Chapter 2.

The role of the centre of government in driving decentralisation reform in Jordan

This chapter analyses the current architecture of the state with a focus on the interplay between the central level, governorates and municipalities examining the autonomy of subnational bodies, accountability mechanisms and the challenges faced by government institutions across all levels of government to effectively deliver on their mandates. It raises the (yet unanswered) question whether the creation of elected councils at governorate and local level will eventually go along with a more significant transfer of administrative, political and financial competencies. Stressing the critical function by the National Committee for the Decentralisation Reform as the centre of government (CoG) for driving the reform process, it discusses the need to further clarify mandates and procedures in order to define the future interaction across all levels in the day-to-day service delivery and the national planning and development process.

This document, as well as any [statistical] data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of, or sovereignty over, any territory to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.
Following Parliament’s approval of the new Municipality and Decentralisation Laws, and their subsequent ratification by Royal Decree in December 2015, Jordan is currently revamping the role of its subnational levels by re-allocating competencies to existing institutions, as well as creating new institutions in the municipalities and governorates to get policies closer to citizens.

This chapter assesses Jordan’s decentralisation reform and the centre of government’s (CoG) co-ordination capacity to successfully address the main challenges the country is facing, as identified in Chapter 1. It presents an overview of the decentralisation reform in Jordan and in particular, it analyses the Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws and the government’s recent arrangements to lead and implement the reform under Jordan 2025.1

Since decentralisation is at the heart of this assessment, this chapter will first focus on defining the process and providing relevant international good practices. It will then determine the role of the centre of government in leading decentralisation reform and devising the mechanisms for an effective and efficient implementation that includes the active involvement and engagement of all key stakeholders.

Decentralisation and governance in Jordan

Jordan’s country specific territorial reality is the result of its own political, social and economic history, described in Chapter 1. This section describes the territorial reality and constraints that have led to the current centralised state, and contrasts it with experiences of OECD countries.

A small country with great regional disparities

Jordan has 12 governorates, each headed by a governor appointed by the King through the Minister of the Interior. The governor and related bodies, who act as the executive organ for carrying out cabinet decisions at the subnational level, are essentially an extension of the central government, and are supervised by the Ministry of the Interior (MoI).2 The municipal system is composed of 100 municipalities and breaks down into four sub-categories to reflect their different size: governorate centres (11 plus the Greater Amman Municipality, GAM), district centres (with a population of over 15 000), caza centres (with a population of between 5 000 and 15 000) and a fourth category for all other municipalities (Ababsa, 2013). Mayors and municipal councils were previously directly elected (but not the municipal council, under the new law) and supervised by the Ministry of Municipality Affairs, except for the mayor of GAM who is appointed by the King. GAM and the Aqaba Special Economic Zone are managed independently, under the Prime Minister.

The sizes and populations of governorates and municipalities have strong disparities. Among governorates, populations range from almost 2.5 million in Amman to fewer than 90 000 in Tafilah (Jordan Department of Statistics, 2017). Half of Jordan’s population is concentrated within the Amman-Ruseifa-Zarqa conurbation (3 million out of 6.3 million inhabitants in 2011). Amman Jordan’s major city, is four times bigger than the second, Zarqa, and seven times larger than Irbid, the third city of the country (313 800 inhabitants in 2013).3 The country’s population density is 86 inhabitants per square kilometre,4 but 80% of the country has fewer than five inhabitants per km². The entire population lives in an area of less than 10 000 km², giving a true density ten times higher: over 650 inhabitants per km². The northern governorates, with less desert areas, have densities of

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over 300 inhabitants per square kilometre, this figure reaches 962 in Irbid. Kerak and Tafila are in the mountains and have suffered from population drift towards the capital; they have respective population densities of 68 and 39 inhabitants per km². In the cities, population density reaches world records, with over 30 000 inhabitants per km² in the poor areas of Amman and Zarqa (Figure 2.1) (Ababsa, 2013).

Figure 2.1. Jordan population density per governorate

These significant differences of population density underline a territorial and country specific reality in Jordan. For instance, there is a big contrast between the north-west country, highly populated with the south-eastern desert area almost unpopulated. Jordan’s Vision 2025 raises the need to promote decentralisation from a local development perspective to fight against unemployment and poverty to not only ensure public service delivery at the local level, but also to encourage local economic development (Figure 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Challenges at the governorate level: GINI, unemployment and poverty in 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>GINI</th>
<th>Poverty rate in %</th>
<th>Unemployment in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajloun</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amman</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aqaba</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balqa</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irbid</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerash</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karak</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma'an</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madaba</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mafraq</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tafilah</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zarqa</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is a large disparity of territorial organisations in OECD countries. There are around 138 000 general purpose subnational governments in OECD countries, which are distributed in one, two or three government layers (Tables 2.2 and 2.3). Jordan is considered a highly centralised country, with a two-tier subnational government system that is made of 12 governorates and 100 municipalities.
Box 2.1. Subnational government structure in OECD countries

The multi-level governance structure of countries varies considerably in the OECD, with 9 federal states and 25 unitary states. Among OECD member countries, only eight have three subnational government tiers: the regional/federated level, the intermediary level and the municipal level. There are 18 countries, such as the Netherlands, with two subnational tiers (regions and municipalities), and 8 countries have only one subnational tier.

Table 2.2. Number of subnational governments* in the OECD in 2015, with figures on Jordan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>Municipal level</th>
<th>Intermediary level</th>
<th>Regional or state level</th>
<th>Total number of subnational governments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federations and quasi-federations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>573</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2 102</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2 111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4 014</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11 116</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11 534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2 445</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>8 117</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8 184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2 324</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>35 879</td>
<td>3 031</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38 960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unitary countries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>360</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>6 253</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6 267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>213</td>
<td></td>
<td>213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>36 681</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36 809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>338</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>3 177</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3 196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>252</td>
<td></td>
<td>252</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>8 047</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1 718</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1 765</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand**</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>446</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2 478</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2 874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal***</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
<td>2 927</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 935</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1 394</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1 475</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD35</td>
<td>130 005</td>
<td>4 111</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>134 630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law. * Includes only subnational government with general competencies. **Netherlands: 403 municipalities as of 1 January 2014. *** The regional level in Portugal includes only two overseas regions: Madeira and Azores.

Jordan’s political, historical and geographic reality (described in Chapter 1) shows it to be a unitary state with a tradition of strong central power. Its administrative culture and background are very close to some OECD countries, such as France and Hungary, where the power is mainly concentrated at the central level, but a meaningful presence on the ground is ensured through prefects or governors and deconcentrated agencies from line ministries. The institutional organisation in OECD countries varies widely across member countries, with a vast majority being unitary states as shown in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3. Institutional organisation in the OECD, and number of subnational layers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 countries with only one level Municipalities</th>
<th>18 countries with two levels States/Regions Municipalities</th>
<th>8 countries with three levels States/Regions Intermediary governments Municipalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 federations and quasi-federations</td>
<td>Australia, Austria, Canada, Mexico, Switzerland</td>
<td>Germany, Belgium, Spain*, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 unitary countries</td>
<td>Chile, Korea, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Norway</td>
<td>New Zealand, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia, Finland*, Ireland, Island</td>
<td>Chile, Korea, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Norway</td>
<td>France, Italy, Poland, United Kingdom*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *Spain is a quasi-federal country. Finland and Portugal have part of autonomous regions in part of the country. There is an intermediate level in United Kingdom.*/


Middle East and North African (MENA) countries have a similar structure with regional and local level units. Although there are significant differences among big countries, such as Egypt and Algeria, and smaller countries, such as Jordan or Tunisia (Box 2.2).
### Box 2.2. Territorial organisations in selected MENA Countries/Territories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territories/countries</th>
<th>Population, 2014, in millions</th>
<th>Regional level</th>
<th>Provincial Level</th>
<th>Local level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>48 provinces/wilayas, 160 districts/constituencies (da’iras)</td>
<td>1,541 municipalities (communes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 governorates, each divided into districts</td>
<td>217 towns + Luxor (with special status)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 governorates</td>
<td>100 municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 governorates (muhafaxat), each (except Beirut) divided into districts (aqdaya)</td>
<td>930 municipalities and villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>12 regions</td>
<td>provinces and prefectures</td>
<td>municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 governorates, 2 autonomous provinces</td>
<td>74 municipalities, 368 villages councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 departments</td>
<td>107 cities, 248 small cities, 207 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 governorates (wilayat), each divided into districts</td>
<td>350 municipalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Western Sahara excluded.*


Although all MENA countries are unitary, territorial realities help to understand the different models and processes that each country is implementing to bring policies and public services closer to citizens. The next section of this chapter will provide a definition of decentralisation, stressing its differences with other models, such as deconcentration. This will be followed by an assessment of the evolution and current status of the decentralisation reform that Jordan under King Abdullah II, and his ambition to modernise Jordan while answering to citizens’ needs for greater participation.

### Decentralisation reform in Jordan

#### Defining decentralisation

Decentralisation is a complex and heterogeneous process. Decentralisation processes across the world have adopted a wide variety of forms, from the high level of decentralisation of certain federal states, such as Germany and some Spanish regions, to the more limited influence of regions in France or Hungary. Consequently, looking for a minimum common denominator is not a simple task.
The OECD broadly defines “decentralisation” (or devolution) as comprising a transfer of “public functions from higher tiers to lower tiers of governance. It can be administrative (transfer of civil servants and public functions to the local level), fiscal (devolution of fiscal resources and revenue generating powers), political (devolution of decision-making powers) or a mixture of these” (OECD, 2005). As such, the concept of decentralisation is often perceived in hierarchical terms, involving the top-down/vertical movement of administrative, fiscal and/or political/decision-making functions. Such functional movement can be intra-organisational (e.g. within government departments) or inter-organisational (e.g. from central to local administration).

For many years, international organisations like World Bank or UNDP have promoted decentralisation as a model to support policies closer to citizens. Decentralisation is directly linked to the principle of subsidiarity defined in article 5 of the Treaty on European Union⁵ and the Council of Europe (with the European Chart of Local Self-Government)⁶. The rationale is based on the need to transfer competencies and responsibilities to authorities closer to citizens so as to be more adapted to the local reality and their specific needs. This implies a certain degree of autonomy to adapt to local realities but always complying with national laws and guidelines. Different degrees of autonomy at subnational level can bring to different models of decentralisation, as mentioned earlier, that can go from a complete devolution from the top to the bottom to transfer of some competences to a lower level.

Promoting decentralisation also brings the opportunity to enhance local governance, citizen participation and local democracy. Interaction between the State and civil society is essential and often easier to be created at local than at central level. Decentralised governments can become key actors to promote an active and vibrant civil society; in fact a greater degree of decentralisation can generate more opportunities for the emergence of new civil society organisations.

Box 2.3 details the different dimensions of decentralisation, and the differences between decentralisation, deconcentration and delegation of powers.

**Box 2.3. Theoretic approach to decentralisation**

**Decentralisation:** the transfer of responsibility to democratically independent lower levels of government, thereby giving them more managerial discretion, but not necessarily more financial independence. It usually includes:

- **Political decentralisation** refers to a situation in which political power is moved either to regional or local bodies that are elected, or to administrative actors who are appointed and supervised by elected bodies. Political decentralisation requires effective constitutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks to ensure accountability and transparency.

- **Fiscal decentralisation** is the most comprehensive form of decentralisation as it is directly linked to budgetary practices. It involves resource reallocation to subnational authorities. Fiscal decentralisation touches upon all forms of decentralisation; reallocating responsibilities without assigning sufficient levels of resources to the newly empowered units will not result in effective decentralisation.

- **Administrative decentralisation** aims to transfer the position of the decision-making authority and responsibility for the delivery of select public services from the central government to other levels of government or agencies.
Box 2.3. Theoretic approach to decentralisation (cont.)

Devolution is the moving of political power from the top to the bottom. It involves a permanent – legal or constitutional – transfer of responsibility, decision making, resources and revenues from a higher level of government to a lower, local level that enjoys substantial autonomy from the decentralising authority. In terms of education decentralisation, devolution transfers responsibility for education to lower levels of government, such as governorates, municipalities, or districts.

Deconcentration transfers decision-making authority – often by administrative decree – from a higher to a lower level of bureaucracy within the same level of government. The same hierarchical accountability is maintained between local units and the central government ministry or agency that has been decentralised. Deconcentration is often the first step undertaken by newly decentralised governments to improve service delivery, that is, the transfer of responsibility from central ministries to field offices or more autonomous agencies, thereby becoming closer to citizens while remaining part of central government.

Delegation assigns – usually by administrative decree – decision-making authority for specifically defined functions to local units of government or agencies that are not necessarily branches or local offices of the decentralising authority. In terms of education decentralisation, responsibility is transferred to elected or appointed education governance bodies, such as school councils or school management.


Under appropriate conditions, all of these forms of decentralisation and deconcentration can play important roles in broadening participation in political, economic and social activities in countries. Thus, decentralisation is not an end in itself, but is rather conceived to be “designed and evaluated for its ability to achieve broader objectives of […] equity, efficiency, quality and financial soundness” (Bossert, 1998). When the decentralisation process starts, the medium and long-term objectives to be achieved are at the heart of the reform.

The differences between federal and unitary systems might appear to be clear and well defined. However, a closer look at the practices reveals that even within each category there are numerous variations. In OECD countries, the unitary state model is the most common form of organisation, as previously shown in table 2.3.

Advantages and cost limitations of decentralisation

Decentralisation has advantages in two main areas: on the one hand, it is supposed to produce a reduction of administrative transaction costs and, on the other, to increase the proximity of decision-making, hence creating a more dynamic interaction with citizens. As for the former, a local administrations allows public and elected officials to be closer to the demands and needs of citizens and businesses, which gives them a greater capacity to react to them directly, without co-ordinating with intermediary and central institutions.

The second element is the greater interaction with citizens due to the proximity of decentralized institutions to their constituencies. Local government allows for a more direct and dynamic active interaction with citizens and can better take into account the political, cultural, ethnic and religious factors that are specific of their local communities. This interaction also implies more opportunities for consultation and participation of civil
society in public affairs. This also improves public sector accountability as it enables citizens and CSOs to better supervise and monitor the use of public funds.

However, decentralisation is not a magic formula since it requires important efforts of co-ordination in the transfer of competences and also in assessing the performance and efficiency of management and delivery of public services by the lower levels. Giving more powers and resources to subnational governments will also be costly at least at the beginning when human and financial resources will be needed to ensure services are effectively and efficiently delivered by the new authorities. In fact, the lack of appropriate skills and capacities at the subnational level is known to be one of the main obstacles to successful decentralisation reforms.

Giving more competences at the subnational level can also entail risks on performance and accountability of the new authorities who will decide on how resources are to be used. This may also generate corruption from local elites if rigorous mechanisms of supervision are not put in place.

As stated before, there’s not an optimal model of decentralisation. It’s not an either-or choice. For instance in different State models like Italy and Spain, subnational governments are kept under a tight financial discipline as enshrined in their Constitution. Governments must create or maintain the "enabling conditions" that allow local levels to take on more responsibilities when resources are available (see Chapter 3). (World Bank, n.d.).

Decentralisation is influenced by a country’s size, population, political and institutional inheritance and diversity. These attributes have an important impact on the design and modalities of decentralisation, which are crucial for its success. The appropriateness of functions to be decentralised, adequacy of fiscal resources to be transferred to the subnational governments, effectiveness of administrative and legal set-ups, and sufficiency of technical/skilled personnel at all levels of government are important ingredients for a successful reform. The next section will provide a historic overview of Jordan’s model and its evolution.

**A historical overview of the decentralisation process in Jordan**

Efforts to transfer competencies from the central level to lower tiers is a relatively recent process in Jordan, and has gone through several stop and go phases during the 2000s (see Chapter 1). Jordan has a long tradition of centralised power with limited scope of action to lower levels of governments.

The Constitution approved in 1952 only stipulates that municipal and local affairs are to be run by municipal or local councils. The details have been left to the Municipalities Law and other relevant laws. Governorates are part of the MoI, and their regulation is referred to in bylaws and the Administrative Divisions Law of 2000, where the 12 governorates are consolidated as administrative and deconcentrated administrations.

Municipalities were established by law three years after the Constitution was approved in 1952 only stipulates that municipal and local affairs are to be run by municipal or local councils. The details have been left to the Municipalities Law and other relevant laws. Governorates are part of the MoI, and their regulation is referred to in bylaws and the Administrative Divisions Law of 2000, where the 12 governorates are consolidated as administrative and deconcentrated administrations.

Municipalities were established by law three years after the Constitution was approved in 1952 only stipulates that municipal and local affairs are to be run by municipal or local councils. The details have been left to the Municipalities Law and other relevant laws. Governorates are part of the MoI, and their regulation is referred to in bylaws and the Administrative Divisions Law of 2000, where the 12 governorates are consolidated as administrative and deconcentrated administrations.

Municipalities were established by law three years after the Constitution was approved and were included in the 1955 Law on Municipalities. As outlined in Chapter 1, there were four categories of municipalities including the governorate centres, the district and caza centres and a fourth category for all other municipalities. The 1955 Municipal Law was inspired by the British system that gives wide responsibilities to mayors, but they have being declining in number progressively (Ababsa, 2016). In practice, the central government currently provides all basic services: water, electricity, gas, sewerage, primary education, healthcare, civil defence, public transport, housing and environment.
Municipalities are now only responsible for urban planning, waste collection, road maintenance and lighting, markets and building permits. They still have limited political power and few budgetary resources.

In the 1990s, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs created new administrative bodies in Jordanian municipalities aimed at promoting local development: the Local Development Units (further details in Chapter 3). They promoted forum and discussion with local communities on economic development and investment projects, however they had little impact due to the lack of competencies of municipal authorities (Government of Jordan, 2016b).

In parallel, during 1994-96, and under the auspices of international donors (mainly the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, and the World Bank), 328 municipalities and 324 village councils were merged. In 2001, the number of municipalities was reduced to 99, and all village councils were dissolved and Amman, as the capital-city and surrounding communities were gathered in 1987 to form the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). The considerable amalgamation of municipalities was intended to solve the problem of insolvency by cutting down on municipal staff while promoting greater citizen participation. It also forced minor tribes to create new alliances to keep some control over municipalities covering their traditional terrains (Ababsa, 2016).

The latest and most important drive towards strengthening local government emerged between 2004 and 2005 when King Abdullah II announced a plan to provide greater autonomy to local institutions, emphasising that “political development should start at the grassroots level, and then move up to decision making centres and not vice versa”. The initiative prioritised three regions (Northern, Middle and Southern), which were to create their own indirectly elected assemblies and regional capitals. The intention was that each region should manage its own services and decide on a policy to encourage local development. Local authorities were to be given greater leeway in guiding the implementation of development programmes at the local level.

To help draft a concrete proposal for decentralisation, King Abdullah II appointed a Royal Commission in January 2005 to examine the decentralisation scheme and make recommendations for its implementation. However, the creation of regions was not pursued, partly because of a lack of political preparedness, but also due to a lack of inter-ministerial co-ordination. In a new speech in October 2008, King Abdullah II called for more public participation at the governorate level, and local development programmes were transferred from the Ministry of Planning to the MoI. In November 2010, King Abdullah II promised Parliament a draft law on decentralisation, including the creation of Governorate Councils. A ministerial Committee on Decentralisation was created and included four subcommittees (Legal, Institutional Framework, Finance, and Capacity Building); however, once again the government failed to reach consensus regarding concrete steps for implementation.

In parallel to these attempts, a new Municipal Law was approved in 2007 where an important democratic component was introduced by the direct election of municipal councillors, except for the GAM. This law enabled, for the first time, fully-elected municipal councils (half of which were previously appointed) and reached outstanding participation from citizens in the following municipal elections where voter turnout reached 50%. The percentage of local elected women also increased dramatically due to the 20% quota included in the law. The last modification of the Municipality Law was in
2011, where the quota for women was increased to 25% and the “developmental role” of municipalities was introduced, this was further developed in the 2015 Law.

During the Arab Spring, the debate on strengthening the local level and improving citizen participation came back to the public sphere with democratic aspirations of the Jordanian population. Giving competencies to local authorities to engage the private sector in fighting unemployment was deemed an important part of the strategy. The creation of jobs across the country in both rural and urban areas was also part of a critical need to slow the exodus towards the capital (Inform, 2015). In some MENA countries, such as Tunisia and Morocco, this led to constitutional amendments to reinforce the role of subnational governments as drivers of socio-economic development and local democracy (Box 2.4).

**Box 2.4. Decentralisation trends in MENA countries: Morocco and Tunisia**

Morocco and Tunisia are at the forefront of decentralisation reforms in Arab countries. After the Arab Spring, both countries have amended their Constitution acknowledging local democracy and citizen participation as a key aspect for good governance. In both countries, administrative systems and even electoral codes have been modified to engage in local democracy.

The amendments introduced in the Constitution of Morocco in 2011 following the Arab Spring assign new responsibilities to Moroccan local and regional authorities and put citizens at the heart of public policies and service delivery at the local level (Articles. 135-144). This is aligned and in parallel with the “advanced regionalisation” (Regionalisation avancée) launched in 2007. Regional and local elections took place in 2015 with gender quota.

In Tunisia, the 2014 Constitution devotes a whole chapter to the local level where territorial decentralisation, local autonomy and administration are conferred. This is also linked to the creation of an intermediate level between regions and municipalities, the departments and the adoption of new electoral rules for local governments to promote local democracy. A Local Governments Superior Council is also to be created. Local elections have been postponed on several occasions and are expected to take place in 2017.


In 2013, the King asked again the government and parliament to start working towards the drafting of a new decentralisation law. Four draft laws were debated and revised and despite significant opposition to specific clauses in the law, the laws on municipalities and decentralisation were finally endorsed by Parliament on 23 August 2015.

**The decentralisation and municipalities Laws: A centralised system also at the subnational level**

Engaging in a decentralisation reform is a complex process that needs a strong political commitment as well as a sound administrative machinery ready to implement it. When a decentralisation reform is envisaged, not only its objectives need to be clearly spelled out but also the legal framework to achieve them. The creation of a strong legal framework is a priority to ensure the proper utilisation of public resources. This legal framework should clearly explain the rationale of the reform, the objectives to be achieved together with a clear description of the competences at different levels with the
necessary resources. This should be accompanied with financial mechanisms to follow-up and evaluate the performance. This part is particularly relevant at the first stage of the process when the implementation of the new legal framework needs to be monitored and, if necessary, adjusted to the reality on the ground.

The Decentralisation Law (DL) and Municipality Law (ML) are the most significant step towards realising King Abdullah’s vision of a political development process towards a better functioning democratic Jordan, which should starts at the grassroots level and moves up to higher decision-making centres (Inform, 2015). The reform takes places at a time when Jordan prepared its third National Action Plan for the Open Government Partnership, which highlights a new momentum for fostering the emergence of a culture of open, transparent, inclusive and accountable governance across the different layers of government.

The government of Jordan bases this reform on four pillars:

- Promoting citizen participation in decision making for democratic development.
- Promoting sustainable local development and equal distribution of benefits.
- Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of local administration and municipalities in providing services.
- Improving efficiency in planning and preparing local budgets.

While these pillars, for the first time, introduce important democratic components in the governorate and municipal levels, by creating elected local councils, they do not yet foresee the transfer of competencies and resources as core elements of the reform. Achieving these objectives would require a major and welcomed cultural change in the public administration in Jordan, however if the rationale of such reform remains clear, the means and tools to achieve it still need to be fully established. These ambitious goals need to fit into the core and yet scarce articles dedicated to governorates and municipal structural reform in both laws. The articles dedicated to administrations, structure, functions, funds and multilevel co-ordination barely represent 25% of the provisions of the DL (12 articles out of 47) and 41% of the ML (32 of 77 articles). The rest of the provisions of both laws are dedicated to electoral procedures. This implies that the laws are quite wide and just give the guiding principles, but that the concrete details for their implementation and their implications will have to be further developed by by-laws. At the time this report was written, only two by-laws from MoI on organisational structures had been approved. This could hamper and slow down implementation, as it will require more legislation to be approved by the national competent authorities.

According to interviews with government senior officials, the DL was originally conceived as a by-law of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) to rearrange the functioning and administrative competences of governorates. However, after intense internal debates, the Cabinet Office agreed to upgrade it to the rank of law. Previous governorate regulations are MoI by-laws regulating the administrative functioning of governorates (number 46 and 47 from the year 2000). The rationale is to reinforce the relevance and importance of the reform and bring a more democratic dimension to the governorates, a deconcentrated administration strictly linked to MoI authority.

These two laws constitute the foundation for a legal framework aimed at promoting citizen participation and bringing policies closer to citizens. Other OECD countries have also engaged in recent reforms aimed at transferring more powers to the regional level to
solve regional disparities and promote regional development by bringing public services and policies closer to citizens’ needs (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4. Regionalisation trends in OECD countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of regionalisation</th>
<th>Key characteristics</th>
<th>Country experiences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation of a new directly elected regional level.</td>
<td>Clear competencies and accountability mechanisms regarding citizens</td>
<td>In <strong>Italy</strong>, regional reforms have taken place in several waves, from the early 1970s to the 2000s (&quot;Bassanini&quot; reforms). They are characterised by a broad allocation of competencies to regions, with the possibility to design differentiated autonomy for regions with an ordinary statute. In 2001, a constitutional reform markedly widened the competences of the regions, in particular concerning legislative powers, and abolished most state controls. In <strong>Denmark</strong>, a general reform of subnational authorities was carried out in 2007. The number of municipalities was reduced from 271 to 99. At the same time, five new regions replaced 14 former counties. The main objective of the reform was to produce efficiency gains based on economies of scale and to offer better and more specialised public services. Regions do not have many instruments to encourage municipalities to co-operate in implementing a vision for the region. It remains to be seen whether regions have enough sticks and carrots to encourage municipalities in their region to help implement the regional visions. In <strong>France</strong>, regions were created in 1982 with a specific focus on regional growth issues. The last reform was in 2014, which merged the regions from 22 to 13, and encouraged the creation of metropolitan areas (see Annex 1 of this report). The map of the new regions took effect on 1 January 2016. In <strong>Poland</strong>, regions were created in 1999 with the mandate to manage part of European Union funding and to elaborate regional development programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of a deconcentrated regional level, not elected.</td>
<td>Responsibilities to enhance co-ordination in specific areas across the national government and local authorities.</td>
<td>The <strong>United Kingdom</strong> has developed a hybrid structure that is based on a Regional Development Agency (RDA), set up and funded by the national government and overseen by a board of directors from the region and led by the private sector; and a regional Assembly, comprised of about 100 people from local government, academic institutions, business and voluntary organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of functional regions, with spatial planning functions.</td>
<td>Focuses mainly on spatial planning issues; has not led to the creation of a new layer of government.</td>
<td>In <strong>Korea</strong>, there is a strong regionalisation trend, but it focuses mainly on spatial planning issues and has not led to the creation of a new layer of government. In 2008, the Korean government announced the &quot;five area-wide economic blocs&quot; which divide the whole territory into five sub-economic blocs (except for two regions, the mountainous northeast area and Jeju Island). Each of these regions, with a population of more than five million, covers two or three provinces (or provincial cities) that share a similar historic, economic and social context. In order to guide co-operation among provinces in the same bloc, an autonomous regional headquarters, rather than a permanent supra-province body, will be installed in each region. This autonomous organisation will create a regional development plan for each bloc and promote horizontal co-operation among local governments in general.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

One of the defining characteristics of this reform is the setting up of a legal framework into two laws: the Decentralisation Law, dedicated to the governorate level, and the Municipalities Law, dedicated to the municipal and district level. These will be assessed in the following sections.

The new role of the governorates

Governorates have long been the administrative and deconcentrated arm of the central government, headed by a governor and appointed by the Prime Minister. This is why some still consider Jordan as a one-tier of subnational government, as governorates are considered part of the central government and not another layer (UCLG, 2016). While the new decentralisation law introduces an elected council at the governorate level with increased competencies, in particular on strategic planning and promotion of socio-economic development, it still remains to be seen whether governorates are to get real autonomy from the central government.

The governorate is an administrative unit directly attached to the MoI,\textsuperscript{13} which employs the personnel of the governorate and determines and allocates their budget. All ministries and agencies of public services (except the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs) have departments or regional offices in the governorates.

Each governorate is managed by a Governor (\textit{Mouhafiz}) who is designated by the Council of Ministers based on the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior, who may also have delegated duties directly from the Cabinet Office. Governors are responsible for maintaining public order and also have the roles of leading and supervising the work of government departments in the governorate and co-ordinate with the municipalities within its geographical boundaries (article 3 of DL). This figure is common in many OECD unitary countries such as the \textit{Intendente} in Chile or the \textit{Préfet} in France (Box 2.5).

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Box 2.5. Role of the “Préfet” in France} \\
\hline
Regional prefects (\textit{préfets de région}) in France have become the linchpins for central government action in a region, and are responsible for co-ordinating the departments grouped around them and overseeing the coherence of the measures adopted in their territory. A prefect must also lead the dialogue and negotiations with elected bodies and their officers. They are appointed in the Council of Ministers by a Presidential Decree on the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior’s recommendation.

French prefects are thus one response to a problem encountered in a large number of OECD countries – that of the inter-ministerial co-ordination of regional policies. They also exercise a vertical co-ordination function, not only between the various local players, but also between those players and the central government. However, while offering an undisputed advantage in terms of regional policy coherence, new reforms have increased the powers of the prefect in the regions.

Prefects in France and governors in Jordan have very similar roles in the implementation of the state's public policy, and the co-ordination between public institutions. However, this task appears more of a challenge in Jordan as deconcentrated units of line ministries depend on the governors, whereas some reforms in France – the “Charter of deconcentration” in 1992, renewed in 2015, and the “General Revue of Public Policies” (RGPP in French) – made it mandatory for local services of the sectorial ministries to obey the prefect’s co-ordination. Although it is still difficult to break silos in France, and some ministries (such as Justice and Education) escape the authority of the prefect.
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Box 2.5. Role of the “Préfet” in France (cont.)

The role of the regional Prefect has been reinforced with the latest deconcentration reform (Decree of 16 February 2010) and now plays a predominant role in reinforcing most national policies at regional level, except matters of safety and security, which are still managed at the department level. They also supervise and co-ordinate the department prefects.


An innovation of the Decentralisation Law is the setting up of two councils in each governorate (Figure 2.2):

- The governorate council: a new elected body (with 85% elected and 15% appointed by the central government) approves the proposals of the Executive Council.

- The executive council: the existing board unit headed by the Governor (also appointed) and composed of representatives of the directorates (deconcentrated agencies from central government).

The governorate council introduces a democratic component at the highest level of the governorate administration in order to get closer to citizen’s needs. However, the Law still limits the scope of its functions to approving draft key documents prepared by the executive Council, such as the strategic plans, governorate budget and governorates’ need guide but with limited capacity to propose new initiatives except for investment projects and participating in joint projects with other governorates that will anyway require the validation from “the relevant bodies” (article 8 DL) of the central government. The DL also states that upon the recommendation of the MoI, the Cabinet will appoint a maximum of 15% of its members. For the time being, the criteria for choosing this 15% is yet to be clarified.

The governorate council enjoys a legal element with financial and administrative independence. In addition, while the governorate council is responsible for reviewing and approving proposals of the executive council, the final decision would not be placed in their hands in case of conflict, instead the final decision will be submitted to the Prime Minister. Along the same line, the law provides a system for conflict resolution where the elected body and the executive are at the same level of discussion in case of disagreement. The creation of the governorate councils will therefore introduce an unprecedented level of popular control and influence on which Jordan will have to build to make them more powerful and fully autonomous, in line with OECD good practices. The synergies and institutional arrangements to combine this elected body with the technical approach of the executive council will be a challenge especially as the funds remain at the central level and will need to be set in a very clear way to make them a fundamental piece of the decision-making process of the governorate.
Figure 2.2. New governorate structure

Source: Author based on Government of Jordan (2016a), Background report of the OECD Strategic Assessment of Jordan, unpublished working paper.

The executive council is in charge of the key programmes and initiatives of the governorate by preparing strategic and executive projects, the governorate budget (based on the sum allocated by the Ministry of Finance after proposal from the MoI), a yearly manual on the governorate and its municipalities’ needs, as well as co-ordinating with municipalities and reviewing their strategies. It also takes decisions to address public issues in governorates, especially regarding public services (Article 5, DL). As shown in Figure 2.2, the duties of the executive council are fed from the line ministries present at the governorate level through to regional directors (mainly the Ministries of Planning and International Co-operation [MoPIC], Health, Education, Social affairs and Public Works), and with the Local Development Unit (LDU), which acts as the General Secretariat for both Councils.

The LDU occupies a key position at the heart of the administrative structure of the governorate. It holds the secretariat of both executive and governorate councils and reports directly to the Governor, head of the governorate (this figure will be further developed in Chapter 3).

The new regulation with the DL and ML is expected to contribute to enhancing co-ordination among the different bodies, however, the co-existence of different technical bodies with a hierarchical relation, from the LDU at the bottom, to the Manager, the technical official in charge of supervising the Development units and the Executive Council, and to the Governor and the Elected Council at the top is far from a simple organisational chart. Governorates will have to make a diagnosis and assessment to make the best of each part of the process and avoid overlapping and red tape.

This new administrative structure at the governorate level may generate some opacity in terms of responsibility and accountability. The coexisting mandate of the governor, who will be both a representative of the State and head of the Executive Council, may generate a problem of divided loyalty (to the central government and to the governorate).
that could undermine the process of building place-based agendas. In fact, as the head of
governorate, the governor will work on developing the territory from the local level
perspective, while as the head of the Executive Council, he/she will be responsible for
implementing national policies and guidelines. In most governorates, as a consequence of
the centralised culture of the country and the predominant presence of line ministries, the
deoncentrated hat that is under the authority of central government may prevail when
implementing central mandates in the governorate against the new bottom-up approach.

One of the effects of the Decentralisation Law is to upgrade the level of legislation
that rules governorates, whose functioning used to be under MoI decree (the latest was
from 2000). However, the new framework does not foresee a transfer of competencies or
functions from the central level, the executive council or the governor to the new elected
body (i.e. the governorate council). Hence, governorate authorities will continue acting on
the central government’s behalf, with the governorate council performing limited
democratic control and input provision functions. Although a democratic component has
been introduced with the governorate council, this reform at the governorate level cannot
be considered as decentralisation according to the OECD definition. The ambitious
reform engaged by the Government of Jordan appears to set the goal of decentralisation
as a medium-term objective, of which the first steps have just been established.

The municipalities in the reform

Municipalities are the lowest and one of the oldest administrative structures at the
local level, together with the no longer existing villages.14 As described earlier in this
chapter, they were first regulated in 1955 and amended on several occasions (1988, 2001,
2007 and 2015).

Jordanian municipalities enjoy legal and financial autonomy since 1955 where key
competencies are already described. They essentially include the traditional competences
related to local governments15 such as the provision of urban services (water, electricity,
sewage) as well as town-planning and maintenance of road and public spaces, hygiene,
public health (slaughter houses, prevent risks and epidemics) and public safety
(prevention of fires, civil defence) and support on education, cultural and sports activities,
assistance of fires.16

Municipalities are subject to supervision by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs
(MoMA) on the legal and administrative side and on the financial oversight and guidance
(further developed in chapter 3). However, many provisions of Municipalities Law (ML)
limit the authority and autonomy of the municipalities and establish the basis for a
relationship of dependence and subordination to the state. For instance, despite the
theoretically large range of fields and competences previously mentioned, the functions
and responsibilities attributed to the municipalities, except for urban planning (which is
made in close co-operation with MoMA), are delegated or "deconcentrated" services from
central government to deconcentrated agencies, or are responsibilities for the execution of
work and services. An important part of the functions and services regulated by the law
concern the responsibility of the various deconcentrated government departments or
companies of public services represented in the municipal administration.17

The municipalities are neither involved nor consulted in the provision, and even less,
in the design of the services related to these fields (Ababsa, 2016). In fact, municipalities
currently don’t have the power for policy making and decision making concerning the
sphere of activities in which these services fit. They do not have the political autonomy to
build local policy in response to specific local needs or a general local development
strategy. The new bottom-up approach will bring the opportunity to change this dynamic. It is significant that social action, a traditional local competence that municipalities usually pay attention to (one of the closes policies to answer to basics citizens’ needs) is only evoked by the law for assisting victims of fires and natural disasters.

While municipal competencies often seem to be under the supervision of MoMA, as well as other line ministries, the ML adds a new competency related to contributing to national development. This means that the local council will contribute to preparing the strategic and developmental plans and the “needs’ guide” within its boundaries in co-operation with civil society organisations, and will submit them to the Municipal Council. The Municipal Council will prepare strategic and developmental plans for the whole municipality, as well as the municipal area needs’ guide, and will submit them to the Executive Council at the governorate level. The co-ordination mechanisms to elaborate these plans remain unclear, as do the common criteria. However, the new bottom-up approach to the design of the national development plan, co-ordinated by MoPIC, can be the basis for more decentralised arrangements. In this context, citizen consultation mechanisms could be envisaged in a coherent manner to ensure a common approach (see Chapter 3).

Local administrations have the potential to develop other competences to provide concrete answers to local needs. In this sense, municipalities in OECD countries not only provide basic public services and strategic planning, but have also promoted innovation and local economic development to fight against unemployment. In some cases, such as Ireland, decentralisation reform has focused on clustering and promoting local economic development through a participatory approach (Box 2.6).

**Box 2.6. “Putting people first - Action programme for effective and local government”: Irish reform of local government**

Putting people first - Action programme for effective local government set out reforms to improve:

- The delivery of services for the citizen.
- Deliver greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- Give local government a more central role in local development and community development.

It represents a significant change in government policy in relation to local government for the purposes of placing local government as the main vehicle of governance and public service at the local level; leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and local communities effectively and accountably.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014, enacted on 27 January 2014, gives legislative effect to the commitments in “Putting People First” including the establishment of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each local authority administrative area.

LCDCs have now been established on a statutory basis in all 31 local authorities for the purpose of bringing a more co-ordinated and joined-up approach to local/community development at the local level. Membership includes local authority elected members and officials; State and non-State local development agencies; community and voluntary organisations; and other representatives of civil society, including business interests and farming interests.

Municipalities will be managed by a municipal council, composed of a mayor, an undetermined number of members representing heads of local councils and an undetermined number of members of local councils who won the highest number of votes, except for Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and Petra Tourism Developmental Authority (Article 3, ML). The creation of an elected body at the district level that is below municipalities called “local councils” within the boundaries of the municipality is one of the most relevant new aspects of the new law.

For the creation of local councils, a decree by the Minister of Municipality Affairs will determine the boundaries of the local council and the number of its elected members (at least five) that will be elected by popular vote.

Where local councils are created (everywhere except from GAM and Aqaba), the current directly elected municipal councils will be transformed into indirectly elected bodies. The Minister may, with the approval of the Cabinet, appoint two additional members in each Municipal Council who enjoy the same rights of elected members (Article 69, ML). The Greater Municipality of Amman presents an exception, as 25% of the council members and the Mayor are appointed.

The creation of local councils can contribute to come closer to people especially where the headquarters of the municipality are far away (like in the bigger cities or in remote areas). Yet, it can also contribute to a potential fragmentation of the political power by creating new structures at the sub-municipal level. In practice, this could also have a counter-productive effect after the major streamlining reform that Jordan undertook early 2000s by reducing the number of municipalities (from 328 municipalities and 324 village councils to 99 municipalities) and removing the villages. Jordan should pay attention on the effectiveness and real synergies between the municipal and local councils to make the most of both institutions.

In line with the King’s vision of a grassroots approach to the national development process, elected local councils are tasked with proposing development projects and contributing to the preparation of strategic and development plans based on the identification of needs in co-operation with civil society organisations (Article 6, ML). Their work is then submitted to the municipal council. Figure 2.3 describes the organisational chart of Jordanian municipalities and local councils under the 2015 Municipalities Law.
As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an important new aspect introduced by the law is a gender quota: 25% of municipal council seats are reserved for women (further explored in Chapter 4). This is an important step as the inclusion of women in representative bodies is still a challenge in the country (Box 2.7).

**Box 2.7. Remaining barriers to women’s participation in representative bodies in Jordan**

Women’s participation in representative bodies in Jordan has improved, yet it remains limited. Jordan introduced a quota system for the 2003 elections, which remains crucial to women’s representation in the House of Representatives. In 2012, the number of seats reserved for women was raised from 6 to 15 seats out of 150. In the September 2016 elections, 5 additional women won in elections outside the quota, making women’s representation in the Parliament 15%, compared to 12% in 2013.

On the municipal level, the quota grants women a share of 25% of seats in municipal councils, and the latest elections in 2013 witnessed a significant increase in female representation, from 28% to 36%.

Although there has been an overall improvement, a number of factors still seriously hinder Jordanian women’s ability to fully participate in representative bodies on both national and local level. Based on the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life, the OECD supports Jordan in the framework of the MENA Transition Fund project “Towards inclusive and open governments: Promoting women’s participation in parliaments and policy-making” and identified key obstacles for women’s participation in national and local elections:
Enduring traditional power structures within political parties:

Despite the multiplicity of Jordanian parties and their various agendas, there is limited presence of women, in particular in leadership positions. Most parties do not include non-discriminatory articles or positive discrimination measures within their constitutions. While overall capacities to attract new members at the grassroots level are weak, a lack of gender sensitive outreach channels particularly hinder women’s participation. Moreover, parties are still reluctant to support female candidates, fearing that voters from tribal or rural areas will refrain from supporting them.

Pre-eminent traditional gender roles supported by tribal structures:

Tribes continue to constitute major political actors in Jordan and remain crucial in mobilising support for candidates during elections. Prevalent traditional understandings of “the tribal representative as a male identity” prefer men as political candidates, while an emphasis remains on women’s roles in the private sphere.

Barriers to achieving economic independence:

Economic independence is a prerequisite for political engagement. Women’s economic participation in Jordan remains among the lowest in the Middle East region. Particularly in rural areas, women have limited access to sources of income, microfinance opportunities, loans and also limited access to even justice. In addition, traditional social constraints prevent women from enjoying their rights in ownership and inheritance. Mobility challenges, including both the absence of safe, inexpensive public transportation between Jordan’s cities, further limit women’s economic and political opportunities.

Lack of political experience in public life:

The historical weakness of female political and public participation naturally translates into a lack of political and electoral experience. With no female role models in positions of influence, the trust of Jordan’s society in women’s ability in political work is limited. Women's clubs and associations, as well as women's sections of professional unions, have proven successful in strengthening women's political participation through training and support networks for candidates. However, the majority are Amman-based and elite-led, and consequently disconnected from women at the grassroots level and from outside the capital.


In conclusion, similarly to what is happening at the governorate level, the ML has introduced a democratic component to the municipal management through Municipal and Local Councils, which is an important step toward a more participatory and place-based governance in Jordan that should not be underestimated. However, the lack of clarity in the distribution of powers between local councils and municipality councils and governorates’ councils may create the risk of adding complexity to the current system and overlaps in the distribution of responsibilities and powers between municipal, local councils and institutions of the central government. In addition, the setting up of the local councils as foreseen by the ML is creating strong expectations among civil society and the private sector that popular participation will increase. However, in light of the lack of a major transfer of actual competencies and powers to the local level, the label of “decentralisation reform” may be misleading. The engagement narrative provided by the Royal Court and the government may more adequately reflect the main intention of the
reform, that is, to strengthen popular participation in the national planning and development process.

The current institutional arrangements established in both laws create a complex system that will require strong co-ordination mechanisms and clear definition of roles, mandates and deadlines for every step. Figure 2.4 shows a tentative outline of these arrangements according to the laws. The co-ordination mechanisms between the MoI and MoMA, either at the central or subnational level, remain unclear. There are many points of connection across the governorate and municipal level, especially on budget, strategic planning and governorate and local development units that would need common procedures and alignments that need to be settled from the beginning by both ministries.

Figure 2.4. Institutional arrangements at the governorate and municipal level

The role of the central government will be determinant in translating and putting into practice the Laws. A well-articulated implementation strategy requires a strong and well-defined Centre of Government leading the reform and marking the path towards the objectives set in consultation with key stakeholders.

Centre of government in Jordan

According to the traditional OECD definition, the Centre of government (CoG) is the body or group of bodies that provides direct support and advice to the head of government and the Council of Ministers. The CoG is known under different labels in different countries, such as the Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Office of the President, and Presidency of the Council of Ministers. From its traditional role of serving the executive from an administrative perspective, the CoG is now playing a more active role in policy development and co-ordination across OECD members. The centre in many countries
now provides services that range from strategic planning to real-time policy advice and intelligence, and from leading major cross-departmental policy initiatives to monitoring progress and outcomes (OECD, 2014a).

More recently, OECD countries have widened the scope of the CoG that not only refers to the presidency or its equivalent but also includes ministries with a key and leading role in defining, implementing and follow-up strategic policies. This new definition integrates the Ministry of Finance (where policy priorities are matched with resources) and the Ministry of Planning, when it exists (with an important role in designing policy priorities across the administration and how these contribute to an overall strategic plan). In other cases, and depending on the institutional situation of a country, other ministries or key strategic organisations can also be considered as part of the CoG for their whole-of-government and cross-governmental co-ordination role. It can be the case of Ministries of Public Administration or governmental bodies in charge of Human resources Management, digital government or regulatory policy (OECD, 2015a).

After the analysis of the decentralisation reform and its challenges, this section examines the strength and agility of Jordan’s centre of government institutions to lead the implementation of the government’s national vision and plan for decentralisation across central government and with its subnational partners.

**Centre of government in Jordan: The institutional set-up**

According to the experience of OECD member countries, in the past, the functions of the centre of government were often limited to serving the executive on administrative matters. Today, the CoG is playing a much more active role in policy development involving other strategic stakeholders to ensure cross-government co-ordination and strategic foresight (OECD, 2015d).

The top four priority tasks of the CoG, as identified by the OECD Questionnaire on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government (OECD, 2013), are:

- Supporting decision making by the head of government/cabinet, which in almost all countries involves blending dual streams of political and non-partisan advice.
- Policy co-ordination across government, which increasingly includes leading cross-departmental priority strategies.
- Monitoring progress with policy reform, which means developing new mechanisms that emphasise outcomes rather than just tracking expenditures.
- Strategic planning, which is being redefined post-crisis to be more closely aligned with policy development and resource allocation.

Other highly valued functions include handling government communications and its media strategy, managing relations with the legislative branch, and preparing and operationalising the government programme. The 2013 OECD questionnaire gives an overview of the centre’s main responsibilities in OECD countries (see Figure 2.5).
Strengthening the centre of government may seem to monopolise government’s power. On the contrary, it is aimed at giving support to ministries and agencies and prevent them from working in silos. The centre of government offers a common strategic framework with agreed outcomes and guidelines on how to achieve them that can actually help them. In this sense, “the centre’s role should be a supportive and enabling one, encouraging line ministries to plan and implement their initiatives in line with whole-of-government policy, and contributing to setting and steering government-wide strategies” (OECD, 2015b).

Generally speaking most OECD countries either in presidential, parliamentary and other systems, the three key roles of the centre are:

1) Supporting quality decision making by the head of government.
2) Policy co-ordination across government.
3) Monitoring the implementation of government policy (OECD, 2015b).

With declining trust figures across countries in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, the CoG’s leadership and innovative decision-making capacity is more decisive than ever before to ensure that government has a clear vision for a country’s future, is capable of engaging in a dialogue with the administration and citizens on this vision, and manages to deliver so as to foster sustainable long-term growth and well-being (OECD, 2013).

Box 2.8 provides a more detailed overview of CoG’s trends and how vision, leadership and innovation are central to its daily business. Across these three areas, the capacity of bridging the (potential) gap between political staff (ministries, state secretaries, political advisors and senior civil servants in certain cases) and the civil service is one of the challenges of incoming governments (OECD, 2015b).
Box 2.8. CoG: Observations and trends in 2014, vision, leadership and innovation

The success of a government rests on its ability to define a vision for the country that reflects an electoral mandate and that is typically designed to increase well-being, prosperity and international competitiveness. In the years following the economic crisis, budget concerns dominated in most countries, crowding out any other vision. However, and governments are now seeking to be more forward-looking and strategic, and most OECD Members have some form of vision document. This vision has different, interlinked dimensions, including a long-term vision for the nation, usually going beyond growth objectives to embrace well-being and sustainability goals, and a vision for what the government of the day wants to achieve.

The government no longer has a monopoly on defining the vision. While efforts to gather citizens’ views could risk raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled, such bottom-up visions can help validate and legitimise government policy. Vision depends on two crucial factors that were mentioned repeatedly in the debate: trust and communication. If citizens do not trust the government, they will not trust its vision. Taking steps to strengthen trust in government more generally will help to ensure greater buy-in on more strategic goals. Communication and ownership are also important. If the vision has a strong narrative, connects to citizens’ lives and is well communicated, then it can help generate support for difficult reforms. A particular problem faced by policy makers is that the reform process and its translation into real benefits for citizens are often too slow, undermining confidence and enthusiasm for longer-term visions.

Leadership is crucial to drive policies that contribute to a strategic vision. In a complex and challenging policy environment, characterised by low levels of trust in government, leadership is an essential attribute of effective government. Room for manoeuvre of governments has probably diminished at both the national level, because of budgetary pressures, and at the international level, because of globalisation. Nevertheless, the centre guides in terms of substance and helps departments understand how to align policies with broader objectives. The centre also has a role to play in leading by example, promoting efficiency and good policy management by departments. A key issue is to ensure that the civil service and political staff do not become disconnected, working as separate entities at the centre.

Many centres of government actively promote innovation in their public services, with an emphasis on encouraging a culture of innovation in public services and providing a stable frame for policy innovation and creativity. The centre can provide an impetus – particularly when it partners with specialist agencies that can identify talented people, good ideas and roll-out techniques. Some countries have successfully used innovation focal points or dedicated units to drive public sector innovation; at the same time, being the innovation leader requires appropriate financial and human resources.


Another important element and distinctive feature of the CoG is its capacity to give the country’s strategic vision its specific shape, to secure its coherence, and to make it operational. A starting point is likely to be the government’s programme or its equivalent. It can also be a broader document providing strategic foresight of what are the key objectives to be achieved on a medium term, the obstacles or challenges to overcome and an action plan to implement those objectives (i.e. a national development plan). For instance Sweden created “the Commission on the Future” where country key challenges in the long term (2020 and 2050) were identified.
Jordan 2025 is the starting point with its ten-year strategy which calls for a transformation of the country’s socioeconomic model of development to achieve growth and prosperity based on competitiveness and providing more employment opportunities. The vision’s framework addresses five main pillars: human resource development, social development, economic development, decentralisation and governorate development, and infrastructure. It also includes a road map with short and medium-term objectives that the country aims to achieve in the following years. Decentralisation appears to be one of the six core priorities of the axes on Government Priority Initiatives (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Core priorities for Government in Vision 2025


Decentralisation reform is included in the Government Priority Axe but conceived as a separate objective and not directly linked to the “Public Sector Performance” neither to the “Size and Work of Government”. In fact, the decentralisation reform is described in general terms as the Laws were still to be drafted when the Jordan 2025 was published. As described in Table 2.5 the targeted scenario does not specify the strategic objectives of the decentralisation reform and just mention in broad terms, the need of a first diagnosis of the current situation and to strengthen the financial and human capacities and transparency and accountability of local governments. Those priorities are directly linked
to those on local development included in the Society Priority Axe where governorates and municipalities are mentioned as key actors to support investment and development projects.

Table 2.5. Decentralisation priorities in Jordan 2025

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted scenario</th>
<th>Priority Initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issuing the decentralisation law for 2014 and formulating a national strategy and</td>
<td>• Conduct surveys for the National legislative system that may conflict with the</td>
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<tr>
<td>implement the decentralisation law and the reforms necessary</td>
<td>decentralisation law, if passed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct survey studies to analyse all local services provided by the central</td>
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<td></td>
<td>government to find a mechanism to delegate service delivery to local administrations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in the governorates to be in line with the powers that will be granted to these</td>
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<td></td>
<td>administrations under the Law</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Implement programs to strengthen the financial decentralisation and public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>expenditure management and find the necessary funding for the financial cost of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the application of the law</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Prepare and implement programs to build the capacity of workers in the local</td>
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<td></td>
<td>administration, the executive departments and the elected structures in line with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the reform of the decentralisation system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Implement programs and workshop to raise awareness about decentralisation and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>local administration and programs to enhance local control and promote transparency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyse the current reality of local administration system and local development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A national dialogue at all levels that include all categories</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A policy paper for the reforms of the decentralisation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a set of sub-executive programs for all sectors targeted for reform of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decentralisation system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting local development</td>
<td>• Enhance the governorate’s production capacity and reduce development disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>between them and focus on local economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strengthen local partnerships between government, agencies, municipalities,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>civil society institutions and the private sector</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build the institutional capacity of active partners in local development sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enable municipalities in the area of planning and development and improve the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality of their services to perform their role in development.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase funding for job-generating institutions in the local development sector</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set up a fund in municipalities to support municipalities that are implementing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>projects in partnership with private sector</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Direct technical support programs towards projects implemented by institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>in the local development sector during the setting-up phase to ensure the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainability of these projects and that they will create job opportunities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Improve the mechanisms of collection of receivables and financial rights of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>municipalities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conduct economic feasibility studies of the outputs of the investment map of</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>governorates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Inform (2015), Jordan 2025, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Amman, 

Following this logic, the key performance indicators for decentralisation are directed liked to the ones related to Communities and local development and do not set concrete
data on the effectiveness or impact of the decentralisation reform on the administrative structure. Table 2.6 shows that indicators only refer to the provision of ICTs in local governments, an objective that is supposed to be achieved in the first year of evaluation, 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2025</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of governorates where poverty exceeds the national average</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of investment projects through the partnership between the municipalities and the private sector</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of municipalities benefiting from integrated computerised financial system project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic feasibility studies of the outputs of the investment map of governorates</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contribution of the organised private sector in meeting housing needs</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The fact that Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws were only approved two years later also explains that the new elected councils at governorate and local level are not mentioned in Jordan 2025 and therefore the link to citizen participation can be found only in the Executive Programme 2016-2018. This operational and strategic document develops Vision 2025 and describes its core priorities, expected outcomes and activities during 2016-2018. It includes the missing information on the decentralisation reform by highlighting the key challenges and some of the expected outcomes on the institutional arrangements and citizens’ participation issued from the decentralisation reform passed in December 2015.

Jordan’s national reform on decentralisation requires a strong and well-defined centre of government able to identify the key steps, as well as follow-up and implementation mechanisms to ensure it is successfully carried out. In addition to help defining and implementing the national strategic vision, the CoG needs the capacity to communicate its objectives and achievements in a way that citizens can understand and appreciate. Transparency and openness help to promote a shared sense of purpose for stakeholders outside and inside the government. Good communication flows within the administration is also important so that, for example, all concerned institutions can understand the vision, share in its construction, and understand their role, responsibility and accountability for results. In Jordan, this appears to be one of the main challenges that the central government will have to face as it implements the decentralisation reform. The Jordanian CoG provides support to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Office and is distributed across the following institutions:

- **Prime Minister (and Cabinet)**: The Prime Minister acts as head of government and, together with the Cabinet minister, has the following functions: to appoint and remove employees who hold “positions of trust”; the initiative to enact laws and the right of veto; the collection and expenditure of the national revenues; and oversight of the proper operation of administrative services and agencies, among others. In practice, the Cabinet Office serves the purpose of a co-ordination body,
where the Prime Minister can monitor progress on strategic issues. Among the objectives set in Jordan 2025, the strengthening of the Delivery Unit to support ministries in achieving the Prime Minister’s priorities initiatives and the creation of a Department of Strategic Policies are also aligned with the CoG and a whole-of-government approach.

- **Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation (MoPIC):** its primary duties include the preparation and follow-up of the national development plan (Jordan 2025); and verification that public investment projects across government entities are aligned with priorities set forth in the plan. Through these functions, the ministry gives technical and political advice to the Cabinet and other public institutions, while it formulates, co-ordinates, monitors and evaluates the strategies and priorities of the government. This ministry is also in charge of co-ordinating international donor community and civil society organisations, in particular through the Open Government Partnership. MoPIC is the national focal point for the Open Government Partnership,\(^{18}\) and the Minister heads the ad hoc committee composed of representatives from the public and sector and CSOs.

- **Ministry of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs (MoPDPA):** this is the interface between the executive and the legislative branch, and is also in charge of relations with citizens, media and CSOs. It has a crucial role in the drafting of laws (as interface with Parliament), and has been assigned the specific task of raising awareness and campaigns on the Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws.

- **Ministry of Finance** (MoF): co-ordinates the budgetary cycle for the central government budget (i.e. ministries and their subsidiary bodies). The Ministry of Finance has competences regarding central government budget, public accounting, management of state property and management of the internal and external debt, public procurement, among others. Responsibilities also include its contribution to the stability and economic growth for social development through the collection, management, allocation, accountability and proper use of financial resources.

**National Decentralisation Committee**

A National Committee was created to co-ordinate, implement and follow-up the decentralisation reform in the DL and ML. Consequently, both the MoI and MoMA have a leading role in their respective competencies: MoI is in charge of the implementation of the DL, whereas MoMA has competencies for the ML.

The committee is composed of:

- **The Ministry of the Interior (MoI)** was established since the formation of the first central government in Transjordan in 1921, and is traditionally associated with the tasks of maintaining security and public order, as well as representing central government in the governorates. The MoI designate governors and co-ordinate the Decentralisation Law and the tasks developed by governorates. MoI is also in charge of the implementation strategy of DL and the by-laws regulations.

- **The Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MoMA)** is responsible for overseeing and giving support to municipalities and joint service councils, the Higher Planning
Council and the Cities and Villages Development Bank. It is responsible for drafting all legislation related to municipalities and the subsequent by-laws.

In addition to being “heads of the reform”, MoPIC and MoPA also play a key role due to their position at the CoG. The Ministry of the Public Sector and Ministry of ICT are also members of the Decentralisation Commission.

- **The Ministry of Public Sector Development** (MoPSD) co-ordinates the government’s strategy and management of its public sector, particularly regarding service delivery improvement, institutional streamlining, human resource management and programme management.

**Figure 2.7. Centre of government for decentralisation reform in Jordan**

![Diagram of Centre of Government]

Its executive arm, the Executive Committee, is chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry for Municipal Affairs. It includes among its members, the secretary generals of the ministries of: Planning and International Co-operation, Public Sector Development, Finance, Communications and Information Technology, Political and Parliamentary Affairs and the Director General of the budget department, in addition to a number of directors of departments at the MoI and MoMA. The executive committee is also in charge of starting the preparatory procedures for the governorate and municipal elections in 2017 and for the implementation of both laws.

While good working relations between these institutions appear to be the norm, their interaction seems to lack institutionalisation and a strategic dimension. There appears to be a theoretical common understanding or willingness to engage collectively in steering the design and implementation of the government’s decentralisation that it is not put into practice. The MoI and MoMA, together with MoPIC and MoPol Affairs and overall government co-ordination, could benefit from involving the other institutions more
closely. It would be particularly relevant to have the Ministry of Finance actively contribute to whole-of-government steering, as it controls the fiscal framework and appears to be leading improvements in the government’s analytical capacity.

The new competences on strategic development could also create some misunderstandings and overlapping at the subnational level. At the central level, MoPIC has been in charge of elaborating the governorate developments plans. With the new regulations, the governorate and municipalities have competencies and will have to co-ordinate with MoPIC, although they first rely on the MoI and MoMA. Ministries in central government will have to make efforts to ensure aligned policies and coherence, particularly regarding in such an important topic as strategic planning.

Significant silos remain regarding the effective follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the decentralisation policy performance, which are undertaken to assess performance against the achievement of results and the improvement of outcomes. Reporting to the public regularly on performance can help enhance government transparency and accountability, while reducing overlap and duplication in roles and responsibilities among CoG institutions and between the CoG and line ministries. This will ultimately improve public trust in the government and its institutions. The example of Spain’s Commission for the Administrative Reform (CORA) and OPERA could serve as inspiration (Box 2.9).

Box 2.9. The strategic role of the CoG in the implementation process: The case of Spain

In the course of discussions that the review team had with various stakeholders, it has been noted that many of the interlocutors – notably those charged with implementing the reform – were aware of the challenges and difficulties between some of the targets and the pace established for DL and ML on the one hand, and the financial allocation necessary to achieve them on the other. For instance, many actions included in the implementation draft strategy (facilitated by the MoI) relied on expected grants from international donors in the near future, whereas the foreseen time horizon set longer implementation targets. In these cases, the government is thus supposed to step in with its own resources. However, these do not always seem to be readily available.

The suboptimal monitoring and reporting mechanism has not allowed for these identified discrepancies to be reported in a timely manner to the steering and co-ordination function of the reform, or to efficiently act upon them if appropriately communicated.

In general terms, a weak monitoring and reporting system puts the accountability of the whole reform at risk, as well as the pace and quality of its implementation, as it makes it difficult to intervene with incremental corrections on the direction and pace of the reform.

An example of administrative reform and reporting on the implementation process is provided by Spain, where a Commission for the Reform of the Public Administration (CORA) embodied a process of data collection, dialogue among practitioners and diagnosis about the weaknesses of Spain’s public administrations. This was part of a broad public administration reform plan aimed at improving the efficiency of the public administrations, enhancing the quality of services provided to citizens and business, and making the public administrations more accountable and transparent.

The CORA report was presented in June 2013 and included 217 proposals, 139 of which addressed both the central administration and regions (autonomous communities), while 78 concerned only the central administration.
The role of Parliament

The role of Parliament has been crucial in decentralisation reform in Jordan. Once the Law of Municipalities was submitted, many amendments were introduced by members of Parliament. In particular, the King solved the controversial issue of keeping the legal and financial autonomy of the Governorate Councils, like municipal and local councils against the Parliament’s approach of limiting the scope of this elected council.19 In OECD countries, decentralisation reform have been opportunities for intense interaction between citizens and the government on the most appropriate institutional set up of the state, often involving debates on the historical and cultural territorial identifies of the various communities at subnational level, as well as fundamental national policy concerns such as fight against corruption or what an equitable redistribution of financial resources to under-privileged areas.

Debates over the draft law in Parliament lasted for almost a year. Supporters of the law argued that the bill would speed up reforms and trim bureaucracy, as well as improve the democratisation efforts. They emphasised the wider possibility for citizens at the local level to participate in decision making as the country is fragmented and many groups remain under-represented. Opponents pointed out that the implementation of the law will be costly while the economic situation is poor, and may cause problems regarding transparency and corruption, as well as the risk of power capture by local elites.

As anticipated, the Decentralisation Law was originally conceived as a MoI’s by-law and was only subsequently upgraded to a law following controversy between central government and the Parliament (conflict on approving the law under the basis of Articles 120 or 121 of the Constitution).20

The interest and reactions showed by the Jordanian Parliament towards the decentralisation reform is an opportunity to improve relations between the executive and the legislative branch. Jordan 2025 also highlights Transparency and accountability towards Parliament and citizens as one of the key priorities for an “effective and efficient Government” (Inform, 2015). The follow-up and implementation phase can be also an
opportunity to improve Parliament’s role, as well as the government’s accountability towards citizens through the legislative.

Jordan’s approach to the decentralisation reform will bring elections to the lower levels, from governorates to municipal and local level. This new phase will be the opportunity to create more synergies between citizens and politicians, as they will run for elections at subnational level. It can have an indirect impact on Members of Parliament’s activities and interests, as they usually come from different territories, villages and cities from all over the country, which they usually and informally represent. King Abdullah already raised this issue in one of his discussion papers stressing the need for Members of Parliament to balance their role of presenting the “needs of local constituencies” as well as “the interests of the Kingdom as a whole”21. New local elected may also create their own “networks’ and connect the citizens ‘needs through lobbying with Members of Parliament.

In fact, the narrative of the reform is sustained on citizen participation and bringing policies closer to citizens, however, both laws have been drafted and approved without formal and prior consultation with citizens. CSOs voiced their concern about the lack of consultation before the laws were sent to Parliament22. The arrival of new elected representatives at subnational level may contribute to make citizens ‘voice better heard.

**Assessment and recommendations**

This chapter has described decentralisation trends and the place of Jordan’s reform. Decentralisation needs to be a flexible process adapted to the country’s reality and conditions. The 2015 Decentralisation Law and Municipality Law reflect the commitment of the Government of Jordan to move forward towards a new culture popular participation at the subnational layers of government and local democracy. However, for King Abdullah II’s vision of a political development process that starts at the grassroots level, and then moves up to higher decision-making centres to fully materialise, a number of key challenges needs to be addressed.

Government has a strong political commitment towards decentralisation reform that allows central/local dynamics to evolve, and that takes into consideration the potential instability of the political framework. Decentralisation requires not only a strong political commitment from the central government but also a social consensus based on the populations’ demands and needs. In that sense, constant changes in the political framework can hinder the building of support for decentralisation (Work, 2012). Although Government of Jordan has a high rotation of high officials because of frequent cabinet reshuffling, Ministers of Interior and Municipal Affairs keep certain stability been among the most stable Ministries which impact in long term reform like the decentralisation one23.

Jordan is at the first stage of a long path towards decentralisation. The official discourse on decentralisation needs to take into consideration all the political, financial and administrative components that such a reform requires. The introduction of the democratic component by including elections at governorate and local level is an important step that will also bring responsibilities and duties to the Jordan Administration. The establishment and consolidation of local democratic administrations will require a profound change in administrative, working and regulating culture between government and constituencies.
One of the major challenges can be to find the right balance between the institutional and traditional role of the Governor and indirectly of the Executive council together with the new political powers conferred to the Governorate elected council that will need support at a first stage to develop all its potential. Promoting a culture of institutional co-operation among the key bodies, Governor, governorate council and executive council will be essential to ensure a fluent dialogue and partnership for better service delivery to citizens.

The current centralised system is characterised by providing basic services to the citizens and by carrying out extensive social investment. These characteristics explain the resistance of national government institutions to transferring functions to other levels. The culture that has developed around the centralised system in Jordan for more than 50 years has sometimes rendered Jordanian municipalities not visible enough to develop their role and potential and has prevented citizens from perceiving local governments as the provider of services or the promoter of local development.

At the same time, the current reform in Jordan provides a major opportunity for redefining roles and responsibilities in line with the principle of bringing services closer to the citizen, which makes political, economic and administrative sense. Several OECD countries can serve to inspire this process. For example, France, Germany and Poland provide models of functional assignment that reflect this principle (Box 2.10).

**Box 2.10. Allocation of responsibilities to the lower tiers of government: France, Germany and Poland**

**France**

In France’s administrative system, each tier of government below the national government is granted specific responsibilities, which are defined in legislation.

The responsibilities of regions include:

- Regional economic planning and policy, industrial development.
- Professional education and high schools (but not the management of the teachers and the school programmes), professional education for the unemployed.
- Transportation outside of cities (interurban buses, regional trains, school buses for high schools). Some regions have also been assigned responsibility for local ports and airports.
- Environmental protection with some special plans organisation.

The responsibilities of departments include:

- Intercity roads (routes départementales).
- Some social policies and welfare allowances.
- Secondary (or middle/junior high) school (except teaching and school programmes/curriculums).

In addition, regions and departments share responsibilities over:

- culture
- sport
- tourism
### Box 2.10. Allocation of responsibilities to the lower tiers of government: France, Germany and Poland (cont.)

- regional languages.

Communes (municipal governments) are responsible for almost all matters regarding municipal affairs, including:

- primary schools and pre-school
- local roads
- local police and public order
- urbanism
- local ports and canals
- housing
- cemeteries
- culture and sport facilities and incentives policies
- local social services
- local transportation
- gas and electricity networks.

**Poland**

In Poland’s administrative system, each tier of government below the national government is granted specific responsibilities, which are defined in legislation.

The responsibilities of districts include:

- secondary education
- healthcare (districts manage only hospital and polyclinic buildings, while current expenditures are covered by separate health authorities)
- roads of district importance
- several social services
- labour offices (coping with unemployment)
- protection against natural disasters
- consumer protection
- land surveying
- various inspections, such as sanitary and building.

The responsibilities of municipalities include:

- pre-school and primary education (for children up to 15-years-old)
- “communal services” including: water and sewage, solid waste collection and disposal, street lighting, local parks and green areas, central heating
- local roads and streets maintenance
- local public transport in cities
- communal housing
Box 2.10. Allocation of responsibilities to the lower tiers of government: France, Germany and Poland (cont.)

- voluntary fire brigades
- various social services, including social benefits for the poor
- local culture (including local libraries and leisure centres)
- local physical (spatial) planning.

**Germany**

In Germany’s administrative system, local authority administrations make up the third pillar of the administration. Their tasks include the administration of town planning, road building and housing, social and health services, and public facilities (swimming pools, libraries, day-care centres and sports facilities). Local authorities are also responsible for providing local public transport and refuse disposal and for ensuring the supply of water, gas, electricity and community heating. These utilities are largely operated as enterprises organised under private law.


Sustaining high-level political support is key to ensuring the success of the reform; the reform and donor attention to decentralisation reform speaks of the political commitment to carry it out. The fact that the leading body is in the Centre of Government also illustrates political support from the top level, and grants authority to request the participation of line ministries and agencies.

Given the importance of making the decentralisation reform happen, and to ensure a long-lasting reform, the government could consider the following recommendations:

**The need of clarifying roles, competences and the relevance of the implementation process of the decentralisation reform:**

- **Clarify roles and responsibilities at the national, governorate and local level.** This could include a clearer identification of services to be provided by each level of government, the line ministries’ role, and the opinion of governorates and local governments that share competencies. This would be complemented by a comprehensive list of competency distributions across the different levels. Organisational charts would be published on line in the websites of each administration.

- **Publish guides and materials on the Decentralisation and Municipalities Laws**, their implications and effects at the national, governorate and local level, with a focus on the forthcoming elections at the governorate and local level. These guides will be an important working tool for public servants and employees.
at the national, governorate and local level, and will ensure a common understanding of the implications and expected outcomes of the reform.

- **Promote a general and comprehensive debate on the new role of governorates, and in particular of the governor, Governorate Council and the Executive Council, especially before the 2017 elections.** Clarify the relationship between governors and the Executive Council (and line ministries in Amman), as well their co-ordination role with municipalities.

- Once the elected bodies take up their duties, **council member will need support to understand the dynamics of each administration and how to contribute to them.** Government of Jordan will need to concentrate on reinforcing the capacities of the members of the newly elected bodies to ensure that the citizens’ expectations on their role and functions will be appropriately met.

- **A follow-up committee should be created to bring updated and evidence-based information to the Cabinet on a regular basis.** Such a committee will also help promote a more integrated approach between the MoI and MoMA to ensure that a “subnational dimension” is fully integrated on the implementation strategy and the road map.

### A stronger and more co-ordinated centre of government (CoG)

- **Consolidate and reinforce the role of Jordan’s centre of government on implementing the decentralisation reform,** recognizing that the Cabinet Office, MoI, MoMA, MoPIC and MoPPA will all play key roles.

- **Strengthen and reinforce co-operation and co-ordination among the CoG institutions implicated in the decentralisation reform** as well as with the rest of the public administration. Crucially, this could contribute to overcoming the existing silo-based approach to service delivery at the local level (as outlined in Chapter 3), while ensuring that policy and spending are better linked and potential overlap and duplication reduced. The GoJ must also ensure effective communication and co-ordination between CoG institutions and collectively with line ministries and citizens by developing a clear communication strategy towards citizens to explain the decentralisation reform through seminars and a dissemination campaign across the country. Some initiatives such as the national dialogue launched by the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs together with the Jordan NGOs coalition is an initiative that could be replicated even prior to the elections.

- **In so doing,** the **Decentralisation Committee needs to follow an implementation road map agreed and approved by the Council of Ministers that includes a set of short, medium and long-term objectives,** as well as expected outputs and outcomes. These outputs and outcomes should include performance indicators and should be published and disseminated regularly.

- **Develop a centralised monitoring mechanism** to evaluate and make adjustments during and after the implementation of the decentralisation programme.

- **Strengthen capacity to implement decentralisation reform in the structures within the CoG by reinforcing the human and financial resources of the MoI, MoMA and MoSPD** so that they can work closely with governorates and municipalities on designing and implementing decentralisation strategic policy
and assessing and monitoring progress, and feed this information into governorate programmes.

- **Reinforce the working relationships between the MoI and MoMA** so that all are working to achieve the same strategic decentralisation objectives and to mainstream decentralisation within the Jordan 2025. These ministries could work with MoPIC, which is responsible for integrating all strands of national development strategy, including decentralisation and regional development, inclusive growth, and public administration reform at the subnational levels into the Biannual Development Programme (currently 2016-2018).

- **Parliament should play a greater role in the follow-up of the implementation of the reform.** The Government of Jordan (through the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs) could consider submitting annual decentralisation reports to the Parliament by developing performance indicators on decentralisation and their impact against the objectives of the reform.

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**Notes**

3. [www.citypopulation.de/Jordan.html](http://www.citypopulation.de/Jordan.html).
14. Villages were extinct and merged in the amalgation reform approved in 2001.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.


References


Government of Jordan (2016a), Background report of the OECD Strategic Assessment of Jordan, unpublished working paper.


