

**The Arab Association of Constitutional Law
and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University (Fez University)**

issue this call for papers for:

**A regional roundtable on
“Decentralisation and the State in the Arab Region”**

The Arab Association of Constitutional Law and the ‘Laboratory for Constitutional, Financial and Developmental Studies’ at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University (Fez University) will be holding a regional roundtable in Fez, Morocco on 3 November 2016. The roundtable’s theme will be: “Decentralisation and the State in the Arab Region”. In order to inform the discussions that will be taking place at the roundtable, the organisers are commissioning a number of papers, covering the following issues:

1. **Comparative survey of decentralization in the Arab region:** This paper will focus on the state of decentralization in the Arab region. The paper should discuss constitutional and legal arrangements relating to decentralization prior to 2011. It should also focus on constitutional and legal reform following 2011, particularly with a view to determining whether any major developments have taken place. In particular, the paper should focus on Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Yemen.
2. **Is decentralization a possible solution to the popular demands that were made in 2011?** Protesters across the region have demanded major reforms to their systems of governance. This paper should explore whether decentralization would be an adequate response to some of the demands that were made. The paper should therefore first identify how the popular demands that were made in 2011 can be translated into specific constitutional principles, and secondly whether decentralization has the potential to satisfy those demands. The paper should also explore whether decentralization has the potential to worsen the delivery of basic services in countries throughout the region.
3. **The forms that decentralization can take in the Arab region:** This paper should focus on establishing a theory of what form decentralization in the Arab region should take. The paper should answer a number of key issues, including whether policy-making authority should belong with decentralized units, which specific authorities they should have, and what measures can be taken to ensure that decentralized units will have sufficient financial resources to satisfy their obligations. The paper should also explore the various mechanisms that can be utilized to reduce regional disparities and protect the independence of decentralized units from the central government.
4. **The economic aspects of decentralization:** This paper should focus exclusively on the economic aspects of decentralization in the Arab region. In particular, it should cover a number of key economic themes including how to maintain a successful decentralized system of government given important economic disparities within individual countries (particularly between major urban centers and rural areas), as well as how resources that are derived from the sale of natural resources (including oil and gas, agriculture) should be managed and shared.

5. **Protecting national cohesion and solidarity in the context of decentralization:** One of the main concerns relating to decentralization in the Arab region has been the potential that decentralization can erode national cohesion and solidarity. This paper should explore the various mechanisms that can be established within a decentralized system to maintain and strengthen national unity, including (but not limited to) financial redistribution mechanisms, the establishment of national commissions to represent and debate the interests of decentralized units.
6. **The state of decentralization and federalism in Iraq:** Iraq's constitution entered into force in 2005, and introduced a federal and decentralized system of government which has nominally been in force now for 11 years. This paper will investigate the state of affairs in Iraq, mainly by exploring whether decentralization has actually been applied, and whether it has delivered any improvements to service delivery and standards of living for ordinary people.

Application instructions

Individuals who are interested in participating in the roundtable that will take place in Fez, Morocco must submit an abstract in accordance with the following instructions:

- (i) If you are interested in carrying out any of the above studies, please send an abstract to Mr Wissam Benyettou at w.benyettou@idea.int no later than **17:00 Cairo time on 15 July 2016**. Abstracts should be no longer than 400 words.
- (ii) All abstracts will be considered. They may be submitted by individuals, co-authors or institutions. Membership in the Arab Association of Constitutional Law is not a requirement.
- (iii) Abstracts and papers are strongly encouraged to adopt a comparative approach. Abstracts and papers that focus on individual countries will still be considered.
- (iv) Individuals from outside the Arab region who wish to submit an abstract that focuses on developments that are taking place outside the Arab region are encouraged to do so, while ensuring that all discussions are aimed towards furthering and enriching the discussion in the Arab region on the topics set out above.
- (v) Abstracts may be submitted in Arabic or English.

The individuals who will be selected to carry out the above studies will be required to prepare oral presentations summarizing their findings at the conference in Fez on 3 November 2016. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered. All the papers that will be issued pursuant to this conference will be published in a joint volume in both English and Arabic.