

For Immediate Release



AUB-led workshop: E-government paves the way for better relations between citizens and the state

Beirut, Lebanon- 18/04/2012 - By going digital, or adopting e-government, the state will improve its relationship with its citizens, said a group of public servants and academics at the E-Government Stakeholders Engagement Workshop, on Wednesday, April 18, 2012.

The workshop took place at the Gefinor Rotana Hotel, hosted by the Suleiman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) at the American University of Beirut and supported by a variety of sponsors and industrial partners. In attendance were representatives from all the ministries including the Ministry of Interior, Information, Trade and Economy, Education, Telecommunication, National Social Security, the Lebanese Army and Interior Security Forces, the Central Bank and the Customs Office. Others in attendance included UN representatives and the ambassadors of Turkey, Qatar and the UK.

"This workshop is meant to raise awareness about the value that e-government can provide for the economic growth of Lebanon and its citizens," said OSB Dean George Najjar in his opening speech.

"Lebanon faces enormous challenges as it seeks to intensify its economic growth and productivity, achieve higher living standards and empower citizens to play more active roles in their communities," noted AUB Provost Ahmad Dallal in his welcoming speech.

Dallal explained that in the past year and a half, AUB has initiated major changes in the IT functions of the institution. "Our experience in transforming traditional services to online services is preparing us to serve as a model and perhaps even a mentor for other Lebanese institutions, including the government," he added.

UK Ambassador Tom Fletcher pledged Britain's support to Lebanon in regards to e-government.

"Governments need to be more connected, more innovative and more efficient in harnessing information and communication technology to deliver higher and more sustainable public values, using digital technology to drive better services while lowering costs," Fletcher said.

The benefits of e-government include improving interaction between government and citizens through better delivery and higher convenience, breaking down bureaucratic barriers, and contributing to a “green” environment through paperless transactions and carbon-efficient services.

“Innovation and technology are the acknowledged drivers of productivity. The challenge is to change that truism into fact,” said Dallal.

Fletcher suggested recruiting and training people to do it, making certain that those without the knowledge of accessing e-government services are not left behind, and that Lebanon needs to ensure access to a stable internet connection and power supply.

The President of the Council of Ministers (PCM) recently created a committee made up of representatives from all Lebanese ministries to work simultaneously on making e-government work for its citizens, starting with the new e-transactions law, which will soon be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval.

“The law aims at building trust in e-transactions and encouraging the use of e-transactions in all sectors of the economy,” said Salam Yamout, the National ICT Strategy Coordinator at the PCM office representing Prime Minister Najib Mikati. Most importantly, the law allows electronic signatures to be recognized by the judiciary as official proof.

“Whether we are replacing aging infrastructure, implementing administrative reforms or developing human potential, the right ICT policy is one that can take Lebanon a long way into a bright and promising future.”

After the welcoming speeches, academics and professional and government experts presented their experiences in a variety of presentations on e-government, highlighting its benefits and limitations.

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For more information please contact:

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, ma110@aub.edu.lb, 01-353 228

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides

medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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