



# What's the Most Innovative Arab Nation?

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The UAE has been named the most innovative nation in the Arab region, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2020. With an overall score of 41.79 out of 100.00, the UAE was some way ahead of the median (30.94), demonstrating the valuable work that has been undertaken in recent years by the Emirati government.

The UAE was placed third in the Northern African and Western Asia (NAWA) region, behind only Israel and Cyprus, while it finished in a very respectable 34<sup>th</sup> position worldwide. That was some way ahead of regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Qatar (66<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> places, respectively) and above massive economies like Russia and Brazil (47<sup>th</sup> and 62<sup>nd</sup> places, respectively).

## Emirati improvement

The UAE's impressive performance is built upon a concerted strategy that was first put in place by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in 2014. That year, he launched the National Innovation Strategy, which set out clear objectives for the country, including propelling the UAE to the forefront of innovation by 2021.

The strategy contained over 30 initiatives spread over a three-year period, all of which were aimed at improving Emirati expertise in the fields of science and technology. Among other projects, these initiatives included:

- Implementing new legislation
- Creating and supporting incubators for innovation
- Offering the private sector incentives to innovate
- Building specialist centres to improve national capabilities
- Reaching out to other global powers to forge strong relationships
- Modernising governmental departments in education, healthcare, renewable energy, space exploration, technology, travel and water security

## Charting progress

The fruits of that labour soon began to pay off. The following year, the UAE Cabinet doubled down on the objectives laid out in the National Innovation Strategy by naming 2015 as the Year of Innovation. Further emphasis was placed upon the importance of forward-thinking technologies by naming 22<sup>nd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November "UAE Innovation Week".



That week continued to be honoured in 2016, before the government decided to expand the week into a whole month, beginning in February 2018. This month sees the fourth annual celebration of Innovation Month, so it's fitting that the GII has recognised Emirati progress in the context of the global landscape.

## A bright future

The last few years have seen the country take significant steps forward in the field of innovation. This has been most notable in the field of education, as the authorities have revamped educational systems, introduced smart-enabled devices into the classroom, put an emphasis on technology in higher education and instituted several new research facilities aimed at promoting innovation.

All of that groundwork will stand the UAE in good stead going forwards, especially during the current turbulence brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. With [a new COVID-19 variant](#) causing all sorts of logistical headaches for governments around the world, the UAE's proactive approach to the virus – which has seen it establish the largest testing lab in the world outside of China – should mean it is well-placed to handle whatever the future holds with confidence and competence.