



IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to promote sustainable democracy.

# Awakening the Voters of Tomorrow: *The Democratic Awakening Toolkit for Primary and Secondary Schools in Tunisia*

Today's students are tomorrow's voters. To awaken this young generation to the values, duties and behaviors that will make them active and engaged voters, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) developed the Democratic Awakening Toolkit in cooperation with the Tunisian High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE) and Ministry of Education (MoE). The toolkit aims to transform civic education in primary and secondary schools by providing teachers with pedagogical resources and reusable voting simulation materials to teach basic information about democracy and elections and organize student-led voting simulations in the classroom.

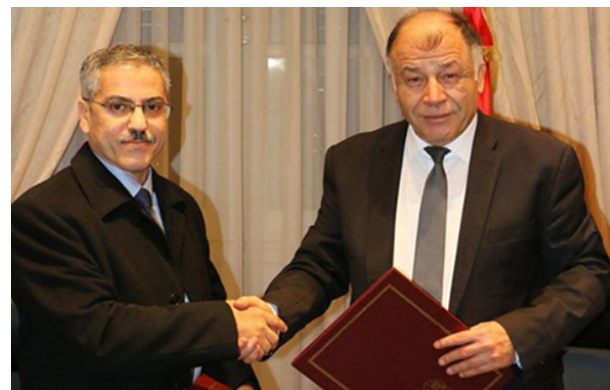
The MoE, supported by the ISIE and IFES, launched a pilot program of the toolkit in schools across Tunisia in September 2018, followed by a comprehensive, IFES-designed assessment.

The pilot and assessment provided all stakeholders with valuable insights on the toolkit's strengths and areas for improvement, with the main takeaway that the Democratic Awakening Toolkit is an effective tool for increasing students' engagement in civic education and commitment to civic participation.



## Building Ownership and Support

While IFES originally created the project in August 2015, it was not until the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ISIE and the MoE on February 6, 2017, that the toolkit began to be developed in earnest. The MoU formed a partnership between the MoE and the ISIE that aimed to promote democratic values and instill the idea of participatory citizenship among primary and secondary school students.

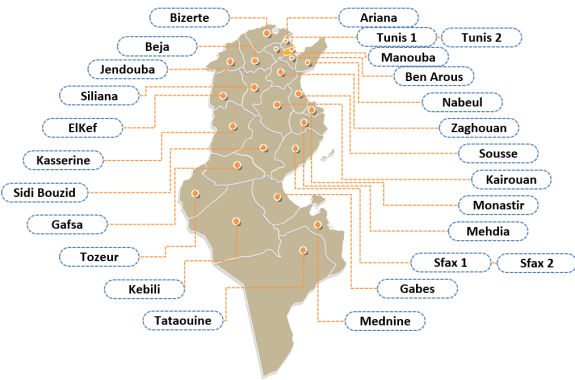


Throughout 2017, IFES worked with the ISIE and MoE to produce the toolkits and train 63 MoE civic education inspectors. The inspectors went on to train the teachers deploying the toolkit in their classrooms and play

an instrumental role in increasing students' civic awareness. In order to incorporate a variety of experiences, build momentum and create buy-in, IFES discussed the production of the toolkit with a broad range of interlocutors at the MoE and the ISIE and solicited their feedback. In particular, the inspectors provided valuable feedback on the teacher's manuals and the toolkits' content.

While the project initially targeted primary schools, the MoE requested an expansion of the project to secondary schools. In the end, IFES created two Democratic Awakening Toolkits for primary and secondary schools, which are comprised of a teaching manual, pedagogical resources and reusable materials to simulate voting in classrooms, such as ballots, a ballot box, voting booths, accreditation cards, and poll worker badges.

As of March 2019, IFES produced 1,500 Democratic Awakening Toolkits – 900 for primary schools and 600 for secondary schools. The MoE distributed the toolkits to schools in all 24 governorates, reaching approximately 100,000 students, ages 10 to 15. Additionally, the MoE used the toolkit to organize elections for two new initiatives – the Youth Parliament and the youth municipal council in Sfax – and elections for citizenship clubs in schools.



## Measuring Impact for Future Improvement

To evaluate the impact of the toolkit, IFES designed a comprehensive, 360-degree assessment consisting of 20 field visits, voting simulations with the toolkit, a quantitative survey, focus groups, interviews with teachers, inspectors and students, and an evaluation workshop. The assessment found that nearly all participants felt more engaged in civic education because of the toolkit.



Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the Democratic Awakening Toolkit.

One hundred percent of the teachers surveyed found the toolkit effective, 88 percent stated that the toolkit encouraged students' civic engagement and 100 percent confirmed that the toolkit contributed to increasing students' interest in civic education. Teachers underlined that the toolkit transformed civic education into an exciting subject for students, who had given little importance to it before. For this reason, a teacher from Bizerte observed that the toolkit resulted in "a more concrete anchoring of student citizenship and democratic values."

IFES interviews found that the toolkit also unexpectedly led to increased knowledge of elections and enhanced civic engagement among teachers. Teachers admitted that teaching with the Democratic Awakening Toolkit, which provides updated civic education information compared to the textbooks from which teachers normally teach, helped them to better understand election-related concepts and procedures. One teacher from Beja stated, "the Democracy Awakening Toolkit helped clarify and simplify concepts not only to students but to teachers as well."



Teachers also perceived the toolkit as complete, attractive and helpful, and felt that the toolkit improved their teaching methodology, pushing them to be more interactive, innovative and technology-oriented. As a teacher from Menzel Jemil in Bizerte observed, “the toolkit helped me structure my course. It brought students closer to democracy and elections in a practical way.”

At the end of the pilot, IFES, the MoE and ISIE organized an evaluation workshop to solicit feedback. The evaluation workshop gathered MoE and ISIE officials, drafters of the teaching manuals, civic education inspectors, teachers and students. It succeeded in identifying the toolkit’s strengths and weaknesses, gathering recommendations to improve it and measure its impact. One significant finding from the workshop was that the students’ parents also benefited from the positive impact of the toolkit. One student declared, “My parents never voted before, but after I participated in the election simulation, I encouraged them to participate and my parents are waiting for the forthcoming elections to vote.”

After the evaluation workshop IFES, the MoE and the ISIE held a press conference to present the results of the pilot phase. Kamel Hajjem, general director of the Primary Education Cycle, stated, “this project will help pupils to become active citizens, for instance participating in elections, and will become themselves ambassadors within their families to remind their parents about the importance of political participation.” Nabil Baffoun, president of the ISIE, said that “the toolkit will enrich the official programs of the civic education subject by training students to citizenship.”



Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the press conference and evaluation workshop.

## مشروع حقيبة اليقظة الديمقراطية

### Looking to the Future of the Toolkit

Comments from the press conference indicate enthusiasm for expanding use of the toolkit. The ISIE regional coordinator of Nabeul said, “it’s a beneficial experience. We need to support it, and it must continue. It will give great results because it’s approaching the voters of tomorrow.” Ministry of Education representatives agreed on the success and impact of the pilot. They acknowledged that “the impact of the project has been higher than initially anticipated. It overpassed our expectations to such a point that we were surprised ourselves,” adding that “the toolkit contributed critically to the behavioral change of pupils but also of teachers through its interactive and practical approach.” They concluded that “the toolkit has become a need and not only a civic education tool. It contributes to the anchoring of democratic values.” In an indication of its success, the MoE has requested that the toolkit be expanded to all primary, secondary and high schools across Tunisia.



Watch this [video](#) to learn more about the youth municipal council elections in Sfaw.

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