

ITU Regional Development Forum for Europe (RDF-EUR)

Information and Communication Technologies for Attaining Sustainable Development Goals

Tuesday 26 May 2020 | 11:00 – 15:30 | Remote Meeting

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Pages/Events/2020/RDF/Remote.aspx>

CONTRIBUTION BY the State of Israel

TITLE:

CONTACT: Ms. Naama Henig

Henign@moc.gov.il

Europe Regional Initiative:

- EUR3: Accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development
- EUR5: ICT-centric innovation ecosystems

Year(s) of implementation:

- 2021

Background

In Israel, ICTs are recognized as having a central role in the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that context, today's main challenges refer to the existing digital divide and digital illiteracy and lack of skills. In the light of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the goals of promoting digital inclusion and bridging the digital divide become more substantial than ever as connectivity and accessibility to ICTs prove to be essential not only for capacity building but also for crisis management and the continuity and sustainability of social and economic ecosystems.

The key role of ICTs, however, cannot be assumed by a single entity, economic or social sector. We believe that in order to enable each person to fulfill his personal, social and economic potential and thereby enhance its competitiveness in the global economic-cultural fabric, the development and implementation of an in-country capacity building process should be based on a multi-sectoral (public, private and non-profits) collaboration. In accordance, the ICT ecosystem in Israel is highly experienced in fostering cooperation between member states, organizations and bodies, in establishing platforms for bridging the digital divide and equipping all groups of society to take advantage of ICTs.



Considering the common objectives of attaining the sustainable development goals and enhancing the development of the socio-economic experience, we find the regional European group office collaboration as a highly important tool. Hence, we acknowledge the essentiality of the Europe region initiative for developing accessibility, affordability and skills to all for supporting the national and European regional activities through the establishment of joint projects and encouragement of the sharing of knowledge and best practices among interested parties.

The State of Israel sees the importance of contributing to the regional European group by joining the efforts to bridging the digital divide, promoting digital inclusion and encouraging ICT-centric innovation ecosystems. Therefore, the State of Israel offers sharing its best practices, innovative solutions, collaboration and openness for partnering with ITU and other relevant European stakeholders.

Proposal

Two of the main goals consists Israel's Digital Action Plan for 2017-2022 strategic goals: Bridging the digital divide and improving the digitalization of government services (e-gov). Considering Israel's experience in developing guidelines and public policies and implementing ICT related projects and activities aiming to eliminate disparities in the use of and access to ICTs and promoting greater inclusion of persons with disabilities and specific needs, we are interested in contributing to the development and implementation of Europe regional initiatives. The contribution can be manifested in sharing knowledge and best practices regarding capacity building in digital skills, inter alia through training courses and dedicated programs. Israel's ICT ecosystem consists of numerous stakeholders, who develop and implement projects and initiatives for the sake of ensuring accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development. The following cases can be regarded as most relevant for accentuating the importance of multi-stakeholders approach as reflected in Israel:

- "Appleseeds" - an Israeli nonprofit that was founded in 2000 with the aim to promoting digital equality in Israel by developing and implementing programs in the areas of technology, employment, and life skills.
- The Cyber Education Center (CEC) – a collaboration between the Israeli government and the civil society under which young girls and boys obtain digital skills through dedicated programs. The CEC promotes social change through education of youngsters from the Israeli peripheries for enhancing their future integration in key positions in Israel's technology industry, academia and defense forces. Some of the main programs implemented by the CEC: Empowerment of programming skills of youth in middle school ages, Exposing kids in elementary Schools to innovative technologies as AI, Blockchain, VR/AR, etc. and Special educational program for promoting the integration of girls in the Hi-tech and Cyber industries.
- "Lehava" Project for Bridging the Digital Divide – a government initiative started already in 2001 aims to deliver technological education and trainings in the 30 operating centers throughout



Israel fully funded by the government. The training centers offer technological education to all people, from all social backgrounds - from preschool to third age. Each centers consists of two classes, containing 40 computers (connected to broadband), where professional guides assist the students in entering the digital world and using its main applications. Among the main programs in the centers: Game-based programming for kids, music and sound editing, video processing, graphics and office applications.

- Digital Rehabilitation Communities – Pilot project funded by the government aimed at using digital tools for strengthening the relationship between caregivers and patients with disabilities and enhancing the quality of treatment and services provided to them by the welfare system.

