



International Telecommunication Union
Arab Regional Office (ARB)



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- Arab Administrations of ITU Member States
- Arab Regulators
- ITU-D Sector Members and Associates
- Academia Institutions
- Regional and International Organizations concerned
- Regional chairs and vice chairs of the Advisory Groups and Study Groups
- UNESCO Regional & National Offices
- UNESCO National Commissions
- UNESCO Chairs & Institutes
- UN Organizations in the Arab Region
- UN Resident Coordinators of Countries in the Arab Region
- All relevant stakeholders non-members of ITU

Subject: ITU- UNESCO Regional Digital Inclusion Week: “Ensuring equity and inclusivity in all that we do: Data, Platforms and Policies”

Dear Madam/Sir,

Building on the success and interest generated over the past years, we are pleased to announce the launch of the fifth edition of the annual **ITU-UNESCO Regional Digital Inclusion Week for Arab States**, that will be held between **26 September to 2 October 2021**, under the theme “Ensuring Equity and Inclusivity in all that we do: Data, Platforms and Policies”. In the post-COVID world, public health remains a concern. So, this year’s events will be held in a hybrid format, with virtual and on-site components (in line with WHO’s recommended safety regulations).

Nowadays, digital connectivity plays a vital role in a wide range of societies. However, there is great concern that although COVID-19 did privilege those who have digital knowledge and force more people to become more digitally aware, it has further deeply impacted those who have limited access to digital means and therefore deepened the existing digital divide. These divides include differences in both physical and intangible aspects such as fixed and mobile network coverage, availability and affordability of infrastructure, digital literacy, gender and the ability to participate, shape and benefit from the digital transformation process. Digital inclusion is now crucial for wider socio-economic participation; consequently, these divides have exacerbated other forms of social inequities among marginalized and vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

Hence, ITU and UNESCO continue to advocate for Digital inclusion to open up space to the marginalized and contribute to equity and inclusivity across multiple areas; this can advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- particularly Goal 10- Reducing Inequalities.

Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, the Week will bring together inter alia governments, UN and intergovernmental bodies, civil society, academia, healthcare professionals, the private sector and citizens to advance digital inclusion. The Regional Digital Inclusion Week is thus an opportunity to raise awareness, strengthen collaboration amongst stakeholders and advance efforts to combat all forms of exclusion.

ITU and UNESCO are therefore inviting stakeholders across the Arab region to actively participate in the activities of this week and organize at least one activity during this Week, to shed light on their key activities in this domain, whether at the national or regional level. Stakeholders are free to design the nature, scope and location of activities and associate them to the Week, as long they reflect the theme of "Ensuring equity and inclusivity in all that we do: data, platforms and policies". Please use the attached Registration Form or the online Form on the event website to make your event submissions before **20 Sept. 2021**. We also invite you to actively participate in and publicize all activities that will be held in the framework of the week.

For further information, please contact:

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All the information related to Digital Inclusion Week including events organized by all stakeholders, will be available on the dedicated website at:

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/ArabStates/Pages/Events/2021/DIW/DIW.aspx>

We look forward to receiving your positive feedback and more importantly to collaborating with you to ensure the success of the Digital Inclusion Week.

Yours faithfully,


Adel M. Darwish
Regional Director
ITU Arab Regional Office


Ghaith Fariz
Director
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States

Encl.

- Concept Note: "Ensuring equity and inclusivity in all that we do: Data, Platforms and Policies".
- Registration Form.