Government Services Reform & Modernization Program (GSR)
E-Government Strategy

Part II
E-Government Strategy in Syria (Orientations)

The State is at the service of people, and its institutions protect the fundamental rights of citizens, develop their lives and support grassroots organizations to be able to develop themselves.

The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic

"Talking about the administrative development... leads us to talking about corruption ... in spite of efforts to reduce and control it... we still need successful mechanisms to combat corruption. Accountability status alone is not enough in spite of its necessity ... so, what is the actual solution? ... The actual solution to combat corruption is in administration, because administrative development ... and expanding the use of modern technology ... are complementary mechanisms to accountability.

In administration... if there is a truly serious administration... automation... and mechanisms for evaluation and selection... all of these mechanisms, if available, will give the results we desire."

Excerpts from the inaugural speech of President of the Syrian Arab Republic – 2007

Document Title: E-Government Strategy in the Syrian Arab Republic

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General Framework for E-Government Initiative in Syria

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General Orientations of E-Government Initiative in Syria

1. Introduction

This document shows the range of activities and strategic initiatives currently running in the Syrian Arab Republic, with which E-Government Initiative in Syria must interact to ensure harmony between the orientations and targets of various initiatives. This document also establishes the general orientations of E-Government Initiative in Syria, and the approach to be locally adopted for the implementation of this Initiative, by analyzing **Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and Threats** (SWOT) that must be optimally dealt with by this Initiative, then formulating general orientations based on promoting strengths, and solve weaknesses, taking opportunities and optimally dealing with challenges.

This document addresses the current situation in Syria in the following areas: (political, organizational, institutional, human and cultural, financial, environment of communication, technological infrastructure, and information and its Management systems).

2. The National Context of E-Government in Syria

As shown in the following figure, E-Government Strategy is based on other three national initiatives: The tenth five-year plan (FYP), rational governance and ICT Strategy. Thus, the orientations contained in the three documents constitute a referential framework for the preparation of E-Government Strategy.
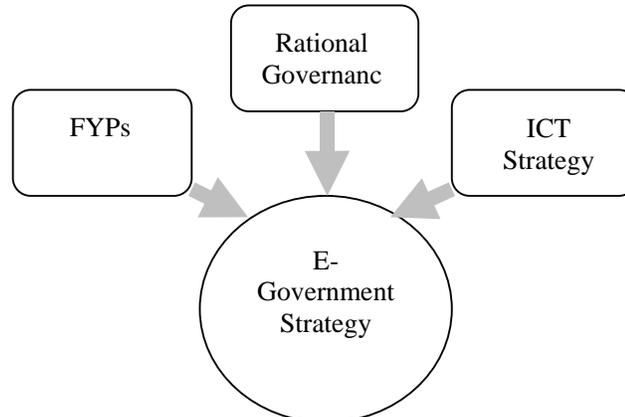
Figure 1: The documents on which the orientations of the E-Government Strategy are based

2.1. The Tenth FYP

The 10th FYP has been issued in the context of the development and modernization process focusing on achieving social and economic development. Covering the period from 2006 to 2010, this Plan focuses on activating the role of the private sector alongside of the public sector as an incentive for economic and social development. It aims to develop the investment environment in Syria to attract foreign investments and organize and stimulate domestic

investments, which leads to increased productivity. Regarding rational governance[1], the Plan aims at linking economic reform to administrative reform, effectively managing the development process and the relationship with citizens, and ensuring accountable and extremely transparent public administration that controls and manages resources efficiently.

The Plan has also developed a set of policies to establish the e-government[2], such as modernizing administrative procedures and government services, developing human resources, and applying the state-of-the-art ICT in the administrative modernization. Appendix I shows the steps which were proposed by the 10th FYP to achieve this.

2.2. ICT Strategy in Syria

In 2002, a joint project between MOCT and UNDP- Syria was launched to develop ICT Strategy in Syria. Focusing on the role of ICT in promoting the social and economic development, the Strategy was put forward for public discussion in 2004.

The ICT Strategy entrusted MOCT to create the necessary legislative and regulatory environment to organize both the telecommunications sector and IT sector. As a result, a draft for the Telecommunications Law was prepared, which proposes the establishment of an agency to regulate telecommunications sector. On the other hand, ICT Strategy has developed a set of targets related to the infrastructures, which must be achieved by 2013, as it has set the target to increase the penetration rates for landline, mobile phone, and laptop to 30%, and for internet to 20%. The document has estimated that the cost of achieving these targets is US$ 8 billion distributed as follows: government spending is 2 billion; the private sector spending is 2 billion; while individuals' spending for technology is 4 billion.

ICT Strategy in Syria has included "the National Initiative for E-Government Administration"[3] which aims to promote the automation of government agencies within the scope of a comprehensive program for administrative reform, which strengthens the direction of providing services for citizens and social and economic institutions, and increases effectiveness and productivity of government agencies by optimally using ICT. The Strategy also emphasizes the need to coordinate efforts between various government agencies and administrative reform programs, the preparation of work programs in order to optimally use ICT in the administrative reform, and defining standards for these programs progress.

2.3. **Ministry of Communication and Technology (MOCT)**

Decree No. 35 of 2004 contains MOCT tasks, including the following:

Article 1: MOCT assumes the following tasks:

1) Outlook the new technologies appropriate to the economic and social development in Syria, particularly ICT, and propose the State's general policies and strategies in regard to the acquisition, localizing, updating and continuity of using such technology in cooperation with the stakeholders.

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[1] The 10th FYP – Rational Governance and Institutional Development
[2] The 10th FYP – Rational Governance and Institutional Development
[3] ICT Strategy – Work Program and Executive Plans

2) Contribute to the preparation of executive plans to achieve strategies of the new technologies in general, and of ICT strategies in particular.
3) Contribute to the development of human resources and propose the establishment of higher institutes that qualify ICT specialists.
4) Supervise telecommunication sector (public and private), develop the necessary plans to promote, develop and diversify sector means and technologies to provide telecommunications services to the largest number of citizens at the most suitable prices, and prepare the necessary draft laws and legislations.
5) Supervise, provide and develop the various traditional and modern postal services to keep pace with global developments such as support to e-commerce.
6) Supervise IT development in Syria and lay the foundations for the development of its systems, networks, standards and security; contribute to their establishment and updating in collaboration with stakeholders; and prepare the necessary draft laws and legislations.
7) Strengthen performance of the State's executive system by adopting ICT as a formal tool in the administrative procedures.
8) Enhance the use of electronic means in trade.
9) Propose concluding international agreements and partnerships related to ICT and other new technologies.
10) Represent Syria in international ICT forums.

Through the said tasks, particularly item 7 of Article 1, MOCT is entitled to launch an initiative to use ICT for the development of government administrative work, which includes E-Government Initiative.

2.4. Defining Stakeholders

E-Government Initiative stakeholders in Syria comprise individuals and corporate bodies that affect or are affected by government services. Therefore, we will try to define the stakeholders to ensure their contribution to the debate on the features and orientations of the Initiative, to ensure that the final version of the Initiative reflects vision concurrence among the following stakeholders:

➢ The citizens.
➢ Business Sector: Chambers of commerce, industry, agriculture, tourism and others.
➢ Craft associations and trade unions: unions of engineers, workers, lawyers, doctors, teachers..etc.
➢ Public sector employees.
➢ Government agencies: ministries - institutions - commissions.
➢ Unions: General Federation of Trade Union - General Union of Peasants - National Union of Syrian Students.
➢ CSOs and professional associations.
➢ Progressive National Front and its member parties.
➢ Foreign investors.

3. Evaluation of E-Government Readiness in Syria

E-Government Initiative is a program for change with technological and social dimensions. Therefore, any initiative for change must be compatible with the readiness of the target country. In this context, measuring the readiness is a necessary step to draft an initiative commensurate with the current situation in Syria to put an applicable agenda for change based on an accurate understanding of the local situation, which may stimulate or impede the process of change with its various themes (technical or human). The evaluation process will be done within the following fields:

(political framework, legislative and organizational framework, institutional framework, human and cultural conditions, communication environment, financial situations, technological infrastructure, data and information systems).

3.1. Political Framework

To ensure the success of the desired change, E-Government Initiative success requires the political leadership extreme support. Therefore, reforming the governmental administration and developing the governmental system are the reasons for launching e.gov Initiative. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Syria launched the administrative reform process. In addition, President Dr. Bashar al-Assad has established the features of the administrative reform in his inaugural speech emphasizing the priority of administrative reform in the following terms[4]:

"Our administration inefficiency is one of the most major obstacles impeding development and improvement process and negatively affecting all sectors with no exception. We have to start at full speed conducting studies to ensure changing this situation for the better through developing administrative systems and their structures, raising the efficiency of administrative and professional cadres, and ending the state of laxity, indifference, and evasion of duty. We must fight against delinquents, wrongdoers, slovens and spoilers."

The President re-emphasized this topic in his speech before the Parliament explaining the importance of raising public sector's performance, and adopting innovative and new ways to achieve this. He also stressed the priority of the concepts of transparency, responsibility and partnership with the citizens in the process of administrative reform and founding rational governance. He also accentuated, while presiding a meeting of the Cabinet, the need to restructure the ministries and public institutions and modernizing their internal working procedures, administration structure and by-laws. The President also stressed the importance of using technology and modern methods of working to improve methods of working and achieve the desired transformation.

In his inaugural speech[5] in 2007, the President stressed the importance of using IT to achieve the administrative reform, and place it on the course of the fight against corruption.

"Talking about administration development ... leads us to talking about corruption ... in spite of the efforts to reduce and control it ... we still need successful mechanisms to

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[4] Excerpts from the inaugural speech of President of the Syrian Arab republic - 2000
[5] Excerpts from the inaugural speech of President of the Syrian Arab republic - 2000

combat corruption. Accountability alone is not enough in spite of its necessity ... Then, what is the real solution? ... The real solution to combat corruption is by administration, as administrative development .. and expanding the use of modern technology .. are complementary mechanisms to accountability.

In administration… if there is a truly serious administration... automation... and mechanisms for evaluation and selection... all of these mechanisms, if available, will give the results we desire."

3.2. Legislative and Organizational Framework

Legislative and organizational framework plays a key role in E-Government Initiative, because it is the means to build confidence among different stakeholders, and it is a secure framework that protects and facilitates exchanging information and services within the government, between the government and the citizens, and between the citizens and the business.

3.2.1. Information related legislation

E-Government Initiative requires a package of integrated legislation, of which the most important is Information Privacy Law which decides the way the public administration deals with personal information of citizens and business, i.e. how to transfer, circulate, store, retrieve, share and block information. Besides, legislation related to publishing the public administration information, namely, that information about the functions of each government agency and its working procedures, policy, functions and services provided to the citizens and business, has to be issued. Such legislation should set the foundations to update this information, and streamline accessing it by citizens and business. Also, there are a number of legislations that contribute to the provision of the legal framework to specific activities and initiatives in favour of the E-Government Initiative, such as acts of e-signature which was issued in early 2009 under the name "Law of E-Signature and Web Services", e-payments, e-transactions and cyber-crimes. These legislations must be completed in conjunction with the readiness of the related projects. Currently, there are draft laws for the following:

➢ Draft law on e-commerce and e-transactions.
➢ Draft law on cyber-crimes and privacy policy.
➢ Draft law on intellectual property rights (IPR).

3.2.2. Information Security Standards

Empowering the government administration to work efficiently in an interdependent world and to comply with legislations relating to privacy of information, its exchanges and the above mentioned principles of dealing with it, requires considering information security by the government top administration. Addressing such issues shouldn't be confined only to the technical dimension of information security, as there must be integrated institutional policy for security of the information the administration deals with. Therefore, the institutions should appropriately secure the information they deal with, regardless of the tools or technologies used for information processing, storage, retrieval and sharing.

MOCT has developed a set of standards related to information security, which address most of the points outlined above. Although the mentioned standards have not been finally adopted by the Syrian government, copies of these standards were distributed to government departments to be used in some pilot projects to assess the results of using them before final adoption. The information security standards have covered the following topics:

- Information Security Policy (administratively - operationally - technically).
- A guide to information security.
- A guide to accreditation and licensing for information security
- Information security plan.
- Rules of conduct for information security.
- A guide to emergency plans.

3.2.3. Regulating Telecommunications Sector

Activating mechanisms of access to ICT, as well as creating an economic environment that makes such technologies (infrastructure, services and equipments) within the reach of large segments of society, are ones of the most important points that contribute to the widespread use of these technologies, and guarantee the achievement of acceptable penetration rates to these digital services in the society. The widespread growth of technologies and services related to telecommunications makes it impossible for a single body to provide such services with an acceptable efficiency. So, there should be a gradual shift of the market, from a single-sided market to a multi-sided transparently competing market, which encourages competition and benefits the consumer. This in turn stimulates economic growth in the ICT-based sectors.

Syrian Telecommunication Establishment (STE) currently has the exclusive right to provide telecommunications services inside Syria. The law, however, allows STE to sign investment contracts with private parties to provide specific services. For example, in 2001, STE signed BOT contracts with two companies to provide mobile phone services. Recently, the two mentioned operators have released some 3G services. A third operator is expected to provide services in 2010 in conjunction with the development process of the telecommunication sector which has begun by drafting the Telecommunications Law, which is a cornerstone of the possibility of raising penetration rates. In the field of internet services, after starting to establish its first internet service provider (ISP), STE permitted the Syrian Computer Society (SCS) to establish its own ISP, and after establishing the public data network (PDN) which makes up the backbone to link ISPs with the international network, licenses were granted to a number of private sector ISPs. A set of criteria for granting licenses to private sector ISPs has been developed. The total number of ISPs has reached eleven.

3.2.4. Supplies related to ICT Systems

Allocated Funding for ICT systems supplies is insufficient as annual public and private investment is no more than $ 80 - 100 million[6], and the bulk of this amount has been allocated for telecommunications equipments. There is no unique policy of government expenditure in the area of ICT systems; therefore it is difficult to accurately determine the government's

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[6] The natural features of information society in the Syrian Arab Republic, UN – Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

expenditure (planned and actual) because there is no separate item for this type of projects. Although Syria adopted ICT Strategy in 2004, expenditure in this sector hasn't increased.

On the other hand, contracting procedures of IT suffer the complexity of procedures and their low efficiency. To address this issue, MOCT has developed integrated standards that cover contracting stages (setting tender book, conducting tenders and contracting), but these standards have not been adopted by the Syrian government yet.

3.3. Institutional Framework

The E-Government Initiative significantly interacts with the process of a wide institutional transformation in the public administration. This in turn requires an effective management of change in the government administration, and an authority entrusted with managing change and plays the role of "Change Agent". The following paragraphs show the status of administrative structures with description of the problems of inter-relations among various government agencies, and the plans set for the reform of public administration.

3.3.1. Administrative Structures

Present administrative structures in the Syrian government administration focus on pursuing the daily issues, and the effort to do this makes these structures unable to effectively manage change programs, as the daily follow-up of excessive bureaucracy-based complex transactions depletes the time and effort of the administrative cadres. Besides, the mismatch of powers and responsibilities in various administrative positions leads to powers overlap and responsibilities conflict, and all this affects the appropriate management of development projects.

Although the 10th FYP adopts the principle of indicative planning as an alternative to central planning, it does not submit a proposal for more flexible administration structure capable of interacting with the system of indicative planning. The document of the 10th FYP has focused on this problem identifying a range of challenges to the current administrative structures, which we show as follows[7]:

Challenges that must be addressed through the new methodology for administrative reform:

- ➢ Organizational structures that rely on the central administration and excessive bureaucracy, red tape and duplication, as well as lack of effective administrative hierarchy, commitment, authorization mechanism and accurate follow-up.
- ➢ No clear role or work mechanisms of government administration, especially in light of the requirements of the social market economy.
- ➢ Traditions and residue of the central bureaucratic system, which have deep roots in the Syrian administrative custom at all levels.
- ➢ No clear boundaries of responsibilities and powers within the government administration itself and in its relationship with the others.

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[7] The 10th FYP – Rational Governance – P. 869-870

- Sever failure to develop qualification programs and train and develop capacities and skills of the human resources in public agencies.
- The incongruity of income levels in the public agencies with the living needs of its employees.
- Poor relations and coordination of public agencies with the private sector and the civil society.
- A large scale of the administrative reform process does not depend on continuity.
- Most government departments lack an active planning body.

During 2008, MOCT developed standards for IT, which includes a proposal to create a post of Chief Information Officer (CIO) in the public institutions[8]. A CIO is the senior expert of information systems in any organization, and leads the development of institutional information systems and follows up the professional development of IT employees. In most government institutions, CIO is responsible for developing an institution's IT strategy in line with the strategy of the works adopted by the institution, and in a way that ensures that IT projects, including e-government projects, support the administrative development programs adopted by the institution. However, governmental administration has so far had no integrated model for managing human resources.

3.3.2. Inter-Relations among Government Agencies

Most often, coordination of work among various government agencies is accomplished through forming joint committees or task teams. This method's disadvantage is the huge consumption of time of the members of these teams especially that they don't get appropriate compensations for their work within these committees to motivate them to work overtime. With no clear mechanisms for the working methods of these committees, in particular with regard to their interdependence (in procedures) with the existing administrative structures, administrative hierarchy, authorities and responsibilities, and because of the large number of these committees and assigning the same person to work in several committees, the ability of these committees to complete their work within the available margins of time is doubtful so that even coordination of meetings among these committees becomes difficult because of the different connections among the employees. Therefore, more efficient ways to coordinate work between various actors within the public administration should be sought. The 10th FYP points out that the weakness is not limited to the relationships within the government system, but also includes the "poor relations and coordination of public bodies with the private sector and civil society."

3.3.3. Public Administration Reform

The 10th FYP[9] indicates that the Syrian public administration employs about 7% of the population. The study considers such ratio is high comparing with other countries in the region (5.7% in Egypt and 1.7% in Jordan), and comparing with the world rates (2% in Africa and 2.6% in the Far East). The 10th FYP has placed a set of targets that lead to realise the concept of rational governance in the Syrian government administration. Public administration reform has been regarded as one of the major themes of this orientation, and the following steps of the administrative reform process have been identified.

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[8] Regulatory Document – ICT Criteria – Document Code – ISMF-ICT/3.21
[9] The 10th FYP in the Syrian Arab Republic – Rational Governance and Institutional Development Document

Administrative reform objectives[10]

> ➢ Re-structuring the organizational structure of the government departments away from centralism; focusing on restructuring the administrative sector on the basis of an accurate description of job, those performing it, outputs and the required expertise to form the basis for evaluating and strengthening the institutional role in terms of flexibility and good performance; and redistributing powers and responsibilities within the same department and among departments to ensure clear and practical delegation and constant follow-up of the implementation.
> ➢ Building practical, technical and administrative correlation among all government departments and agencies, and providing the best performance and best services to citizens and business away from corruption and cronyism.
> ➢ Reforming and modernizing administrative procedures to be more flexible, effective and transparent, and standardizing references of control and custodian bodies to enable them to adjust and repair the administrative and legal defect before it occurs, and root out corruption through developing radical solutions to drain its resources and eliminate it at all levels.
> ➢ Applying the-state-of-the-art ICT to support the processes of modernization and administrative and economic reform, including the application of complete systems for e-government and internet websites, work flow, managing the administrative and financial affairs, as well as linking all government agencies to the private sector.

At the level of executive steps related to the administrative development, a series of steps have been proposed, such as:

> ➢ Creating a high-level committee headed by the Prime Minister to oversee the institutional and administrative reform.
> ➢ Re-engineering the organizational structures of the government administrative units (selected ministries, agencies and institutions), defining the main tasks and functions they carry out and distributing tasks, responsibilities and powers.
> ➢ Transition to a decentralized government administration.
> ➢ Re-engineering all procedures, particularly those through which the government provides services to citizens and business to make them more transparent, effective and disciplined.
> ➢ Developing workplaces to provide security, safety, comfort, and best interaction between state officials and citizens in respect of procedures and services.
> ➢ Setting the "one stop" system to provide services to citizens and developing a civil service communication centre.
> ➢ Developing workflow systems to facilitate the processes of petitions and keeping track of all transactions. These systems measure employees' effectiveness and productivity and evaluate their performance while on duty.
> ➢ Creating a mechanism for filing complaints and how to deal with them and follow them up.
> ➢ Developing indicators and standards to measure performance and productivity at all levels.

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[10] The 10th FYP - Rational Governance – P. 871

A set of programs has been proposed to put these proposals into force, such as (improving the administration's relationship with citizens program - creating offices for the relationship with the citizens program - simplification of procedures program - deepening decentralization applications program - Syrian administration qualification program). However, absence of administrative frameworks of change, which allow launching and managing change programs with the appropriate competence and ensure their continuity, has led to slow rates of implementation of the said programs. Therefore, the steps achieved in the various ministries were not properly coordinated, which led to a decline in the effectiveness of these activities. Regarding the simplification of procedures program which has been proposed to be implemented under the auspices of the State Planning Commission (SPC), GSR program has been launched in cooperation with UNDP with a funding of $ 11 million[11] for five years. This program has already started and so far the following agencies participate in it: MOCT, Ministry of Transport, STE and Syrian Post. Other agencies are expected to join gradually.

On the other hand, Law No. 22 of 2005 founded the Syrian Commission on Financial Markets & Securities (SCFMS) as the first governing agency; autonomous in its resources and in establishing its own by-law, including the foundations of appointment; and specifying the criteria for internal and external audit. This has led to the establishment of a different administrative mechanism for managing the governing government institutions, and thus opened the door to the establishment of other bodies that have the required managerial flexibility, such as Law No. 15 of 2008 creating the General Authority for Development and Real Estate Investment, and Law No. 4 of 2009 of e-signature and network services. The independent bodies are expected to play an increasing role in the establishment of government institutions with financial and administrative independence, and thus able to attract talents, and work with the required efficiency.

3.4. Human and Cultural Conditions

Employees of government administration must enjoy a range of skills and experiences to be able to contribute to the E-Government Initiative both in the early stages of the preparation of the Initiative and in the subsequent implementation stages. Also, culture of the importance of change in the administrative system must be promoted so that a culture of change would become a reality in government administration. The extent to which citizens interact with government services is largely linked to the general educational level.

Government spending on education increased from 8% of the total government expenditure in 1987 to 18% in 2007, when spending reached SYP 91 billion. In 2008, the literates' rate was 80%, while the rate of education enrolment was 64%[12].

3.4.1. Computer Illiteracy and Popularity of Use

In cooperation with (UNESCO Cairo Office) and the Syrian Computer Society (SCS), Ministry of Education (MOE) has started a program to teach the basics of computer in schools. In 2003, SCS also signed a contract with UNESCO Cairo Office making it the sole agent representing this office in Syria with respect to the certificates of international computer

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[11] GSR Document – 9-12-2005
[12] UN survey for e-government - 2008

driving license (ICDL)[13]. This includes promoting this program and granting accreditation for training and test centres of this certificate as well as managing and supervising its exams.

This program grants licenses to conduct ICDL courses to the public and private sectors educational centres. So far, 54 licenses have been granted[14]. In early 2009, the Prime Ministry issued a decision committing the categories I and II applicants to the recruitment competitions of the State to obtain ICDL certificate or any equivalent license, and a certificate of passing the National Test of English language.

3.4.2. Skills at Public Sector

Even though the government effort exerted in information capacity-building, the public sector is still in need of more advanced IT expertise. The phenomenon of quitting employees after being trained is an obsession of the government administration, and the lack of standards for professional work in government departments limits the effects of capacity-building.

Ministry of Higher Education Information Technology Centre (ITC) has been created. It provides professional training for some commonly used specializations, such as (MCSE, CCNA, CCNB and OCP), and there are many private centres that offer similar curricula.

The 10th FYP considers that the absence of appropriate programs to build capacity in the public sector is one of the main obstacles to the development of public administration. This results in weakening the productivity of public administration employees, and consequently, not achieving the work with the required quality. In addition, the traditional mechanism for promotion, rewards and compensations are not sufficient incentives to develop their abilities or to make them actively participate in development initiatives. Also, low salaries increase quitting of government administration experienced employees, and may lead to increased rates of corruption.

The Syrian government has made efforts to develop a job ranking project[15] which aims to provide an opportunity to reward the hard-working employees and encourage the delinquents to make the necessary effort to improve their career performance. The project adopts the principle of categorizing employees as those who are seriously striving for developing their institutions through developing themselves (the human staff) as an essential instrument of administrative reform, and those who do not try to improve their capacities which accumulates the problem forming by time the so-called occupational complacency. Treatment is performed according to the following five bases: recruitment, qualification, performance measurement (evaluation), promotion and motivation.

On the other hand, Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), in collaboration with the University of Damascus, has established a program for qualifying IT departments' staff to a level of a director of IT department. The program was put into action between 2005 and 2008, during which 7 training courses were held with 137 participants. Recently, a new program for qualifying CIOs has been announced, which will be implemented during the

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[13] Syrian Thawra Newspaper – issue no. 13321 - 27/5/2007
[14] ICDL website (www.unescoicdl.org)
[15] An interview with the Secretary of the Council of Ministers Prof. Maher Mujtahed, published in the Syrian Tishreen Newspaper on 10-2-2009

years 2009 – 2010. This program includes 3 courses of training, in each 25 trainees will participate, bringing the number of participants to 75 trainees from various Syrian government departments.

Concerning qualifying the leading cadres, The National Institute of Public Administration (INA) was created through the Legislative Decree No. /27/ of 2002 in cooperation with École Nationale d'Administration in France. INA is an independent scientific body linked to the Minister of Higher Education, and have been assigned the following tasks:

➢ Prepare, qualify and train senior leading cadres for public administration.
➢ Qualify and train personnel of the public administration.
➢ Conduct research and studies, and provide consulting for public agencies.

INA aims to train Syrian senior employees who, after ending their qualifying periods, will occupy major positions in the various departments of the State. 50 students join the Institute annually, half of them have government positions such as managers or department heads whose jobs are related to administration, while the other half are ordinary students. Number of graduates reached 205 at the end of 2008.

3.4.3. The National Initiative for Capacity-Building

ICT Strategy includes the "National Initiative for Capacity-Building", which aims to improve the technical capacities of the Syrian graduates in the field of ICT to a decent level and support the use of these technologies in general at all levels of university education in order to improve the productivity of various economic sectors in Syria through a set of principles, the most important of which are[16]:

➢ Set frameworks and regulations to improve the educational capacities, reform and restructure the public university system, encourage the specialized universities, and launch the necessary qualitative programs in this area.
➢ Graduate highly qualified batches in ICT and its services.
➢ Link the applied scientific research in the Syrian universities and research centres to the economic actors.
➢ Promote the use of ICT to improve productivity of industry, agriculture and services.

In this context, a specialized MA degree "Qualification and specialization MA Degree in the management of regulating telecommunication and information" has been launched in cooperation with the Higher Institute of Business Administration (HIBA) and MOCT. Study period is two years, and the curriculum covers the following subjects: (basics of economics, basics of administration, sources and rules of commitment, communication technologies, financial management, communication skills, Trade and Companies Law, projects management, IT international organizations, ICT strategies and policy, ethics of profession, managing telecommunication companies, regulate telecommunications, economy and services of information society, and scientific research methodologies). A Student has to set a thesis in the second year.

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[16] ICT Strategy – Agenda and Executive Plans

3.5. Financial Conditions

Generally, cost of founding E-Government Initiative is relatively high. Therefore, the effective management of resources and the search for innovative ways of funding are crucial factors which ensure the sustainability of the projects which will be launched through the Initiative. Syria's GDP was about $ 44 billion in 2008 and $ 39 billion in 2007. According to World Bank, Syria was classified among the (below the average) countries in terms of income level, as the GDP per capita (adjusted according to purchasing power) was 3808 dollars[17].

3.5.1. The Available Sources of Funding

In 2007, government revenues amounted to 21.8% of GDP[18]. Most revenues come from the following three major sectors: oil, governmental production institutions and taxes. Income from taxes amounted to SYP 309 billion ($ 6 billion) in 2007. On the other hand, government expenditure in 2007 amounted to 26.4% of GDP.

In 2008, current expenditure appropriations amounted to SYP 370 billion, while investment expenditure appropriations amounted to SYP 230 billion. At the end of 2008, the Council of Ministers submitted 2009 draft budget which amounted to SYP 685 billion, of which SYP 410 billion were for current expenditure and SYP 275 for investment expenditure. The following table shows the apportionment of the appropriations to the various items of the budget[19].

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[17] UNDP Human Development Report (HDR) – 2007 - 2008
[18] Syrian Economic Report – Bank Audi 2008
[19] The Syria Report on Sunday 21 December, 2008, SEBC

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General Services	8,594	4,321	12,915
Justice and Central Management	77,688	44,688	122,376
National Security	99,316	2,148	101,464
Foreign Affairs, Information and Expatiates	8,119	2,057	10,176
Higher Education	19,602	9,049	28,651
Education	44,105	9,505	53,610
Culture	1,555	580	2,135
Social Services	6,239	2,861	9,100
Economy and Finance	110,324	2,717	113,041
Agriculture	6,968	23,878	30,846
Extracting industries	134	21,472	21,606
Manufacturing industries	713	9,285	9,998
Electricity, Gas and Water	86	41,455	41,541
Building and Construction	125	970	1,095
Trade	750	2,633	3,383
Transport, Communication and Storage	682	36,337	37,019
Finance, Insurance and Real estate	0	4,334	4,334
Reserve fund for capital investments	0	55,710	55,710
Price Stabilization Fund	25,000	0	25,000
Others	0	1,000	1,000
TOTAL	410,000	275,000	685,000

Table 1: Apportionment of appropriation to various items in 2009 budget

3.5.2. Mechanism of Apportionment of Appropriations

The 10th FYP has developed a national system of priorities for selecting projects. The normative perspective adopted by the Plan requires that the project, in order to be selected, should achieve approved national standards. An objective standard that adopts the following nine criteria has been set[20]:

1	The Project contributes to the achievement of returns for broad social strata
2	Contributes directly to the alleviation of poverty
3	Has a sectoral priority with clear front and rear networking
4	Contributes to the achievement of regional balance among governorates and leads to fair regional development
5	Certainly needs the government's participation in financing the project
6	Based on broad popular participation
7	Depends on local execution within the context of decentralization
8	Significantly contributes to the involvement of the private sector and enhances competitiveness
9	The evaluation of its previous performance in case of being a continuing project

Table 2: Criteria for prioritizing projects in the 10th FYP

The selected projects were classified into three groups according to their position on the scale of priorities and to what grades each project has got.

As noted, such mechanism to monitor the appropriations suffers centralism and lack of flexibility because it has already set priorities of the projects for the five years, which limits the possibility of allocating appropriations for the E-Government Initiative unless they were sanctioned earlier in the FYP, perhaps with some limited exceptions.

3.5.3. Sources of Non-Governmental Funding

The international organizations and NGOs engaged in development are additional sources of funding which can be relied upon. This option, however, requires efforts to search for common orientations and programs whose targets are similar to those of the proposed initiatives to ensure optimum benefit from such funding. It also requires creating an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluation, which is able to communicate with the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the funders.

3.5.4. Partnership between the Public and Private Sectors

The funding institutions, particularly private banks and holding companies which are more able to finance in addition to public banks, could contribute to the financing of some government activities.

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[20] The 10th FYP – Introduction to the Plan – Developing and following a National System of Priorities for selecting projects

Law No. 2 of 2005 allows the establishment of joint ventures between public and private sectors with the possibility of assigning to them some functions of the public institutions and companies in accordance with the following paragraph[21]:

Article -35- "Public institutions, companies and facilities may separate administration from ownership in some works and services, and the Council of Ministers issues a decision of approval upon a justified proposal of the competent minister."

Article -36- "Public institutions, companies and facilities may propose establishing joint ventures for some works and services provided that they are founded by legal instruments. The Prime Minister issues instructions relating to the implementation of the provisions of this article based on the proposal of the Ministry of Finance and the competent minister."

Although the above-mentioned article has set a legal ground for partnership between public and private sectors, the issues governing this partnership (such as service level agreement, way of sharing resources, mechanisms for selecting the private actors and supervising their work, and many of the points that reinforced the need for separate integrated legislation for the partnership between the public and private sectors) have not been addressed yet.

3.6. Communication Environment

E-Government Initiative requires dialogue with all stakeholders to build a common understanding of what to be done, and of the positive impacts of this Initiative on the community in general. Therefore, communication with stakeholders is an integral part of change process which e-government Initiative launches. Despite the fact that the Initiative is one of the initiatives proposed by ICT Strategy in Syria, and despite the widespread use of the term "e-government" within the activities of those workers in the field of IT in the government agencies, these activities are rarely reflected into specific projects.

On the other hand, the individual activities carried out in different governmental agencies have suffered the absence of the concept of partnership among government agencies, and between them and the beneficiaries, thus the e-government initiatives and activities have remained limited to the context of competition among the different governmental agencies. Although these isolated initiatives have resulted in an important group of government websites, most of which interact well with people, the absence of a culture of sharing information and services among government agencies have made the ceiling of services that can be provided by these websites limited because of its inability to cover cross-ministries services. On the other hand, the non-proliferation of the ideas of support provided by the Initiative to the administrative development of the government administration has limited the support of the (non-technical) government system, and particularly those concerned with management of e-government Initiative.

3.7. Technological Infrastructure

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[21] Law No. 2 of 2005 on public institutions, companies and facilities

A poor technological infrastructure is one of the most important constraints faced by developing countries during the introduction of its e-government initiatives, and Syria is no exception to this rule. According to United Nations e-Government readiness Index 2008[22], Syria ranked 119 out of 182 countries as the value of its index was 0.3614, which is lower than the average regional index (0.4875) and also lower than the average global index (0.4514). This composite index is composed of three sub-indices:

- ➢ Web measure index.
- ➢ Telecommunication infrastructure index.
- ➢ Human capital index

E-Government Readiness Data 2008

Ranking	Country	Web Measure Index	Infrastructure Index	Human Capital Index	E-Government Readiness Index
167	Syrian Arab Republic	0.2408	0.0923	0.7549	0.3614

Infrastructure Index 2008						
Ranking	Country	Internet Index	PC Index	Cellular Index	Main Telephone Lines Index	Broadband Index	Infrastructure Index
167	Syrian Arab Republic	0.087	0.046	0.156	0.172	0.001	0.0923

Infrastructure Data 2008						
Ranking	Country	Internet Per 100 Users	PC Per 100 Users	Cellular Subscribers Per 100 Users	Main Telephone Lines Per 100 Users	Broadband Per 100 Users
167	Syrian Arab Republic	7.69	4.20	23.96	16.62	0.03

Education Index 2008				
Ranking	Country	Adult Literacy	Gross Enrolment	Education Index
167	Syrian Arab Republic	80.8	64.770	0.7549

Service Delivery by Stages 2008 (% Utilization)						
Ranking	Country	I	II	III	IV	V	Total
167	Syrian Arab Republic	0	28	34	7	3	72

Table 3: Indices of Syrian readiness in the e-government field

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[22] UN e-Government survey 2008

With regard to the telecommunications sector, Syria ranked 109. In spite of the accepted figures for Syria in the land and mobile phone, the low penetration rates of the Internet, particularly in broadband Internet, have led to this relatively low rank. In 2008, limited modifications were made to the data upon which the UN report relied. The following table shows the current and planned figures in the field of telecommunications[23].

Telecommunication infrastructure	End of 2008	Planned /2010	2013 Targets
Internet Users /100 persons	3.5	12	30
PCs /100 persons	9	12	20
Main Telephone Lines /100 persons	18.2	21.5	24.5
Cellular telephones /100 persons	34	50	70
Broad banding /100 persons	00.5	1.6	3

Table 4: Indices of readiness of existing and planned infrastructure

3.7.1. Telecommunications Infrastructure

Use of wireless network is a major theme of the development of telecommunications sector in Syria. According to this vision, STE has signed two contracts, the first with the Syrian-German company and the second with Siemens and Ericsson, to deliver phone service to rural areas using wireless networks. The third rural project also plans to deliver phone service to half a million subscribers in 5,000 villages and sub-districts in all parts of the country[24]. With regard to mobile phone, number of subscribers reached to about 6 million at the end of 2007. The two operators companies offered a range of new services during 2007, including six GPRS services to transfer data. Recently, internet 3G service has been made available.

3.7.2. Citizen Service Centres

In 2008, MOCT established the first Citizen Service Centre at al-Qadam area south of Damascus. The Centre plays the role of "mediator and guarantor" between the government and citizens. It receives the citizens' requests for access to government services, meaning that the citizens consent to be represented by the Centre before the government. The Centre aims to provide an additional channel which can be used by citizens to obtain government services; and to raise the quality of service provided to citizens through the reduction of direct contact between government employees and the citizens. The Centre currently offers 3 main services (10 different transactions), and plans are under preparation for opening other centres in different parts of Syria.

3.8. Data and Information Systems

Information systems, work procedures and data are central compounds which support any e-government initiative. In Syria, the process of transferring data from paper to digital form has gone a considerable way; however, it is relatively slow and does not produce data of adequate

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[23] Directorate of Planning - STE
[24] (Annual Business Economic and Political Review: Syria, OXFORD BUSINESS GROUP 2008) bulletin

quality. Additional measures should be taken to ensure the good quality of the government digital data records.

3.8.1. The Government Main Digital Records

➢ **Civil registry database:**

The Ministry of Interior has created an electronic database of the civil registry records in Syria within the framework of automation of the civil registry project. The result is a database at the national level, which contains the national numbers of the citizens and the family numbers. 28 million civil registers (citizens registered since 1922 until now) and 4 million family records have been entered. In March 2005, linking information of all the 254 civil registry branches to a unified information network was completed. Through this network, access can be made to the integrated database of the civil registry through special servers for each governorate, and through a national server that contains all the data of the civil registry in Syria. Thus, any data of new occurrences of (birth - marriage - divorce) will be recorded and carried out using the information system, including the obtaining of documents relating to these data. However, the database of families is still in need of different reviews to ensure good quality of data before final adoption.

➢ **Database of commercial and industrial registers of individuals and companies**

Ministry of Economy and Trade has launched a project to replace its dispersed commercial registers databases with a unified and integrated database, and to complete its data with statements from the paper records of individuals and companies. 100,000 registers of Damascus and Rural Damascus have been completed so far (about 30% of all commercial registers in Syria).

Ministry of Industry has started creating a database for industrial registers and licenses at the national level. So far, about 10,000 registers (10% -15% of the total registers) are available.

➢ **Database of vehicles**

Ministry of Transport has a digital database for 1.3 million vehicles registered in Syria. However, these records are within different databases in each governorate. Efforts must be made to make these data available within a national integrated database.

➢ **Real estate and residency database**

Until now, there has been no e-database for real estate and residency. There is a collection of various paper records of houses such as (the permanent register, provisional register, under construction houses of housing associations and housing companies, illegal settlements). Numerous efforts have been made to give numbers to houses in preparation for moving the databases to the electronic form. Also, several studies to address the problems of multiple records have been conducted.

3.8.2. Quality and Security of Databases

General Framework for E-Government Initiative in Syria

Despite the significant strides the process of transferring government records into the electronic form has made, adopting such data effectively and using them as national databases by the government agencies need to address the problem of data accuracy, completeness and updating, as databases are still not based on unified national classifications. This type of addressing has not begun yet.

On the other hand, efforts must be made to make these data available through highly efficient information systems. Here, we believe that great efforts should be done, especially with regard to the service level associated with the efficiency of operating and maintaining information systems already working or to be created. Due to the mentioned problems, the national databases are still unable to directly support the daily work, and still used as a reserve for paper records. However, the process of establishing the role of automated information systems in managing the daily work has been launched in most of these agencies.

4. SWOT Analysis

The following table provides an analysis of e-Government readiness according to SWOT analysis classified in conformity with the various themes that have been studied before.

4.1. Strengths

Theme	Strengths
Political framework	– The political leadership has adopted the development and modernization process. – Adoption of a participatory approach in the relationship between government and citizens.
Legislative and regulatory framework	– Standards for information security. – Standards for IT projects supply and contracting procedures. – Law on "e-signature and web services" has been issued.
Institutional framework	– Independent bodies able to attract experienced staff and have the flexibility to execute their work with the required efficiency have been established.
Human and cultural conditions	– The public sector has a number of cadres qualified to work in the E-Government Initiative, through assuming a role in the information management or information systems management.
Financial conditions	– The Syrian private sector is able to contribute to the finance of relatively large projects. – The government can fund infrastructure projects, and some other vital projects.
Communication environment	– The Syrian government has adopted the E-Government Initiative as one of the initiatives of ICT Strategy. – The current Syrian government websites are in active status in terms of content, number of visitors and the level of their interaction through these websites.
Technological infrastructure	– Both land and mobile phones have acceptable penetration rates. – Citizen service centres as a new channel for citizens to access the government services are being established. – MOCT information services centre is being established.
Data and information systems	– Most basic data are electronically available with quality rates that can be built upon (individuals, commercial and industrial actors, vehicles)

4.2. Weaknesses

Theme	Weaknesses
Political framework	– No authorized agency for change management at the level of government as a whole.
Legislative and organizational framework	– No legislation of privacy policy of personal data at the government administration. – No legislation for the foundations of publishing government system information and methods to access that information, so as to promote the concept of transparency. – Poor procedures for IT projects planning, imports, installation and operation.
Institutional framework	– Government system is based on centralization and bureaucracy. – Overlapping of powers and responsibilities. – Lack of cooperation among various government agencies.
Human and cultural conditions	– Poor incentives for public employees to effectively participate in the process of change. – Lack of IT expertise and advanced information management in the government system.
Financial conditions	– Appropriations are centrally allocated, with no sufficient flexibility for change them. – Auditing focuses on inputs rather than outputs or outcomes.
Communication environment	– No clear plan to communicate with citizens and other stakeholders concerning development issues. – Poor level of awareness of ICT ability, especially the E-Government Initiative, to contribute to the development of public administration.
Technological infrastructure	– Limited spread of Internet. – Poor spread of broadband Internet. – Lack of IT governance measures in government departments.
Data and information systems	– Absence of some essential national data banks, such as real estate and residency data, as well as limited coverage for others. – No standard coding for basic reference information. – Limited exchange of information among government departments.

4.3. Opportunities

Theme	Opportunities
Political framework	– Active political will towards reform.
Legislative and organizational framework	– Trend towards regulating the telecommunications sector through the new telecommunications law. – Preparing a draft law on e-commerce and transactions. – Preparing a draft law on IPR.
Institutional framework	– High rates of awareness and support for the importance and necessity of public administration reform. – Implementation of GSR which includes components for developing procedures of government administrations. – Government authorities' orientation to approve the creation of CIO position.
Human and cultural conditions	– Preparation for launching job ranking project. – Launching the National Initiative for Capacity-Building within ICT Strategy. – Relatively low-level of IT illiteracy. – Large number of highly qualified cadres (engineers and technicians) in the Syrian private sector. – Syrian expatriate expertise that can support local expertise. – Establishment of INA to qualify the government administrative cadres.
Financial conditions	– Possibility to make partnerships between the public and private sectors. – Public and private banks and financial holding companies are potential sources of funding for projects that may be presented. – International organizations and NGOs can fund and foster some initiatives.
Communication environment	– Extensive network of media able to address the masses, and can be used to communicate with citizens (public and private newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, websites, road advertising, mobile phone and others). – Many expertise in the private sector (private companies) are able to design and implement appropriate information campaigns.
Technological infrastructure	– Plans are underway to increase broadband internet penetration rates. – Plans to designate the current network to exchange data to network government agencies. – Significant increase in number of Syrian websites.
Data and information systems	– Growing awareness of the importance of data sharing among government agencies. – Plans to complete and refine digital data in many government agencies.

4.4. Threats

Theme	Threats
Political framework	– Resistance to change within the government administration.
Legislative and organizational framework	– Reviewing and approving draft laws require long periods.
Institutional framework	– Lack of incentives that allow the government administration employees to interact with programs of change. – Lack of initiatives and effective programs necessary to develop government administration. – No institutional motivations to launch development processes.
Human and cultural conditions	– Low income of public administration employees. – Increased rates of government employees quitting.
Financial conditions	– Relatively limited rates of investment spending in IT, software and development management. – No proper consideration for the concept of partnership between the public and private sectors.
Communication environment	– E-Government Initiative is perceived as a tool for competition rather than cooperation among government agencies. – Poor communication between citizens and official media. – Some variation in the figures announced by the government agencies.
Technological infrastructure	– Limited amount of government investments in infrastructure. – Shortage of highly qualified cadres capable of operating and maintaining advanced IT systems.
Data and information systems	– No precise or specific deadlines to complete the national information banks or update their content. – No information strategies in government departments. – Limited measures for protecting data security and privacy policy.

5. The Proposed Approaches to E-Government Initiative in Syria
    5.1. The Preparatory Stage for the Initiative

MOCT has signed a memorandum of understanding with GSR to prepare for the e-government Initiative, which includes the development of a draft strategy for the Initiative.

5.2. Steps for Developing E-Government Strategy

The following figure shows development steps to be followed, which will ensure the broad participation of various stakeholders in the preparatory phase of the Initiative.
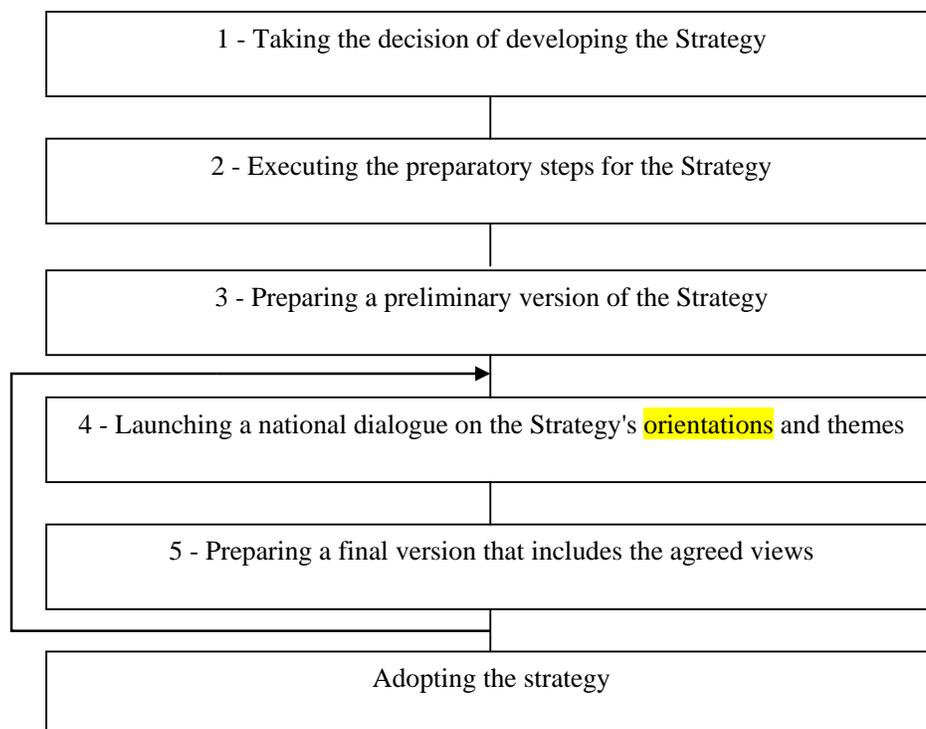
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        1 - Taking the decision of developing the Strategy      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        2 - Executing the preparatory steps for the Strategy    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        3 - Preparing a preliminary version of the Strategy     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  4 - Launching a national dialogue on the Strategy's orientations and themes  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      5 - Preparing a final version that includes the agreed views   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                     Adopting the strategy                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2: Steps of developing E-Government Strategy

5.3. Features of the Current Reality

E-government initiatives orientations are similar in different countries, but the method and speed of achieving these targets must take into account the results of evaluating the reality and the available resources in order to ensure the achieving of the Strategy targets. Generally, results of evaluating the reality in Syria show that its most important features are:

➢ Each ministry manages its own data, and maintains most of these data in its internal records which it uses to provide its services to the beneficiaries. It is difficult to ask the ministries to share their data and services at an early stage of the transformation process, and it is better to develop the standards that govern this and the means to evaluate the provided services and stimulate the transition in accordance with the new standards.

- Not all ministries have banks of information for their own data, and some of these banks are incomplete.
- Limited budgets for informatics and administrative development projects, which calls for the adoption of multi-stage methodology consistent with the available appropriations and capacities.
- Addressing networking among ministries needs a relatively long time and decentralized participatory mechanisms to save time and distribute effort.
- Resistance to change is expected, which necessitate a clear mechanism for managing change based on the empowerment of ministries to work without waiting for the readiness of other ministries.

5.4. Foundations of the Syrian Approach of the Initiative

In order to ensure the best ingredients for the success of the Initiative, the Strategy has been developed building on the main features of reality as set out above, by addressing the following frameworks:

(Time framework and stages, organizational framework and management of change, and technical framework and distribution of responsibilities). Therefore, the following foundations have been adopted:

5.4.1. Time Framework and Stages

Stage I (2009 – 2010):

During this stage, efforts will be made to accomplish the following:

- Creating and publishing information on government services.
- Completing the legislative and technical infrastructure and its associated standards.
- Completing the national data banks (as much as possible).
- Ministries are to complete their current e-government projects and publish their services at the level of the available readiness, through the e-government portal.
- Releasing some basic and high-priority services.
- Preparing an enabling environment and activating different channels to provide the citizens with the services (land phone, mobile phone, citizen service centres, internet..etc.)
- Some beneficiaries confidence-building measures on e-services.

Stage II (2011 – 2013):

During this stage, efforts will be made to accomplish the following:

- Providing the largest possible number of interactive services.
- Showing a unified image of government services (for citizens).
- Benefiting as much as possible from the common services and shared infrastructure.
- Encouraging the government agencies to share data as much as possible (by providing G2G services).
- Attracting the largest number of citizens to use e-services.

- ➢ Broaden the base of providing services to include the various channels of communication.

Stage III (2014 – 2020):

During this stage, efforts will be made to accomplish the following:

- ➢ Profound shifts in the ways of providing e-services, where citizens get complete "transactions" services electronically.
- ➢ Shift in the structures of government services toward integrated institutional structures, which makes the whole government administration use the common infrastructure and services, while each department does its own work.
- ➢ Introducing new services more appropriate to the needs of citizens.

5.4.2. Organizational Framework and Management of Change

Waiting for the establishment of new structures, the Strategy seeks to activate the existing administrative roles and structures. A set of new roles for the implementation of the Strategy will be proposed. The Strategy proposes a sponsor of each strategic theme, and an authority to oversee each of the operational programs contained in the Work Plan, provided that the proposed main roles are to be as follows:

Council of Ministers

Council of Ministers follows up work progress of the Initiative on the basis of the reports of the Steering Committee, approves launching any programs proposed by the Steering Committee and directs to allocate funds for them.

The Steering Committee for the e-government

It considers various reports filed by the Executive Team, follows up the progress of work in the various programs of the Strategy and submits necessary reports and proposals to the Council of Ministers.

The Steering Committee comprises representatives of the Initiative's key stakeholders. In quarterly meetings, it discusses the progress of work in the various adopted programs and recognizes the projects, with their financial allocations, which are proposed by the Executive Team after reviewing the quarterly reports of the Executive Team.

The Executive Team

It performs the following main tasks:

- ➢ Coordinating among the various ministries through their representatives to e-government Initiative.
- ➢ Monitoring and evaluation.
- ➢ Providing technical support to the different agencies when needed.
- ➢ Following up progress of work on current projects.

- ➢ Proposing new projects to the Steering Committee.
- ➢ Contributing to the standardization of information tasks and activities, and the principles of providing services to citizens.
- ➢ Developing inter-governmental agencies IT services and components.
- ➢ Developing and implementing a plan to market the e-government services.
- ➢ Launching e-services targeting the citizens.

E-government programs at ministries and bodies' projects

In addition to the programs introduced centrally, any ministry may launch its own internal projects related to e-government Initiative, and any specialized body may launch some shared services, provided that these programs and projects contribute to the service of the Strategy's targets and are approved by the Steering Committee, as well as the ministries are enabled to work on different speeds and in accordance with their financial capacities.

On the other hand, the Strategy suggests an interim working group to follow up the progress of the implementation of the Strategy till forming a permanent Executive Team after adopting the Strategy and formally launching its implementation stage.

5.4.3. Technical Framework and Distribution of Responsibilities

The technical dimension is a heavy burden on ministries, particularly the complex technical cases that may require the participation of several ministries to provide citizens with a service at an acceptable level. This obligates the Strategy to adopt the development of an "E-Government Enterprise Architecture" that supports the central planning to create standards for the uniform delivery of government services electronically, and supports the decentralized implementation based on the provision of appropriate technical tools, common services and infrastructure, which eases the burden of inter-coordination on the ministries. It is important that the process of assigning different tasks is consistent with the organizational structure described earlier with regard to the roles of various ministries and agencies. Following are some examples of the tools and services that can be provided:

- ➢ Publishing tools and access to services on the government portal.
- ➢ Tools of sharing data and interoperability.
- ➢ Telecommunications infrastructure.
- ➢ Multi-intermediate increasable programs with standards for the best intermediate programs.
- ➢ Communication channels according to different forms.
- ➢ Standards for internal forms and information, and mechanisms for transition to data without repetition.

Also, a model for the exchange of government services, which can separate between business requirements and technical requirements, is to be adopted. This model enables ministries and government agencies to fully oversee their data, which will lay the foundations for effectively managing networking among ministries and exchanging information and services among ministries, and between them and the bodies that may be created to provide some common services or technical infrastructure services.

6. Features of the Syrian E-Government Strategy
    6.1. Vision

Providing distinguished services to the beneficiaries (citizens and business) by increasing effectiveness, productivity and transparency of government work; and providing integrated e-services accessible by multiple channels; while maintaining the protection of the beneficiaries' personal data.

    6.2. Targets
        6.2.1. Targets of Stage I: at the End of 2010

➢ 70% of the services are available at the stage of publishing electronically.
➢ 30% of the basic services are provided electronically at the interactive level.
➢ 10% is the rate of using the available e-services (the proportion of e-channels users to traditional channel users).
➢ 5% of the total government services are available through channels other than the traditional one.

        6.2.2. Targets of Stage II: at the End of 2013

➢ 100% of the services are available at the stage of publishing electronically.
➢ 80% of the basic services are provided electronically at the interactive or transactions level.
➢ 30% is the rate of using the available e-services (the proportion of e-channels users to traditional channel users).
➢ 30% of the total government services are available through channels other than the traditional one.
➢ 30% of government supplies are conducted electronically.

        6.2.3. Targets of Stage III: at the End of 2020

➢ 100% of the basic services are provided electronically at the interactive or transactions level.
➢ 50% is the rate of using the available e-services (the proportion of e-channels users to traditional channel users).
➢ 70% of the total government services are available through channels other than the traditional one.
➢ 60% of government supplies are conducted electronically.

	2010	2013	2020
Services available at the stage of publishing electronically	70%	100%	-
Basic services provided electronically	30%	80%	100%
Rate of using the available e-services	10%	30%	50%
Access to government services through new additional channels	5%	30%	70%
E-government supplies	0%	30%	60%

6.3. Strategic Themes of the Work Plan

To achieve the targets of stage I and II, and in conformity with the orientations of the 10th FYP documents, stage I covers the remaining two years of the 10th FYP, while stage II covers the first three years of the 11th FYP. The work plan for stage III will be developed in light of progress of work in stages I and II. Both stages deal with the following strategic themes:

Strategic theme: Providing government services electronically
Sponsor: The Steering Committee
Outcomes: – Publishing structured and updated information on government services. – Providing interactive or transactions e-services. – Providing multiple-channelled services. – Increasing rates of using e-services. – Promoting government e-services. – Enhancing the participation of the beneficiaries in government affairs. – Realizing the satisfaction of beneficiaries. – Continuous improving the content of government websites and facilitating their use. – Reducing the service cost (for the beneficiary). – Increasing the added value that the beneficiary obtains. – Restructuring government services according to beneficiaries' needs. – Providing new services commensurate with beneficiaries' wishes and interests.
Indicators: – Proportion of the electronically available services in the three stages (publishing - interactive - transactions). – % of services provided interactively out of the total services. – % of websites that offer interactive or transactions services. – % of government agencies which have transactions websites. – % of services provided electronically (at each ministry). – % of citizens using e-services. – % of citizens using services (at each ministry). – % of growth of citizens using services. – % of citizens' complaints about quality of the provided e-services. – % of services that have been refined based on suggestions of the beneficiaries. – % of using government websites and services off duty hours. – % of customers' satisfaction. – % of growth of inquiries received electronically. – % of responses for inquiries received electronically. – % of citizens looking for information via the website. – % of government high quality websites. – Quality of the provided e-services. – % of decline in transaction cost for the citizens (transportation - stamps - fees – keeping track of transactions). – % of decline in transaction cost for businesses (transportation - stamps - fees – keeping track of transactions).

– % of time saved for citizens' transaction.	
– % of time saved for business transaction.	

Strategic theme: Developing the public administration

Sponsor: Prime Ministry

Outcomes:

- – Increasing efficiency of internal administrative processes.
- – Increasing efficiency of serving the beneficiaries.
- – Increasing efficiency of import procedures.
- – Streamlining internal procedures in each ministry.
- – Streamlining and harmonizing procedures among ministries.
- – Reducing burden of interior government works.
- – Controlling corruption and abuse of power.
- – Increasing the citizens' confidence in State institutions.
- – Achieving the maximum possible benefit from public expenditure.

Indicators

- – % of reduction in indirect costs (paper - mail fees - printers - copiers..etc.)
- – % of reduction in government direct cost of providing service.
- – % of reduction in the average time of providing the service to citizens.
- – Number of simplified procedures.
- – Savings achieved in purchase processes.
- – % of SMEs that use government import website.
- – Indicator for the increased citizens' confidence.
- – Syria ranking in index of government work transparency.

The strategic theme: Preparation of the enabling environment

Sponsor: MOCT

Outcomes:

- – Capacity-building of public administration on e-government.
- – Completing the legislative and regulatory environment.
- – Completing the construction of key national data banks.
- – Completing the readiness of IT infrastructures.
- – Designing and executing E-Government Enterprise Architecture.
- – Managing change factors for E-Government Initiative.

Indicators:

- – % of the cadres that received training in areas related to the government.
- – Incentives associated with the development of specialized expertise.
- – % of e-government projects funded by the private sector.

- Enacting cyberspace laws.
- Adopting contracts law amendments related to IT systems tenders.
- Organizing the telecommunications sector.
- Adopting the concept of programs and projects management.
- Number of digital banks and rates of data completeness and accuracy.
- Number of exchanged electronic documents.
- Number of transactions related to electronic documents.
- % of electronic transactions that use the beneficiary identifying code.
- Number of the government agencies that have adopted the confirmed architecture.
- % of number of systems compatible with the adopted architecture.
- % of repetition in the government data.
- % of government services that use common services.

Setting detailed plans for administrative development

➢ Setting a work program and a progress conception for managing change to facilitate reform processes and transform from the status quo to the situation expected in the short, medium and long term. This requires evaluating the readiness to change and way of committing the State and the political and technological class; setting prospects and dimensions of plans of effective training and development for the immediate beginning of the new situation, and plans of communications with citizens and business owners, accompanied with supporting and strengthening media and distributing information to ensure communication on the evolution of reform work and raising their awareness on their roles in reform processes, filing complaints and fighting against corruption.

➢ A high-level committee headed by the Prime Minister will be set up to oversee the process of institutional and administrative reform.

➢ Restructuring organizational structures of the government administrative units (selected ministries, agencies and institutions), defining the tasks and the main functions they carry out, as well as distributing tasks, responsibilities and powers according to a studied, practical and realistic administrative and occupational hierarchy, taking into account not to have conflicted jobs or repeated tasks and outputs.

➢ Studying entrusting social organizations, NGOs and the private sector to do some of the tasks performed by the central government to ease pressure and the increased burden on the government administration.

➢ Transforming into a decentralized government administration, developing the necessary policies and legislations and providing powers necessary for the actual implementation, taking into account monitoring and follow-up. In this context, many central functions will be assigned to local bodies and institutions to ease pressure on the central administration and secure government works and services in all governorates and their directorates and departments. Powers will also be granted to locally take and implement decisions. However, in cases of escalation or things that need policies and legislations at a high level, central authorities will take over.

➢ On the other hand, the central authority will qualify and train all concerned parties and resources at the local level to carry out their new tasks and begin to assume responsibilities in decision making and implementing.

➢ Fair scientific and practical distribution of work, so that no work pressure or external pressure may affect the decision-making process.

➢ Following modern administrative methodologies based on delegation, coordination and follow-up within departments and among state institutions and developing standards and indicators necessary to measure productivity and performance.

➢ Describing jobs in detail, indicating the outputs of each job and jobs inter-relationships, in addition to identifying ways of measuring their impact on each employee's functional behaviour development, training and development needs.

➢ Developing a strategy and plans to amend the government jobs as needed and transfer of staff among the various government bodies.

Updating the administrative procedures and government services

- ➤ Restructuring all procedures, particularly those through which the government provide services to citizens and business, to be marked with quality and good treatment among State officials, citizens and business owners, and to become more transparent, effective and disciplined, as well as less costly and wasting of time and effort. Highly qualified work teams will restructure organizational structures and procedures through standard methodologies and plans for change management.
- ➤ Developing work places and logistics to provide security, safety, comfort and the best interaction between State officials and citizens in respect of procedures and services.
- ➤ Developing the "One Stop" system to provide services to citizens and developing a communication centre for civil service.
- ➤ Developing workflow systems to facilitate the processes of petitions and keeping track of all transactions. These systems measure employees' effectiveness and productivity and evaluate their performance while on duty.
- ➤ Creating a mechanism for filing complaints and how to deal with and follow them up.
- ➤ Developing indicators and standards to measure performance and productivity at all levels.

Developing the human resources and skills of employees at all levels

- ➤ A long-term policy concerning the employees will be developed. It aims to enable and strengthen civil service, raise its morale and responsibilities, enhance opportunities for professional work and raise level of performance and professionalism for serving public interests and public affairs.
- ➤ Updating personnel management method at their different levels of the public bodies by assessing each employee's qualifications, experience and potentials to recognize the required expertise in order to develop and distribute them according to the needs and tasks through which the best performance and productivity can be presented at the level of the one public body in particular, and of the public bodies in general.
- ➤ Reforming salary system and developing incentive policy to ensure quality performance and better services. Salary level must be commensurate with employees' needs of a decent standard of living and a dignified life. Besides, improving salaries will encourage the Syrian expatriates to return to Syria to contribute to economic and social development. This also includes the application of a unified system of performance appraisal in a scientific, practical and fair way, through which the incentives will be granted for those who are worthy only, while those who are not will be dealt with in another way.
- ➤ Amending labour and labourers laws to improve level of income, provide social protection networks and social and health insurance, as well as facilitate recruitment and transfer among jobs in the State according to the needs.
- ➤ Training and developing State employees through developing training and qualifying programs that adopt the best practices with the provision of systems and effects to follow up and measure the impact and effectiveness. Training programs should be extended according to the needs of the employees to enable them to perform their basic tasks. On the other hand, programs will be set to develop the functional behaviour of each well and distinctively performing employee. The most important developing programs include administrative development training, time management, human resources management, delegation and follow-up, and dealing and communicating with employees and citizens. They also include training on modern

techniques to reduce the cost of transactions and improve performance and communicating with others. In addition, there will be foreign languages training programs because of their importance in modernization process and in dealing with technical changes, foreign investors and foreign countries, especially after putting the Association Agreement with the European Union into effect. It is advisable to create government institutions and contract with effective and fair sources of education to provide the best levels of training and services and get the best results.

➢ Creating highly qualified work teams to help in reform processes concerning the use of standardized training curricula and train trainers whom will be selected for those tasks.

➢ Promoting the culture of modern administration and the performance of public employees in order to ensure greater preparedness in terms of commitment and assuming responsibilities while performing their work.

➢ Developing effective control and follow-up means to fight systematic and indiscriminate corruption and providing appropriate support from the authorities at all levels to limit corruption and open the way for all citizens, staff of public and private entities at all levels and business owners to file complaints and make sure that they are filed in the correct and appropriate way to the competent authorities that process and follow them up to reach the desired results.

➢ Including a fair and effective evaluation system of the performance of the public bodies' staff, which includes performance standards and criteria, in addition to including appropriate incentives and disincentives with their application powers within the drafted laws and regulations.

Applying the latest ICT in administrative modernization

➢ Developing a comprehensive strategy to implement technology and communications infrastructure for the governmental facilities and keeping pace with the best international practices.

➢ Public institutions will be linked to uniform networks and operating systems.

➢ Administrative, financial and control systems, as well as systems to manage the flow of procedures will be put into effect to facilitate the work of public bodies, provide citizens with prompt and high quality services and follow them up closely, as well as limit all forms of corruption.

➢ A national centre for communicating with citizens will be established to provide the necessary information on State services and how to get them personally or through ICT.

➢ E-Government Strategy will be developed, and the infrastructure and human and material resources will be prepared to implement it through practical and effective stages that commensurate with the speed of its absorption by citizens and those working on it.

➢ Principle of the "One Stop" for government services, which relies mainly on ICT, will be activated.

➢ All employees of public agencies will be trained and qualified on the uses of ICT through mandatory and voluntary training programs depending on job requirements and wishes of the employees (who are not committed to use IT) to develop their skills and experiences.