of effective operational procedures. In line with the end date of the first action plan of the PSMR in 2025, the PMIO is only established on a temporary basis. After three years of operation, in 2025, a comprehensive performance and impact assessment study of the PMIO's work is planned. For the sake of ensuring reform continuity and keeping momentum for public sector modernisation beyond the end of the current PSMR, the government of Jordan could consider strengthening the PMIO's operational existence to secure reform continuity and sustain the momentum of public sector modernisation beyond 2025.

The PMIO should be further institutionalised in the context of a new public administration reform entity, the Public Service and Administration Commission (SPAC). Following public sector modernisation endeavours, the government of Jordan created SPAC in November 2023, with the mission to develop and unify the administrative services provided by the public departments and administration and to establish principles of governance and compliance within the public service and administration. This includes tasks

related to the management of policy and standard development in human resources, leadership, institutional culture, organisation transparency and performance, compliance, advisory support and job evaluation in the civil service. Replacing the Civil Service Bureau as a high-level entity reporting directly to the Prime Minister, SPAC reports to the prime minister and its president has the same rank as a minister (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[16]</sup>).

The roles, responsibilities and activities of the PMIO and SPAC need to be delineated and co-ordinated, which reinforces the need for a clear mandate for the PMIO. From their respective tasks and devoted activities, the PMIO can play a strategic role in steering, supporting and guiding line ministries, as well as monitoring the implementation of the PSMR and public administration reform initiatives as a whole, while SPAC can play a crucial role on the standards, organisation and performance assessment of the administration, including operational support to ministries in these areas. The co-ordination between both entities can be supported through direct and formal governance arrangements, including a regular board meeting between the management of both entities and their teams to align activities and needs and ensure consistency between PSMR objectives and the SPAC mandate.

The government of Jordan is considering the creation of a Public Sector Modernisation Committee that could play this function. Some OECD countries have established a “formal administrative co-ordination structure that handles operational [public administration reform] management issues, provides regular reports on progress in [public sector modernisation], identifies obstacles to progress and devises possible ways to overcome them” (OECD-EU SIGMA, 2017<sup>[27]</sup>). Such a co-ordination structure could help gather all relevant stakeholders with relevant competency and capacity. While this would first and foremost include line ministry representatives, Jordan could include non-governmental actors such as academic, civil society organisation or private sector and donor representatives, in regular consultation. Responsible for co-ordinating PSMR implementation, the PMIO could carry out secretariat functions in support. Examples of such co-ordination structures for public administration reforms can be found in Chile, Czechia, France or the United States (Box 1.8). The structure in Jordan could be headed by the deputy prime minister in charge of public administration and gather key entities involved in public administration reform, including the PMIO, SPAC, the Institute of Public Administration, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, MoPIC as well as other relevant agencies.

### Box 1.8. Administrative co-ordination structures for public sector modernisation in OECD countries

**Chile’s** Permanent Advisory Council for State Modernisation acts as an advisory and co-ordination body. Being administratively dependent on the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency, it comprises 12 councillors and a president, all appointed by the president of Chile and with recognised experience in public and/or private management. The councillors are representatives from government, municipalities, academia, civil society organisations, think tanks and the private sector. As an advisory body, the council provides a long-term vision and contributes to a sense of urgency and continuity to the modernisation process. Its co-ordination functions consist of aligning with other government advisory entities whose objectives are directly related to state modernisation and public management.

In **Czechia**, the Government Council for Public Administration is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the PAR Strategy 2030 and supporting the joint model of public administration. Established by government resolution in 2014, the council is located in the Ministry of the Interior and its president is always the Minister of the Interior. The council brings together representatives from line ministries (Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Industry and Trade, at least at the level of deputy ministers) and regional

and local governments. The council is mandated to monitor the PAR Strategy 2030 through a dedicated working group and make proposals to the government for decision.

**France** has a high-level Inter-ministerial Council for Public Transformation that is headed by the prime minister and brings together all ministries. The council meets once a year to determine the reform priorities for public sector transformation in France, discuss progress and make decisions on key activities and next steps. The council has recently defined 12 priority commitments to reform the public administration and services in replacement to the former public administration modernisation plan, *Action Publique* 2022. Its secretary is the director of the Inter-ministerial Directorate for Public Transformation.

In the **United States**, the President's Management Council (PMC) is an inter-departmental entity responsible for improving government-wide management and co-ordination practices. The council is made up of high-ranking administration officials from major executive branch agencies, primarily deputy secretaries, deputy administrators and agency heads from the General Services Administration and Office of Personnel Management. The PMC is tasked with overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes as well as performance and management leadership provision throughout government bodies. Moreover, it advises the president and the Office of Management and Budget on reform initiatives. Given that the PMC's members come from key administrative institutions and the PMC plays a crucial role in the development of government plans, it provides the highest level of accountability for both the improvement of internal processes and the implementation of plans.

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[3]</sup>), *OECD Public Governance Reviews: Czech Republic. Towards a More Modern and Effective Public Administration*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/41fd9e5c-en>.

### Building capacity and providing resources for reform

A crucial success factor for public sector modernisation is that the lead unit also has the capacity to carry out its responsibilities. It requires adequate financial resources and staff in charge of managing and co-ordinating reforms need to be “experienced with knowledge and skills in communication, teamwork, development, planning, organisation and conceptual, analytical and creative thinking, and they receive regular training” (OECD-EU SIGMA, 2017<sup>[27]</sup>). The PMIO is equipped with its budget and currently counts on sufficient financial means from donors to fund its work. At the same time, the limiting character of the current office space in the Prime Minister's Office was reported to undermine the unit's functioning. The PMIO's recent setup at the beginning of 2023 was followed by an institutionalisation phase to build the necessary capacity. Enabled through sufficient resources and the ability to pay salaries in line with remuneration standards at the Royal Hashemite Court, the unit is now comprised of a recently established small team of staff with a broad array of skills to fulfil the PMIO's various roles. Nevertheless, recruitment and human resource management are major challenges for the unit's future work. Interviews confirmed that the PMIO requires further expertise in communication, donor co-ordination and technical knowledge to implement specific public sector modernisation initiatives. The PMIO is currently working to provide for internal organisation capacities within the unit.

In the meantime, the creation of SPAC has also expanded the capacity to support developments and enhancements in public administration in Jordan. It is expected to have a relatively large staff of experts compared to the PMIO. It could also provide direct support to line ministries and help them expand their competencies and instruments while adhering to the highest standards of public administration quality. These standards could mirror the OECD SIGMA principles and more operational public administration quality tools such as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF, see Box 1.9) and Jordan's own KACE 5.0 assessment model. The CAF is a self-assessment quality tool for individual public sector organisations that is widely used in European Union member states and elsewhere. It can help support

and improve public sector organisations' performance, quality and resilience over time by exploring criteria for leadership, people management, strategy and planning, partnerships and resources, processes and results (EUPAN, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>). More than three-quarters of CAF users surveyed by the OECD confirmed that their experience with the framework helped during the COVID-19 crisis (OECD, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>).

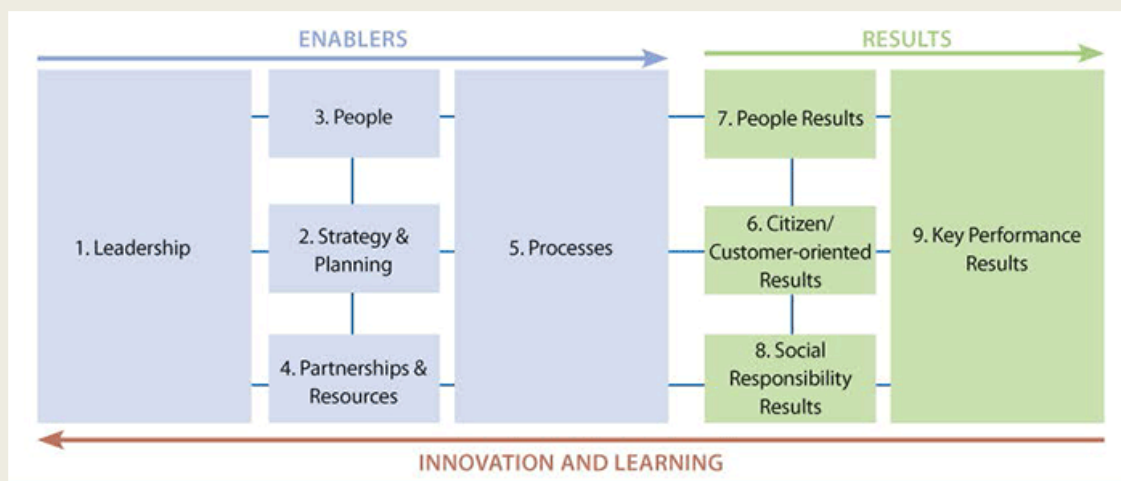
### Box 1.9. Overview of the Common Assessment Framework

The CAF is a quality management and organisational development tool that aims to reinforce operational performance, organisational excellence, positive societal outcomes of public sector organisations and resilience. Despite not being designed from the perspective of resilience, the CAF can nonetheless help assess the preparedness and adaptation of public organisations to the crisis and help them to be more resilient by looking at measures needed across its various criteria.

The CAF has been embedded in public administrations in European Union member states for more than 20 years and is a model applicable to all types of public sector organisations. More than 2 000 CAF users are registered in the European Institute of Public Administration database, representing a wide range of public sector organisations.

The model, aimed to facilitate self-assessment as an initial step to trigger a process of continuous improvement, includes nine overall criteria that are split between enablers and results. Each of these criteria are split into sub-criterion to make the assessment more precise and comprehensive. Eight horizontal principles of excellence are also defined and mainstreamed across different criteria, such as results orientation, citizen/customer focus, continuous learning, innovation and improvement. The model was last updated in 2020, right before the COVID-19 crisis, and included focuses on resilience, agility and digitalisation.

Figure 1.5. The CAF model, 2020



Note: For more details about the CAF model, please consult: <https://www.eipa.eu/caf-resource-centre/> and <https://www.eupan.eu/caf/>.

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[30]</sup>), "More resilient public administrations after COVID-19: Lessons from using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) 2020", <https://doi.org/10.1787/8d10bb06-en>.

Depending on the future institutionalisation and developments of both entities, the competencies of the PMIO and SPAC call for developing different levels and types of capacities in each institution to support

public administration reform, with a focus on strategic, analytical and monitoring skills in the PMIO and technical and operational expertise as well as standard setting and development and auditing in SPAC.

A number of OECD member countries have developed specific agencies and entities to steer, co-ordinate and implement public administration reform. For instance, France has established the Inter-ministerial Directorate for Public Transformation (*Direction interministérielle de la transformation publique*, DITP), which combines both strategic and monitoring roles with operational functions and support to line ministries on key reforms, as well as innovation development and dissemination across the administration (Box 1.10). This model might help Jordan delineate the activities of each institution involved in public administration reform.

### Box 1.10. France's Inter-ministerial Directorate for Public Transformation

In France, the DITP plays a central role in driving public administration reform plans and efforts, providing support, guidance and capacity building to line ministries and public agencies and monitoring. The DITP directly reports to the Minister for Public Sector Transformation and the Civil Service and has a staff of 120 experts and consultants. The DITP has recently undergone internal transformation with the creation of an in-house consulting agency for the public sector, grouping 60 agents dedicated to the day-to-day support of public administration bodies in their transformation projects.

Regarding the implementation of policy and public administration priorities, the DITP's mission is twofold: monitor the government's priority policies and their territorialisation; and provide direct support to public sector players in their transformation projects. Working closely with ministries and agencies, this support aims to promote innovation, skills development and the transformation of organisations, managerial practices and public management, and accelerate high-impact administrative projects with the support of its teams of in-house experts and consultants.

The DITP supports public sector players in implementing the government's priority policies, transforming their organisation, improving their operational efficiency, simplifying administrative procedures or processes, and involving citizens and civil society. It offers support services in more than ten areas of expertise, including strategy and transformation consulting, behavioural sciences, operational efficiency and process re-engineering, user experience and administrative simplification, citizen participation and civil society association, collective intelligence, service design, co-development, coaching, open innovation and experimentation.

In general, the projects in which DITP teams are involved are carried out over short periods, based on targeted objectives and with a concern for impact. They are characterised by a strategic alignment with the government's public transformation programme and priorities, a strong commitment from the partner administration, positioning as a partner of the supported administration and an objective of transfer and development of skills towards the administrations.

Source: French Government (2024<sup>[31]</sup>), *Qui sommes nous*, <https://www.modernisation.gouv.fr/qui-sommes-nous>.

Despite the PMIO's need to hire staff with experience in project implementation in specific areas, it cannot currently recruit officials from line ministries or agencies who may bring in their much-needed experience and expertise. The creation of a staff mobility programme could be instrumental in addressing the lack of expertise and facilitating the exchange of personnel with specialised skills and knowledge from line ministries. By temporarily deploying staff members with the relevant expertise, such a programme could help inject fresh perspectives, good practices and new skills into the unit and allow line ministries and agencies to profit from the staff's return. This cross-pollination of talent can promote collaboration and knowledge sharing, enabling both the PMIO and the line ministry to benefit from a broader range of



experiences and insights, ultimately contributing to building capacity. Box 1.11 provides an overview of a few staff mobility programmes in OECD countries that could be of interest to the government of Jordan.

### Box 1.11. Examples of staff mobility programmes in OECD countries

In **Canada**, departments or functional communities may offer a variety of rotation programmes. One example of a centrally managed rotation programme is the Mosaic Leadership Development Programme. The targeted population is employees a level below the executive ranks belonging to the four employment equity groups (women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of marginalised groups). The approximate size of the first cohort is 40. Experience-building assignments within the ministry or others within the public service are a required part of the programme.

**Belgium's** Talent Exchange is a mobility programme for Belgian public servants from all levels of government, mostly used by federal entities. Talent Exchange allows participating organisations to exchange talent for specific initiatives or projects with a duration of between 6 and 12 months, thereby giving public servants new challenges aligned with their skills and competencies. In 2021, 199 exchanges were published.

**Japan** conducts exchanges between the public and private sectors and between levels of government, although these programmes are not necessarily two-way exchanges. Thirty-five national public servants were dispatched to the private sector in 2021, while 308 private sector personnel were newly appointed to the government. In addition, 1 788 employees were transferred from the national government to local governments and 3 031 local government employees were accepted by the national government (as of 1 October 2020).

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[32]</sup>), *Public Employment and Management 2023: Towards a More Flexible Public Service*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5b378e11-en>.

SPAC's work and responsibilities in evaluating public administration performance can also be linked to the assessment and activities carried out by KACE (Box 1.12). KACE can provide a handful of important resources and public sector analyses that can help reorganise, enhance the processes and upgrade skills in organisations, including in key functions such as strategic planning.

### Box 1.12. The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence

KACE is an institution in Jordan dedicated to fostering a culture of excellence and innovation across public and private sectors, including non-governmental organisations. Established in 2006, KACE develops national excellence frameworks and evaluation criteria, assesses organisations' performance, advances skills in excellence and innovation, and manages King Abdullah II Awards for Excellence. KACE leverages international best practices in its assessments and guidance and the organisation has extended its expertise by providing technical assistance to other countries in the region.

In 2023, KACE launched the Fifth Generation Excellence Model, a new Jordan Government Excellence Model designed to enhance the responsiveness of governmental entities and service quality of government entities. This model equips institutions with information on efficiency principles, strategic planning, policy implementation, change management, innovation and government modernisation. The model is structured in three pillars: planning, implementation and transformation. Each pillar is supported by main and sub-criteria further divided into capabilities and their corresponding outcomes. In other words, the model connects relevant inputs, outputs and outcomes through the identified criteria.



Overall, the Fifth Generation Excellence Model is expected to serve as a practical roadmap for institutions to elevate their performance.

Source: Information provided by KACE.

### *The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit*

Over the past 20 years, many governments have decided to establish delivery units (DUs) to support the implementation of a number of high-level priorities at the sectoral level. More than 25 countries worldwide have opted to set up DUs at their centre of government (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>). Evidence from countries suggests that DUs can take various forms and be placed at different levels of government, thus reflecting variations in administrative and performance management traditions (World Bank, 2010<sup>[34]</sup>). Acting as more formal or informal entities, they are usually integrated into existing networks of planning, strategy development, policy co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation units. Currently, DUs exist in OECD member and partner countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Madagascar, Malaysia, Singapore and Uganda. Often located at the centre of government and usually composed of a small number of staff, DUs are expected to monitor progress on government priorities and help line ministries and agencies deliver their objectives. They typically choose a handful of performance indicators and employ regular progress-tracking methods.

Due to the nature of their work across government, DUs need explicit political backing and endorsement from senior government figures, often the president, prime minister or deputy, to convene across government to address challenges, solve problems and take decisive measures for implementation. Due to their proximity to the centre, they are closely associated with the leader in question (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>). Access to the head of the executive is crucial to call for binding problem-solving meetings and convening senior policymakers and senior civil servants. Such close association can also become a challenge in the case of government transitions and political leadership changes.

DUs tend to bring new and/or additional perspectives, tools and resources to the table, increase awareness and focus on priority goals, altogether breaking down barriers to achieving results. While DUs intervene in the policymaking process and work closely with different ministries and agencies, the responsibility for end-to-end policy implementation usually rests within the standing institutions (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>). Therefore, DUs are generally considered to be complementary facilitators to line ministries and agencies' work rather than being the lead implementers of priorities. In general, DUs take on some or all of the following functions:

- Monitoring the implementation of priorities across government.
- Promoting and communicating key government priorities across and beyond the public sector.
- Maintaining and channelling a focus on results on behalf of the head of the executive.
- Sending a clear message that the government is holding ministers and senior staff accountable for achieving the government's priorities.
- Supporting innovation and co-ordination for implementation and providing technical support and a forum for problem solving if required.
- Providing financial resources or support the search for funding through internal and external fundraising efforts.

Despite the above-mentioned common features, the rationale for creating the respective unit, the priorities set and the scope of work differ from country to country. For instance, in the United Kingdom, under the Blair administration, the DU focused on the issues citizens were the most dissatisfied with, while in Malaysia, the unit was primarily tasked with long-term economic and government transformation reforms. Moreover, DUs can also be deployed at the subnational level, as is the case for Australia.

In Jordan, the government has sought to operationalise a DU approach on several occasions. Several subsequent DUs existed between 2010 and 2019 and underwent multiple changes to their structure, staffing, functions and mandate under different prime ministers and governments (Qarout, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). From 2010 to 2013, a DU staffed with consultants was given a cross-sectoral mandate to follow up on national plans. The unit took on the responsibility of tracking a large number of projects and eventually became a project management office (Gold, 2017<sup>[36]</sup>). Limited institutionalisation and dwindling political support led to the DU's eventual abolishment. Re-established in 2015, the DU had a narrower focus on tracking and enabling priority initiatives within the Jordan 2025 strategy. To increase the unit's institutionalisation and position as regards ministries, it was integrated into the organisational hierarchy and staffed with civil servants instead of external consultants. This institutionalisation aimed to enhance the DU's role as a supervisory entity, ensuring that ministries were responsible for meeting their sector-specific KPIs. It also addressed the reporting structure and position of the DU within the bureaucratic hierarchy. At the same time, the DU encountered challenges related to its responsibility to follow up with institutions from across the government on more than 100 KPIs (Qarout, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). Paired with limited capacity and human resources, the broad mandate impeded the unit's meaningful engagement in the implementation process and tackling the challenges of single sectors and ministries – a challenge that had persisted from its inception in 2010. Furthermore, there was a need to increase the incentives and levers available to the unit to influence underperforming ministries and agencies (Qarout, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). The second DU ceased to exist in 2019.

The government of Jordan established its third DU in 2022. It was initially created to follow up on the Government's Economic Priorities Programme 2021-23. Later, with the political support of the prime minister and the Royal Hashemite Court, the PMDU became the central government entity responsible for the implementation and delivery of Jordan's EMV. In line with the PSMR, the government of Jordan also established “central institutional units that enhance follow-up, oversight and accountability over performance, and performance and achievement follow-up units in various ministries” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[13]</sup>). These specific monitoring units (or performance improvement officers) at the ministerial level directly collaborate and liaise with the PMDU. With the help of MoPIC, all ministry staff members in these mini DUs have received extensive training on the new performance dashboard.

### **Further institutionalising the PMDU**

While it was set up by the same bylaw as the PMIO (see previous section), the PMDU was established permanently (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[28]</sup>). To ensure that the unit's existence does not depend on political support from individual governments and that the PMDU continues to exist beyond single government cycles, the PMDU has been tied to the vision unit in the Royal Hashemite Court.

Contrary to other countries, no additional legislation or policy framework defines or guides the monitoring and implementation work of the unit. The majority of OECD countries have developed a legal framework that guides the work of units working on policy evaluation, defines approaches and scopes of practices and institutes the work of a long-term policy beyond single electoral mandates. The legal anchors of evaluation can vary substantially across countries. Some countries have specific stipulations in their constitutions (as in the case of Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Mexico and Switzerland), while others focus on primary or secondary laws. To provide Jordan's DU with the necessary legitimacy to work across government, the government needs to ensure the DU's role is sufficiently defined. A clear mandate could help create clarity within the government and communicate the role externally, for instance, to international donors.

In order to further institutionalise DUs, they can be equipped with their own budget and independent financial resources. While such an arrangement depends on their specific organisational and legal status, they operate with a dedicated budget allocated to their functions in some countries. In contrast, others draw resources from the overall budget of the larger government entity they are part of. The financial

arrangement can vary based on the goals, priorities and policies of the organisation or government implementing the DU. In Jordan, the PMDU currently does not count on its budget and funding constraints are reported to be a major challenge to the unit's operation. The government of Jordan could thus consider providing the DU with its own financial resources. In light of the lack of funding, it is particularly important that the DU closely co-ordinates with the Ministry of Finance or budget office, as the implementation of priority projects often requires additional funds for line ministries. The PMDU can help guide additional allocations or use discretionary funds (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>).

### **Driving performance through the centre of government monitoring**

A core task of many DUs is to track the progress of priorities across the government. “Light, nimble data collection and reporting systems that [are] not expensive or onerous to operate and maintain” as well as “systematic, regular monitoring of performance to assure responsible ministers maintain a continual focus on the objective” are two key factors for successful performance monitoring (World Bank, 2010<sup>[34]</sup>).

With a view to amending existing monitoring tools such as monthly, quarterly and semi-annual reports and to create a simple and direct monitoring mechanism for the deliverables included in the EMV, the PMDU recently completed the Prime Minister's Office development of an online monitoring system and corresponding dashboard ([www.pmdu.gov.jo](http://www.pmdu.gov.jo)). This can help create further momentum for monitoring and build commitment to the cause of performance management.

Since August 2023, this detailed dashboard has served internally to track progress on more than 442 priorities and projects, with the longest breakdown of 3 months. This allows the DU to detect potential problems or challenges related to implementation in a timely manner. Each ministry is granted full access to its projects. A version that tracks all government programmes is also publicly accessible.

The digital dashboard tracks the economic development priorities and initiatives outlined in the EMV's Executive Programme (2023-25). The tool presents KPIs, responsible ministries and agencies, and respective implementation timeframes. It allows to see the current status of programme delivery and shows how many are completed, not started, delayed or making progress and what the reasons for delays in the implementation of certain projects/priorities are. Users can filter projects by responsible entity, sectors or growth drivers. In addition, the platform offers an up-to-date overview of the country's macroeconomic development. Lastly, quarterly performance reports are readily accessible on the website.

The dashboard allows line ministries and agencies to directly input their data into the system and submit the progress reports digitally. The minister or delegate validates data before they are shared with the PMDU. The PMDU then checks the quality of the report and submits it to the dashboard. This new approval procedure places more responsibility on ministries and creates a more efficient monitoring environment. Interviews with government officials further confirm that the new dashboard has led to a renewed focus on indicators in line ministries and increased attention to progress by ministers. Moreover, the media and international donors are reported to be frequent users of the new publicly available dashboard.

As a result of the creation of the dashboard and corresponding system, implementing agencies submit monthly reports online; the PMDU reviews the monthly progress reports (for all activities within those priorities) every month. In addition to these, entities are required to submit quarterly reports on the overall progress of implementation on the internal dashboard, which detail challenges observed and interventions needed. Based on these internal reports, the PMDU prepares a quarterly report that is published on the dashboard. Tying expenditures to the results obtained by adding financial indicators could also further support economic assessment and cost efficiency of the measures implemented and help inform resource reallocation.

## Moving from monitoring to delivery through further prioritisation

There is a growing consensus that DUs are most effective when they focus only on a limited number of explicit and well-defined priorities they help achieve (World Bank, 2010<sup>[34]</sup>). Without a clear set of projects and initiatives to work on, DUs can be forced to stretch their capacity over a plethora of government activities. They cannot provide the in-depth technical assistance and support they were established for. To prevent such situations and build additional legitimacy across the public sector, DUs need to focus on mission results and a clear mandate on what to focus on and why (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>). This requires the selection and prioritisation of policies and activities. In this process, it is particularly crucial to focus on priorities that are neither too broad nor too ambiguous, shared by the majority of stakeholders involved in delivery, operationalised through measurable indicators and whose outcomes matter to citizens (Shostak et al., 2023<sup>[37]</sup>).

Due to its recent establishment, with the absence of a mandate set in a policy document and of a prioritisation mechanism, Jordan's PMDU is currently responsible for tracking a total of 514 government priorities linked to the implementation of the EMV and could further focus its role and activities on a limited set of priorities. Moreover, the number of priorities has continuously increased over time. To enable the PMDU to move from a mere monitoring unit to a results-oriented unit that facilitates the implementation of policies, solidifying priorities would allow staff to look at a small set of priority projects and deep dive into implementation. By assisting with the removal of implementation barriers, supporting co-ordination and providing help to increase performance, the PMDU could provide added value to line ministries and agencies (World Bank, 2010<sup>[34]</sup>). In similar structures in OECD member countries, the prime minister sets the list of focus priorities for DUs based on their mandate's key strategic plans, government programmes or policy priorities.

Governments have a number of tools and approaches at their disposal that can be applied to prioritise initiatives and interventions. Box 1.13 provides an overview of different practices in Canada, Colombia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. While the PMDU has started to develop an internal scoring system to determine potential future priorities based on impact, no decision has been made. In a move toward a more delivery-oriented approach, Jordan's PMDU has started to experiment with project implementation support. Still, there is a further need to systematise the technical assistance provided to ministries and agencies. It will also be important to clarify the relationship between the PMDU and its partner organisations. In addition to informal contacts, institutional relations must be clarified to ensure the PMDU can attend relevant line ministry meetings and receive project-related communication and information. A partnership approach, where the PMDU facilitates and supports delivery but line ministries are responsible for implementation and receiving the credit for successful delivery, has proven to work well in many countries. Further focus on prioritisation could thus help Jordan to focus on a delivery approach and leverage the potential of its DU.

### Box 1.13. Examples of prioritisation in OECD member countries

#### Translating strategy into a set of priorities in Colombia

In Colombia, the National Development Plan (2014-18) consisted of 831 indicators that were monitored by responsible ministries, departments and agencies. Within those, the centre of government's delivery unit focused on 21 selected priorities (or "mega-goals") and an additional set of sectoral goals. From the centre, the plan was monitored by the National Planning Department (*Departamento Nacional de Planeación*).

### **A focus on an outcomes approach in the United Kingdom**

In 2010, the United Kingdom government created a dedicated Cabinet sub-committee to identify the top priorities from a whole-of-government perspective. The previous approach, which asked individual departments to identify priorities, was replaced by the committee's work to create a centralised vision, relying on cross-departmental agreement and progress measurements.

Outcome delivery plans (ODP), introduced in 2021, lay out specifics of how each department works to achieve its priority outcomes. Instead of the narrow departmental priorities from the previous single department plans, the ODP emphasises inter-departmental work. This enables better outcomes for cross-cutting priorities and centralised monitoring.

The ODP is a helpful tool for the prime minister to oversee performance across institutions and to hold ministers and the civil service accountable. Key enablers are setting clear responsibilities and consistent co-ordination mechanisms, and ensuring departmental equality in terms of visibility and contribution to the plans.

### **Boosting performance through focused priorities in New Zealand**

Cross-cutting issues can create a challenge requiring comprehensive views and multi-agency co-operation. To address this, in 2012, New Zealand adopted the Better Public Services programme with a limited number of priorities and gathered institutions around their achievement.

The government of New Zealand met several times to agree on the ten most persistent social problems to be addressed by the public administration over a five-year term. The plan prescribed ambitious targets and set out baseline progress indicators. Public reports were published every six months, making the group collectively accountable. Performance increased in all areas.

This approach required the public administration, including the centre of government (the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury and the Public Service Commission) to overcome agency barriers and silos. Commitment to the goals set out and a relatively stable political environment were key enablers.

Source: Shostak, R. et al. (2023<sup>[37]</sup>), *The Center of Government, Revisited: A Decade of Global Reforms*, <https://publications.iadb.org/en/center-government-revisited-decade-global-reforms>.

Once a certain prioritisation has taken place and the DU increases its focus on delivery, the overall task of monitoring progress on the EMV could be relocated to another institutional entity. A 2018 OECD Survey on Policy Evaluation found that units in the centre of government (in 27 countries), the Ministry of Finance (in 26 countries) and the Ministry of Planning (in 7 countries) are the most common institutions in charge of policy monitoring and evaluation across government (OECD, 2020<sup>[38]</sup>). In the case of Jordan, the Ministry of Finance or MoPIC could, for instance, take over this role.

Performance dialogue and management are crucial and powerful enablers to deliver on priorities (OECD, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). This involves creating a system that structures routines, standardised tools and organisational arrangements for steering and monitoring progress in implementing priorities. In practice, governments have established defined procedures, shared tools (e.g. dashboards, KPIs), and inter-ministerial co-ordination meetings focusing on delivery that can discuss, review and accelerate the progress on specific items and priorities based on monitoring tools and results. For instance, the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office organises monthly meetings of key contact points in each ministry in charge of the ODP and of senior management, as well as quarterly meetings with state secretaries of the various ministries to ensure that the government is on track with the priorities defined in the ODP and monitored through the joint online Grip dashboard. These practices underline the need for the PMDU to also set up the relevant dialogue performance mechanisms to support discussions and decisions on the progress of key priorities.

that are outlined by the dashboard. This would call, for instance, for structured meetings with contact points and senior management in line ministries.

A reinforced focus on delivery and results also requires different human resources and skills to establish a team that monitors and understands sectoral projects and facilitates their implementation to foster impact. A DU's staff needs to be capable of examining complex policy issues through a whole-of-government perspective and assist in overcoming implementation obstacles that may exist in single institutions across the public sector or originate outside of the government (Brown, Kohli and Mignotte, 2021<sup>[33]</sup>). While DUs are often only equipped with a small team, sometimes recruited from the public and private sector, they usually count on highly skilled staff members, a DU's greatest asset. These may be recruited on a permanent basis, provided with temporary contracts (for instance, in the case of Malaysia) or seconded from line ministries or agencies involved in delivery. To attract high-skilled individuals, some countries allow DUs to recruit on competitive salaries that may exceed public sector remuneration standards. In Jordan, the PMDU is currently composed of ten staff members, including the director of the DU. Currently, no secondments from line ministries or agencies form part of the PMDU. The government of Jordan could consider establishing a staff mobility programme to temporarily provide the PMDU with highly skilled line ministry staff (for additional information, see Box 1.11).

## Policy recommendations

Following decades of planning practices, Jordan has embarked on a major reform path with a new generation of comprehensive national strategic documents supported by executive and action plans, dedicated support and monitoring units and a new planning law that can help consolidate roles. Jordan could further reinforce its policy framework for strategic planning and the implementation of strategic documents. This would aim to streamline the number of national and sectoral plans that exist in various formats, which can create difficulties in implementation and ensuring coherence. Such efforts could involve cancelling outdated or irrelevant plans. Furthermore, Jordan lacks a clear hierarchy and complementarity between its numerous strategic documents, making it more difficult to follow up and evaluate policies prescribed in the plans.

Current reform efforts, including through the new planning law, can contribute to clarifying roles, ownership and guidance. While national plans benefit from clear assignments and follow-ups, such as the EMV by the PMDU, the PSMR by the PMIO and the Reform Matrix by MoPIC, this is not always the case across all sectoral plans and strategies. Further efforts could be needed to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system, particularly at sectoral levels, as many sectoral strategies lack implementation documents and KPIs, making progress measurement unclear.

Jordan has shown its commitment to strengthening the strategic planning system and overcoming strategic gaps, notably in terms of alignment, instruments, sectors and roles between different government entities. Through an improved complementarity of strategic plans and a renewed focus on implementation as well as the public sector's capacity, the government aspires to improve the delivery of its priorities and policies. The OECD has identified several areas to further enhance the country's strategic planning, implementation and performance management processes to support Jordan's commitments. These opportunity areas are outlined below, suggesting practical steps for key entities, particularly MoPIC, the PMIO and PMDU.



## Policy recommendations

### The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

To align and integrate Jordan's strategic planning system, MoPIC could consider:

- Implementing and enforcing the law on strategic planning, which includes principles for strategic planning, high-level co-ordination and alignment mechanisms, and a hierarchy of strategic planning documents.
- Defining the hierarchy and complementarity of all national strategic plans and their objectives in a separate planning document or legislation; this could take the format of detailed and separate rules and procedures on the typology, preparations, development and approval processes of strategic plans.
- Undertaking a new stocktaking exercise of Jordan's whole-of-government and sectoral planning documents, including their time frames, objectives, reviews and related action plans to streamline strategic planning; encouraging ministries to address overlaps and finding synergies on specific plans and eliminate outdated, superfluous or not implemented whole-of-government strategic documents for more effective government action; ensuring that all documents are available and centralised in one database for reference.
- Ensuring that all remaining and future short-, medium- and long-term whole-of-government and sectoral strategies include cascading activities and goals from the highest-level national plans to ensure short-term goals are aligned and feed into medium-term goals, which contribute to long-term goals, or at the very least are not in contradiction with them.
- Establishing an online registry of strategies and portals, including templates for strategies and methodological guidance, displaying documents, their goals and measures, responsibilities for fulfilling them and indicators of success.

To enhance alignment, co-ordination and challenge functions at the centre of government, several steps could be considered. These measures aim to better integrate both sectoral and whole-of-government strategies, thereby consolidating a unified strategic planning system:

- Integrating MoPIC into the systematic review of new strategic plans is essential. This integration would focus on improving the quality of plans, ensuring consistency with other plans and aligning them with national priorities:
- Developing and enforcing the mandate of a MoPIC unit (National Policy Department) to steer the whole-of-government strategic planning process, co-ordinate the preparations of key national strategies, support the alignment of national and sectoral documents, review and challenge all future national strategic planning documents before finalisation to ensure they link effectively to whole-of-government priorities and the existing planning framework, ensure that sectoral strategies are established in all relevant areas, harmonise strategic documents, co-ordinate the work of strategic units in line ministries (and support their creation when they do not exist) and progressively develop capabilities in the entire administration.
- Preparing a strategic planning manual within the new MoPIC unit that would help unify the planning system, can be shared across the government and provide more detailed guidance to help public bodies responsible for the development of strategic plans; the manual could include a typology and hierarchy of strategic documents and templates, and guidelines on KPIs, objective setting, how to link with other national and sectoral plans, action plans and implementation mechanisms.



- Improving intrinsic capacity for sectoral planning in Jordan, in particular, to remedy the asymmetry in skills and resources across line ministries by identifying partners and potential gaps in line ministries and by providing resources to the MoPIC unit to support the development of strategic capabilities in all line ministries and agencies, for instance by organising training and coaching sessions on strategic planning.

To enhance co-ordination with other institutions responsible for strategic planning:

- Establishing a network of strategic planning units and contacts across line ministries led by MoPIC to discuss the strategic alignment of documents, share guidelines, tools and expertise and help build capacities across the administration; the network could meet every month.
- Strengthening collaboration with the GBD to ensure efficient fund allocation and alignment between strategic objectives, KPIs and allocated budget. In that regard, developing clear processes and mechanisms linking strategic planning and budget, for instance, ensures: the involvement of MoPIC, GBD and the authoring line ministry during the design phase of strategic plans; that costs of measures are assessed and priorities funded through a formal strategic review meeting at the concept phase; the appointment of contact points on strategic planning and budget in line ministries, or the creation of a working group following the financing of strategic plans within the budget process with the same interlocutors; the alignment of objectives, KPIs and financial allocations in strategic plans and implementation plans during their preparation and in the budget process; the systematic measurement and evaluation of plans against KPIs and allocated funds.

To develop consistent and harmonised outcome-focused KPIs across strategic plans and objectives:

- Refining KPIs to emphasise outcomes rather than solely focusing on progress or inputs.
- Ensuring that all strategic documents include well-defined and SMART KPIs with targets and timelines.
- Creating and reviewing connections and cascading between high-level KPIs from national plans into sectoral strategies.

To create detailed guidelines and toolkits to integrate stakeholder engagement and citizen participation within the planning cycle:

- Promoting and facilitating a supportive administrative culture for stakeholder engagement in strategic planning, for instance by providing guidance and templates on how to design stakeholder and citizen engagement strategies, which can range from information to co-creation or holding public consultations and hearings at the sectoral or agency level.
- Reinforcing the institutional framework for stakeholder engagement by building effective feedback loops by ensuring stakeholder and citizen engagement activities (national conferences, consultations, hearings, community scorecards) are carried out at a time that enables their outputs to be included in the process.
- Requiring institutions to provide feedback to stakeholders on how their input was used.

### **The Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernisation Project Management and Implementation Office**

To effectively support and modernise the public sector, the PMIO could consider:

- Reinforcing the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of public sector modernisation:

- Providing PSMR implementation counterparts with precise guidelines and training on collecting, managing and reporting implementation data and evidence, enhancing the quality of monitoring efforts and establishing a more sustainable monitoring ecosystem.
- Considering the formal establishment of a network of liaison staff working on public modernisation in line ministries and agencies. This structured and organised monitoring mechanism would ensure systematic and consistent monitoring of information exchange and foster co-operation between different stakeholders.
- Continuing work on a monitoring dashboard and publishing the results of progress made on KPIs that will be particularly helpful for the PMIO's Roadmap Achievement Office; sharing these results with the whole government and selected ones with the general public. Regular automatic updates would flag delays and challenges in the implementation of the PSMR.
- Further institutionalising the PMIO and delineating responsibilities with SPAC:
  - Promoting the PMIO's mandate and role across government and as regards international donors to strengthen its legitimacy and promote accountability and transparency.
  - Considering strengthening the PMIO's operational existence to secure reform continuity and sustain the momentum of public sector modernisation beyond 2025.
  - Clearly delineating PMIO and SPAC functions on public administration reform, particularly by highlighting the strategic steering, co-ordination and monitoring functions of the PMIO, including with regard to line ministries and agencies.
  - Codifying the relationship between the PMIO and SPAC, possibly through a memorandum of understanding, and establishing formal, regular bilateral co-ordination mechanisms between the two entities to ensure alignment, complementary actions and synergies on public administration reform.
  - Establishing and organising regular meetings of the Public Sector Modernisation Council, headed by the newly appointed Minister of State for Public Sector Development, composed of line ministry and other representatives to set and review priorities, make decisions with a focus on the PSMR. This body could gather the heads of the PMIO, SPAC, Institute of Public Administration, MoPIC, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, and other key agencies on public administration reform (such as KACE). The PMIO could act as a secretariat to support its co-ordination functions in the implementation of the PSMR. The decisions of the Council should also be shared and submitted to the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers when needed.
  - Considering also establishing a more operational, quarterly inter-ministerial committee with interlocutors from the same institutions (PMIO, SPAC, Institute of Public Administration, MoPIC, Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship) at a more operational level to discuss implementation, identify obstacles to progress and devise possible ways to overcome them.
  - Considering shared donor mapping to manage fundraising efforts between the PMIO and the MoPIC Foreign Funding Unit to avoid overlaps and ensure a coherent approach across different government entities.
- Building capacity and providing resources for reform:
  - Establishing a staff mobility programme to address limited capacity and expertise by facilitating the temporary exchange of personnel with specialised skills and knowledge from line ministries and supporting current priorities and programmes.

- Expanding PMIO and SPAC capabilities in their respective activities to ensure co-ordination, guidance and support for line ministries in implementing the public administration reform agenda.

### **The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit**

To enhance the effectiveness and impact of the PMDU, the following steps could be considered:

- Further institutionalising the PMDU:
  - Defining the PMDU's mandate in a policy or legal document to create clarity regarding the unit's roles and responsibilities, foster legitimacy and promote its work across government and with regard to international partners and donors.
  - Considering allocating a dedicated budget or independent financial resources to the PMDU that can be invested in key priorities.
- Transitioning from a monitoring focus to a delivery approach:
  - Encouraging the identification of a few priorities (tentatively five to seven) from the EMV in line with the prime minister's priorities to focus the PMDU's intervention on selected measures and topics, including close monitoring and support to line ministries involved in delivering these priorities.
  - Focusing on the prioritisation of projects and initiatives and solidifying the PMDU's tasks to move from a monitoring focus to a results-oriented approach to facilitate line ministry project implementation, assisting with removing implementation barriers, supporting co-ordination and providing help to increase performance.
  - Continuing to experiment with project implementation support and gradually systematising the PMDU's technical assistance provided to ministries and agencies.
  - Clarifying the relationship between the PMDU and its partner organisations and adopting a partnership approach, where the PMDU facilitates and supports delivery but line ministries are responsible for implementation and receive the credit for successful delivery. This can involve the preparation of memoranda of understanding to clarify the responsibilities, activities and resources to be mobilised by each partner.
  - Developing performance dialogue mechanisms with line ministries and key agencies involved in delivering the EMV on the implementation progress based on dashboard results, for instance monthly meetings with key contact points in each organisation and quarterly meetings with the senior level to discuss priorities, explore solutions and make decisions.
  - Once the unit's priorities are solidified, considering relocating the responsibility for general monitoring of the EMV from the PMDU to another institutional entity (e.g. MoPIC, given its role in strategic planning).
  - Considering establishing a staff mobility programme to temporarily provide the PMDU with highly skilled line ministry staff experienced in policy implementation and delivery.

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## **2 Towards Open Government in Jordan: Promoting Transparency and Access to Information**

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The Chapter examines opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the open government principle of transparency in Jordan. It analyses the country's legal and policy frameworks for access to information, including the mechanisms and tools for proactive and reactive disclosure. It provides an assessment of the institutional framework for access to information. Throughout, the chapter provides recommendations and reflects on good practices from OECD member and key partner countries to help the government of Jordan reinforce a culture of transparency.

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## Introduction

Transparency, underpinned by the right to access information (ATI), plays a crucial role in creating an efficient and effective public governance system that responds to the needs and demands of its citizens. By providing individuals with the means to access relevant information, ATI empowers people, promotes informed participation in policy and decision-making and is a precondition for holding public institutions accountable. In this sense, the right to ATI – an individual's ability to seek, receive, impart and use information (UNESCO, 2023<sup>[1]</sup>) – is a key contributor to the success of any national reform agenda in good governance. Recognising its relevance, Jordan has recently approved an amended version of its Access to Information Law, the Law amending the Law Guaranteeing the Right to Access Information 3/2024, in force since the 24 April 2024 (hereinafter the “amended ATI Law” or “2024 ATI Law”). In addition, Jordan has enshrined transparency as both a foundational principle and an objective of its Public Sector Modernization Roadmap 2022-25 (hereinafter “the Roadmap”) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). Under its rational, the Roadmap highlights that “There is a significant increase in demands for accountability and transparency in information and procedures (...), which impose on the government the need to be upfront and transparent with the citizens and adopt clear principles for reward and punishment” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). It also positions transparency and accountability as success pillars and foundations, defining them as “ongoing communication with citizens and partners, enhancing principles of transparency, openness and the culture of performance, clarity in procedures and availability of information around them, and applying the concepts of good governance, integrity and accountability in decision-making and service provision” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>).

The amended ATI Law and the high-level political commitment to the Roadmap, which aspires for Jordan to build “a flexible and efficient government structure designed around citizen priorities, compliant with the principles of good governance and enhance transparency and accountability” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>) could provide the necessary impetus to encourage a paradigm shift throughout the administration in favour of a culture of transparency. Jordan's pledge towards transparency is similarly included in its commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.10 to “Ensure public ATI and protect fundamental freedoms”, under which there is further room for progress according to the country's latest SDG voluntary national review (MoPIC, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>).

In addition to supporting the achievement of Jordan's goals for public governance, there is evidence to suggest that strong ATI systems can help create economic efficiencies, increase foreign direct investment (FDI) and foster economic growth (Box 2.1), which would in turn support another high-level policy document, the Jordanian Economic Modernization Vision (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[4]</sup>). For instance, businesses are a significant stakeholder group that can benefit from the vast amount of information collected by public authorities, much of which is relevant to economic matters and social trends, to make better decisions. The economic value of the information released under right to information requests has been assessed at billions of USD (UNESCO Jordan, 2017<sup>[5]</sup>).

### Box 2.1. ATI fosters higher economic growth and foreign direct investment

Evidence suggests that information transparency and accountability foster economic growth and investment. Some reasons identified include:

- **Reduces information asymmetries between economic actors.** For multinational firms, information transparency confers two advantages. First, “it decreases the uncertainty of the information they hold about a country's value as a location for investment” (Berliner, 2012<sup>[6]</sup>). Access to this knowledge enables multinational firms to best evaluate if investment in a country would be profitable for them or not. Additionally, ATI laws benefit foreign firms by allowing them

to access information about the operating environment that domestic firms already enjoy (Malesky, McCulloch and Nhat, 2015<sup>[7]</sup>).

- **Enhances predictability.** Where “laws and regulations are implemented in a manner which would allow firms to forecast and build new developments into their business plans” (Hollyer, Rosendorff and Vreeland, 2011<sup>[8]</sup>), predictability “also increases the likelihood that they will have advance warning in the case of any future attempt to expropriate or increase regulatory or tax burdens” (Berliner, 2012<sup>[6]</sup>).
- **Strengthens credibility.** Transparency in general, and specifically ATI laws, can increase policy credibility by placing monitoring and sanctioning ability in the hands of a greater number of domestic actors, making future policy reversals less likely (Berliner, 2012<sup>[6]</sup>).

These elements translate into beneficial results for the economy. Foreign investors place high importance on government transparency when deciding to invest for the first time or intensify their activities abroad (WTO, 2002<sup>[9]</sup>).

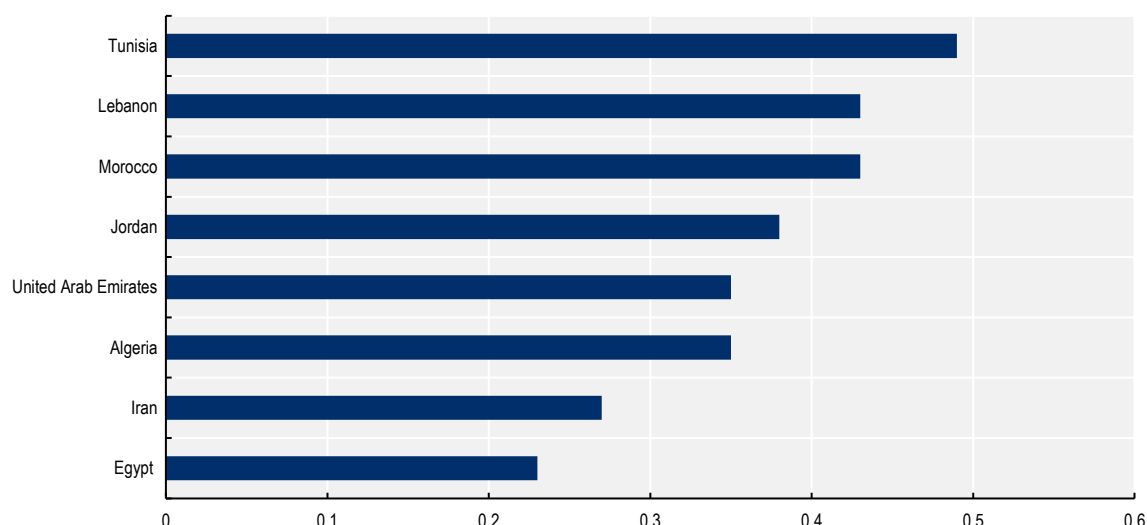
- **All else equal, non-transparent policies are linked to lower levels of FDI** (Payne and Drabek, 2022<sup>[10]</sup>). Similarly, low transparency has been shown to significantly hinder the inflow of FDI to host countries (Zhao, Kim and Du, 2003<sup>[11]</sup>). High levels of transparency are very closely correlated with FDI inflows (Caetano and Caleiro, 2009<sup>[12]</sup>).
- **Fiscal transparency** and its capacity to constrain government behaviour are **closely linked to increased FDI inflows and economic growth**. More specifically, a higher degree of transparency during the phase of budget execution is associated with increases in FDI inflows (Cicatiello et al., 2021<sup>[13]</sup>; Cimpoeu and Cimpoeu, 2015<sup>[14]</sup>).
- **Transparency increases economic growth once a certain threshold of transparency has been reached** and continues to increase growth, making the country more transparent (Law et al., 2022<sup>[15]</sup>).
- **Average income levels tend to increase** in correlation with higher levels of public sector transparency (Forssbaeck, 2021<sup>[16]</sup>).

Sources: Berliner, D. (2012<sup>[6]</sup>), “Institutionalizing transparency: The global spread of freedom of information in law and practice”, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/21770>; Malesky, E., N. McCulloch and N. Nhat (2015<sup>[7]</sup>), “The impact of governance and transparency on firm investment in Vietnam”, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecot.12068>; Hollyer, J., B. Rosendorff and J. Vreeland (2011<sup>[8]</sup>), “Democracy and transparency”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 73/4, pp. 1191-1205; WTO (2002<sup>[9]</sup>), “The impact of transparency on foreign direct investment”, <https://www.e-jei.org/upload/148HEKXL3092R4YH.pdf>; Payne, Z. and W. Drabek (2022<sup>[10]</sup>), “The impact of transparency on foreign direct investment”, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23000835>; Zhao, J., S. Kim and J. Du (2003<sup>[11]</sup>), “The impact of corruption and transparency on foreign direct investment: An empirical analysis”, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40835633>; Caetano, J. and A. Caleiro (2009<sup>[12]</sup>), “Is there a relationship between transparency in economic and political systems and foreign direct investment flows?”, *IUP Journal of Applied Economics*, Vol. VIII/2, pp. 45-58; Cicatiello, L. et al. (2021<sup>[13]</sup>), “Assessing the impact of fiscal transparency on FDI inflows”, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2020.100892>; Cimpoeu, M. and V. Cimpoeu (2015<sup>[14]</sup>), “Budgetary transparency – An improving factor for corruption control and economic performance”, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)01036-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01036-9); Forssbaeck, J. (2021<sup>[16]</sup>), “Transparency and economic development”, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429326936>; Law, S. et al. (2022<sup>[15]</sup>), “Non-linearity and the threshold effect of transparency on economic growth: Evidence from developing countries”, <http://10.1080/17487870.2022.21>.

Jordan was the first country to adopt an ATI law in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region – Law no. 47 of 2007 Guaranteeing the Right to Access Information (hereinafter the “former ATI Law” or “2007 ATI Law”) (Official Gazette, 2007<sup>[17]</sup>) – and made strides towards the law’s implementation, especially through Commitment no. 5 of the Fourth Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan (NAP) 2018-21 (OGP, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>) on institutionalisation of the enforcement measures of the ATI law. However, the OGP *Transitional Results Report Jordan 2018-2021* (2022<sup>[19]</sup>) underscores important gaps in the right to ATI in Jordan and the need to continue working to achieve a stronger ATI system. Similarly,

according to the World Justice Project (WJP) Rule of Law Index open government indicator, Jordan ranks 109 out of 142 countries in 2023 on the extent to which the government shares information and empowers people with tools to hold the government accountable as well as on the quality of information published by the government (WJP, 2023<sup>[20]</sup>). Figure 2.1 shows that Jordan performs better than several other economies in the MENA region but there continues to be room for improvement with respect to its neighbours.

**Figure 2.1. Rankings of open government in the MENA region**



Note: The open government factor of the WJP Rule of Law Index assigns a score from 0 to 1 with “0” being weaker and “1” being stronger. The WJP Open Government Index includes four dimensions: i) publicised laws and government data; ii) right to information; iii) civic participation; and iv) complaint mechanisms. More information on the methodology is available here: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/wjp-rule-law-index/wjp-open-government-index/dimensions-wjp-open-government-index>.

Source: WJP (2023<sup>[20]</sup>), *WJP Rule of Law Index - Open Government Dimension*, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/factors/2022/Open%20Government/>.

The challenges mentioned above were exacerbated by the approval of Law no. 17 of 2023 on Cybercrime (Official Gazette, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>) on 12 August 2023, which raised concerns at the national and international levels due to its potential implications on civic freedoms, especially on freedoms of expression and information. In this context, King Abdullah II stressed during a meeting with the National Centre for Human Rights' board of trustees and the Jordan Press Association that combating cybercrimes should not be at the expense of Jordanians' right to express their opinion and criticise public policies, and he encouraged further discussions in parliament about a possible amendment of the ATI law (Press Release, King Abdullah, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>) to ensure everyone's right of timely access to correct and accurate information. This discussion, which had started in 2019, regained momentum, leading to the approval of the amended law. In synergy with the national priorities mentioned above, Jordan has a unique opportunity to embrace the positive additions of this amended ATI Law and align its implementation with international good practices. This will support Jordan in its aims to foster economic growth, combat corruption, counter disinformation, remain accountable and, ultimately, strengthen citizens' trust in public administration. This chapter aims to support Jordan in its journey to implement its amended ATI Law, consider future improvements and develop enhanced mechanisms for proactive and reactive disclosure through comparative analysis and recommendations based on good practices from OECD members and partner and European Union countries.

## The legal framework for transparency and ATI in Jordan is growing stronger but some challenges remain

### ***Jordan has ratified international treaties that protect the right to access information***

In Jordan, the ratification of international treaties is sufficient to incorporate them into Jordanian domestic law and to be invoked before national courts. This makes international instruments Jordan has ratified a fundamental part of its legal framework. Furthermore, the Constitutional Court, through Decision no. 1/2020 regarding the interpretation of Article 33 of the constitution, confirmed that it would not be permissible to issue laws that contradict the obligations acquired by Jordan through international treaties.

Jordan ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1975, under which Article 19 establishes that “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to *seek, receive and impart information* and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (emphasis added) and also foresees that “the exercise of the rights (...) carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary: a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; b) For the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals” (UN, 1966<sup>[23]</sup>). Hence, the right to access information can be considered a fundamental right under Jordan’s legal framework.

Recognising the need to bridge the gap between the content of the ICCPR and the 2007 ATI Law, Jordan’s Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (2016-25) (Government of Jordan, 2016<sup>[24]</sup>) foresaw aligning the national legislations and policies related to the right to the freedom of opinion and expression with the constitution and international conventions, to the extent endorsed by Jordan. As a key activity it included “amend and further activate” the 2007 ATI Law, as done through the amendment approved in March 2024.

In the context of the fight against corruption, Jordan ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2005, in which Article 10 establishes that countries will “take such measures as may be necessary to enhance transparency in its public administration, including with regard to its organisation, functioning and decision-making processes, where appropriate” and in Article 13 establishes a commitment to “(a) Enhancing the transparency of and promoting the contribution of the public to decision-making processes; (b) Ensuring that the public has effective access to information” (UN, 2005<sup>[25]</sup>).

### ***Enshrining the right to access information at the highest level***

The Jordanian constitution, adopted in 1952 and amended in 2011, is the pinnacle of the Jordanian legal system. Chapter 2 of the constitution describes the fundamental rights of its citizens, including freedoms of opinion and expression. Different international declarations and legal authors have deemed that the right to access information can be subsumed in these two rights (UN, 1948<sup>[26]</sup>; UNESCO, 2009<sup>[27]</sup>) since it is a precondition for their exercise. However, the constitution does not acknowledge the fundamental right to access information explicitly, unlike 70% of respondent OECD members and economies from the MENA region to the 2020 OECD Survey on Open Government such as Egypt (OECD, n.d.<sup>[28]</sup>), Morocco and Tunisia (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Box 2.2 highlights some examples of countries that have included this right in their constitutions. Enshrining the right to access information at the highest level would have the potential to ensure its longevity throughout changing political cycles and would provide a stronger legitimacy to developing other legal and institutional frameworks on ATI at all levels and branches of government. It would also be in line with the government’s plan to further align Jordan’s legal framework with the international human rights covenants it has ratified. As such, Jordan could consider recognising the right to ATI at the highest level.

## Box 2.2. Examples of MENA and OECD countries with the right to ATI in their constitutions

### Morocco

- Article 27: “The citizens [feminine] and citizens [masculine] have the right to access information held by the public administration, the elected institutions and the organs invested with missions of public service. The right to information may only be limited by the law, with the objective of assuring the protection of all which concerns national defence, the internal and external security of the State, and the private life of persons, of preventing infringement to the fundamental freedoms and rights enounced in this Constitution and of protecting the sources and the domains determined with specificity by the law”.

### Tunisia

- Article 32: “The state guarantees the right to information and the right of access to information and communication networks”.

### Belgium

- Article 32: “Everyone has the right to consult any administrative document and to obtain a copy, except in the cases and conditions stipulated by the laws, federate laws or rules referred to in Article 134”.

### Colombia

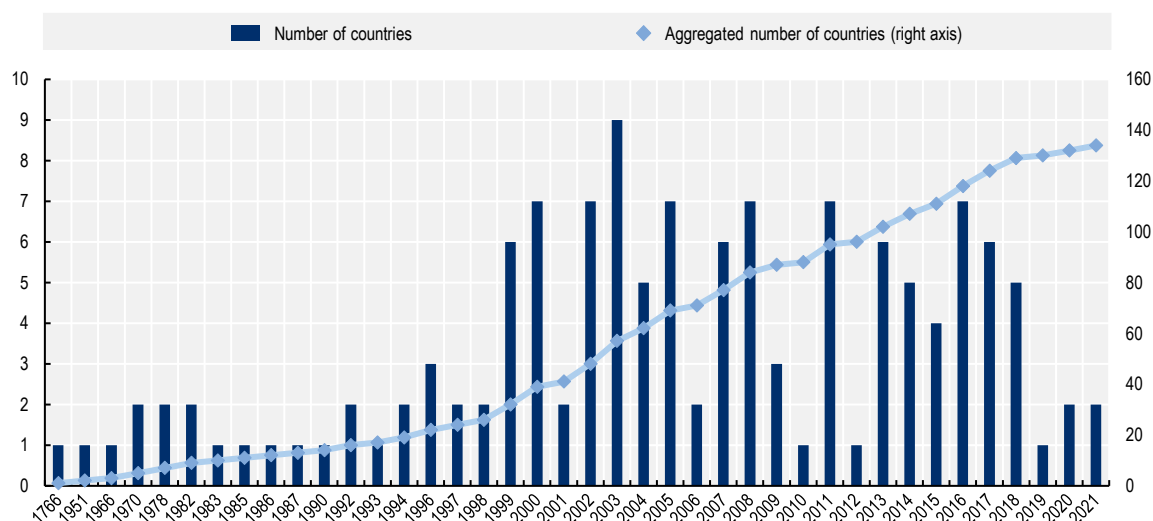
- Article 20: “Every individual is guaranteed the freedom to express and diffuse his/her thoughts and opinions, to transmit and receive information that is true and impartial, and to establish mass communications media”.
- Article 74: “Every person has a right to access to public documents except in cases established by law”

Sources: Government of Belgium (2021<sup>[30]</sup>), *The Belgian Constitution (English translation)*, [https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf\\_sections/publications/constitution/GrondwetUK.pdf](https://www.dekamer.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/publications/constitution/GrondwetUK.pdf); Government of Colombia (n.d.<sup>[31]</sup>), *Political Constitution 1 of 1991*, <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=4125>; Government of Morocco (2011<sup>[32]</sup>), *The Constitution*, [http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/constitution/constitution\\_2011\\_Fr.pdf](http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/constitution/constitution_2011_Fr.pdf); Government of Egypt (n.d.<sup>[33]</sup>), *2014 Constitution*, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt\\_2014](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Egypt_2014); Government of Tunisia (n.d.<sup>[34]</sup>), *The Constitution*, [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia\\_2014](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Tunisia_2014).

## ***Jordan has taken an important step to strengthen its legal framework by amending its ATI law***

Jordan was a pioneer in the MENA region by adopting its 2007 ATI Law and paving the way for other MENA economies that have since approved their ATI laws. In this sense, Jordan joins the large majority of countries worldwide: 134 countries currently have an ATI law, according to Global Right to Information Rating (Center for Law and Democracy, 2023<sup>[35]</sup>) (Figure 2.2).

However, it is crucial for countries to continually monitor and evaluate their ATI laws to address any bottlenecks and gaps that arise in practice and guarantee that they reflect changes in how modern public administrations work. Jordan, like Morocco and Tunisia in the MENA region and 30% of OECD member countries, has amended its ATI laws since they were first adopted.

**Figure 2.2. Evolution of the adoption of ATI laws, 1766-2021**

Source: Centre for Law and Democracy (n.d.<sup>[36]</sup>), *By Country - Global RTI Rating*, <https://www.rti-rating.org/country-data/>.

It is important to note that to fully reap the benefits of ATI law and increase buy-in and appropriation by the public administration and citizens, any amendment to the law should be developed through a participatory approach. Interviews during the fact-finding mission highlighted that selected entities and civil society organisations (CSOs) were engaged in formulating the amended ATI Law,<sup>1</sup> including extensive consultation with the National Center for Human Rights. However, the draft was not open to a broad citizen and stakeholder consultation through the Legislation and Opinion Bureau platform. Jordan could consider involving stakeholders in implementing the amended ATI Law and developing bylaws to infuse them with helpful inputs and foster stakeholder ownership and buy-in.

Through its OGP Fourth NAP 2018-20, Jordan adopted Commitment no. 5, “Institutionalization of the enforcement measures for Access to Information Law” (OGP, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>) to complement the content of the former ATI Law and advance its implementation. The leading implementing agencies were the Department of the National Library in the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (now the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, MoDEE) and the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC) for the fourth milestone of the commitment. A committee was formed in 2019 to follow up on the commitment, comprised of representatives from the Open Government Unit at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), the Department of the National Library, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (now MoDEE), JIACC, the National Center for Human Rights, the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, the Jordan Transparency Center and academics from the Al-Hussein Bin Talal University and the Princess Sumaya University for Technology. The committee was entrusted with developing an executive plan and following it up to implement the commitment to institutionalise the procedures for the right to access information. The plan included several implementation stages, including forming committees of specialists to develop protocols jointly with experts, promoting approval of the protocols by the Council of Ministers, preparing and implementing awareness and training materials on the protocols, and contributing to designing a compliance matrix in co-operation with JIACC.

These committees finished their work after the approval of the three protocols by the Council of Ministers. The results were three protocols finalised in 2020 and endorsed through Formal Letter No. 65/10/6/24254, dated 22 December 2020, from the prime minister to the minister of culture approving the three protocols



and instructing all governmental ministries, bodies and institutions to comply with them. Therefore, the protocols are considered binding:

- The **Information Classification Protocol**, which outlines a system to classify the information in possession of each public entity in advance to determine what information is available and what is not (i.e. which is confidential) by the provisions of the former ATI Law. This includes, for instance, criteria for identifying the information that should be proactively disclosed, reactively disclosed and confidential.
- The **Enforcement Procedures for Access to Information Protocol**, which aims to establish a unified and institutionalised process for implementing the former ATI Law by best practices. It does so by defining the specific roles and duties of each entity when enforcing the law and outlining the requisites for internal operations to guarantee the right to ATI.
- The **Documents and Files Management and Indexing Protocol**, which develops a system for information management with the aim to harmonise practices for indexing across public entities.

As mentioned throughout this chapter, the protocols reflect promising practices aligned with international standards. Based on OECD research and interviews, there remains a need to raise public officials' awareness of the protocols and to achieve their implementation. The Department of the National Library has conducted significant efforts to train officials since the protocols were approved (see section "Capacity building and training of public officials"). However, in many cases, they are still not applied in practice, with officials focusing solely on the contents of the ATI Law.

In addition to the above committee, two technical committees were formed among relevant public institution and CSOs to develop amendments to the 2007 ATI Law in line with international good practices, resulting in the draft presented in parliament in 2019. While the 2019 amendments were not approved at the time and were debated in parliament in subsequent years, they formed the basis of the amendments approved in the 2024 ATI Law, with limited modifications.

Moving ahead, Jordan could consider maintaining some of these committees, whether created to fulfil its OGP commitments or for legislative efforts, to ensure their continued implementation and monitor their sustainability. This would enable the pursuit of open government goals as part of a more sustainable strategic vision for the country and would perpetuate the momentum of reforms.

Through the amended ATI Law, Jordan has enshrined some of the protocols' provisions into legislation, such as obligations related to proactive disclosure. This is a step in the right direction, although some key provisions and procedures were not included. As part of implementing the amended ATI Law, it will be relevant to update the protocols to ensure their alignment with the amended ATI Law. In April 2024, a new committee was formed to develop bylaws and regulate the implementation of the amended ATI Law.

Aspects that are well-regulated in the protocols but not in the amended ATI Law include for example: in the Enforcement Procedures for Access to Information Protocol, the responsibilities at each level of management for the implementation of the ATI Law within a public entity (Article 4); the detailed procedures for dealing reactively with information requests, both in person and digital, including the need to seek user feedback (Article 5); the full nature of the annual report that each public entity should provide to the Information Council (Article 6); the development of ATI performance indicators in each entity (Article 8); and the development of ATI awareness, promotion and training initiatives to be carried out by each public entity (Article 9). In the Information Classification Protocol, internal ATI committees are created for the classification of information and the procedure to do so (Articles 5-8). Finally, the system outlined in the Documents and Files Management and Indexing Protocol could serve as a basis for the system of information management that should be regulated in the bylaws according to the amended ATI Law.

As the above-mentioned provisions of the protocols are still relevant and compatible with the amended ATI Law, Jordan could consider enshrining the content of the protocols into bylaws of the amended ATI Law,



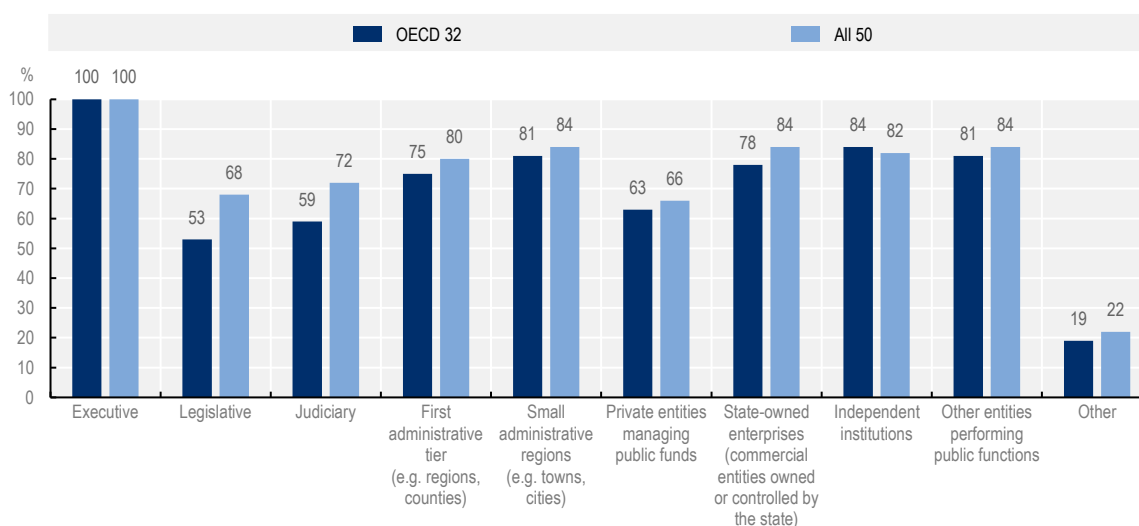
which would ground these good practices in a stronger legal framework and make their implementation more likely.

### Scope of the amended ATI Law

The scope of Jordan's amended ATI Law is considered to be broadly in line with international good practices. Article 2, related to definitions, states that “public entity” in the law refers to “any ministry, office, authority or committee or any public official or official public institution or company that manages public facilities, unions/syndicates, and parties, and any body that receives partial or complete funding from the state’s general budget or from any foreign party” (Official Gazette, 2024<sup>[37]</sup>). As the former law, the amended ATI Law applies across the executive, legislative and judiciary powers, as well as to the Royal Hashemite Court; it applies to both first administrative tier and smaller administrative authorities like towns and cities and also covers state-owned enterprises, independent institutions, hospitals, universities, trade unions, professional associations, municipalities and the Social Security Corporation. As a new addition, it covers political parties and anybody receiving total or partial government funding. Figure 2.3 reflects the scope of ATI laws across OECD member and partner countries (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>).

**Figure 2.3. Scope of application of ATI laws, 2020**

Percentage of countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: At the time of writing, Costa Rica did not have an ATI law but an executive decree applying to the executive branch; therefore, the country was not included in this question.

Source: 2020 OECD Survey on Open Government, in OECD (2022<sup>[29]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

### Promoting proactive disclosure of information: What, when and how information is published proactively

Proactive disclosure refers to the act of regularly releasing information without the need for a request by stakeholders. It reduces the administrative burden for public officials handling and answering individual ATI requests, which can often be lengthy and costly. Favouring proactive disclosure “encourages better information management, improves a public authority’s internal information flows, and thereby contributes to increased efficiency” (Darbishire, 2010<sup>[38]</sup>). Finally, it ensures timely access to public information for citizens as information is published as it becomes available and not upon request (OECD, 2016<sup>[39]</sup>). The

information should be clear, complete, timely and reliable, in line with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017<sup>[40]</sup>).

In Jordan, the need to proactively disclose information has been enshrined in the amended law for the first time (Box 2.3). This brings it in line with most OECD countries, which provide a list of information proactively disclosed by central/federal governments as stated in the law or any other legal framework in respondent countries (Figure 2.4).

### **Box 2.3. Proactive disclosure according to the amended ATI Law (2024) and the Information Classification Protocol in Jordan**

Article 8 of the amended ATI Law reads as follows:

*“The public entity must periodically publish the following:*

- *Information related to the public entity’s organisational structure, the tasks assigned to it, its work mechanisms, and legislation related to it;*
- *Information related to the department’s budget, details of its items, distribution mechanism and auditing of the department’s accounts and expenditures, financial deficits and surpluses, and their causes;*
- *Information related to the general policy, programs, plans and projects of the public entity;*
- *A detailed list and general description of the services provided to the public and the conditions required to benefit from these services if certain conditions exist;*
- *Annual or periodic reports issued by the concerned public entity;*
- *Agreements relating to the operation of the public entity;*
- *The name of the Information Officer and the mechanism for communicating with him or her;*
- *Tenders offered by the public entity;*
- *Any other information that the Information Council needs to publish.”*

*The Information that has been published, disclosed, or delivered to the person requesting it by the concerned authorities can be used or reused, on a condition to mention the date of its acquisition and source, and that its content is not distorted in accordance with the provisions of the document indexing and classification system issued pursuant to the provisions of this law.*

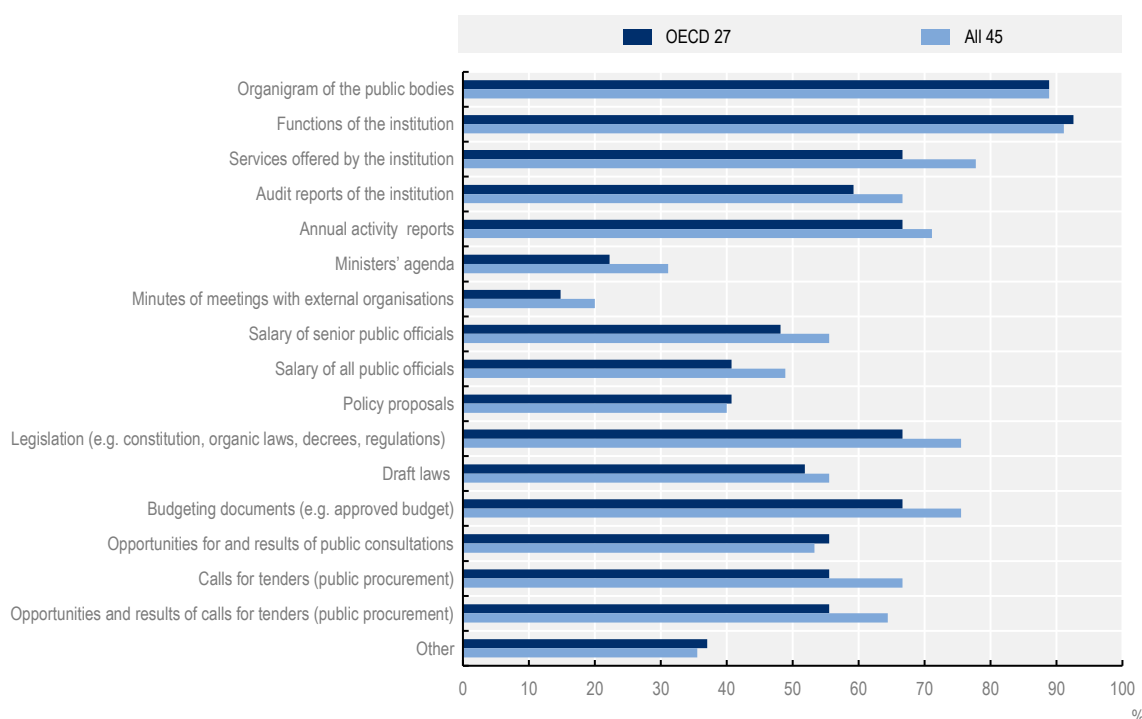
*The Armed Forces, General Intelligence and Public Security departments are excluded from applying the provisions of this article.*

Compared to the article on proactive disclosure contained in the Information Classification Protocol (2021), while both documents are generally in alignment, some additional provisions in the protocol include: “The information held by the department and its types” and “Information related to all sectors, whether raw data, aggregated or statistical information, such as economic, social and residential information”. Both categories are relevant and continue to be binding in the current framework; however, their overlap may create confusion among public officials and entities when responding to requests. This reinforces the need to create relevant bylaws that consolidate the content of the protocols and are fully aligned with the amended ATI Law.

Source: The new ATI Law (2024); the Information Classification Protocol (2021); the Information Classification Protocol (2021).

In light of the amended ATI Law, public entities in Jordan will need to pursue and scale up their efforts to proactively disclose information in the coming months. According to the information received by the Information Council in the annual reporting cycle of 2022, only 40 public institutions among the entities that responded to the prime minister’s circular by submitting information reports carry out proactive disclosure in practice, out of the 124 that received the circular (about one-third). This points to the need to enhance proactive disclosure across all of the concerned entities, which may require technical support to upload information onto governmental websites, as well as to strengthen prior classification efforts.

**Figure 2.4. Information proactively disclosed by central/federal governments as stated in the law or any other legal framework, 2020**



Note: "All" refers to 45 respondents (27 OECD members and 18 non-members).

Source: 2020 OECD Survey on Open Government, in OECD (2022<sup>[29]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

### *How to prioritise what information to disclose?*

Two approaches are particularly helpful when deciding what information to disclose proactively. First, the information to be proactively disclosed should ideally be of particular interest to relevant stakeholders, such as citizens, civil society actors, the private sector and journalists. In this sense, Jordan could consider consulting stakeholders on which information is most useful for them and could enable its prioritisation in the disclosure efforts, saving stakeholders and the public sector significant resources and time spent on ad hoc requests. Similarly, Jordan could track and measure which information is most frequently requested and disclosing this type of information periodically could help increase efficiency.

In this regard, there is still room to improve the prioritisation approach of the Information Council by focusing on uploading updated information that is likely of higher interest to the public first. Jordan could adopt a more strategic outlook to enhance the department's work efficiency while being more useful for stakeholders. Jordanian officials may benefit from targeted capacity-building and training to this effect.

### *Accessibility of information through multiple channels*

In Jordan, proactively disclosed information is mostly published on each ministry's or institution's website and the Official Gazette is used for disclosing legislative information (e.g. constitution, organic laws, decrees, regulations). In many countries, such information is also gathered in a central portal that acts as a one-stop shop for ATI; Jordan could consider this the next step to enhance proactive disclosure of information.

In this regard, the new e-government portal, which has been recently launched by MoDEE, could be a channel to enhance the user experience for citizens, residents and tourists that seek public information online. The portal provides information about Jordan's geography, population, governmental structure, tourist landmarks, visa procedures, and the history of the Hashemite Royal Family, in addition to information about policy priorities, such as the modernisation roadmap, and about key economic sectors. Furthermore, the new website contains a directory of all government institutions and their contact details, which can facilitate smooth interaction between citizens and government bodies. In regards to digital governmental services, users will be re-directed to the website of Sanad Digital Services to simplify online interactions and enhance efficiency in accessing governmental services.

The website encourages interactive feedback, allowing users to share suggestions and complaints directly with the government through the *Bekhedmetkom* platform. This website could be populated with some of the key information to be proactively disclosed, such as the governmental entities' organisational structures, budgets, policy programmes, plans and projects, public services, annual reports, the contact information of all information officers per department, etc. or provide easy links to each departmental website containing this information.

## Box 2.4. One-stop shops for ATI

### Brazil

To ease the information request process, Brazil created Fala.BR (<https://falabr.cgu.gov.br/web/home>), an innovative platform combining federal *ouvidorias* and the Citizen Information Service obligations. It allows citizens to request information and make complaints or claims against any federal body, express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a service or programme and provide suggestions for improving or simplifying public services. Importantly, users can also follow the progress of their request and file an internal appeal in case of non-conformity with the response. In addition, Fala.BR allows the government to provide up-to-date statistics on requests. Overall, by centralising ATI requests into a single system, the Fala.BR platform has significantly simplified the process for citizens, stakeholders and federal government institutions when making or processing an ATI request.

### Morocco

In Morocco, the information portal Chafafiya.ma (<http://www.chafafiya.ma/>) allows any citizens and foreign persons legally residing in Morocco to submit and track information requests by Law 13-31 relating to the right to obtain information. The platform, handled by the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform, allows users to make requests directly in the portal, follow their progress and receive the information required through the platform in different formats. It also includes data about requests, such as the number of applications that have been submitted so far through the portal at the time of writing (15 490 in total), the number of processed requests and the average response days, among others.

Source: Government of Brazil (n.d.<sup>[41]</sup>), *Fala.BR - Plataforma Integrada de Ouvidoria e Acesso à Informação*, <https://falabr.cgu.gov.br/publico/Manifestacao/SelecionarTipoManifestacao.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>; Government of Morocco (2024<sup>[42]</sup>), *Chafafiya.ma Information Portal*, <http://www.chafafiya.ma/>, accessed on 20 September 2024.

The accessibility and usability of these online tools are key to ensuring that all citizens can easily locate existing information. Furthermore, these websites and portals should be designed to minimise barriers for both the general public and those with specific needs.

### *Open data*

Jordan has developed an open data platform that allows concerned entities to access governmental data and enables all beneficiaries to access the list of government data available. This platform presents the open datasets in possession of government agencies in open and machine-readable formats so that, according to the conditions in the Jordanian Open Government Data License, datasets published on the platform can be used, reused and redistributed by anyone and in any place for any purpose. This is done in accordance with the Open Government Data Policy issued by MoDEE (formerly the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology) and approved by the Council of Ministers in 2017 (Council of Ministers, 2017<sup>[43]</sup>) and the instructions for publishing open government data on the open government data platform issued in 2019 (Council of Ministers, 2019<sup>[44]</sup>). As provided for in the National Digital Transformation Strategy and Implementation Plan (2021-25) (MoDEE, 2021<sup>[45]</sup>), the government of Jordan, in 2024 through MoDEE, is developing a more advanced platform called an open data portal, which according to OECD interviews will have more modern features in line with international good practices. The portal is being developed and intended to go live in 2024-2025. It will entail a migration of all existing datasets onto the new platform.

Jordan continues to be committed to populating the open data platform and is currently focusing on increasing the number of available datasets. The Roadmap foresees “publish[ing] all data related to governmental services on a government open data management platform and spread awareness of this platform” by the end of 2024. At the same time, a focus on quality is required to ensure that the available datasets are truly useful. The quality of the datasets uploaded onto the platform has been highlighted as a challenge during OECD interviews. It also mentions launching a programme to encourage young people, innovators and programmers to take advantage of open data to provide pioneering work models that help develop services and ways to provide them to customers in new and innovative ways.

### *Budget transparency would benefit from stronger interinstitutional collaboration and participatory initiatives*

The General Budget Department (GBD) at the Ministry of Finance handles Jordan’s efforts towards budget transparency by co-ordinating inputs across the administration to respond annually to the International Budget Partnership Open Budget Survey, where Jordan has consistently scored 61-63 out of 100, which makes it the highest ranked economy in budget transparency in the MENA region since 2006, and participation in the European Union Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability programme. In addition, the GBD applies a results-oriented approach to budgeting by linking budget programmes to strategic goals and measuring progress with key performance indicators. Moreover, the GBD publishes annual reports of its activities, including results against key performance indicators.

Budget transparency is a fundamental dimension of ATI and can bring important benefits. Evidence shows that fiscal openness benefits citizens, societies and governments through lower corruption, enhanced accountability, more inclusiveness and higher levels of trust (OECD, 2024<sup>[46]</sup>). It is associated with better macro-economic management, lower borrowing costs and more efficient resource allocation (IMF, 2018<sup>[47]</sup>). In particular, budget transparency is key to adopting effective budget decisions and monitoring their adequate implementation. Along these lines, the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Budgetary Governance (2015<sup>[48]</sup>), which provides a comprehensive, integrated set of guidance on budget formulation, management and its links with other aspects of good public governance, calls on governments to “ensure that budget documents and data are open, transparent and accessible” (OECD, 2015<sup>[48]</sup>).

This includes, among others: ensuring the availability of clear, factual budget reports which should inform the key stages of policy formulation, consideration and debate, as well as implementation and review; the presentation of budgetary information in comparable format before the final budget is adopted, providing enough time for effective discussion and debate on policy choices (e.g. a draft budget or a pre-budget

report), during the implementation phase (e.g. a mid-year budget report) and after the end of the budget year (e.g. an end-year report) to promote effective decision-making, accountability and oversight; the publication of all budget reports fully, promptly and routinely and in a way that is accessible to citizens, CSOs and other stakeholders; the clear presentation and explanation of the impact of budget measures, whether to do with tax or expenditure, noting that a “citizen’s budget” or budget summary, in a standard and user-friendly format, is one way of achieving this objective; and the design and use of budget data to facilitate and support other important government objectives such as open government, integrity, programme evaluation and policy co-ordination across national and subnational levels of government (OECD, 2015<sup>[48]</sup>).

With a score of 60 in the Open Budget Survey (2023), since 2006, Jordan is the best placed among all the MENA economies that participate in the survey, which include Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen (IMF et al., 2023<sup>[49]</sup>).

The GBD strives to raise awareness of the budget process among Jordanian citizens through awareness campaigns, as well as among public institutions that need to implement transparency in their budgets. In 2023, they were especially focused on conducting a campaign for university students on budget execution. The GBD has identified growing the application of budget transparency at the regional and local levels as a particular challenge.

Despite the GBD’s strong commitment to transparency, OECD interviews highlighted that they would benefit from co-ordinating more systematically with other institutions focusing on transparency and participation in Jordan, such as the Information Council. In this regard, several opportunities have been identified to strengthen the GBD’s performance on budget transparency through stronger interinstitutional collaboration with specialised bodies.

First, Jordan’s performance in budget transparency and participation would benefit from stronger co-operation between the GBD and the Audit Bureau of Jordan, given the latter’s expertise in monitoring public policies, as well as with the Tax and Customs Departments, which are key entities when it comes to budget development. This would support the creation of a more cohesive ecosystem conducive to budget transparency and possibly improve performance in the Open Budget Survey.

Second, Jordan scores low on the Open Budget Survey pillar concerning participation in the elaboration of budgets and could benefit from strengthening how citizens engage with the budget process. In this regard, the GBD has developed a Citizen Guide, which presents a user-friendly summary of the draft budget laws, and published it on its website to enable citizens to provide comments on the draft law, which is open for consultation. Although there is a window on the GBD’s website to receive comments and inquiries from citizens, there is a need for a dedicated and user-friendly channel to receive citizen inputs. In this regard, the GBD could significantly benefit from co-operating with MoDEE through the e-participation platform currently being developed in collaboration with the Legislation and Opinion Bureau, which could serve as the right platform to conduct citizen consultations on draft budget laws. In addition to this option, the GBD and line ministries should consider involving citizens in all stages of the budget law drafting process, such as its formulation or implementation, and not only to provide comments once the law is finalised.

Jordan has also conducted some participatory budgeting efforts at the local level in recent years, engaging local communities in the decision-making process of their governorate councils’ budgets. However, this type of participation method has not been implemented nationally. The GBD could benefit from implementing innovative participatory budgeting initiatives at the national budget level<sup>2</sup> (see Chapter 3 on Promoting Responsiveness and Stakeholder Participation). An additional option may be to establish a dedicated team or official in charge of citizen participation in budget affairs to increase specialisation and capacities at the institutional level.

Finally, the GBD makes available an email address, telephone and WhatsApp numbers to receive inputs, questions and information requests from citizens, but they receive a very limited number of requests, the ones received being largely from journalists. Jordan could strengthen co-ordination between the Information Council and the GBD to ensure that the department uses adequate ATI forms, benefitting from the established procedures through the ATI Law and the three ATI protocols. In addition, the GBD could carry out awareness campaigns to promote these mechanisms so that citizens can request budgetary information and participate in the budget process.

### ***Ensuring agile and trustworthy reactive disclosure of information***

Reactive disclosure refers to citizens' right to request information that is not made publicly available. The amended ATI Law foresees the right of every Jordanian to obtain the information they require according to the provisions of the law if he or she has a legitimate interest or reason and describes the possibility of making a request in Article 7. In 2022, within the 54 institutions that reported their ATI activities to the Information Council, 4 016 requests for information were received in 41 public institutions. Out of these, 3 845 requests for information were accepted, while 171 requests were denied, reaching an approval rate of 95.74%.

High approval rates have remained stable during the past 10 years in the reporting institutions (Table 2.1), never dropping below 90%, which can be a strong positive indicator of the practical application of ATI in the country. However, the quality of the information provided in response to requests and users' satisfaction with the information and process, should also be analysed to provide a holistic assessment. The vast majority of requests are submitted by individual citizens (87% in 2022), followed by researchers (11%) and journalists (2%). Despite these numbers, civil society and journalist stakeholders pointed out during the OECD fact-finding mission that the perceived number of denials is higher and that there is a perceived lack of transparency. Jordan could benefit from the publication of yearly reports with the numbers of received requests versus acceptance and denial. Also, Jordan could carry out further research to understand if the perception of lack of transparency is due to the quality and presentation of the information.

Noticeably, the number of requests received across institutions has varied widely during the past decade, reaching a peak of 13 349 requests in 2018 after a surge between 2016 and 2018, but then dropping significantly by 2020 to 2 220 requests (Figure 2.5). One explanation as pointed out by relevant stakeholders is the increasing proactive disclosure of information by the government, as well as the creation of the open data platform, which has had a positive effect by making key information available, therefore reducing the number of requests from the public and lowering transaction costs for the administration. An additional reason for the sharp drop in 2020 might be the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on in-person requests. Jordan could consider carrying out some research in this regard to understand the fluctuations of requests and address any gaps and bottlenecks for users.

The institutions that received the most requests in 2022 were the Service and Public Administration Commission (SPAC, formerly the Civil Service Bureau), the Department of Statistics, the Jordan Customs department and the National Library (see Figure 2.6).

Cumulatively, these four institutions received roughly 70% of all ATI requests across the 124 institutions to which the ATI Law applies. While the top receiving institutions are not the same every year, this information could facilitate implementation efforts. Jordan could consider targeting the institutions that receive the most requests first and focus on those with a smaller percentage later. This could make the administration more responsive to citizen and stakeholder needs and faster than attempting to strengthen ATI over a hundred institutions.

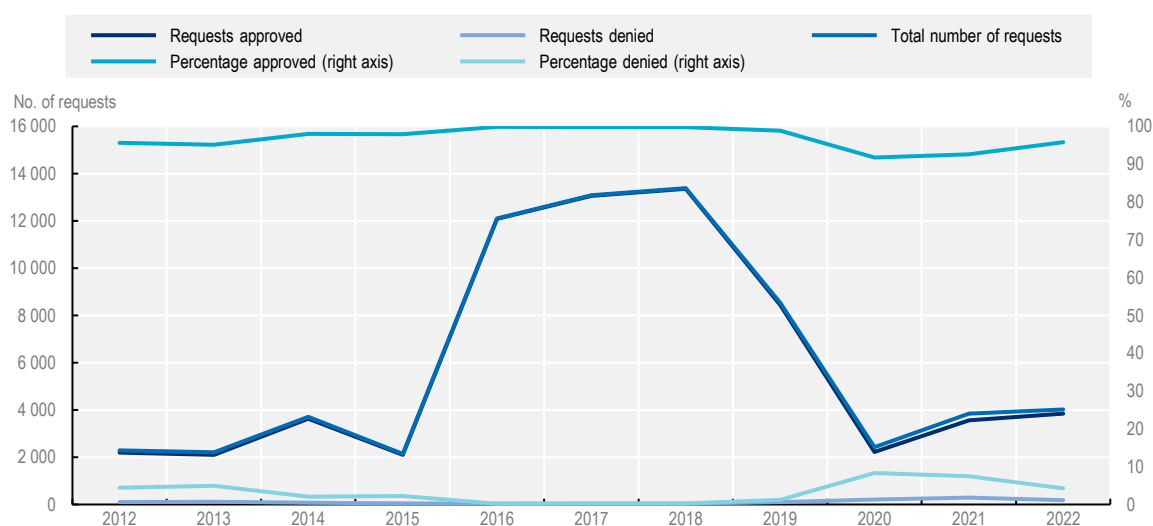


**Table 2.1. Number of ATI requests in Jordan**

Year	Number of institutions that responded to circular	Requests approved	Requests denied	Percentage approved	Percentage denied	Total number of requests
2012	15	2 186	100	95.63	4.37	2 286
2013	8	2 101	108	95.11	4.89	2 209
2014	13	3 624	74	98.00	2.00	3 698
2015	40	2 094	47	97.85	2.20	2 140
2016	45	12 077	24	99.80	0.20	12 101
2017	49	13 049	34	99.74	0.26	13 083
2018	49	13 349	34	99.75	0.25	13 383
2019	54	8 436	99	98.85	1.16	8 534
2020	37	2 220	200	91.74	8.26	2 420
2021	58	3 550	284	92.59	7.41	3 834
2022	55	3 845	171	95.74	4.26	4 016
2023	56	3 740	218	94.49	5.51	3 958

Note: These figures respond to the institutions that reported their ATI activities to the Information Council, out of the 124 public entities the law applies to. To have a full representation of ATI requests' approval rates in Jordan, information from all of the institutions would be required.

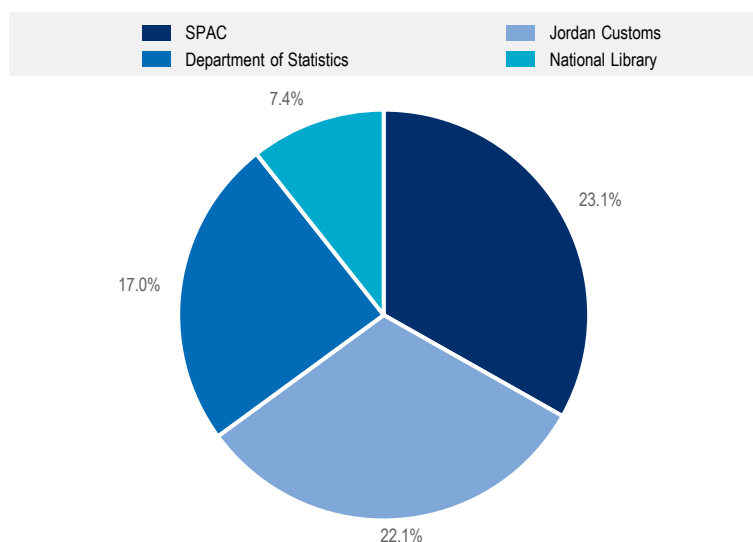
Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2024.

**Figure 2.5. Evolution of the number of requests**

Note: This information reflects requests received by the institutions that provided annual reports to the Information Council.

Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2023.

**Figure 2.6. Institutions in Jordan received the highest numbers of ATI requests, 2022**



Note: SPAC, (formerly the Civil Bureau) received 928 requests, the Jordan Customs department 891, the Department of Statistics 686 and the National Library 298 in 2022.

Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2023.

### *Any person or stakeholder should be able to request information*

In principle, any person, regardless of age, gender, religious belief, legal status and political affiliation, and any institution or organisation, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector, should be able to request information. In Jordan, according to Article 7 of the amended ATI Law, any Jordanian national natural or legal person with a legitimate interest or reason has the right to make such requests. Non-national legal residents may also make these requests if there is a reciprocal provision towards Jordanians in their country of origin. This presents a positive development regarding the former ATI Law since the amended law clarifies that the right to make requests applies to Jordanian legal persons (such as companies and civil society) and foresees that previously excluded foreign legal residents could obtain information. However, there is still room to align with most OECD countries, 82% of which stipulate that “anyone can file a request for information” without further qualifications, according to the 2020 Survey on Open Government.

As mentioned, the amended ATI Law requires a legitimate interest justification when people apply to obtain information. In line with international standards, the absence of motivation should not serve as a reason to reject the request and the motive or reason for the request should not be a prerequisite. Only a few countries globally require a motive, while others do not require the intention behind the request but allow requestors to state their reasons, which may be considered for resolution of the request.

An additional obstacle in Jordan is that the term “legitimate interest” is neither defined nor limited, which could potentially give place to contradictory interpretations at the discretion of the public institutions. In this sense, Jordan could clearly define what is comprised under “legitimate interest” in line with international standards in the new bylaws for the amended law.

### *Protecting the identity of requestors*

The amended ATI Law foresees that an official form to request information in Jordan shall be approved. The form, which presumably will continue to be the same one used to date, is readily available on the website of the Information Council as well as on the websites of almost all ministries.<sup>3</sup> It requires the full

name of requestors, their national number, a copy of their identity card, their home and work addresses, their employer's name, their contact details including phone, fax number, email and post office box, the purpose and legitimate interest for requesting information, the object of the request (i.e. what information is needed), the requested format (carbon copy, compact disc or other) and the signature of the requester. In the case of organisations, the information required is the name, registration type, number and date of authorisation letter and the name of the authorised person. The form also includes a commitment to be signed by the requestor stating that he or she will use the information for the purpose specified in the request form and that they will make reference to the information source.

Protecting the identity of requestors is important to avoid the risk of profiling citizens and acting on biases by governments. However, it is an area where global progress is required and 75% of OECD member respondents to the 2020 Open Government Survey and MENA respondents, such as Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, still do not allow for anonymous requests (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Only 18% of all respondents have a legislative framework that explicitly protects the integrity and privacy of individuals and parties that file a request for information, for example in Mexico, Poland and Sweden. Alternatively, some countries require information to be filled in but do not verify it, enabling the use of pseudonyms to protect the requestor's identity or limiting the number of public officials who can access that information (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). In the case of Jordan, an initial step in this direction could be to avoid mandatory completion of all categories that are not essential to fulfilling the request, such as requesting a single contact method and only requiring the employer's details if the request is made in the context of the person's work.

### *Ease of filing requests and measures for inclusiveness*

The process of filing an ATI request in Jordan, especially following the increasingly frequent application of the three ATI protocols, is relatively straightforward. It can be done in person or on line through the standard form approved by the Information Council. It is free of charge, except for costs linked to the reproduction of materials (e.g. printing), as mentioned below. Most ministries have this form readily available on their website to fill in digitally or download for printing. Leveraging the opportunity to review their practices in accordance with the amended ATI Law, Jordanian public entities could consider reviewing their websites to ensure the ATI form is easily identifiable on their website's homepage.

The availability of both in-person and digital options for filing requests is a positive aspect of fostering inclusiveness. It can bridge the digital access and skills gaps and make it more accessible for the elderly.

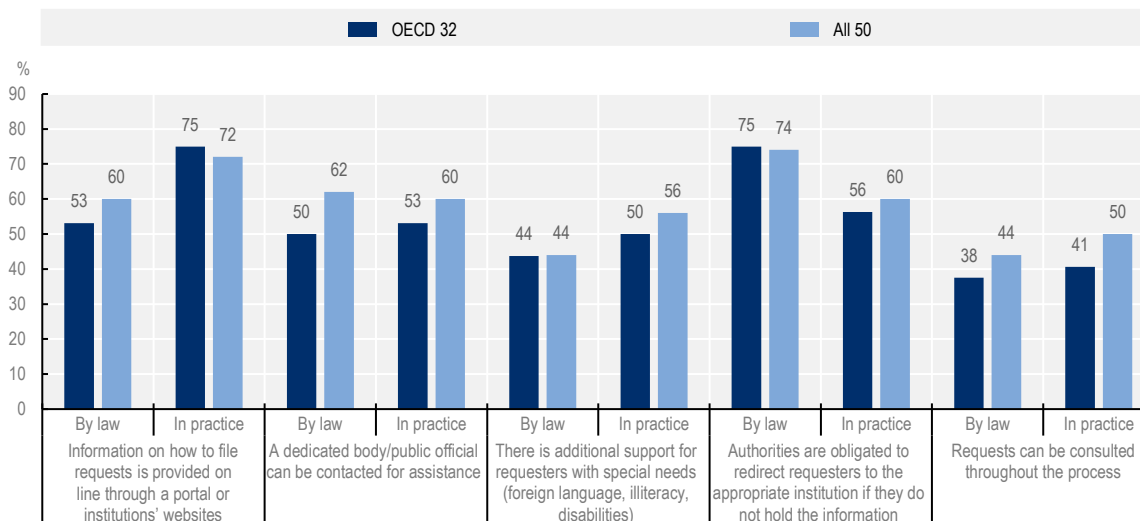
Through its protocols, Jordan aims to apply several measures to facilitate the request process for users. The Protocol on Enforcement Procedures for ATI states that if the information is not within the competency of the department, the department should, if possible, redirect users to the relevant authority. In addition, information officers (officials designated in each institution as focal points for ATI requests, according to the protocols) can be contacted by users for assistance, although the process of reaching officers and where to find their contact information is often unclear. The amended ATI Law provides for the proactive disclosure of information officer contact information, which can be implemented as a priority, a quick measure that can significantly facilitate reactive requests for information.

Concerning inclusiveness, vulnerable demographics such as individuals belonging to low socio-economic groups, youth, migrants, refugees, rural populations and individuals with disabilities encounter additional challenges in exercising their rights regarding ATI. The 2020 Open Government Survey findings indicated that 44% of OECD countries, as well as Morocco and Tunisia, incorporate measures in their ATI laws to offer supplementary support to these groups when making requests and 50% actively implement such support in practice (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). For example, in Tunisia, the ATI law establishes that the person in charge of access to information in each institution must provide the necessary assistance to the applicant for access in case of a disability or illiteracy and when the applicant is deaf or blind. In Jordan, the amended ATI Law renders the information officer responsible for facilitating the process for people with disabilities, illiterate citizens and the elderly (Article 9.G). However, there is no evidence that measures for information

officers to assist currently exist in Jordan. Taking into account the high numbers of refugees, as well as the large percentage of young people in Jordan (one-third of the total population are children), for instance, the country could consider prioritising specific tools to facilitate accessibility for these constituents and for people with disabilities. Figure 2.7 outlines some of the main processes put in place globally to facilitate ATI requests.

**Figure 2.7. Procedures in place related to requests for information by law and in practice, 2020**

Percentage of countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: Sweden did not respond to this question.

Source: 2020 OECD Survey on Open Government, in OECD (2022<sup>[29]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

### Accessibility of cost

Ensuring that requests are free of charge is one of the most important ways to reduce obstacles to citizens and stakeholders exercising their right to information. Costs associated with requests can either greatly discourage citizens from lower socio-economic backgrounds from submitting a request or make it impossible for them to do so. Filing a request for information does not involve a cost in 82% of OECD countries. However, as in Jordan, it is common to have costs associated with obtaining the requested information in practice. For example, fees may be involved for searching and retrieving information (as in 31% of OECD countries) and in the event the requester wishes to have documents or other materials mailed to them (48% of OECD countries). ATI requests and appeals/complaints filed with the Information Council are free of charge in Jordan. Article 17 of the amended ATI Law specifies that the costs incurred for “copying of the information required” should be specified by an Information Council decision. A committee was formed for this purpose and issued a list of costs which detailed the different formats of the requested information and specified costs for some formats (printed A4- and A3-size paper, images, photos and documentary films). The committee allowed each institution the discretion to specify the costs for other remaining formats (maps, sketches, video tapes, audio and video). Printing A4 pages is free of charge for the first ten pages. This information was published in Prime Minister’s Circular No. 67/11/1/1514 dated 23 January 2008.

Therefore, Jordan’s practices align with international standards. Jordan could nonetheless consider harmonising the costs for the remaining formats not specified in the prime minister’s circular to avoid

differences among institutions, as well as consider introducing waivers for requestors from low-income backgrounds.

### *Ensuring a clear process and timelines*

Having clear and respected timeliness standards is crucial as it provides certainty and transparency to requestors on how long the process for their request will last. In Jordan, requests filed under the former ATI Law had to be fulfilled in 30 days, which has been shortened to 15 days in the 2024 ATI Law with the possibility of another 10-day extension only for 1 time and justifiable reasons (Article 9 of the amended ATI Law). In practice, however, according to information received from the Information Council, the average number of days to receive an answer is lower (Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2. Average number of days taken by public institutions in Jordan to reply to requests**

Year	Average number of days
2022	6.35
2021	11.6
2020	..
2019	7.5

Note: .. - Not available.

Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2023.

While the amendments can be seen as an improvement, the administration's capacity to absorb these requests and reply on time should be taken into account. This is especially the case because, according to the legal framework, while rejected requests should be "justified and reasoned", a lack of reply is considered a denial of request (Article 9.E of the amended ATI Law), which could act as an incentive for authorities not to reply. This enables an appeal of the resolution but does not provide the requestor with the necessary information to adequately argue their appeal, as the grounds for denial have not been shared. Jordan could consider transforming the negative administrative silence into positive and justify every time, creating a bias in favour of ATI, as well as an incentive for authorities to react to requests within the required timelines.

An additional positive development contained in the amended ATI Law is the inclusion of an obligation to confirm receipt of ATI requests (Article 9.C). This provision embeds in the law the content of the Protocol on Enforcement Procedures for ATI, whereby public authorities are required to confirm their receipt of requests, both on line and in person. This is in line with the practices of 39% of respondent OECD countries to the 2020 Open Government Survey (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). In denying a request, they must also inform users of the possibility to appeal and the timeline and process to do so.

## ***Exemptions from disclosure: Use of exceptions, appeal processes and sanctions***

### *Exceptions*

Countries can have legitimate reasons to exempt some information from being disclosed. For instance, the specific information at hand might constitute a risk to national security or international relations, or it could unveil an individual's personal data, violating their privacy. That said, exceptions must be necessary, appropriate and proportionate. In Jordan, Article 12 of the amended ATI Law outlines existing exceptions<sup>4</sup> in an article that presents limited but relevant modifications regarding the former ATI Law.

As can be observed in Box 2.5, many exceptions in Jordan's ATI Law conform to international standards regarding the interests that may override the right to information. However, some exceptions are overly broad and lack safeguards often present in other ATI laws.

### Box 2.5. International standards for exemptions to providing ATI

According to international standards, exemptions to providing ATI include:

- national security (i.e. information that would compromise the safety of a country against threats such as terrorism, war or espionage)
- international relations (i.e. information that would compromise relations with other countries)
- personal data (i.e. information that would infringe on an individual's right to privacy)
- commercial confidentiality (i.e. information that would compromise the privacy of sensitive information of individual firms)
- public health and safety (i.e. information that would compromise the health and safety of the public or a specific demographic)
- law enforcement and public order information received in confidence
- the prevention, investigation and prosecution of legal wrongs
- fair administration of justice and legal advice privilege
- privacy
- legitimate commercial and other economic interests
- management of the economy
- conservation of the environment
- legitimate policymaking and other operations of public authorities.

Sources: OECD (2022<sup>[29]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>; based on Article 19 (2016<sup>[50]</sup>), *The Public's Right to Know: Principles on Right to Information Legislation*, [https://www.article19.org/data/files/RTI\\_Principles\\_Updated\\_EN.pdf](https://www.article19.org/data/files/RTI_Principles_Updated_EN.pdf); OAS (2020<sup>[51]</sup>), *Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information*, [http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/docs/publication Inter-American Model Law 2 0 on Access to Public Information.pdf](http://www.oas.org/en/sla/dil/docs/publication_Inter-American_Model_Law_2_0_on_Access_to_Public_Information.pdf); OECD (2016<sup>[39]</sup>), *Open Government: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264268104-en>.

The formulation of Article 12 in the amended ATI Law partly addresses several relevant concerns raised by the former ATI Law. First, in the previous law, any exceptions in other laws overrode the ATI Law. That sentence has now been removed from Article 12, opening the door to a more favourable interpretation for ATI in the event of conflicts among laws. The article explicitly establishes the prevalence of the Personal Data Protection Law over the ATI Law. However, the priority of the ATI Law over others is not explicitly mentioned, which may cause a conflict of laws. This may happen with Law no. 50 of 1971, for the Protection of the State's Secrets and Documents, which stipulates broadly that any information that has a "bad effect on public morale" is classified as restricted, as well as any protected information or document that may "defame an official figure" or "abuse the status of the state". While conflicts of laws are normally determined by the administrative courts, such a conflict may be overly complicated for public officials and information officers in their day-to-day responses to ATI requests, which may rarely reach the justice system. Jordanian institutions could consider clarifying this aspect to facilitate the implementation of the amended ATI law.

Second, in line with the contents of Article 3 of the Information Classification Protocol, the amended ATI Law incorporates a harm and public interest test ("The Council may assess the extent to which the public interest exists in disclosing the information contained in Paragraph A of this Article excluding clauses (1), (2), (6), (7)" and a harm test (it now refers to "Information that may cause *harm* to national defence or state

security or its foreign policies” [emphasis added] as opposed to the previous wording which referred to “secrets related to national defence, state security or foreign policy”). The amended ATI Law also stipulates that information related to human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity will never be considered confidential. These three additions are considered in line with international good practices.

One further positive development of the amended ATI Law is that it foresees in Article 13 that a bylaw will be issued outlining rules for the classification of information as confidential, in line with the recommendation made above to enshrine the content of the protocols into bylaws. This opens the door to resolving the gap in the former ATI Law, where the specific criteria for information to be classified were not stipulated anywhere and were left at the discretion of the public officials in charge of each request. At the same time, Jordan could consider interpreting the amended ATI Law through an “open-by-default” lens, whereby anything that does not fall under the exception regime of Article 13 is considered accessible to the public.

Some challenges remain in the wording of the exceptions in the new Article 12, given that they are broad and loosely defined compared to international good practices. For instance, the exceptions to protect intellectual property rights (which are not limited to private rights but comprise the government’s copyright over its documents) and private correspondence could cover a vast amount of otherwise shareable information, placing limits on almost all publicly held information. Thus, through bylaws and leveraging the new harm and public interest provisions, Jordan could consider clarifying the scope of exceptions in line with international standards.

As in Jordan, in the event of a denial of a request for ATI, 96% of all respondents to the Open Government Survey 2020 require a justification to be provided based on the use of exceptions. Implementing such a requirement is beneficial because it serves as a deterrent, discouraging public officials from casually rejecting requests (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Instead, it encourages them to thoroughly assess the legitimacy of the exception or consult with the relevant authorised officials or oversight bodies to determine the viability of the exception. While a reply with justification is also required by law in Jordan, administrative silence is equated with denial, diminishing the need for a justified reply in practice. A better practice would be to consider the administrative silence as positive while allowing requestors to appeal on the grounds of lack of respect for the 15-day limit.

Despite the broad exception regime, which in legal terms is considered a limitation to the right to ATI, the highly positive response rates to ATI requests may suggest that they do not become an obstacle in practice. Further information regarding how the statistics on approvals and denials are created would help clarify this point.

### *Limited numbers of appeals could point to burdensome procedures*

Article 16 of the amended ATI Law in Jordan reflects two possibilities for appealing denied ATI requests. Requestors may make an external appeal to the Information Council after the denial of a request, whether an explicit denial with a justification or administrative silence, or attempt a judicial appeal in the administrative courts in the 30 days following the denial of a request. Two such processes cannot take place simultaneously but requestors are not obliged to seek an appeal before the Information Council before resorting to the judicial route.

Appeals to the Information Council are free of charge and must be resolved in writing or by administrative silence within 30 days. It is not clear in the law whether denials of the appeal must be justified, as the need for justification is only mentioned concerning original ATI requests, which could be further clarified. Appeals received in the Information Council are very limited compared to the total number of denied requests (see Table 2.3). In 2022, only 1 appeal reached the Information Council out of the 171 denied requests and 2 in 2023. In this regard, some stakeholders have highlighted that a significant obstacle from appealing to the Information Council is the perception that they are rarely accepted, which constitutes a loss of time and effort. This seems to align with the available evidence of the limited number of appeals.



**Table 2.3. Number of appeals received by the Information Council, 2012-23**

Year	Number of appeals
2012	7
2013	15
2014	8
2015	4
2016	5
2017	7
2018	4
2019	7
2020	14
2021	3
2022	1
2023	2
Total	83

Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2023.

Stakeholders have also pointed out during interviews that, on occasion, appealing is perceived negatively by the original institution to which the request was made, as it entails bringing a complaint to a high-level body (the Information Council) and can cause the loss of an otherwise good relationship. During the fact-finding interviews, several requestors expressed that they would rather maintain their positive relationship with the public institution in question or even rely on it for their work (for instance, journalists who regularly receive information from the government), which acts as an obstacle when they consider appealing. In this regard, Jordan could consider the introduction of a third way of appeal, the internal appeal (i.e. to the same institution that denied the original request for information), which is present in 85% of the OECD member respondents to the Open Government Survey (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). This is especially the case in view of the fact that Information Council resolutions are not binding and there is no mechanism for enforcement of such decisions. It has been reported by different users that, on occasion, the original institution does not comply with Information Council decisions, which does not carry any consequences. Hence, Jordan could consider strengthening the legal value and enforceability of Information Council decisions.

At the administrative courts, appeals must be made through a licensed lawyer with a minimum of 5 years of practice and the fees for a requestor to submit an appeal range between JOD 30 and 300. Taken together, these two characteristics may embed the process with high costs and complexity, especially for individual requestors from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In many of the OECD countries surveyed on open government in 2020, judicial appeals for this purpose did not require a lawyer unless the requestor voluntarily wanted one (75%) and, in some cases, the lawyers were free of cost (25%) (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Jordan could consider adopting these practices to significantly ease the appeals process for Jordanian citizens and stakeholders.

In Jordan, the judicial appeal must rely on evidence that the denial was against the provisions of the amended ATI Law, putting the onus on the requestor to prove that the denial was wrongful and not on the public institution to prove that the denial was in accordance with legal exceptions. Shifting the burden of proof onto the public institution to justify its decision to the court would be in line with a default approach in favour of ATI and, thus, with good practice. In 2022, the administrative courts did not receive any ATI-related appeals.<sup>5</sup> This may point to a perception that the process is burdensome and costly, for the reasons mentioned above, underlining room for improvement in the accessibility of judicial appeals.

On the other hand, some of the human rights complaints mechanisms in different public institutions (see Chapter 3 on Promoting Responsiveness and Stakeholder Participation) may, on occasion, be used by

citizens to appeal denied requests, as wrongful denials can affect the right to ATI. Some other stakeholders may use such channels to point to systematic failures in implementing ATI in some public entities. Once made, these requests should be examined by the relevant bodies and submitted to the Information Council if needed, through institutionalised channels.

*The lack of sanctions for systematic failures to comply with ATI creates negative incentives and would benefit from revision*

Establishing sanctions for public officials or institutions who fail to meet the obligations outlined in ATI laws is important. Some OECD countries that enforce sanctions are Chile, Mexico and multiple states in the United States. The lack of sanctions can create negative incentives, resulting in breaches of an ATI law, such as overly broad application of exemptions or simply administrative silence. It can also be the source of weak enforcement of the law. The amended ATI Law does not impose any sanctions for those who wilfully obstruct access or implementation of the law nor for public authorities that systematically fail to implement the right to information properly.

At the same time, in Jordan, there are severe legal consequences for sharing confidential information under other laws. Under Law no. 50 of 1971 for the Protection of the State's Secrets and Documents, releasing information considered confidential or restricted can lead to prison sentences ranging from 10 to 25 years and up to the death penalty. In addition, according to Article 69 of the Civil Service Bureau Regulation of 2020 and its amendments, "The employee is prohibited, under penalty of disciplinary responsibility, from undertaking any of the following actions: (...) b) To keep any official document or message, or a copy of it, or pictures of it, or to disclose it to any external party, or write or to give out outside the workplace without that being of his powers, except for the documents that reveal corruption, then he is referred to the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC) or to the competent authority in the department based on what the complainant decides". It is clear in the text that only corruption cases fall within the scope of this article, while ATI requests covered by the ATI Law is not mentioned. The related disciplinary responsibilities outlined in Article 142 of the same law include reductions in the employee's monthly salary, withholding annual salary increases for up to five years, dismissal and impeachment.

The amended ATI Law does not protect officials who disclose information under the ATI Law in good faith. Coupled with the high penalties mentioned, this fact can strongly disincentivise sharing even simple and benign information, especially in cases where full information classification has not been conducted. In this sense, Jordan could consider amending the ATI Law in the future to include sanctions and a good faith exemption or, if possible, introducing these through bylaws, further aligning Jordanian practices with international standards and modifying the current incentives at play in favour of transparency.

## **Strengthening institutionalisation and governance of the ATI Law**

### ***Jordan's institutional framework for ATI and transparency***

The institutional landscape in Jordan for access to information reflects a multi-faceted approach to transparency, with various bodies working to ensure that the right to ATI is upheld. The ATI Law in Jordan foresees that access to information shall be primarily implemented by the Information Council and the Information Commissioner. However, as outlined below, the need to implement transparency across public entities in a co-ordinated manner and the nature of ATI as a fundamental right, illustrate a more complex institutional landscape in practice.

### *The Information Council and the Information Commissioner*

The Information Council was established by Article 3 of the former ATI Law. The Minister of Culture chairs it and includes the Information Commissioner, namely the director of the Department of the National Library, as vice-chairman. Members of the council are the secretaries-general of the Ministries of Justice, Interior and the Media Higher Council, the directors of the Department of Statistics, the National Information Technology Center and the Armed Forces, and the Human Rights Commissioner. The amended ATI Law has broadened the composition of the council to include the secretary-general of the Ministry of Government Communication, the secretary-general of MoDEE, the heads of the Jordanian Press Association and Jordan Bar Association. These inclusions have the potential to make the council more effective and inclusive, including for the first-time professional associations of two key professions in relation to the right to ATI. Furthermore, the newly-created Ministry of Government Communication may have a fundamental role to play in relation to ATI while respecting the limits between communications and proactively disclosed information.

The Information Council's role is to ensure the provision of information for requesters within the limits of the ATI Law. It receives the complaints submitted thereto by the information requesters and resolves them. The council also approves the standard paper and online information request form and is responsible for undertaking the appropriate activities to explain and enhance the right to information. Furthermore, the council approves the annual report on enforcing the right to ATI submitted by the Information Commissioner to the prime minister and, since the entry into force of the amended ATI law, to parliament. The chairman and the members of the Information Council have no right to remuneration and carry out this role in addition to their high-level responsibilities.

The Information Commissioner (Article 6 of the ATI Law) is responsible for preparing instructions for the acceptance, resolution and submission of complaints to the council for resolution. He or she also receives the complaints from information requestors and presents them to the council for resolution (Official Gazette, 2024<sup>[37]</sup>).

### *The Department of the National Library*

The Department of the National Library was established in 1975 as one of the departments of the Ministry of Culture. The department and the Center for Documents were merged into the National Library in 1994. Its main tasks include keeping, organising and introducing to the public the national intellectual product issued both inside and outside Jordan, collecting and keeping books, manuscripts, periodicals, photographs, recordings, videotapes and other materials relevant to Jordanian heritage, to the Arab world and Arabic and Islamic civilisation and to human heritage in general, as well as collecting government documents from ministries and public departments and institutions.

In accordance with Article 6 of the ATI Law, the department shall render the administrative and professional services required to fulfil the duties and liabilities vested in the Information Council and Information Commissioner (its director) (Official Gazette, 2024<sup>[37]</sup>).

### *The Jordan Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC)*

According to Article 4(d) of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Law (Law no. 13/2016), JIACC aims to ensure compliance with the principles of national integrity and anti-corruption through, among others, ensuring that the executive branch is committed to transparency when developing (...) policies, decision-making and ensuring citizens' right to access information in accordance with legislation. Since being merged with the ombuds office in 2016, JIACC has also been a promoter and guardian of a culture of transparency in the public sector – a key building block of integrity and anti-corruption efforts. Transparency is, therefore, also one of the criteria in JIACC's National Integrity Index, developed in collaboration with CSO Al Hayat-Rased. The National Integrity Index is built through several indicators, including the Compliance Matrix for public

institutions and the Integrity Survey for public officials. The questions related to the “transparency” criteria in both the Compliance Matrix and the survey were developed together with the Department of the National Library.

### *The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC)*

The Open Government Unit under MoPIC was established in 2018 to help all concerned governmental institutions and CSOs monitor and follow up on Jordan’s participation in the OGP. Nowadays, most institutions in charge of OGP NAPs globally are moving ahead to also work on bolstering transparency, establishing and institutionalising the participatory consultation approach in public affairs management, and becoming interconnected with all stakeholders in the sector, including government institutions, CSOs and concerned international organisations within a framework of co-operation and co-ordination. As such, MoPIC plays a relevant role in implementing ATI. The unit also played a key role in the co-ordination of efforts under Commitment no. 5 of the Fourth OGP NAP, including in the development of the three ATI protocols, and under Commitment no. 5 of the Fifth OGP NAP regarding the development of the Integrity Compliance Matrix.

### *The Service and Public Administration Commission (SPAC)*

The recently established SPAC has the mission to develop and enhance the administrative services provided by public institutions and establish principles of governance and compliance in public administration. Among other tasks, this includes responsibilities related to transparency. SPAC is expected to employ a large staff of experts to guide public bodies in developing competencies and using instruments that facilitate their adherence to the highest standards of quality in public administration, including potentially in the field of ATI.

### *The Institute of Public Administration (IPA)*

The IPA was established as one of the first institutes in the MENA region to specialise in training, capacity building, studies, research and consultation in various areas of public administration. The institute offers civil servants a variety of training programmes that respond and are aligned with national priorities and plans. It also offers training and capacity-building services to any other interested party, including from different sectors and countries. Training courses and materials focus on strengthening the principles and concepts of governance, excellence, sustainability, leadership and innovation (IPA, n.d.<sup>[52]</sup>). The institute may thus provide an excellent platform to develop the competencies of public servants in terms of ATI and raise their awareness of its relevance, which is key to its effective implementation.

### *The King Abdullah II Center for Excellence (KACE)*

KACE is dedicated to promoting a culture of excellence and innovation in the public and private sectors, as well as in non-governmental organisations. To do so, the centre develops national excellence frameworks and evaluation criteria, assesses the organisation’s performance, supports advancing skills in excellence and innovation and manages the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence. For the public sector, the Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency is considered the highest at the national level. These awards can provide a good means to reward the efforts of different institutions regarding ATI as well as to raise awareness of its importance throughout the Jordanian public sector.

### *The administrative courts*

Jordan’s administrative courts have an important role in guaranteeing the enforcement of access to information, given that they constitute the last instance of appeal for denied ATI requests. These courts provide a legal avenue for resolving disputes and ensuring that the principles of transparency and

accountability are upheld. In turn, a resolution of the ordinary administrative courts can be appealed in the High Administrative Court.

### *The National Center for Human Rights (NCHR)*

The NCHR is an independent national institution established in 2006 through Law no. 51/2006, which is not affiliated with any ministry or other entity. The prime minister nominates its board of trustees and King Abdullah II ratifies its appointment by royal decree. In turn, the board of trustees appoints the NCHR's commissioner general. The centre's budget comes from the General State Budget. The NCHR mainly receives complaints about civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and grievances related to the violation of these rights by the public authorities. They can make unannounced site visits to different institutions and places of detention to monitor the human rights situation on the ground throughout the country. The NCHR's annual report, which assesses compliance with human rights, often points to gaps in government practices. The report is submitted to the king, the upper and lower houses of parliament and the Cabinet and is published on the NCHR website. NCHR recommendations are not legally binding. The NCHR has regularly included references to ATI in its annual reports, referenced in other parts of this chapter. Regarding ATI, the centre has an employee dedicated to right to access information and freedom of expression files and monitors the situation in practice regarding these rights. Through its relevant mechanism, the NCHR can receive ATI complaints that can be investigated and formally communicated to any institution across the three branches of power, coupled with a request to end any abusive practice. Furthermore, the Human Rights Commissioner sits on the Information Council.

### *The government co-ordinator for human rights and the Human Rights Unit at the Prime Ministry*

At the Prime Ministry, the position of government co-ordinator for human rights (GCHR) was created in 2014. The GCHR's mandate is to review and suggest amendments to national legislation and laws to align them with international conventions related to human rights ratified by Jordan, receive complaints concerning human rights violations submitted to the PMO by citizens and institutions, investigate these complaints in co-ordination with the competent authorities, and raise awareness and promote a culture of human rights throughout society utilising various means, maintaining channels of communication and co-operation with international organisations, CSOs and institutions advocating for human rights. The Human Rights Unit at the PMO also follows up on all issues related to human rights violations. As such, the GCHR and the Human Rights Unit at the PMO have a fundamental role in aligning governmental policies with the right to access information in line with the ICCPR, including suggesting appropriate amendments to the ATI Law and how it is implemented. The GCHR must also respond to the NCHR's report recommendations and measure progress towards international human rights standards. Given that such reports often reference weaknesses in the legal and enforcement of ATI, the GCHR has an additional mandate to protect this right.

### *The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (MoDEE)*

MoDEE supports policies to enable Jordan's transformation into a digital economy. In this regard, it has developed a procedural framework for classifying, measuring and evaluating the quality of open government datasets and designing and developing a web application to measure and facilitate the open dataset quality assessment based on the new procedural framework. MoDEE manages Jordan's Open Government Data Platform,<sup>6</sup> which aims to provide a unified store of open data held by governmental institutions. On the other hand, MoDEE handles the online *Bekhedmetkom* platform, which gathers citizens' inputs and human rights complaints (for a detailed description and analysis of this platform, see Chapter 3 on Promoting Responsiveness and Stakeholder Participation).

## **Strengthening leadership and interinstitutional co-ordination**

### *Empowering the Information Council in its role to enforce, monitor and promote the 2024 ATI Law*

The mandate and responsibilities of access to information bodies across OECD and partner countries vary widely but can be largely grouped into enforcement, monitoring and promotion of ATI law. The Information Council, supported by the Department of the National Library, is mandated by the amended ATI Law (Article 4) to carry out the following tasks (Official Gazette, 2024<sup>[37]</sup>):

- Ensuring that information is provided to those requesting it in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Developing the necessary plans to ensure the right to obtain information and the council's work progress.
- Promoting the culture of the right to access information.
- Approving the information request paper and electronic forms.
- Considering the appeals and complaints submitted by information requesters and deciding on them.
- Approving the annual report on the council's work.
- Submitting the annual report to the prime minister and parliament and publishing it on the council's website.
- Proposing draft laws, regulations and instructions.

Given the above considerations, the Information Council seems responsible for enforcement (ensuring that information is provided to those requesting it, developing the necessary plans, proactively disclosing the information requested, etc.), monitoring (through annual reports) and promotion (by promoting a culture of the right to ATI) of the ATI Law.

The high-level nature of the Information Council, gathering an interinstitutional team of governmental authorities, has strengths in that it can leverage its influence to brainstorm and adopt strategic policies surrounding ATI. This may be especially effective in the development of policy plans and in leading a cultural transformation in the public sector backed by high-level commitment. However, the current placement of the ATI oversight institution within the Department of the National Library – given the department's history and its responsibilities to maintain the country's archives – has understandably meant that the right to ATI has been included in the department's focus on indexing and the scanning of documents, rather than in a modernised vision for transparency. In this sense, there is room for the Information Council to adopt a forward-thinking strategy for ATI at the national level and consequently fully embody its leadership role in ATI policies.

At the same time, the high-level nature of the Information Council can have drawbacks as it has very limited implementation means. While the administrative support provided by the Department of the National Library can help deal with information requests, the council is not currently supported by adequate human and financial resources to carry out the ambitious tasks outlined above. There is only one person in the department dedicated on a part-time basis to the role of secretariat to the Information Council, which leaves limited capacities to develop ATI policies and plans in the vein of Article 4, carry out awareness-raising initiatives, ensure that ATI requests are adequately fulfilled across the many institutions involved, provide tailored advice to individual institutions on implementation of ATI, etc. Jordan could consider strengthening the human and financial capacities that support the Information Council with a dedicated team to ensure the full implementation of the amended ATI Law.

Another way to strengthen the Information Council would be to strengthen its enforcement capacities, that is to provide a binding nature to its resolutions, capacitate it to issue sanctions against non-complying

institutions and provide it with ways to enforce them towards the rest of institutions to which the ATI Law applies.

In the medium to longer term, Jordan could consider creating an institution or department that focuses solely on ATI implementation, with adequate resources, staff and capacities to undertake this task. In the majority of OECD countries, this institution is established either as an independent oversight entity or as an authority within the executive power (Figure 2.8). Box 2.6 provides examples of the different institutional arrangements for ATI in several countries. Regardless of the chosen option, establishing a dedicated department to pursue the full implementation of the ATI law across the administration could be of value to Jordan.

### **Box 2.6. Institutional oversight mechanisms for access to information**

#### **An Independent oversight institution: The National Institute of Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI) of Mexico**

Following the adoption of the Mexican ATI law in 2002, INAI was first established as a decentralised body of the Ministry of the Interior. Due to its lack of autonomy, many stakeholders, including citizens and politicians across the political spectrum, demanded the creation of an autonomous body, which was then created through a constitutional reform in 2014. Given that INAI is a constitutional body, it is independent of other state authorities and, therefore, free from the influence of the executive, legislative or judiciary branches of government.

The INAI comprises seven commissioners designated by the Congress of the Mexican Federal Union to guarantee their independence. The law establishes that stakeholder profiles with relevant experience in ATI and the protection of personal data should be chosen.

Currently, the main role of INAI is to guarantee that 865 federal public entities grant access to public information in line with the law. It also responds to appeals, co-ordinates the National Transparency System and promotes transparency and ATI more broadly. Since 2003 until the end of 2020, more than 2 million requests for ATI have been made. In that same period, requesters made more than 100 000 appeals.

The INAI has represented one of the most important democratic advances in Mexico and has been key to exposing several high-profile cases unveiling corruption and human rights abuses through the use of ATI.

#### **An oversight institution in the executive branch: Brazil's Office of the Comptroller General (*Controladoria-Geral da União*, CGU)**

Brazil's national ATI law mandates that the federal executive branch designates oversight responsibility to a specific body over federal bodies (Article 41). This responsibility was assigned to the CGU by federal decree. The CGU is the body of internal control of the federal government and is responsible for carrying out activities related to the defence of public assets and increasing transparency through public audit actions, correction, prevention and the fight against corruption. As part of its attributions, the CGU is responsible for increasing awareness of the right to ATI, providing ATI training, promoting a culture of transparency and submitting an annual report to national congress on this matter.

#### **Oversight by the ombudsman: The case of Denmark**

The Parliamentary Ombudsman in Denmark has a mandate for maladministration with a specific focus on ATI. In 2016, the Parliamentary Ombudsman undertook an internal investigation in relation to the

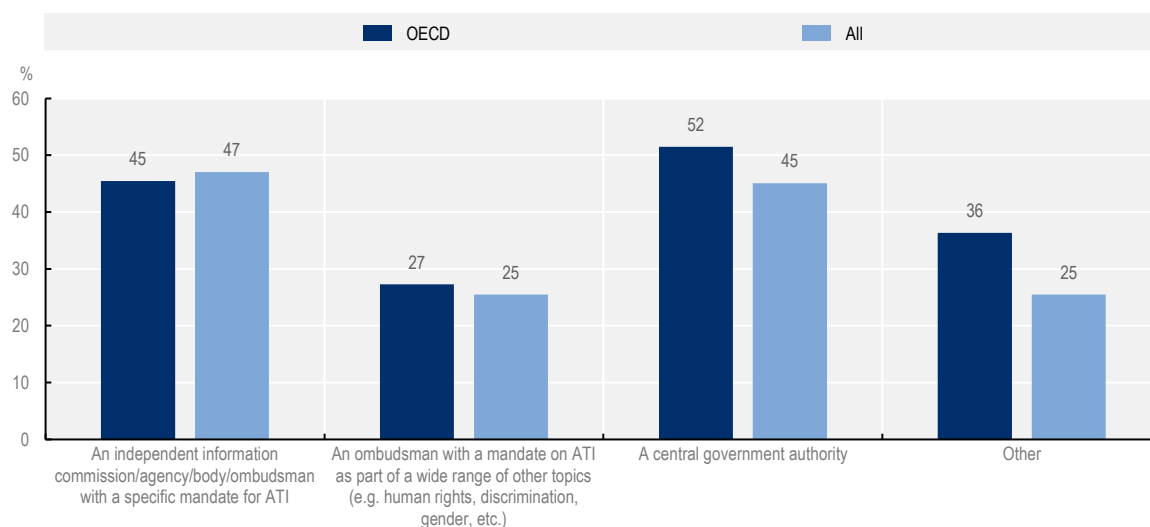


Access to Public Administration Files Act and how it was interpreted and used by ministries to foster greater openness.

Sources: (INAI, n.d.<sup>[53]</sup>); (Government of Brazil, n.d.<sup>[54]</sup>); (The Ombudsman, n.d.<sup>[55]</sup>).

**Figure 2.8. Bodies responsible for the enforcement, monitoring and/or promotion of ATI laws, 2020**

Percentage of countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Source: 2020 OECD Survey on Open Government, in OECD (2022<sup>[29]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

### *Promoting inter-institutional co-ordination*

As evidenced by the institutional framework highlighted above, a variety of actors have a mandate to monitor and promote the ATI Law and a culture of transparency in Jordan from perspectives beyond the Information Council. The NCHR must monitor compliance with ATI in its dimension as a fundamental right as the underpinning of other civic freedoms; JIACC must promote it and monitor its enforcement from the standpoint of integrity compliance (see section on monitoring and evaluation of compliance); and MoPIC's Open Government Unit can promote actions towards its enforcement from an open government perspective.

Collaboration between the Information Council and JIACC is key to ensuring that transparency is a cross-national effort. Such collaboration has the potential to bring ATI to the forefront of policy priorities, given the authority and strength of the above-mentioned institutions. However, the Information Council must continue spearheading Jordan's ATI efforts in line with its legal mandate. Specific technical-level meetings on ATI could also be organised, bringing together all of the key institutions mentioned above, including the NCHR and GCHR, to promote co-ordination.

Co-operation between the Information Council and JIACC in the context of the Fifth OGP NAP to create the transparency dimension of the National Integrity Index and the Compliance Matrix (see section on monitoring and evaluation of compliance) has been particularly fruitful and has the potential to strengthen monitoring processes of ATI at the national level. The avenues for interaction established through this period, supported by MoPIC's Open Government Unit, could be institutionalised into systematic ATI exchanges to avoid the loss of existing links due to personnel changes.

### *Adopting a whole-of-government approach to ATI*

Protecting the right to access information for all citizens and stakeholders requires strong commitment and co-operation across all layers of government and the public administration. This is particularly the case when it comes to transparency, given that each public body is responsible for disclosing its information and responding to requests. In this regard, stronger co-operation is needed from many public entities, such as by appointing information officers and information committees and reporting to the Information Council on their respective ATI efforts. The need to raise awareness and ownership of this agenda across public administration is discussed below (see section “Reinforcing a culture of transparency in Jordan”). One way to foster increased ownership and co-ordination could be to develop a strategic plan for ATI at the national level. Box 2.7 highlights Lebanon’s National Action Plan to implement the country’s ATI law.

#### **Box 2.7. Lebanon’s National Action Plan to Implement the Right to Access to Information Law**

The government of Lebanon has undertaken a variety of official actions to improve the implementation of the Right to Access to Information Law (Law 28/2017) since its passing in 2017. As part of those efforts, the development of an action plan was designed to enhance co-ordination between official and non-official efforts and provide local and international support with proper guidance as part of the implementation. The Ministerial Anti-Corruption Committee adopted the plan in 2020.

The action plan proposes ten main actions and their corresponding activities, identifies the parties responsible for their implementation and sets implementation deadlines. Each of these actions is based on a specific challenge identified as a barrier hindering the full implementation of the ATI law. Furthermore, activities under each action are classified as short-term, medium-term or long-term.

Source: OMSAR/UNDP/OECD (2020<sup>[56]</sup>), *National Action Plan to Implement the Right to ATI Law*, <https://www.undp.org/lebanon/publications/national-action-plan-implement-right-access-information-law>.

#### **Strengthening capacities of information officers and committees across the administration**

The breadth of public administration entails developing a network of specialised ATI officers that implement ATI procedures in their respective institutions and across the public sector. Public institutions often struggle with ATI obligations due to a lack of a dedicated office or official monitoring of the law’s implementation. To overcome this obstacle, several ATI laws currently require the establishment of an information office or officer responsible for ensuring compliance with the legal framework. These officers are generally appointed to guarantee both proactive and reactive disclosure of information, including but not limited to consolidating proactively disclosed information, responding to information requests, redistributing misallocated or non-allocated requests among other public bodies, and supporting colleagues in responding to requests. Fifty percent of OECD member country respondents to the 2020 Open Government Survey and Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia stipulate the establishment of this office/r in their ATI law. Other countries, despite not including such provisions in the law, have established similar positions in practice (OECD, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). In line with these practices, Jordan has enshrined the need to appoint ATI officers in the amended ATI Law (Article 9) and Classification Committees in the ATI protocols. Box 2.8 provides an example of the co-ordination mechanism that exists in Morocco to encourage collaboration among all information officers in the administration.

Responsibilities of ATI officers in Jordan are defined in Article 9 of the amended ATI Law, which foresees the appointment of such officers in each institution with the responsibility of receiving and following up on

ATI requests, giving notice of receipt to the applicant, answering or rejecting the request and facilitating the requests for people with disabilities, illiterate citizens and the elderly.

### Box 2.8. The Moroccan inter-ministerial network of ATI officers

In the Moroccan central government, an inter-ministerial network of information officers in charge of ATI in their respective institutions was created by Circular no. 05/2020 of 17 June 2020 and placed under the aegis of the Ministry for Digital Transformation and Administrative Reform (MTNRA). It has been set up to facilitate exchange, consultation, awareness raising and training on the new measures taken and the improvements made to implement the right of ATI.

To strengthen the effectiveness of this network, in March 2023, the MTNRA launched the ReDAI platform ([redai.chafafiya.ma](http://redai.chafafiya.ma)), which is a virtual space for the exchange of ideas, experience and expertise between network members, thus helping the institutionalisation of communication within the network with a view to co-ordination. The platform aims to promote the dissemination of good practices relating to the implementation of the right of ATI., identify and collectively propose solutions to problems relating to the organisation of information and the management of requests, share developments, innovations and news at the national and international levels in the field of the right of ATI and finally participate in the reinforcement of the capacities of the members of the network.

Source: MTNRA (n.d.<sup>[57]</sup>), *Circular no. 05/2020 of 17 June 2020*,  
[http://redai.chafafiya.ma/redai/javax.faces.resource/files/Circulaire\\_DAI\\_05\\_2020.pdf](http://redai.chafafiya.ma/redai/javax.faces.resource/files/Circulaire_DAI_05_2020.pdf).

The Enforcement Procedures for ATI Protocol further specifies that ATI officers are responsible for: providing the request form for accessing information in print and electronic form and providing confirmation of receipt of requests to applicants; following up on information requests with those concerned, taking measures to respond to requests, and adhering to the announced time period; preparing an information register and reports related to the subject and providing the Information Council with an annual report on information requests; participating in classifying information in co-operation with the Information Classification Committee in their institution; and educating public staff and employees about the enforcement procedures for the right to ATI. Until 2022, 47 public institutions that responded to the prime minister's circular appointed an information officer (38%) and 17 had an assistant information officer (13%). These figures highlight room for further implementation and improvement by appointing such officers and committees across the remaining entities.

There is no job description or path to promotion for information officers in the Civil Service Regulation. A key hurdle is that public servants perform the numerous duties of information officer/co-ordinator in addition to their original job (there are no dedicated public employees who work only as information officers, nor do these employees receive additional compensation for this task). This may cause ATI officers to favour their other tasks or become overburdened depending on the number of requests the institution receives. In public entities where the volume of requests is high, dedicated ATI staff could be hired or additional incentives for ATI officers provided, whether economic or in the form of other benefits, including promotions, recognition, etc.

In addition to information officers, Article 5 of the Information Classification Protocol states that a committee<sup>7</sup> should be formed in each public institution to ensure implementation of ATI law, build capacities of public officials, submit recommendations to senior management about how to increase compliance with the ATI Law and follow up on the classification of information within the institution. Information officers are part of such committees. However, in 2022, only 36 public institutions that responded to the circular (29% of the total) reported having an information classification committee, which shows room for improvement.

Building a strong network of information officers and committees across the administration in Jordan would significantly strengthen the implementation of its ATI framework, bridging the gap between regulations and practice. Based on interviews during the OECD fact-finding mission, the limited uptake currently observed across the public sector is probably due to several interconnected factors that include a lack of awareness of the need to appoint an ATI officer and/or lack of awareness of the potential benefits of ATI, and/or lack of capacities and resources for operational implementation. Efforts to raise awareness in these institutions and strengthen their capacities for ATI would go a long way to improve implementation of the amended ATI Law, with a special focus on institutions that receive the highest volumes of requests.

### **Information management**

Article 14 of the former ATI Law stated that public bodies should index, organise and classify information in their possession. However, as mentioned above, Jordan's Fourth OGP NAP acknowledged that governmental institutions lacked a clear and uniform system for classifying and managing information (OGP, 2018<sup>[18]</sup>). As such, one of the fundamental milestones of Commitment no. 5 of the previous OGP NAP was to build a unified system for classifying and managing governmental information while considering the differences between governmental institutions. The Protocols on Classification of Information and Documents and Files Management and Indexing aimed to fill this gap. Furthermore, the amended Article 14 in the new 2024 ATI Law establishes that such a system will be formalised through a bylaw developed for this purpose, which would be convenient to unify the relevant provisions from the protocols in one legal document. While these are steps in the right direction, the implementation across the public administration remains challenging. Many public officials are not aware of the existence of this scheme and have not classified their information accordingly. The Department of the National Library has trained hundreds of officials on the content of the three protocols, and efforts in this regard should be continued, especially once the new bylaws are in place.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation of compliance with ATI law***

In line with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[40]</sup>), open government initiatives should be monitored and evaluated to learn lessons from their application and improve them over time. As such, it is necessary to: identify institutional actors in charge of collecting and disseminating up-to-date and reliable information and data in an open format; develop comparable indicators to measure processes, outputs, outcomes and impact in collaboration with stakeholders; and foster a culture of monitoring, evaluation and learning among public officials by increasing their capacity to regularly conduct exercises for these purposes in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

#### *The annual report of the Information Council*

In Jordan, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the ATI Law is entrusted to the Information Council, which submits a report to the Prime Ministry every year. The report, in turn, is prepared by the Information Commissioner, who presents it to the Information Council. The amended ATI Law includes a new obligation to submit the report to parliament, which can be beneficial in promoting legislative improvements to the 2024 ATI Law as needed. To date, these reports have not been systematically published. Given the related obligations in the amended ATI Law, Jordan could consider this an immediate step in order to strengthen the usefulness of these reports for public officials and the public.

One additional challenge concerning the reports is the lack of enforcement ability by the Information Council or Commissioner. Once deficiencies are detected in the implementation of the ATI Law in some institutions, the council does not have the power to sanction or enforce any actions in favour of ATI. As mentioned, Jordan could consider strengthening the binding power of Information Council resolutions and recommendations.

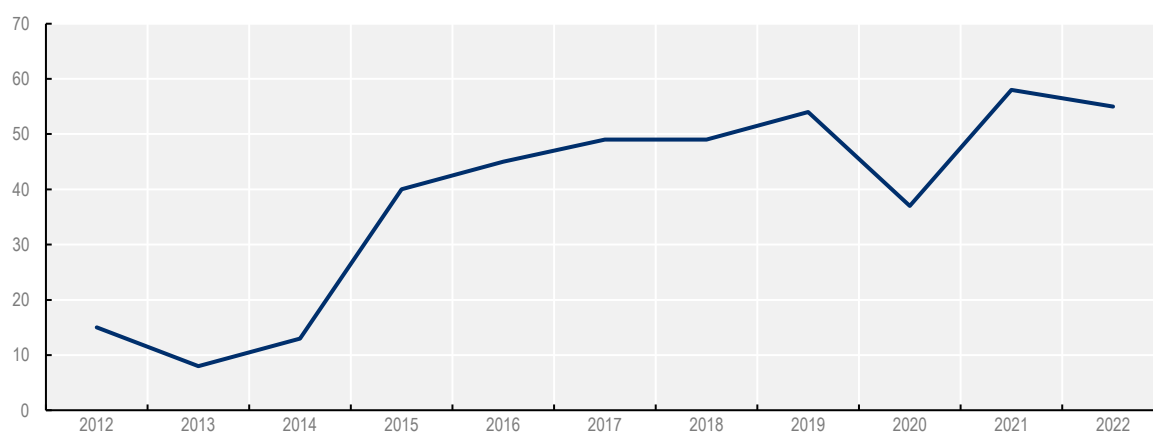
The annual reports include information concerning Information Council meetings, complaints submitted to the council, participation by council members in conferences and seminars, the institutionalisation of the enforcement measures of the 2024 ATI Law, and ongoing challenges, among others. To compile this report, the Department of the National Library collects information from all of the public institutions to which the ATI Law applies, requesting the institutions share the following information:

- name and number of information officers
- number of in-person requests submitted
- number of online requests submitted
- number of ATI requests accepted (information was provided)
- number of ATI requests denied (information was not provided)
- status of information classification
- status of proactive disclosure
- challenges
- lessons learned
- directions and plans.

In principle, public institutions should be ready to provide the necessary information to the Information Council/ Information Commissioner, given that the Protocol on Enforcement Procedures requires each public entity to develop clear quantitative and qualitative performance indicators linked to mechanisms for enforcing the right to access information and conduct the related data collection. However, whether these indicators are being developed in practice in any public institution is unclear. As such, Jordanian institutions could consider taking decisive action to develop these indicators.

A fundamental challenge highlighted by the Information Commissioner is the limited level of responses that they ordinarily receive. While, as underscored in Figure 2.9, the amount of reporting entities has steadily increased since 2012, total responses remain low, with only 55 out of 124 public institutions responding in 2022 and 58 in 2021. It remains to be seen whether PMO Circular no. 19/2021, which requires each public institution to submit a report to the Information Council regarding the implementation of ATI Law within the entity, will significantly impact the response rates.

**Figure 2.9. Number of institutions that reported to the Information Council, 2012-22**



Source: Data provided by the Information Council, 2023.

These findings contrast, for instance, with the fact that all 100 institutions targeted by JIACC for the Compliance Matrix (see below) replied to the questionnaires (even though not all of them replied to the transparency section). To address this, Jordan could consider raising awareness of public institutions, fostering a whole-of-government approach to ATI so that each institution feels compelled to contribute to ATI efforts, and raising the profile and strength of the Information Council.

### *The Integrity Compliance Matrix*

Also prompted by commitment no. 5 made under the Fourth OGP NAP, JIACC has developed a Compliance Matrix that feeds into the National Integrity Index (NII). The development of the Matrix was carried out under the fourth milestone of the commitment, “Monitoring the compliance of public administration institutions with the classification of information by conducting an evaluation of relevant governmental institutions, issuing a report, then circulating and publishing it, as a prelude to an annual evaluation process that seeks to promote the practices and culture of access to information”. The Compliance Matrix, which feeds into the NII, evaluates the compliance of public administration institutions with national integrity standards on five dimensions, one of which is transparency. In cooperation with the Department of National Library and a number of CSOs and private entities, a questionnaire was developed in this context related to public sector institutions’ compliance with the implementation of ATI Law. The results of the first edition of the index, launched in 2023 in cooperation with Rased, constituted the opportunity to present the objectives of the NII and announce the names of top-scoring entities from five assessed sectors: ministries, departments and institutions, municipalities, universities and hospitals. The results of the NII were based on a number of sources, including the integrity questionnaire, through which a survey gathered opinions of 3,597 employees regarding their assessment of the extent to which national integrity standards were being applied in their institutions.

Based on the information gathered during OECD interviews and a review of the questionnaire itself, there is an overlap between the information that JIACC will periodically collect for its Compliance Matrix and the information requested annually by the Information Council to all institutions in line with Prime Minister’s Circular no. 19/2021. Based on the information collected through stakeholder interviews, the response rates to JIACC’s questionnaire were higher (comprising almost all the surveyed public institutions) compared to an approximately 50% response rate for the Information Council. Collaboration between the Information Council and JIACC already exists, with JIACC sharing the data collected with the Council about classification procedures, lists that clarify classification of information, number of requests received by each institution and number of approved and rejected requests. Building on this co-operation, joint Information Council and JIACC requests for this information could be co-ordinated, as both council and committee should have access to the information and use it for their reporting purposes, for internal control and compliance on the side of JIACC and broader ATI policy purposes on the side of the Information Council.

### *User satisfaction*

One additional way that Jordan is aiming to build its compliance system is by measuring service recipient satisfaction. According to the Protocol on Enforcement Measures, a questionnaire should be sent to service recipients of ATI requests to measure/assess their satisfaction with the working procedures and the quality of services according to the form approved by the department. The annual report will include the results and measurements of satisfaction indicators. This tool has the potential to yield great insights for public institutions to improve their practices and make them more responsive to user needs. However, this is not currently implemented in practice according to interviews during the OECD fact-finding mission and available data. Collecting these metrics could support Jordan in understanding why there is a perceived lack of transparency on the part of some users, although request approval rates have remained

high. Box 2.9 provides an example of how user satisfaction surveys are used in Brazil to foster more responsive ATI services.

### Box 2.9. User satisfaction surveys in Brazil

Brazil, through its one-stop-shop portal *fala.BR* maintains a system for monitoring and tracking user satisfaction with ATI requests regarding reactive disclosure. It is an optional survey where the user is asked to rate the understandability of the information provided and if the responses to their requests were satisfactory. The results of the survey are published on the Office of the Comptroller General (CGU) website, which is in charge of the transparency agenda. This approach allows stakeholders to use information and data for engaging and monitoring government action and can prompt the CGU to take action in relation to expressed dissatisfaction.

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[58]</sup>), *Open Government Review of Brazil: Towards an Integrated Open Government Agenda*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f9009d4-en>; CGU (n.d.<sup>[59]</sup>), *ATI Law Panel (Painel Lei de Acesso a Informacao)*, <http://paineis.cgu.gov.br/lai/index.htm>.

### Capacity building and training of public officials

As mentioned throughout this chapter, despite the advances presented by the three protocols on ATI and other policy measures *de jure*, adequate implementation remains a widespread challenge. This may largely be due to limited knowledge of public officials on ATI procedures and requirements and limited conviction on the part of officials at all management levels about the benefits of ATI and a culture of transparency. The Department of the National Library has taken the lead on training officials from different institutions on the ATI Law and the three protocols, reaching around 700 officials across public institutions and the army in 10 governorates in 2022-23. Each training course is 45 hours spread over 10 days, with 3 days of theoretical content provided by CSO experts and 7 days of practical training provided by the department's staff. Continuing these efforts is crucial to building the capacities of public administration to implement the amended ATI Law. Jordan could consider complementing these with the creation of easy-to-use visual guides, focused workshops or shorter versions of the courses, which could be distributed throughout the administration for those who cannot attend the ten-day training. Furthermore, "train the trainers" sessions could also be considered, that is, providing training to officials that can, in turn, bring this knowledge to officials in their institutions. Lastly, the training efforts currently led by the Department of the National Library could be jointly organised with the IPA to draw on its extensive resources and expertise and ensure coherence with its ongoing capacity-building services for civil servants. Box 2.10 provides an example of a digital training platform implemented in Chile to train citizens, CSOs and public officials in the field of ATI.

There is also the possibility that implementing ATI requests is a low priority for officials in the context of their daily tasks. While this may partly be explained by the lack of sanctions for non-compliance, some interviewees pointed to a broader issue: public officials do not always recognise the value of sharing information with citizens and stakeholders in the first place. In this regard, all ATI training could be prefaced by a strategic overview of the importance and benefits of ATI as a fundamental right to achieve Jordan's broader policy goals and build citizen trust.



### Box 2.10. Chile's educational online platform EducaTransparencia

The Chilean Transparency Council has developed a portal with different pedagogical resources such as animated capsules, informative videos and e-learning courses that allow users to certify their knowledge in the areas of transparency and ATI. It targets citizens, CSOs and public officials, and has trained over 92 000 people since its creation in 2011.

The portal provides a training space that includes 28 virtual courses, 50 educational videos, 127 documents and 2 interactive resources to answer questions related to ATI. To develop the materials for citizens, specific methodologies were used to ensure that they were understandable and user-friendly. These resources are accessed freely via the website.

Source: CPLT (n.d.<sup>[60]</sup>), *EducaTransparencia Portal*, <https://www.educatransparencia.cl/portal/>.

## Reinforcing a culture of transparency in Jordan

A common challenge encountered in interviews and research surrounding transparency in Jordan is the limited trust that both public officials and citizens place in the right to access information. Public officials, in many cases, are not aware of citizens' rights to ATI or its potential benefits for Jordan's governance and economic objectives; civil society, journalists and regular citizens have often described mistrust of the possibility of openly requesting information without facing repercussions. Therefore, increased transparency could become the bedrock upon which further trust between the government and its citizens is built and the outcome of an increasingly two-way relationship where more information is openly disclosed and requested.

To a certain extent, the government is already working on setting policies and practices to foster a culture of transparency in public administration. For example, to receive the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[61]</sup>), public entities must demonstrate a commitment to implement the guarantees of the amended ATI Law.

Towards the public, promoting awareness among citizens and stakeholders regarding their right to access information is crucial. It is essential that these actors are well-versed in the existence of relevant ATI laws, the procedural aspects of filing requests and the avenues available for appeals. During the past three years, several media have been used in Jordan to communicate with the public about their right to ATI and the amended ATI Law. Communication avenues include the government's official websites and social media accounts, a stakeholder brochure, press releases, online advertisements, television and radio interviews and dedicated conference

es for public officials and civil society. However, in 2022, according to the Information Council's annual report, only 17 public institutions that responded to the circular had an ATI awareness plan for their employees and the public (13% of all institutions), despite the requirement to this effect contained in Article 9 of the Protocol for Enforcement Procedures for ATI. Further efforts in this direction can foster much-needed trust and awareness of the importance of transparency in Jordan.

## Box 2.11. Awareness-raising campaigns on ATI

### Morocco

Morocco's OGP National Action Plan 2018-20 Commitment no. 1 was to "Increase public awareness of the right to information". Its milestones included:

- Developing a communication plan around the law on the right of ATI.
- Developing informational content on the right of ATI.
- Defining the appropriate media to use to facilitate the flow of information pertaining to the right of ATI.
- Producing the means of popularisation based on informational content developed in several languages.
- Using the means of popularisation by the communication plan on the most appropriate channels.
- Organising meetings at the central, regional and local levels.

To fulfil this commitment, the Ministry of Administration Reform and Civil Service has developed a communication strategy on the right to ATI, including hosting national, regional and local level meetings and using various media and communication channels to promote public awareness. Furthermore, they developed a guide for citizens entitled *The Right to Access Information in Morocco* and a user-friendly video on how to use the chafafiya.ma platform.

### Mexico

The National Institute of Transparency, ATI and Protection of Personal Data in Mexico regularly hosts workshops and engages in outreach with vulnerable groups facing structural barriers that can impede ATI. One outcome of these workshops was the production of guides on digital literacy for senior citizens and women in rural areas.

### Uruguay

Uruguay has developed several awareness-raising campaigns for youth, for instance "We want to know" in 2017. It has also created an Action Plan for the Right to Access Information with a Gender-sensitive Approach (2021) and awareness-raising programmes on gender and ATI. Furthermore, it developed a general guide for requesters to foster knowledge of the right to access information, the *Guía didáctica sobre el Derecho de Acceso a la Información Pública (Didactic Guide on the Right of Access to Public Information)*.

Sources: Government of Morocco (n.d.<sup>[62]</sup>), "Le droit d'accès à l'information Guide relatif à la loi no 31.13", <https://web.archive.org/2012-06-14/103471-46036825.pdf>; OGP (n.d.<sup>[63]</sup>), Morocco: ATI Awareness Raising (MO0001), <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/morocco/commitments/MO0001/>; Government of Uruguay (2017<sup>[64]</sup>), "Queremos Saber [We want to know]", <https://www.gub.uy/unidad-acceso-informacion-publica/comunicacion/campanas/queremos-saber>; Government of Uruguay (n.d.<sup>[65]</sup>), "Plan de Acción del Derecho de Acceso a la Información Pública con enfoque de género [Action Plan for ATI with gender focus]", <https://www.gub.uy/unidad-acceso-informacion-publica/politicas-y-gestion/plan-accion-del-derecho-acceso-informacion-publica-enfoque-genero>; Government of Uruguay (2021<sup>[66]</sup>), *Guía didáctica sobre el Derecho de Acceso a la Información Pública [Didactic Guide on the Right of Access to Public Information]*, <https://www.gub.uy/unidad-acceso-informacion-publica/comunicacion/publicaciones/guia-didactica-sobre-derecho-acceso-informacion-publica/guia-didactica>; INAI (n.d.<sup>[67]</sup>), *What Public Information Do You Need?*, National Institute of Transparency, ATI and Protection of Personal Data, Mexico, <https://home.inai.org.mx> accessed on 20 September 2024.

## Policy recommendations

Jordan has underscored its commitment to building a stronger ATI ecosystem as part of its journey towards a more modern, transparent and accountable state. Through the recently amended ATI Law, including transparency as a foundational principle and an objective of the Roadmap and its international commitments pledged under the United Nations and the OGP, Jordan can leverage this opportunity to develop a culture of transparency in public administration and the eyes of its citizens.

Throughout this chapter, areas of opportunity for growth have been explored. Jordan's Information Council, the leading body implementing, supervising and monitoring the ATI Law, would benefit from a stronger mandate and reinforced capacities to carry out its duties. At the same time, a more comprehensive legal framework that integrates the content of the three ATI protocols into bylaws would ensure a sound and long-lasting basis for this right in line with international good practices. Developing digital access tools, such as an information one-stop shop within Jordan's e-participation platform, would promote a modern and inclusive approach to ATI. Finally, continued efforts to raise awareness and trust in the right to access information among public servants, citizens, journalists, academics and CSOs would contribute to a whole-of-society understanding of ATI.

These recommendations are outlined below, suggesting key steps to be considered by the Information Council, MoPIC, JIACC, MoDEE, the NCHR, PMO and GBD. Despite the leadership exercised by these entities, effective implementation of these recommendations will require closer inter-institutional co-operation, a whole-of-government approach mainstreamed across all public entities to which the ATI Law applies, as well as support from the legislative and judicial branches of power within their respective competencies. Some are geared towards the short term and can contribute quick wins, while others, such as modifying legal frameworks, can be considered long-term suggestions.

## Policy recommendations

### **Leverage the momentum of the amended ATI Law to achieve its full implementation and continue to strengthen the legal framework for ATI**

In order to continue ongoing efforts to strengthen the legal ATI framework and further align it with international best practices, consideration could be given to the following:

- Enshrining the right to access information at the highest level to embed it with longevity and firm grounding as a fundamental right.
- Unifying the content of the three ATI protocols into the amended ATI Law's bylaws, ensuring they are sufficiently detailed, coherent and in line with international good practices.
- In the medium to longer term, considering further amending the ATI Law and, if possible, introducing new aspects in the new ATI Law's bylaws in line with international standards, with a particular focus on the following:
  - Enhancing the institutional framework for the implementation of ATI, such as by creating a dedicated department or institution for this purpose.
  - Clarifying and limiting the extent of exceptions, applying an open-by-default approach and positive or neutral administrative silence.
  - Establishing sanctions for public institutions and officials who systematically fail to uphold the ATI Law and an exemption from penalties for officials who disclose information in good faith in accordance with the law.
  - Strengthening the implementation of proactive disclosure of information

Leveraging its inclusion in the amended ATI Law, all public entities led by the Information Council could make efforts to increase its degree of implementation, in particular:

- Strengthening proactive disclosure in practice, raising the percentage of institutions that actively disclose (currently about one-third).
- Considering developing a one-stop shop to facilitate the accessibility of information, prioritising the disclosure of the most relevant and recent information first.
- Continuing efforts to populate the future open data portal in terms of quantity and quality, and leveraging its launch to raise awareness among public officials and citizens.
- Considering conducting participatory budgeting initiatives at the national level with stronger consultation with citizens on budget laws at all four stages of budget law development.

### **Improve inclusiveness of reactive disclosure of information and data**

To strengthen the inclusiveness and accessibility of ATI requests, Jordan could consider measures to simplify and streamline this process across public entities, in particular:

- Building on the high approval rates already in place, prioritising ATI efforts in the institutions that receive the highest numbers of requests first to achieve a quick improvement.
- Considering reducing the amount of mandatory information required to file a request and removing or clarifying the need for a motive or purpose.
- Building on the amended ATI Law, further implementing inclusiveness initiatives for vulnerable and marginalised populations.
- Addressing the low number of appeals by facilitating the processes and raising trust in their effectiveness among citizens.

### **Strengthen ATI oversight capacities for a more effective implementation**

Jordan could consider strengthening its institutional framework, including the mandate, resources and capacities of the Information Council, to implement the right to access information. In particular, Jordan could:

- Strengthen the strategic approach of the Information Council to lead an ambitious agenda on ATI in the country.
- Provide the Information Council with sufficient human and financial resources to enable the adequate enforcement, monitoring and promotion of the amended ATI Law.
- Ensure the appointment of information officers and committees in all public entities, establishing stronger incentives for undertaking such roles.
- Join reporting request efforts between the Information Council and JIACC to avoid requesting the same information twice, providing both institutions with access to the data.
- Continue efforts towards capacity building and training of public officials on ATI.
- Implement user satisfaction measurement in practice to address concerns from the perspectives of requestors.

### **Foster increased clarity of roles, interinstitutional co-ordination and ownership for ATI**

To promote stronger interinstitutional co-ordination and alignment among the key public entities working on ATI, Jordan could consider the following:

- Continuing fruitful co-operation measures among the Information Council, JIACC, MoPIC and the NCHR, considering the organisation of technical-level co-ordination meetings.

- Establishing a stronger link between the Information Council and the GCHR to ensure efforts surrounding ATI are aligned.
- Fostering increased co-operation on the issue of budget transparency across the relevant entities.
- Adopting a whole-of-government approach that ensures all public entities see transparency as a common objective, encouraging their compliance and reporting on ATI, including through a national strategy or action plan for ATI.
- Continuing efforts to raise awareness and trust on the importance and benefits of the ATI law for public officials and citizens.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to stakeholder interviews, the Jordan Transparency Center, the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, civil society coalition HIMAM, the Journalists Association and the Economic and Social Council were consulted.

<sup>2</sup> For resources and guidance on conducting participatory budgeting efforts, see OECD (2022<sup>[68]</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> Based on OECD team research conducted in October 2023.

<sup>4</sup> In accordance with Article 13 of the amended ATI Law, the following information cannot be disclosed: documents obtained from another country and agreed to remain confidential between the two parties; information that may cause harm to national defence, state security or foreign policy; information that includes analysis, recommendations, proposals or consultations to be submitted to the Official in Charge before a decision is made in their concern, including correspondences and information exchanged between different governmental departments regarding it; personal information and files related to educational or

medical persons, professional records, bank accounts and transfers and professional confidentialities or other data that are prohibited from being disclosed in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law; correspondence of personal or confidential nature, whether in the form of post, cable, phone call or any other technological means, with governmental departments and the replies thereto; information whose disclosure will affect negotiations between the kingdom and any other country or body; investigations made by the public prosecution, judicial police or security authorities concerning any crime or lawsuit within their jurisdiction, as well as investigations conducted by the competent authorities for unveiling financial, customs or banking violations, unless the competent authority permits the disclosure thereof; and information of commercial, industrial, financial or economic nature, information on scientific bids or researches or technology, whose disclosure will lead to the violation of its copyright, intellectual property rights or fair or lawful competition or to illegal profit or loss for any person.

<sup>5</sup> According to the information provided by the administrative courts in OECD interviews, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://bit.ly/3mi8nYA>.

<sup>7</sup> The committee should be permanent and formed of no fewer than five members and no more than seven members, under the leadership of the secretary- or director-general of the entity, whose members include a specialised employee for receiving requests for information (called the information co-ordinator), a representative of the legal affairs unit/directorate, a representative of the administrative affairs unit/directorate, a representative of the information technology unit/directorate, and a representative of the institutional development unit/directorate, taking into account the organisational structure of the department, in addition to any person with competency appointed by the secretary- or director-general of the department. They should meet at least every three months, or as often as necessary.

# **3**

## **Promoting responsiveness and stakeholder participation in Jordan**

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This chapter focuses on fostering responsiveness and strengthening citizen and stakeholder participation in Jordan. It concentrates on the opportunities available to citizens and civil society organisations to provide suggestions and feedback on policymaking, service design and delivery, as well as to be meaningfully involved in public decision-making and hold the government accountable for their activities and related outcomes. The chapter begins by reviewing the conditions for meaningful participation, namely the protection of civic freedoms, an enabling environment for civil society and the role of oversight bodies. It then looks at how the government receives inputs, complaints, and grievances from citizens and how accountable the public administration is. Lastly, the chapter identifies existing forms of citizen and stakeholder participation and ways to mainstream more innovative methods to strengthen the state-citizen relationship.

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## Introduction

By seeking out the views of their citizens and addressing their concerns, governments can ensure that policies and services reflect and respond to the needs of the public. At the same time, actively engaging citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs)<sup>1</sup> can support public officials in making informed decisions underpinned by a broad range of perspectives, increasing stakeholders' buy-in on necessary reforms. Bolstering citizen and stakeholder participation and providing more opportunities for their participation in policymaking and service design and delivery can support governments in pursuing short-, medium- and long-term goals.

The OECD defines citizen and stakeholder participation as “all the ways in which stakeholders (including citizens) can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery” (OECD, 2017<sup>[1]</sup>). This refers to all efforts made by public bodies to hear the views, perspectives and inputs from citizens and stakeholders. While formal organisations and individual citizens require different approaches and formats, the *OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes* outline different ways that both can be involved in public decision-making (Table 3.2) (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). To support countries in this regard, the OECD has developed a “ladder” of citizen and stakeholder participation to expand upon the ways in which all relevant actors can be involved in public decision-making. The 2017 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017<sup>[1]</sup>) defines them as the following:

**Information:** An initial level of participation characterised by a one-way relationship in which the government produces and delivers information to stakeholders. It covers both on-demand provision of information and “proactive” measures by the government to disseminate information.

**Consultation:** A more advanced level of participation that entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback to the government and vice-versa. It is based on the prior definition of the issue for which views are being sought and requires the provision of relevant information, in addition to feedback on the outcomes of the process.

**Engagement:** When stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy cycle and in service design and delivery.

Jordan has an array of legal, policy and institutional frameworks that enable citizens<sup>2</sup> and other stakeholders<sup>3</sup> to share their knowledge and expertise, provide feedback, shape policymaking and service design and delivery, and promote accountability across public administration. Today, the country has a unique opportunity to transform high-level commitment into concrete action through its current reform agenda, namely the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (hereinafter “the Roadmap”) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>), the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[4]</sup>), the *Report from the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System* (Government of Jordan, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>) and the associated government Executive Programme (2023–25) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>). It can also seek to enhance its relationship with citizens and stakeholders as active partners supporting the government in achieving shared objectives. In this regard, one of the stated aims of the Roadmap is to “foster a sustainable, developed, and capable public sector that is qualified to assume its tasks efficiently and effectively, respond to citizens’ needs and expectations, and enjoy flexibility and responsiveness to meet future challenges” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>). Moreover, in the preface of the EMV, King Abdullah II emphasises that “citizens are key partners in expediting positive change and benefiting from it” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[4]</sup>). The government Executive Programme also calls for “a modern state rooted in participation, active citizenship [and] the rule of law” (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>).

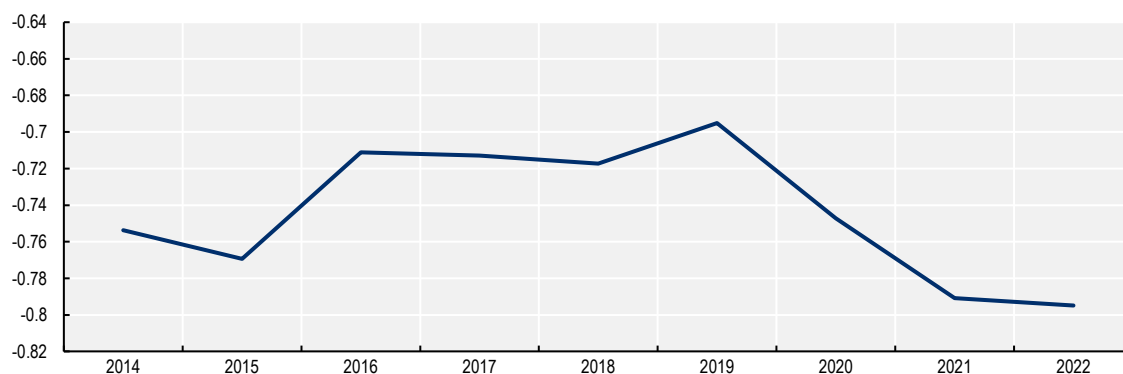
At the same time, facilitating and encouraging the role of citizens and stakeholders to participate in public decision-making is dependent on certain prerequisites and conditions. First, as noted in the OECD report *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, fundamental civic freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association must be protected and promoted to ensure that all citizens can access information, express their views and

participate in public life on an equal basis (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Moreover, governments increasingly recognise the importance of establishing channels that allow citizens to provide feedback, propose ideas and submit complaints. CSOs make essential contributions to public life: they can advocate for vulnerable groups and those at-risk of exclusion, provide expertise on subject matter, deliver services, and monitor and evaluate government activities (OECD, 2024<sup>[8]</sup>). An enabling environment for CSOs allows them to operate freely, access diverse forms of funding and participate in public decision-making as partners supporting governments to align laws, policies and services to societal needs.

Solidarity in Jordan has a rich history, with roots extending back to philanthropic traditions and religious and charitable organisations (Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). Furthermore, after a series of democratisation reforms in 1989, the work and scope of civil society activities began to expand. While laws on societies existed as early as the 1930s, the activities of CSOs started to flourish in Jordan during the 1990s (CMEP, 2009<sup>[10]</sup>). The Arab Spring was yet another catalyst for the evolution of civic space in Jordan in 2011 (Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). According to international non-profit organisation CIVICUS, over recent decades, the space for civil society in Jordan has “witnessed both periods of contraction and of expansion, with relationships between CSOs and the government varying” (CIVICUS, n.d.<sup>[11]</sup>). CSOs have multiplied over the years and their impact on public decision-making has the potential to be significantly stronger with further support (ETF, 2021<sup>[12]</sup>).

Jordan has made progress in some of the above areas over the past decade, notably by implementing the commitments of their Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plans<sup>4</sup> (OGP, n.d.<sup>[13]</sup>). At the same time, the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2022 gave Jordan a score of 0.38 out of 1, with 1 being strongest in the category of open government (WJP, 2022<sup>[14]</sup>) while Jordan scored in the 27<sup>th</sup> percentile in the World Bank’s Voice and Accountability indicator (World Bank, 2022<sup>[15]</sup>). This indicator, – which measures the extent to which citizens can participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of the press – demonstrates that there is room for improvement in order to reverse the trajectory that the country has followed in recent years (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1. World Bank Voice and Accountability indicator in Jordan, 2014-22**



Note: Estimate gives the country’s score on the aggregate indicator in units of standard normal distribution, ranging from approximately -2.5 (worst) to 2.5 (best).

Source: World Bank (2022<sup>[15]</sup>), *Voice and Accountability: Estimate - Jordan*, [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VA.ES?end=2022&locations=JO&name\\_desc=true&start=2016](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VA.ES?end=2022&locations=JO&name_desc=true&start=2016).

This chapter focuses on how Jordan can further build on its promising foundations to ensure that all citizens can exercise their voice while also providing CSOs with sufficient channels to actively participate in policymaking and contribute to the design and delivery of services, thereby strengthening transparency and accountability.

## Protecting civic freedoms and the information ecosystem ensures that citizens and stakeholders can participate fully in public life

### Legal frameworks are strong but implementation challenges remain

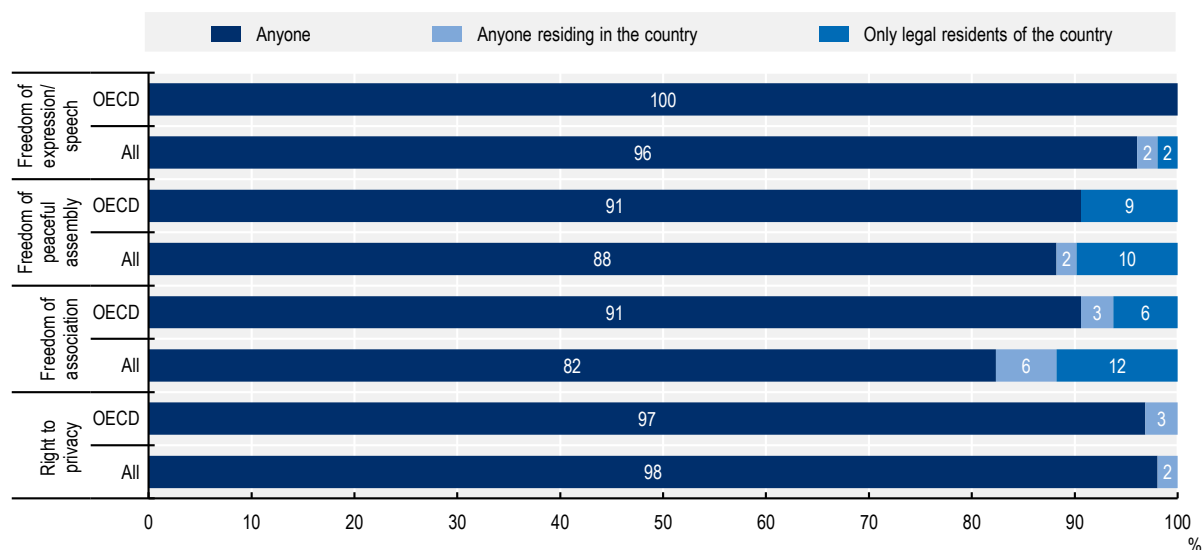
Freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association are fundamental civic freedoms that enable effective citizen and stakeholder participation. In Jordan, these freedoms are enshrined at the highest level, as they are guaranteed by the constitution (Government of Jordan, 1952, amendments in 2011<sup>[16]</sup>).

- Article 15 of the Jordanian constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression and refers to several modes of expression (e.g. speech, writing, photography and “others”).
- Article 16/1 of the Jordanian constitution protects freedom of peaceful assembly by stating that “Jordanians shall have the right to hold meetings within the limits of the law”.
- Article 16/2 stipulates that “Jordanians shall have the right to establish societies, unions and political parties provided their objective is lawful, their methods peaceful, and their by-laws not in violation of the provisions of the Constitution”. The constitution delegates authority to the legal code to regulate the operation of these entities. Article 23/2/F guarantees that this right is also applicable to trade unions.

At present, the constitution affords this right to Jordanian citizens. OECD member countries afford the right to legal residents and anyone residing in the country (Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2. Legal entitlement to civic freedoms, 2020**

Percentage of OECD member and non-member countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: “All” refers to 51 respondents (32 OECD member and 19 non-member countries). In the context of this graph, “legal resident” refers to any persons with permits to reside in the country, while “anyone residing in the country” covers any persons living in the country. “Anyone” is the broadest term, meaning that any persons inside and outside the country are entitled to exercise these civic freedoms..

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[7]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.



### *Aligning the right to freedom of expression with international standards*

The right to freedom of expression covers the right to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, orally, in writing or print (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Aside from the constitution, other legislation regulates freedom of expression, including the penal code. The penal code includes some rights limitations, particularly concerning slander, defamation, inciting sectarian strife and sedition, and offending religious beliefs (Government of Jordan, 1960, amended in 2011<sup>[17]</sup>). Jordan is not alone in applying criminal sanctions for defamation, with 88% of OECD members having similar provisions in their laws (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). That being said, while international standards allow for limitations on speech where necessary (out of respect for the rights or reputations of others for the protection of national security, public order, or public health or morals), they also advise that defamation laws should be formulated carefully to ensure that they are proportionate and minimise the risks of stifling freedom of expression in practice (UN, 2011<sup>[18]</sup>). Jordan could benefit from reviewing the existing legal frameworks on freedom of expression, e.g. defamation, to ensure that they align with international standards.

As in many other countries, restrictions on freedom of expression have been a renewed subject of conversation over the past year in Jordan. International human rights organisation Article 19's 2023 *Global Expression Report* categorises Jordan as "highly restricted" (Article 19, 2023<sup>[19]</sup>). While the country ranks above Algeria and Egypt, it also ranks below Lebanon and Morocco (Article 19, 2023<sup>[19]</sup>). In 2023, the government adopted the Cybercrime Law, which regulates online activity intending to address online defamation, hate speech and disinformation (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[20]</sup>). While it is important for countries to address and counter cybercrime, the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law has analysed the law and concluded that "many of the cybercrimes listed in the draft law are vague and overly broad, which could lead to impermissible restrictions on the freedom of expression" (ICNL, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>). CSOs and journalists interviewed as part of the fact-finding mission expressed similar concerns.

In response to these concerns, King Abdullah II emphasised during a meeting with the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) that "the Kingdom was never an oppressive country, and will never be one, and its history is a testament to that". He has also stated that "combating cybercrimes should not be at the expense of Jordanians' right to express their opinion and criticise public policies" (HRW, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>; Jordan Times, 2023<sup>[23]</sup>), indicating that the way in which the law is interpreted and applied will be crucial.

In this regard, Article 39 of the law states that "the Council of Ministers shall issue the regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Law" (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[20]</sup>). This provision allows public officials to collaborate with stakeholders to introduce practical guidance on applying the law. Jordan could consider creating a working group or focus group on the Cybercrime Law to allow academics and CSOs, including human rights organisations and journalists, to discuss how to implement the law effectively. In this regard, to minimise an excess of discretion in its application, the government could elaborate secondary guidelines via bylaws/regulations for public officials on interpreting and implementing the law in line with international standards. Training judges and prosecutors on how to apply the law could be beneficial.

### *Ensuring that positive amendments to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are reflected in practice*

Freedom of peaceful assembly is essential to allow citizens to express their views and they should, in principle, be able to exercise the right to peaceful assembly in all public spaces (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Aside from the constitution, the Public Gatherings Law, which was adopted in 2004, operationalises this right. In a positive move, the law was amended in 2011 so that organisers no longer require permission from the government to host public meetings or demonstrations. The law now indicates that they only need to notify the relevant authorities, which aligns with international standards (Government of Jordan, 2004, amendments in 2011<sup>[24]</sup>).

That being said, some implementation challenges remain in practice regarding this amendment. Some CSOs and journalists interviewed during the OECD fact-finding mission mentioned they needed permission from the Ministry of Interior to host events in public and private venues (e.g. hotels). Public bodies in Jordan are also required to inform the Ministry of Interior regarding any events or workshops but are not asked to seek permission.

In addition, the NCHR has also emphasised that some of the existing provisions of the law could constitute an obstacle to the right to peaceful assembly. It has recommended that, for example, Article 2 on the definition of a public meeting be amended to ensure alignment with international standards.

To protect freedom of peaceful assembly, Jordan could assess whether provisions of the Public Gatherings Law are conducive to an enabling environment for civil society. It could also ensure that promising amendments that have been made to the legal framework are reflected in practice, including by reviewing cases where CSOs have been unable to host a public gathering.

### *Operationalising the right to freedom of association*

More details on how this right is operationalised in practice can be found in the section below on the enabling environment for CSOs.

### *Protecting press freedom and strengthening the information ecosystem*

#### **Developing a holistic strategy to promote freedom of the press and support media outlets and journalists**

Informed individuals are the foundation of democratic debate and society (OECD, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>). In addition to protected civic freedoms, a healthy information ecosystem allows citizens and stakeholders to access information, take part in public debate and hold public officials accountable for their decisions and actions. Freedom of the press is a core part of a healthy information ecosystem.

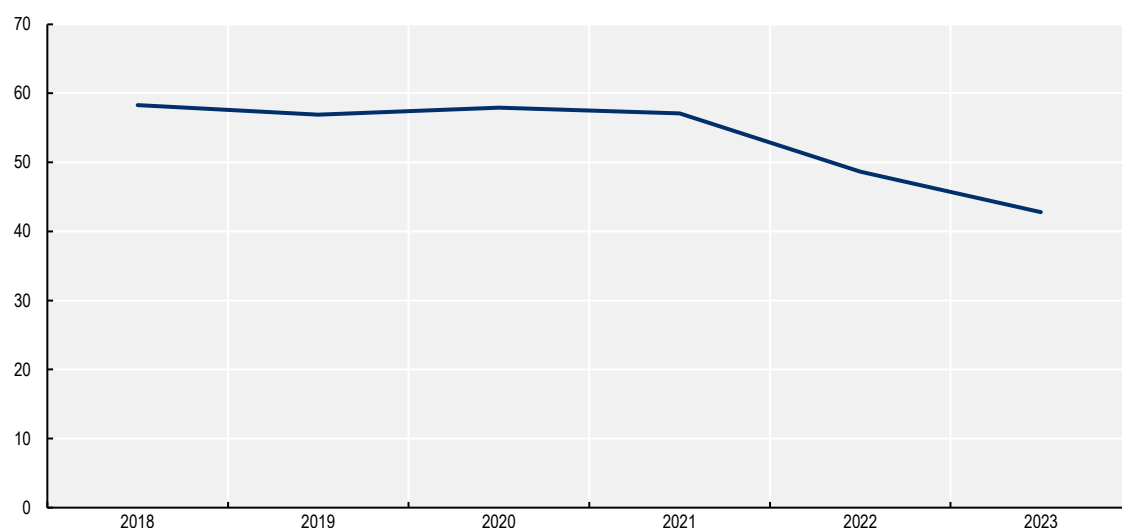
Freedom of the press is guaranteed by Article 15/4 of the Jordanian constitution (Government of Jordan, 1952, amendments in 2011<sup>[16]</sup>), which states that the licenses of newspapers and information media cannot be revoked except by judicial order. The only permissible derogations to this right are in a state of emergency wherein limited censorship may be imposed in matters related to public safety and national security. The most relevant pieces of legislation are the amended Law Guaranteeing the Right to Access to Information (discussed in further detail in Chapter 2 on transparency and access to information) (Government of Jordan, 2007, amended in 2024<sup>[26]</sup>), the Press and Publications Law (Government of Jordan, 1998, amended in 2012<sup>[27]</sup>) and the Audiovisual Media Law (Government of Jordan, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>). The latter established the Media Commission as the regulator for broadcast media, which resulted in the emergence of new radio and television stations (Government of Jordan, 2015<sup>[28]</sup>) and contributed considerably to greater media pluralism in Jordan.

The Press and Publications Law provides a framework within which print media can operate. It was amended slightly in 1999 and again in 2012 to bring news websites under its remit. In addition to governing the content of published material, the law allocates a wide range of regulatory functions regarding the operations of media entities to explicitly political bodies and individuals such as the Cabinet, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (now Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, MoDEE) and the Media Commission (Government of Jordan, 1998, amended in 2012<sup>[27]</sup>). Print media are required to obtain a license to operate and can be blocked if they do not comply with the law.<sup>5</sup> The law authorises the director of the Media Commission to block unlicensed websites and shut down entities operating without license (Government of Jordan, 1998, amended in 2012<sup>[27]</sup>). The amendments also consider third-party comments as “journalistic material” and place responsibility for the content of these

comments with the website owners and editors-in-chief (Government of Jordan, 1998, amended in 2012<sup>[27]</sup>).

Overall, Jordan can be commended for having a diverse range of state, private and community radio stations and several independent media platforms (RSF, 2023<sup>[29]</sup>). Reporters Without Borders ranks Jordan 146<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in its 2023 World Press Freedom Index (see Figure 3.3 for the score) (RSF, 2023<sup>[29]</sup>), noting challenges regarding media independence and pluralism. For example, some television channels are partly government-owned and some editors are appointed by public bodies, affecting their ability to report impartially (RSF, 2023<sup>[29]</sup>). In addition, privately owned media outlets can suffer from a lack of financial resources to operate (RSF, 2023<sup>[29]</sup>). On the other hand, regarding freedom of expression and press freedom in the digital sphere, Freedom House's 2023 Freedom on the Net annual survey ranks Jordan as "partly free" given its score of 47/100 and finds that access to the Internet has "improved significantly" over recent years (Freedom House, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>).

**Figure 3.3. Jordan in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index, 2018-23**



Note: RSF compares the level of press freedom in 180 countries and issues an annual ranking (1 being the best, 180 being the worst) and score per country.

Source: RSF (2023<sup>[29]</sup>), *RSF World Press Freedom Index - Jordan*, <https://rsf.org/en/country/jordan>.

Jordan is already trying to address the challenges that media outlets and journalists face in partnership with these same stakeholders. In 2023, the Ministry of Government Communication began developing a policy to strengthen government communication while improving the legal and regulatory frameworks that govern media actors and highlighting their important role in fostering pluralistic public discourse (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[31]</sup>). As part of the process, the Economic and Social Council (ESC) held a dialogue between the government and media actors before the policy's approval (Jordan Times, 2023<sup>[32]</sup>). Moreover, in 2024, a Permanent Committee for Media Freedoms and Human Rights was established with a mandate to:

- Create a conducive legislative and regulatory environment that enables the media and journalists to fulfil their important roles.
- Provide recommendations and suggestions for developing press freedom in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, legislation, international standards and best practices.
- Collaborate with partners that operate in the field of human rights to advance press freedom.<sup>6</sup>

Jordan could consider building upon existing initiatives by continuing to host workshops, roundtables and discussion groups with media outlets and journalists to discuss the challenges they face in undertaking their vital work. As noted by the NCHR, it could be helpful to develop a national strategy for media and journalists that clarifies relevant legislation outlining the government's goals – and steps to achieve these – in safeguarding press freedom.

### **Fortifying the information ecosystem by improving media literacy and combatting mis- and disinformation**

Jordan has made significant progress in relation to improving the broader public interest information ecosystem through initiatives on public communication and media literacy. Like all OECD members, Jordan is not immune to the growing spread of mis- and disinformation.<sup>7</sup> A survey undertaken by the Rased Al Hayat Centre in 2023 found that 16% of respondents were happy to be the first to share news regardless of its validity, while 13% said that sharing news, regardless of its accuracy, makes them feel influential (UNDP, 2023<sup>[33]</sup>). In this context, the government is ramping up efforts to strengthen critical thinking, foster media literacy, improve public communication and share more accurate and timely information with citizens. Some of these initiatives include the following:

- The fact-checking Your Right to Know or *Haggak Tiraf* platform allows citizens to quickly verify information, particularly on social media, before they share or circulate it further (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[34]</sup>).
- The online portal called Our Trust, established by the Ministry of Culture, includes resources for training on media literacy for schools, universities and CSOs, as well as a set of educational videos on the topic (Ministry of Culture, n.d.<sup>[35]</sup>).
- The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship launched the Government Communication Forum in 2023. The forum allows public officials to present or explain their policies and programmes to the public and media actors and journalists, covering different policy areas each time, e.g. education, agriculture and health. The forum is weekly and is live-streamed on social media. It enables the government to combat false news and rumours by providing reliable information and fostering exchanges between the government, the media and citizens.<sup>8</sup>

Addressing false information requires a multifaceted approach, acknowledging there is no one-size-fits-all solution (UNDP, 2023<sup>[33]</sup>). Countries are increasingly implementing policies to foster societal resilience to mis- and disinformation and upgrade governance measures to enable public institutions to support the integrity of the information space (OECD, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>). Jordan has not yet developed a mature and comprehensive strategy, guide or toolkit to counter mis- and disinformation (OECD, 2021<sup>[36]</sup>). In this vein, Jordan could build upon its existing efforts by developing an overarching framework to strengthen the information ecosystem and combat mis- and disinformation, which could be led by the Permanent Committee for Media Freedoms and Human Rights under the guidance of the Ministry of Government Communication and Ministry of Culture.

## **There are opportunities to enhance the enabling environment for CSOs**

### ***The civil society sector in Jordan is diverse and key to supporting the reform agenda***

CSOs can take on a range of roles and effectively collaborate and co-operate with the government to achieve shared goals (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). For example, given their proximity to the communities in which they operate, they can provide social services, education and healthcare services in collaboration with the government. With a strong enabling environment, they can act as an interface or mediator between citizens and the government in support of the public interest. They can also act as essential advocacy or watchdog organisations that speak on behalf of those who are underrepresented, monitor government activities and

hold public officials to account. Their essential role in society is increasingly recognised as governments work towards creating an environment that facilitates and supports their activities (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

CSOs in Jordan can be broadly divided into two categories:<sup>9</sup> societies<sup>10</sup> and non-profit companies,<sup>11</sup> most of which are based in the capital city Amman. With no official data available, most of these work on topics such as poverty, youth, refugees, gender, education, disability and healthcare, according to interviewees during the OECD fact-finding mission. Many have a service provision rather than an advocacy role, with most focused on supplying essential services to their communities. There are also organisations under honorary royal patronage, given the importance of the areas and sectors they work on. These often work on matters pertaining to vulnerable groups, such as the King Hussein and Jordan River Foundations.

## ***A range of legal, policy and institutional frameworks regulate the civil society sector***

### *Processes and procedures for CSOs to register and operate could be streamlined*

In order to operate, societies and non-profit companies are required by law to register. Registration can be done through the Register of Societies at the Ministry of Social Development or the Companies Control Department for non-profit companies. According to the Register of Societies, approximately 6 625 societies are currently in operation in the country, while the Companies Control Department has about 1 500 registered non-profit companies.<sup>12</sup>

#### **The Register of Societies at the Ministry of Social Development could shorten registration times**

The main legislative instrument regulating societies is Societies Law No. 51 (Government of Jordan, 2008<sup>[37]</sup>) of 2008 and its amendments in 2009 (Government of Jordan, 2009<sup>[38]</sup>), as well as Societies Regulation No. 57/2010 (Government of Jordan, 2010<sup>[39]</sup>) and the recently amended Regulation for the Specified Regulation of the Provisions of the Societies Bylaws, Societies Regulation No. 25/2023 (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[40]</sup>). The law does not permit the formation of groups that pursue “political objectives” as Jordan has a specific law on the right to form and join political parties, or groups that carry out activities contrary to “public order” (Government of Jordan, 2009<sup>[38]</sup>). In 2021, the Ministry of Social Development formed the Committee for Amending the Societies Law to introduce reforms to the legal framework; however, it did not proceed past the initial stages. In a positive development, the committee was restructured to include more representatives from CSOs and ministries in 2023, with ongoing discussions on the law.

The law grants the Ministry of Social Development extensive responsibilities in relation to societies and establishes the Register of Societies. Responsibility for managing the register lies with a board of directors chaired by the Minister of Social Development. This board is comprised of the following representatives from relevant ministries and the charitable or volunteer sector (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[41]</sup>):

- Secretary General of Register of Societies
- Representative from the Ministry of Interior
- Representative from the Ministry of Culture
- Representative from the Ministry of Environment
- Representative from the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs
- Representative from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
- Four experts in voluntary and charity works.<sup>13</sup>

The Register of Societies and the Ministry of Social Development provide the information organisations must register on their respective websites, per the Societies Law and the Societies Regulation

(Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[42]</sup>). A society must submit its application to the register with the following information:

- Name and address of the main office and branches of the charitable society, social organisation or union (if the organisation is based outside of Jordan).
- Names of founding members, ages, occupations and places of residence. Members must be over 18 years old.
- Description of the main purpose for the establishment and other goals the society strives to achieve.
- Terms of membership, subscription and means of ending membership.
- Election details of the board of administrators that will handle the work of the society and supervise its affairs.
- Supervision and control of the financial affairs of the society.
- Information on disposing of the society's funds upon its dissolution, provided this is in line with its objectives and the funds are used inside the Kingdom (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[42]</sup>).

Organisations must fill various professional roles internally to meet the baseline requirements for registration. While the law does not mandate a specific number of staff for certain functions, it does note that societies should have an administrative committee and a legal accountant. This requirement could be burdensome for small or recently founded organisations, as they may not have adequate financial resources to pay for such staff. Jordan could reassess whether its requirements (e.g. staff functions) are overly prescriptive, especially for smaller societies or those with limited financial and human resources.

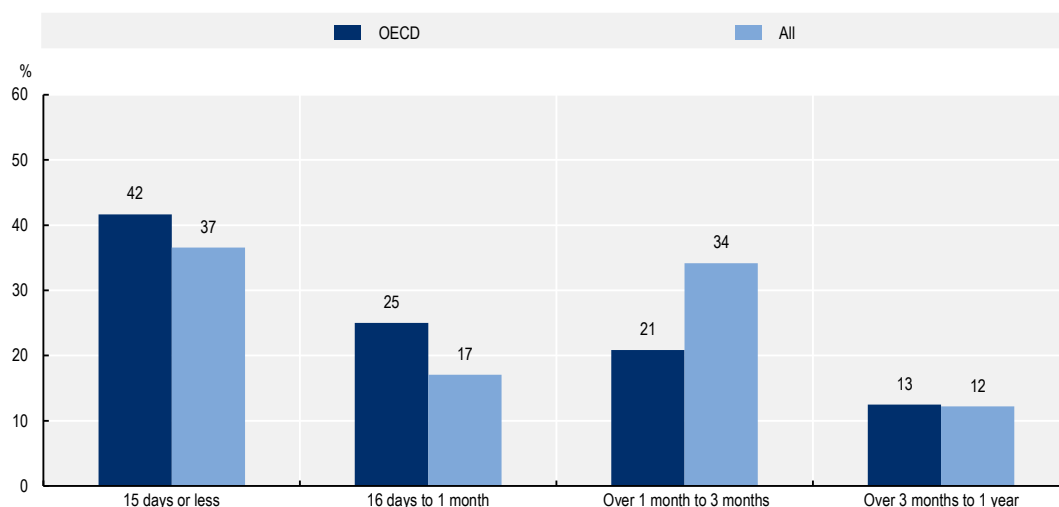
As a positive step, following the COVID-19 pandemic, applications for registration can now be submitted online, while the in-person option remains available. This change significantly facilitates the process. The board must approve or deny a registration request within 60 days (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[42]</sup>). If the application is submitted to one of the field offices of the Ministry of Social Development located outside of Amman, the office is required to send the application to the register within seven days. If any of the registration requirements are missing, the register notifies the applicant within 15 days of receipt of the application. Overall, this means that the entire process can take up to almost 90 days from the submission date, which is comparatively long compared to other countries (Figure 3.4).

In this regard, Jordan could explore possibilities to reduce the time required for registration, for example, the register could aim to immediately inform the applicant if certain documents are missing and the board could consider shortening its current 60-day deadline.

At times, societies may be advised to amend their goals or make other changes, for example, if they have the same name as another registered society. In case of an outright rejection, an applicant can submit an appeal to the Administrative Court. The board justifies rejections to the applicant. The board can also revoke a registration, for example, if a society stops conducting activities for a year, accepts foreign funding without approval or fails to elect an administrative committee. Societies can also submit an appeal to the Administrative Court if their status is revoked. To ensure due process, fairness and accountability, Jordan could ensure that all applications, if rejected or revoked, are accompanied by a detailed justification of why and how decisions are made.

**Figure 3.4. Average length of time between submission of a request for registration by CSOs and a decision, 2020**

Percentage of OECD member and non-member countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: "All" refers to 41 respondents (24 OECD member and 17 non-member countries).

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[7]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

### **The Companies Control Department at the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Supply could introduce maximum deadlines for approval**

Companies Law No. 22/1997 (Government of Jordan, 1997<sup>[43]</sup>) and Non-Profit Companies Regulation No. 73/2010 (Government of Jordan, 2010<sup>[44]</sup>) regulate the activities of non-profit companies. Non-profit companies register with the Companies Control Department (n.d.<sup>[45]</sup>).

Registration of non-profit companies is done electronically on a webpage.<sup>14</sup> There is no specific timeline for the registration of non-profit companies. However, approval is required from the Ministry of Interior, which is not the case for societies. The length of the process thus depends on the time needed to obtain the approval. Once the ministry grants approval, the Companies Control Department registers the non-profit company. The steps for the application include:

- Entering the type of company, its location and its management structure.
- Selecting goals as per the National Classification for Economic Activities (ISIC4) system.
- Entering the details of the founders and partners (e.g. identification, shares in the company).
- Entering the details of the relevant contracts and bylaws.

After submitting the application, the applicant receives a notification specifying whether the information is under review, whether information needs to be amended, the status of the approval from the Ministry of Interior and the status of fee payment. The Companies Control Department could seek to introduce maximum deadlines, including the time required for approval from the Ministry of Interior, to ensure that non-profit companies understand how long the process may take.



### **The Takamul platform has the potential to provide an overview of the civil society sector and promote its activities**

The Register of Societies currently provides a range of important information and data on its website (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[41]</sup>). For example, the website provides an overview of the register's structure and board of directors, as well as an information centre with guidance on its services. It regularly publishes articles on training workshops with societies. The register also includes a full database of the societies in operation in Jordan (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[46]</sup>). All entries include the headquarters of the organisation, whether it operates at the local, national or international level, its area of operation, the responsible ministry and its name and identification number. Currently, there are societies cross-registered with 14 ministries with which they work, all of which are also visible in the database (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[46]</sup>).

The Companies Control Department also publishes a database of registered non-profit companies (n.d.<sup>[45]</sup>) where users can search for a company. Like the Register of Societies, users can search for any non-profit company by the name or number of the company, name of a partner, type of company, the outlined goals and time of registration.

In a promising step, the Register of Societies launched the *Takamul* platform in early 2024 as a national platform that gathers and consolidates all existing information on societies (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[47]</sup>) (see Box 3.1).

#### **Box 3.1. The *Takamul* platform for societies**

The *Takamul* platform (<https://societies.ammangov.jo>) was launched in January 2024 as a national platform for societies. It connects them with more than 36 public bodies and collates information supplied by societies, including type of organisation (e.g. charity, forum, network, council, organisation), governmental affiliation (e.g. Ministry of Culture), sector (e.g. environmental, health, religious, etc.), status (e.g. operational, inactive), events and programmes, and board members. Currently, the platform can be used by societies and relevant public bodies but it will also be open to the wider public in the future. As of January 2024, 64% of societies in operation had been registered on the platform.

As part of the development process, in 2023, public officials tested the platform and gathered feedback to improve user experience and enhance services. In addition, 17 training sessions were conducted for 5 000 societies with over 10 000 individuals taking part. In collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), two workshops were also held with stakeholders on the classification of societies and the revised Classification Manual. Seventeen contact numbers were established for *Takamul* to provide firsthand support, with 850 enquiries addressed daily.

In 2024, public officials aim to raise greater awareness of the platform through targeted social media campaigns, to build on 24 000 views and interactions across social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, YouTube) in 2023 and the current count of over 10 000 followers on Facebook.

Source: Information provided by the Register of Societies, 2024.

The *Takamul* platform has significant potential to bring government and CSOs closer together. The Register of Societies can build further awareness of the platform by continuing to organise workshops and trainings on its use. In the medium to long term, Jordan could consider transforming the *Takamul* platform into a comprehensive one-stop shop where all CSOs can register, find information on other organisations and their activities, interact with one another, apply for funding, provide financial reports and identify opportunities to participate in public decision-making.

To gain a more accurate overview of the composition of the sector, Jordan could optimise the information contained in the databases of both societies and non-profit companies. This could include publishing information and disaggregated data on each respective website on topics and types of activity (e.g. poverty reduction, youth) and how many CSOs work in Amman compared to other districts. In addition, information on the CSOs themselves could be provided to allow them to contact and potentially collaborate. For societies, this information could be publicised on the *Takamul* platform. Users could also have the ability to download or export the data and then re-organise or re-use it as they see fit. Lastly, this information could be used to issue annual reports with an overview of the sector year-on-year.

### **Equalising procedures for societies and non-profit companies through a joint oversight body could strengthen the civil society sector**

Overall, the existence of two legal frameworks and two separate processes for societies and non-profit companies creates misunderstanding and, in many cases, different treatment for organisations performing similar tasks. Many interviewees noted that some societies register as non-profit companies to avoid restrictions that are only applied to societies and because it is considered less burdensome to do so. In addition, the requirements for societies and non-profit companies to register and report on their activities can pose challenges for those with limited resources and capacity.

Jordan could consider reviewing both its Law on Societies and its Companies Law to include clearer definitions of a society versus a non-profit company as well as the functions and topic areas in which they can work. Any discussions on revising the law must be done in collaboration with a wide range of societies and non-profit companies to ensure that their perspectives are considered. Establishing a working group that brings together representatives from the Register of Societies and the Companies Control Department to clarify and communicate the differences could also prove useful. Moreover, they could already work more closely through existing channels: for example, a representative from the Companies Control Department could be invited to join the board of directors at the Register of Societies to ensure alignment. Jordan could seek to equalise procedures between both bodies to avoid organisations registering with one simply because it is less demanding to do so. In the long term, Jordan could empower an existing body or consider establishing one joint oversight body to supervise, oversee and regulate the entire civil society sector (societies and non-profit companies) to align procedures.

### *Stable and diversified funding for societies and non-profit companies is crucial*

Consistent sources of public and private funding are essential for CSOs as they allow them to plan their activities, hire the necessary staff, establish offices, handle administrative and reporting duties, and fulfil the stated goals of their programmes. Predictable funding is essential for the sector to function effectively and develop its capacities. In order to support their important role in society, many governments offer some form of financial assistance to CSOs, with some even providing long-term core funding that gives them the flexibility to operate over several years without applying for individual grants (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). In countries where government funding is limited or unavailable, foreign or international funding can also provide a valuable lifeline for CSOs. In this case, CSOs often rely on the government to facilitate and incentivise foreign and international donors to support the sector. At the same time, to maintain the independence and autonomy of CSOs, it is important for governments also to facilitate the diversification of funding sources for CSOs, such as private donations or crowdfunding, to boost their financial sustainability and independence (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

### **CSOs can benefit from public benefit status and special tax regimes**

Like CSOs in all OECD member countries and some MENA economies (e.g. Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia), societies and non-profit companies in Jordan can benefit from special tax regimes and, in some cases, public benefit status. Organisations with public benefit purposes, such as religious, charitable,

cultural, educational, sports and health organisations, are eligible for an income tax exemption. Some may also apply for charitable status, which exempts all donations made to them from income tax if the exempted income does not exceed one-quarter of the donor's taxable income (ICNL, n.d.<sup>[48]</sup>). Societies and non-profit companies are not exempted from sales tax.<sup>15</sup>

The Law on Societies also states that religious entities and orders operating in the Kingdom have the right to undertake charitable services with a public interest goal. These include but are not limited to establishing shelters, educational institutes for the needy, community centres for the poor, as well as providing regulated financial or in-kind assistance and medical treatment (Government of Jordan, 2009<sup>[38]</sup>).

### Government funding could be expanded by building on existing support

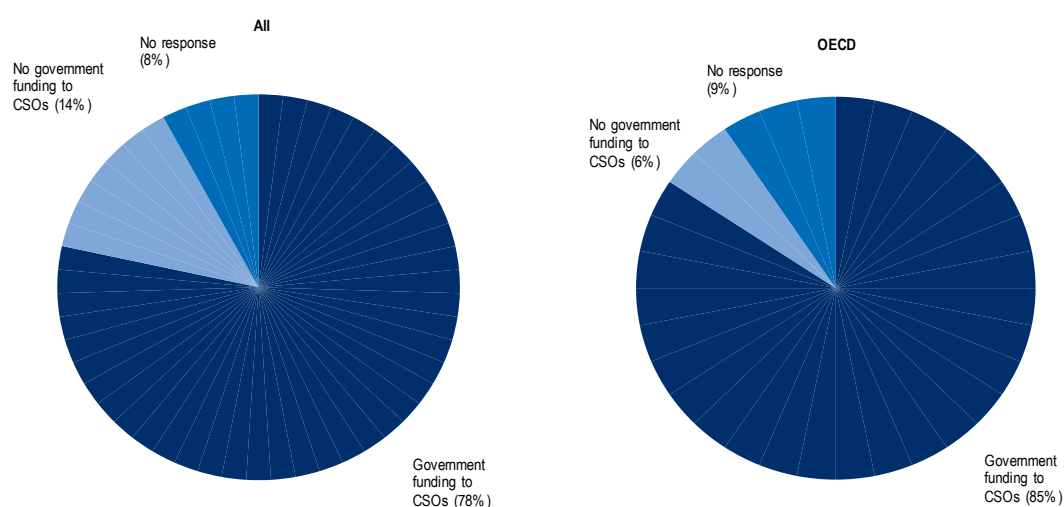
The amount of government funding available to CSOs is relatively limited in Jordan. At present, 14 ministries<sup>16</sup> support societies working in the same sector with specific grants and other forms of funding.<sup>17</sup> Institutions, such as the Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation and the Development and Employment Fund, also provide some form of funding to societies and non-profit companies.

Moreover, the Ministry of Social Development has a Society Support Fund, managed by the Register of Societies, alongside a Directorate of Enhancing Competitiveness and a Directorate of Societies, providing financial support. The Society Support Fund is the main source of financial support to societies from the government. Approximately 80-100 organisations receive regular funding. However, not all societies are eligible and the selection criteria for those that can apply to receive funding change year on year (Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, 2021<sup>[9]</sup>). Access to government funding is also an important issue. It requires clarity on where and how organisations can apply and transparent decisions on who receives funding, why and for what purpose. Some CSOs may have more opportunities as they are well-known and longstanding organisations with strong relationships and networks.

Jordan could take inspiration from the practices of many OECD members and economies in the region that provide consistent government funding to CSOs (Figure 3.5).

### Figure 3.5. Government funding to CSOs in 2019

Percentage of OECD member and non-member countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: "All" refers to 51 respondents (32 OECD member and 19 non-member countries).

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[7]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

Jordan could consider expanding upon the existing Society Support Fund to provide diversified government support to societies, including those working in advocacy, producing research and acting as watchdogs to strengthen social accountability.

### **Promoting transparency and access to information on foreign funding can change perceptions among CSOs**

Many CSOs in Jordan rely on international donors to support the sector and thus depend on the government's ability to facilitate and incentivise foreign funding. At the same time, any money entering the country is under increased scrutiny as Jordan continues its efforts to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism (FATF, 2023<sup>[49]</sup>).<sup>18</sup> Within this context, CSOs that wish to receive foreign funding must submit an application that includes the source and amount of funding requested, the purpose of the funding and a project proposal.

To ease this process, the government adopted the *Mechanism to Obtain Approval for Foreign Funding* in 2019 (Government of Jordan, 2019<sup>[50]</sup>). The mechanism was developed in collaboration with CSOs through Jordan's Fourth OGP National Action Plan (OGP, 2018<sup>[51]</sup>). It shortened the time for CSOs to obtain approval for an application to 30 days – where the previous process could take several months – and allowed CSOs to track the status of their applications.

The mechanism was further updated in 2023 and details were published on the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC) website (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[52]</sup>). It clarifies the procedures for obtaining funding, outlines MoPIC's mandate with regard to foreign funding, offers an overview of the duties of the Foreign Funding Committee and provides timelines for each step of the approval process (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[52]</sup>). In January 2024, MoPIC posted instructions on the updated mechanism on its website.

MoPIC's Foreign Funding Unit is supported by the Foreign Funding Committee, which meets weekly. The secretary general of MoPIC is the head of the committee and the other members include (Government of Jordan, 2023<sup>[52]</sup>):

- a director from the Prime Ministry
- a director from the Ministry of Interior
- a director from the Ministry of Social Development
- a director from the Companies Control Department
- a representative from the ministry of the topic related to the CSO sector.

To support CSOs in applying for foreign funding for a project, the Foreign Funding Unit launched an awareness-raising campaign and a training programme in 2023 so that CSOs can self-assess their eligibility and increase their competitive advantage. In collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, the unit is hosting sessions in all 12 governorates.<sup>19</sup> The training includes a self-assessment tool which asks CSOs to reflect on their technical capabilities (e.g. qualifications of staff, expertise in the topic, ability to prepare a proposal, experience in implementing projects, preparing periodic or annual reports, need for a local partner, etc.). It then evaluates the financial structure and governance of the CSO (e.g. having a registration certificate, issuing annual budgets, any violations or penalties, etc.). Lastly, it supports CSOs in assessing the project proposal itself (e.g. consistency with national priorities, alignment with relevant laws and regulations, having an action plan for implementation, identifying a clear target group, developing progress indicators, etc.). The training programmes and the self-assessment tool represent good practices that can foster dialogue between the government and CSOs on foreign funding. The Foreign Funding Unit could make additional efforts to publicise and promote this initiative and these tools. For example, it could publish the relevant materials online to ensure that all CSOs, including those that did not or could not attend, are aware of the campaign and programme and can also access the training and self-assessment tool.

Upon receiving an application, the Foreign Funding Committee can accept, suggest amendments or reject the application. Approval is automatically granted if a decision is not taken within 30 days of formally notifying the applicant. Application acceptance rates are generally high and have been increasing over recent years. Ninety percent of submissions were accepted in 2020, 96% in 2021, 95% in 2022<sup>20</sup> and 98% in 2023.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, there is a perception among some CSO interviewees that applications are frequently rejected. The government could try to change this perception by clearly communicating this matter to CSOs. For example, Jordan could publish up-to-date statistics on the number of requests received for foreign funding, including approvals and denials. It could also publish more detailed information on the foreign funding that is granted to CSOs, disaggregated by type of activity, location and amount of funding.

Before accepting or rejecting an application, the Foreign Funding Unit can sometimes ask CSOs to clarify or adjust their activities. At the same time, during the fact-finding mission, interviewees highlighted that they have at times been requested to change their programmes or activities in ways that do not necessarily align with their operations or goals. To ensure that suggested changes are congruent with the organisation's objectives, the unit could schedule a meeting to discuss the application with the CSO before proposing modifications.

According to government interviewees, in the rare case of a rejection, it is most likely due to the following reasons:<sup>22</sup>

- The funded proposed project does not align with national priorities (social welfare, gender, water, climate and youth).
- The funded proposed project does not align with the objectives, speciality or field of society.
- The project budget does not match the implemented activities.
- The administrative expenses (salaries of project staff) of the funded proposed project are extremely high.
- The CSO does not comply with the relevant legal, financial and administrative requirements, which include, for example, an annual budget, the declaration of the actual beneficiary and the financial and administrative status of the organisation.
- The CSO does not have a sufficient governance system (e.g. no clear vision or mission, lack of a transparent human resources system for appointing staff to the project, no system for procurement or registering the assets of the CSO)

CSO interviewees highlighted a lack of alignment with national priorities as one of the main justifications for a denied application. However, CSOs noted that they are not always fully aware of national priorities. They also perceive that the government generally tends to be more supportive of CSOs working in economic empowerment, community development (e.g. services and infrastructure) and charity and humanitarian aid.<sup>23</sup> The Foreign Funding Unit could make additional efforts to clearly outline the national priorities for funding on an annual basis so that they are evident to CSOs before applying. They could be publicised on the relevant websites and further integrated into awareness-raising campaigns and training programmes. In the future, these national priorities could be decided in consultation with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders.

Applications where a high percentage of the funding is dedicated to administrative costs and staff salaries can also be subject to denials. The unit checks the cost of fixed employees on the payroll, which should not exceed a certain percentage of the project's total cost. At the same time, organisations are welcome to hire as many external experts as needed for a specific project or programme. However, it is important to note that the main "product" of certain CSOs is knowledge work and intellectual services, such as organisations that engage in advocacy, monitoring and evaluation and watchdog-type activities. Ensuring that such CSOs have access to diverse sources of funding is crucial to their effectiveness, professionalisation, and sustainability in the medium-to long-term. When it comes to reviewing applications

that have high staff costs, it is important to distinguish between the types of CSOs and types of projects concerned, as some may require more resources for core staff than others (e.g. advocacy, monitoring and evaluation and watchdog organisations) as well as staff with specific competencies. It could be beneficial to include civil society representatives in the Foreign Funding Committee to share the perspectives of diverse types of CSOs, building on the good practice of the Register of Societies.

Overall, Jordan should consider striking the right balance between caution and control regarding foreign funding. While, in general, it is not advisable – as per the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – for governments to approve foreign funding for CSOs, it is important to acknowledge the particularities of the Jordanian context. Given the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing, the approvals process may be necessary and the government can instead focus on ensuring it is as transparent, fair and accountable as possible.

### ***Mainstreaming the involvement of CSOs in public decision-making will foster effective and evidence-based policies and services***

Offering CSOs an opportunity to actively engage in policymaking as well as service design and delivery contributes to more effective decision-making. In many countries, this manifests through public consultations with CSOs on specific laws, strategies, policy proposals or budgets. Institutionalised opportunities to engage in policymaking offer longevity and legitimacy to stakeholder participation as they become routine rather than ad hoc.

In Jordan, CSOs are invited to provide feedback on policymaking and service delivery, participate in consultations (on-line and in person) and are given space to advocate for improvements to legislative or policy reforms. They can send recommendations to government committees or working groups on specific issues, for example social welfare. In general, opportunities for public consultation are available on an ad hoc basis. CSO interviewees outlined that dialogue mostly happens through government-initiated technical committees and that their success varies. The perception is that the Royal Committees, which the Royal Hashemite Court establishes, tend to be more productive due to the clarity of their mandates, processes and expected outcomes. Moreover, Royal Committees frequently channel private sector expertise in designing and managing the process, contributing positively to more effective implementation overall.

There is a perception that CSOs have different opportunities to participate based on the type of organisation they represent, their location and their size. For example, CSO interviewees noted that those invited to participate in public consultations, discussion groups or working groups are often well-known organisations, such as the national branches of renowned international CSOs or large and well-established CSOs based in Amman. CSOs also noted that there is a need to engage specialised CSOs more, both in wide-ranging national reform efforts and in discussions on specific legislative or policy proposals pertaining to their area of expertise. It is important that all CSOs participate equally in public debates, discourse and decision-making, especially when it is related to their area of expertise. Public bodies in Jordan could thus make efforts to ensure that a range of CSOs are given an opportunity to share their insights, e.g. by experimenting with open calls rather than selecting a number of CSOs directly.

In Jordan, few public bodies institutionalise stakeholder participation in public decision-making, meaning that CSOs are routinely consulted or are core members of a permanent public body, council or commission. Some good practices can be noted, for example the CSOs on the board of directors within the Registry of Societies (see the section on the registry), the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) (see Chapter 5 on gender) and the Economic and Social Council (ESC). The ESC was established in 2009 as an advisory body to the government to guide social and economic policy. It comprises experts from the private sector and academia and ensures dialogue on issues such as socio-economic inequality, unemployment, poverty and education (ESC, n.d.<sup>[53]</sup>).

To foster dialogue and informal and formal interactions on an ongoing basis, a cross-cutting permanent body that is comprised of both public officials and CSOs could be established or a similar body, such as the ESC, could be expanded and empowered with such a role. Such an advisory group or expert forum could strengthen the government-CSO relationship and help to build trust between the nominated representatives. In addition, it could be useful to assign an office or officer within each ministry and/or public body responsible for relations with CSOs and working with other public bodies to improve the enabling environment through sharing information and building capacity.

Box 3.2 provides examples of other countries with bodies that have a mandate to ensure engagement with civil society actors.

### **Box 3.2. Institutionalised mechanisms for engaging with stakeholders**

#### **Finland**

The Advisory Board for Civil Society Policy (KANE) operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and is tasked with promoting interactions and collaboration between the public administration and civil society and improving the enabling environment and operating conditions for CSOs. A government decree outlines the tasks and composition of KANE. The board consists of representatives from CSOs, research organisations, the private sector, ministries and other public agencies, and is elected for a four-year term.

#### **Romania**

Romania has a variety of permanent mechanisms for consultations with CSOs. Public bodies are encouraged to create an office through which they consult with representatives of the associations and foundations that operate in their sphere of competency. Moreover, the Economic and Social Council is an advisory body for the public administration and parliament. The council is autonomous and was created to facilitate a tripartite dialogue between employers' organisations, trade unions and representatives of CSOs and foundations at the national level. Its main task is to review draft normative acts before they are adopted and sent to parliament. Most ministries at the national level and all governing bodies at the level of the counties are required to create consultative social dialogue commissions, which consist of public officials, representatives of employers' organisations and nationally representative trade union organisations.

Sources: Finnish Ministry of Justice (n.d.<sup>[54]</sup>), *The Advisory Board for Civil Society Policy (KANE)*, [https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/advisory-board-on-civil-society-policy#:~:text=The%20Advisory%20Board%20for%20Civil,operating%20conditions%20for%20civil%20society](https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/advisory-board-on-civil-society-policy#:~:text=The%20Advisory%20Board%20for%20Civil,operating%20conditions%20for%20civil%20society;); OECD (2021<sup>[55]</sup>), *Civic Space Scan of Finland*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/f9e971bd-en>; OECD (2023<sup>[56]</sup>), *Open Government Review of Romania*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ff20b2d4-en>; OECD (2023<sup>[57]</sup>), *Civic Space Review of Romania*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f11191be-en>.

A permanent body for Jordan could be informed by and build upon the successes of Jordan's existing OGP Multi-Stakeholder Forum (see Chapter 4 on youth and Chapter 5 on gender) (Figure 3.3) (OGP, 2023<sup>[58]</sup>) as well as its ESC (n.d.<sup>[53]</sup>).



### Box 3.3. The OGP Multi-Stakeholder Forum in Jordan

As part of the development of Jordan's 2021-25 OGP National Action Plan, MoPIC formed a working group to facilitate its technical development. This was the first co-creation process of its kind.

In line with good practice, the Multi-Stakeholder Forum consisted of an equal number of government and civil society stakeholders. It included representatives of CSOs from across Jordan, focusing on a range of issues, as well as representatives from the private sector. On the government side, it included national institutions promoting women's and youth's rights.

In parallel, MoPIC launched an open call to identify priorities and propose commitments to be included in the action plan. The opportunity was promoted on social media to broaden its target audience and 40 CSOs submitted proposals on commitments.

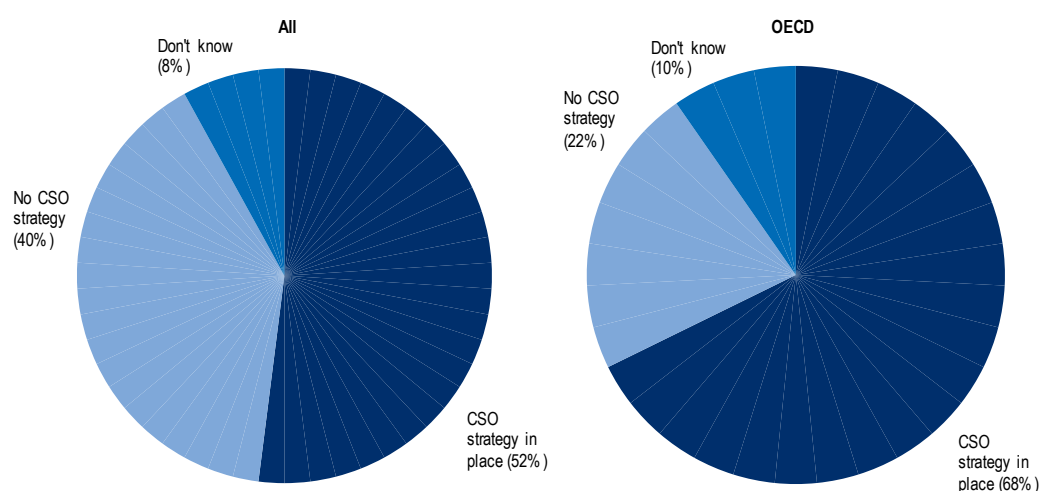
Source: OGP (2023<sup>[58]</sup>), *Jordan Action Plan Review 2021-2025*, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/jordan-action-plan-review-2021-2025/>.

#### *Outlining a vision through a strategy for CSOs can highlight the value of the sector*

Many governments have begun to develop policy frameworks or strategies to articulate their vision for improving the enabling environment for CSOs (Figure 3.6) (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Such a document can be beneficial as it encourages the government to reflect on the value of civil society and how CSOs can contribute to good governance and sustainable development in the short, medium and long terms (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

**Figure 3.6. Countries with a policy or strategy to improve or promote an enabling environment for CSOs, 2020**

Percentage of OECD member and non-member countries that provided data in the OECD Survey on Open Government



Note: "All" refers to 50 respondents (31 OECD member and 19 non-member countries).

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[7]</sup>), *The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space: Strengthening Alignment with International Standards and Guidance*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d234e975-en>.

Some of the stated objectives of CSO strategies include strengthening the state-CSO relationship, supporting volunteering and donations, inclusion and social cohesion, improving welfare, promoting public dialogue and improving public consultation (OECD, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Box 3.4 provides some examples.

### **Box 3.4. All-of-government frameworks and strategies for civil society**

#### **Legal and policy framework for CSOs in Slovenia**

The 2018 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) Act requires ministries to create an enabling environment for NGOs to contribute to societal goals in a wide range of policy areas, from sports and culture to ecology and healthcare. This includes developing strategies, action plans and standardised measures for public consultation and guarantees the engagement of NGOs in public decision-making processes. Furthermore, ministries are responsible for reporting on the sector's development, collecting data on funding and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the act. In addition, Slovenia sets out its vision for the sector through its National Strategy for the Development of the Non-Governmental Sector and Volunteering and has a Council for the Promotion of the Development of Volunteering and Volunteer and Non-Governmental Organisations, which serves as a consultative body of the government of the Republic of Slovenia.

#### **Civil Society Policy in Estonia**

The Strong Civil Society 2021-24 policy aims to strengthen civil society, enhance decision-making with CSO involvement and increase population engagement in voluntary work. It includes a monitoring and evaluation framework with measurable targets for both short- and long-term deliverables and a budget for all four years. Ministries oversee programme activities and provide annual reports. The Ministry of the Interior compiles and publicly shares an overall performance report on the policy.

Sources: Government of Slovenia (2018<sup>[59]</sup>), *Non-Governmental Organisations Act (ZNOrg)*, <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MJU/SNVO/ENG/Act-On-Non-Governmental-Organisations-ZNOrg.docx>; Government of Slovenia (n.d.<sup>[60]</sup>), *Non-governmental Organisations*, [https://www.gov.si/en/topics/non-governmental-organisations/#:~:text=The%20Non%2DGovernmental%20Organisations%20Act,association%20in%20the%20public%20interest](https://www.gov.si/en/topics/non-governmental-organisations/#:~:text=The%20Non%2DGovernmental%20Organisations%20Act,association%20in%20the%20public%20interest;); Government of Estonia (n.d.<sup>[61]</sup>), *A Strong Civil Society 2021–2024*, <https://www.siseministerium.ee/tegevusvaldkonnad/sidus-uhiskond/kodanikuuhiskond>.

In line with the above, Jordan could consider developing a strategy for CSOs which offers an overview of the current state of play, a vision for the CSO-government relationship, a commitment to collaborate with CSOs in public decision-making and how the government intends to support CSOs in the short, medium and long terms.

### **Enhancing responsiveness across the public administration to build trust in government**

The responsiveness of the public administration to its citizens is a crucial factor that influences the level of trust in government (OECD, 2022<sup>[62]</sup>). Actively listening to citizens, providing a channel for them to share their views and reacting to their feedback are fundamental to building buy-in with public decision-making.

## ***Empowering oversight and co-ordination bodies and streamlining feedback and complaints mechanisms***

There are a myriad of oversight institutions and public bodies with a specific role in civic freedoms and human rights in Jordan. In addition, many public bodies have a duty to respond to suggestions, complaints and feedback that are specific to their own mandates. For example, the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC) receives alerts from citizens on potential cases of misuse of public funds or misconduct of public officials. Jordan has also introduced centralised and consolidated platforms (e.g. the *Bekhedmetkom* platform, the *Tawasal* e-participation portal), which serve as a “catch-all” for citizens to submit their ideas, proposals and grievances and identify ways to engage with public decision-making. The below section provides an overview of how these oversight bodies and feedback and complaints mechanisms currently function while identifying existing gaps and areas for improvement.

*Improving co-operation among bodies with a mandate on civic freedoms and guiding public officials in responding to human rights complaints*

### **The NCHR plays an essential role in protecting and promoting civic freedoms**

Independent oversight bodies for civic freedoms are essential in safeguarding citizens, acting as mediators between individuals and the government, and addressing any violations. In many countries, they take the form of a national human rights institution or ombudsman institution that has a constitutional or legal mandate to protect civic freedoms at the national level, as well as the regional level in certain countries (GANHRI, n.d.<sup>[63]</sup>).

In Jordan, the NCHR is the pivotal institution with this role and is accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI, n.d.<sup>[64]</sup>). Established in 2002, it receives complaints, investigates potential violations, monitors government developments related to civic freedoms and communicates with citizens on how to exercise their rights (NCHR, n.d.<sup>[65]</sup>). While the board of trustees is appointed by royal decree, the centre is perceived to operate independently both administratively and financially, submitting its budget – drawn from the General State Budget – to the government for approval. The NCHR actively engages in global and regional network meetings, positioning itself as a reference point in the field. As mentioned during the OECD fact-finding mission, the centre promotes civic freedoms both in Jordan and in the wider MENA region, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, including women, children, migrants, refugees and people with disabilities. The centre also collaborates extensively with the National Centre for Curriculum Development to integrate education on human rights into the curriculum and raise awareness among the public.

The NCHR also issues annual reports submitted to King Abdullah II, the Cabinet, the judiciary and the upper and lower houses of parliament. Its recommendations are not legally binding but all public bodies must review and act upon them. Many recommendations have led to improvements to relevant legal frameworks and their implementation (NCHR, n.d.<sup>[66]</sup>). For instance, one of its previous proposals called for the creation of the Office of the Government Coordinator for Human Rights (OGCHR) within the Prime Ministry, which has since been established. In addition, as mentioned during the fact-finding mission, they are frequently consulted by public bodies on key legislative and policy proposals in areas of interest. Overall, the role and mandate of the NCHR in Jordan are highly valued and positively viewed by public bodies and CSOs alike.

The NCHR has established a robust complaints department, responding to a diverse range of issues, including those related to education, employment, healthcare and gender equality and can form investigatory teams when necessary. The 2022 and 2023 reports find that many of the complaints pertained to “civil and political rights”, including the right to life, liberty and physical integrity; the right to access to justice and a fair trial; the right to nationality and asylum, the right to vote and run for office, and the rights to establish and join political parties, CSOs and trade unions (NCHR, n.d.<sup>[66]</sup>). They undertake

many activities, including investigations and monitoring, workshops, field visits and training, all of which could benefit from additional public funding. In addition, the NCHR has many ways for citizens to lodge complaints, such as via a hotline and WhatsApp discussion on a 24-hour/7-days-a-week basis (Box 3.5 outlines the process for responding to complaints).

### **Box 3.5. The complaints mechanism at the NCHR**

The NCHR has a protocol and a set of procedures which the complaints unit follows. It includes the following stages:

- **Receiving the complaint**

There are various channels through which individuals and organisations can file a complaint; these channels are as follows:

- Coming in person to the centre.
- Calling the hotline (active 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
- Posting on social media pages of the centre (Twitter, Facebook).
- Sending an email, fax.
- Sending a text or WhatsApp message.
- Filing an online complaint on the centre's website.

- **Investigating the complaint**

The complaints unit then investigates the complaint to check its validity and verify the veracity of the allegations stated therein. Verification procedures take place as soon as possible and, in urgent cases, occur within the same day of filing the complaint. The procedure includes:

- Sending a formal letter to the institution where the violation has been reported to take place, the “respondent institution”, to inform it of the complaint and hear its side of the story.
- Conducting a field visit to the institution where the violation has been reported to take place.
- Gathering evidence and collect information.
- Requesting documents and information from the respondent institution.
- Requesting further information from the complainant.

After receiving the respondent institution's reply to the complaint, the complaints unit informs the individual or organisation who filed the complaint, obtains their feedback and conducts the necessary assessment.

- **Complaint resolution**

In the event the complaint has been verified and is not merely an allegation, the NCHR sends a formal letter to the head of the institution informing them of the violation and requesting that they rectify the situation.

- **Closing the complaint**

Closing the complaint file involves the following five steps and requires different levels of approval to ensure clear, fair and transparent procedures:

- Recommendation from the official who followed the complaint.
- Recommendation from the head of the complaints unit.
- Approval from the head of administration.
- Approval from the protection commissioner.

- Approval from the general commissioner.

- **Assessment of the procedure**

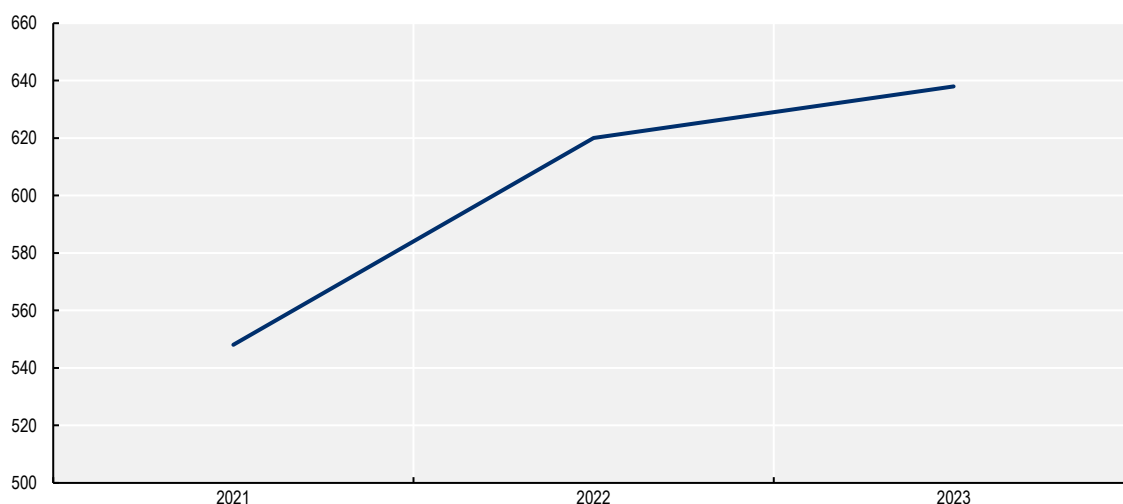
After the closure of the complaint, an analysis of the complaint is conducted and disclosed through an annex published in the annual report.

Source: Information provided by the NCHR.

There has been an increase in the number of complaints received over recent years, from 548 in 2021 and 620 in 2022 to 638 in 2023 (Figure 3.7).

Despite its important role, the NCHR sometimes faces difficulties due to a lack of human and financial resources. Although there have been increases in the centre's budget allocation, additional human and financial resources would allow the NCHR to expand its complaints unit and enable it to continue to offer its services to all citizens and residents and fulfil its important oversight role. Moreover, while the NCHR publishes an annual report with disaggregated data, additional breakdowns could be provided, for example, by gender. Jordan could also consider illustrating how many complaints on civic freedoms are received by all relevant bodies, with organised and disaggregated data to aid understanding. The Office of the OGCHR and the Human Rights Unit (HRU) at the Prime Ministry could work with the NCHR on training and capacity-building activities.

**Figure 3.7. Complaints received by the NCHR, 2021-23**



Source: Information provided by the NCHR.

The OGCHR and HRU co-ordinate the implementation of the commitments on human rights across public administration, including the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights 2016-25 (Government of Jordan, 2015<sup>[67]</sup>). Moreover, they are responsible for preparing and ensuring the plan is compatible with the recommendations of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UN, n.d.<sup>[68]</sup>), monitoring implementation and responding to human rights reports from international bodies. The HRU also facilitates co-ordination between ministries and other public bodies on human rights and fosters collaboration with local, regional and international CSOs on relevant topics.

The OGCHR and HRU have committed to collaborating with other stakeholders, including CSOs. One promising example is the one-day consultation held in July 2023 wherein the HRU, NCHR,

government officials and CSOs discussed Jordan's Fourth Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council (Jordan Times, 2023<sup>[69]</sup>). The government also engages the JNCW (see Chapter 5 on gender for more), the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and regional and local levels of government in the review (Jordan Times, 2023<sup>[69]</sup>).

The OGCHR and HRU receive complaints from citizens regarding civic freedom violations (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[70]</sup>). Any citizen who encounters a violation of their human rights can file a complaint through the following channels:

- In person at the Prime Ministry service desk.
- Via phone call to the landline of the HRU.
- Via phone or WhatsApp call to the cell phone of the director of the HRU.
- An online complaint via the human rights complaint icon on the *Bekhedmetkom* platform.

Significant efforts have been made to train public bodies to classify and organise these complaints. As mentioned during the OECD fact-finding mission, 220 focal points across public bodies were trained to categorise, address and – when necessary – redirect complaints to the relevant public body. However, according to interviewees, public officials are sometimes unsure of how to differentiate or classify complaints on human rights compared to other types of complaints. At the same time, interviewees mentioned that citizens do not always understand the roles and responsibilities of different public bodies and do not always direct their suggestions or grievances to the correct public body. In this sense, there is a lack of clarity for both public officials and citizens on submitting and handling complaints.

To reduce the burden on public officials and citizens, the NCHR could conduct training and capacity-building for all relevant bodies on handling and classifying human rights complaints. The relevant bodies for co-ordinating human rights, e.g. the NCHR, OGCHR and HRU could support such an endeavour. This could include conducting training and workshops on categorising and redirecting complaints for focal points in all relevant public bodies.

### **The Lower House and Senate Committees for Public Freedom and Human Rights are increasing engagement with citizens and stakeholders**

The Parliament of Jordan is comprised of the House of Representatives (n.d.<sup>[71]</sup>), which has 20 committees, and the Senate (Senate of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[72]</sup>), which has 17. Both have permanent committees responsible for civic freedoms and human rights. The Senate committee reviews relevant laws, examines and handles complaints, and ensures that international human rights standards are followed in Jordan (Senate of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[73]</sup>). The Lower House committee is also entrusted with reviewing laws, proposals and suggestions, examining and handling complaints and monitoring the work of reform and rehabilitation centres, temporary detention centres and social care centres (House of Representatives of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[74]</sup>). In March 2023, the Lower House committee launched a hotline to communicate more directly with citizens concerning human rights violations. The committee works with the NCHR to review complaints when necessary. Moreover, in a positive move, the committee assigned three officials to manage complaints and grievances received via WhatsApp and the hotline.<sup>24</sup> Citizens can also submit a complaint to the Lower House committee via a form on the website. Both committees promote their work to citizens and share information and updates on their respective websites and social media.

### **The Transparency and Human Rights Bureau in the Public Security Directorate (PSD) responds to complaints and reports of malpractice in its domain**

The Transparency and Human Rights Bureau was established in 2005 and has a wide range of duties. It receives complaints relating to violations and malpractice from the PSD, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior (PSD, n.d.<sup>[75]</sup>). The bureau also has a Human Rights Training Centre where it

qualifies and trains officials so they can undertake their duties, with a strong emphasis on promoting human rights and holding workshops and seminars on the topic (PSD, n.d.<sup>[75]</sup>).

The Transparency and Human Rights Bureau has three sections:

- a governance and transparency section
- a complaints and reports section
- a human rights training centre.

### **The Primary and High Administrative Courts serve as appeals mechanisms for citizens and stakeholders**

Civil courts “exercise their jurisdiction in respect to civil and criminal matters in accordance with the law, and they have jurisdiction over all persons in all matters, civil and criminal, including cases brought against the government” (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[76]</sup>). If citizens are not satisfied with how their complaint has been handled or if it involves a suitably serious violation, they can bring their case to the Primary Administrative Court (PAC) and then to the High Administrative Court to seek a verdict or appeal a decision. The PAC specialises in resolving administrative disputes involving decisions made by public officials or bodies. If a citizen has a dispute about a final administrative decision, they can choose to file a case before the High Administrative Court. The court then decides whether the actions taken by the officials are in accordance with the law. The High Administrative Court can reverse the decisions made by the PAC, meaning that citizens can seek an appeal through this court.

### **Establishing a network of relevant actors could encourage exchange and raise awareness of their work**

Given the many actors working on this topic across public administration, it is important that their mandates and roles are clear and that they co-ordinate closely with one another. At present, there is co-operation between the Senate, Lower House of Representatives and Legal Committees to ensure that Jordanian legislation complies with international standards in this area. In addition, a public official from the PSD is assigned an office at the Lower House Committee, working as a focal point to co-ordinate between the Lower House Committee and the PSD concerning any human rights violations claimed to have occurred at the PSD. There is also co-ordination with the OGCHR and NCHR in the following ways:

- Holding meetings to discuss issues related to human rights.
- Building capacity and raising awareness among the government co-ordination team.
- Exchanging knowledge and expertise.

The NCHR is often the first point of reference in Jordan for receiving human rights complaints. However, the Lower House and Senate Committees have the ability to hold the executive branch to account more directly by, for example, questioning the prime minister and the Cabinet, or issuing a vote of no confidence. In this regard, the NCHR is currently working with the Lower House to sign a memorandum of understanding. In doing so, the NCHR hopes its annual reports will be consistently discussed in parliament. In this sense, Jordan could seek inspiration from its existing practices and encourage greater co-ordination and collaboration between all public bodies, which would play a role in advancing the human rights agenda to build upon existing exchanges. In particular, the Lower House and Senate Committees, NCHR, OGCHR and HRU could work more closely to advance the human rights agenda in Jordan. This could take the form of a network that meets regularly with a dedicated public official in each body liaising with the others. This network could hold regular meetings to discuss areas of opportunity and find solutions to common challenges.

Overall, to raise awareness among citizens on the work of these bodies, this network could work together and consider launching a public campaign on the entire ecosystem for civic freedoms (e.g. create videos



outlining their respective mandates) and utilising existing social media channels for dissemination. It could also identify ways to foster more interoperability and cross-referencing between all body websites.

### *Streamlining suggestions, compliments and complaints related to policies and services*

#### **JIACC and the Audit Bureau manage complaints related to corruption and misuse of public money**

JIACC was established in 2006 as an independent authority with powers to monitor public officials' wealth growth included in the illicit gain law and recover assets lost due to acts of corruption (JIACC, n.d.<sup>[77]</sup>). JIACC's goal is to promote the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunities, correct public administration performance and contribute to building a culture of integrity and fighting corruption (JIACC, n.d.<sup>[77]</sup>) (see Chapter 6 of the Public Sector Integrity Review of Jordan). The complaints unit at JIACC is responsible for receiving the following:

- **Information:** A citizen can inform the JIACC complaints unit of suspicion of corruption cases. The informant does not provide personal details and, most often, is not directly affected by the case.
- **Complaint:** The injured party or victim of corruption can submit a complaint to the complaints unit (central department), providing their name and full details of the case.
- **Investor complaint:** A complaint submitted by investors goes into a fast-track process.
- **Grievance:** A grievance is submitted by a person harmed by public administration decisions. They complete a special administrative grievance form, available on line on the JIACC website, with a hard copy available in all governate post offices.

The Audit Bureau was established in 1952 to audit the state's revenues and expenditures (Audit Bureau, n.d.<sup>[78]</sup>). The bureau is a partner to public bodies and supports financial analysis of audit risks, conducts feasibility studies for the development of projects before their implementation, monitors the outcomes of the projects and evaluates their results (Audit Bureau, n.d.<sup>[78]</sup>) (see Chapter 5 of the Public Sector Integrity Review of Jordan). The bureau presents an annual report to the Lower House of Representatives and the Senate for each financial year, with over 70 reports submitted to date. Overall, there is a great level of interest and media coverage in these reports and most of the recommendations have been adopted by the government. In October 2022, the Audit Bureau established a new division to receive complaints and enhance its oversight role by raising the level of communication with the local community, media institutions and public bodies, to report any misuse of public money (Audit Bureau, n.d.<sup>[78]</sup>). As mentioned during the OECD fact-finding mission, the bureau has many different channels, such as WhatsApp, email and a hotline. Interviewees also mentioned a strong relationship between JIACC and the Audit Bureau, and both have signed a memorandum of agreement. Overall, the number of complaints has fluctuated since the creation of the new division. However, the bureau is increasingly active on social media, with citizens gaining more awareness of their work.

#### **Optimising the *Bekhedmetkom* platform and increasing its visibility to encourage uptake**

Digital platforms can enable citizens to find information, offer feedback and make proposals to the government, which can foster transparency and accountability. A prime example of this potential is the At your Service *Bekhedmetkom* platform launched in 2018. This interactive platform enables direct communication between citizens and the government, offering various options such as asking questions, making suggestions, giving compliments, submitting complaints and reporting potential misuse of funds or misconduct by public officials (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[79]</sup>). The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship (MoDEE) hosts the technical team behind the platform.

Through the *Bekhedmetkom* platform, the government of Jordan provides a central portal for citizens to send inquiries to different ministries regarding specific policies and services, fostering a culture of

responsiveness. The platform includes 106 public entities and provides various communication channels to meet the needs of all social demographics. Each public body handles the questions, suggestions and complaints about their institution.

The stages of managing a request include the following: i) registering the request; ii) notifying the citizen that the request has been registered; iii) analysing, classifying and directing the request; iv) processing the request; and v) closing the application based on the evaluation of the requester. Depending on the degree of risk of the request (from low to critical), the required response time (from one to eight hours) and required time for resolution (from four hours to one week) varies.

**Table 3.1. Classification of complaints according to topic and importance**

Topic or area of complaint	Low	Medium	High	Critical
Procedures	1 month	7 days	3 days	2 days
Behaviour and conduct of public officials	3 months	1 month	7 days	1 day
Delay or duration of a service	7 days	3 days	2 days	1 day
Environment of service delivery	3 months	1 month	7 days	2 days
Quality of service	1 month	2 weeks	3 days	2 days
Specialised classification according to sector	7 days-3 months	3 days-1 month	2-7 days	1-2 days

Source: Based on information shared during the OECD fact-finding mission.

The platform publishes statistics on the number of complaints received and user satisfaction levels. Although the specific nature of complaints and their outcomes are not publicly reported, the availability of these statistics already demonstrates a degree of transparency.

A study by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (n.d.<sup>[79]</sup>) has noted the platform's benefits, including more efficient and effective processing of citizens' suggestions and complaints. Moreover, the platform allows the government to showcase success stories, encouraging competition between public bodies and providing a source of motivation. At the same time, the World Bank has found that "processes and procedures are not unified" across public bodies (World Bank, 2022<sup>[80]</sup>) and they can differ in practice from what is outlined in written guidelines per body. The study also found a lack of awareness among some focal points as to their own procedures and practices (World Bank, 2022<sup>[80]</sup>).

Using user feedback can help public bodies improve platforms and ensure they are fulfilling their purposes. In this vein, public bodies could conduct joint feedback sessions or focus groups with citizens who have used the *Bekhedmetkom* platform to identify ways to optimise it. Jordan could undertake recurring public communication campaigns to increase visibility around the platform. CSOs could also work as partners to support the government in further promoting this mechanism through different channels (e.g. social media, their websites, etc.). Administering a survey to a large sample size of citizens to determine whether they are knowledgeable about the relevant platforms or if they would use them could also help improve accessibility while promoting the mechanisms. In the medium to long term, the government could consider developing indicators to measure the platform's performance and identify and act upon shortcomings.

Overall, Jordan could consider clarifying the pathways for feedback mechanisms so citizens can easily understand where to submit their suggestions, proposals and concerns (e.g. *Bekhedmetkom* platform, WhatsApp, email, hotlines, etc.). The government could create a chatbot that can answer queries from citizens and redirect them to the most relevant public body or platform to submit their feedback or complaints. It could be helpful to map the channels available to citizens on each respective website so they can easily follow the process.

## Encouraging citizen and stakeholder participation in public decision-making for meaningful engagement

As in many countries, citizens and stakeholders in Jordan are increasingly seeking opportunities to be involved in all stages of the policymaking cycle. Recognising this growing demand, governments actively explore various methods to facilitate meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation. In Jordan, there are some opportunities for organised stakeholders (e.g. civil society or the private sector) to participate in public decision-making. However, there are fewer possibilities available to individual citizens. Most existing interactions tend to be unilateral and one-sided. They could be re-envisioned to encourage a more constructive two-way dialogue between citizens and state and enhance stakeholder participation.

There are a variety of ways to involve and engage citizens and stakeholders in public decision-making, including through access to information and data, open meetings, public consultations, open innovation, citizen science, civic monitoring, participatory budgeting and representative deliberative processes (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2. Different methods of citizen and stakeholder participation and their key characteristics**

Participation method	To use when you are looking for...	Considerations	Type of input it yields	Stage of the decision-making process	Costs (on a scale from € to €€€)
<b>Access to information and data</b>  Publishing information proactively and providing information reactively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to raise awareness of an issue or a public decision.</li> <li>• Ways to keep the public informed about public decisions.</li> </ul>	The very least that can be done. Should be used in situations where there is no room for citizens to have a say.	Promotes transparency, creates awareness of public issues, provides necessary information and creates conditions for more advanced methods of participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the channels used to disseminate the information but can usually be done with existing resources.  €
<b>Open meetings/ town hall meetings</b>  Gathering the public in face-to-face meetings with public authorities to provide information and openly discuss topics of interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ways to inform the public about public issues and decisions.</li> <li>• Space to have a loosely structured exchange and receive broad initial feedback.</li> <li>• “Test the water” for the public’s initial reception of ideas and policies.</li> </ul>	Allows for an exchange between public authorities and the public. Does not yield representative judgement or well-informed solutions.	Information sharing and broad feedback from citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the scope but can usually be done with existing resources.  €
<b>Public consultation</b>  A two-way relationship in which participants provide feedback to a public body (such as comments, perceptions, information, advice, experiences and ideas).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggregated individual opinions and feedback from the public.</li> <li>• Opinions about a policy debate or a specific question.</li> <li>• Experts’ feedback.</li> </ul>	Adaptable to needs - can be carried out using a range of different methods, from surveys and digital platforms to in-person discussions.  Not statistically representative of the population.  Can be difficult to process the inputs received.	Aggregation of individual citizens’ preferences or grouped opinions from stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> </ul>	Dependant on the method chosen and the scope of the consultation. Usually requires developing an adapted methodology or technical interface. If in-person, participants will need a space and facilitators.  € - €€

Participation method	To use when you are looking for...	Considerations	Type of input it yields	Stage of the decision-making process	Costs (on a scale from € to €€€)
<b>Open innovation: crowdsourcing, hackathons and public challenges</b>  Tapping into the collective intelligence to co-create solutions to specific public problems via crowdsourcing, hackathons or public challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas and collective solutions to framed problems.</li> <li>• Involvement of the public in developing solutions or prototypes.</li> </ul>	Requires certain conditions and necessary resources for citizens and stakeholders to work on and develop solutions to public problems. Usually, participants require certain expertise.	Collective imagination, co-creation of solutions and prototypes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the method chosen and the scope of the process. Usually requires a technical interface, some communication efforts and a physical space for hackathons.  <b>€ - €€</b>
<b>Citizen science</b>  Involving citizens in one or many stages of a scientific (or evidence-based) investigation, including identifying research questions, collecting data and evidence, conducting observations, analysing data and using the resulting knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help collecting or analysing scientific data.</li> <li>• Feedback or guidance on research questions and research design.</li> <li>• Collaboration to implement science-related projects.</li> </ul>	Is suited for scientific endeavours rather than policy questions and dilemmas. Adaptable to the needs – covers a range of participation opportunities in science.	Varies from data collected to guidance on research questions and decisions to implement citizen projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the method chosen and scope of the process. Usually requires a technical interface, some communication efforts, can require a physical space for meetings, can require specific technical equipment (for example, air quality sensors to be made available for citizens for data collection purposes).  <b>€ - €€€</b>
<b>Civic monitoring</b>  Involving citizens in the monitoring and evaluation of public decisions, policies and services. Civic monitoring can be considered as a social accountability mechanism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative oversight and evaluation mechanisms for public decisions and actions.</li> <li>• Ongoing monitoring of and feedback on a policy or a project.</li> <li>• Community monitoring of a policy or a service.</li> </ul>	Is an ongoing process which requires sustained participation. Is geared towards receiving feedback from individuals during or after implementation. Requires a certain level of commitment from public authorities to take into account feedback to improve services or policies.	Citizen feedback, opinions and suggestions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the method chosen. Usually requires an adapted methodology or technical interface.  <b>€ - €€</b>

Participation method	To use when you are looking for...	Considerations	Type of input it yields	Stage of the decision-making process	Costs (on a scale from € to €€€)
<b>Participatory budgeting</b>  Mechanisms that allow citizens and stakeholders to influence budgetary public decisions through the direct allocation of public resources to priorities or projects or by being involved in public deliberations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help from the public to identify budget or resource allocation preferences.</li> <li>• Ideas and projects from the public to be funded.</li> <li>• Increased awareness and understanding of public spending by citizens.</li> </ul>	Creates conditions for the public to participate in decisions linked to public spending. Can yield either an aggregation of participants' individual preferences (if takes the form of a voting) or their collective judgements (if it has a deliberative element).	Varies from ideas, projects and prioritisation, to binding allocation of public resources through vote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Implementation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the scale and scope of the process. Usually requires intensive communication, human resources, developing an adapted methodology and a technical interface.  €€ - €€€
<b>Representative deliberative processes</b>  A randomly selected group of people who are broadly representative of a community spending significant time learning and collaborating through facilitated deliberation to form collective recommendations for policymakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed, collective public judgements about a complex policy issue.</li> <li>• Recommendations that take into account a broad diversity of views.</li> <li>• Legitimacy to make tough decisions.</li> </ul>	Helpful when tackling complex, long-term policy issues. Can take place in different models ranging from shorter and smaller citizens' panels/juries to larger scale, longer citizens' assemblies or even permanent bodies.	Collective citizen recommendations, position or judgement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification</li> <li>• Formulation</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> </ul>	Dependant on the scale of the process. Usually requires intensive communication, human resources, an adapted methodology, a physical space to deliberate, skilled facilitation and compensation for participants' time.  €€ - €€€

Source: OECD (2022<sup>[2]</sup>), *OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f765caf6-en>.

In Jordan, several bodies have a role in fostering citizen and stakeholder participation, including MoPIC, the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance and MoDEE, among others. The Ministry of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs (MoPPA) has overall responsibility for Jordan's high-level commitment to interacting with CSOs and citizens (Box 3.6).

However, according to interviewees, MoPPA tends to have a more traditional view of citizen and stakeholder participation at present and could assume a more prominent position in encouraging novel and innovative ways towards more participation in public decision-making between electoral cycles. Overall, MoPPA could embrace its steering role by working with other public bodies, e.g. line ministries, to identify ways to mainstream citizen and stakeholder participation across public administration in Jordan. This could include implementing a diverse range of participatory mechanisms, such as town hall meetings, citizen assemblies, national dialogues, participatory budgeting, digital platforms and deliberative fora to facilitate consensus-building in policy areas such as education, gender equality and healthcare. Introducing and institutionalising such practices and initiatives can promote greater understanding between public bodies and those they serve. This effort should be conducted in collaboration with relevant ministries, public bodies and civil society organisations. Furthermore, MoPPA could design and implement educational and awareness-raising programmes, projects, and plans that target all segments of Jordanian society, with a particular emphasis on women and youth. These initiatives could underscore the value of

citizen participation in public life and highlight the importance of active engagement in decision-making processes.

### **Box 3.6. The high-level commitments of MoPPA on citizen and stakeholder participation**

MoPPA notes that one of its duties is to support “the democratic march” of the country. Moreover, the ministry’s strategic plan includes references to educating all democratic groups about elections, political parties, constitutional amendments and ways to activate their role in public life. It also places a specific emphasis on the empowerment of women and youth.<sup>25</sup> The ministry lists among its tasks raising awareness among citizens of their civic freedoms, encouraging “targeted dialogue” with stakeholders and citizens, inspiring citizens to get involved in political parties and building trust among all stakeholders (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[81]</sup>).

Source: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (n.d.<sup>[81]</sup>), *Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs*, <https://portal.jordan.gov.jo/wps/portal/Home/GovernmentEntities/Ministries/Ministry/Ministry>.

### ***Building on the Tawasal platform as the main digital platform for e-participation***

Creating channels for both in-person and digital forms of citizen and stakeholder participation is essential as they foster inclusivity and accessibility, allowing a diverse range of citizens to actively engage in policymaking and service design in the ways that best suit them. In 2020, 27 out of 32 surveyed OECD member countries (85%) had government-wide participation portals used by all ministries at the central/federal level to publish consultation and engagement opportunities (OECD, 2020<sup>[82]</sup>). The information and data generated by these platforms support evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that decisions align with citizens’ demands. Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate community building, enabling citizens to connect at the local, regional and national levels. If they keep pace with the technological transformation, these platforms can remain an effective and relevant way to engage citizens and stakeholders in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Some good practices of centralised digital platforms for citizen and stakeholder participation include Brazil and Portugal (Box 3.7).

### **Box 3.7. Interactive digital platforms for citizen and stakeholder participation**

#### **Portugal**

Participa.gov is a platform to support participatory processes across public administration, allowing citizens to participate in public decision-making through accessible and reliable technologies. The platform was launched in 2021 and represents one of many online portals in Portugal that bring the government closer to citizens. The platform is a centralised and cross-cutting platform and aims to facilitate participatory processes at all levels of government. It also supports participatory budgeting processes by allowing citizens to submit proposals and make decisions through their vote using secure and safe technologies such as blockchain.

#### **Brazil**

*Participa Mais Brasil* represents a government-wide participatory portal that supports the harmonisation of public consultation across the administration. An initial version of this centralised portal for participation (Participa.br) was published in 2014 and gathered 371 communities with 31 756 users registered. In 2020, the platform became the present-day one-stop shop for all public bodies at the



federal and subnational (states and municipalities) levels under the responsibility of the Special Secretariat for Social Coordination in the Secretary of Government (*Secretaria de Governo* or SEGOV). The platform allows the public to directly provide input to online participatory processes (consultations and polls) and get information from other in-person opportunities (public hearings and councils). As of 2022, public bodies have published 172 consultations and 44 opinion polls, gathering 34 063 contributions from 25 154 registered users. Significantly, public bodies can provide feedback for each public consultation published on the platform to those who responded or submitted their proposals or suggestions.

Source: Government of Portugal, (n.d.<sup>[83]</sup>), *Participa.gov*, <https://participa.gov.pt/base/home>; OECD (2023<sup>[84]</sup>), *Civic Space Review of Portugal: Towards People-Centred, Rights-Based Public Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8241c5e3-en>; Brazilian Presidency (n.d.<sup>[85]</sup>), *Participa Mais Brasil*, <https://www.gov.br/participamaisbrasil/pagina-inicial>; OECD (2022<sup>[86]</sup>), *Open Government Review of Brazil : Towards an Integrated Open Government Agenda*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f9009d4-en>.

Jordan has made significant strides in this domain with several achievements of note in recent years. MoDEE has been at the forefront of these efforts (MoDEE, n.d.<sup>[87]</sup>). In 2023, the e-Participation Department was established in MoDEE within the Directorate of Strategies, Future and Entrepreneurship. The department aims to mainstream citizen and stakeholder participation across public administration, taking advantage of digital tools and platforms. As outlined in the OECD fact-finding mission, the objective is to promote a culture whereby the government views citizens as partners in achieving national objectives.

To achieve this aim, MoDEE developed the e-participation portal *Tawasal* (see Box 3.8), allowing citizens to comment on draft legislation, take part in public consultations, co-create policies and services and offer suggestions to public bodies. The ministry has already conducted broad consultations regarding the platform as part of the national commitments of the OGP in relation to enhancing citizen and stakeholder participation using electronic tools (OGP, 2023<sup>[58]</sup>). MoDEE, in partnership with MoPIC, also collaborated with the chambers of commerce, the private sector, international organisations, public bodies and CSOs representing women, youth and people with disabilities in the planning and development stages of the project.

### Box 3.8. The *Tawasal* platform for citizen and stakeholder participation

*Tawasal* is a unified platform that consolidates all public consultations on legislation, policies, public projects, plans, strategies and services led by public bodies. It enables those interested to stay informed about government actions and activities and contribute proposals that help shape policies and services according to their needs.

The *Tawasal* platform has several key objectives:

- Encourage public participation in the preparation of legislation and in public decision-making.
- Improve the quality of public policies and services to meet the needs of citizens.
- Promote transparency and build trust in the government.
- Foster a participatory approach to evidence-based decision-making.
- Enhance access to information and improve its quality.

The platform allows individuals to submit requests for access to information and follow up on their requests. It is integrated with the open data platform and is also linked to the *Bekhedmetkom* platform so individuals can submit inquiries, suggestions and complaints to public bodies. To gather user feedback, it also has a webpage for surveys and polls. The platform features a chatbot to answer questions and provide additional information.

Source: Government of Jordan (n.d.<sup>[88]</sup>), *About the Tawasal Platform*, <https://www.tawasal.jo/About>.



When there are many separate portals and websites for engaging with different public bodies, citizens can be unsure where to direct their queries or feedback. In this regard, MoDEE is exploring whether any other existing digital platforms and portals for feedback and engagement could lead to duplication and identify areas where functionalities could be merged or interconnected through the upcoming unified platform. Supporting MoDEE's efforts to centralise existing platforms and portals is crucial. It will streamline communication with the public, enhance user experience, ensure that feedback is efficiently gathered, addressed and reported, and foster greater citizen and stakeholder participation across public administration.

The ministry also produces training materials and guidelines for public officials on e-participation. The guidance will include a code of conduct and general principles on citizen and stakeholder participation, all of which were discussed following workshops with CSOs and other non-governmental stakeholders. Undertaking consistent training and capacity building will be crucial to the success of the e-participation platform. MoDEE could also consider monitoring and evaluating the uptake of the platform and its use by public officials and users. In this regard, the ministry can also serve as a reference point for public officials who need further advice or assistance on the platform.

Digital divides can be a barrier for many, especially those lacking connectivity or digital literacy and information and communication technology skills. In this regard, there must be dedicated efforts to reach out to underrepresented or vulnerable groups. A diverse range of citizens and stakeholders could also be involved in testing and piloting the platform through, for example, focus groups and workshops to ensure that it is user-friendly and caters to all social demographics. Public spaces could also be offered to citizens so they can come and use the service in person, such as the Citizen Stops and Citizen Shops in Portugal (OECD, 2023<sup>[84]</sup>).

A legal or policy framework that renders some level of citizen and stakeholder participation obligatory or encourages and guides public officials in this regard could ensure sustainability and longevity throughout political cycles. In the medium to long term, Jordan could consider following the example of some countries, such as Romania (OECD, 2023<sup>[57]</sup>; 2023<sup>[56]</sup>), by having legal provisions that make it obligatory for public bodies to involve citizens and stakeholders at certain stages of the public decision-making process.

### ***Unlocking the potential of national dialogues for national development plans***

Many countries are beginning to experiment with ways to bring citizens closer to their reform agenda on a large scale, with one of the most influential and ambitious being a widespread national dialogue. Public officials increasingly recognise the benefits of such initiatives for enhancing citizens' understanding of reforms and providing a platform for exchange, thereby fostering greater legitimacy and buy-in from citizens in the process. Proactively addressing any potential concerns identified in the early stages of the dialogue can help prevent conflicts and dissatisfaction and contribute to smoother implementation. The diverse perspectives in these discussions can also often lead to innovative solutions and the process demonstrates responsiveness, adaptability and commitment to meeting the population's and government's evolving expectations. Box 3.9 illustrates two good examples that could inspire a similar effort in Jordan.

### Box 3.9. National dialogues for inclusive and sustainable development

#### Colombia

Colombia's current National Development Plan (NDP) 2022-26 was adopted in 2023. During its development, 51 Binding Regional Dialogues were conducted, involving more than 250 000 citizens. Moreover, the NDP declares that "citizens will be involved in the management of the public, improving existing mechanisms, expanding the channels of dialogue and adapting them to the new citizen expressions, the diversity of the country's population and its changing needs".<sup>1</sup> It also refers to the institutionalisation of these participatory practices, stating that "permanent exchange mechanisms will be defined". This is not the first initiative of its kind in the country – from 2019 to 2020, the Grand National Conversation was established by the Presidency of the Republic to enable citizens to participate in roundtables and make proposals across a wide range of topics (Latinno, n.d.<sup>[89]</sup>)

#### Morocco

In January 2020, the *Commission spéciale sur le modèle de développement* (CSMD) launched a nationwide public consultation to all citizens on national development. Its aim was to gather the views, opinions and expertise of individuals, CSOs and the private sector through a multi-channel approach (Participo, 2021<sup>[90]</sup>). In addition to an online platform which posed the question "What is one thing you want to change about Morocco?", the CSMD undertook 30 field visits to both urban and remote rural areas to ensure all communities had an opportunity to be involved. From January to December 2020, the CSMD received "over 10 000 written pages of contributions from 6 600 individuals and 165 organisations" (CSMD, 2021<sup>[91]</sup>).

In April 2021, the CSMD published a summary report on this "new development model" which is "designed by Moroccans, with Moroccans and for Moroccans". It emphasises the role of access to information for a more ethical and accountable public life. The report also recognises that their approach has revealed great interest among the general population for more "participation, inclusion and empowerment" and a more significant role in public decision-making (CSMD, 2021<sup>[91]</sup>).

Note: 1. Information provided to the OECD as part of Colombia's Implementation of Public Governance Post-Accession Monitoring Framework.

Source: Latinno (n.d.<sup>[89]</sup>), *Grand National Conversation*, <https://latinno.net/en/case/5314/>; Participo (2021<sup>[90]</sup>), "Morocco finds a new source of policy expertise - its own citizens", <https://medium.com/participo/morocco-finds-a-new-source-of-policy-expertise-its-own-citizens-b92358fa08ba>; CSMD (2021<sup>[91]</sup>), *Report of the Commission*, <https://csmd.ma/rapport-en>.

In the medium to long term, Jordan could draw on these examples and consider hosting a nationwide dialogue in the development phases of national plans and strategies and important sectoral policy documents (e.g. education, climate, health). It is important to conduct such a dialogue in the early stages of policymaking to ensure opportunities for meaningful engagement and that the inputs gathered will be reflected in the final plan or strategy.

### **Considering the use of representative, deliberative processes and citizen's assemblies, juries and panels**

The representative, deliberative process is a process in which a broadly representative body of people weighs evidence, deliberates to find common ground and develops detailed recommendations on policy issues for public authorities (OECD, 2020<sup>[92]</sup>). As noted in the 2020 OECD report *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, the use of these processes

has been growing among public bodies from all levels of government since the 1980s (OECD, 2020<sup>[92]</sup>), with common examples including citizens' assemblies, juries and panels.

Assembling ordinary citizens from all spheres of society to deliberate on complex policy dilemmas and develop collective proposals has become an increasingly attractive way for governments to push through difficult reforms while being assured public support (OECD, 2020<sup>[92]</sup>). In these processes, randomly selected citizens, making up a microcosm of a community, spend significant time learning and collaborating to develop informed collective recommendations for public officials. A representative deliberative process is most suited to addressing values-based dilemmas, complex problems requiring trade-offs and long-term questions beyond electoral cycles. In this sense, while such processes are costly in terms of time and resources, they have the potential to create significant value for those making decisions while empowering citizens and redefining their relationship with their government (Box 3.10) (OECD, 2020<sup>[92]</sup>).

### Box 3.10. Representative deliberative processes to solve complex policy problems

#### France

France has experimented with several citizens' assemblies over recent years. One notable example is the Citizens' Convention on Climate (*Convention Citoyenne pour le Climat*), announced by the French president in 2019. The assembly brought together 150 randomly selected citizens tasked with proposing a series of measures "to achieve a minimum reduction of 40% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, in a spirit of social justice" (Citizens' Convention on Climate, n.d.<sup>[93]</sup>).

In 2022, the president of the republic announced a citizens' convention on end of life under the auspices of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, given its mandate for fostering citizen participation. The convention was asked "Is the end-of-life support framework adapted to the different situations encountered or should possible changes be introduced?" (ESEC, n.d.<sup>[94]</sup>). After 27 days of deliberation spread across 4 months, 184 randomly selected citizens from across France reached 92% consensus around 67 recommendations, which were submitted to the president (Democracy Next, 2023<sup>[95]</sup>).

#### Ireland

Ireland has held several citizens' assemblies from 2016 to 2024, bringing citizens together to consider and discuss important policy issues in Ireland. A citizens' assembly is usually composed of 99 randomly selected members of the public and 1 appointed chairperson. Members are selected to reflect wider society in terms of age, gender, socio-economic class and regional diversity.

When the assembly finishes considering each issue, it develops a series of draft recommendations and votes on each. It then reports to the Irish parliament with its final recommendations. The government's next step is to respond to each recommendation and arrange a debate in parliament (Citizens Information Board, n.d.<sup>[96]</sup>).

Some of the topics discussed in previous years include how to respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population, making the country a leader in tackling climate change, gender equality, responding to the loss of biodiversity, reducing harms caused by drug use and more.

Sources: Citizens' Convention on Climate (n.d.<sup>[93]</sup>), *The Citizens' Convention on Climate, What Is It?*, <https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/en/> (accessed on 12 September 2024); ESEC (n.d.<sup>[94]</sup>), *Citizens' Convention on the End of Life*, <https://www.lecese.fr/convention-citoyenne-sur-la-fin-de-vie>; Democracy Next (2023<sup>[95]</sup>), "End of life citizens' assembly concludes with 92% consensus, delivers recommendations to Macron", <https://www.demnext.org/news/democracy-in-france-end-of-life-citizens-assembly-concludes-with-92-consensus-delivers-recommendations-to-macron>; Citizens Information Board (n.d.<sup>[96]</sup>), *Citizens' Assembly*, <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government-in-ireland/irish-constitution-1/citizens-assembly/#:~:text=A%20Citizens'%20Assembly%20is%20typically,member%20of%20a%20Citizens'%20Assembly.>

It could be beneficial for Jordan to consider introducing deliberative mechanisms on sensitive or complex policy questions, whereby the government assembles ordinary citizens from all parts of society to discuss, reach a consensus and develop collective recommendations for decision-makers to consider.

### ***Exploring the possibilities of focus groups, town hall meetings, roundtable discussions and other fora***

Focus groups are a tool that allows public officials to determine citizens' preferences or evaluate proposals and suggestions. Usually, they involve a group of citizens who are testing or experiencing services, products or solutions and are asked to provide their in-depth feedback. They usually comprise eight to ten people, gathered for a day or less (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). Town halls or open meetings gather the public in face-to-face meetings with public officials to provide information and discuss topics of interest chosen beforehand. These processes are based on dialogue and debate rather than deliberation and do not necessarily result in formal inputs from citizens (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>). Other fora include seminars, conferences, roundtable discussions and workshops, which can be used to collect expert opinions and create opportunities to exchange ideas. They can happen on line or in person and involve anywhere from 20 to 150 participants, depending on whether a smaller group discussion is needed or if a larger group would serve to frame the debate and raise awareness (OECD, 2022<sup>[2]</sup>).

These initiatives should include special outreach efforts to underrepresented groups that could be prioritised (e.g. women, people with disabilities, migrants). Jordan could also commit to raising awareness and building capacity to undertake more frequent and effective participatory processes. This could include training public officials on the benefit of citizen and stakeholder participation and how to launch and implement such processes.

### ***Fostering citizen and stakeholder participation in the budget process and expanding participatory budgeting***

Participatory budgeting (PB) is beneficial as it empowers citizens to be involved directly in how the government allocates public funds. PB started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 and has since expanded globally (OECD, 2022<sup>[86]</sup>). It is a process whereby citizens decide how to spend a budget segment, usually through project proposals (OECD, n.d.<sup>[97]</sup>). By involving residents in identifying priorities and distributing resources accordingly, PB fosters a sense of ownership among citizens, who actively contribute to shaping their communities. A common approach to introducing PB is for governments to identify aspects of their service delivery that could be delegated to PB, such as education, infrastructure or community services (OECD, 2022<sup>[86]</sup>).

At present, the General Budget Department (GBD) strives to improve citizen participation in the early stages of the budget throughout Jordan and improve the country's score in the International Budget Partnership (IBP) Open Budget Survey. As of 2023, Jordan performed well, getting the highest score in the region regarding budget transparency of 60/100, with 100 being the best (see Chapter 2 on access to information). However, there is room for improvement regarding its score on public participation, which is currently 4/100 (IBP, 2023<sup>[98]</sup>). The IBP recommends that the GBD pilot new ways to engage the public in formulating the budget, allocating and following up on the implementation. It also encourages the GBD to actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or indirectly, through CSOs (IBP, 2023<sup>[98]</sup>).

To improve its international standing, the GBD has already developed a citizen guide that presents a user-friendly summary of the budget laws published on its website. It has also launched several awareness-raising campaigns on the budgetary process. At the same time, ministries could be encouraged to seek the views of a diverse range of stakeholders and citizens when considering budgetary allocations. The department and responsible public bodies (e.g. line ministries) could use the new *Tawasal*

e-participation platform to reach out to citizens and stakeholders and publicise opportunities to get involved in the budgetary process.

PB in Jordan represents a good example of collaboration between the government and CSOs.<sup>26</sup> CSO Partners Jordan<sup>27</sup> currently works alongside the government to implement PB at the municipal level, bringing together public officials and their communities across municipalities (Partners Jordan, n.d.<sup>[99]</sup>). After discussions between municipal decision-makers, stakeholders and citizens, a percentage of the municipal budget is allocated to the chosen priorities. Interviewees stated the amount granted is often around 15-18% of the overall budget. At present, PB is voluntary rather than obligatory for governorates, cities and municipalities in Jordan, whereas certain countries, such as Poland, have made it mandatory for areas with county status (OECD, 2021<sup>[100]</sup>).

In this context, the GBD could encourage all governorates and municipalities to undertake some form of PB, including involving more participants and allocating a greater share of the budget year on year. It could also consider making some form of PB mandatory in each governorate and municipality, to the extent possible, depending on their resources and capacity. To do so, the department could be granted additional human and financial resources to expand its efforts. Jordan could also consider establishing a participation unit or assigning a public official within the GBD responsible for involving citizens and stakeholders in the budget process and promoting PB, as did Egypt (Box 3.11).

### Box 3.11. Participation in budgetary processes in Egypt

Egypt has made significant efforts to entrench citizen participation in budgetary processes and undertake PB initiatives. The Ministry of Finance publishes several reports and documents to inform and familiarise citizens with public financial management and the state budget. Each year, the ministry issues a citizen's and a child's budget, simplified versions of the official enacted budget that are user-friendly, written in plain language and adapted to the target audience (Egyptian Ministry of Finance, n.d.<sup>[101]</sup>). Its aim is to be "understood by as large of the segment of the population as possible" (IOPD, n.d.<sup>[102]</sup>).

Moreover, there is a high level of commitment from the Ministry of Finance, with the minister highlighting the benefits of citizen participation in the budget for transparency and good governance in 2022 (SIS, 2022<sup>[103]</sup>). The Ministry of Finance established a Fiscal Transparency and Citizen Engagement Unit for this purpose. According to its website, the unit aims to motivate citizens of all demographics in the economic and financial affairs of the country through transparency and access to information, interactive and gamified platforms and opportunities to get involved, all of which aim to "enhance citizens' sense of belonging and consolidate the principle of active citizenship" (Egyptian Ministry of Finance, n.d.<sup>[104]</sup>).

Sources: OECD (n.d.<sup>[105]</sup>), *Public Governance Review of Egypt*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Egyptian Ministry of Finance (n.d.<sup>[101]</sup>), *Egypt's Citizen Budget Initiative Dashboard*, <https://budget.gov.eg/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A/>; IOPD (n.d.<sup>[102]</sup>), *From "Citizen Budget" to Participatory Budgeting in Egypt*, <https://oidp.net/en/content.php?id=1631>; SIS (2022<sup>[103]</sup>), "Participatory budgeting aims to entrench citizen participation in state financial policy-making process", <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/171088/Maait-Participatory-budgeting-aims-to-entrench-citizen-participation-in-state-financial-policy-making-process?lang=en-us>; Egyptian Ministry of Finance (n.d.<sup>[104]</sup>), *Transparency and Citizen Engagement Unit*, <https://budget.gov.eg/en/> (accessed on 12 September 2024).

The GBD and other public bodies could thus benefit from learning from international experiences regarding participation in the budget and PB to build their capabilities in this field.

## Policy recommendations

Over the last century, Jordan has introduced a range of legal, policy and institutional frameworks that enable citizens and stakeholders to provide feedback, submit complaints, shape policymaking and service design and delivery, and promote accountability across public administration. Today, the country has a unique opportunity to transform high-level commitment into concrete action through its current reform agenda. All ministries and many other public bodies have a key role to play in achieving the ambitious aims of the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[3]</sup>), the Economic Modernisation Vision (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[4]</sup>), the *Report from the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System* (Government of Jordan, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>) and the associated government Executive Programme (2023-25) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>). Many public bodies are already making significant efforts to promote responsiveness and citizen and stakeholder participation across the public administration. The NCHR, OGCHR, HRU and others are essential in protecting and promoting the civic freedoms that allow citizens to participate in public life. MoDEE encourages greater citizen and stakeholder participation in the digital sphere by establishing a centralised platform for engaging with the public. MoPPA is steering the government's commitment towards empowering individuals to participate in public decision-making. The GBD is making progress in mainstreaming participation in the budget and expanding PB. The Register of Societies, the Companies Control Department and the MoPIC Foreign Funding Unit are identifying ways to improve the enabling environment for CSOs.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement to ensure that existing initiatives and practices collectively achieve more than the sum of their parts. First, Jordan can ensure that freedoms of expression, assembly and association are aligned with international standards, in legislation and in practice. In addition, developing a holistic strategy to protect press freedom and support media outlets and journalists could strengthen the information ecosystem, improving media literacy and combatting mis- and disinformation. Regarding an enabling environment for CSOs, there are opportunities to improve processes and procedures for registration, collect and publicise data and information on the sector, increase transparency around government funding and outline a vision that highlights the important role of CSOs in society. Jordan could consider clarifying the many channels available for complaints and feedback to enhance responsiveness across public administration. Lastly, there is significant potential to move towards more innovative forms of citizen and stakeholder participation in the country, for example, piloting a national dialogue, experimenting with representative, deliberative processes and exploring ways to introduce more focus groups, roundtables and town hall meetings into policymaking and service design and delivery.

## Policy recommendations

### Protecting civic freedoms and the information ecosystem to ensure that citizens and stakeholders can participate fully in public life

To safeguard freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association and guarantee press freedom, Jordan could:

- Review the existing legal frameworks on freedom of expression, e.g. defamation, to ensure they align with international standards.
- Create a working group or focus group on the Cybercrime Law to allow academics and CSOs, including human rights organisations and journalists, to discuss how to effectively implement the law. To minimise an excess of discretion in its application, the government could elaborate secondary guidelines via bylaws for public officials.
- To protect the freedom of peaceful assembly, ensure that promising amendments made to the legal framework are reflected in practice.

- To safeguard press freedom and strengthen the information ecosystem, consider developing a national strategy for supporting media and journalists as part of an overarching framework to strengthen the information ecosystem and combat mis- and disinformation.

### **Improving the enabling environment for CSOs**

To streamline registration and operational processes and procedures for CSOs, promote transparency of funding and gain an overview of the sector, Jordan could:

- Explore possibilities to reduce the time required for registration of societies and seek to introduce maximum deadlines for registration of non-profit companies.
- Expand upon the existing government funding to provide diversified government support to societies and non-profit companies.
- Promote the transparency of foreign funding by publicising and promoting their training materials and self-assessment tool. The Foreign Funding Unit could publish up-to-date statistics on the number of requests received for foreign funding, including approvals and denials. It could make additional efforts to clearly outline the national priorities for funding so that they are evident to CSOs before applying.
- Raise awareness of the *Takamul* platform and continue to organise workshops and training on its use. Consider transforming the platform into a comprehensive one-stop shop where all CSOs can register, find information on other organisations and their activities, interact, apply for funding, provide financial reports and identify opportunities to participate in public decision-making.
- Seek to equalise procedures between societies and non-profit companies and consider empowering an existing body or consider establishing one joint oversight body with a role to supervise, oversee and regulate the entire civil society sector (societies and non-profit companies) to align procedures.

### **Mainstreaming the involvement of CSOs in public decision-making will foster effective and evidence-based policies and services**

To foster dialogue and informal and formal interactions on an ongoing basis, Jordan could:

- Establish a cross-cutting permanent advisory body comprising public officials and CSOs or expand and empower a similar body with such a role and responsibility. In addition, assigning an office or officer within each ministry and/or public body responsible for engaging with CSOs could be useful.
- Consider developing a strategy for CSOs which offers an overview of the current state of play, a vision for the CSO-government relationship, a commitment to collaborate with CSOs in public decision-making, and of how the government intends to support CSOs in the short, medium and long terms.

### **Enhancing responsiveness across public administration to build trust in government**

To improve co-operation among bodies with a mandate on civic freedoms and guiding public officials in responding to human rights complaints, Jordan could:

- Support the NCHR in conducting training and capacity building for all relevant bodies, focusing on handling and classifying complaints pertaining to human rights. The relevant bodies for human rights co-ordination, e.g. the NCHR, OGCHR and HRU, could support such an endeavour.



- The Senate Committee, House Committee, NCHR, OGCHR and HRU could work more closely to advance the human rights agenda in Jordan. This could take the form of a network that meets regularly with a dedicated public official in each body that liaises with the others.

To streamline suggestions, compliments and complaints on policies and services, Jordan could:

- Encourage public bodies to conduct a feedback session or focus group with citizens who have used the *Bekhedmetkom* platform to identify ways to optimise the platform. Jordan could also undertake recurring public communication campaigns to increase visibility around the platform. CSOs could also work as partners to support the government in further promoting this mechanism through different channels (e.g. social media, their websites, etc.).
- Overall, Jordan could consider clarifying the pathways for feedback mechanisms so citizens can easily understand where to submit their suggestions, proposals and concerns (e.g. *Bekhedmetkom* platform, WhatsApp, email, hotlines, etc.).

### **Encouraging citizen and stakeholder participation in public decision-making for meaningful engagement**

Jordan could embrace its potential to move towards more innovative forms of citizen and stakeholder participation in the country, including through:

- MoPPA embracing its steering role by working with other public bodies, e.g. line ministries, to identify ways to mainstream citizen and stakeholder participation across the public administration in Jordan. This could include awareness-raising activities on the value and benefits of citizen and stakeholder participation.
- Supporting MoDEE's efforts to centralise existing platforms and portals through the *Tawasal* platform to streamline communication with the public, enhance user experience, ensure that feedback is efficiently gathered and addressed, and foster greater citizen and stakeholder participation across public administration. A diverse range of citizens and stakeholders could be involved in testing and piloting the platform. MoDEE could also consider monitoring and evaluating the uptake of the platform and its use by public officials and users.
- Hosting a national dialogue in the future development phases of national plans and strategies and important sectoral policy documents (e.g. education, climate, health).
- Introducing deliberative mechanisms on complex policy questions, whereby the government assembles ordinary citizens from all parts of society to deliberate, reach a consensus and develop collective recommendations for decision-makers to consider.
- Supporting the work of the GBD in encouraging all governorates and municipalities to undertake some form of PB, including by involving a higher number of participants and allocating a greater share of the budget year on year.
- Considering creating a participation unit or assigning a public official within the GBD responsible for involving citizens and stakeholders in the budget process and promoting PB.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> CSOs are an organisational representation of civil society and include all not-for-profit, non-state, non-partisan, non-violent and self-governing organisations outside of the family, in which people come together to pursue shared needs, ideas, interests, values, faith and beliefs, including formal, legally registered organisations as well as informal associations without legal status but with a structure and activities (OECD, 2021<sup>[108]</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this chapter, unless otherwise explicitly stated, the term citizen is meant as any inhabitant of a particular place and not a legally recognised national of a state.

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders are defined as any interested and/or affected party, including: individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations; and institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector (OECD, 2017<sup>[11]</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> Jordan joined the OGP as a member in 2011.

<sup>5</sup> In 2023, the commission granted 3 licenses to radio broadcasting and rebroadcasting stations, renewed the licenses of 9 radio broadcasting stations and 3 satellite broadcasting stations, granted license renewals to 6 television broadcasting stations, bringing the total to 39 satellite stations. It also granted licenses to 35 electronic news publications, bringing the total number licensed to date to 214 electronic news publications. Lastly, it renewed 18 paper press publications licenses, so that the total number reached 18 publications. This information was shared by the Ministry of Government Communication, March 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Information shared by the Ministry of Government Communication, March 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Misinformation can be defined as “false or inaccurate information that is shared unknowingly and without the intention of deceiving the public” while disinformation is usually defined as “false, inaccurate, or misleading information deliberately created, presented and disseminated to harm a person, social group, organisation or country” (OECD, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> Information shared by the Ministry of Government Communication, March 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Jordan also has many co-operative societies (1 499 as of 2021), which are registered in accordance with the provisions of Cooperative Law No. 18 (Government of Jordan, 1997<sup>[106]</sup>) and Regulation No. 36 (Government of Jordan, 2016<sup>[107]</sup>). Co-operative societies are subject to the supervision and control of the Jordan Cooperative Corporation and are classified according to their activities, for example multi-purpose co-operative societies, consumer co-operatives, co-operative societies, professional co-operative societies, housing co-operative societies, co-operative societies for mutual benefit, craft co-operative societies and women’s co-operative societies, among others. Co-operative societies conduct activities to support communities and can apply for foreign funding. However, they differ from societies and non-profit companies because they can engage in profitable activities and the profit can be distributed to their members.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Societies Law, “society” refers to “any legal personality composed of a group of people not less than seven and is registered in consistency with the provisions of this law to provide services or undertake activities on voluntary basis without intending to make or share profit, to realise any benefit for any of its members or for any specific person, or to achieve any political goals that enter into the scope of

the work and activities of political parties in accordance with the legislation in force” (Government of Jordan, 2009<sup>[38]</sup>)

<sup>11</sup> According to the Non-Profit Companies Regulation, a non-profit company means the company is registered in accordance with the provisions of the law and regulation and does not aim to achieve any profit. If it does earn any revenue, it should be spent to pursue and fulfil the objectives of the company as it is not permissible to distribute it to any of the staff or shareholders (Government of Jordan, 2010<sup>[44]</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> Information shared by the Register of Societies, January 2024.

<sup>13</sup> The selection criteria consider the experience and expertise of an organisation in voluntary and charity works as well as factors such as diversity of gender, religion and geographical region of operation.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://portal.ccd.gov.jo/account/register>.

<sup>15</sup> In certain cases, they can apply for sales tax exemption at the Income and Sales Tax Department. If an international donor is exempted from sales tax, the exemption extends to the grant they provided to a CSO or non-profit company.

<sup>16</sup> The Ministries of Social Development; of Culture; of Tourism and Antiquities; of Interior; of Environment; of Political and Parliamentary Affairs; of Health; of Agriculture; of Justice; of Water and Irrigation; of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs; of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship; of Planning and International Cooperation; of Industry, Trade and Supply.

<sup>17</sup> MoPIC provided funding to societies from 2002 to 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Jordan was on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) “grey list” until October 2023, meaning it was one of the countries under increased monitoring as it actively worked to “address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing” (FATF, 2023<sup>[49]</sup>). Given the country’s significant progress in this area, from October 2023, Jordan is no longer subject to the FATF’s increased monitoring process (FATF, 2023<sup>[49]</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> As of November 2023, training had already taken place in four governorates.

<sup>20</sup> In 2022, 237 societies and non-profit companies were granted approval for 370 projects.

<sup>21</sup> Information shared by governmental stakeholders during the OECD fact-finding mission.

<sup>22</sup> The Foreign Funding Committee is required to provide justification to the CSO when rejecting an application and the CSO can object to the rejection in writing within two days.

<sup>23</sup> In October 2023, the charity sector and non-profit companies received the highest percentage of foreign funds, to a total value of JOD 47 million.

<sup>24</sup> The Lower House Committee keeps a record of all complaints submitted, the type of complaint, the public body implicated by the complaint and the action taken to solve the issue.

<sup>25</sup> PowerPoint presentation on the strategic plan shared by governmental stakeholders during the OECD fact-finding mission.

<sup>26</sup> The decentralisation process in Jordan supported a participatory approach by allocating financial ceilings to the governorates annually and encouraging them to involve citizens in determining their needs through the elected governorate councils.

<sup>27</sup> Partners Jordan was established in 2005 and is a member of an international network comprised of over 22 Partners Network centres across the globe. It aims to build capacity among CSOs, support mediation and peacebuilding in Jordan, and promote good governance, social accountability and citizen participation in sustainable development in Jordan. See more at Partners Jordan (n.d.<sup>[99]</sup>).

# **4**

## **Empowering young people to enhance integrity and accountability in Jordan**

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This chapter analyses opportunities and barriers for young people to enhance public sector integrity and accountability in Jordan. Against the background of Jordan's political, public sector and integrity reform, it identifies ways to involve youth stakeholders more systematically in policymaking and hold the government accountable for public service delivery. The chapter also identifies avenues to address barriers related to integrity and accountability that prevent young people from participating in political life – with a focus on their role as voters, candidates and elected officials.

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## Young people in Jordan: The promise for a better and more prosperous future

As of 2023, Jordan has an estimated 3.29 million people aged between 15-29 years old, around 29% of its total population (Department of Statistics, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). Jordan's youth<sup>1</sup> demographic presents a unique opportunity, heralding the potential for an increased workforce. However, important structural barriers prevent them from transitioning to an autonomous life.

In recent years, young people in Jordan have shown remarkable resilience in the face of several regional and global crises. In 2023, unemployment rose to 22.3%, remaining above its pre-COVID-19 crisis average of 15.1% (2012-19), with young people (46.1%) being the most affected (World Bank, 2023<sup>[2]</sup>). Young people were pushed further into informal and more precarious jobs, which had negative impacts on their disposable income, financial independence and broader social and well-being outcomes (OECD, 2023<sup>[3]</sup>). At the same time, young people and youth-led organisations in Jordan were at the forefront of mobilising support in their communities, thus promoting solidarity across all groups and social cohesion.

Beyond the impact of the pandemic, young people in Jordan are growing up in a regional context of political and economic instability with spill-over effects into the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that Jordan ranks second globally in hosting refugees per capita, with over 760 000 refugees registered as of 2023 (UNHCR, 2023<sup>[4]</sup>). Similar to their peers across the world, the implications of global transformations, such as the green and digital transitions, a shifting landscape of work and uncertain economic prospects further impact young people in Jordan. Despite these challenges, this context of transformation also presents opportunities for young people. For example, thanks to the digital transformation, young people in Jordan are increasingly empowered to be engaged citizens, promoting positive change in their communities and the country. With a high Internet penetration rate of 91% (DataReportal, 2024<sup>[5]</sup>) and a significant social media presence, young people have demonstrated agency to voice their views, participate in public life and ultimately advance on issues that matter most to them.

To build a more prosperous and secure future for young people, enhancing public sector integrity and accountability in partnership with young people is paramount. In line with that objective, the government of Jordan has demonstrated a strong commitment to encourage the participation of young people in public and political life through the political reform agenda and through important initiatives to increase efficiency and integrity across the public administration. However, young people in Jordan remain under-represented in positions of political influence. Moreover, recent studies demonstrate that university students express low satisfaction with the performance of political parties (JCSS, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>) and a majority believes that none of the existing political parties is representing their interests (NAMA, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>).

This chapter will assess the commendable efforts undertaken by the government of Jordan, independent institutions and civil society to empower young people and enhance public sector integrity and accountability. Based on a review of relevant legal, institutional and policy arrangements and current practice, as well as good practices from Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and OECD countries, it identifies opportunities to:

- Empower young people and youth organisations to hold the government accountable in policymaking and service delivery.
- Remove structural barriers, in particular in relation to integrity and accountability, that prevent young people from participating in political life.

## Public sector integrity and accountability: Bedrocks of trust in government and inclusive policy outcomes

Public sector accountability and integrity serve as the bedrock of trust in government and effective and inclusive policy outcomes. They underpin trust and transparency, which are paramount for the successful delivery of government programmes and services for all ages, including the government of Jordan's ambitious political, public sector and integrity agenda (see Chapter 1).

The OECD Framework of Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions finds that the degree of trust people place in their government is strongly influenced by a number of factors, including government's competency, which refers to its ability to provide public services effectively, and government's reliability to adapt to emerging needs, as well as perceptions of integrity, fairness and transparency of government institutions. It highlights that corruption exerts a negative influence on citizens' trust in public institutions (Brezzi et al., 2021<sup>[8]</sup>).

Existing evidence suggests that there is scope to reinforce trust in Jordan's political institutions, notably the parliament and political parties (BTI, 2024<sup>[9]</sup>; IRI, 2023<sup>[10]</sup>). For instance, the OECD report *Empowering Youth and Building Trust in Jordan* (2021<sup>[11]</sup>) finds that, in line with trends observed across many OECD countries, young people in Jordan express less interest in politics than older age groups and continue to be under-represented in positions of political influence. In turn, young people more frequently participate through non-institutionalised channels, for instance in civil society and volunteering activities. While young people play an important role in holding government to account through civil society engagement, removing barriers to their participation in positions of political influence is equally critical to re-build trust and deliver more responsive and accountable policy outcomes as recognised by the OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>).

Moreover, fostering a culture of public integrity in society in partnership with the private sector, civil society and individuals (OECD, 2017<sup>[13]</sup>) is key to investing in better policy outcomes for young people and building society-wide support for Jordan's ambitious reform agenda. It is important to recognise that, in their role as students, workers, customers and voters, young people can be exposed to corrupt behaviour through various entry points (OECD, 2016<sup>[14]</sup>).<sup>2</sup> Besides the negative impact at an individual level, corruption diverts resources and influence away from their intended use and, thus, the core of society. Funding that could otherwise be allocated to improving education and health services, job opportunities and other public services for young people is siphoned off. For example, inflated public construction costs may result in fewer new schools being built, leaving young populations underserved.

At the same time, young people in Jordan and elsewhere have emerged as vocal advocates to uphold standards of integrity and partners to design, implement, monitor and evaluate government action. With unprecedented access to information and digital tools, young people worldwide are seeking to hold public institutions accountable for decisions taken in the field of climate and environmental protection, civic space and others. For example, in the case of Japan and France, young people have partnered with the government to advocate for transparency, fairness, and the responsible use of public resources (see Box 4.1).



### Box 4.1. Mobilising young people as partners of government action in selected OECD countries

#### Japan: Special Youth Rapporteurs inform government planning

The Japanese Cabinet Office appoints students as Special Youth Rapporteurs to inform government planning, legislation and regulations related to childhood and young people. The rapporteurs are asked to give their opinion on government thematic priorities, which are selected by the Cabinet Office. Their inputs are then shared across relevant ministries and government agencies and are published online on the website of the Cabinet Office.

#### France: Youth Policy Orientation Council (*Conseil d'orientation des politiques de jeunesse*)

Since 2016, the *Conseil d'orientation des politiques de jeunesse* (CoJ), acts as an advisory body to the prime minister. The CoJ contributes to the co-ordination and evaluation of youth-related policies and is composed of commissions dealing with education and participation in policymaking. Its 79 members, including ministers, youth representatives and youth organisations, can also be consulted on legislative or regulatory drafts on issues relating to young people and may examine any general draft laws relating to youth policies.

Source: OECD (2020<sup>[15]</sup>), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>.

### Empowering young people in the context of Jordan's ongoing political, public sector and integrity reform agenda

Empowering young people has been a longstanding priority on Jordan's political agenda. The 6<sup>th</sup> Discussion Paper issued by King Abdullah II in 2016 stressed that “we cannot address the use of the rule of law without recognising that *wasta*<sup>3</sup> and nepotism jeopardise development effort”, acknowledging in this context the need to “empower young people to realise their potential and expand their horizons” (Government of Jordan, 2016<sup>[16]</sup>). With the adoption of the 2015 Decentralization Law and Municipality Law, Jordan also embarked on an important decentralisation reform with the stated objective of increasing citizen participation locally (OECD, 2020<sup>[17]</sup>). Moreover, Jordan is among the few economies in the MENA region with a national youth strategy in place (National Youth Strategy 2019-25), featuring commitments to strengthen “youth, engagement and effective leadership”, “youth, rule of law and good governance”, foster citizenship and empower young people in the political, social and economic sphere (Ministry of Youth, 2019<sup>[18]</sup>).

Acknowledging the need to further enhance integrity, accountability and efficiency in public administration as well as more inclusive decision-making, Jordan has embarked on an important reform process. Central to these efforts is the adoption of the Political Parties Law No. 7 of 2022 (hereafter the Political Parties Law of 2022) and the Election Law of the House of Representatives No. 4 of 2022 and its amendments (hereafter the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022). The adoption of these laws led to the reduction of the minimum age required to run in national elections from 30 to 25 years, thus bringing Jordan closer to international standards. To register, political parties need a minimum of 1 000 members and 20% of its founding members must be between the ages of 18 and 35. Moreover, political party activity on university campuses was legalised. These changes and their possible implications for young people's participation in political life are further discussed below.

At the same time, findings from the NAMA Strategic Intelligence Solutions survey (2022<sup>[7]</sup>) reveal that young people remained sceptical about whether the legal changes were sufficient to make political parties more effective when the new laws were adopted. According to the survey, 66% of university students in Jordan believe that political parties in Jordan are “very” or “somewhat” ineffective and concur they are unable to address the most pressing challenges facing the country, such as addressing crime (72.5%) and unemployment (67%). Similarly, 68% of the university students “totally agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that political parties’ programmes do not address citizens’ needs (NAMA, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). As regards the underlying reasons for the negative perception of political parties held among young people, the available evidence points to “limited rotation of party leadership, the overall weakness of political parties in political action, and the simplistic organizational structure of most parties”, alongside the concentration of most parties in Amman (PSI, 2023<sup>[19]</sup>).

In parallel to the political reform agenda, the government of Jordan has embarked on an ambitious reform trajectory to enhance the efficiency, responsiveness and citizen-centric nature of public policies and services. Key objectives and steps are consolidated in the 2022 Public Sector Modernization Roadmap (hereafter the Roadmap) (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[20]</sup>). Among others, the Roadmap foresees a merger between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Youth (MoY) to integrate programmes and optimise the use of public resources (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[20]</sup>). It also envisions a reform of the civil service by modernising government scholarship policies and updating recruitment systems for specialised programmes abroad, ensuring equal opportunities for women, young people and persons with disabilities (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[20]</sup>).

Lastly, to “uphold integrity, and reject corruption” (2020<sup>[21]</sup>), the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission (JIACC) adopted the National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2017, which was updated in 2020. The strategy is described as a national framework where partners from the public and private sectors and civil society are involved in its implementation. It outlines five objectives, including strengthening Jordan’s overall integrity system, adopting a proactive approach to mitigate corrupt practices and fostering collaboration in the fight against corruption. The strategy demonstrates some commitment to engaging young people in anti-corruption efforts, for instance by integrating integrity and anti-corruption concepts in school and university curricula and to incorporating young people into national policies to combat corruption using modern communication methods (JIACC, 2020<sup>[21]</sup>).

## Young people as agents to promote public sector integrity and accountability

This section examines efforts by the MoY, the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MoPPA) and the Ministry of Education (MoE) as well as JIACC and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to involve youth stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the Roadmap, the Political Parties Law of 2022 and the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 and Jordan’s National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy 2020-25 to promote public sector integrity and accountability. It will assess the opportunities and barriers for young people to shape the process, as well as the capacity of the lead entities to collect and use age-disaggregated data and raise awareness among young people for the objectives and implications of the reform underway.

It draws on the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[22]</sup>), which underlines that stakeholder participation in the policy cycle increases government’s accountability, as well as the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>), which holds that countries should promote meaningful youth participation in public decision-making to deliver more responsive, inclusive and accountable policy outcomes (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

It will also discuss opportunities and barriers faced by young people to inform and monitor public service delivery, in line with relevant commitments in Jordan’s National Youth Strategy 2019-25, Open Government Agenda and other cross-cutting policy frameworks.

## Shaping Jordan's reform agenda: Defining a proactive role for young people

Various dimensions underpin effective government accountability. Based on a review of accountability mechanisms in youth policy across OECD countries, Figure 4.1 presents five common dimensions. The figure demonstrates that promoting accountability relies on a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach with important interventions from various entities across and beyond government, including independent organisations, civil society and the wider public.

**Figure 4.1. Five dimension to strengthen accountability in policy outcomes for young people**



Source: Based on OECD (2020<sup>[15]</sup>), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en> and OECD (2024<sup>[23]</sup>), *Together for Children and Young People in Ireland - Towards a New Governance Framework*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/12f4dfb2-en>.

While discussing each dimension for the three reform areas outlined above is beyond the scope of this chapter, the figure provides a useful framework to unite the whole government behind delivering more responsive and accountable policy outcomes for young people. For the purpose of this chapter, the analysis will focus, in particular, on promoting accountability to young people.

In Jordan, the MoY is in charge of co-ordinating youth policy across government and is thus central to strengthening accountability in youth policy outcomes across its different facets. Based on an assessment of its capacities and the governance structures set up to support the implementation of Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25 in the OECD report *Empowering Youth and Building Trust in Jordan* (2021<sup>[11]</sup>), Box 4.2 provides an overview of key policy recommendations and recent developments to provide further context to the analysis that follows.

### **Box 4.2. Enhancing accountability for youth outcomes in Jordan: A summary of OECD findings and recent developments**

The OECD report *Empowering Youth and Building Trust in Jordan* (2021<sup>[11]</sup>) provides a holistic assessment of governance structures in place to support the implementation of Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25 and the capacities of the MoY to steer its implementation.

Acknowledging that Jordan is one of few MENA economies with an integrated national youth strategy in place, it identifies several action points to support its effective implementation:

- Identifying clear mandates across government entities and allocating adequate resources within MoY to co-ordinate its implementation and avoid fragmented coverage of support and services and address unmet needs.
- Setting clear objectives, targets and timeframes for all implementation partners involved.
- Systematically collecting and using age-disaggregated evidence underpinning strategic objectives and activities.
- Linking strategic objectives to local priorities identified in the implementation plans of youth centres and using standardised terminology across all youth centres.
- Establishing a unified database and building technical capacity at the local level to collect and share data and facilitate the monitoring and evaluation.
- Regularly publishing information about the progress achieved in implementing the strategy, for instance through annual reports.

According to the OECD interviews conducted in June 2023, the MoY has undertaken important efforts to act upon these recommendations:

- Review and update of the National Youth Strategy with a post-Covid 19 action plan.
- Development of an Activity Bank to monitor and support activities led and executed by young people in local youth centres. Through this initiative, they can apply for funds to support the implementation of activities. As of February 2024, the Activity Bank included more than 6 500 initiatives. Local youth centres are requested to design plans that respond to local needs and priorities.
- In collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its Technical Assistance Program, MoY has also worked to set up a monitoring and evaluation unit within the ministry and devised a monitoring and evaluation plan. Efforts to strengthen monitoring and evaluation also include the use of pre- and post-surveys to collect evidence on the impact of activities in the youth centres in line with a commitment in Jordan's 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan to the Open Government Partnership to conduct annual evaluations of the strategy based on consultations with youth stakeholders, relevant governmental institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector (Commitment 4, Milestone activity 2).

Sources: OECD (2021<sup>[11]</sup>), *Empowering Youth and Building Trust in Jordan*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8b14d38f-en>; OECD questionnaire and interviews in June 2023; Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation (2021<sup>[24]</sup>), *The Fifth National Action Plan 2021 - 2025 Under the Open Government*, [https://ogp.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root\\_Storage/EN/5\\_NAP/5th\\_NAP - En Ready to Print MODIFIED VERSION 10 April.pdf](https://ogp.gov.jo/EBV4.0/Root_Storage/EN/5_NAP/5th_NAP_-_En_Ready_to_Print_MODIFIED_VERSION_10_April.pdf).

While the MoY is tasked with a key role in delivering policies and programmes that are responsive to young people's needs, Jordan's reform agenda does not only cut across various ministerial portfolios. It also foresees an important role for independent institutions such as JIACC and the IEC. In this complex environment, safeguarding civic space is an important precondition for youth stakeholders to share their perspectives and possible criticism of government action in the public domain and for independent institutions to operate without fearing concerns of negative repercussions.

### *Creating an enabling environment to enhance accountability towards young people*

Safeguarding civic space is a foundation for establishing a trustful relationship between young people and public institutions (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). The civic space<sup>4</sup> is influenced by various factors, including institutions,

laws, regulations and rules that shape the civil and political rights and liberties of young people, including their access to information, freedom of speech and expression, the right of association and assembly, the right to privacy and non-discrimination as well as the freedom of the press, and open Internet and data protection (OECD, 2022<sup>[25]</sup>). Moreover, rules and regulations in relation to prohibiting hate speech and incitement to violence, and promoting access to justice and other areas shape the civic space, as do the mechanisms established to support their implementation and enforcement (see Chapter 3).

### *Building blocks to increase government accountability towards young people*

In addition to mechanisms safeguarding civic space and upholding political and civil liberties, promoting accountability to young people relies on at least three important foundations: the availability of age-disaggregated evidence, public communication that is responsive to young people's media preferences and the availability of and access to inclusive and meaningful youth participation (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2. Building blocks to promote government accountability towards young people**



Source: Author's elaboration.

### **Leveraging age-disaggregated evidence**

To deliver youth-responsive policies and services, the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (2022<sup>[12]</sup>) highlights the relevance of improving capacities for the “collection, use and sharing of data disaggregated by age, sex and other relevant characteristics”, such as education and income.

Without the systematic collection and use of data disaggregated by age and other identity factors such as gender and socio-economic background policymakers risk underestimating the distinct challenges specific groups in society are facing. Understanding the specific challenges young people are facing can help design more tailored policies and programmes and mobilise the required resources to address them. Utilising granular data is also critical to better track the performance of programmes and initiatives targeting young people, thus ultimately enhancing accountability towards them.

## Tailoring public communication to young people's habits and preferences

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (2022<sup>[12]</sup>) highlights that young people should be involved in a meaningful way in public decision-making processes, with targeted measures to mobilise disadvantaged and under-represented groups. It further holds that the government should communicate with young people on relevant matters in clear and accessible ways based on active listening and understanding of their concerns and interests. Outreach efforts should be targeted to their needs, media consumption habits and preferences.

Beyond information sharing, public communication<sup>5</sup> is a building block for promoting the participation of stakeholders in policymaking and service delivery (OECD, 2017<sup>[22]</sup>). According to the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017<sup>[22]</sup>), stakeholders should have “equal and fair opportunities to be informed, consulted and actively engaged”, underlining that specific efforts should be made to reach vulnerable and underrepresented groups. OECD countries have undertaken efforts to adopt new methods to deliver public communication that is responsive to young people.

In a survey run by the OECD in 2020 among centre of government (CoG)<sup>6</sup> institutions, 49% confirmed they were seeking to target young people through their public communication efforts, ahead of people with special needs/disabilities (44%), elderly (38%) and women (36%). However, findings from the same survey for Jordan suggest that, at present, limited and uneven capacities exist across ministries to make use of audience insights<sup>7</sup> and tailor communication efforts to specific segments of the population, primarily women and young people (OECD, 2021<sup>[26]</sup>).

## Providing spaces for meaningful youth participation

In recent years, young people in Jordan and elsewhere have demonstrated a preference for non-institutionalised forms of participation (e.g. online activism, civil society engagement, social movements) over traditional channels, such as voting and political party membership (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). While young people have historically mobilised during crises, OECD data suggest a broader trend towards non-institutionalised forms of participation among young people (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

Recognising this trend, the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (2022<sup>[12]</sup>) calls on countries to promote meaningful youth involvement in decision-making processes. At its core, it calls for clear communication, diverse representation and the use of innovative engagement methods. The OECD distinguishes between three levels of stakeholder participation (i.e. information, consultation and engagement; see Chapter 3), highlighting the need for interactive relationships and collaboration throughout the policy cycle (OECD, 2016<sup>[27]</sup>).

The next sections will discuss opportunities and barriers to promote government accountability to young people in the context of Jordan's political, public sector and integrity agenda with a view to assessing the three dimensions introduced above. In line with findings observed across OECD and MENA countries (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>), it identifies important gaps in the existing governance structures in Jordan and concludes with a discussion on possible priorities to address them.

### *Spotlight 1: The political reform agenda*

Led by the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System, Jordan has embarked on an ambitious political reform process with the objective of bringing forth parliaments dominated by strong political parties with policy agendas to form a government in accordance with Article 35 of the constitution (Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System, 2022<sup>[28]</sup>). As part of these efforts, a National Dialogue for Political Reform (2018-19) was set up and a series of consultations were held across various sectors to inform new legislation in the field of elections, political parties, decentralisation and the role of local administration.

In 2022, the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 was adopted. Among others, the 2022 election law lowered the minimum age to run for parliament from 30 to 25 years in line with the 2022 constitutional amendments with the objective of increasing young people's participation in politics and encouraging their participation in elections. With this change, Jordan moved closer but still significantly exceeds the OECD average of 19.8 years, as well as the minimum age required in Morocco (18 years) and Tunisia (23 years). It is aligned with practices in Egypt, Lebanon and Mauritania in the MENA region (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>).

Moreover, the Political Parties Law of 2022 was adopted, stipulating that political parties need a minimum of 1 000 members and that a minimum of 20% of founding members should be between the ages of 18 and 35 (Article 11/A and 10). The law further states that it is prohibited to expose the students of higher education institutions because of their affiliation and party and political activity (Article 4/C), affirming in Article 20 the rights of students who are members of a party to practice party activities within the campus "without any restriction or prejudice to their rights, provided that a special regulation is issued to regulate these activities" (Prime Minister's Office, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). Bylaw No. 68 of 2022 to Organise the Student Party Activities in Higher Education Institutions specifies in Article 3/C that students have the right to engage in various activities, such as holding and participating in political seminars and debates, and elections organised by the higher education institutions for student councils, unions, associations, or student clubs (Prime Minister's Office, 2022<sup>[30]</sup>).

Although young people were involved in shaping the 2022 laws, the process encountered challenges in terms of inclusivity, representation and meaningful engagement. According to MoPPA, the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System included representatives from various ministries<sup>8</sup> (Government of Jordan, 2024<sup>[31]</sup>), as well as civil society, political parties, women's organisations and young people. Eleven youth stakeholders were selected based on leadership roles in prominent youth organisations or their active participation in governorate councils and governmental institutions. According to OECD interviews, some proposals developed by the group were not taken forward, such as the idea to reduce the minimum age required to run for a seat in the national parliament to 18 years.

Various institutions, notably MoPPA, the MoY and IEC, have undertaken efforts to raise awareness for the 2022 laws among young people. According to MoPPA, its "Your Voice Your Future" campaign delivered 383 awareness and education activities across all governorates, targeting 50,000 participants including young people, women and local communities. Activities included dialogue meetings and training sessions, which were conducted in partnership with international and local partners. These efforts also benefitted from theatre performances and the dissemination of didactic material, including copies of the Jordanian constitution, the Electoral Law and Political Parties Law and different booklets and leaflets. MoPPA also launched a series of videos on political reform, which were broadcast via its social media platforms, reaching a total of 2 million views according to the ministry. It further created an awareness and education team comprised of 12 staff, who received technical training on the new laws. The team was tasked to raise awareness and co-ordinate the actions taken forward by different ministries.

The IEC issued brochures, used billboards, organised workshops and set up programmes in universities and schools to target young people. It also used social media to raise awareness, drawing on simplified language, visuals, infographics and videos applying sign language to disseminate information about the new laws, by-law and election process to a large segment of society. A total of 200 000 brochures were distributed as part of the Door-to-Door campaign through volunteers in the context of the USAID-funded Partnership Project. The IEC has rolled out its activities across all governorates, especially in the peripheral areas, and engages young people as volunteers during the electoral process. According to IEC, joint sessions were also organised with MoY to raise awareness and knowledge among young people as regards the role of political parties and opportunities to participate in political life in the context of the Al-Hussein Youth Camps.



Despite these notable initiatives, OECD interviewees pointed to challenges, such as limited or reduced financial resources to engage with young people via social media and roll out programmes across all governorates. They also pointed to a lack of interest among young people to participate in political life (in particular due to a priority of economic considerations among young people), their continued lack of confidence in political parties and work programmes as well as in parliament, and at times fear of engaging in political parties. While young people were consulted at an early stage in the process, OECD interviews suggest that the process was considered lacking inclusiveness and representativeness as only a limited circle of young people were invited, and no specific efforts were undertaken to target young people living in disadvantaged circumstances.

### *Spotlight 2: The public sector reform agenda*

The Roadmap (2022<sup>[20]</sup>) forms one of the three axes of the current government's overarching goal of reviving the national economy. The stated goal of the strategy is to "create a comprehensive roadmap to elevate public administration, enhance the institutional approach in responding efficiently to local and global developments, and contribute effectively to attain economic recovery, based on the principles of excellence, transparency and accountability". This strategy is wide-reaching and based on seven institutional pillars to modernisation, including pillar six, "transparency and accountability".

According to OECD interviews with the Prime Minister's Public Sector Modernization Project Management and Implementation Office (PMIO), a specialised unit in charge of managing and implementing the Roadmap, this reform will have significant implications for young people too (see Chapter 1). First, the inventory system at the Civil Service Bureau is envisaged to be eliminated by 2027. The aim is to shift from 12% to 40% of civil servant jobs allocated based on open competition and to accelerate the creation of private sector jobs in line with Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision. As a result, by November 2023, no new applications were supposed to be accepted and open competition was planned to be the norm. The commitment is driven by the consideration that the current system is unsustainable, with a growing number of applications by young graduates and a limited number of annual hires. By June 2023, 486 000 applications were registered in the inventory, with an additional 37 000 new applications coming in each year for only 8 000 new available civil servant jobs each year. In 2024, the recruitment of public employees came to be governed by the new Human Resources Management Bylaw No. 33 for 2024, which states that competition will take place for vacant positions officially listed in the Formation Table, prepared annually to organise the recruitment process and the efficient distribution of human resources across the public service.

Another action envisaged by the Roadmap, the integration of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Vocational Training Institute into the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, was approved by the Council of Ministers on 30 April 2024. The merger aims to better link education policies with labour market needs and improve policy coherence in education policies, especially concerning early childhood, primary education (up to 16 years), and vocational education.

To raise awareness of the Roadmap and its objectives, the PMIO has contracted a public relations agency to run a communication campaign, funded by USAID. Core to the campaign is a dedicated website (govreform.jo). According to the PMIO, further efforts will be rolled out gradually, including a social media campaign and other channels. For instance, in June 2023, a forum with Jordan's prime minister and university students was organised to discuss the public sector reforms and a national dialogue, managed by the Economic and Social Council, was conducted across all governorates, involving ministries and civil society organisations.

While the importance of effectively communicating this sensitive reform package is acknowledged by the PMIO, young people were not engaged in the preparation of the Roadmap. Moreover, by June 2023, limited outreach efforts had been undertaken to raise awareness among youth stakeholders despite the significant impacts of the reform on young people's educational and professional careers.

### *Spotlight 3: Reform of Jordan's public integrity system*

Jordan was the first Arab nation to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2005 and the Arab Anti-Corruption Convention (2010). Building on previous and ongoing efforts to further strengthen Jordan's public integrity system, findings from the OECD Public Sector Integrity Review of Jordan (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[32]</sup>) suggest that there is further scope to move from a culture of control to a culture of Integrity. The elaboration of JIACC's next strategy provides a timely opportunity for advancing this agenda and for placing young people at the centre of these efforts (OECD, forthcoming<sup>[32]</sup>).

According to JIACC, activities to raise awareness of the strategy included official meetings with government departments, private sector representatives and civil society organisations. Information sharing via traditional media channels was accompanied by outreach efforts undertaken via social media. JIACC also conducted a series of awareness-raising campaigns in 2022 and 2023 with relevant ministries, such as the MoY, to raise young people's awareness of the dangers of *wasta* and nepotism (see Box 4.3).

#### **Box 4.3. Awareness-raising efforts in Jordan to support the implementation of the National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy**

##### **The "I am Against Bribery" campaign**

The "I am Against Bribery" campaign was organised by JIACC in collaboration with civil society organisation Palladium and various universities in Jordan. For a month, the campaign promoted integrity standards and raised awareness about the dangers of nepotism and bribery. Slogans were designed to target young people specifically via JIACC's website and social media platforms, accompanied by outreach efforts via government websites. Slogans, posters and other communication material to support the campaign were developed together with 15 students from 12 government and private universities. Examples of the slogans included:

- "Wasta is an assault on the rights of others, so let's work together to combat this scourge".
- "Nepotism and Wasta are two sides of the same crime, so let's work together to fight this disease".
- "Defend the future of your children and say no to nepotism and Wasta".
- "Nepotism and Wasta violate the values of justice, equality and equal opportunities, so don't be a part of it".

##### **Lectures for young anti-corruption champions**

In 2022 and 2023, JIACC and the MoY organised awareness-raising workshops and lectures within selected youth centres to discuss the role of young people in combatting corruption and enhancing integrity standards.

Source: Based on OECD interviews and replies to the questionnaire.

According to JIACC, data on the exposure of young people to corruption in Jordan are not collected systematically. It is therefore unclear to what extent and in which circumstances young people may be more vulnerable than other age groups to practices such as *wasta* and bribery and whether the overall trend is positive or negative. In many cases, being exposed to corrupt and undue behaviour might not even be recognised as such, for instance when personal connections determine grades or the acceptance to higher education. The lack of such data is also a limitation to JIACC's efforts to communicate the risks of corruption to young people and the need to prioritise interventions and resources in high-risk areas.

While JIACC pointed to a lack of experience and interest among young people, impeding a more systematic engagement on issues around public sector integrity, OECD interviewees from the non-

governmental sector referred to a culture of risk-aversion that might discourage young people from engaging in anti-corruption efforts. Moreover, while the MoY was consulted in the elaboration of Jordan's National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy 2020-25 and has partnered with JIACC in the delivery of lectures, young people themselves were not given a dedicated space to shape its elaboration. The MoY further reports that lack of funding remains a challenge to roll out awareness-raising activities across all governorates; a concern that is shared by JIACC. The memorandum of understanding signed between JIACC and the MoY includes a commitment to raise awareness among young people to uphold principles of integrity. While Jordan's National Youth Strategy 2019-25 does not explicitly state the objective to engage young people in the fight against corruption (Pillar 5 covers good governance and the rule of law more broadly), joint activities with JIACC to raise awareness among young people to detect and fight corruption are included in the annual activity plan for the youth centres.

According to JIACC, young people shall be involved in the evaluation of its current strategy by the end of 2025 (see Box 4.4). While the process to engage young people in this effort is yet to be established, it provides an important opportunity to associate young people more actively with Jordan's public sector integrity agenda and explore new approaches to the communication of results, such as via peer-to-peer approaches. Moreover, an online platform (Innovation Incubator) was launched by JIACC in 2024 in attendance of the ministries of youth, digital economy and the King Abdullah II Fund for Development, which provides a space for citizens, and in particular young people, to submit their ideas for promoting integrity and preventing corruption.

#### **Box 4.4. Raising awareness for integrity through school and university curricula**

JIACC co-operates with the National Center for Curriculum Development on the reform of the curriculum. A joint committee was formed to include courses on national integrity standards and anti-corruption mechanisms, as well as patriotism, in the curriculum of public and private schools for pupils aged 14 years and older. Reportedly, between 2022 and mid-2023, various lectures were organised in schools across Jordan.

Moreover, a joint committee was established with the Ministry of Higher Education, which introduced mandatory lessons on anti-corruption and national integrity standards for all students in 2010. In 2022, a memorandum of understanding was signed with the University of Jordan to introduce a new master's programme in governance for law students led by lecturers from JIACC.

Civil society and royal patronage organisations in Jordan are playing an important role in this regard. Since 2013, the Crown Prince Foundation has carried out an initiative targeting school students across governorates in Jordan with a focus on promoting ethical values among young people. From 2020 to 2023, grade 8 students have benefitted from this initiative, reaching a total of 61 035 students.

Source: Based on OECD questionnaires, interviews and information submitted by government counterparts.

The Jordan National Integrity Index (NII), an annual report by JIACC, is a prominent initiative in which young people have been involved. The NII has received high-level political support and aspires to be a flagship initiative in the country's anti-corruption agenda. It aims to measure the perceptions of public employees on integrity and prevention of corruption in ministries and other public bodies by analysing data collected through anonymised questionnaires, which can be disaggregated by age, gender, governorate, marital status and other variables.

Young people played a key role in collecting and monitoring data for the index. As part of a joint initiative with Rasheed for Integrity and Transparency (Transparency International - Jordan) and Al Hayat-Rased, two civil society organisations engaged in promoting more open and transparent governance,

approximately 40 individuals between the ages of 22-32 years were mobilised to collect data for the index among 101 public entities. An estimated 3 572 public servants were reached through this exercise. At the time of writing, the results of the Integrity Index are expected to be launched in 2024. To build on this effort and engage young people more systematically in anti-corruption efforts, JIACC might consider establishing a dedicated unit or team to facilitate outreach and engagement. Box 4.5 presents the example of the Youth Working Group, which is associated with the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform in Lebanon and supports the implementation of the country's national anti-corruption strategy.

#### **Box 4.5. The Youth Working Group supporting Lebanon's National Anti-Corruption Strategy**

Following the adoption of Lebanon's National Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2020, a working group of young people was established in 2022 to support its implementation.

The working group brings together students from different universities in Lebanon who received training from the United Nations Development Programme, supported jointly by Denmark and the European Union. The working group was placed under the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, which is in charge of following up on the implementation of the strategy.

The working group is mandated to contribute to national efforts aimed at preventing and combating corruption through:

- Communicating with all segments of young people in Lebanon and encouraging them to engage in efforts to follow up on the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy, preparing and implementing awareness-raising and educational activities for this purpose.
- Submitting proposals to the competent authorities in co-ordination with the Ministry of State for Administrative Reform, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to integrate the culture of integrity and anti-corruption topics into the programmes of educational institutions of various types.
- Preparing and implementing initiatives for communication and co-operation with all state departments regarding follow-up on strategy implementation.
- Supporting the creation and running of student integrity clubs at the Lebanese University and private universities and facilitating networking among them.

Source: Based on Lebanese Republic (2022<sup>[33]</sup>), "A team of young people to accompany the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy", <https://omsar.gov.lb/Media/News/%D9%A2%D9%A0%D9%A2%D9%A2>.

#### *Key insights from the Spotlights: Strengthening government accountability to young people*

The previous sections illustrate a number of common challenges for promoting accountability to young people in the context of Jordan's political, public sector and integrity agenda related to the availability of data, youth-responsive communication and engagement opportunities. The following section provides a synthesis of the challenges identified and points to good practices across MENA economies and OECD countries in selected areas to inspire further reform initiatives.

#### **Using more strategic and tailored public communication**

Existing efforts to strengthen young people's awareness, such as through discussions at universities and youth centres, have reached a limited number of young people so far. OECD interviews confirmed that further outreach activities are needed to target young people in more remote governorates.

Capacities across public institutions to inform and communicate in ways that are accessible and responsive to young people are uneven. Moreover, language and channels used to reach out to young people are not always targeted, which risks that this demographic might not be aware of important developments for their personal and professional lives (e.g. the elimination of the inventory system at the Civil Service Bureau) and new opportunities to engage in politics (e.g. the reduction of the minimum age required to run for a seat in parliament). There is recognition that the language used in public communication is often too technical and that further efforts to publish information in simple language and through both online and offline channels would be critical to reach a larger audience. So far, collaborating with young people and youth organisations, as well as schools and universities, in communicating with young people remains a largely untapped opportunity. To better tailor its public communication to young people, evidence on young people's media consumption habits, interests, motivations, values and perceptions could be collected to help prioritise the allocation of scarce resources. Moreover, most outreach efforts remain ad hoc and lack a long-term vision to transform instances of one-way communication into a more systematic and permanent dialogue with youth stakeholders.

The example of Ireland, presented in Box 4.6, illustrates how government departments, agencies and youth organisations can collaborate to gather data on young people's concerns and together design a youth-focused campaign responding to their priorities.

#### **Box 4.6. Ireland's #AntiViral campaign**

Ireland's Government Information Service, in collaboration with the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health, engaged with representatives from a range of youth organisations to better understand young people's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outreach to youth organisations aimed to ensure policymakers and communicators develop a better understanding of young people's concerns and to examine ways to communicate more effectively with them. The group met weekly, shared research findings and was directly involved in informing campaign briefs and giving feedback.

An example was the government's #AntiViral campaign, a social media campaign using channels such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, with content developed by young people for young people.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[34]</sup>), *OECD Report on Public Communication: The Global Context and the Way Forward*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/22f8031c-en>.

The use of "plain language" to simplify communication and make use of visual aids is also critical to gain the attention of young people in an increasingly competitive information environment. In the United States, for instance, a centre for plain language (Plain Language.Gov) was established to oversee the implementation of the Plain Writing Act, provide training and share good practices across the public sector to enhance the use of these techniques within their communication to citizens (OECD, 2021<sup>[34]</sup>).

The OECD guide *Engaging Young People in Open Government* provides further guidance to promote meaningful communication with young people (see Box 4.7). Moreover, the OECD working paper "Accessible and inclusive public communication: Panorama of practices from OECD countries" presents a range of practices and lessons learned about accessible and inclusive public communication in OECD member and partner countries, including public communication targeting young people (Cazenave and Bellantoni, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>).

#### Box 4.7. The OECD *Engaging Young People in Open Government: A Communication Guide*

The OECD guide *Engaging Young People in Open Government* supports governments in communicating effectively with young people to promote their participation in policymaking, drawing on research and case studies from across OECD member and partner countries.

The guide provides concrete steps for public communicators to understand the needs and perspectives of youth stakeholders, reach out to them and promote their participation in the design and delivery of policies and services. It underlines the importance of understanding and treating young people as equals rather than “citizens in training”. To reach young citizens effectively, it emphasises that digital technologies should be used strategically in tandem with traditional forms of engagement, such as youth councils.

Source: (OECD, 2018<sup>[36]</sup>), *Engaging Young People in Open Government: A Communication Guide*, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c27c93f1aef1d60b29781f9/t/64f3421b5a4db53e4759485c/1693663790536/Young-people-in-OG\\_compressed.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c27c93f1aef1d60b29781f9/t/64f3421b5a4db53e4759485c/1693663790536/Young-people-in-OG_compressed.pdf).

In the field of anti-corruption, public communication targeting young people is critical to build a whole-of-society culture of integrity (OECD, 2021<sup>[34]</sup>). For example, the government of Greece deployed a large-scale campaign to engage young people as champions in the country’s national anti-corruption agenda (see Box 4.8).

#### Box 4.8. Partnerships with YouTubers in Greece to engage youth in the fight against corruption

To increase awareness of corruption, generate community responsibility and encourage action to prevent corruption, the government of Greece launched a campaign targeting young people. The campaign engaged young people in a two-way dialogue and focused on opportunities for them to champion integrity rather than reiterating the existing discourse, which was primarily concerned with alerting citizens to the dangers of corruption. In this effort, the government partnered with young, popular YouTubers, whose platform was used to start a conversation with their followers on the cost of corruption and reflect on actions to contribute to the greater common good. Entitled “Be the change you want to see”, the storyline was based on the creators’ personal experiences of everyday corruption and bribery, which young people could relate to.

In total, the videos reached more than 888 000 views and 62 000 reactions and 78% of the viewers were between 13 and 34 years old. One of the videos also trended first on YouTube in Greece.

Source: Based on OECD (2019<sup>[37]</sup>), *Engaging Youth in the Fight against Corruption*, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bc512509-en/index.html?itemId=/content/paper/bc512509-en>.

### Systematically collect and use age-disaggregated evidence

Despite their significant impact on young people, none of the major reform initiatives underway in Jordan (i.e. political, public sector, integrity) appears to build on the systematic collection and use of age-disaggregated data. For instance, data on young people’s exposure to corruption and trends over time are absent.

At the same time, there is scope to draw lessons and further scale existing initiatives such as the NII. Similarly, to support the political and public sector reform agenda and address the specific challenges



faced by young people, investments into a more systematic collection of data disaggregated by age, sex, socio-economic background and other factors would be critical to inform policy priorities and effectively monitor and evaluate implementation progress. So far, perception-based surveys have been primarily conducted by research institutes and international stakeholders and their results do not always feed back into the decision-making process. Efforts to collect and leverage more granular data should be embedded in robust, integrated and consistent information systems to facilitate the integration of data from different datasets based on common standards, guidelines and templates.

Box 4.9 presents recent initiatives in Canada, France and Sweden, which could inspire new initiatives in Jordan to strengthen capabilities for the collection and use of age-disaggregated data as well as the use of survey and administrative data to gauge unmet needs among young people.

### **Box 4.9. Collecting age-disaggregated data in OECD countries**

#### **Canada: Disaggregated Data Action Plan**

Acknowledging the diverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on different demographic segments, the Canadian government has committed CAD 172 million over a span of 5 years to Statistics Canada. This financial support is intended to facilitate the execution of a Disaggregated Data Action Plan, aimed at promoting evidence-driven decision-making in key areas such as healthcare, quality of life, environmental issues, justice, business and the economy. This plan emphasises intergenerational equity concerns and the requirements of various population groups.

#### **France: DJEPVA Barometer**

To provide policymakers with data disaggregated by age, the Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions in France has been conducting surveys at the request of the Directorate of Youth, Popular Education and Community Life (*Direction de la jeunesse, de l'éducation populaire et de la vie associative*, DJEPVA) that focus on the living conditions and aspirations of people in France. In 2023, it released the most recent edition of the DJEPVA Barometer, a nationwide survey that involved 4 500 young individuals aged 18 to 30 to gauge their life satisfaction, state of mind, confidence about the future and civic engagement. For the first time, the sample was extended to include people aged 31 and over and minors aged 15 to 17 to allow for comparisons across age groups.

#### **Sweden: Age-disaggregated evidence to monitor and evaluate youth policy**

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the youth policy are achieved. As part of its ongoing effort to monitor and evaluate the youth policy, it continuously compiles and publishes available age-disaggregated data, which is linked to the indicators of the youth policy, on the *Ung Idag* (Young Today) website. It covers six key sectors of interest for young people: work and housing; economic and social vulnerability; physical and mental health; influence and representation; culture and leisure; and training.

Source: Based on OECD (2020<sup>[15]</sup>), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>; OECD (2022<sup>[38]</sup>), "Delivering for youth: How governments can put young people at the centre of the recovery", <https://doi.org/10.1787/92c9d060-en>.

### **Addressing structural challenges to systematically involve young people in policymaking**

Available evidence suggests that there is widespread support for increased youth inclusion in the political process but the preceding assessment demonstrates that young people had limited opportunities to shape the political reform agenda. Notably, 73.2% of university students surveyed by NAMA indicated that they



would vote for a political party that advocates for more youth inclusion in the political process (NAMA, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). However, only a small circle of young people was consulted in the context of the adoption of the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 and the Political Parties Law of 2022. No specific mechanism was set up to involve youth stakeholders in developing the Public Sector Roadmap and the National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Core to the challenges of involving young people more systematically in law- and policymaking in Jordan is the absence of structured opportunities. For instance, across 78% of OECD countries, independent national youth councils play an important advocacy role in amplifying young people's perspectives in public discourse and public consultation exercises (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>). Youth organisations across many OECD countries also benefit from financial contributions and technical support provided by the government. For example, in Costa Rica, each of the 82 cantons (similar to the concept of a governorate) has a youth committee that receives yearly funding from the National Young Person Council (*Consejo de la Persona Joven*). The funding is used to develop and implement activities and projects each committee formulates based on the priorities determined by its young members (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

Institutional structures such as (independent) national youth councils and youth advisory councils affiliated with specific ministries or public agencies can play a pivotal role in amplifying young people's voices in decision-making. As dedicated platforms to involve young people, they can mobilise resources, including human, financial and technical support, to cover associated costs like meeting venues and digital platform licenses.

Box 4.10 illustrates the examples of the Parliament for Youth in Luxembourg and youth councils in the Netherlands, Estonia and elsewhere, presenting different models established across OECD countries to establish a more structured dialogue with young people.

### **Box 4.10. Youth parliaments and youth councils across OECD countries**

#### **The Parliament for Youth in Luxembourg**

In Luxembourg, the Parliament for Youth is an assembly composed of young people and working for them. Every person aged 14-24 living in Luxembourg can be a member. A parliamentary session lasts from October to the following October. The Parliament for Youth is composed of commissions and an executive board. Since its creation, it has published resolutions on a variety of policy areas including waste management, European affairs and the quality of life. It also holds regular meetings with government officials. The youth parliament's main partners are the National Youth Council of Luxembourg (CGJL – *de Jugendrot*), the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth as well as the Chamber of Deputies.

#### **National and local youth councils across OECD countries**

As of 2019, 78% of OECD countries surveyed by the OECD report (2020<sup>[15]</sup>) have a national youth council and 88% indicate that local youth councils exist. A closer look at the youth councils reveals that considerable differences exist with regard to their institutional architecture and involvement in policymaking. For instance, in the Netherlands, the government recognises the Dutch National Youth Council as the main national partner in youth affairs in the country and involves it through thematic working groups. The Estonian National Youth Council participated in the elaboration of the country's long-term development strategy Estonia 2035. In some OECD countries, such as Finland, Luxembourg and Slovenia, the status and functions of national youth council are clarified in youth laws, including membership conditions and responsibilities, among others.

Source: OECD (2020<sup>[15]</sup>), *Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for All Generations?*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3e5cb8a-en>.

There is no equivalent to (an) independent national or local youth council(s) in Jordan. In the absence of clear guidelines and incentives, the extent to which young people are consulted or involved in decisions that affect their lives and future trajectories is at the discretion of each government entity.

The MoY has undertaken various efforts to make youth centres more attractive to young people; however, significant challenges remain in relation to resourcing, regaining young people's interest and transforming these centres into spaces to listen to the ideas, perspectives and (local) priorities from young people, which could, in turn, inform law- and policymaking. Besides creating or supporting institutional structures to involve young people, such as youth parliaments and youth councils, OECD countries have engaged youth organisations and young individuals in new and innovative formats, including through deliberative processes. Box 4.11 presents these examples, some of which could be piloted and, based on the learnings, adjusted to the local context in Jordan.

### **Box 4.11. Selected country examples of engaging young people and youth organisations in the policy cycle**

#### **Participation of youth organisations in planning COVID-19 recovery measures**

In Australia, Austria, Estonia, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic, youth organisations were prominently involved in public consultations to determine COVID-19 recovery measures. In Austria, each measure proposed by civil society organisations, including youth organisations, was displayed in a table that included a pillar on young people and future generations. In Australia, a list of youth organisations that provided feedback on the 2021-22 budget priorities is publicly available, and non-confidential submissions were accessible online. The government of Estonia consulted its National Youth Council to inform the country's COVID-19 response and recovery plan.

#### **Deliberative processes targeting young people**

The Barcelona Youth Forum was a representative, deliberative process that brought together 99 randomly selected people living in Barcelona aged 16-29. The forum deliberated about the needs of young people in the city and what the city council could do to address them. Following a 5-month period of deliberations, the forum issued 22 recommendations in December 2021. In February 2022, representatives from the Barcelona Youth Forum and city officials, including the mayor, met in the town hall to discuss ways to implement their proposals. From the 22 submitted recommendations, the city hall accepted 18 and published a response to confirm that 2 were already in progress and explain why 2 others had to be rejected. Additionally, a commission with representatives from the forum was established to follow up and monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

Sources: OECD (2022<sup>[12]</sup>), *OECD Recommendation on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People*, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0474> and OECD (2022<sup>[38]</sup>), "Delivering for youth: How governments can put young people at the centre of the recovery", <https://doi.org/10.1787/92c9d060-en>.

Beyond the challenges outlined above, OECD interviews also suggest that the government entities and independent institutions involved in Jordan's reform agenda do not always co-operate and co-ordinate their interventions. As many of the awareness-raising and engagement initiatives (targeting young people) are dependent on the availability of international donor funding, reportedly, institutions often compete rather than seek synergies and economies of scale. As a result, existing programmes and initiatives tend to remain fragmented and ad hoc, leaving too many young people underserved.

## Young people as agents to enhance accountability in public service delivery

Access to quality education, employment, health, transportation and other public services is critical for young people to find a job, live a healthy life and their overall well-being. This section will provide an overview of the opportunities and challenges that young people in Jordan face when reporting access barriers or poor quality of public services due to *wasta*, bribery and similar challenges.

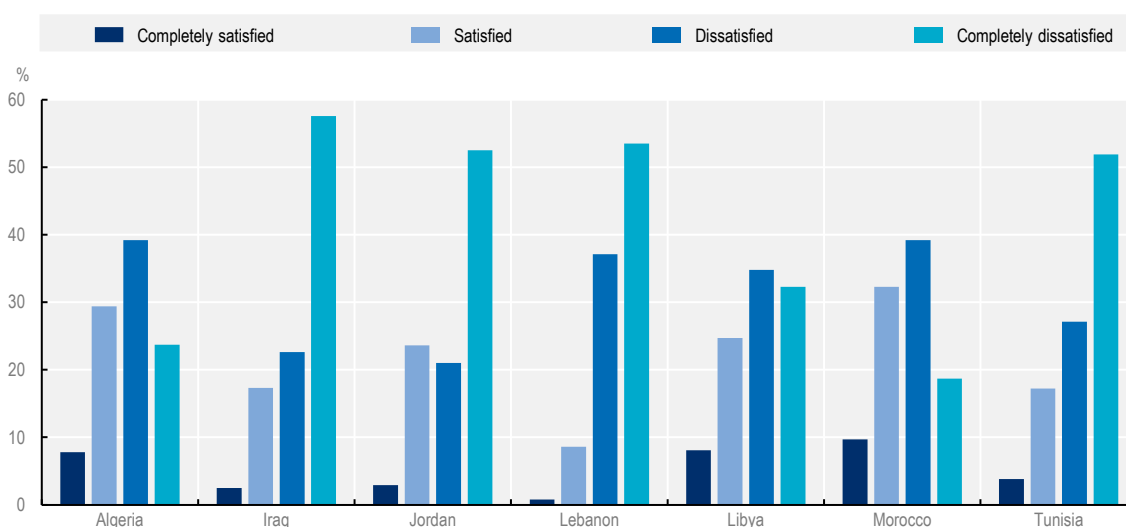
### *(Young people's) satisfaction with public service delivery*

The delivery of policies and services plays a vital role in shaping the interface between the state and its citizens. Poor standards of delivery can heighten inequalities and fuel public discontent in government institutions and public decision-making processes.

Since 2017, the role of citizens in defining priorities for local public service delivery underwent a profound transformation with the rollout of the decentralisation reform and the creation of the needs assessment process led by local and governorate councils. Nevertheless, findings from the OECD (2020<sup>[17]</sup>) reveal that access to public services across the governorates remains fragmented, with uneven levels of access and quality, in particular in governorates with a higher share of lower-income households and for communities of migrants and refugees (World Bank, n.d.<sup>[39]</sup>).

According to Arab Barometer data from 2021, 50.9% of young people (up to 29 years) are “satisfied” or “completely satisfied” with the governments’ performance overall, compared to 47.7% among 30-49 year-olds and 48.8% among the age group of 50 and over. In comparison to satisfaction levels among young people in 7 MENA countries, Jordan ranks 4<sup>th</sup> behind Morocco (65.5%), Libya (59%) and Algeria (51.6%). However, when it comes to young people’s satisfaction with the education system, satisfaction levels among young people drop to 26.5% in Jordan, again ranking 4<sup>th</sup> behind Morocco (42%), Algeria (37.2%) and Libya (32.8%) (see Figure 4.3). Satisfaction with the healthcare system is higher across all age groups in Jordan, including youth (56.6%), ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> in regional comparison behind Morocco (57.8%) (Arab Barometer, 2021<sup>[40]</sup>).

**Figure 4.3. Young people in Jordan express low satisfaction with the education system**



Note: “Young people” applies to survey respondents of up to 29 years of age.

Source: Arab Barometer (2021<sup>[40]</sup>), *Data Analysis Tool - Arab Barometer Wave VI*, <https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-analysis-tool/>.

### *Pathways through which young people encounter corruption*

Young people can be affected by corruption through different pathways. One way is through petty corruption, defined as an abuse of entrusted power by public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, for instance when the latter try to access basic goods or services. The practice of *wasta* is widespread in many economies in the MENA region. According to the Global Corruption Barometer (2019<sup>[41]</sup>), about one-third of the region's population in the MENA region has used personal connections to access basic services. When *wasta* is involved, individuals leverage family or social ties to expedite access to education, healthcare, employment and administrative procedures, such as the renewal of an identity card. As a result, the quality and speed of services being delivered are subject to the social standing of the connection rather than to objective criteria and regulations. In Jordan, *wasta* is an obstacle to fair public service delivery to young people and citizens at large (TIMEP, 2022<sup>[42]</sup>). Data from the Global Corruption Barometer (2019<sup>[41]</sup>) suggest that 25% of survey respondents in Jordan have used personal connections to access basic public services, such as education and healthcare, compared to 54% in Lebanon and 39% in the Palestinian Authority. Courts and public utilities, such as electricity and water services, were the sectors most concerned (Transparency International, 2019<sup>[41]</sup>).

In general terms, young people can also encounter nepotism, a form of favouritism, which is characterised by the exploitation of power by someone in an official position to provide a favour to a family member or friend engage with public institutions and public officials to access certain public services (Transparency International, 2024<sup>[43]</sup>). Indirectly, young people can also suffer from political corruption or the manipulation of policies, institutions and rules of procedures in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers (Transparency International, 2024<sup>[43]</sup>). Political corruption diverts public resources away from the centre of society and their intended use, such as improving education, employment, healthcare and social welfare outcomes (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>).

Indeed, when resources are siphoned off, the intended beneficiaries may face more expensive or unmet needs. Embezzlement of educational funds, bribery in admissions processes, and nepotism can also hinder equal opportunities, preventing deserving students from accessing educational resources and scholarships. Similarly, if employment opportunities are unfairly distributed based on personal connections rather than merit, it can limit professional growth and risk the career prospects of the younger population (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

### *Oversight and redress mechanisms*

Independent oversight and complaint redress mechanisms play a fundamental role in protecting and promoting the principles of accountability and integrity in public service delivery. For instance, JIACC has established several channels through which citizens can issue complaints, including a hotline service, website and social media, in addition to the possibility of submitting complaints in person. Despite important progress in establishing mechanisms for reporting instances of corruption, the OECD interviews revealed that existing complaint mechanisms to report abuse (overseen by JIACC), low quality (overseen by service providers) or lack of access to public services (overseen by line-ministries and service providers) exhibit shortcomings.

Currently, young people in Jordan are not always aware of and make use of the existing complaint mechanisms. Building on the existing feedback mechanisms (see Chapter 3), including the *Bekhidmatikum* ("At your service") platform handling complaints, inquiries and suggestions in regards to public procedures and services, further efforts could focus on expanding their availability and promoting uptake among young people (OECD, 2021<sup>[26]</sup>). For example, OECD interviewees underlined that the Ministry of Health developed a complaint mechanism, but those questions remained as to how it was used to inform public service reengineering or quality enhancement. MoPPA seeks feedback from young people via meetings with youth groups at universities, clubs, and centres, and engagement through the ministry's website and

its social media accounts. While these initiatives are welcome, OECD interviews suggest that further efforts are needed to increase awareness among young people and to build capacities and incentives among public officials to effectively follow up.

At the governorate level, different grassroots initiatives led by young people have emerged to report instances of corruption in service delivery. For instance, in the framework of the local policy development project (USAID/Al Hayat, 2023<sup>[44]</sup>), selected initiatives focused on monitoring public services and the work of local administrations (Al Hayat, 2023<sup>[45]</sup>). For example, with the objective of enhancing healthcare services in Madaba, young people used questionnaires to monitor service delivery and published a report with recommendations highlighting instances of corruption and *wasta* in the distribution of medicine. Initiatives implemented in Ajloun, Karak, Salt and Zarka mobilised young people to monitor education services, environmental impact and municipal work more broadly. Moreover, through the Nazaha project, JIACC and Rasheed for Integrity and Transparency are providing financial support to civil society organisations to use social media and digital tools to reinforce accountability at the community level in Al-Karak, Ein Al-Basha, Irbid, Ma'an, Madaba, Ramtha, Rseifeh, Sahaab, Salt and Zarqa. However, it appears that none of these initiatives has been translated into a formal programme with sustainable funding or embedded in the work of national or local authorities.

### *The digitalisation of public services*

To improve access, transparency and efficiency, the government of Jordan has undertaken efforts to gradually digitalise public services and expand communication with the public through online platforms. More than 40 e-services were adopted in ministries such as the those of Justice, of Industry and Trade, and of Social Development (BTI, 2022<sup>[46]</sup>) with the intention to streamline bureaucratic processes and improve oversight and recordkeeping, and minimise entry points for corruption. Moreover, to promote political accountability, plenary sessions of the parliament are now being livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook (BTI, 2022<sup>[46]</sup>).

While digitalising public services was widely seen by OECD interviewees as an effective way to curb entry points for corruption, not all households in Jordan have access to the Internet. The digital divide disproportionately affects households with less financial means. According to the Jordan Department of Statistics, 8.6% of households without Internet access refer to the cost of service and 6.2% point to the cost of equipment as the main reason (Department of Statistics, 2021<sup>[47]</sup>). The 2022 Inclusive Internet Index places Jordan 60<sup>th</sup> globally and 9<sup>th</sup> among MENA economies, underscoring that further efforts are needed to address the gap in access to digital technologies and digital literacy (see Figure 4.4).

As long as a digital divide persists, public services should be made available both online and offline and due consideration should be given to integrating relevant services in one place to reduce the complexity of access for young people. With this objective in mind, Portugal elaborated guidelines, an online platform and dedicated one-stop shops to facilitate young people's access to important services that support their transition to an autonomous life (see Box 4.12).

#### **Box 4.12. The ON@18 Guide to Public Services for young people in Portugal**

The government of Portugal developed the [ON@218 guidelines](#) to advise young people (17-23) on ways to access and benefit from public services. The guidelines have been accompanied by an online platform featuring “youth-friendly” language and relevant public services organised by “life events” to ease their uptake.

Co-ordinated by the Administrative Modernisation Agency (AMA), citizen shops, citizen spots and business spots have also been established offline to support the uptake of public services by (young) citizens and businesses. These one-stop shops gather in a single space the interfaces of relevant

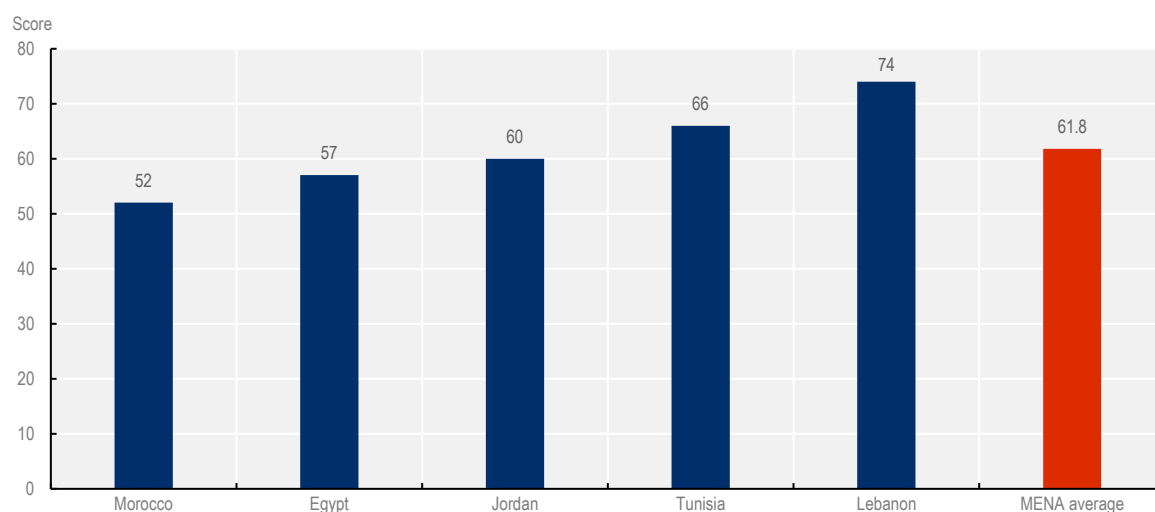
service suppliers as well as other public and private actors to share resources and minimise costs. They target especially groups that might find it more difficult to interact with the state for different reasons, including young people, the elderly, migrants and Roma communities.

- **Citizen shops** are physical spaces where public and private entities provide face-to-face support to citizens in the delivery of key services. There are currently 59 citizen shops concentrated in and around the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.
- **Citizen spots** are helpdesks delivering over 200 public services mediated by local public servants through a hybrid model that facilitates access to both onsite and digital services. At present, there are 710 citizen spots located in town halls and post offices.
- **Business spots**, similar to citizen spots, provide onsite support targeted to private sector actors. Large and small businesses can seek guidance across 31 available locations on matters related to legalising their activity, regularising their fiscal activity and to comply with other obligations with the state.

In addition, AMA has gradually introduced the use of mobile units to provide on-the-go support for harder-to-reach locations.

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[48]</sup>), *Civic Space Review of Portugal: Towards People-Centred, Rights-Based Public Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8241c5e3-en>.

**Figure 4.4. The 2022 Inclusive Internet Index in the MENA Region**



Note: The graph depicts the positioning in the ranking based on the index score

Source: Based on EIU (2022<sup>[49]</sup>), *Inclusive Internet Index 2022*, <https://impact.economist.com/projects/inclusive-internet-index/2022/country/Jordan>.

## Encouraging young people's political participation through improved transparency and integrity

Following the issuance of the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 and the Political Parties Law of 2022, this section will explore the opportunities for young people in Jordan to participate in political life, as well as barriers to encourage their participation in elections, run as candidates and perform

successfully in elected positions, in particular as they pertain to the integrity and accountability of the process.

### ***Historical context of political party activity***

The political reform in Jordan has been announced as an important process to foster young people's participation in public life and bring forth parliaments that are dominated by strong parties with policy agendas, which would ultimately form a government (TIMEP, 2022<sup>[50]</sup>).

However, political parties in Jordan are traditionally viewed as lacking broad support (Yom and Al-Khatib, 2022<sup>[51]</sup>). This is in large part due to the decades-long ban, which has had lingering effects on Jordan's present political participation. As part of a series of political reforms in the 1990s, political parties were legalised again in 1992.

Since 2001, various initiatives and committees have been implemented, reflecting ambitions at the highest political level to improve political party life. To this end, the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System was formed by King Abdullah II in 2021. The committee was divided into six subcommittees focusing on elections, parties, constitutional amendments, local administration, youth and women. It was tasked to recommend legislation which would create a political and legislative environment "conducive to the active engagement of youth and women in public life" (King Abdullah II, 2021<sup>[52]</sup>). Following several months of deliberation, the committee proposed a ten-year roadmap of gradual democratisation (Petra News, 2021<sup>[53]</sup>). From over two dozen proposals, the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives and the Political Parties Law were approved in 2022. Moreover, the Cabinet approved in March 2023 Bylaw No. 15 on the financial contribution system for supporting the political parties, which entitles licensed political parties to secure financial contributions, the amount of which is determined by the share of votes the party secures in electoral districts, the number of seats won, and the share of elected women, young people (25-35 years) and candidates with a disability (Article 4/A). The 2024 general elections in September were the first since the new laws and by-laws were adopted.

Already in 2015, responsibility for licensing and registering political parties was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to MoPPA, which is also mandated to empower young people and women in political life. In 2022, with the issuance of the new law, the mandate for licensing and registering political parties was transferred to the IEC. However, MoPPA continues to lead government efforts to raise awareness for political reform and its implications and to encourage the participation of all groups in society in political life.

OECD interviewees broadly welcomed the political reform but also cautioned that a gradual development was needed to "get used to political parties" and that large-scale awareness-raising programmes were needed to inform citizens, including young people, about the new conditions to engage in political life.

### ***Key changes introduced by the 2022 Law on the Election to the House of Representatives and Political Parties Law***

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>) stipulates that youth participation in civic and democratic processes should be promoted at all levels and that young people should be aware of and empowered to exercise their democratic rights (OECD, 2022<sup>[15]</sup>). In line with that ambition and driven by the objective to bring about "a qualitative leap in political and parliamentary life" (King Abdullah II, 2021<sup>[52]</sup>), the political reform in Jordan envisages to increase the political participation of young people and women through different mechanisms.

Key to the new laws is the objective to gradually increase over the next election cycles the allocation of seats to national party lists and reduce the number of independent members of parliament who, at present, hold a dominant position in the lower house (Yom and Al-Khatib, 2022<sup>[51]</sup>). According to Article 8/C of the



Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022, in the general electoral list 41 seats are allocated based on the closed list proportional system (...) to be formed by party lists in the 2024 elections. Article 71 stipulates that the proportion of seats allocated to parties and party alliances is no less than 50% of all seats when electing the twenty-first Parliament and no less than 65% of all seats when electing the twenty-second Parliament.<sup>9</sup>

To establish a political party, a minimum of 1 000 founding members is required, who must be residents of at least six governorates, provided that their number is not less than 30 people from each governorate. The percentage of young people between 18 and 35 years of age shall not be less than 20% of the number of founders. Moreover, the percentage of women should not be less than 20% of the number of founders according to Article 11.

Article 8/C in the 2022 Law on the Election of the House of Representatives stipulates that a young man or woman under the age of 35 years shall be among the first five candidates in the party list and that at least one woman shall be among the first three candidates as well as among the next three candidates. As of 24 September 2024, 38 political parties are registered with 36 878 out of 96 016 political party members (38%) aged below 35 years according to the IEC.

Moreover, on 18 June 2022, a bylaw regulating political party activities within universities came into effect to facilitate students' involvement in Jordan's "political and partisan future" (Jordan News, 2022<sup>[54]</sup>). The bylaw forbids the discrimination of students in higher education institutions based on their political views or engagement in political party-related activities on campus.

### ***Roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the political reform agenda***

As the government entity in charge of following up on the implementation of the political reform agenda, MoPPA prepared an action plan to define the roles and responsibilities across relevant ministries, including the ministries in charge of education, higher education, culture, youth and labour. The action plan was approved by the Cabinet and disseminated by the Prime Minister and an inter-ministerial committee was formed to facilitate co-ordination. According to MoPPA, it has also engaged with civil society organisations to gather public opinion and raise awareness. In January 2024, MoPPA developed a monitoring report to take stock of the implementation of recommendations issued by the Royal Committee (Government of Jordan, 2024<sup>[31]</sup>). MoPPA has further led programmes to raise awareness among young people for the 2022 laws through the Participation for All campaign, which kicked off in August 2023 (see Box 4.13).

#### **Box 4.13. The "Your Voice Your Future" campaign**

MoPPA initiated the "Your Voice Your Future" initiative, an awareness and educational campaign to enhance political inclusivity and encourage participation in the elections, focusing on increased engagement among young people, women and local communities. According to MoPPA, 50,000 participants were reached through theatre performances and 383 awareness and education activities across all governorates by October 2024. In collaboration with international and local partners, the ministry worked with the MoY to organise awareness sessions in youth centres and lectures in schools and universities. Additionally, awareness raising and educational videos were uploaded on its social media platforms, accumulating nearly two million views according to the ministry.

MoPPA has also distributed thousands of copies of the constitution, the 2022 Law on the Election to the House of Representatives and Political Parties Law as well as brochures on democracy and civic education. Future plans include a new programme to strengthen political parties' capacities.

Source: Based on replies to the OECD questionnaire and interviews.

Besides MoPPA, the MoE and the Ministry of Higher Education have played an important role in the political reform (see Box 4.14). The MoE was responsible for introducing changes in the curriculum to cover topics related to citizenship, democracy and integrity in grades nine, ten and eleven. It also oversees parliamentary student councils in schools, which provide an important space for developing young people's practical skills to participate in public life. According to the Ministry of Higher Education, changes to the curriculum also include new courses on political parties and elections, which are compulsory for all majors in public and private universities. Reportedly, the ministry also plans on introducing a bachelor's degree focused on young people's participation in political life and parties and establishing a platform for distinguished students to present positive role models, including in the political sphere. While further activities to raise awareness among university students for the changes in the bylaws are planned, the lack of dedicated funding was seen as a barrier to rolling out more activities. The IEC participated in both committees led by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education respectively.

#### **Box 4.14. Selected initiatives to promote young people's personal development and foster civic and citizenship literacy**

##### **School parliamentarian councils and student unions**

School parliamentarian councils exist for 5<sup>th</sup> graders and older since the 2010/11 academic year. These councils are elected every year by pupils to participate in the preparation and review of school development plans and facilitate communication between pupils and the school administration, as regulated by the instructions of the parliamentary councils in public and private schools (No. 8 for 2010). The councils can also conduct research and studies on issues of concern to the school and local community and propose solutions in co-operation with educational counsellors and civil society organisations, and they are involved in preparing initiatives to improve the educational process, school environment and the relationship with the local community. According to the MoE, through these councils, the ministry aims to prepare a generation of leaders who can assume responsibility, communicate effectively, address various situations, promote the spirit of belonging to their country, develop democratic practices and foster constructive dialogue and the values of tolerance and coexistence. According to JIACC, several awareness-raising lectures on national integrity standards and the importance of combatting corruption have been organised together with members from these councils.

##### **The National Programme Imprint**

Since 2017, the National Programme Imprint has been organised by the MoE in co-operation with IEC to promote active citizenship by promoting values of belonging to the country and loyalty to the Hashemite leadership as well as ethical principles and values. Through activities such as scouting, volunteering and participation in cultural, artistic and sports initiatives and community service, this programme supports students in showcasing their talents, developing new skills and engaging in dialogue, thus fostering a culture of tolerance. The initiative targets 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in public schools and has reached a total of 79 575 beneficiaries as of 2023 and another 8 800 students in primary education since.

##### **Programmes to improve classroom environments and problem-solving**

The MoE co-operated with the organisation Children Without Borders and the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) to implement a project to "Enhance the model of supportive educational activities in government schools". This programme was implemented in 27 schools distributed across 3 education directorates in the field. Events, activities and competitions were held in government

schools under the supervision of the activities management, such as creative competitions (short stories, articles, public speaking), school debates, etc.

### Educational counsellors in schools

As part of efforts to support young people in their transition to adult life, counsellors have been assigned to schools in Jordan. The role of an educational counsellor is to assist students in developing their personalities in all psychological, social, behavioural, professional and cognitive aspects to become active citizens contributing to their community. The number of counsellors amounts to approximately 2 600 across schools in Jordan.

Source: MoE (2011<sup>[55]</sup>), “Student parliamentary council elections in all schools in the Kingdom”, <https://www.moe.gov.jo/node/454>; replies to the OECD questionnaire and OECD interviews.

The IEC is implementing several initiatives for young people to acquire skills and experience for participating in the political discourse, including through the *Ana Usharek* programme (see Box 4.15). The IEC also runs the Electoral Justice Project and worked with the Judicial Council in 2020-22, training judges, lawyers and students at law schools on the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives and Political Parties Law of 2022. It foresees extending training to deputy governors, the police, intelligence and media to promote compliance and create an environment in which young people feel empowered to talk about politics.

### Box 4.15. The *Ana Usharek* programme

Meaning “I participate” in Arabic, *Ana Usharek* is a comprehensive civic engagement programme aimed at fostering young people’s active participation in democratic processes, covering issues such as national identity, citizenship, political participation and parties, electoral process, legislation, rule of law and democracy. It also features sessions on the 2022 Law on the Election to the House of Representatives and Political Parties Law of 2022 and the by-law regulating party activities in higher education institutions, hate speech, leadership, and climate change, among others.

Launched in 2011, and financially supported by USAID, this initiative targets university students and community members and focuses on equipping them with knowledge and skills to engage in civic life. It includes three stages: (i) “I participate” (covering: national identity and citizenship, political participation and democracy, electoral process, political parties, legislation and the rule of law, regulation of student party activities in higher education institutions, hate speech, leadership, climate change); (ii) “I participate +” (covering: community dialogue, research and needs identification skills, electoral systems, electoral law, parties law, parliament, local administration, fake news, leadership and climate change); and (iii) “I participate Fellowship” (covering: facilitation skills, advanced political parties research/solution papers, climate change, convince me competition for fellowship students). Programme participants go through each stage, with the final stage providing most opportunities to gain practical experience.

The programme is active across all governorates, covering all higher education facilities with offices on the ground in 40 locations. Between 2022-24, according to information provided by IEC in September 2024, more than 27 000 sessions were organised with the participation of more than 240 000 young people. Moreover, 440 sessions were organized at universities, such as dialogue sessions, practical exercises of the electoral process and sessions with the deanship of student affairs, the judiciary, mock trials, and awareness campaigns.

Following a five-year period (2018-23) in which the programme was co-led by the National Democratic Institute and the Crown Prince Foundation, it is since implemented by the IEC.

Source: Based on OECD questionnaire and interviews.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the political reform agenda, effective co-ordination and collaboration across government entities and with the IEC is crucial. OECD interviews suggest that there is significant scope to strengthen cross-sectoral co-ordination to promote coherence and coverage, especially in terms of conducting outreach and awareness-raising events. OECD interviewees also raised the need to identify more sophisticated performance indicators to effectively track the implementation of the MoPPA-led action plan, which, at present, lacks indicators and targets to measure outcomes.

### ***Changing Jordan's political culture and perception of (young) citizens***

Civil society organised interviewed by the OECD broadly welcomed the political reform and its objective of increasing the participation of women and young people in political life. Survey findings from 2023 show that a majority of 65% of respondents across all age groups are willing to vote for a political party advocating for enhanced inclusion of young people (IRI, 2023<sup>[10]</sup>). However, despite these encouraging developments, more needs to be done to change Jordan's political culture and the perception of (young) citizens in the country.

OECD interviews pointed to persistent challenges, notably gaps in awareness and compliance in relation to the 2022 laws. They also underscored that structural issues must be considered, such as the cost of participating in political life, the dominance of a tribal-based political culture and the lack of trust among young people in political institutions, notably political parties and the parliament. Concerns about the lack of awareness among young people are confirmed by a survey conducted in September and October 2022, which revealed that 79% of university students in Jordan had not been aware of the recommendations put forth by the Royal Committee to Modernize the Political System (NAMA, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). In addition, findings from another study suggest that 74% of Jordanians were unaware of the Royal Committee for Political System Reform, formed in 2021, and only 44% were optimistic about the committee's potential when the survey was conducted in mid-July 2021 (JCSS, 2021<sup>[56]</sup>).

Interviewees raised concerns about whether young people joining political parties for the first time were genuinely involved in decision-making and positions of influence or rather mobilised for the sake of fulfilling the new legal requirements. Opportunity and financial costs were regarded as significant barriers as political involvement remains a costly endeavour, especially for young people who are at a higher risk of being employed in informal work or seeking jobs. OECD interviewees also pointed to a lack of space for young people to practice democratic decision-making and acquire the skills and competencies needed to successfully perform their duties as elected officials.

Underlying many of the concerns raised by OECD interviewees is the persistent distrust among (young) citizens in political parties and the performance of the parliament. A (2022<sup>[59]</sup>) study conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies on political participation among university students found that more than three-quarters (78%) viewed the performance of political parties in Jordan as unsuccessful so far. Reasons for non-affiliation mentioned by respondents include disinterest in political parties (32%), lack of confidence in parties (25%), as well as wider concerns about possible repercussions. These findings are consistent with other survey findings from 2022, indicating that an important majority of the population in Jordan remained sceptical that further developing political parties could improve political reforms (IRI, 2023<sup>[57]</sup>).

To address high levels of distrust in political parties and parliament and strengthen young people's skills and competencies to engage in political life, various initiatives have been developed, led by government and non-governmental stakeholders (see Box 4.16).

### Box 4.16. Selected initiatives to foster young people's participation in political life in Jordan

#### The MoY Political Institute for Youth Leadership Development

The Political Institute for Youth Leadership Development is implemented by the MoY to promote young people's participation in public life and decision-making. The youth parliament and youth government projects aim to promote active citizenship, belonging and loyalty among young people, develop skills and competencies and raise awareness of their constitutional and legal rights and duties:

- The **Youth Parliament Project** consists of 40 young members, who gather in eight committees focused on legislation, laws and regulations. They regularly meet with relevant ministries to discuss relevant policy developments.
- The **Youth Government Project** consists of 50 young members, tasked to prepare proposals and solutions across 10 themes in the public sector and to explore ways of implementing them in partnership with relevant ministries and stakeholders from civil society, international institutions and the private sector.

Young people are selected based on a call for expression of interest, which is issued by the MoY, and a review of their curriculum vitae, a research paper and interviews. The programme spans one year and is currently being implemented for the third time. According to the MoY, it envisions expanding this initiative to the city level.

#### The Partisan Dialogue Platform

Rasheed for Integrity and Transparency (Transparency International - Jordan) together with the IEC, launched the Partisan Dialogue Platform in August 2024. The platform provides a tool allowing young people to compare their political orientations to political party programmes, provides a space for dialogue between young people and political party representatives, and allows civil society to present issues of concern to the attention of political party representatives.

#### The King Abdullah II Fund for Development's Parliamentary Fellowship Project

Based on an open call for applications, around 150 young people aged 20 to 30 are selected based on a 2-stage process (application, personal interviews) to assist members of the House of Representatives in their day-to-day work. Selected young people receive a salary of around JOD 250 (around EUR 315).

Support provided by the selected young people to members of parliament (MPs) includes research assistance, providing information on draft laws and other issues discussed by the parliament and its committees. The project seeks to build a generation of young people who are aware of the role of the parliament and its legislative and oversight role, create young leaders capable of bringing positive change, encourage youth participation in political life, and provide practical training to refine the skills set of young people, as well as to strengthen the performance of parliament in the present and future. All participants undergo theoretical training, followed by a 6-month practical experience. The trainings cover basic skills, such as giving presentations and strengthening communication skills, as well as knowledge about political life in Jordan, the concepts of democracy and research skills. According to the project website, the project has so far trained around 300 young men and women.

#### School of Politics implemented by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

The NIMD School of Politics Initiative targets politically active individuals aged 19-33, irrespective of their party affiliation. The competitive programme annually selects a limited number of young people, offering a comprehensive curriculum on constitutional aspects, political theory, public speaking and

more. Alumni have participated in discussions on the Royal Committee for Political Reform Agenda. The NIMD also envisages future work on a voter compass.

Source: Based on replies to the OECD questionnaire and OECD interviews; KAFD (n.d.<sup>[58]</sup>), *Projects*, <https://www.kafd.jo/Projectst.asp>.

Despite these notable initiatives to build young people's awareness, skills and competencies, OECD interviewees from the government institutions in charge of implementing the political reform expect that a couple of election cycles might be needed for citizens to understand and embrace the legal changes.

Interviewees further highlighted the need to better clarify the distribution of roles and responsibilities among key institutions, notably MoPPA and the IEC. According to interviews with civil society representatives, their presence across governorates was considered weak, suggesting that more efforts were needed to reach young people across the territory, including in more remote regions.

### ***Corruption as a barrier to young people's political participation***

Beyond the challenges discussed above, broader challenges impede young people from participating in political life in Jordan, some of which relate to the transparency, integrity and accountability of the political process. In the Transparency International 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index,<sup>10</sup> Jordan scores 47, a drop of 2 points from 2021, decreasing in 4 out of 8 categories that measure the government's ability to reduce corruption in various institutions, including bribery, nepotism, favouritism and the abuse of public funds and position by officials (Transparency International, 2022<sup>[59]</sup>).

According to OECD interviewees, these multifaceted challenges also impact young people's participation across various stages of the political process. The use of personal connections and influence in government and other appointments (e.g. candidacy) poses a challenge to fair and equal treatment, which may deter young people who typically have built less social capital than older people. The next sections will discuss how exposure to corruptive practices, such as *wasta*, nepotism, bribery and vote buying, create an uneven level playing field for young people in their role as voters, candidates running in elections and elected officials.

#### *Young people as voters*

In Jordan, overall turnout in the last parliamentary elections in 2024 remained low, with only 32% of eligible voters casting their ballots according to IEC, compared to 30% in 2020 and 36% in 2016 (Ma'ayeh and Sweis, 2021<sup>[60]</sup>). According to information provided by IEC, out of a total of 2 295 706 eligible voters below the age of 35 years, 715 811 (31.18%) casted their ballot, slightly below overall turnout.

Various factors impact young people's participation in elections, with interest in politics playing a crucial role. Notably, 52% of young people (18-29), compared to 46% among those aged 50 or more, reported being "very uninterested" in politics in 2018 in Jordan, only surpassed by Egypt in the MENA region (77% among young people) (Arab Barometer, 2018<sup>[61]</sup>). In comparison, an average of 24% of young people across OECD countries express no interest in politics (OECD, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>). Participation in elections may also be hampered by a lack of confidence in the ability of voting to influence political priorities and direction. A study conducted before the 2020 elections in Jordan found that almost 40% of surveyed young people reported that their tribal affiliation influences their voting behaviour (Ma'ayeh and Sweis, 2021<sup>[60]</sup>).

The study aligns with broader observations on the impact of tribalism on past electoral dynamics in Jordan. For example, the European Union Election Observation Mission in 2016 highlighted the influence of tribal alliances in shaping candidate lists (EU, 2016<sup>[62]</sup>).

While neither the IEC nor JIACC collect quantitative data on the exposure of young people to corruptive practices when voting, OECD interviews suggest that, when it occurs, it poses significant impediments to



their participation in political life. Young people may be discouraged from participating in elections due to concerns about the fairness of the process. Moreover, corruption, whether perceived or experienced, not only erodes trust in political institutions but also reinforces negative perceptions of political participation as a fraught and compromised endeavour.

Young people exposed to corruption during the elections are encouraged to report such instances to the IEC. Complaints on violations to the integrity of elections can be made via a call centre, which transfers relevant cases to a specialised committee for investigation, as well as via social media. The committee conducts investigations directly or may transfer the case to competent entities for further action. While the 2024 report is yet to be finalised, according to the 2020 report, there were 757 cases of election propaganda violations, 163 reported cases of vote buying (some of which were transferred to public security/prosecutor) and 40 reported violations of the instructions of the electoral headquarters (with headquarters being closed and transferred to the public prosecutor and the administrative governor as a result) (IEC, 2020<sup>[63]</sup>). The IEC also provides training to young people to promote awareness and compliance with the regulations, including through simulations.

JIACC is not involved in examining reports of corruption and undue influence during elections. However, it holds the power to investigate such cases in parliament and government with the possibility of lifting immunity and transferring cases to the responsible court. JIACC has also supported awareness-raising activities among young people in co-operation with the MoE and MoY, including through lectures at the MoY-hosted summer camps. JIACC indicated it plans to reach more young people outside Amman in co-operation with the MoY and youth centres. It has also partnered with the National Centre for Curriculum Development in the reform of the curriculum and setting up initiatives to raise awareness for integrity with specific programmes for pupils aged 14 and older and students aged 17-22. The Curriculum Administration within the MoE, in turn, plays a role in reviewing and editing educational material (i.e. textbooks, manuals, activities) produced. Reportedly, plans are underway to create integrity clubs for university students. JIACC also seeks to qualify teachers<sup>11</sup> through a dedicated platform and training material, which has reached 42 750 teachers as of late 2023.

Despite these notable efforts, feedback from the interviews with stakeholders from the subnational level suggests that the IEC and JIACC lack visibility and their impact across governorates is perceived as limited. At the same time, their role was seen as critical in raising awareness and building skills and competencies in the field of ethics and integrity among young people and fostering understanding and exercise of their civic rights.

### *Young people as candidates in elections*

The Political Parties Law of 2022 (Article 11/3) and the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 (Article 8) define young people as individuals aged 18-35.<sup>12</sup> According to IEC data from 24 September 2024, there are currently 38 registered political parties. Earlier data submitted suggests that most political parties have between 1 000 and 2 000 members and that only a few parties significantly exceeded the minimum requirement of 1 000 members as set by the Political Parties Law of 2022. For instance, as of June 2023, only 2 registered political parties had more than 5 000 members, whereas 24 parties had less than 2 000 members. As of 24 September 2024, a total of 36 878 political party members (or 38% of all party members) were below 35 years according to IEC, highlighting that data on political party membership and composition is updated on a daily basis and therefore subject to significant changes.

In the 2024 parliamentary elections, 220 candidates were aged below 35 years (78 female, 142 male) according to IEC, compared to 221 candidates (13.2% of total candidates) aged between 30 and 40 in the 2020 parliamentary elections and 725 candidates aged 25-40 years in the last subnational elections (IEC, 2023<sup>[64]</sup>). As discussed above, the still recent endorsement of the 2022 laws and the formation of new political parties raises questions about the maturity of political party programmes.



In a 2022 survey, 87% of university students in Jordan stated that they are “somewhat uninterested” or “very uninterested” in joining a political party and taking part in political life (NAMA, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Moreover, financial constraints pose significant challenges for young candidates aspiring to run for elected office. The registration fee of JOD 500 (around EUR 630) and refundable collateral of JOD 2 000 (around EUR 2 500) for each party list exclude an important share of young people running for office who cannot afford to register. Unlike politicians with business backgrounds, young people, especially women, lack the financial means to engage effectively in political campaigns.

While not unique to Jordan, ageism and other social norms persist because young candidates lack the experience and social networks to run successful campaigns (OECD, 2021<sup>[11]</sup>). According to OECD interviews, senior tribal leaders are often perceived as more promising due to their extensive network of social connections and influence to attract public services and resources to their community. In turn, opportunities for skills development and for attaining decision-making positions are frequently obstructed for young politicians due to societies’ preference for more experienced individuals in elected leadership roles. To set certain preconditions against the risk that new political parties form alongside tribal affiliations, the Political Parties Law of 2022 introduced a requirement that, to register, political parties would need to mobilise members from across at least six governorates.

While the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 was welcomed as a step in the right direction by OECD interviewees, they also expressed concerns about the possibility that women and young people within political parties might be instrumentalised to fulfil legal requirements (e.g. nomination in internal committees).

### *Young people as elected officials*

In the 2024 parliamentary elections, a total of 17 candidates aged 40 years and below (12%) successfully competed for one of the 138 seats in the House of Representatives according to the IEC (see Table 4.1). According to MoPPA, the ministry regularly monitors the performance of young MPs, for instance by recording the number of times elected officials ask questions in parliamentary sessions.

**Table 4.1. A snapshot of young elected officials in Jordan**

	National parliament (2024)	Governorate councils (2022)	Municipal councils (2022)
40-36 years	11	16	56
35-31 years	4	19	53
30 years or younger	2	18	42

Source: IEC (2023<sup>[64]</sup>), “Responses to the OECD questionnaire” and interviews.

The political reform agenda foresees that, supported by the 2022 laws, stronger political blocs and programmes will form and gradually decrease decision-making based on personal relationships and tit-for-tat arrangements. However, OECD interviews also suggest that societies’ perception of the (future) role of the parliament is yet to change as part of a broader change in Jordan’s political culture to align with this ambition.

Importantly, young MPs can act as role models for other young people aspiring for a political career and promote accountability by bridging the trust gap between young people, political parties and the parliament. For instance, the young MPs interviewed by the OECD frequently meet other young people to inform them about their political work. Some also report hosting in educational institutions, including public and private schools, to discuss issues around political participation and parliamentary decision-making.

Exposure to corruption presents a significant barrier for young elected officials, impacting their effectiveness in various ways. Insights from OECD focus group discussions organised with young MPs and elected officials at the subnational level in November 2023 reveal that the lack of trust in the election process stands out as a major challenge. This lack of confidence not only diminishes the participation of young people in political life but also hampers public engagement in the political process. Although the role of the IEC in addressing this challenge was acknowledged, more efforts were considered important, especially at the governorate level, to sensitive young people for detecting and countering corruptive practices.

Furthermore, the issue of corruption, particularly associated with “black money”, was cited as a concern in OECD interviews and continuous work to promote ethical standards and provide guidance was needed. As elected officials, (young) MPs receive a code of conduct and a commission exists within the parliament that is in charge of the guidelines to promote ethical behaviour and integrity. Moreover, JIACC has investigated cases in parliament and government and can lift MPs’ immunity to transfer the case to the relevant court. However, young MPs had diverging views on whether these measures were sufficient and effective. While some expressed a clear understanding of the objectives and content of the code of conduct, others suggested that more training was needed to disseminate and practice ethical guidelines.

## Policy recommendations

Against the background of Jordan’s ambitious reform agenda, this chapter has identified opportunities and barriers for young people to actively shape it, thus reinforcing public sector integrity and accountability. Despite the significant impact of the reform package on young people’s lives, it finds that young people continue to face several structural barriers to making their perspectives heard in policymaking. Likewise, while notable initiatives exist to mobilise young people to monitor public service delivery, they tend to suffer from the lack of sustainable funding. Challenges also persist as regards the participation of young people in political life, some of which concern the integrity and accountability of the process.

To address these challenges, the box below lists a number of priorities for different Jordanian stakeholders in line with the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (2022<sup>[12]</sup>).

## Policy recommendations

### **Consult and engage young people systematically on decisions affecting their lives across all relevant areas of policymaking and public service delivery**

Ministries, subnational authorities and independent institutions (e.g. JIACC) should gradually remove barriers to the participation of young people and youth stakeholders in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies, strategies and programmes, including in the context of the political and public sector reform agenda and in support of initiatives aimed to reinforce public sector integrity.

- **Create an enabling environment for youth to act as partners in policymaking and hold government accountable** by protecting civic space for young people and youth stakeholders and upholding their civil and political rights.
- **Promote the meaningful and systematic participation of young people in all relevant areas of policymaking**, including in Jordan’s national integrity agenda, by harnessing digital technologies, applying a clear and unified methodology, and building skills and competencies among public officials and youth stakeholders, and allocating adequate resources and tools, in

line with the objective of Jordan's 5<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership (Commitment 4).

- **Provide opportunities for youth stakeholders to engage in structured and meaningful dialogue with decision-makers at the national and subnational levels**, for instance through the creation of (an) independent youth umbrella organisation(s).
- **Scale up local youth-led initiatives to monitor the performance and integrity of public service delivery** by strengthening capacities to collect, manage, use and share data, provide sustainable funding and reinforce feedback and redress mechanisms to enhance impact.
- **Issue public communication across all ministries and independent institutions that is responsive to young people's media habits and preferences**, employing tailored messages, tools and channels, for instance in co-operation with youth stakeholders.
- **Strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between MoPPA, the IEC, the MoY, JIACC and the MoE and Ministry of Higher Education** in rolling out awareness and capacity-building programmes to inform, consult and engage young people in Jordan's political, public sector and integrity reform in partnership with education and training institutes and young people's social networks (e.g. families, peer-to-peer approaches).
- **Create effective systems for the collection, use and sharing of data disaggregated by age** to inform priorities in the implementation of Jordan's political, public sector and integrity reform.

**Promote the participation of young people in political life and their representation in positions of political influence in line with the objectives of Jordan's political reform agenda.**

Ministries, subnational authorities and independent institutions (e.g. IEC) should systematically raise awareness among young people for the Law on the Election to the House of Representatives of 2022 and Political Parties Law of 2022 and facilitate young people's participation in political life as voters, candidates and elected officials, including by safeguarding the integrity of all relevant processes.

- **Roll out systematic formal and non-formal programmes to increase young people's interest in politics, voter turnout, civics and citizenship more broadly.**
- **Address financial constraints ("cost of politics") and other barriers for young candidates** to run campaigns, among others, by developing young candidates' skills and competencies in developing political (party) campaigns and programmes and promoting initiatives to address ageism and other restrictive social norms.
- **Support young elected officials to perform their duties and act as role models** for other young people aspiring to pursue a political career, for instance by promoting their skills and professional development, and issuing clear guidance and support to promote ethical behaviour.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Creating Better Opportunities for Young People (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>), “youth” refers to a period of transition from childhood into adulthood, which is characterised by significant changes in young people’s lives and the consolidation of their autonomy. According to this definition, “young people” are considered individuals aged 15 to 29 to allow for comparison of outcomes across countries and facilitate standardisation of data collection by age group. However, this range can vary depending on the topics and indicators.

<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2004<sup>[65]</sup>) the term “corrupt behaviour” includes bribes, mis use of resources, embezzlement, trading in influence, abuse of functions, illicit enrichment, money laundering, concealment and obstruction of justice. In turn, public integrity is defined

by the OECD as the “consistent alignment of, and adherence to, shared ethical values, principles and norms for upholding and prioritising the public interest over private interests in the public sector” (2017<sup>[13]</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> *Wasta* is understood as using personal connections for obtaining an advantage of gain, for instance in the access to public services.

<sup>4</sup> Civic Space is defined by the OECD as “the set of legal, policy, institutional and practical conditions necessary for non-governmental actors to access information, speak, associate, organise and participate in public life” (2022<sup>[25]</sup>).

<sup>5</sup> Public communication is defined by the OECD as “any communication activity or initiative led by public institutions for the public good. It is different from political communication, which is linked to the political debate, to elections or individual political figures and parties. Public communication activities can include the provision of information, as well as consultation and dialogue with stakeholders” (2021<sup>[34]</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> The CoG refers to “the administrative structure that serves the executive (president or prime minister, and the cabinet collectively)”. The CoG includes entities referred to in various countries as: the Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Privy Council Office, Office of the President, Executive Office, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Audience insights are defined by the OECD as “the conducting of research into audiences to gain a deeper understanding of their motivations, impeding factors, fears or barriers, as well as their understanding of the subject to be communicated and their media consumption habits” (2021<sup>[34]</sup>).

<sup>8</sup> Ministries that were represented in the Royal Committee include: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Government Communication, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Endowments, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, Jordan Olympic Committee, Jordanian National Commission for Women (Government of Jordan, 2024<sup>[31]</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> As per the law, 65% is the minimum share of seats that parties can eventually reach in the House of Representatives, but government counterparts pointed that it is expected that the percentage will be higher, especially with parties winning seats in local districts.

<sup>10</sup> Each country’s score on the Transparency International index is a combination of at least 3 data sources drawn from 13 different corruption surveys and assessments. These data sources are collected by a variety of reputable institutions, including the World Bank and the World Economic Forum.

<sup>11</sup> The following training courses are held to enhance integrity: Initiated in 2022, the national integrity standards compliance course is given to teachers and administrators to be one of the mandatory conditions. The new course targets new teachers who have been appointed by the Ministry of Education. As part of the course to date, professional ethics has been a core area of focus. An awareness workshop was given to all employees of the MoE’s centre, and a workshop on a code of professional conduct and public service ethics in 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Articles 11(3) and 8 respectively.

# **5**

## **Promoting accountability for gender equality policy and outcomes in Jordan**

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This chapter assesses the structures and mechanisms that underpin public sector accountability concerning gender equality policy and outcomes in Jordan. Robust and comprehensive accountability and oversight systems are pivotal in advancing gender equality objectives. They help identify the needs and challenges of attaining specific gender-related goals, thus facilitating implementation, monitoring and progress reporting. They also offer redress and recourse options for victims of gender-based discrimination where needed. Following an examination of institutional responsibilities and existing practices that foster accountability in Jordan, the chapter puts forth a set of action-oriented recommendations in this regard.

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## Introduction

As illustrated in previous chapters, following the strong commitment expressed by King Abdullah II, the government of Jordan has over the past two decades undertaken a number of institutional reforms to improve public sector accountability as a key driver of economic prosperity. In line with these efforts, the National Strategy for Women in Jordan 2020-25 (NSW 2020-25), the country's strategic framework for promoting gender equality, raises the importance of promoting sound accountability mechanisms for gender equality policy. Indeed, building “an institutional framework to enhance accountability in formal institutions, alongside participatory gender-responsive mechanisms” is included as a key output of one of the *strategy's* four main goals (JNCW, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Likewise, aiming at fostering the integration of gender equality considerations into policymaking, the Gender Mainstreaming Policy adopted in 2020 underscores accountability as one of its main principles, emphasising the importance of “taking responsibility for actions and acknowledging the consequences of decisions made in the pursuit of gender equality” (JNCW, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>).

Better policy outcomes for all men and women are more likely to be achieved if robust accountability mechanisms are in place and underpin government action (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). As outlined in the 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life, countries should seek to strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives across and within government bodies (OECD, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>), as they play a key role in ensuring implementation, monitoring progress and promoting transparency. When paired with transparency mechanisms that enhance access to information and awareness of gender inequalities and diverse societal needs, accountability arrangements can play a key role in supporting the fulfilment of gender equality goals. They facilitate the implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming policies and strategies while promoting monitoring and reporting on progress achieved and remaining gaps.

For the purposes of this chapter, accountability refers to the responsibility and duty of government, public bodies, public officials and decision-makers to provide transparent information and answer for their actions and performance with respect to the advancement of gender equality to the public, stakeholders and other governing bodies. With robust public sector accountability mechanisms in place, citizens and other stakeholders are informed on what public institutions do and how they perform (OECD, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>). This empowers them with the right and responsibility to scrutinise government action and reward or sanction performance through electoral, institutional, administrative and social channels.

Based on the commitment of the NSW 2020-25 to enhance institutional accountability for gender equality, this chapter assesses the existing frameworks and governance arrangements for public sector accountability and their potential to support gender equality policy and improve gender policy outcomes in Jordan. It explores various dimensions of accountability within government and encompasses senior managerial responsibility in public administration, parliamentary oversight, independent institutions and citizen participation. By proposing a way forward to strengthen accountability mechanisms for gender equality, the chapter aims to contribute to increasing the effectiveness of government action in Jordan in the area of gender equality.

## A series of strategic and policy frameworks guide Jordan's gender equality efforts while promoting accountability for progress in related areas

In recent years, the government of Jordan has worked to develop strategic and policy frameworks underpinning the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming. These serve as guiding documents to set the direction for the country's gender equality agenda and establish a foundation for accountability in that area. Relevant frameworks are briefly illustrated below.

### ***Three paths of modernisation and reform aim to ensure women's contributions to the economy, public administration and the political sphere***

Developed between 2021 and 2022, the Economic Modernisation Vision (EMV), the Public Sector Modernisation Roadmap and the Political System Modernisation Plan are the main whole-of-government strategic documents that set renewed objectives to boost economic growth and raise citizens' living standards, modernise the public sector and promote greater participation of society in politics in Jordan. All three documents focus on the empowerment of women in Jordan to ensure they play a key role in the economy, public administration and the political sphere (Government of Jordan, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>; 2022<sup>[7]</sup>). Notably, to prepare and implement the executive programme for EMV for 2023-25, 22 sectoral teams have been established in 2022 (MoPIC, n.d.<sup>[8]</sup>), including one dedicated to women's empowerment chaired by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment (IMC). The team has been responsible for developing the executive programme, conducting studies for the proposed initiatives within the vision, identifying priority initiatives and aligning them with the timeline of the executive programme itself.

### ***The Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV details objectives and initiatives to foster women's economic participation in Jordan***

Launched in April 2022, the IMC prepared the Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV in partnership with relevant institutions and bodies to reflect Jordan's commitment to equality, fairness, respect for human rights and eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination. The strategy aims to enhance women's participation in the labour market, increase their participation in economic decision-making and mainstream gender equality issues into the work of public and private sectors (The Jordan Times, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>).

In particular, the strategy sets some main objectives related to women and young women:

- Doubling the share of female participation in the labour market from 14% to 28% in 2033, which would help provide more than 280 000 job opportunities for women.
- Achieving a qualitative leap in Jordan's ranking in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index and the World Bank Women, Business and the Law Index, as well as developing a national index to monitor and track women's economic participation.

As stated in the strategy, these objectives will be achieved through a series of initiatives, including rapid advancements in legal protection and legislative amendments, particularly focusing on regulations and instructions. In addition, the strategy foresees the adoption of a national composite index of women's economic participation, taking into account women with disabilities and implementing the seal of gender equality. It also introduces the Women's Online Store initiative, a plan promoting women-led online entrepreneurial projects. This encompasses obtaining an application, designing a store and integrating online businesses with electronic payment methods and delivery applications. Furthermore, the strategy aims to transition working women from the informal economy to formal sectors through incentives, such as subsidising a portion of Social Security contributions for a specified period.

The strategy sheds light on the existing obstacles that prevent women's economic participation in Jordan, which include societal expectations regarding women's roles, employer reluctance to hire women due to stereotypes, gender wage disparities among those with bachelor's degrees and above, and the lack of affordable kindergartens and safe public transportation. The strategy also identifies the most promising sectors for increasing women's economic participation, such as leadership and creativity sectors, education, high-value industries like manufacturing and logistics, and future services such as healthcare, social services, trade, as well as financial services, communications, information technology, scientific and technical professional activities.

In doing so, the strategy includes women's empowerment enablers in the EMV, such as robust legislative frameworks, digital inclusion, financial inclusion, creating a supportive work environment, fostering a culture of positive representation of women in leadership positions and investing in education, training, skills development and knowledge generation.

***The National Strategy for Women in Jordan 2020-25 and its Action Plan 2023-25 are the country's main strategic framework to promote gender equality***

Developed by the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) under the directives of the prime ministry and the supervision of the IMC with a participatory approach, the National Strategy for Women in Jordan 2020-25 (NSW 2020-25) is the country's standalone strategic framework for the promotion of gender equality and the key reference document for improving the economic, social and political rights of women (JNCW, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Approved in March 2020, the NSW 2020-25 builds around four strategic goals:

- **Women and girls are able to exercise their economic, political and human rights and freely lead and participate in a society free of gender-based discrimination.** This goal encompasses three key outcomes: i) ensuring equal opportunities for women in leadership positions, fostering economic independence and decision-making freedom; ii) guaranteeing women access to infrastructure and essential services tailored to their specific needs, including humanitarian assistance, and enabling their contribution to and enjoyment of security; and iii) facilitating women's access to justice, promoting equality and equity within society and families, recognising the family as the cornerstone of society.
- **Women and girls enjoy a life free from all forms of gender-based violence.** This goal focuses on implementing mechanisms for preventing, protecting against and responding to gender-based violence across private, public and digital sectors and spaces through a series of targeted interventions and initiatives.
- **Positive gender norms, attitudes and social roles support gender equality and women's empowerment.** This goal aims to reinforce positive gender norms and roles and mainstream them in formal and informal education, as well as in the media, religious narrative and society.
- **Institutions are executing and sustaining policies, structures and services that support gender equality and women's empowerment in alignment with Jordan's national and international commitments.** This strategic goal comprises one key output related to having institutions in place that have the capacity to develop and sustain policies, structures and services that support gender justice, gender equality and women's empowerment. This output also addresses developing and facilitating access to gender statistics and data to support decision-making processes, advocacy and accountability on gender equality.

In March 2023, to foster the implementation of the strategy, the government adopted the NSW Action Plan 2023-25, aligned with the EMV, which includes a wide number of initiatives and projects and specifies implementing entities and partners, as well as the indicative resources needed to carry them out (JNCW, 2023<sup>[10]</sup>).

***The Fifth National Action Plan under the Open Government includes initiatives on gender equality and mainstreaming as a means to ensure transparency and accountability***

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary multilateral initiative gathering government leaders and civil society organisations (CSOs) with the aim of securing concrete commitments to promoting transparency and access to information, fostering inclusion and citizen participation in policy and decision-making, fighting corruption, strengthening accountability and leveraging new technologies for good governance (OGP, n.d.<sup>[11]</sup>). In the spirit of multi-stakeholder collaboration, the OGP is overseen by a

steering committee that includes government and CSO representatives. Jordan joined the initiative in 2011 and, since then, has adopted five national action plans aiming at increasing transparency, accountability and reinforcing governance. Among its commitments, the Fifth National Action Plan, launched in December 2021 and extending until 2025, encompasses initiatives focused on gender equality and mainstreaming in the public sector. Notably, Commitment no. 3 outlines plans and activities for developing and implementing gender mainstreaming policies across line ministries and governmental directorates (Government of Jordan, 2021<sup>[12]</sup>). This signals a key step towards improving gender equality and mainstreaming within Jordan's public sector.

### ***The Gender Mainstreaming Policy promotes the integration of gender equality perspectives into policy and decision-making processes in Jordan***

Developed by the JNCW and adopted in 2020, the Gender Mainstreaming Policy affirms Jordan's commitment to addressing gender inequalities in the political, social and economic spheres by combining targeted policy initiatives with the integration of gender equality considerations into the policy and decision-making process in order to take into account the different responsibilities, circumstances and conditions of women and men (JNCW, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>). The policy outlines four priority areas:

- Enhancing institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming.
- Promoting gender-responsive planning and legislation at the national and sectoral levels.
- Increasing women's representation in government decision-making positions.
- Expanding the volume of national resources for targeted and gender mainstreaming initiatives.

### ***The Jordanian Second National Plan 2022-25 for activating UNSCR 1325 supports women's participation in conflict prevention, peace building, stability and security***

Developed by the JNCW and approved by the Council of Ministers in July 2023, the Jordanian National Action Plan (2022-25) (JONAP II) for advancing the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) Resolution 1325 aims to integrate a gender-based approach towards women's participation in prevention and protection processes during conflicts, as well as in peace building and maintaining stability and sustainable security (UN Women Jordan, n.d.<sup>[13]</sup>). Parallel to these efforts, JONAP II specifically responds to the 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242, which highlights the importance of co-operation with civil society and the role of women as key partners in preventing and combating violent extremism. It also reiterates the importance of engaging men and boys as partners in promoting women's participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts (UN Women Jordan, n.d.<sup>[13]</sup>). The plan follows the adoption of Jordan's first-ever JONAP in 2018, which covered the 2018-21 period. Compared with the first JONAP, the new action plan also includes initiatives related to the environment and climate change, and actions aimed at enhancing women's access to decision-making positions in the diplomatic corps and justice sector.

### **The institutional framework for gender equality and mainstreaming has been recently strengthened, defining roles and responsibilities across government and promoting accountability**

Effective accountability requires a robust institutional framework allocating clear mandates and responsibilities across ministerial portfolios and different levels of government, as well as independent oversight mechanisms (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). Over the last years, Jordan has made efforts to strengthen its institutional architecture to promote the gender equality agenda at the national level. The following



subsections briefly outline the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions, which in turn define the parameters for assessing Jordan's existing accountability structures in this chapter.

***The centre of government provides leadership to the gender equality agenda, contributes to strategic and policy frameworks and fosters gender-responsive budgeting approaches***

Achieving gender equality is a multifaceted exercise that spans various dimensions and cuts across different areas, thus requiring the active engagement and support of all government actors. Within OECD countries, the centre of government (CoG) – which serves as the support structure for the highest level of the executive branch, including presidents, prime ministers and their equivalents – holds a unique position, as it has the capacity to secure this broad-based support throughout the government. With its capabilities for bringing together and directing policy priorities, the CoG assumes a crucial role in the governance of gender equality. The composition of the CoG varies from country to country depending, for example, on the constitutional order, the political system, the country's administrative structure and contextual and historical actors (OECD, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>). In Jordan, the CoG comprises the Cabinet, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), the General Budget Department and the Ministry of Finance.

The Cabinet of Jordan provides leadership to the country's economic, political and public sector modernisation agenda, including efforts to foster women's empowerment in those related fields. MoPIC participates in formulating general economic and social policy and supports developing programmes and plans for its implementation. Established in 2005 as the first government-level unit for gender equality and women's empowerment, the Division on Gender Policies and Women's Empowerment within MoPIC's Directorate of National Policy Planning participates in defining development goals, policies and indicators on gender equality in co-operation with the JNCW and gender focal points in relevant ministries. The division, currently comprised of two employees, is also responsible for co-ordinating with other national bodies on gender equality and women's empowerment and contributing to studies and surveys on women and other gender-related topics.

The General Budget Department is responsible for preparing the annual General Budget Law and proposing allocations aligned with the government's policy directions and priorities. Aiming to enhance women's rights and empowerment through gender-responsive government planning, programming and budgeting, the General Budget Department ensures that every ministry includes budget allocations for women and children to cover activities within their policy areas of responsibility. As such, together with the Ministry of Finance, it plays a central role in driving forward gender-responsive budgeting approaches. This aligns with the country's efforts initiated in 2013 with the issuance of Official Circular no. 16 by the Ministry of Finance, stating "The ministry, department or unit must also take into consideration gender and child issues as identifying its indicators. In addition, number of employees by gender and distribution by programme should be specified, with presenting each programme's objectives, main services and divisions responsible for implementing those programmes" (General Budget Department, 2013<sup>[14]</sup>).

***The Jordanian National Commission for Women fulfils the role of the main co-ordinating body for the gender equality policy in the country***

The JNCW fulfils the role of the main co-ordinating body for gender equality policy in the country, which is responsible for advancing the status of women in Jordan and enhancing their participation in achieving sustainable development. Established by Council of Ministers decision in 1992, the JNCW is a semi-governmental body mandated to mainstream women's considerations and priorities into national strategies, policies, plans, laws and budgets to ensure gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination (JNCW, n.d.<sup>[15]</sup>). In addition, it monitors instances of discrimination against women and tracks progress in realising equality and equal opportunities. Moreover, it advocates for various women's issues and raises awareness about women's pivotal role in society by producing studies and guidelines on

particular topics. The JNCW board, chaired by HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal, is made up of 18 members from relevant ministries, national councils and institutions, and civil society (JNCW, n.d.<sup>[15]</sup>). A secretariat in the capital city Amman hosted by the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development, the country's largest non-governmental organisation, supports the commission in its work.

***Various institutional mechanisms foster gender policy co-ordination across government, establishing implementation responsibilities and encouraging accountability***

In Jordan, line ministries and other public institutions are responsible for contributing to the implementation of the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan, as well as the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and other policies and strategies in relevant areas. Gender equality and women's empowerment units and divisions have been established in some key line ministries to promote the integration of gender equality considerations in their activities and policy areas of responsibility. The units/divisions, which vary in size and positioning across ministries, comprise a network co-ordinated by the JNCW. For example, the Ministry of Youth has incorporated the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment in the executive plan (2023-25) for the National Youth Strategy. It has established a women's empowerment department to promote gender mainstreaming and women's representation in leadership positions in the institution, as well as their participation in various committees. Likewise, the Ministry of Labour is currently developing a policy for gender equality and women's empowerment and an executive plan providing a comprehensive institutional framework for various initiatives to promote gender equality and women's empowerment within the ministry's scope.

Moreover, since 2015, the IMC has facilitated horizontal co-ordination in government on gender equality and women's empowerment actions, in accordance with the goals set out in Jordan's development plans and strategies, such as the EMV (see previous section). Notably, the IMC, which works at the ministerial level, supports initiatives that enhance women's economic and political participation and ensures the adoption of plans, policies and programmes to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, thereby encouraging accountability.

***The Department of Statistics is Jordan's main data-collecting and producing body, ensuring the collection and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and indicators***

Established under General Statistics Law No. 24 of 1950 and currently governed by General Statistics Law No. 12 of 2012, the Department of Statistics produces, analyses, and disseminates data, including gender-disaggregated statistics. A specific Gender Division within the department also prepares gender indicators using data collected through surveys, censuses and administrative records.

***The Service and Public Administration Commission and the Institute of Public Administration manage and train public sector employees while promoting equal opportunities***

The Service and Public Administration Commission (previously named Civil Service Bureau) is a central government body reporting to the prime minister and responsible for managing public sector employees. In doing so, the commission promotes equality and equal opportunities as some of the key principles and values of the Jordanian civil service (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[16]</sup>). Complementing the role of the commission, the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) is a governmental institution specialising in training, capacity building, studies, research and consultations in various fields of public administration (IPA, n.d.<sup>[17]</sup>). In co-operation with the JNCW, the IPA is reportedly working to include gender equality considerations in its training offer to ensure the capacity of the Jordanian public administration to integrate gender equality aspects into the planning and policymaking process.

***The Parliament of Jordan contributes to advancing the gender equality agenda through its legislative and oversight functions***

At the legislative level, the Women and Family Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives and the Woman Committee in the Senate are responsible for reviewing legislation on women, families and children and overseeing policies, plans and programmes for women's social, cultural, economic and political empowerment.

***The National Center for Human Rights and the Government Coordinator for Human Rights provide oversight and co-ordination on human rights, including women's***

The National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) is the main oversight body in Jordan, protecting and promoting the principles of human rights and public freedoms, including women's rights. It is a national public benefit institution with financial and administrative independence and legal personality. In particular, the NCHR monitors the status of human rights in the country, provides advice and legal assistance, reviews legislation, prepares reports and takes the necessary administrative and legal measures to address complaints related to violations and abuses. The Government Coordinator for Human Rights (and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's Office – is an executive body that, among other functions, co-ordinates with line ministries, departments and other relevant authorities on human rights issues. It also has a role in implementing and monitoring the Comprehensive National Plan for Human Rights (2016-25), which aims to promote and protect women's rights, focusing on the groups most vulnerable to rights violations.

***The Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs is mandated with promoting the participation of relevant groups in decision-making, including women***

The Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MOPPA) is tasked with supporting and promoting the political and parliamentary development in the country through government programmes based on six axes, one of which includes modernising laws related to women and youth (Government of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[18]</sup>). Through the work of its Women's Participation Department, MOPPA strives to enhance women's participation in political life, in line with the recommendations issued by the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System the Political System in Jordan. The ministry developed a strategic plan to this effect in 2020.

**There is scope to further strengthen accountability mechanisms for gender equality within the executive branch**

As a key principle of democratic governance, government institutions are responsible for their actions and decisions. They are answerable to the public for the outcomes achieved (OECD, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>), including with respect to gender equality policy. Holding governments accountable is essential for ensuring they respond to the needs and interests of the groups they serve (OECD, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>).

Given the cross-cutting and multidimensional nature of gender equality policies, it is important to establish effective mechanisms to make sure the various line ministries and agencies involved in their implementation are held accountable for the work they undertake. In fact, achieving transversal goals requires particular accountability regimes that recognise collaboration, collective responsibility and relative contributions to those goals.

In Jordan, the NSW 2020-25, approved by the government in August 2020, explicitly states that the responsibility of advancing women's status lies on all government's ministries and institutions, thus calling them to be accountable for their respective mandates and jurisdiction (JNCW, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>).

### ***The CoG is assuming a more active role in fostering accountability for gender equality and mainstreaming***

By playing a strategic role in identifying implementation gaps, establishing effective performance frameworks and ensuring that a gender equality lens is mainstreamed in all government decision-making processes, the CoG can greatly contribute to strengthening accountability (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Indeed, accountability systems that involve reporting to the highest levels of government increase the likelihood that gender equality and mainstreaming strategies will be successful and sustainable (OECD, 2021<sup>[3]</sup>). In Canada, for instance, the prime minister is used to issuing supplementary mandate letters to ministers, delineating the government's high-level commitments and specific objectives that each minister will strive to achieve. These letters form the foundation for holding ministers accountable for their results and performance and represent good practice, as explained in Box 5.1.

#### **Box 5.1. The prime minister's mandate letters to foster accountability in Canada**

The prime minister of Canada issues mandate letters to delineate the policy priorities ministers are tasked with achieving and the urgent challenges they are expected to tackle in their roles. This practice serves as a mechanism to hold ministers accountable for their actions. In recent years, the government has taken steps towards greater transparency by publicly releasing these ministerial mandate letters, aligning with its commitment to open and accessible governance for the Canadian people.

The mandate letters direct each minister to track and regularly report on progress against their commitments, assess the effectiveness of ongoing work and invest resources to achieve results for Canadians on things that matter. Progress against delivering these commitments is highlighted in an online Mandate Letter Tracker. This platform helps Canadians hold the government accountable for delivering high-level commitments and, in many respects, represents advanced international practice. Notably, in January and December 2021, these letters contained a noteworthy pledge, mandating that all ministers incorporate Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), Canada's tool for gender and intersectional analysis, into their decision-making processes. They were also instructed to apply intersectionality when designing public policies to address deep-rooted systemic inequalities.

Source: Information provided by the government of Canada in 2022.

Over the past years, the CoG in Jordan – comprising the Cabinet, MoPIC, the General Budget Department and the Ministry of Finance – has played an increased role in promoting accountability for gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives. As part of the commitments outlined in the NSW 2020-25, for example, in 2020, the government adopted a Gender Mainstreaming Policy to affirm the country's commitment to addressing gender inequalities in the political, social and economic spheres (JNCW, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>). The Gender Mainstreaming Policy was developed by the JNCW and shared with all government institutions by the Cabinet to promote uptake. According to the policy, each public entity should consider women and children's needs when designing their key performance indicators for related projects, initiatives and services while being requested to identify expenditure for women and children and their distribution per year. Indeed, stakeholders reported that the Cabinet sent circulars to line ministries and other government entities to encourage them to be accountable for gender mainstreaming within their programmes, budgets and internal operations. Although not binding, the official letters set clear expectations and contribute to increasing governmental and ministerial accountability by signalling the importance of gender equality as a national goal and policy practice and facilitating broad buy-in.

Moving forward, following the approach adopted for the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, the Cabinet could consider issuing similar circulars to foster the implementation of the NSW 2020-25, as well as of its

successor strategic framework for the promotion of gender equality in the country after 2025. In line with Jordan's efforts to increase transparency and access to information (see Chapter 2) and similar to what is already done with King Abdullah II's official letters (Royal Hashemite Court, n.d.<sup>[20]</sup>), consideration could also be given to proactively disclosing the content of those letters encouraging the implementation of the NSW 2020-25. This would contribute to building citizens' trust in public institutions (OECD, 2020<sup>[5]</sup>).

***While playing a key role in promoting gender mainstreaming and fostering accountability, the JNCW could benefit from a stronger legal mandate***

The JNCW is the main co-ordinating body for the gender equality policy in Jordan and is responsible for supporting the government's agenda to advance society-wide gender equality goals. In light of the key role played by the JNCW in mainstreaming gender equality considerations and priorities in national strategies, policies and plans, as well as in following up on their implementation to foster accountability, it would be beneficial to strengthen the legislative framework outlining its mandate and responsibilities. Indeed, as illustrated in the previous section, the JNCW currently operates on the basis of a Cabinet decision. Providing a stronger legal basis to further institutionalise the mandate and role of the JNCW would help safeguard it from political fluctuations and reduce dependency on the willingness of the governing administration to address gender equality issues. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, a comparable step was recently taken by Egypt when it reinforced the legal standing of the National Council for Women, which was previously regulated by presidential decree, by enacting a law in 2018 to clearly define its mandate and responsibilities (SIS, 2018<sup>[21]</sup>).

At the same time, in line with the Gender Mainstreaming Policy's priorities, it would be important for Jordan to continue enhancing institutional capacities for the integration of gender equality perspectives into government action while promoting gender-responsive planning and legislation and ensuring that gender-targeted initiatives receive sufficient resources to effectively achieve their intended outcomes. This would demonstrate the government's commitment to achieving tangible results in this area, ultimately contributing to enhancing political accountability.

***The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women's Empowerment contributes to holding ministries accountable but additional reporting requirements could be introduced***

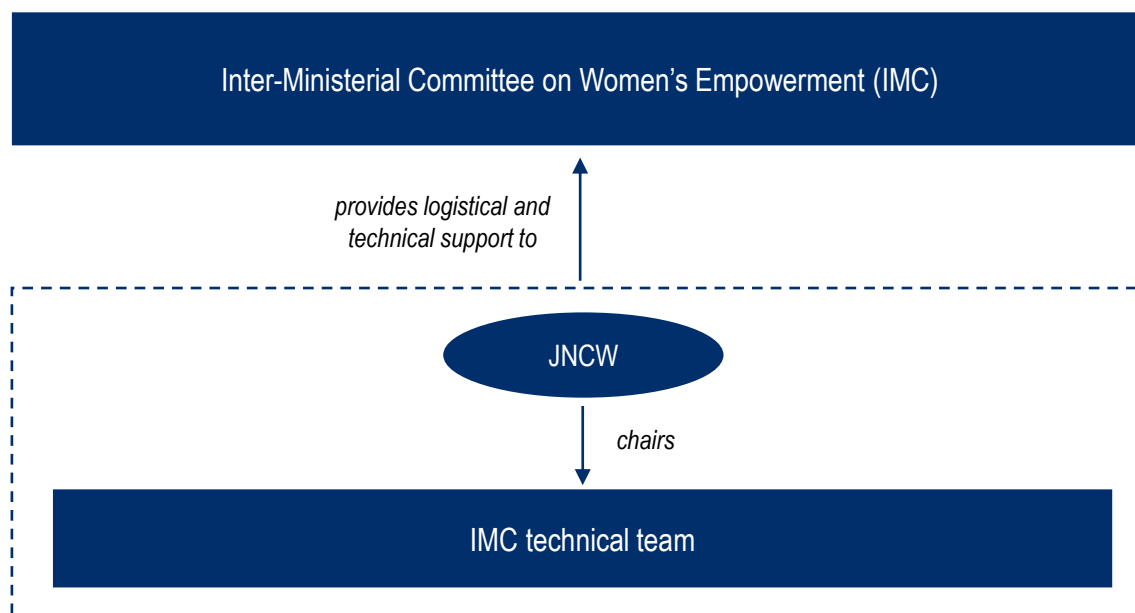
As the main body for the horizontal co-ordination of the gender equality policy, the IMC plays an important role in providing leadership and accountability for action across government on achieving gender-related commitments within the country's economic development plans and other national priorities and planning documents such as the NSW 2020-25. Building on this, there is scope to further strengthen existing arrangements to increase accountability for gender equality policies and outcomes.

Initially established in 2015 in accordance with a prime minister's letter, the IMC was administratively institutionalised as a permanent committee of the Council of Ministers in 2020. Its membership includes 15 relevant ministers and representatives of 8 governmental bodies, including the JNCW.

The IMC meets at least once every two months at the ministerial level to discuss and report on implementing strategies and plans. A technical team representing the IMC's members and chaired by the JNCW provides technical and logistical support to the committee in aligning projects and programmes within the executive plan for the NSW and other relevant gender equality and women's empowerment strategies, as well as in following up on their implementation in relevant governmental bodies (Figure 5.1). As part of its mandate and responsibilities, the IMC also reviews national and international reports on women's status, submits appropriate recommendations to the government and develops plans for implementing accepted recommendations from United Nations bodies and international or regional convention committees dedicated to women's issues. Furthermore, it fosters harmonisation of domestic

legislation and policies with international commitments, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and global development priorities while recommending legislative revisions to achieve that alignment.

**Figure 5.1. Structure of Jordan’s Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women’s Empowerment**



Under the supervision of the IMC, the JNCW heads the IMC technical team and is mandated to monitor the implementation of the government’s Gender Mainstreaming Policy adopted in 2020 (JNCW, 2021<sup>[2]</sup>), including through a report on its implementation which is submitted to the chairperson of the IMC itself for approval. Instead, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan 2023-25 is under development, as explained in Box 5.2.

#### **Box 5.2. Key elements of the M&E framework for the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan 2023-25**

Robust M&E mechanisms can help ensure gender equality strategies achieve their intended impacts. Monitoring assesses progress, improves decision-making, allows programmes to be adjusted for greater impact and strengthens accountability and institutional learning. It also helps policymakers understand where resources are most needed.

After the adoption of the NSW 2020-25, the JNCW, in co-operation with MoPIC, developed an action plan, which the IMC officially approved in March 2023. The action plan includes 50 initiatives and 268 programmes and projects carried out through 76 implementing partners across the government in 6 areas: economic empowerment; political empowerment and participation in decision-making; human rights; combating violence against women and girls; community culture; and gender mainstreaming at the institutional level in the public and private sectors. The plan also includes some indicators (e.g. unemployment rate among women aged 15 years or more) under each strategic goal, specifying baseline values and targets for 2025.

To monitor the implementation of the plan, the JNCW is reportedly in the process of developing a dedicated M&E system. An Operations Management Team, co-chaired by the JNCW and MoPIC, has been established in MoPIC to foster the alignment of the NSW 2020-25 with the government’s Indicative Executive Programme (2021-24) and the Economic Modernisation Vision. Co-ordination with implementing partners will ensure the regular provision of updated data on the Plan’s progress. These

data will serve to gauge the plan's implementation, measure progress in executing its interventions, initiatives and projects and assess their contribution to the achievement of NSW 2020-25 objectives. Subsequently, as explained in the NSW Action Plan 2023-25, with the assistance of a technical team comprising gender and planning focal points from relevant ministries and entities, the JNCW is expected to compile an annual completion report, which will undergo final review by the IMC.

Source: OECD (2020<sup>[5]</sup>), *Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance: Baseline Features of Governments that Work Well*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c03e01b3-en>; information provided by the government of Jordan in 2023; JNCW (2023<sup>[10]</sup>), *Action Plan of the National Strategy for Women in Jordan 2023-2025*, [https://women.jo/sites/default/files/2023-06/National%20Strategy%20for%20Women%20Action%20Plan%202023-2025\\_0.pdf](https://women.jo/sites/default/files/2023-06/National%20Strategy%20for%20Women%20Action%20Plan%202023-2025_0.pdf).

Additionally, after introducing an electronic monitoring system to track the government's performance and achievements in August 2023, the IMC submits monthly qualitative and quantitative indicators on implementing the Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV. This system, overseen by the Prime Minister's Office and the Royal Hashemite Court, aims to enhance accountability at the highest levels of governance by tracking the progress made by relevant ministries across 27 domains, including women's empowerment.

As illustrated above, the IMC plays a significant role in inter-governmental liaison at the ministerial level to foster the adoption and execution of policies, plans and programmes. Convening line ministries together to report on their contribution to implementing the gender equality agenda contributes to fostering political accountability for action on gender-related commitments. According to stakeholder interviews, representation in the IMC meetings has remained at high level over time, with most ministries participating in person or nominating their secretary-general to attend discussions at the technical level.

Fact-finding meetings revealed that there is scope to strengthen the IMC technical team's ability to follow up on its recommendations to line ministries and more generally the government, and monitor their take-up and implementation. Notably, in the future, the IMC chair could explicitly ask relevant line ministries to provide regular reporting on the implementation of its recommendations, leaving them the responsibility to ensure they are considered in the institutions they lead. Furthermore, to foster the implementation of the government's Gender Mainstreaming Policy and increase accountability, the IMC could consider holding regular discussions to identify the benefits of integrating gender equality perspectives into policymaking and share good practices. This would contribute to raising awareness within line ministries and promoting buy-in, thus encouraging them to take concrete action to that effect.

Going forward, efforts could also be made to ensure that the parliament has the necessary and timely information to hold public administration accountable in the area of gender equality. While the IMC already addresses inquiries from parliament pertaining to its areas of responsibility, it could consider presenting annual reports on the implementation of the NSW 2020-25 and the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, to be prepared by the JNCW, as well as the Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV to the parliament, to further facilitate oversight and scrutiny by elected representatives (see section on accountability for gender equality through the parliament and other oversight institutions). Such reports should clearly highlight ministries' contributions to achieving the strategies' objectives and be disclosed to the public in a timely manner to enhance transparency and access to information and allow citizens to scrutinise the government's efforts in promoting gender equality.

## **Managerial accountability mechanisms could be established to promote gender equality and mainstreaming across public administration**

Providing a critical incentive to change, including objectives and targets for public sector managers related to gender mainstreaming (e.g. the incorporation of gender-sensitive considerations in policies,



programmes and budgets in specific areas) can advance the integration of gender equality considerations into policymaking and the achievement of more inclusive outcomes. Likewise, well-defined executive accountability mechanisms for promoting and monitoring gender balance in the public sector can enhance women's representation in public institutions and close gender gaps (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>) by holding managers accountable for their commitment and actions to advance gender equality. The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life states that countries should enhance management and executive accountability to ensure gender balance at all levels and occupational groups in the public sector while dealing with gender equality issues in the workplace through performance management frameworks (OECD, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>).

Indeed, performance management systems are increasingly used in OECD member country civil services to help focus leadership and management efforts and align individual incentives with desired behaviour and organisational outcomes (OECD, 2019<sup>[23]</sup>). When these systems integrate gender equality and mainstreaming objectives for senior and middle-level managers, they can effectively incentivise these leaders to prioritise gender issues in their daily work. Conversely, without that integration, civil servants may have limited incentives to view these responsibilities as part of their daily duties, with the risk of sidelining the gender equality agenda.

***Managerial accountability mechanisms could foster gender mainstreaming in policymaking and promote progress towards gender equality objectives in the public sector***

In Jordan, the appointment system for leadership positions in the public service, as outlined in Bylaw No. 34 of 2021 and its subsequent amendments, upholds the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunities. It emphasises transparency and integrity, ensuring that women have equal opportunities to compete with their male counterparts for these positions based on experience and competency in accordance with universally applicable terms, principles and conditions. Justice, equality and equal opportunities also represent one of the public sector National Integrity System (NIS) pillars. Aiming to evaluate public entities' compliance with the NIS and its pillars, the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission has recently developed the National Integrity Index (NII),<sup>1</sup> which assesses, among other things, evidence of gender equality within public institutions, including representation in managerial and leadership positions. By calculating a score for each public institution, the NII acts as an additional public sector accountability mechanism to promote women's fair representation at all levels, including leadership.

Furthermore, as set in the Civil Service Bylaw No.34 and Human Resources Management in the Public Sector Bylaw No. 33 of 2024, all Jordanian public sector employees are subject to annual performance evaluations, except those in the highest category. At the beginning of each year, in agreement with their direct managers, public employees set results to be achieved and performance indicators against which their performance is reviewed. While the Jordanian civil service upholds the core principles and values of equal opportunities and accountability, as enshrined in the Civil Service Bylaw, the Code of Conduct and the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, at present, there are no requirements to integrate targets for gender equality and mainstreaming (e.g. hiring, development or promotion targets or others fostering gender-sensitive policy) into the performance agreements of senior and middle managers to promote executive accountability. Some OECD countries, as a way to foster managerial accountability and provide incentives for gender balance and gender mainstreaming, have introduced gender equality or diversity objectives directly into performance assessments of managers and senior leaders, as illustrated in Box 5.3.

### Box 5.3. Promoting managerial accountability for gender equality and mainstreaming in selected OECD countries

#### Australia

In Australia, the Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26 strongly emphasises embedding and clearly defining managerial accountability for promoting gender equality in all public organisations. Leadership and managerial accountability for pursuing gender equality in public institutions is one of the strategy's six priority actions. Under this priority, the strategy recommends considering specific key performance indicators in senior leader performance agreements to show commitment to gender equality through actions and words.

#### Canada

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, a central agency of the government, uses the Management Accountability Framework (MAF) to monitor the management performance of federal departments and agencies, including with respect to the promotion of gender equality, diversity and mainstreaming. The MAF identifies management expectations, assesses policy compliance and performance, and highlights management strengths and opportunities to improve on a yearly basis.

Regarding people management, the 2022-23 MAF assessment prioritises diversity and inclusion as one of its main priority areas of focus, in line with the Employment Equity Act, which requires organisations to demonstrate that they have set hiring goals in their human resources, employment equity or staffing plans, supporting the reduction and eventual elimination of representation gaps as a minimum in case of under-representation. These efforts primarily focus on four distinct categories: women, Aboriginal individuals, persons with disabilities; and visible minorities.

The 2022-23 MAF also assesses whether organisations are implementing key policy requirements, such as the use of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus), the analytical tool used in Canada to support the development of responsive and inclusive policies, programmes and other initiatives, and understand how identity factors (e.g. gender, race, national and ethnic origin, Indigenous origin or identity, age, socio-economic conditions, geography, culture and disability, etc.) impact outcomes and can affect access to and experience of government programmes. In fact, the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act requires the government of Canada to report the impacts of programme expenditures on gender and diversity annually. As such, the MAF requires all programmes to have data collection plans for reporting on impacts on gender and diversity and assesses results against that target.

Source: Australian Government (n.d.<sup>[24]</sup>), *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26*, <https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/APSC%20-%20Gender%20Equality%20Strategy.pdf>; Government of Canada (2023<sup>[25]</sup>), *2022-23 Management Accountability Framework Government-Wide Report*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/management-accountability-framework/2022-23-maf.html#toc-2>.

The Service and Public Administration Commission could consider introducing gender mainstreaming targets into the annual performance appraisal of civil servants, especially middle and senior managers. Taking this approach would contribute to implementing the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, which aims to advance gender-responsive planning at both the national and sectoral levels. By doing so, public sector managers would also be motivated to ensure that teams within relevant line ministries duly execute their responsibilities for implementing the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan. To this effect, the IPA, with the support of the JNCW, should continue its efforts to build capacities for gender mainstreaming across public administration.

Similarly, there is an opportunity for executives to establish objectives aimed at promoting gender-balanced representation within public institutions. This should be complemented by establishing well-defined gender equality metrics, which could be used to evaluate performance. Additionally, implementing coaching initiatives for executives to improve their understanding of gender biases and their impact on managerial practices and organisational culture would be crucial. These measures would not only help make managers more accountable for their positive actions to enhance gender equality but also resonate with the overarching civil service principle of equality.

## **There are opportunities to strengthen accountability for gender equality in view of the oversight functions of the parliament and other relevant institutions**

Independent oversight and accountability mechanisms can play a key role in ensuring that gender equality remains a legislative priority and that related initiatives have their intended impact. To be qualified as independent, oversight institutions should have statutory independence from the executive and be given sufficient authority and resources to monitor, oversee and promote the implementation of policy initiatives throughout government (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>). The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life highlights that countries should consider establishing or strengthening the capacities of independent institutions to monitor the implementation of gender equality strategies, integrate gender issues in policymaking and facilitate reporting, audits and measurement. To be effective, this oversight should maintain a balanced approach, refraining from overly prescriptive methods and instead encouraging ongoing improvements while enabling the monitoring of progress in gender equality (OECD, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>).

Across OECD countries, a range of accountability mechanisms is ensured through independent institutions like parliament and other oversight bodies, including independent commissions, equality bodies, ombuds offices and supreme audit institutions (SAIs). These mechanisms can have both a pre-emptive and a “corrective” or recourse function (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>). They have the potential to promote compliance with gender equality policies, identify shortcomings and obstacles in achieving gender equality objectives and offer impartial and objective assessments of government actors’ efforts. Additionally, oversight and accountability bodies can assume a substantial role in informing citizens about gender equality results, gender mainstreaming strategies and issues related to gender equality, such as violence against women and the gender wage gap (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>).

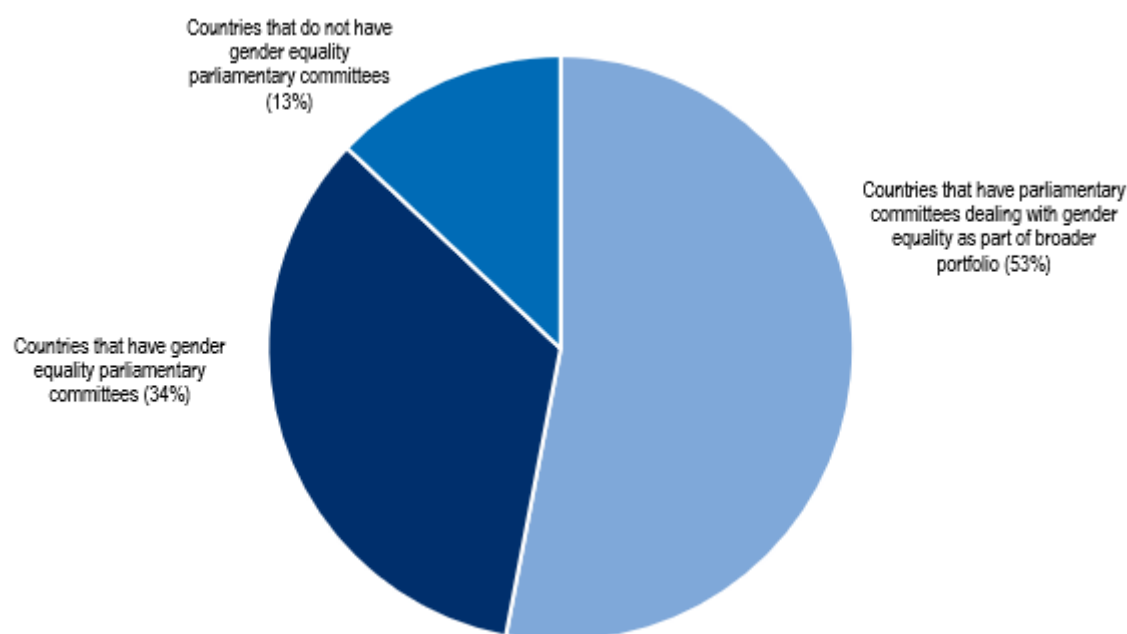
In Jordan, parliament promotes accountability for the gender equality policy through its legislative and oversight functions. In addition, the NCHR, the Office of the Government Coordinator for Human Rights (OGCHR) and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister’s Office protect human rights, including women’s, as explained in the subsections below.

### ***In light of its oversight function, there is scope for parliament’s access to key information on gender equality policy and its implementation progress to be enhanced, with the government playing an important facilitating role***

Parliament and parliamentary committees can provide effective oversight of the gender equality agenda by acting as a check on various government entities and contributing to the continuity of gender equality reforms, particularly in times of political transition. By examining existing and proposed legislation and scrutinising government action through reviews and inquiries into programmes, policies, expenditures and appointments, parliament can enhance the overall commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Legislative bodies can help ensure that gender-related issues are incorporated into the legislative agenda and that laws and policies designed to advance gender equality are effectively implemented. Gender-sensitive legislative oversight can aid in developing inclusive, needs-based laws and policies and advance gender equality in the allocation of resources through its budgetary oversight function.

In OECD countries, parliament employs various mechanisms to scrutinise government action with regard to gender equality. The most common approaches include the practice of questioning ministers or Cabinet members, holding public hearings on government initiatives or gender equality issues, and conducting reviews of gender equality reports issued by governmental actors (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Based on the most recent available evidence, 87% of OECD countries have parliamentary committees dealing with gender equality as their exclusive portfolio or, more commonly, combined with other related matters such as family, human rights, welfare, youth policies, etc. (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2. Parliamentary committees on gender equality in OECD countries, 2023**



Source: Official websites of OECD country legislatures; Parline database on national parliaments.

Although the specific duties of these committees vary, they generally oversee gender equality legislation and evaluate selected draft laws from a gender equality standpoint. Box 5.4 illustrates the mandate and functions of Colombia's Legal Commission for Women's Equity and the United Kingdom's Women and Equalities Committee.

### Box 5.4. Mandates and functions of gender equality parliamentary committees in selected OECD countries

#### Colombia's Legal Commission for Women's Equity

Established by Law 1434 of 2011 and made up of members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, Colombia's Legal Commission for Women's Equity (*Comisión Legal para la Equidad de la Mujer*) encourages and promotes the adoption of national policies to improve the situation of women in Colombian society and eliminate all forms of discrimination. One of the commission's primary responsibilities is to elaborate legislative proposals that promote the realisation of various rights for Colombian women, encompassing human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. This process involves collaboration with women's associations, groups, think tanks and other human rights organisations. The commission also holds political oversight over government bodies concerning formulating and developing gender equality plans, programmes and policies. Furthermore, it plays a role in disseminating information on existing legislation and enhancing women's rights through various fora, such as public hearings, meetings, symposia, working groups and seminars.

#### United Kingdom's Women and Equalities Committee

First appointed by the House of Commons in 2015, the Women and Equalities Committee examines the policy, administration and expenditure of the Government Equalities Office, the United Kingdom's central gender equality institution, while looking at the wider work of the Cabinet Office in reducing disparities, particularly the Race Disparity Unit and the Disability Unit. The committee holds the government, including the Minister for Women and Equalities, to account for cross-departmental work in relation to equality policy and law, as well as on its performance on equality (e.g. gender, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, etc.) issues. To carry out its functions, the committee listens to and engages with those with protected characteristics about the inequalities they face and provides analysis of equalities by using the information it gathers, facilitating discussion, advancing effective recommendations and increasing the availability and accessibility of useful information on equalities in the public domain.

Source: OECD (2023<sup>[26]</sup>), *OECD Review of Gender Equality in Colombia*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a559fc5e-en>; UK Parliament (n.d.<sup>[27]</sup>), *Women and Equalities Committee - Role and Strategy*, <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/role/>.

Various MENA economies have also established parliamentary committees to deal with issues related to gender equality. However, given the differing roles of parliaments across the region, their prominence in promoting the gender equality agenda is also not uniform (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014<sup>[28]</sup>). For instance, Egypt has a parliamentary Social Solidarity Committee and Tunisia a Parliamentary Committee on Social Affairs and Public Health. Morocco has a Thematic Group of Parliamentarians for Parity and Equality, which does not yet have the status of a committee but, in practice, performs similar tasks (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>).

While having gender equality parliamentary committees provides a dedicated space for the discussion of those matters, legislature can still address them in other relevant committees, in light of the cross-cutting nature of gender equality goals. For example, the Swedish parliament (*Riksdag*) introduced gender mainstreaming in 1994, mandating that its committees incorporate considerations of gender equality into all scrutiny of the executive branch. This entails conducting analyses of the potential impact on both men and women for all new legislation. Consequently, parliamentary committees, during their examination of legislation, are able to assess its effects on men and women and make more informed decisions during

voting. Moreover, gender mainstreaming extends to budget scrutiny, with the Committee on Finance routinely evaluating the annual budget for gender equality aspects (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>).

The Parliament of Jordan introduced the Women and Family Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives (in accordance with the Bylaw of the House of Representatives of 2013) and the Woman Committee in the Senate (in accordance with the Bylaw of the Jordanian Senate of 2014) with the mandate to “study laws and matters related to women, family and children and follow up the policies, plans and programmes necessary for social, cultural, economic, and political empowerment of women” (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>). Although these entities contribute to increasing the visibility of gender equality-related discussions, there remains scope to further strengthen the parliament’s oversight role, as acknowledged in the NSW 2020-25 itself (JNCW, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). In fact, while the committees actively debate gender-related matters (House of Representatives, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>; Jordan News, 2021<sup>[31]</sup>) and engage with peers from other countries (Jordan News Agency, 2022<sup>[32]</sup>), there is an opportunity to enhance their involvement in following up the implementation of policies, plans and programmes. Similarly, no compelling evidence indicates a systematic integration of evidence-based assessments of gender impacts and considerations into the policy cycle by those committees (OECD, 2018<sup>[33]</sup>).

Against this backdrop, as explained in the section above, the government of Jordan could strengthen its consideration of parliament’s oversight role, particularly through the Women and Family Affairs Committee. This could be achieved by ensuring parliament’s prompt access to key information on the implementation of the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan, the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the Women’s Empowerment Strategy within the EMV submitted by the IMC. In that respect, public administration would play an important role in ensuring reports are presented in a readily understandable format, thereby supporting parliament in assessing how government action progresses gender equality goals.

Apart from formal structures, other informal groups within parliaments, such as women’s caucuses, can also play an important role in holding governments accountable (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014<sup>[28]</sup>). They are particularly useful for strengthening the voice of an under-heard constituency and advocating for gender equality. Furthermore, they can serve as influential agents for integrating gender-related considerations into the policymaking process, fostering solidarity among female parliamentarians and ensuring that gender equality remains a prominent item on the legislative agenda (OECD/CAWTAR, 2014<sup>[28]</sup>; OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>), by putting pressure on other lawmakers and the government to take related policies seriously. Box 5.5 describes the role and impact of Costa Rica’s Parliamentary Group of Women Deputies in fostering the advancement of the country’s gender equality agenda.

### Box 5.5. Costa Rica's Parliamentary Group of Women Deputies

Costa Rica is one of the OECD member countries with the highest share of women in parliament, representing 47.4% (27 out of 57) of seats in the country's unicameral legislative assembly. Since 2015, the Parliamentary Group of Women Deputies (*Grupo Parlamentario de Mujeres Diputadas*, GPMD) elaborates and promotes a legislative agenda without distinction of political party, oriented toward strengthening initiatives for the defence of women's rights, gender equality and the oversight of public policies promulgated with these objectives. Currently counting on all women members of the parliament – representing six political parties – the GPMD seeks to promote the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in parliamentary oversight and the inclusion of women's rights in all bills developed and approved in committees and the plenary. It also fosters the exchange of good practices for advancing gender equality across political parties. In the framework of the 2019 International Women's Day, the GPMD signed a sisterhood pact to promote the pending gender equality agenda in the legislative assembly. As a result, between 2018 and 2021, Costa Rica's legislative assembly approved 50 new laws promoting gender equality, including 12 as initiatives of women deputies.

Sources: Grupo Parlamentario de Mujeres Diputadas (2021<sup>[34]</sup>), *Informe general de leyes aprobadas que promueven la igualdad de género y derechos de las mujeres (periodo mayo 2018-marzo 2021)*, <http://www.asamblea.go.cr/ci/ciev/Documentacin%20adicional/Informe%20Institucionalidad%20de%20Genero%202018-marzo-2021GPMD.pdf>; Grupo Parlamentario de Mujeres Diputadas (2022<sup>[35]</sup>), *Informe de Labores (Período Junio 2022 – Junio 2023)*, [http://www.asamblea.go.cr/ci/ciev/Documentacin%20adicional/Grupo\\_Parlamentario\\_Mujeres\\_Diputadas.pdf](http://www.asamblea.go.cr/ci/ciev/Documentacin%20adicional/Grupo_Parlamentario_Mujeres_Diputadas.pdf).

Since 2013, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (or Forum) in the Jordanian House of Representatives has provided a cross-party platform for female members of parliament (MPs) to unite on policies to promote gender equality and women's greater inclusion in decision-making roles. So far, issues dealt with by the Jordanian caucus have included violence against women, rights of citizenship and nationality of Jordanian women and their children, empowering women politically and economically, defending human rights and individual and collective freedoms, and improving women's image in the media (IPU Parline, n.d.<sup>[36]</sup>). For example, in 2021, during deliberations on the outcomes of the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus put forward a series of recommendations on women's empowerment.

However, holding only a handful of seats in parliament (17 out of 130 in the House of Representatives and 10 out of 65 in the Senate, as illustrated in Box 5.6), Jordanian female MPs are still far from reaching a "critical mass" (i.e. 30% representation) to directly impact debate and votes, thus making the support of male peers pivotal for advancing gender equality objectives. Engaging all MPs, both women and men, including those showing resistance to change, would be key to sustainable progress.



### Box 5.6. History of women's representation in the Jordanian parliament

Jordanian women gained the right to run for office in 1974 but their participation in parliamentary elections did not commence until 1989. During this initial participation, women made up only 2% of the candidates, lacked political party support and saw no success in winning seats. The turning point came in 1993 when Toujan Faisal became the first woman elected to Jordan's House of Representatives. However, it was not until 2003, with the introduction of the first quota (consisting of six reserved seats), that women's representation started to improve. Since then, the presence of women in the lower house has steadily increased.

According to available data, Jordan ranks 11<sup>th</sup> among 19 MENA economies in terms of women's representation in lower or single houses of parliament, with women holding 17 out of 130 seats (13.1%). In the Senate, where members are not elected directly but chosen among "present or former Prime Ministers, ambassadors, speakers of the House of Representatives, Presidents of the Court of Cassation and of civil and Sharia Courts, retired military officers, representatives who have been elected at least twice and other personalities who enjoy the confidence of the people" (art. 36 of the Jordanian Constitution), women currently hold 10 out of 65 seats, 15.4% of the total.

Source: OECD (2018<sup>[33]</sup>), *Women's Political Participation in Jordan*, OECD, Paris; IPU Parline (n.d.<sup>[37]</sup>), *Jordan - Election Results*, [https://data.ipu.org/node/86/elections?chamber\\_id=13434](https://data.ipu.org/node/86/elections?chamber_id=13434).

As an indirect driver of accountability, promoting women's representation in parliament would help establish stronger caucuses to support gender equality as a key priority in the legislative agenda. Research also shows that improving gender representation in decision-making institutions and processes can improve policy outcomes for those groups (Kahn, 2012<sup>[38]</sup>). Going forward, with the aim to sustain government institutions' move toward embracing a new set of standards grounded in transparency, accountability and equality, the government of Jordan should continue efforts to facilitate the engagement of women and men in the political sphere at various levels and strengthening equal access to public office. Indeed, the NSW 2020-25 includes increasing women's opportunities to "reach leadership positions in political life without discrimination" as one of its main interventions to ensure that "women and girls are able to exercise their human, economic and political rights to participate and lead in a society free from gender-based discrimination" (JNCW, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). To this effect, its related Action Plan 2023-25 outlines a series of initiatives and projects to increase the share of women in legislature to 25% by 2025 (JNCW, 2023<sup>[10]</sup>). Likewise, the recommendations issued by the Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System place a significant emphasis on enhancing women's participation in Jordan's political life. Indeed, the committee's report includes a dedicated subsection on women within its six chapters, with one entirely devoted to them.

Jordan's gradual shift towards a parliamentary style of government and decentralised governance (OECD, 2020<sup>[39]</sup>) presents a window of opportunity for women to amplify their political influence and assert an equitable presence in historically male-dominated spheres of decision-making. For instance, the newly adopted Election and Political Parties Law No. 7 of 2022, Election Law of the House of Representatives No. 4 of 2022, and Electoral Districts Law No. 52 of 2023 offer the occasion to strengthen the political party landscape in Jordan and advance increased representation of women. Since the 2024 parliamentary elections, the country has been divided into 18 electoral districts, encompassing 97 out of 138 seats. Candidates participate in an open-list proportional representation system. Within these 97 seats, 18 are earmarked for female candidates. The remaining 41 seats are assigned as part of a national district and political parties will participate in a closed-list proportional representation system, which reserves 30% of the seats in parliament. To achieve official party status, political parties must claim a membership of a minimum of 1 000 individuals from at least 6 governorates, with the added requirement that at least 20%

of this membership must consist of women. Additionally, when forming party lists, it is mandated that at least one of the first three positions, and another one in the subsequent three, must be occupied by a woman (Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System, n.d.<sup>[40]</sup>; TIMEP, 2022<sup>[41]</sup>). MOPPA is reportedly working to raise awareness among women of the new Election Law and the mechanisms for their active participation in future elections. Recently, it also adopted a Media Plan from a Gender Perspective in order to support efforts to reach out to women and engage them in politics.

Striving for gender-balanced representation in parliament would help create a more inclusive and accountable political landscape that addresses women's specific needs and concerns. As such, it could facilitate the development of more inclusive laws and policies while having the potential to influence resource allocation and policy decisions to advance gender equality. Ultimately, this could accelerate the country's desired modernisation path, increasing public trust and reinforcing accountability.

### ***The NCHR, the Government Coordinator for Human Rights and the Human Rights Unit shed light on the status of human rights, including women's***

Ombuds offices, independent commissioners and equality bodies are critical actors in upholding gender equality principles, investigating discrimination cases and overseeing and reporting compliance with equal treatment and anti-discrimination laws (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). These independent oversight bodies require an adequate level of authority over national government institutions to ensure their genuine independence and impartiality (OECD, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>). Across the OECD, there may be a special mandate on equality, which could be combined with human rights commissioner functions and/or an ombuds mandate (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Box 5.7 provides some examples.

#### **Box 5.7. Ombuds offices in OECD countries**

##### **Spain's *Defensor del Pueblo***

Spain's ombudsperson (*Defensor del Pueblo*) serves as the parliamentary high commissioner with the crucial responsibility of safeguarding citizens' fundamental rights and civil liberties. This is accomplished through the oversight of administrative activities and public authorities. The *Defensor del Pueblo* operates as an autonomous institution, conducting its functions with complete independence and impartiality. It operates without external influence or directives and exercises its duties with discretion. The *Defensor del Pueblo* is accountable to parliament and is included in the general state budget, which falls under the purview of the parliamentary budget.

Citizens have the right to seek the ombudsperson's assistance at no cost to investigate cases involving irregular actions. Moreover, the ombudsperson can proactively intervene in cases that come to their attention, even without a formal complaint. In the sphere of equal treatment, the office aims to combat discrimination in various forms (e.g. gender, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, disability or any other personal or social condition or circumstance, etc.). In its 2021 annual report, the ombudsperson strongly emphasised the failures and deficiencies in addressing the issue of violence against women.

##### **Sweden's Equality Ombudsman**

In Sweden, the Equality Ombudsman is an independent government agency tasked with protecting equal rights and opportunities for all and supervises compliance with the Discrimination Act. It also works to combat a wide range of discriminations, including on grounds of gender, ethnic origin, religion or other beliefs, disability, age and others. The Equality Ombudsman examines complaints concerning discrimination and harassment, and assesses how employers, higher education institutions and schools work to prevent discrimination. The Ombudsman may, *inter alia*, receive and consider complaints from individuals asserting that they have been the victims of discrimination. Following such an investigation,

the Equality Ombudsman has the power to bring legal action for damages on behalf of the individual concerned.

Source: (Defensor del Pueblo (n.d.<sup>[42]</sup>), *Qué es el Defensor*, <https://www.defensordelpueblo.es/el-defensor/que-es-el-defensor/>; OECD (2023<sup>[22]</sup>), *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3ddef555-en>).

In Jordan, similar functions are exercised by the NCHR, the OGCHR and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's Office (see section on institutional frameworks).

As Jordan's main human rights institution, the NCHR focuses on a wide range of matters and has a specific unit working on women's issues under a department entitled Managing the Most Vulnerable Groups (NCHR, n.d.<sup>[43]</sup>). Upon receiving a complaint for human rights violations, the NCHR conducts a thorough review to verify the accuracy of the complaint. Subsequently, it issues a letter to the public institution where the violation occurred, requesting remedial action. Although the centre has no authority to enforce any actions, stakeholder discussions suggested that institutions normally respond to their recommendations. Furthermore, every year, the NCHR submit annual reports assessing compliance with human rights to King Abdullah II, the speaker of the House of Representatives, the president of the Senate, as well as the prime minister and the Cabinet. Similarly, the OGCHR and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's Office also receive complaints. Following an investigation of the OGCHR, a formal letter from the prime minister forwards the complaint to the relevant public department for internal analysis. If the violation is substantiated, appropriate actions are taken against the responsible parties.

The NCHR, the OGCHR and the Human Rights Unit in the Prime Minister's Office also work together to co-ordinate the implementation of the country's National Plan for Human Rights, conduct joint events and respond to international reports on human rights issues.

OECD analysis suggests that there is scope to further promote a co-ordinated and collaborative approach between public bodies, including the NCHR, OGCHR and Human Rights Unit, to advance the human rights agenda. Chapter 3 discusses their roles and proposed recommendations more in depth.

### ***The Audit Bureau of Jordan could help accelerate the implementation of the gender equality policy through formal oversight***

Historically, supreme audit institutions (SAIs) were not traditionally seen as central players in the promotion of gender equality but this perception is changing rapidly (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). In fact, SAIs can help governments identify needs, gaps and challenges in fulfilling their gender equality goals while evaluating the impact of their efforts and fostering accountability. Available evidence shows that they can provide important support in advancing government objectives by offering independent assessments of government initiatives and making recommendations. In OECD member countries, SAIs are taking on a more prominent role in overseeing the achievement of gender equality goals. Between 2017 and 2022, institutions in at least ten OECD countries have undertaken audits of gender-related initiatives, a substantial increase from the three audits conducted in 2017 (OECD, 2022<sup>[44]</sup>). In Sweden, for instance, an audit by the country's SAI brought to light existing obstacles to gender mainstreaming and played a crucial role in their removal. This effort led to a significant restructuring of the country's institutional arrangements for gender mainstreaming. As another example, the Austrian Court of Audit has completed multiple audits with a gender perspective on various topics. Box 5.8 provides more details, presenting a compelling argument to enhance the integration of a gender perspective into the operations of SAIs.

### Box 5.8. The role of SAs in promoting gender equality and mainstreaming in selected OECD countries

#### Austria's Court of Audit

The Austrian Court of Audit is the highest authority overseeing Austria's financial and performance audits. Its internal guidelines specify that each performance audit must encompass gender equality considerations, considering questions like:

- Is the gender-related objective relevant?
- Are there sufficient gender-specific data?
- To what extent is the level of ambition regarding measures and indicators appropriate?
- What is the impact on society?
- Are women and men appropriately represented in the governing bodies?

As an illustration, an audit investigating “agricultural investment subsidies and its outcomes” under Austria's rural development programme shed light on a lack of systematic coverage of gender equality in the programme. This was further compounded by a monitoring committee where only 30% of its members were women, despite rules of procedure aimed at gender-balanced representation. Additionally, gender-specific investment needs were overlooked, even though women tend to operate smaller farms than men. Lastly, the programme's data were not consistently reported or analysed from a gender equality perspective.

#### Sweden's National Audit Office

The Swedish National Audit Office (NAO) is an independent entity accountable to the Swedish parliament (*Riksdag*) and is responsible for conducting comprehensive and impartial audits of the state's financial management. These audits encompass the entire spectrum of executive authority, including performance and financial evaluations.

In 2014-15, following an increase in resources dedicated to gender policy measures, the NAO conducted an audit of the government's gender equality initiatives. The primary objectives were to assess the conditions necessary to sustain the outcomes of gender policy measures, ensuring permanent improvements. Additionally, the audit aimed to assess the effectiveness of the government's initiative design and management and the presence of an institutional framework to sustain results over time. The 2015 NAO report highlighted the need for a more robust institutional structure to bolster gender equality efforts, reinforce gender mainstreaming within administrations and create a conducive environment for transitioning temporary initiatives into enduring outcomes. Subsequently, in response to the audit's findings, the Swedish government expressed its intent to establish a Gender Equality Agency. This agency, which has been operational since January 2018, is dedicated to enhancing the efficient implementation of Swedish gender equality policies.

Source: OECD (2019<sup>[19]</sup>), *Fast Forward to Gender Equality: Mainstreaming, Implementation and Leadership*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/g2g9faa5-en>.

The Audit Bureau of Jordan, as the country's supreme audit institution, is responsible for elaborating annual reports to audit the revenues and expenditures of the state and ways of expenditure. As such, it mainly exercises compliance- and finance-oriented control, although in the last few years, it has also carried out some performance audits (EC, n.d.<sup>[45]</sup>). Every year, the president of the bureau presents a report to the House of Representatives and the Senate, highlighting its audit findings, including any irregularities, deficiencies or weaknesses in the performance of the audited entities, together with recommendations for

addressing them (Audit Bureau of Jordan, n.d.<sup>[46]</sup>). At present, the bureau does not apply a specific gender lens to its work. However, its Strategy 2024-26, launched in April 2024 (Audit Bureau of Jordan, 2024<sup>[47]</sup>) aims to reinforce the bureau's role in overseeing and monitoring the achievement of SDGs (The Jordan Times, 2023<sup>[48]</sup>).

In the medium to long term, the Audit Bureau of Jordan could potentially assume a more significant oversight role with respect to gender equality and mainstreaming. Although its mandate mainly relates to auditing the financial management and not the implementation of government policies and how they progress on strategic priorities, such a role could be envisaged in the future. For instance, the bureau could help hold ministries accountable for the gender equality goals that they set by incorporating a gender dimension into their performance audits. As part of the regular performance audit process, the bureau would identify whether policies and programmes delivered against stated gender targets contribute to improving accountability concerning gender equality. To this effect, it would be key to ensure that the Audit Bureau of Jordan has adequate capacities in terms of resources, staff and gender expertise to undertake this expanded mandate.

### **Enhancing citizen and stakeholder participation in promoting gender equality could foster government responsiveness and accountability**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in the decision-making process is essential for more inclusive policies and services (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). This ensures that civil society and the wider public can actively contribute to help advance policy change and hold governments and policymakers accountable for their decisions. The OECD 2017 Recommendation of the Council on Open Government highlights that stakeholder participation increases government inclusiveness and accountability while calling on governments to “grant all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities to be informed and consulted and actively engage them in all phases of the policy cycle and service design and delivery” (OECD, 2017<sup>[49]</sup>). In this regard, the perspectives of a diverse range of groups have the potential to enrich the quality and responsiveness of gender-sensitive inclusive policymaking. CSOs and gender equality advocacy groups, in particular, often have valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges regarding the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and are thus crucial actors in the legal reform processes for women's economic empowerment and the implementation of related reforms.

#### ***There is scope to ensure structured and systematic inclusive consultations with civil society, including various women's groups, to promote gender-sensitive policymaking***

CSOs play an important role in promoting accountability for gender equality reforms. Stakeholder discussions revealed that in Jordan, there is some level of awareness of the importance of promoting active citizenship to advance the gender equality agenda and foster accountability. Significant opportunities exist to enhance the engagement with CSOs and other women's groups in policy and decision-making, bolstering their position as overseers of these processes.

Fact-finding meetings highlighted that organisations such as women's clubs and associations can be active at different stages of policymaking and in various forms in Jordan. CSOs engage in advocacy campaigns designed to enhance awareness of critical issues. They undertake targeted awareness-raising efforts aimed at relevant public bodies and parliamentarians by presenting policy papers that shed light on the challenges confronting women in the country. These groups have proven historically successful in strengthening women's political participation (OECD, 2018<sup>[33]</sup>), changing labour law reforms in support of women's economic empowerment (OECD/ILO/CAWTAR, 2020<sup>[29]</sup>) and amending legislation on gender-based violence, among others.



Still, as assessed in Chapter 3, there is scope to strengthen mechanisms for citizen and stakeholder participation in public decision-making. Indeed, as revealed by fact-finding meetings, public consultations with CSOs by government institutions appear to be fragmented and mainly organised on an ad hoc basis.

The IMC and JNCW particularly strive to bring together diverse voices and experiences by co-ordinating with CSOs to build a community-based culture supporting gender equality. For example, the IMC held five focus group sessions with various stakeholders and CSOs before launching the Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV. Likewise, the JNCW reportedly developed the NSW 2020-25 through a participatory process to initiate a “dialogue on women's issues” in the country (JNCW, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Consultations were conducted in all governorates, following a bottom-up approach, beginning with grassroots organisations and culminating in interactions with top-level management. The consultation sessions occurred between October and November 2019, involving mainly women but also men of all ages from local communities, local CSOs, members of municipal and provincial councils and religious leaders. Four provincial executive councils represented the northern, central and southern regions, with 850 participants. Focus groups with 35 women from refugee camps and a national-level session with government officials, academics, national institutions and CSOs were conducted, involving around 190 participants (JNCW, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>). Similarly, consultations with CSOs were reportedly organised to develop the NSW Action Plan 2023-25 to build a national consensus vision (JNCW, 2023<sup>[10]</sup>). The efforts undertaken by the IMC and JNCW to ensure a gender-sensitive and inclusive policymaking process could serve as an example for other government institutions wishing to ensure a wide representation of diverse women's groups in public consultations since the early stages of policy and decision-making.

Moving forward, it would be important to expand opportunities for comprehensive stakeholder participation to ensure that women, as crucial components, are not only heard but also integrated into the policymaking process, resulting in more inclusive and gender-sensitive policy outcomes. This should be applied to all policies, including those unrelated to women's issues. In doing so, particular consideration should be given to guaranteeing equitable representation from all governorates, including hard-to-reach ones. To be effective, consultations should begin at the early stages of the policymaking process when stakeholders still have an opportunity to influence policy design (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Furthermore, it would be key to establish robust communication channels and strengthen existing feedback mechanisms to improve dialogue between government institutions and other stakeholders involved in the process. Such mechanisms would not only enhance the understanding of the value of the process but also secure their buy-in with the outcomes (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Moreover, this approach would increase transparency, build trust in government and empower civil society actors to continue to hold public institutions accountable for their actions and decisions as a pivotal step towards fostering effective, inclusive and gender-sensitive policies and strengthening democratic governance more broadly.

## Policy recommendations

Over the past years, following the strong commitment expressed by King Abdullah II, the government of Jordan has undertaken some institutional reforms and developed strategic documents to improve public sector accountability, including with respect to the gender equality policy, as a key driver of economic prosperity. In 2015, establishing the IMC as the main body for co-ordinating gender equality policy greatly contributed to providing political leadership and accountability for action across government on achieving gender-related commitments. Recently, the Cabinet has also been active in promoting the engagement of ministries in implementing Jordan's gender mainstreaming strategy by setting clear expectations to foster government and inter-ministerial accountability. To help ensure that the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan achieve their intended impacts, the ongoing efforts of the JNCW to establish an M&E framework represent an improvement. With respect to the accountability role played by the parliament, the existence of relevant committees both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives, as well as of a Women's Forum, has the potential to increase the visibility of gender equality-related discussions. Moreover, a certain level of

awareness of the importance of involving women in policymaking creates the conditions to strengthen public consultations and make them a systematic practice in the future.

Nevertheless, there is room for further improvement. While the IMC acts as a body fostering political will for the promotion of gender equality, its ability to exert a substantial influence on the policymaking process and to follow up on its recommendations to the government could be strengthened. Within the public sector, introducing mechanisms for holding senior and middle managers accountable for advancing gender mainstreaming and gender equality at the organisational level would foster gender-sensitive policymaking and contribute to achieving a balanced representation of women and men in public institutions. Similarly, there is scope for the government to further consider parliament's role in overseeing the gender equality policy. Moreover, fostering women's representation in legislature could offer opportunities for supporting the enactment of inclusive laws and policies that respond to the needs of diverse societal groups. Although a supreme audit institution exists, its contribution to advancing gender equality and mainstreaming could also be increased. Lastly, public consultations with CSOs and women's groups, which currently appear fragmented and organised ad hoc, could be expanded and systematised, thus enhancing accountability across the public administration.

## Policy recommendations

### Reinforce government accountability for gender equality policies and outcomes

To enhance accountability mechanisms for both the government as a whole and individual line ministries in advancing gender equality in Jordan, consideration could be given to:

- Issuing official circulars from the Cabinet to foster the implementation of the NSW 2020-2025 and its Action Plan, as well as of its successor strategic framework for the promotion of gender equality in the country, in line with the approach adopted for the Gender Mainstreaming Policy. Aligning with Jordan's commitment to increasing transparency and access to information and similar to the current practice with the king's official correspondence, the option of proactively disclosing the content of those circulars could be explored. This would build citizens' trust in public institutions while offering opportunities to strengthen their ability to hold the government accountable for its actions.
- Strengthening the legal framework by outlining the mandate and responsibility of the JNCW in light of its key contributions to mainstreaming gender equality considerations and priorities into national strategies, policies and plans, and following up on their implementation to foster accountability. Reinforcing the JNCW's legal basis would help ensure the continuity of the gender equality agenda as a cross-cutting public policy priority.
- Continuing efforts to advance the priorities set out in the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, such as enhancing institutional capacities for the integration of gender equality perspectives into government action, promoting gender-responsive planning and legislation, and ensuring adequate resources for gender-targeted initiatives, to demonstrate government's commitment to achieving tangible results in this area and ultimately contributing to strengthening accountability.
- Maintaining the active and regular participation of ministries in the IMC, with a continued emphasis on the involvement of their secretaries-general at the technical level, to drive progress in gender equality outcomes.
- Continuing to discuss the benefits of gender mainstreaming, including showcasing best practices within the IMC on a regular basis, raising awareness among line ministries and



persuading them to take action in that respect. This would help increase buy-in, foster the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and promote accountability.

- Establishing arrangements, including the allocation of adequate human and financial resources, to ensure the IMC's ability to follow up on its recommendations to line ministries and more generally the government, as well as to monitor their take-up and implementation. For example, the IMC could request relevant line ministries to provide consistent updates on implementing its recommendations. This approach would delegate responsibility to ministers to ensure the effective incorporation of these recommendations within the institutions under their leadership.
- Submitting the IMC's annual reports on the implementation of the NSW 2020-25, the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the Women's Empowerment Strategy within the EMV to parliament in order to provide elected representatives with timely and necessary information to scrutinise gender equality progress. The reports should clearly highlight each line ministry's contribution to achieving strategy and policy goals. To enhance transparency and access to information, such reports should also continue to be disclosed to the public in a timely manner, thus allowing citizens to scrutinise the government's efforts in promoting gender equality.

### **Take steps to promote managerial accountability for gender mainstreaming in policymaking and gender equality in the public sector**

In the short term, the Service and Public Administration Commission could consider:

- Introducing managerial accountability mechanisms for gender equality and mainstreaming through the incorporation of gender-related objectives within the yearly performance assessments of civil servants, particularly those in middle and senior management roles. Targets should be introduced both for the integration of gender considerations into the policymaking process (e.g. share of initiatives that rely on gender-disaggregated data and allow the assessment of their impact on women and men) and for the promotion of gender equality within the civil service (e.g. share of women hired and/or promoted in a given year). Targets could also be established to make senior managers responsible for their respective line ministries' contributions to implementing the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan. To be effective, this should be coupled with:
  - Continued efforts by the IPA, with the support of the JNCW, to build capacities for gender mainstreaming across the public administration.
  - The establishment of clearly defined gender equality metrics to evaluate performance.
  - The introduction of coaching programmes aimed at enhancing executives' awareness of gender biases and their influence on managerial behaviours and organisational culture.
- These steps would not only promote greater accountability among managers in their efforts to advance gender equality and mainstreaming. Still, they would also harmonise with the overarching civil service principle of equality. In addition, they would contribute to the implementation of the government's Gender Mainstreaming Policy and of the NSW 2020-25 and its related Action Plan.

### **Strengthen the government's ability to ensure parliament's prompt access to key gender equality information in view of its oversight role**

In order to further strengthen the government's consideration of the oversight role of parliament with respect to the promotion of the gender equality agenda, the following actions could be considered in the short term:

- Following the submission of annual reports on the implementation of the NSW 2020-25 and its Action Plan, as well as of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy adopted in 2020 and of the Women's

Empowerment Strategy within the EMV (see related recommendation above) to parliament, providing the Women and Family Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives and the Woman Committee in the Senate with the opportunity to receive, consult and discuss them.

With the aim to ensure a diverse range of perspectives in parliament addressing the varied needs and interests of both women and men in Jordan, the government should consider:

- Continuing efforts to facilitate the engagement of women and men in the political sphere at various levels and enhancing equitable access to public office, thereby fostering gender-balanced representation in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This would include addressing structural and emerging barriers to women's participation and representation in public life, such as stereotypes and violence, both on line and off line.

### **Increase the role of independent oversight institutions in the promotion of gender equality**

In the medium to long term, to play a more significant oversight role with respect to gender equality and mainstreaming, the Audit Bureau of Jordan could consider:

- Incorporating a gender dimension into performance audits as appropriate by identifying whether policies and programmes implemented by the government delivered against stated gender equality targets and goals. To this end, it would be important to bolster capacities in terms of resources, personnel and gender expertise to enable the Audit Bureau of Jordan to undertake this expanded mandate effectively.

### **Reinforce channels to promote citizen participation with the aim of fostering responsiveness and accountability for better gender equality outcomes**

In order to strengthen responsiveness and accountability across the public administration, the government of Jordan could consider:

- Expanding opportunities for comprehensive and systematic stakeholder participation to ensure women's voices are considered and integrated into the policymaking process, resulting in more inclusive and gender-sensitive policy outcomes. This approach should encompass all policy areas, even those not related to issues specific to women. In doing so, special attention should be paid to ensuring equitable representation from all governorates, including the most remote ones. To be effective, consultations should begin at the initial stages of policy development, where stakeholders can have a meaningful impact on policy design.
- Establishing effective feedback mechanisms linking government institutions with non-governmental stakeholders throughout the process to enable civil society actors to hold public institutions accountable for their actions and decisions.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on the NIS and NII, please refer to the OECD Integrity Review of Jordan.

# **JORDAN**

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As Jordan steps up its efforts to modernise its public sector, this OECD Public Governance Review provides an overview of the government's capacity to design and implement more responsive, transparent and accountable public policies, with the goal of building trust in government and fostering inclusive economic development and prosperity. It also provides tools for promoting a culture of transparency, facilitating access to information, ensuring greater citizen participation in public decision-making processes and determining how accountability frameworks can be strengthened to better meet the needs of underrepresented groups, including women and young people.



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