

Overcoming Barriers to Administrative Simplification Strategies

GUIDANCE FOR POLICY MAKERS





ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

***Overcoming Barriers to Administrative
Simplification Strategies:
Guidance for Policy Makers***

2009

***Regulatory Policy Division
Directorate for Public Governance and Territorial Development***

Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Administrative simplification	6
1.2. Leading initiatives and international co-operation	9
2. Designing and implementing administrative simplification strategies	15
2.1. Administrative simplification strategies	15
2.2. Elements promoting administrative simplification strategies	25
2.3. Barriers to administrative simplification strategies	26
3. Experience overcoming barriers: 22 points for success	31
3.1. Strategic and policy approaches	31
3.2. Capacity building support	39
3.3. Institutional design	42
3.4. Supporting tools	44
4. Conclusions and checklist of good practices	53
Annex 1. 22 statements to overcome barriers to administrative simplification strategies based on OECD and Arab countries' experience	55
Annex 2. Matrix of barriers to administrative simplification strategies and approaches to overcome them	56
Bibliography	57

Boxes

Box 1. Reviewing the stock of regulation in Egypt	19
Box 2. Implementing the e-Government programme in Egypt	24
Box 3. The Standard Cost Model methodology	46
Box 4. Prioritising simplification reforms in Tunisia	47

*1. Introduction*¹

Administrative simplification strategies are designed to reduce regulatory complexity and uncertainty, and cut red tape reducing unnecessary burdens created by bureaucracy and paperwork. Its final objective is to promote the rule of law, efficiency and economically enabling environments. A number of barriers hamper the effective development of these strategies. Most barriers are found in many countries, which might lead one to think that these commonalities allow the undertaking of similar approaches to overcoming them. When discussing concrete issues and policy options, each country needs to develop its own model and adapt others' experiences to undertake administrative simplification successfully.

The purpose of this publication is to complement and expand the policy dialogue initiated at the seminar on “Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation” that took place in Cairo, Egypt on 18-19 June 2008.² This seminar was held in the framework of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative,³ specifically as part of the activities of the Working Group II on E-government and Administrative Simplification, chaired by Dubai and co-chaired by Italy and Korea, and in co-operation with Working Group IV on Public Private Partnerships, Public Service Delivery and Regulatory Reform, chaired by Tunisia and co-chaired by Italy, Canada and the Netherlands. The event was hosted by the Ministry of State for Administrative Development of Egypt and organised in co-operation with the OECD. This paper is one of the outcomes of the efforts made by OECD and MENA⁴ countries that actively participate in the GfD Initiative.

The goal is to disseminate knowledge about barriers encountered to the implementation of administrative simplification strategies and propose some ideas and good practices to effectively cut red tape. Readers are invited to send more comments and suggestions to the OECD Secretariat on how to overcome barriers to administrative simplification strategies.⁵

This document is articulated in a logical sequence starting from a definition of administrative simplification. The introductory session also discusses why administrative simplification is a relevant topic, what are the

main challenges today and some leading international achievements; the paper continues with a definition of strategies for administrative simplification including the elements structuring and promoting them; an identification of barriers to these strategies, differentiated between strategic and technical; and finally a brief description of some approaches based on OECD and MENA experiences overcoming them, gathered under four themes: policies, building capacities, institutions and tools. As a conclusion, a set of highlighted good practices aim at building successful administrative simplification strategies.

1.1. Administrative simplification

What is administrative simplification?

The challenge for governments is, on one hand, to balance their need to use administrative procedures as a source of information and as a tool for implementing public policies, and on the other, to minimise the interferences implied by these requirements in terms of the resources demanded to comply with them.⁶

Administrative simplification involves cutting red tape. Red tape originates from excessive regulation that can be redundant or bureaucratic, and thus hinder action or decision making. Red tape generally includes filling out unnecessary paperwork, and complying with excessive administrative procedures and requirements such as licences.

Thus, “administrative burdens refer to regulatory costs in the form of asking for permits, filling out forms, and reporting and notification requirements for the government.”⁷ These can be harmful if they unnecessarily limit innovation, trade, investment and economic efficiency in general.

Why is administrative simplification relevant today?

Administrative simplification is currently high on the political and policy agenda in most countries. It is one of the most effective methods for fighting against regulatory complexity and inflation. Governments are facing increasing and changing challenges and, in response, regulatory activities multiply red tape.

There are many advantages in cutting red tape and maintaining administrative requirements better adapted to real needs and circumstances. Three key benefits should be underlined: *i*) innovation can be encouraged through efficiency gains, *ii*) entrepreneurship can be favoured by fewer

administrative burdens, releasing resources otherwise devoted to red tape, and *iii*) better public governance can be attained with more effective tools available for policy implementation.

Visibility of cutting red tape policies has also been a support when launching reform. Administrative simplification can be very appealing politically as governments can gain constituency by reducing administrative costs to businesses and citizens, thus promoting a proactive and business enabling environment.

In MENA countries, some key challenges hampering the investment climate and thus their development are tackled through simplification. These challenges include business informality, high transaction costs (*e.g.* those linked to corruption), and lack of transparency, accountability and predictability of the public administration.

This is especially important for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are less equipped to face administrative burdens due to greater resource constraints. In the MENA region, this becomes more relevant because governments still play a large role in the economy. The competitiveness of SMEs is rather limited, constrained by the inhibitions that regulations impose on them.⁸ Burdensome administrative barriers may also reduce the attractiveness of a country to foreign investments. The most recent *Doing Business Report*⁹ shows that the MENA region lags behind others in terms of procedures to follow when starting up a business, which is the area where most MENA countries are undertaking reform efforts.¹⁰

How is administrative simplification implemented?

There are different routes to simplification. There is not one single model that can be applied everywhere. Administrative simplification policies can be designed either on an *ad hoc* basis focused in a sector, or on a rather comprehensive and long term perspective. Usually first steps are based on the first type of approach, providing outcomes and instruments to continue in other fields and expanding to reach other policy areas.

The administrative system is framed by institutions, policies and tools used by government. When cutting red tape, these elements need to be improved and their challenges tackled. As will be explained below, there are five main areas of work for cutting red tape: *i*) regulatory management reform to improve the framework of the administrative system, *ii*) organisational reengineering, *iii*) use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), *iv*) better information on the delivery of services and administrative requirements, and *v*) co-ordination of multiple requirements stemming from the public administration. Each of these five areas has developed its own techniques and methods.¹¹

Challenges ahead

Defining and identifying challenges for administrative simplification is not an easy task since they link to broader policy issues that are difficult to tackle simultaneously. The main objectives in cutting red tape should be to improve the efficiency of administrative processes needed to undertake economic and social activities, provide a co-operative relation between public administration and citizens, and minimise cost interferences to businesses and citizens. Some of the key challenges to meet these objectives are:

- *Build a constituency for administrative simplification.* Without support from a network of partners at a high political level, but also at a technical level, reforms might not attain expected goals. This support should not be taken for granted and needs to be gained.
- *Effective and efficient use of capacities and resources available.* Consideration of opportunity costs and benefit cost analysis of reforms are needed to rank priorities.
- *Manage institutional and organisational needs.* Administrative simplification is not embedded in the mandate of all government institutions; it needs to be pushed forward in a co-ordinated manner. The establishment of administrative simplification units inside government and outside taskforces can help with co-ordination and keeping up the path of reforms.¹²
- *Ensure sound multilevel governance.* Unco-ordinated government efforts at different levels of government might multiply the adverse effects of red tape. The approach should take into account that even though administrative requirements emanate from different institutions, the end user should be able to address all responsibilities using a common information source.
- *Involve all stakeholders fairly in administrative simplification strategies.* All relevant stakeholders and affected parties should be able to be involved in the administrative simplification reforms. This can also contribute to gaining constituency.
- *Develop and improve measurement and evaluation mechanisms.* The relevance of this challenge is two-folded: first, the strategies already in place need to be evaluated to ensure that their objectives are met, and second, there is still a lack of information on how red tape strategies impact and benefit public interest.

1.2. Leading initiatives and international co-operation

Administrative simplification in a programme of regulatory reform aims at improving efficiency. If there is a reduction in time and costs associated to regulatory compliance, efficiency gains in the economy will follow. A number of countries have only recently placed this improvement high on their political agenda, and the outcomes have varied from one to another. An observed trend has been the progression from *ad hoc* or sectoral approaches to “whole-of-government” programmes aiming at reducing administrative burdens, increasingly embedding the cutting through of red tape in policy making processes.¹³

Simplification has also been driven by the increasing adoption of market-based economic policies. This has been especially relevant for some Arab countries where the state’s role has been changing over the last years from provider to regulator. These changes have triggered government interest to provide enabling and fair market environments, at least in areas where public intervention had been demonstrated to be less efficient than markets, and there were no compelling arguments to justify a strong intervention to protect public interest.

Administrative simplification strategies have been developed using a broad range of tools and approaches that have allowed to make “quick wins” relatively easy to sell politically. In some cases these efforts have led to the integration of broader regulatory programmes. Today, the most innovative initiatives on administrative simplification include the improvement and sophistication of mechanisms for administrative burden measurement. In this field, the Standard Cost Model, designed in the Netherlands, is the most solid methodology to assess the effects of red tape, and the benefits of cutting it.

Businesses, especially SMEs, are still the main group targeted for administrative simplification efforts. However, many now include in their target citizens, non profitable institutions (known as the *third sector*), and the public administration itself.¹⁴

Countries have started at different points in time and with different objectives. Considering OECD member countries, some of the pioneers have been countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States. Other countries have followed and are undertaking comprehensive strategies for administrative simplification. All of them serve as examples of how to better understand administrative simplification and barriers which are found. Arab countries have followed uneven paths in administrative burden reduction, which has been a priority for many years. Administrative simplification has been part

of national plans to modernise and reform the administration, but it has been limited to general notions of updating laws and reviewing methods of operation.¹⁵ According to the *Doing Business Indicators 2008* (World Bank Group), the most popular reform to ease the regulatory environment for business in the MENA region was the improvement of the start-up procedures for businesses.¹⁶

Co-operation between countries has exponentially multiplied their policy outcomes as, for example, the exchange of information and co-operation between the Netherlands and Denmark, two of the most advanced countries innovating in this policy area.

OECD work on administrative simplification

The OECD has been at the forefront of the work on administrative simplification issues since the 1990s as a unique international forum where officials and practitioners share their experiences and techniques, thus accumulating knowledge. The *2005 Guiding Principles for Regulatory Quality and Performance*¹⁷ set the bases for the work on administrative simplification, and advised governments to “minimise the aggregate regulatory burden on those affected as an explicit objective to lessen administrative costs for citizens and businesses and as part of a policy stimulating economic efficiency”, and “measure the aggregate burdens while also taking account of the benefits of regulation.” These principles have been endorsed by all OECD member countries. The *2005 APEC-OECD Integrated Checklist on Regulatory Reform* encourages governments to promote approaches to regulation that “avoid unnecessary burdens on economic actors.”¹⁸

Analyses in this policy area have been presented in different publications such as *Cutting Red Tape: National Strategies for Administrative Simplification* (2006) and *From Red Tape to Smart Tape* (2003).¹⁹ These publications owe much to the peer-to-peer country reviews the OECD has undertaken on cutting red tape and regulatory reform, including the most recent ones on the Netherlands and Portugal. In the case of Portugal, the peer review analysed a double perspective including a combination of both administrative simplification and e-government to improve the regulatory environment.²⁰

Administrative simplification in the context of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative

Different focus policy areas of public governance are dealt within the GfD Initiative. Different working groups formed by officials and experts from OECD and MENA countries are dealing with each of these areas. Administrative simplification is closely related to the focus areas of e-government and regulatory reform. This topic has been identified from the outset of the initiative as a top priority for Arab countries. Policy dialogue activities are bringing value added to participating countries. For example, opinion surveys were completed at the end of two GfD seminars on administrative simplification held in Cairo, Egypt, in 2007 and 2008. The results of these surveys indicated that more than 84% of the participants thought the discussed topics were relevant and useful to their work.

The Cairo seminar from a strategic perspective: Satisfying a demand from Arab countries, work on administrative simplification in the future

In this context, the 2008 Seminar on "Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation" was held as a follow up of the seminar that took place one year before and was also hosted by the Egyptian government. The 2007 seminar helped consolidate a network of experts on administrative simplification in the region. The 2008 event gathered and expanded this same network to focus discussions on concrete barriers to administrative simplification strategies in a 'hands-on' practical atmosphere, with workshop sessions devoted to constructive win-win discussions.

At the end of the seminar participants confirmed their support to continue work on administrative simplification issues within the framework of the GfD Initiative and concretely on: *i*) designing a broad and long term strategy for administrative simplification; *ii*) overcoming barriers that block these strategies; and *iii*) methodologies for administrative burdens measurement, such as the Standard Cost Model. These priorities for future work were presented to and approved by the Steering Committee of the GfD Initiative held at the OECD Headquarters in Paris, France, on 5 July 2008.

Other initiatives

Another relevant international co-operation experience is led by the European Commission, which has promoted the reduction of red tape in different fields. The policy priorities of this initiative on administrative simplification were institutionalised through the *Lisbon Growth and Employment Strategy*. This initiative has triggered many reforms in Europe at national and sub national levels to simplify the regulatory environment.²¹

The World Bank Group has recently worked on measuring and benchmarking countries on enabling business environments. Part of these assessments is presented in the *Doing Business Indicators*.²² Looking at these indicators, the evolution of some of the MENA countries can be seen in temporal and regional perspective. The top global reformer in 2007 was Egypt, a country that has been also one of the most active countries within the framework of the GfD Initiative regarding administrative simplification, showing clear interest in improving public governance capacities. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were ranked in the 20 top countries on the ease of doing business. Tunisia, Yemen, Oman and Qatar also registered significant reforms. This offers only an indication of ongoing reforms and comparable measures of regulatory burdens faced by business. As they are simplified indicators, they risk missing out important information or encouraging a blind reduction of regulations, but taken with precaution, these indicators offer at least an overview benchmarking international trends.²³

The Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO) provides general guidelines, undertakes reviews of country case studies and offers technical assistance on different areas of public governance. One of them is administrative simplification and its latest publication reviews the efforts made in several Arab countries in administrative simplification to provide guidance, principles, methods and instruments. This analysis aims at providing the basis for further discussion among practitioners on the topics presented.²⁴

Other indicators also show the situation of regulatory burdens in different countries. For example, the Global Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum.²⁵

Notes

1. This publication was drafted by Pedro Andres-Amo, Policy Analyst, OECD Regulatory Policy Division. Nora-Elise Beck provided research assistance. Jennifer Stein prepared the text for publication. This work owes much to the useful comments and suggestions from Lorenzo Allio, Salih Arikan, Carly Avery, Ichrak Benbrahim, Fethia Brini, Marco Daglio, Josef Konvitz, Delia Rodrigo, Sidsel Sovik, Dominique de Vos, and Mike Waghorne.
2. www.oecd.org/document/8/0,3343,en_34645207_34744758_41122120_1_1_1_1,00.html .
3. www.oecd.org/mena/governance.
4. Eighteen Middle East and North African (MENA) delegations signed the Declaration of the Red Sea that launched the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative: Algeria, Bahrain, Dubai UAE, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Palestinian National Authority, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.
5. Please send any comments and suggestions to pedro.andresamo@oecd.org.
6. OECD (2002), *Regulatory Policies in OECD Countries: From Interventionism to Regulatory Governance*, Paris.
7. OECD (2006), *Cutting Red Tape: National Strategies for Administrative Simplification*, Paris.
8. SMEs play a rather important role in the economy of most Arab countries, except the oil producers.
9. Doing Business Report (2008), International Finance Corporation. World Bank Group.
10. These indicators are to be considered with caution. For a detailed assessment including some shortcomings see the report: *Taking the Measure of the Doing Business Indicators: An Independent Evaluation*. The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank Group at : <http://go.worldbank.org/KK32T2X0J0>
11. These five tools for cutting red tape were discussed at the seminar on “Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation”. They were presented by delegates from Denmark and the Netherlands as the tools used in these countries.
12. OECD (2003), *From Red Tape to Smart Tape. Administrative Simplification in OECD Countries*, Paris.
13. OECD (2006), *Cutting Red Tape. National Strategies for Administrative Simplification*, Paris.

14. OECD (2006), *Cutting Red Tape. National Strategies for Administrative Simplification*; OECD (2008), *Regulation Inside Government*; Heady, Lucy, and Sarah Keen (2008), *Turning the Tables in England. Putting English Charities in Control of Reporting*.
15. Farazmand, Ali (2002), *Administrative Reform in Developing Nations*.
16. Doing Business Indicators: www.doingbusiness.org.
17. *The OECD Guiding Principles for Regulatory Quality and Performance*, www.oecd.org/regreform/principles.
18. *The APEC-OECD Checklist on Regulatory Reform* available at: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/9/34989455.pdf.
19. More information, including by country, visit www.oecd.org/gov/regref.
20. www.oecd.org/gov/regref/portugal.
21. Donelan, Edward (2008), Administrative Simplification, an Overarching Policy to Maintain a Balance between the Protection of the Public Interest and Interests of Businesses.
22. www.doingbusiness.org.
23. These indicators are to be considered with caution. For a detailed assessment including some shortcomings see the report: *Taking the Measure of the Doing Business Indicators: An Independent Evaluation*. The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank Group at : <http://go.worldbank.org/KK32T2X0J0>
24. ARADO (2008), "Methodology and Process of Administrative Simplification", *Research and Studies*, Osama Jaradat.
25. www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/index.htm.

2. Designing and Implementing Administrative Simplification Strategies

How to overcome barriers to administrative simplification strategies in Arab countries has been highlighted as a priority in the programme of work of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) Initiative in Arab Countries. These barriers refer to the obstacles (Section 2.3) found when designing and implementing administrative simplification strategies or programmes. To understand this, a definition of administrative simplification strategies is needed (Sections 2.1. and 2.2).

2.1. Administrative simplification strategies

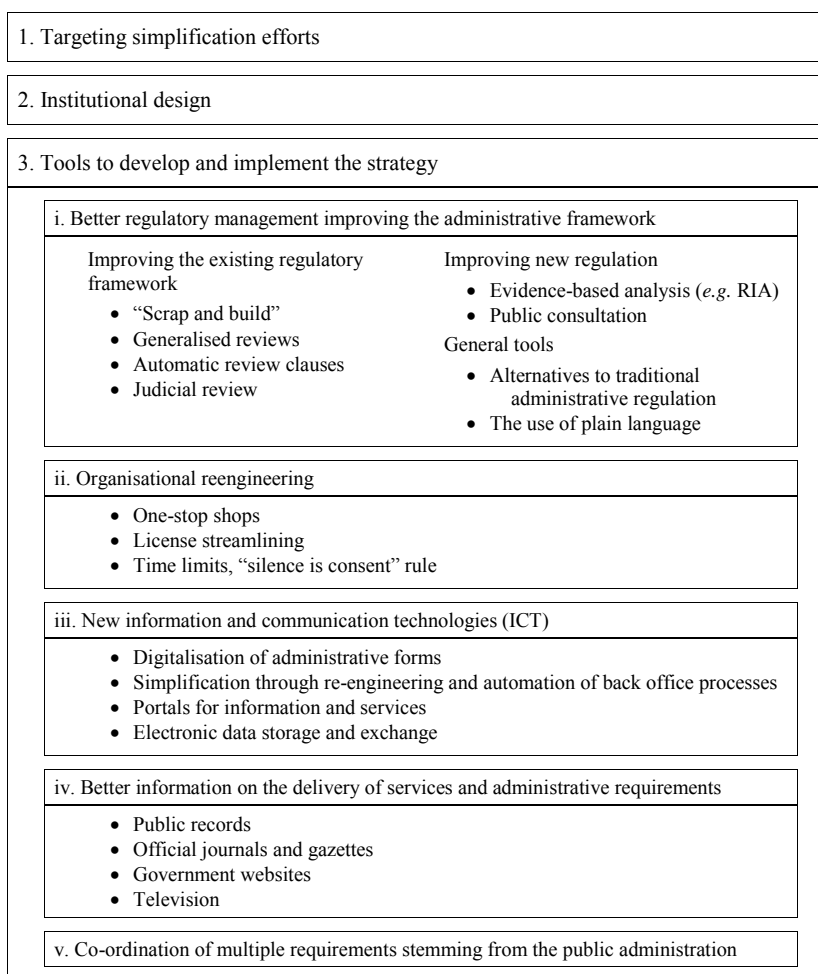
Simplification strategies are designed “to improve the efficiency of transactions with citizens and business without compromising regulatory benefits.”¹ These strategies are complex schemes for administrative simplification efforts, and should have a long-term and “whole-of-government” perspective. They need to be well thought through and be clearly defined by establishing measurable objectives, resources, timing, outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Strategies or programmes often prioritise concrete sectors or policy areas, but as achievements come, other areas also start to take on with reforms. The trend should lead towards a comprehensive approach to reduce the risk of creating administrative gaps between different sectors of activity, or government entities.

Strategies normally follow *sequential phases*: planning, consultation, design, implementation and evaluation:

- *Planning*. This is the first part of the process to set up a strategy for administrative simplification. Planning requires a preliminary identification of policy objectives, resources, capacities and tools to be used. During this phase, government officials have to sketch the way they want to achieve objectives in the most efficient manner (at lowest cost), and the most effective way (achieving defined objectives).

- *Consultation.* It is necessary to consult with stakeholders to gain political support. This phase of the project is essential to create constituencies for the strategies to be implemented. Consultation is important not only to echo the concerns expressed by stakeholders, which should be reflected in the strategy per se, but also to make the strategy relevant and viable in the medium and long term. Political support is fundamental to create momentum for reform and sequence the reform in the most appropriate way.
- *Design.* In this phase objectives, timing and resource allocation are established. The design phase should include variables that can be measured over time in relation to concrete outcomes. The design phase provides an opportunity to indicate clearly how policy objectives will be achieved, assessing the different variables that can interfere during the subsequent phases of the process. The tools to be used for simplification have to be integrated in the different stages of the project.
- *Implementation.* The tools for simplification are put into practice. It is time to review simplification tools focused on administrative provisions, improving guidelines for administrative regulation, communication mechanisms, incentives, etc.
- *Monitoring and evaluation.* This is an important element of the process that should be planned from the conception of the project in order to know if the policy strategy really contributes to the achievement of the desired objectives. On progress monitoring can contribute to assess how institutions participating in the project perform and could be able to improve the simplification strategy implementation. Techniques to monitor and evaluate include the use of quantitative and qualitative tools to measure administrative burden reduction.

Some of the *key elements* of a strategy can be gathered under three areas: simplification targets, institutional framework and tools available for administrative simplification (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Elements of an administrative simplification strategy

1) Targeting simplification efforts

A complete strategy requires defined objectives in qualitative and quantitative terms within a given timeframe, to avoid ideas that are too broad and imprecise declaration of intentions. For instance, the 25% reduction target proposed by different European countries to be obtained in a determined period of time is a solid target that helped move reform ahead. Defining priorities can be complemented by identifying targeted groups and the impacts of red tape on these, for instance, most of the administrative simplification efforts have concentrated on business, and in particular small and medium enterprises. Targeted groups can also be citizens, and public administration itself.

2) *Definition of institutions, responsibilities and co-ordination mechanisms*

A consolidated strategy for administrative simplification includes an institutional framework. Different government departments and other outside stakeholders share responsibilities to design, implement, supervise and measure outcomes of the strategy. As explained below, some experiences point out the relevance of central units to ensure co-ordination and long term commitment to the administrative simplification strategy. In Lebanon for instance, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) reviews and advises on simplification solutions for several ministries involved in the establishment of concrete administrative procedures.

3) *Tools to develop and implement the strategy*

Experience shows that there are different tools to be used in isolation or in combination. The selection of these tools is determined by political and administrative issues and not all of them are effectively applicable everywhere. These tools can be included in five categories: better regulation, organisational improvements, ICT implementation, better information and enhanced coherence among administrative requests.

(i) Better regulatory management improving the administrative framework

One of the most important elements of cutting red tape is the improvement of the regulatory backdrop of administrative burdens. This is done through improvement of regulatory processes and a review of the body of rules itself. A systematic approach can contribute to consistency and far reaching accomplishments over time. The process should include an assessment of regulations, signalling the most frequently requested administrative formalities and those with the heaviest burden impacts. The final goal is to improve the rule making mechanisms to ensure that regulation is created in accordance with predefined quality standards.

Once the assessment is available, there are a number of instruments available to improve the **existing regulatory framework** – *ex post* approach:

- “Scrap and build” is a severe approach that challenges the entire regulatory regime. It consists of a complete review of the regulatory system, rethinking its principles, and the interactions between regulators. It has not been used very often since it is costly and not always feasible. But when used it has delivered benefits rather quickly.

- Generalised reviews. This is less radical than “scrap and build” but it has delivered more modest results. This tool involves a review of the entire body of regulations against previously defined criteria. Mexico undertook a process of review that led to a 45% reduction of business formalities in 1999.

Box 1. Reviewing the stock of regulation in Egypt

In the last two decades, the government of Egypt has taken major steps to address impediments to economic growth, opportunities for business and wider civil society to join-in the benefits of an open market economy. The main impediments the country is still facing are:

- Excessive administrative burdens and red tape.
- Insufficient competition and market access for investors.
- Reduced transparency creating uncertainty regarding policies and regulations.

In 2007, the Egyptian Regulatory Reform Activity (ERRADA) launched a comprehensive regulatory reform, co-ordinating a wide range of government institutions including 12 ministries. The initiative is managed by a central committee that co-ordinates the work of units nested at each ministry. The final objective is to promote a low-cost and low-risk regulatory system in Egypt.

Four phases were envisaged to take place in sequence:

1. **Inventory of regulations** – each of the participating ministries collects, orders and classifies all laws and subordinate regulations, such as decrees, affecting individual citizens and businesses;
2. **Review of regulations** – this phase improves existing regulation, eliminates unnecessary or dated rules, and points out when new regulation is needed. This review is managed by a central authority in consultation with each of the participating ministries;
3. **E-registry** – an electronic registry of all laws and regulations combines and presents the results of the inventory and the outcomes of the review;
4. **Evidence-based policy tools** – once the stock of regulation is improved, evidence-based approaches, such as Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), are systematically applied by the government to inform economic policy.

Source: Seif Coutry and Sherif Fawzi, *Regulatory Reform: Building Egypt’s Competitive Advantage*, ERRADA. Presentations on 20 November 2007 and 29 April 2008.

- Automatic review clauses can establish an examination of the efficiency and effectiveness of regulation over time. Sun setting clauses are best known to ensure a review of regulation after a determined period of time. Other less restrictive clauses may provide a greater degree of flexibility and extend the validity period of a concrete regulation unless actual action is taken to eliminate or change it.
- Judicial review has been used as a tool to improve the application of administrative regulation. It can contribute to improving the administrative system by identifying poor quality regulations and proposing alternatives to the existing provisions. This is a mechanism which oversees general consistency of regulation, and the respect of general principles such as transparency, accountability and constitutionality.

Other better regulation policy tools are available to improve the **creation or the flow or regulation** – *ex ante* approach:

- Evidence-based approaches can improve the quality of new regulation by using instruments such as regulatory impact assessments (RIA), which can have a specific focus on administrative burden reduction. These instruments support better informed decision making and provide a more reliable regulatory system. A good example for this is the “Kafka test” in Belgium, which is applied to regulation with legal effect on businesses (about 20% of all regulation proposals).² Portugal is applying a similar method called “Simplex test”. And New Zealand has a specific Business Compliance Cost Statement (BCCS) to ensure that compliance costs of future policy measures are fully considered and kept as low as possible.
- Public consultation with relevant stakeholders and the public at large provides means to identify key problematic areas and learn about the irritations they provoke. There are multiple instruments that can be used to conduct public consultation such as informal consultation, circulation of regulatory proposals for public comment, public notice-and-comment, on-line tools for consultation, public hearings and advisory bodies.³ Some examples of the latter have provided effective cases of independent task forces combining the private sector’s perspectives in highly technical contexts. The Small Business Deregulation Taskforce in Australia provided measures of administrative burdens at federal level and

identified priorities for action. The 2005 Hampton report in the UK underlined the effects of regulatory inspection and enforcement and suggested a deep change in the conception of red tape by the introduction of risk-based approaches to regulation.

And still other more general tools to improve the regulatory framework such as alternatives to traditional command-and-control regulation, and the use of plain language in regulation.

- Alternatives to traditional administrative regulation. Regulation that is too restrictive and directive can hamper economic activities. As a way to provide better regulation, well adapted to effective conditions of markets and enhancing compliance by economic agents, co-regulation and self-regulation have been used as efficient arrangements where the private sector participates in regulatory responsibilities. Co-regulation implies that government co-operates with private entities in the setting of rules, and self-regulation offers the opportunity to the agents working in a certain industry to define a rule framework. These alternatives can only be used in certain cases of low risk and where mechanisms for collective oversight are effectively available.
- The use of plain language is an intuitive tool that can greatly improve regulatory compliance and enforcement. The easier it is to understand a regulation, the easier it will be to comply with its requirements.

(ii) Organisational reengineering

Better organisational management of the administrative system promotes efficiency. The best case to illustrate this approach is the creation of one-stop shops. These initiatives combine services delivered by different institutions channelled through a focal point so that final users are addressed by a “single window” to face multiple institutions’ requirements. The effectiveness of one-stop shops is multiplied exponentially if computing tools are introduced in the processes. Both Morocco and Tunisia have established one-stop shops to facilitate investment activities.

Process reengineering is a tool to revise and improve information transactions required by administrative formalities. Requirements can be either eliminated or transformed through redesign. Licences and permit reforms are the most popular implementation of process reengineering as they suppose one of the heaviest burden on investment, business start-ups

and public administration workload. Recent reforms are based on the presumption of freedom to develop a business. This is only implemented in low risk environments where practice shows that most demands are finally licensed, so licences can be requested once an activity has already commenced.

Another effective way to reduce burdens created by excessive workload of public administration is the use of time limits for administrative decision-making and the “silence is consent” rule. This implies that administrative requirements take place within a defined timeframe known by the end users. If compliance is observed bureaucracy can be minimised. Tunisia adopted this measure in 2007 and 2008 with two decrees giving the public administration response timeframe which includes in some cases the “silent is consent” rule.

(iii) Use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Another innovative approach to cutting red tape is the application of ICTs tools to simplify government operations and reduce the cost of transactions. However the impact of e-government – defined by the OECD as the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, to achieve better government – goes beyond the simplification of administrative procedures and operations. E-government has been recognised as a key policy tool to transform government, *i.e.* towards a government that costs less, provides user-focused quality services and uses ICTs to better engage citizens in policy making.⁴

ICTs offer immense possibilities for the reduction of administrative burdens as it improves information management, dissemination and transactions. First, the capacity to deal with enormous amounts of data can improve government responsiveness to external demands. Second, the reach of information dissemination is multiplied exponentially with the use of electronic means, especially using Internet-based and e-mail networks. And third, the electronic exchange of data instead of the traditional paperwork transactions is a powerful tool to reduce administrative burdens. Finally, time and space limits can be effectively eliminated through “24 hours 7 days a week” access to services through access to a computer. Nonetheless, the use of ICT should be accompanied by a parallel review and reengineering of existing traditional administrative processes to avoid wastes and inefficiencies resulting from the automation of already non-performing processes.

A concrete example of the use of ICT for administrative simplification can be found in Tunisia, where citizens can declare taxes, find education counselling services, and use MADANIA, an electronic application, to obtain birth certificates throughout the country. In June 2008 the Palestinian National Authority installed an e-accounting system connecting 10 ministries with the Ministry of Finance through the Government Computer Centre.

One area of application of ICT to improve public service delivery and increase transparency in government operations is public procurement. The high value and volume of government procurement transactions makes this a particularly vulnerable area. Electronic means can bring transparency and enhance competition among suppliers, resulting in better services and more trust in public activities. For example, Morocco has developed an e-procurement platform which allows the publication of procurement tenders online (e-tendering).⁵

A number of challenges need to be faced when implementing e-government. There are two which are especially relevant for administrative simplification: first, consideration of security and privacy issues, including the protection of information and the need to build citizens' trust; and second, the degree of Internet penetration and access to computers by the affected final users because low access can seriously hamper any efforts in this area.

The most common tools used in the e-government area for simplification are:

- Digitalisation of administrative forms. Especially forms related to trade, labour and taxes can result in efficiency gains.
- Simplification through re-engineering and automation of back office processes. For instance the use of e-Human Resource Management or e-accounting.
- Systems for data reporting from business to government.
- Portals for information and services, such as citizen or business portals.
- Electronic data storage and exchange.

Box 2. Implementing the e-government programme in Egypt

The strengthening of government-to-government transactions is one of the priority areas outlined in the e-government programme carried out by the Ministry of State for Administrative Development of Egypt. The Egyptian government has cut red tape, increased efficiency, and reduced government expenditure with the use of a one-stop shop to integrate nearly fifty public services.

This programme is part of the National ICT Plan to integrate and facilitate public service delivery in Egypt. The design of this plan took into account a number of observed challenges such as a low and scattered level of automation among different government institutions, the lack of a new service delivery channel concept, and a legislative environment unprepared for electronic data handling.

One of the most relevant outcomes of this programme has been the first version of the Egyptian Government Services Portal “BAWABA” (citizen-centric service delivery through a one-stop shop); This portal offers 53 online governmental services. The portal is considered the first step toward establishing an Egyptian e-government system that provides 24/7 access to government services. Another success story has been the implementation of a full Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that, co-ordinating various ministries and government agencies, introduced the concept of workflow and increased efficiency in government offices.

Source: United Nations (2007), *Innovations in Governance in the Middle East, North Africa, and Western Balkans. Making Governments Work Better in the Mediterranean Region*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.

(iv) Better information on the delivery of services and administrative requirements

Compliance is enhanced if citizens have free and easy access to information on administrative procedures, their obligations and the regulatory framework.

There are a number of instruments available to disseminate this information: public records, official journals, gazettes, government websites, television and other communication more innovative tools.⁶ The key issue is that information is correctly addressed to the interested parties. Interesting examples can be found in Morocco and Egypt, where call centres to guide citizens on the way to deal with administrative procedures have been established. This could also be done using existing channels of information specific for designated stakeholders. For instance, if the administrative

framework for hunting is changed, specialised magazines on hunting could assist in disseminating the government's information to the right people. But also a new locus for communication could be created, such as new discussion groups or advisory services provided by government.

(v) Co-ordination of multiple requirements stemming from the public administration

“The different sets of rules should be coherent in relation to each other, even across appropriate departmental areas.”⁷

Citizens, business or other organisations subject to administrative procedures need to manage different requests and administrative responsibilities. These requirements often arise at different periods of time even though some of them might require similar reporting activities, or similar certification processes, such as informing on economic performance. These different requests often come from different institutions, but this should not justify unnecessary administrative repetitions. Therefore, if for example a business needs to report at different times of the year on its economic performance, compliance costs would be larger than if this information is required only once. Thus co-ordinating demands and requirements could contribute to a reduction of burdens.

2.2. Elements promoting administrative simplification strategies

1) Domestic: reflecting interests and pressures from businesses and civil society

Administrative simplification strategies respond to real domestic concerns. Simplification of citizen's lives and businesses' activities has become a common demand in many countries, as the complexity of the government's procedures increase and regulations are difficult to understand and to comply with. Complaints from businesses are widespread and they reflect the workload that a burdensome regulatory system can impose on them. Citizens can also be affected by paperwork and regulations that are not clear, transparent and effective.

In most OECD countries, businesses, and citizens to a lesser extent, have played an important role in advocating and lobbying to simplify administrative procedures. This has been one of the main domestic drivers to introduce and implement simplification strategies by governments. The test governments have to pass is related to the effectiveness of such strategies, and also to the mechanisms that they can set up to establish and foster a fluid consultation and communication with stakeholders.

Administrative simplification programmes are not free from political pressures, but a well designed and implemented approach will resist being influenced by political interests. The advantage of launching simplification strategies that bring concrete results is that the benefits cannot be reasonably opposed by anybody. The difficulty is to sustain these benefits over time and integrate them in broader programmes that improve the quality of the new regulation that accumulates again over time.

2) External: making national economies more competitive

One of the key elements that count for competitiveness is the degree to which the regulatory environment facilitates economic activity, attracts investment, increases trade, creates jobs and promotes competition. A common element in this list is the importance to keep administrative requirements to a minimum, without imposing charges and barriers that only hamper and discourage entrepreneurship and to maintain a sound regulatory framework that is clear, transparent and understandable.

All countries face external pressures to introduce and implement strategies for administrative simplification. These pressures refer not only to those directly linked to the globalisation of the economic activity, but also to the need to compete for investments and capitals. Being ranked in international benchmarkings also creates incentives to eliminate burdens and reduce red tape. In many Arab countries, donors have also played an important role in promoting administrative simplification, conditioning financial support to very targeted measures in that domain.

2.3. Barriers to administrative simplification strategies

One of the objectives of this paper is to identify barriers encountered when developing and implementing administrative simplification strategies. The previous section defined these strategies and explained the rationale behind them. This section enumerates a number of barriers encountered in OECD and Arab countries.

A number of these barriers were identified through a questionnaire submitted to the OECD Secretariat by the Arab countries participating on the work on administrative simplification in the framework of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) Initiative. Furthermore, during the seminar in Cairo on “Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation” these barriers were discussed and compared with the ones found in some OECD countries. Key barriers encountered can be differentiated into strategic or technical in nature (see Table 1).

These barriers have been generally found in both Arab and OECD countries; however, specific political, administrative and cultural environments have influenced their different materialisation. Some argue that these differences are mainly related to a strong centralisation of government, heavy bureaucracy, political instability, reduced public participation in policy making processes, reduced transparency, different legal systems and forces leading to the implementation of long term strategies with a short term perspective.⁸ In addition, government institutions in Arab states are often overstaffed with low productivity and low pay. The problem is the contrary in the Gulf countries though, where government institutions face their responsibilities understaffed.⁹ This generalisation needs to be examined carefully, because there are great differences not only among OECD countries, but also among Arab countries, meaning that for a more detailed analysis of the differences between countries, further study should be undertaken.

Strategic barriers

The first set of identified barriers refers to strategic issues, challenges arising from policies and the general administrative culture environment.

- *Lack of high political support* is probably the first issue practitioners think about when they are asked about barriers. Support from powerful entities can make the difference in actually facilitating reform. However, even if this support has been obtained at early stages of the process, the lack of continuous support can also block efforts. This is especially noticeable a case where support is based on the interest of one politician or high-level administrator. In some cases, comprehensive administrative reform strategies have been set up to be launched, but ultimately it has had to be cancelled because there was not enough backing from top executives.
- *Resistance to change* is related to the first barrier, though this resistance refers mainly to lower levels of government, and even outsiders to government. In these instances, resistance can come either from technical and operational levels within the administration or from the general public. This resistance is usually related to a lack of understanding of reform proposals, a perceived threat to traditional administrative culture and vested interests. Reform in general meets with resistance due to uncertainty and potential privilege losses.

- *Lack of co-ordination* in an administrative simplification strategy obstructs coherence, multiplies costs, and creates gaps between policy areas and sectors. Unclear division of responsibilities, ineffective communication and co-operation mechanisms in place, and conflicting powers are some of the reasons behind this particular obstacle. This is especially relevant in complex institutional contexts.
- *Lack of a comprehensive whole of government administrative simplification strategy* makes change difficult. Watertight programmes bring progress but leave gaps behind. A broad strategy can help co-ordinate different reform programmes focused on concrete policy areas or sectors to reach common far-reaching goals. An overarching strategy can also facilitate capacity building and transmission of know-how among government departments. This barrier is greater if an effective communication strategy is also lacking.
- *Limited resource availability* is a burden affecting management in general. Priorities compete for resource allocation also in public governance. Cutting red tape might be an expensive policy option, and its benefits, though demonstrable, are difficult to collect since they are translated into efficiency gains throughout the economy. Political support and thus sufficient resources are needed to obtain and bring these benefits to society. This limitation is usually greater in developing and emerging economies. Furthermore, resource availability might be conditioned to aid management cycles, meaning that ambitious programmes for reform run out of steam despite efforts are starting to harvest results if funding becomes unavailable, making reforms unsustainable for national and local governments.

Technical barriers

The second set of barriers is more of a technical nature and refers to barriers that are linked to instrumental issues.

- *Legal complexity reduces compliance and enforcement capacity.* This is important because laws and regulations determine and shape an administrative environment. Legal complexity might result from deficient legal review mechanisms to improve and adapt to societal, technological and economic changes. This problem might be larger

in contexts with different legal heritages. Legal complexity might become an unsolvable challenge if regulatory management frameworks are too burdensome and resistant to change. Laws may need to be changed as part of the simplification process.

- *Lack of human skills and capacities.* Administrative simplification is not inherent to any public administration, therefore, special skills and capacities need to be built upon. Often there is a mismatch between the needs of public administration and available training facilities and programmes. Specific training capacities should be developed. Having an insufficiently skilled and ill-equipped team working on administrative simplification will likely prevent governments from meeting ambitious expectations.
- *Lack of understanding of the use of administrative simplification* generally inhibits participation and compliance from involved parties. Administrative simplification is not an easy to understand and restrictive term, it is usually confused with the improvement of the public administration structure, overlooking the cutting red tape aspect. This lack of understanding also limits the possibility of building constituency and a sense of ownership among relevant stakeholders potentially affected by the strategy.
- *Lack of information and data.* Blindly designed reforms undertaken without a comprehensive understanding of reality and its changes are generally doomed to fail and perhaps make things worse. In some cases information is available, but effective data-collection or sharing mechanisms might not be in place. Economic data is generally relevant for administrative simplification strategies, but information such as a complete assessment of government requirements, the time-cost needed to comply with them, and an estimation of the number of potential compliers is also important.
- *The digital divide* means that segments of the population of both OECD and Arab countries enjoy limited access to ICTs. This impedes them in fully benefiting from the development of an information society and only enjoying limited access to improved and simplified e-government services. Before investing much effort into ICT for administrative simplification, access to electronic means by end users should be assessed.

- *Lack of standardisation of procedures* might contribute to create confusion and promote discretion, and thus potential discrimination and corruption. Lack of guidelines defining conditions that should be respected by administrative procedures can hamper predictability and coherence of an administrative system as a whole.
- *Lack of measurement and evaluation mechanisms.* Administrative simplification strategies should set clear objectives and targets. Measurement mechanisms are then needed to assess performance and target achievement. Furthermore, evaluation mechanisms can promote benchmarking of public institutions and thus encourage involvement through greater competition. At the same time, co-operation can also be encouraged since evaluation highlights elements where progress is possible.

Notes

1. OECD (2006), *Cutting Red Tape. National Strategies for Administrative Simplification*, Paris.
2. OECD (2006), *Cutting Red Tape. National Strategies for Administrative Simplification*, Paris.
3. OECD (2006), Public Consultation. Background report for the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative, Paris.
4. OECD (2003), *The e-Government Imperative*, Paris
5. OECD (2007), *Joint Learning Study on Integrity in Public Procurement in Morocco*, Paris.
6. See Section on Improving Transparency, Approach No. 19.
7. Brokner, Cecile, (2008), "The Danish Approach to Better Regulation and Simplification", Danish Commerce and Companies Agency of Denmark. Presentation, 19 June.
8. Abu-Laban, Baha, *et al.* (1986), Jabbra, Joseph G., *et al.* (1989), Kuran, Timur (2004), Liman, Imed (2003), World Bank Group (2003).
9. Farazmand, Ali (2002), *Administrative Reform in Developing Nations*.

3. Experience overcoming barriers: 22 points for success

This section aims at finding ways to overcome the barriers mentioned in the previous section based on international experience. This is done by proposing elements that contribute to the building of a solid strategy for administrative simplification. Several actions and approaches to strengthen a government programme for simplification were identified during the seminar “Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation”, held in June 2008 in Cairo. During the closing session of the seminar a first collection of barriers and appropriate solutions to overcome them was presented (see Table 1).

A more extensive explanation is offered below and presented in the form of 22 statements gathered in four concrete themes: *i*) strategic and policy approaches; *ii*) capacity building support; *iii*) institutional design; and *iv*) supporting tools. Some of these are designed to tackle several barriers at the same time, and in combination should strengthen an administrative simplification strategy to successfully overcome obstacles. (A complete list of the proposals is presented in Annex 1, Annex 2 shows a matrix proposing a number of approaches for each barrier, and a summary presents eight good practices in the conclusion section).

Taking into consideration the experiences in OECD and MENA countries, an administrative simplification strategy needs to observe at least five precepts: it needs to be innovative, multidisciplinary, communicative, assertive and outcome-based. The proposals gathered below have been observed in different countries, they are presented in a simplified manner, and each of the statements should be carefully examined and adapted for applicability in light of the specificities of a concrete country.

3.1. Strategic and policy approaches

The first set of elements can be classified as strategic and policy-oriented. They refer to those actions that support the strategy from a tactical perspective. They are relevant at all phases of the strategy, but in particular during the design phase, when policy makers need to make sure that they will find support and they are setting the right objectives. They refer, mainly, to the need to have in mind a broad concept of reform, to establish clear objectives and feasible targets, to ensure political commitment, to adopt a “whole-of-government” approach without a “one size fits all” model, and to promote a reform attitude inside the administration.

1) Establish a comprehensive programme on administrative simplification and maintain broad policy priorities

Administrative simplification should be systematically adopted, avoiding an exclusive use of *ad hoc* measures. Even if a strategy should be focused in a concrete area at its inception, such as processes of licensing reform to obtain relatively fast results, in the long run a comprehensive programme for administrative simplification ensures continuity, endurance of reforms and the creation of synergies. The European Commission has given much emphasis to the reduction of regulatory burdens as a priority of the *Lisbon Strategy* and member countries have been asked to define a comprehensive strategy in pursuit of this objective.

Furthermore, administrative simplification in OECD countries is often included in greater reform programmes to enhance regulatory quality. The regulatory policy tools such as public consultation, Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) and alternatives to traditional regulation contribute to more sophisticated administrative simplification strategies. In the United States, the Regulatory Flexibility Act enacted in 1980 started the process to promote the reduction of the impact of regulations on small business and other small entities that later was included under the umbrella of a more comprehensive regulatory reform programme.

But long term commitment under defined broad priorities needs to be supported by short and medium term planning that adapts to continuous change. For example, in Mexico there are biennial regulatory improvement programmes (PBMR) which are used to identify and reduce high impact formalities.¹ The Simplification Agency of the Belgium federal government established in 2003 a simplification programme to plan activities for each legislature. Its first programme, the “12 works of the government”, set concrete priorities across the public institutions to reduce administrative burdens borne by businesses.

Table 1. Presentation summarising discussions on barriers and ways for these to be overcome during the Seminar “Administrative Simplification: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation”, held in June 2008 in Cairo

Strategic barriers	Actions and approaches
Lack of political support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use success stories: start small • “Whole-of-government” approach • Powerful support • Quantifying costs and benefits • Necessary but not sufficient
Lack of co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade off centralisation and ownership on reform efforts • Watchdog at the core of government
Resistance to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and promotion: transparency • Ambassadors programme / champions • Defining clear targets and making institutions accountable
Lack of an administrative simplification strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning – action plans and accountability • Public consultation • “No one size fits all”
Limited resource availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency gains • Prioritisation based on evidence-based analysis – opportunity cost
Technical barriers	Actions and approaches
Legal complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory quality improvement – different from deregulation • Multidisciplinary approach to law drafting
Lack of human skills and capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, training and training • Multidisciplinary and focused • Creativity approach. Reform attitude

Technical barriers	Actions and approaches
Lack of understanding administrative simplification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication
Lack of information and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development data collection strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • User/consumer involvement • International co-operation
Digital divide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of the digital divide as a broad policy priority
Lack of standardisation of procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better regulation
Lack of measurement & evaluation mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Indicators on government performance: Benchmarking, awarding • Monitoring body/institution

2) Take a “whole-of-government” approach

A whole-of-government approach involves considering and including all parts of government in the proposed strategy. This includes both horizontal (government agencies at the same authority level) and multilevel governance perspectives (the relation between national, sub- and supra-national levels of government). Institutional co-ordination and accountability are at the service of common priorities and outcomes for better governance.

Canada developed a solid whole-of-government framework interrelating policy areas and institutions.² In Egypt, the Institutional Development Programme (IDP) aims at improving government performance, it supports the alignment of all government institutions with the direction of the National Administrative Development Strategy. An example of efforts to co-ordinate multilevel governance can be found in the United Kingdom, where the Local Better Regulation Office was established in 2008 to spread good practices at a local level throughout the country. This office advises local authorities regarding their interaction with businesses to promote consistency, determines priorities for simplification at the local level, and mediates any disputes between local authorities in respect of regulatory

public services.³ In Denmark, the Danish Evaluation Institute for Local Governments (KREVI) was established in 2005 as an independent institution under the Ministry of Social Welfare. KREVI's main role is to promote regulatory quality at a local level and the best application of the resources in the public sector. KREVI analyses, evaluates and promotes the performance of the public sector and the state regulation of the local governments through consultation, dissemination and exchanges of information.⁴

The “whole-of-government” approach is necessary to buttress political support and ensure coherence of public administration performance. In addition, adequate resources should be made available to promote a change in administrative culture and provide incentives for officials.

3) Ensure powerful (political) support

Political commitment in the form of a strong declaration of interest needs to be followed by concrete action. A consistent legal framework in the form of a law or regulation is a way of building a solid foundation for the strategy by describing its priorities, allocating responsibilities in government and ensuring accountability of results. To make sure the strategy goes beyond mere words on paper, expected outcomes should be defined (*a priori*) and compared with their realisation (*a posteriori*).

To be able to move forward and overcome resistance, the strategy needs to have a visible high political figure backing the programme, but ensuring at the same time independence from the political cycle. In the case of the Netherlands, the Ministry of Finance exerts its sanctioning power to move simplification reforms forward.

Sustained support can be reinforced by including administrative simplification in a comprehensive reform programme, where administrative simplification can build enough constituency in combination with other reforms proposals. In Lebanon for instance, a great interest in the development of e-government to improve public services served to launch complementary administrative simplification activities planned in co-ordination.

Whatever the case, political support is necessary but not sufficient to move forward with reform.

4) Define clear objectives-targets and make institutions accountable for them

In line with the legal frame and the definition of short and medium term action plans, clear and measurable targets are needed to ensure that simplification ambition is met. This targeting is only useful if there is institutional accountability over time.

In this policy area it is important to know where the administrative burdens are and how substantial they are. Regulations from some ministries are more burdensome than from others, and affect end users differently. The simplification strategy needs to concentrate on those regulations that create the greatest burdens, with goals that would put pressure on the institutions responsible for lowering them.

In the Netherlands the government decided to reduce administrative burdens on businesses by a net 25% in 2007. “By establishing a quantitative, ambitious and time bound target, and communicating this widely, the government accepted to be held accountable on a highly prioritised policy goal. The target has been divided among ministries and over years, thus providing a strong instrument for steering and monitoring simplification efforts across the administration.”⁵ In Denmark, the government committed itself to reducing administrative burdens on companies by 25% in 2010. In Egypt, the Institutional Development Programme (IDP) is planned to help organisations to set well defined targets and accountability mechanisms. The Kafka Department within the Belgian federal Simplification Agency is in charge of measuring all effective and potential burden reductions, becoming a key element to follow simplification achievements and shortcomings.

This approach can be effective in fighting encountered resistance to change since constituency can be built using targets and making institutions accountable for their responsibilities in a shared manner.

5) Use success stories: start small and gain constituency

Benefits of cutting red tape might be expressed in monetary terms. It is often said that administrative simplification saves money through the reduction of regulatory burdens. But these savings are not collected and made directly available to governments so that they can invest somewhere else. This monetisation of burden reductions rather expresses efficiency gains, which should be the final objective of the simplification strategy. As a result, more resources are freed to undertake “normal” business, to the benefit of those who must comply with regulation and the general public interest.

To start small means starting with reasonable ambitions that can be realistically obtained within a concrete timeframe. Once successful stories and numbers are available to show the benefits of cutting red tape, building constituency for administrative simplification is less costly. A good starting point could be to centre efforts on bureaucratic processes that are either widely used or create much irritation, for instance the bureaucratic processes related to health coverage and insurance. Efficiency gains can be easily presented after the first results are collected. For instance, in the UK a review of central data collection in 2007 for the National Health Service saved over 50 000 hours of staff time. The average length of an inspection of a large hospital went from between 3 and 4 days in 2005 to 1.5 and 2 days in 2008. As a result, less time spent on data collection saving an estimation of £1.4 million.⁶ After Mexico successfully institutionalised through the Economic Deregulation Unit (UDE) a reform to reduce business formalities, political support was obtained to create the Federal Regulatory Improvement Commission (COFEMER), which took a more comprehensive approach to reform than its predecessor.

“Link it, monetise it and demonstrate it” is one of the mottos in the Netherlands for the promotion of administrative simplification. At the beginning people did not necessarily know what administrative simplification meant. A long process of clearly explaining its benefits has helped to gain support for reform efforts.⁷

In conclusion, using numbers helps to be persuasive, obtain political support and fight against resistance to change.

6) Implement a user-focus approach

One of the biggest problems of public administration reforms is the lack of a user-friendly approach. This should be changed as far as possible. An interesting way to begin with is to collect and consider views and priorities from all stakeholders affected. For instance, the Palestinian National Authority has launched a website to collect complaints from citizens regarding burdensome administrative procedures. A similar experience can be found in Belgium where a ‘complaint help desk’ for citizens and businesses was established in 2003. Until 2008, around 10 000 messages were received, distributed to, and mandatorily answered by the concerned institution at federal, regional or local level. These initiatives enabled to identify affected groups and quantify regulatory burdens imposed to them so that cutting red tape was more effective and simplification efforts better targeted.

The delivery of public services should be seen as a right rather than as a favour, and the needs and priorities of citizens should be placed in the forefront in the design of this service delivery. Administrative procedures should try to avoid incongruous and “Kafkaesque” situations. General guidelines for civil servants on user friendly delivery services have helped promoting this approach, as well as mechanisms to award civil servants improving and simplifying treatment to citizens.

The Ministry of State for Administrative Development in Egypt developed a programme to “provide service to citizens” that included a profound administrative culture change. A number of services were streamlined to ensure that documents, time and costs needed to benefit from these services were reduced to the minimum.⁸

7) Avoid a “one size fits all” model

This document is based on the assumption that international policy dialogue and exchange of practices bring better public governance. But this should not be mistaken with implementing copies of other countries’ models without a period of reflection and adaptation to specific conditions of the reforming country. This process should include the views of the main stakeholders, including foreign stakeholders. The experience in some developing countries has pointed out the risks of applying mimic reforms in countries where the political, cultural and administrative contexts were different. These experiences show that particularities need to be taken into account and using models that have been successful in other countries require a high degree of adaptation. Simplification efforts can only succeed if they are locally adapted and respond to genuine needs.

8) Promote a reform attitude and innovative approaches

Successful cases of administrative simplification adoption have been based on a “trained into change” attitude. This means that the core team should be formed by people who are used to questioning the norms, being assertive and creative, and that in addition demonstrate strong analytical capacities. Interestingly, the Belgium government proposes the “10 tips” guidance to infuse officials with a simplification attitude in their work.⁹

An innovative approach should include the consideration of alternative approaches to traditional administrative regulation, organisational issues and management. An example to illustrate this is the use of *ex post* notification procedures instead of *ex ante* approval mechanisms to obtain licences and permits. This significantly reduces burdens to activities since they can start before actually obtaining a licence. But it is only recommendable when dealing with low risk activities and in cases where most applications results in a licence being issued.

A lack of innovation has often been observed among civil servants participating in reforms in Arab countries.¹⁰ It appears that financial incentives are not a definite solution since these innovative shortcomings have been also observed in countries where economic incentives are not a constraint. Reacting against this, the Egyptian Ministry of State for Administrative Development has established an ambitious plan for *Government Modernisation Programme* promoting incentives, developing human resource development programmes, promoting co-operation with the private sector when efficiency gains can be obtained, and building a solid framework for the integration of new technologies in public management.

3.2. Capacity building support

Capacity building mainly refers to increasing abilities and skills of human resources that will be dealing with specific issues, as well as making possible the development of intellectual debate inside the administration on the best way possible to move forward the reform agenda. Facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and increasing the awareness of why administrative strategies are necessary along with the way they can be best implemented, are fundamental to success. Governments have to ensure that staff can have access to information, technical support and training and that these resources are well allocated so as to exploit their potential.

9) Ensure a multidisciplinary approach to administrative simplification

In many cases, OECD countries' administrations are staffed by multidisciplinary teams to undertake simplification: economists, lawyers, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, etc. Different backgrounds and approaches help enrich simplification strategies and avoid an excessive dominance of one of these fields of expertise. For instance, legal complexity is more difficult to solve using overly legalistic approaches, thus lawyers need the support of other specialists when drafting regulation and defining an administrative framework. How to define responsibilities and establish effective co-operation between experts is an important challenge.

A degree of specialisation should also exist to facilitate expertise development. This is especially relevant when central services offer technical support to different government departments, officials at the central services should be familiar with the concerned department's common challenges and jargon. For example, in Denmark, the Better Business Regulation Division of the Commerce and Companies Agency designates officials to support the work of concrete ministries, so that teams follow up the work of each ministry and responds to their inquiries.

This approach supports the improvement of skills and human capacities for administrative simplification.

10) Provide guidelines and technical assistance to support policy making in a simplification context

Applying standardised procedures enhances coherence of an administrative system as a whole. Standardisation can be disseminated through guidelines and manuals for policy makers. Extensive guidance should be provided to cover policy making processes, including any available policy tools that may support the definition of the regulatory environment. Documentation on guidance should not be static, it needs to evolve, adapt to new challenges and improve through innovative approaches; these changes should be inspired in part by inputs from officials developing procedures as well as final users. Guidance should be provided in an effective way to the appropriate audience.

The United Kingdom has developed guidelines for officials to produce regulations with which businesses can easily comply with.¹¹ Morocco has developed guidelines for administrative procedures management addressed to compliers, especially those concerning investment. This guidance aggregates procedures according to activities, and includes a description of the procedure, the forms to be filled in and signed as well as a description of other documents required.¹²

Help-desk assistance can be in place to uniformly support different public institutions working on administrative simplification. This technical support can help harmonise procedures and outcomes. In Denmark, a programme providing technical support called *Personas* was launched to provide personalised services to different categories of civil servants working on administrative simplification.¹³ This categorisation uses previous surveys and takes into account elements such as the field of work, previous inquiries and current demands. In Egypt, an e-Government Consultation Centre (EGCC) provides technical support to different government institutions in the use of e-tools.¹⁴

Technical assistance could also be provided through outsourcing to close knowledge gaps in the public administration. Private expertise can bring knowledge to streamline procedures, as it happened, for instance, in Saudi Arabia in 2007 with the co-operation established between government and a Singaporean consortium to improve the trade declaration system.¹⁵ This is also a way of taking advantage from other countries' experiences. Another interesting case can be found in Tunisia, where the UNDP co-operated in 2005 with the government to improve the performance of government agencies undertaking administrative tasks.

This approach helps support the establishment of comprehensive programmes for administrative simplification.

11) Training, training and training

Training is the main tool to improve skills and human capacities. Training should target core teams for administrative simplification, public administration as a whole as well as general public. Each of the groups should be addressed accordingly through different training means and adapted content. Whereas officials at the centre of government need highly technical training, dissemination of knowledge to general public on how administrative simplification affects citizens needs a more accessible and simpler approach.

People working for administrative simplification really make the difference. Training should have an outcome based approach and encourage innovative attitudes. Officials working on administrative simplification require strong administration, management, organisation, communication and interpersonal skills. These skills equip them to maintain continuous contact with other departments, agencies, business and other stakeholders, often at high political level.

Skills will determine a person's capacity to overcome encountered barriers, such as resistance to change and barriers of a technical nature. In Lebanon, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform has deployed efforts to promote capacity building, expertise and training mechanisms to ensure that know-how is shared by all staff working on administrative simplification.

Co-operation with academic, research and consulting institutions could be timely so as to attract expertise and outsider perspectives. This should not only be limited to a domestic sphere, as international expertise, including that of other governments, can be essential for capacity development.

12) Reduce the digital divide

Ensuring the widespread use of new technologies is necessary so as to maximise the benefits of using e-government for administrative simplification. Internet penetration determines the utility and reach of administrative procedures available on-line. Innovation and adaptability of electronic devices can bring appropriate solutions. In Morocco, for instance, special touch screens with easy-access software have been installed in public service offices to facilitate use for illiterate citizens.

3.3. Institutional design

Institutions matter in regulatory governance since they are fundamental in designing and implementing any strategy. Institutions are needed to establish rules to increase transparency, to foster co-ordination inside the administration, to ease communication with stakeholders and to promote a cultural change in the way the administration approaches administrative simplification. The right institutional design, however, needs to take into account political, cultural and social specificities. Administrative strategies require some institutional support in order to guarantee the quality of the strategy, to stimulate champions for reform and to find a right balance between centralisation and ownership of reform.

13) Consider the set up of a watchdog at the core of government

Increasingly, countries are designating the responsibility of running administrative simplification strategies to central institutions for regulatory quality. This is an indication of how administrative simplification is regarded as a component of a broader regulatory quality strategy, rather than an isolated exercise. This approach can help to create links and synergies with other areas of regulatory governance. In Korea, a Regulatory Reform Committee (RRC) directly accountable to the Korean president was created in 1998 to lead administrative reforms. Its secretariat is established in the Prime Minister's office, and it is responsible of overseeing the whole regulatory system and challenging its impact on business and citizens.

There are also cases of commissions created to co-ordinate administrative simplification but only focused in a concrete policy area. For example, in 2006 Morocco established the National Council for Investment Procedures which harmonises and simplifies the bureaucratic environment for investment. In addition, in 2008 Morocco was in the process of consolidating a commission to co-ordinate different areas of government aiming at a coherent and maintained evolution of administrative simplification. This institutional arrangement is being planned to develop technical skills on the streamlining of administrative procedures, and providing monitoring tools to evaluate the results of the simplification efforts.

According to answers delivered to the OECD Secretariat by Arab countries to a questionnaire in 2008, the institutions managing administrative simplification are ministries, and no specific autonomous identities have been created with the purpose of defining and developing a broad whole-of-government strategy for administrative simplification. In some OECD countries, the tendency has been to move administrative simplification responsibilities from ministries to units in charge of improving the quality of the regulation. It is the case of the Netherlands, where a Group on Regulatory Reform headed at the Ministry of Finance relies on members from different ministries such as the Ministry for Economic Affairs. The already mentioned Agency for Administrative Simplification in Belgium is an example on how to promote a consolidated simplification strategy from an institution created for that purpose at the centre of government, in this case at the premier's office.

14) Find a balance between centralisation and reform efforts ownership

There is a trade off between centralised control over reform and complete involvement at lower levels of government. If co-ordination mechanisms are too loose, a comprehensive strategy might encounter problems in being coherently implemented. On the contrary, if centralisation is too tight, institutions applying the strategy might lose the feeling of ownership, and thus the strategy might strike implementation barriers. The right balance needs to be achieved to keep strategies moving forward, taking into account the institutional system, the size of the public administration, and the needed degree of ownership. A central unit for administrative simplification can become a useful tool to understand this balance and provide effective co-ordination in practice.

This balance can be more easily found in the case of small countries such as the Denmark and Netherlands than in larger countries or administrations with decentralisation tensions.

15) Promote the work of ambassadors and champions for the simplification programme

Involving stakeholders affected by administrative simplification in the creation and implementation of the strategy is important to the establishment of realistic objectives and the finding of effective ways to meeting these. Furthermore, once these stakeholders are motivated and involved, they can promote their work and, indirectly the administrative simplification strategy, to third parties thus multiplying the existing communication capacities. For example, business communities have often participated in cutting red tape programmes to fuel, monitor and act as ambassadors for the work undertaken.

This approach is one of the pillars to fighting against resistance to change. It is especially relevant to find ‘ambassadors’ that have access and credibility in spheres from where resistance is most likely to spring, or where public administration is less able to convey its messages. In Korea, the RRC is composed of 18 business representatives, one of whom co-chairs the committee. This active involvement in the general policy for administrative simplification promotes a sense of ownership that is disseminated to other members of the business community.

3.4. Supporting tools

Administrative simplification strategies are only effective if they are not seen and implemented in isolation. They must be integrated into a broader strategy for regulatory quality improvement in which other tools play a role in its implementation. For instance, administrative simplification can only be promoted if transparency principles are integrated into the strategy: making regulations easier and clearer implies discussing with stakeholders how these regulations affect them and can be improved. Consultation and communication are useful tools to support this process. Administrative simplification needs to be prioritised in relation to the evidence on the burden they impose to businesses and citizens, and some quantification of costs and benefits can help in making decisions about which areas should be targeted first.

16) Use better regulation (regulatory quality improvement)

Regulation is not harmful *per se* and governments need to continuously create new regulations so as to be able to enact public policy. Better regulation means to adopt regulations that meet concrete quality standards, avoids unnecessary regulatory burdens and effectively meet clear objectives.

The aim should be at a broader improvement of the regulatory environment including an ambitious “whole-of-government” approach to improve regulatory quality capacity of government. This would be supported by a so-called programme of regulatory reform with different phases. Experience says that it is recommendable to move step by step and start paying special attention to licensing, permits or other “burden rich” forms of regulatory intervention.¹⁶

This statement is central to the reduction of the legal complexity in an administrative system. Multidisciplinary approaches are also important in general regulatory reform programmes. Better regulation can also help find political support for administrative simplification, as constituencies supporting regulatory reform are indirectly supporting the latter.

17) Quantify costs and benefits, both *ex ante* and *ex post*

Administrative simplification strategies have to help clean the stock of regulations (existing regulatory framework), but also the flow of regulations (the production of new regulations). Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) can help to focus on the quantification of costs and benefits, both *ex ante* and *ex post*, of particular measures tending to reduce burdens and introduce simplification measures. In some countries RIA has a particular focus on administrative burdens reduction on SMEs.

Other techniques concentrate more on the measurement of burdens *per se*. Measurement of administrative burdens should consider including the time and other associated costs by, on the one hand: *i*) government when taking a decision, developing the administrative procedure, providing information and, once the administrative regulation is in force: providing the service, collecting information, inspecting, filing, managing administrative procedures; and on the other hand, *ii*) the private sector when reading, understanding, compiling and retrieving information, filling in forms, submitting, recording and filing. The most accepted measurement mechanism is the Standard Cost Model (SCM), initially developed in the Netherlands (see Box 3). It measures the administrative costs imposed by government on business. The SCM breaks down legislations into information obligations on the business side, allowing a great level of detail and facilitating the assessment of the impact on administrative burdens of concrete reform efforts.

Box 3. The Standard Cost Model methodology

The Standard Cost Model (SCM) measures the administrative costs imposed on business by central government regulation. The costs are primarily determined through business interviews where it is possible to specify in detail the time companies use to fulfil the government regulation.

1. The SCM breaks down regulation into manageable components that can be measured: information obligations, data requirements and administrative activities.

2. The SCM then estimates the costs of completing each activity on the basis of a couple of basic cost parameters:

- Price: price consists of a tariff, wage costs plus overhead for administrative activities done internally or hourly costs for external services.
- Time: the amount of time required to complete the administrative activity.
- Quantity: quantity comprises of the size of the population of businesses affected and the frequency that the activity must be carried out each year.

3. The combination of these elements gives the basic SCM formula:

Cost per administrative activity = Price × Time × Quantity.

1. Information obligations are obligations to provide information and data to the public sector or third parties (e.g. reports about labour conditions, labelling provisions).
2. A data requirement is each element of information that must be provided in complying with an information obligation. Each information obligation consists of one or more data requirements (e.g. VAT number, identity of business).
3. To provide information for each data requirement a number of specific administrative activities have to be carried out. These may be done internally or be outsourced. They can be measured (e.g. description, calculation, archiving information).

Source: OECD (2006), Cutting Red Tape: National Strategies for Administrative Simplification, OECD Publishing, Paris.

There are, however, other mechanisms which are used. For example, in Belgium an indexed system called “score board” maps the administrative burden landscape; while in France, a different methodology for a “complexity indicator” was developed from the SCM.

18) Prioritise based on evidence

This statement suggests using the quantification and evidence-based analyses to set priorities for the strategy and follow these over time. Prioritising is fundamental in establishing policy objectives in an efficient and effective way, as well as to set targets that can be linked to the impact of certain measures in certain groups or linked to the size of the impacts.

The “Kafka Test”, designed and implemented in Belgium, provides a tool to monitor how new regulation creates administrative burdens on citizens, businesses and the third sector. This method, developed in 2004, systematically requests regulators to define any administrative burdens imposed by all regulatory proposals. The analysis needs to differentiate between affected groups and the type of burdens.¹⁷

Box 4. Prioritising simplification reforms in Tunisia

The Tunisian government designed in 2007 a comprehensive public administration reform including a wide range of policy issues, among which we can find the improvement of the business environment and the quality of regulation. As part of these efforts, administrative simplification is prioritised on the basis of the analysis of the administrative and the regulatory system. After its analysis, the Tunisian Prime Ministry established four main priorities guiding the simplification strategy:

- The reengineering and simplification of procedures affecting the business environment. One of the goals is to obtain a reduction by 90% of the number of required business licences.
- The reduction of time delays and the number of documents in order to benefit from public service delivery. For instance with the use of mechanisms such as the silent is consent rule.
- Efficiency improvements of an effective public administration to reduce unnecessary public expenditure.
- Development of monitoring mechanisms for quality service delivery.

19) Promote transparency through communication

Communicating a strategy's objectives and elements, its relation with other reform programmes, and its progress over time contribute to enhancing transparency. It also helps ensure that there is a match between achievement and objectives, contributing to accountability. If work on administrative simplification goes unnoticed, it is highly probable that support will diminish. Moreover, sound communication contributes to cultural change and to building a sense of ownership.

There are different tools for communication which adapt to different audiences and messages to convey. In Egypt, information related to administrative requirements is offered by telephone to citizens, this includes all required documents, information, fees, which institutions to address and deadlines to observe.¹⁸ Another example of communication to the general public can be found in Morocco, where a complex communication strategy was launched to inform the public about administrative procedures and requirements. "Idaratouk" Television programmes, a call centre for citizens and a general public administration website provided much information.¹⁹ Furthermore, there are other activities such as seminars, conferences and public hearings that can also disseminate a strategy.

Standards, guidelines and manuals for communication design to the general public can support better communication initiatives. Examples of this can be found in Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, where principles for effective communication have been established.²⁰

This statement facilitates the general understanding of administrative simplification and could diminish the resistance to change.

20) Encourage public consultation and participation in policy making

Consultation and participation support the definition of priorities for a strategy. Consultation processes can enhance a government's capacity to identify irritating areas of regulation. For instance in the United Kingdom the better regulation website²¹ collects ideas from citizens, which are processed transparently and reported on if ideas were taken forward or rejected. In Korea, the Business Difficulties Resolution Centre acts as a one-stop shop ombudsman attending to business demands facing regulatory constraints. Whereas in Tunisia, working groups composed by officials, academics and businessmen participate in the framework of administrative reforms to prepare studies and produce recommendations for administrative simplification.

Consultation can be encouraged through different channels, such as launching satisfaction surveys, establishing advisory bodies with particular roles to give voice to stakeholders and creating *ad hoc* task forces that can make recommendations on very specific issues. These bodies are often able to channel priorities and to promote efforts for improving the administrative culture. They open the possibility for different parties to exchange views that are a good source of data collection for the administrations and encourage the participation of other entities in the policy-making process.

21) Develop data collection strategies

Great administrative burdens originate at the requirements of information flowing from citizens and businesses to government. Data needs to be effectively and efficiently collected, managed and transmitted to meet the needs of public institutions in an efficient and non burdensome manner. Belgium has developed a central data bank, the “Crossroads Bank of Enterprises”, that stores all basic data regarding enterprises and their individual business locations. This tool satisfies information needs from different parts of government such as for instance the Ministry of Finance and the Social Security Administration.²²

Information is important for the design and implementation of simplification strategies. But, information is expensive and efforts need to be well oriented, aiming at obtaining relevant data that can guide the simplification process. Especially the information on administrative burdens, such as information on administrative requirements compliance and the time-cost associated to them.

Governments have used surveys, user/consumer involvement as well other existing mechanisms for data collection already established in the administration. However, OECD countries’ recent experiences suggest that quantitative approaches are increasingly supplementing or substituting business surveys as the primary source of information for assessing the burdens. Quantitative measurements are, however, costly if accuracy is needed. This is why a number of OECD countries still rely on survey-based approaches to target simplification policies.²³ A way to financially support data collection is by selling some parts of the information gathered, an example are the data bases of companies in Kuwait that are sold for commercial interests by private entities.²⁴

22) Develop indicators on government performance: benchmarking and awarding

Measuring and evaluating government performance is needed to ensure accountability of public institutions. In addition, benchmarking can encourage competition and promote co-operation between institutions, thus facilitating advances. Performance can be further enhanced through award mechanisms to reward effective efforts. Some examples of this can be found in Bahrain where the government delivers annual awards on different areas related to e-government, and Egypt celebrates the National Service Day with a ceremony that delivers a prize to the government agency providing the best public services. At the international level, the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme (UNPSA), organised since 2003, annually rewards the “creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions to development in countries around the world”, especially those tailoring public service delivery toward citizens’ needs. Institutions in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have been nominated or awarded for their efforts on administrative simplification.²⁵

Rewarding can also take place at a more *micro* level by encouraging citizens to point out relevant administrative burdens and procedures that are too cumbersome and in need of revision. “The Best Idea for Red Tape Reduction Award” is an example of how authorities promote and reward good and innovative ideas from citizens to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy stemming from legislation. The criteria of this award takes into consideration: *i*) originality and degree of innovation of the proposal, *ii*) feasibility (*i.e.* potential for simple and quick implementation) *iii*) reduction potential (*i.e.* how much businesses could save; sometimes relatively small burdens can be more irritating than more costly ones; this is also taken into account) and *iv*) transferability of possible solutions to other areas/other cases. This award organised in 2009 by the General Directorate for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission, complements the “Red Tape Reduction Award” conceived to award only public authorities.²⁶

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4. Conclusions and checklist of good practices

The goal of this publication is to identify barriers to administrative simplification strategies and reflect on solutions to overcome them. This section summarises the ideas discussed with the aim of presenting condensed good practices as a conclusion. Some success elements for a comprehensive administrative simplification strategy are:

1. *Long term and high political support.* A high-level political institution should promulgate the content and the frame of the national strategy or programme for administrative simplification. *This strategy should have a ‘whole-of-government’ approach* in the sense that it needs to engage a great number of government institutions, including a multilevel perspective. Co-ordination mechanisms should be well in place.
2. *There should be an institution specialised on administrative simplification at the centre of government overseeing and running the administrative simplification strategy or programme.* It should be located in a powerful ministry, though it should be reasonably independent.
3. *The strategy should have clear objectives with reasonable deadlines.* A number of small success stories which are easy to communicate should be gathered to obtain support from a broad range of stakeholders.
4. *There should be a multidisciplinary team working on administrative simplification trained with a vision for change, who are creative, assertive and who have strong analytical capacities.* The team should have links to the most relevant areas of the public administration and backed by high-level political support as well as by a sense of ownership throughout the administration. The promotion of innovative and reforming approaches should be encouraged by a compensation programme based on improvements and outcomes.

5. The administrative simplification strategy toolkit should include: *i*) the use of better regulation, *ii*) organisational reengineering, *iii*) the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) tools, *iv*) better information and service to citizens and business, and *v*) the creation of synergies between administrative requirements.
6. *Incentive mechanisms should be used to promote a “reform” approach to administrative simplification* (encouraging the work of ‘champions’ and ambassadors for this policy area).
7. *The public administration as well as other stakeholders should be included in a three-fold communication action plan: i) general communication, ii) training and iii) consultation processes.* There should be in place a comprehensive training and capacity-building programme designed with a whole-of-government perspective. *These communication strategies should be supported by a network of ‘champions’ on administrative simplification and ambassadors for the administrative simplification programme.*
8. Check and balance mechanisms make each stakeholder accountable for its responsibilities and activities. *There should be a monitoring system in place that systematically reports to higher authorities and to the general public.*

There is no “one solution fits all” model, and each case’s specificities determine the different approaches that could be chosen. Thus, these suggestions underline which key issues need to be reflected upon when overcoming barriers to administrative simplification strategies.

Annex 1. 22 Approaches to overcome barriers to administrative simplification strategies Based on OECD and Arab countries' experience

3.1. Strategic and policy approaches

1. Establish a comprehensive programme on administrative simplification and maintain broad policy priorities.
2. Take a “whole-of-government” approach.
3. Ensure powerful (political) support.
4. Define clear objectives-targets and make institutions accountable for them.
5. Use success stories: start small and gain constituency.
6. Implement a user-focus approach.
7. Avoid a “one size fits all” model.
8. Promote a reform attitude and innovative approaches.

3.2. Capacity-building support

9. Ensure a multidisciplinary approach to administrative simplification.
10. Provide guidelines and technical assistance to support policy making in a simplification context.
11. Training, training and training.
12. Reduce the digital divide.

3.3. Institutional design

13. Consider the set up of a watchdog at the core of government.
14. Find a balance between centralisation and reform efforts ownership.
15. Promote the work of ambassadors and champions for the simplification programme.

3.4. Supporting tools

16. Use better regulation (regulatory quality improvement).
17. Quantify costs and benefits, both *ex ante* and *ex post*.
18. Prioritise based on evidence.
19. Promote transparency through communication.
20. Encourage public consultation in policy making.
21. Develop data collection strategies.
22. Develop indicators on government performance: benchmarking and awarding.

Annex 2. Matrix of barriers to administrative simplification strategies and approaches to overcome them

The goal of this matrix is to match the barriers found with the approaches suggested to overcome them. It is only indicative and not exhaustive. To facilitate a clear presentation of this matrix, the list of approaches can be found separately in Annex 1.

Barriers	Approaches (see Annex 1)																					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1) Lack of high political support	X		X		X								X	X	X							
2) Resistance to change	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X				X		X		X	X		X
3) Lack of co-ordination	X	X								X	X		X	X	X							X
4) Lack of a comprehensive administrative simplification strategy	X	X	X	X							X		X			X						
5) Limited resource availability	X		X	X	X										X							
6) Legal complexity									X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		
7) Lack of human skills and capacities									X	X	X		X									X
8) Lack of understanding administrative simplification				X	X					X	X		X		X				X	X		X
9) Lack of information and data					X												X	X			X	
10) The digital divide												X										X
11) Lack of standardisation of procedures	X	X				X				X			X			X	X	X	X			
12) Lack of measurement and evaluation mechanisms																	X	X		X	X	X

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Selected websites links:

Doing Business Indicators: www.doingbusiness.org

OECD Regulatory Policy Division:

The Global Competitiveness Network:

www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/index.htm

The Standard Cost Model (SCM) network: www.administrative-burdens.com

www.oecd.org/gov/regref + country background reports.

www.oecd.org/gov/regref/portugal

www.oecd.org/mena/governance

www.oecd.org/regreform/principles

National websites:

Belgium's Kafka Programme: www.kafka.be

Danish Evaluation Institute for Local Governments: www.krevi.dk

Government of Morocco website: www.service-public.ma

Morocco Procedures guidelines: www.manueldesprocedures.com

Treasury Board of Canada: www.tbs-sct.gc.ca

UK Better Regulation website: www.betterregulation.gov.uk

US President's Office of Management and Budget. Paperwork Requirements. www.whitehouse.gov/omb/infoereg/infocoll.html

Overcoming Barriers to Administrative Simplification Strategies

GUIDANCE FOR POLICY MAKERS

Governments face the challenge of rationalising and minimising administrative burdens imposed by bureaucratic requirements. At the same time, they need to use administrative procedures as a source of information and a tool for implementing public policies. Administrative simplification strategies are designed to streamline procedures, reduce complexity, paperwork and uncertainty. This helps to make public sector delivery more accountable and efficient, and to foster a regulatory environment that enables economic and social activity.

This guide draws on the experience of, and policy dialogue between, member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Middle East and North African countries (MENA). It reviews common barriers to designing and implementing a strategy for administrative simplification and offers 22 approaches to overcome them, providing a synthesis of good practices among policy makers and practitioners working on cutting red tape.

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