

**Global Directory of Economic and Social Councils**  
**UNITED NATIONS DIVISION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**MANAGEMENT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

---

## **Background**

In recognition of the need to deepen the participatory processes of government to ensure citizens' engagement, the Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) has launched several initiatives in support of participatory governance through comprehensive analysis, promotion and advocacy of citizen and government dialoguing. In particular, the Socio-economic Governance and Management Branch (SGMB) of DPADM has recently embarked on several initiatives which aim to examine the relevance of citizen and government dialoguing specifically in three areas including policy-development, service delivery and public accountability.

It is for this reason that the Division has taken a special interest in the significant role played by Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) and similar institutions in promoting civic engagement and in facilitating valuable dialogue and policy recommendations from social partners.

Civic participation has emerged as a powerful vehicle for creating effective government policies, ensuring public accountability and building trust across the globe. National strategies to promote development have become increasingly focused on social inclusion and transparent dialogue between government and civil society. Several significant developments at the international level have promoted this trend, including globalization and liberalization, the democracy movement, the information and communication technology revolution, and the socio-economic development agenda set by the UN Millennium Development Goals. These developments have made participation in governance by civil society stakeholders both increasingly possible as well as necessary. Rather than being an issue relevant solely to established democracies, participatory governance has been hailed as a tool in the creation of successful and sustained development programs in the developing world particularly in fragile states as well as a means of building social cohesion in post-conflict, transitional societies.

Increasingly, many countries throughout the world have recognized and reaffirmed the importance of enhancing the quality of public administration based on this participatory approach to development and pro-poor policies. While the challenge in creating a truly engaged and effective dialogue with organized civil society on key economic and social policies is significant, these governments have been successful in building formal institutions to encourage civic engagement and to provide official channels through which society can play a consultative role in the policymaking process.

UNDESA aims to enhance our knowledge database on ESCs by undertaking in-depth studies and rigorous research on ESCs worldwide and strengthening the dissemination of information and analysis of ESCs. This Global Directory, then, is the initial stage of this initiative.

## **A note on guidelines for inclusion in the database**

For the purposes of this initiative, SGMB/DPADM used the following criteria as a guideline for which institutions or arrangements to include as an ESC:

- An element of economic and social policy dialogue (e.g., the work of the institution has as a goal that it will contribute to civic engagement in policy development).
- The government must play a substantial role either in its establishment , in funding, in the selection of members, or in direct participation in the work of the ESC
- “Civil society” will include
  - o *non-governmental organizations, professional and private sector associations and trade unions. They also include families, churches, neighborhood groups, social groups and work groups.*  
(Compendium of Basic Terminology in Governance and Public Administration. E/C.16/2006/4. 5 January 2006. Submitted to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration at its fifth session. New York. 27 -31 March 2006.)
- The ESC meets with regularity (not ad hoc).
- The ESC is primarily concerned with macro-level policies (rather than sub-regional).