



UN-ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON PROMOTING DIGITAL ARABIC CONTENT IN THE ESCWA REGION

29-30 April 2008, Beirut, Lebanon

Information Note

Background

The digital content industry provides vast opportunities for investment in the Arab region. Despite the numerous challenges that face the development of this industry in the Arab region, the opportunities of success are extensive, given the increased use of the Internet for socioeconomic activities and the presence of more than three hundred million Arabic speakers.

With the above in mind, and in order to promote the DAC industry, the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) at ESCWA launched in 2007 a project entitled "Promotion of the Digital Arabic Content Industry through Incubation". This project follows a series of activities that were initiated in 2003 by the "Arabic Content Initiative" which included a 2003 study on "Enhancing Arabic content on the digital networks", a 2005 study on "Digital Arabic Content: opportunities, priorities and strategies", in addition to an on-line workshop on "Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry" which took place in 2007.

The objective of the aforementioned project is to contribute to the growth of the DAC industry in Western Asia by supporting and promoting the development of DAC applications in ICT incubation facilities. It consists of two main tracks of implementation. Track 1 includes the assessment of the needs of the DAC industry, proposals for region-specific DAC applications and the development of business and partnership models for building this industry. Track 2 concentrates on supporting the practical implementation of a number of DAC projects at selected incubators in ESCWA member countries. These projects will be competitively selected by a regional committee which includes representatives from ESCWA and from ICT incubators in the region. They will address a variety of subjects that are relevant to the socioeconomic development of the Arab region including e-government and e-learning as well as culture, media, health and science. ESCWA will also partner with a number of incubators in the region to implement the selected projects as well as to launch media and awareness campaigns. Following the end of the project's activities, incubators will use the models and modalities developed during the implementation process for the implementation of future DAC projects.

Objectives

The long-term objective of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to accelerate the development of the Digital Arabic Content industry in the ESCWA region. The immediate objectives are to a) present and discuss several studies that were prepared by ESCWA for the promotion of the digital Arabic content industry; b) set the framework for cooperation and partnership with

incubators in the ESCWA region; and c) launch the incubation preparatory process with various ICT incubators in the region.

The studies ESCWA prepared within the aforementioned project cover the following:

- ***A Survey on Digital Arabic Content: software, applications and needs assessment***, which is an assessment of the status and needs of the DAC industry as well as a guide for incubators and their clients that would help them in the creation of digital content start-ups and small enterprises.
- ***Models for Business Plan, Marketing and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for the Digital Arabic Content Industry***, which proposes business models and practical forms of partnerships for start-ups and small enterprises in the DAC industry.
- ***Hardware & Software Incubation Requirements and Training Needs***, which details the DAC industry's needs and requirements in terms of hardware, software, connectivity, and training.

Outcomes

The EGM's expected outcomes are:

- (1) Increased awareness of ICT incubators on the importance of developing and promoting the DAC industry in the region;
- (2) Consensus on the domains, sectors and applications which are of interest to the development of the DAC industry;
- (3) Adoption of the proposed business and partnership models;
- (4) Setting the framework of cooperation with selected incubators.

Organization

The EGM is organized by ICTD/ESCWA, and will be held during 29-30 April 2008 in Beirut, Lebanon¹.

Participation and Registration

Participants in the meeting will include representatives of incubators in the ESCWA region as well as selected experts from research centres, academic institutions and enterprises which are engaged in the development of digital Arabic content. ESCWA might also invite experts from other international organizations, government bodies and NGOs.

Participants are requested to register for the meeting by filling a downloadable registration form and returning it by email, to escwa-ictd@un.org and idlebi@un.org before 7 April 2008.

¹ The venue is tentatively set in Beirut. However, it may change according to the security situation in Lebanon. Participants will be notified of any changes ahead of time.

Language

Arabic and English will be the working languages of the EGM, noting that simultaneous interpretation will not be provided.

Travel and Accommodation

All participants are expected to inquire on their visa requirements to Lebanon and secure one ahead of the anticipated travel date. In this regard, ESCWA can provide assistance to Palestinian and Iraqi participants.

Additional information

Further information and documentation is available at the following URL:

<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=680E>

Submissions, inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

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