OECD Public Governance Reviews

Palestinian Authority

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

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Foreword

As highlighted in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance and the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration, properly designed and implemented public administration reforms can lead to a more accountable and effective civil service, better organisation of the administration, and higher quality service delivery for citizens and businesses.

To achieve optimal results, public administration reform (PAR) should be undertaken coherently through a whole-of-government approach. An inclusive and evidence-based strategy should be used to identify a set of clear, prioritised, and widely understood reform objectives to be credible and guarantee real change. Concrete steps should also be taken to implement policy goals, together with sufficient financial resources, clear managerial and executive roles, and adequate capacities. Moreover, clear lines of accountability among intervening institutions and departments are necessary, as well as clearly established leadership of reforms and well-organised coordination and monitoring procedures, at both the political and administrative levels.

This Review analyses the institutional and strategic framework for PAR in the Palestinian Authority (PA). It points to the specific challenges and opportunities for the development and implementation of effective PAR strategies. It includes actionable recommendations to enhance the framework as well as for strengthening the coordination, systems, and processes for public administration reform.

In its annexes, it provides a complementary analysis of challenges and opportunities related to strategic PAR areas. Annex A looks at service delivery and reviews current administrative challenges, obstacles, priorities and opportunities in selected administrative areas and services with recommendations to support the reengineering and digitalisation of services. Annex B analyses the challenges and offers recommendations on how the centre of government can play a strategic and leading role in the development and implementation of PAR, with a particular focus on prioritisation. Finally, Annex C reviews the organisational and functional set-up to deliver on sectoral strategies focusing on three pilot administrations responsible for the implementation of gender equality objectives.

The Review is the result of the OECD's contribution to "Support the Palestinian Authority Public Administration Reform" project, funded by the European Commission. The project seeks to support the Palestinian Authority to improve overall governance capacity in managing the public administration for the ultimate benefit of citizens and businesses through more effective and efficient policy and service design and delivery. The project is implemented in close cooperation with the SIGMA Programme, a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, principally financed by the EU.

The Review is part of the Programme of Work 2023-2024 of the OECD's Public Governance Committee in the framework of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme in support of public sector efficiency in the MENA region. In line with the strategic priorities of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and the OECD Public Governance Committee, it helps identify key issues and lessons learnt to implement public sector reforms in view of unlocking social and economic development and of meeting citizen's growing expectations in terms of quality services, inclusive policymaking and transparency in the Palestinian Authority. The Review draws on the evidence and good practices gathered by the OECD Public

Governance Committee, the Regulatory Policy Committee, the Committee of Senior Budget Officials, and their sub-bodies; the working groups and networks of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, and OECD Recommendations in the area of public governance. The findings and lessons learnt drawn from this report will in turn inform discussions and promote peer learning on public governance reform in the MENA region.

The final version of the report was completed in September 2023. The Review is based on a survey administered and subsequent fact-finding missions conducted in 2022 with a wide range of stakeholders including peers from OECD and MENA countries. References to major changes made after this date or planned, such as the guidelines for strategic planning for 2024-29, were also considered but do not substantially alter the original assessment. The recommendations have been extensively discussed with the beneficiary institutions, the European Union, and relevant stakeholders. The members of the Stakeholders Advisory Group, including close to 30 public institutions and non-governmental organisations, were officially consulted on the Review.

This document was approved by the Public Governance Committee via written procedure on the 23 May 2024 and prepared for publication by the OECD Secretariat.

The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the Palestinian Authority.

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Government, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, the Palestinian Land Authority, the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority, the Palestine Monetary Authority, the Palestinian Water Authority, the Wafa Agency (Palestine News Agency), the Independent Commission of Human Rights (ICHR), the Palestine Trade Center (Paltrade), the Human Rights and Democracy Media Center (Shams), the Institute of Law (Birzeit University).

This Review also builds on the findings of the complementary OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* developed under the "Support the Palestinian Authority to enhance Governance and the Rule of Law" project, funded by the European Commission, led by Mr. Thomas Kirchner, Head of Governance Section, and Ms. Sarah Velud, Programme Manager. The report focused on the initial stages of policymaking with a focus on achieving a more effective, transparent, and participatory policy- and law-making process. This complementary Review looks at later stages of the policy development process, including co-ordination, policy delivery, monitoring, and evaluation.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

2030ASD	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
CGEPL	Council on Gender Equality in Public Life
CoM	Council of Ministers
CSGP	Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy
Diwan	The Official Gazette Bureau
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
EU	European Union
GAPP	General Administration for Planning and Policies
GPC	General Personnel Council
GRA	Government Reform Agenda
HRM	Human Resources Management
LMA	Line ministries and/or agencies
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
MoWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
NCSSIA	National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption
NDP	National Development Plan
NGT	National Gender Team
NPA	National Policy Agenda
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OoP	Office of the President
PA	The Palestinian Authority
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PBMG	Planning and Budget Management Group
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PESTLE (analysis)	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PMT	Programme Management Team
SAI	Supreme Audit Institutions
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SERNAM	Chilean National Women's Agency

SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SPA	Strategic Planning Approach
Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029	Ministry and agency strategy guidelines – Strategic planning cycle 2024-2029
SSCS	Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service
SWOT (analysis)	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Executive summary

Reforming the public administration is a clear political priority for the Palestinian Authority (PA). A well-functioning public administration is a prerequisite for accountable and effective governance. It determines a government's ability to provide public services and foster competitiveness and growth. Public trust is thus also an outcome of good governance and effective public administration.

This Review analyses the institutional and strategic framework for public administration reform in the Palestinian Authority and makes the case for building a more efficient administration to deliver better outcomes for people and strengthen public trust. To this end, the Review provides concrete and tailored recommendations and examples of good practices to improve this framework as well as the co-ordination mechanisms, systems, and processes for public administration reform based on OECD standards and good practices as well as SIGMA principles.

Key findings and recommendations

Achieving results requires governments to steer and co-ordinate the implementation of an overall reform vision and prioritised objectives notably by ensuring effective and clear leadership, well-functioning co-ordination and implementation mechanisms, clear accountability lines and financial sustainability.

The main objectives related to public administration reform (PAR) in the PA are outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) and in the Government Reform Agenda (GRA), with objectives from both strategic documents encompassing PAR substance areas. The existing institutional framework for PAR in the PA could benefit from a more rational setup, including clear leadership lines and co-ordination mechanisms with a stricter differentiation of responsibilities at the centre of government (CoG) to avoid overlaps in mandates and responsibilities. The PA could also benefit from enhancing the planning, implementation and monitoring of PAR strategic objectives. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems and tools are paramount to measure progress and ensure effective implementation of strategic objectives for public administration reforms.

To strengthen the strategic and institutional framework for PAR as well as the planning, implementation and monitoring of PAR strategic objectives, the Palestinian Authority could consider:

- **Improving the coherence of the strategic framework for public administration reform**, notably by:
  - Widening the scope of the existing PAR strategic framework by addressing important reform areas in line with the NDP and identifying clear leadership for each of them;
  - Carrying out a comprehensive evaluation of the entire PAR agenda and thematic strategic frameworks to inform the future design of reforms after the PAR strategic documents expire.
- **Strengthening institutional leadership and co-ordination for public administration reform,** notably by:
  - Clarifying responsibilities for steering, implementing, and monitoring PAR at the CoG;

- ○ Pursuing a whole-of-government approach in its wide array of PAR efforts;
- ○ Identifying lead institutions for the PAR areas currently not covered by the strategic framework, notably policy development, co-ordination and monitoring, and organisation and functions of public administration;
- ○ Establishing clear organisational and individual accountability lines among the relevant stakeholders and involved institutions;
- ○ Involving civil society in the PAR management bodies.

- **Bolstering the evidence base and prioritisation efforts for public administration reform,** notably by:
  - ○ Strengthening existing methods for problem analysis and policy identification by including more sources of evidence such as performance information, audit reports, internal and external evaluations, and expenditure reports;
  - ○ Building further on the existing but uneven practices for the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in problem analysis;
  - ○ Focusing on a limited number of carefully analysed, agreed, and prioritised issues, in line with the financial circumstances and the most pressing needs in the society.

- **Enhancing the operationalisation of public administration reform objectives,** notably by:
  - ○ Reviewing the current operational plans for PAR to ensure that they are aligned and consist of clear outputs, operational responsibilities, and a concrete implementation timeframe;
  - ○ Ensuring that operational plans only describe focused actions leading to the envisaged results with the available resources.

- **Strengthening the monitoring processes and tools to measure progress towards public administration reform objectives,** notably by:
  - ○ Ensuring that the Strategic Results Framework allows for measuring progress towards expected improvements, rather than the outputs of the different reform measures;
  - ○ Ensuring alignment between the monitoring framework of the different (PAR) sector and cross-cutting strategies and the current, and future Strategic Results Framework;
  - ○ Ensuring that regular meetings take place among all the relevant PAR institutions (both CoG and line institutions) to discuss progress towards expected improvements, current and future challenges, effectiveness of expenditures, and follow-up on findings and decisions taken;
  - ○ Enhancing systematic circulation of monitoring information among the CoG institutions and with all the (PAR) relevant institutions;
  - ○ Clarifying the mandate of dedicated monitoring and evaluation departments within the administrations to ensure a uniform approach across all institutions and frameworks.

- **Improving costing and securing expenditure for public administration reform,** notably by:
  - ○ Including clear information about sources of financing in the strategic documents for PAR;
  - ○ Aggregating cost estimates per strategic objective to better compare the costing of reforms with the expected improvements and assess its expenditure effectiveness;
  - ○ Harmonising cost estimation methodologies and ensuring uniform practices for cost estimations.

- **Leveraging human resources management for public administration reform,** notably by:
  - ○ Focusing on the development of transversal and future-oriented competencies;
  - ○ Applying competencies in the recruitment and performance management processes;
  - ○ Continuing its focus on providing opportunities for continuous learning for all civil servants.

- **Improving accountability and transparency for public administration reform through stakeholder participation,** notably by:
    - ○ Moving forward with the adoption of a Law on Access to Information in line with international standards and good practices;
    - ○ Providing for mandatory publication of reports concerning the implementation of thematic and cross-cutting strategies, especially regarding the NDP and the GRA;
    - ○ Institutionalising stakeholder participation to improve the quality and effectiveness of public policies in general and more specifically for PAR.

1 Context for Public Administration Reform in the Palestinian Authority

The success of public administration reforms is contingent on contextual factors including the state of public governance, public finance, organisational culture, and geo-political developments. This section analyses the context for public administration reform in the Palestinian Authority.

Public administration reforms never happen in a vacuum and their success is strongly influenced by contextual factors that can be conducive or unfavourable to the reform process, or sometimes even both. These factors relate to the broader governance situation, public finance, organisational culture, and geo-political developments. The context for public administration reform in the PA is particularly challenging for several reasons; some of which can be addressed by the PA directly, and for others, coping mechanisms can mitigate their impact on reform.

Parliamentary elections have not been held in the PA since 2006. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) – the PA's Legislature – was first suspended, and then officially dissolved in 2018. To date, the PLC remains inactive, and legislation is being issued by the President by decrees that have power of law under Article 43 of the Basic Law. The institutional environment for legislative initiatives on public administration reform is also absent given that parliamentary debates on reform priorities are unable to take place; as such, there is limited space to hold the PA accountable on its reform policies and overall governmental action. Citizens are unable to express reform priorities through democratic representation. This democratic deficit is tangible, with the PA ranking 109 out of 167 entities on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index 2021 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2022[1]).

This situation is exacerbated by a shrinking space for Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the Palestinian Authority, which traditionally have played a significant role in service delivery and articulating reform priorities. The space for CSOs to operate is increasingly being challenged from new and different angles, including financial, political, and cultural pressures (European Commission, 2019[2]). Palestinian and international CSOs operating in areas under the control of the PA are subject to the terms of the "Law of Charitable Associations and Community Organisations" from 2000 (Law 1/2000) as well as a growing number of more recent restrictive legislative and policy measures. These new measures have increased the administrative burden for CSOs, requiring more steps in the registration process, complex financial procedures, administrative obstacles to setting up a bank account and/or receiving and transferring funds. During the OECD's fact-finding missions, civil society organisations in the PA denounced the politicisation of the registration process and considered these increased administrative burdens as disabling, as they further divert their energies away from service delivery and advocacy work in an already difficult operating environment.

As identified in the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[3]), the Palestinian Authority is making efforts to engage stakeholders in the rule-making process. In 2018, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) issued Guidelines on Public Consultations based on the OECD Practitioner's Guide for Engaging Stakeholders (OECD, 2011[4]) (Palestinian Authority, 2018[5]). While the guidelines strongly encourage ministries to follow the outlined procedures, they are not considered legally binding. As such, these efforts are deemed insufficient by civil society, which regards its own impact on agenda setting and policy formulation as restricted.

An additional challenge relates to the stability of the public budget. PAR efforts often aim to render service delivery more cost-effective and reform priorities can therefore take budgetary considerations, such as staff costs and potential economies of scale, into account. Budgetary projections over the mid-and long-term can underpin the deliberations on reform priorities and their impact. Yet, the budgetary situation in the PA is unstable in part due to the structural and contextual factors, thus rendering the overall PAR planning process unstable as well. The PA is also relying on international aid for much of its funding, however these funding sources remain uneven. As a result, the overall finances of the PA are faltering (International Monetary Fund, 2023[6]).

Over the years, the PA has created multiple institutions and committees within its public sector, including bodies working in the areas of public administration reform. This fragmentation of public institutions represents both an opportunity and a challenge for PAR. Conflicts of power between these bodies persist, leading to inefficiencies in co-ordination, spending, and service delivery. Despite the separation of powers stipulated in the *Basic Law*, overlapping mandates are common, and ambiguities in the legal texts often

lead to inefficiencies, misinterpretations, and mandate creep. Although fragmentation in PAR creates opportunities for a more streamlined and co-operative approach, the Palestinian public sector faces barriers to reform, such as resistance to change, which is a common point in public sectors across various OECD and MENA countries. As noted by the World Bank's assessment of the PA's wage bill and public employment (World Bank, 2022[7]), the PA's public employment as a percentage of total employment is with an average of 17 percent on par with the global average of 18 percent, and lower than the average in MENA which is 25 percent. However, the average share of public employment in total is higher than the average in comparator economies of lower-middle income countries and fragile and conflict affected states where the equivalent figure is 14 percent for both (see Figure 1.1). However, analysis shows that its wage bill is larger than other comparable economies (see Figure 1.2). Between 2011-2018, the PA's wage bill averaged 14 percent of GDP and 46 percent of central government expenditure. The equivalent figures for the MENA region were 11 and 30 percent respectively. Similarly, for countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence, the averages were 8 and 29 percent. On average, the PA spends more on its wage bill as a share of GDP and expenditure than countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. The high personnel cost of the PA thus underscores the imperative of public administration reform.

Figure 1.1. Public employment as share of total employment

2011-2021 average
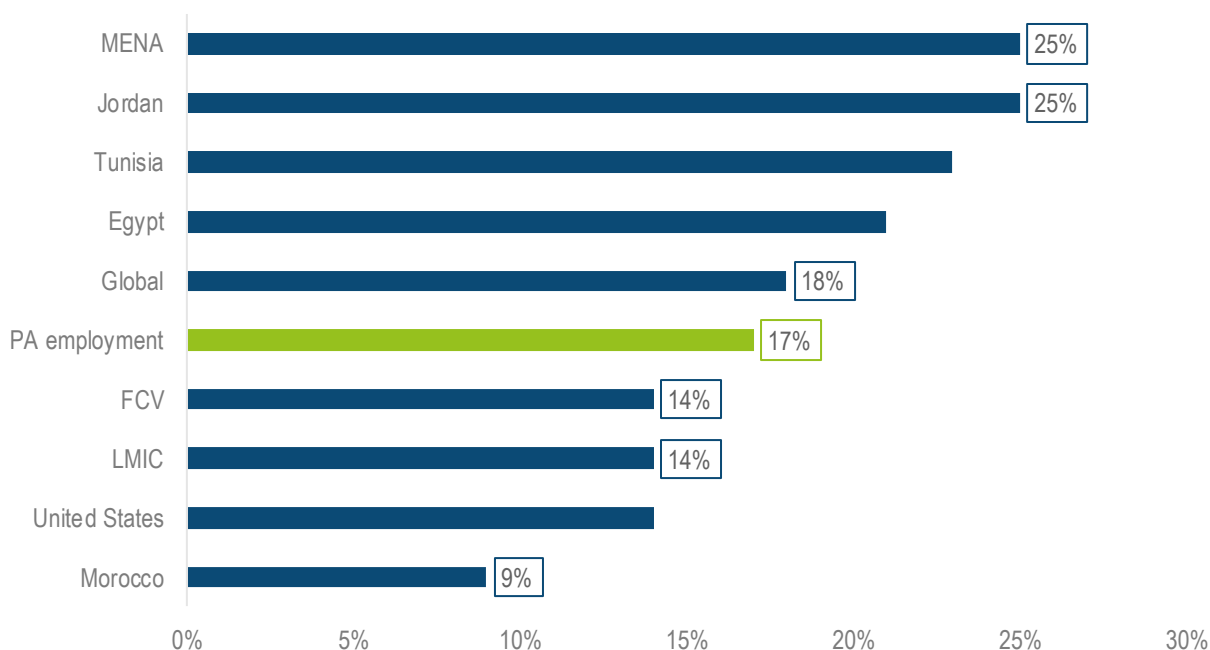
Source: Ministry of Finance, ILO stat as mentioned in the (World Bank, 2022[7]).

Figure 1.2. Wage bill spending in comparable economies

2011-2018 average
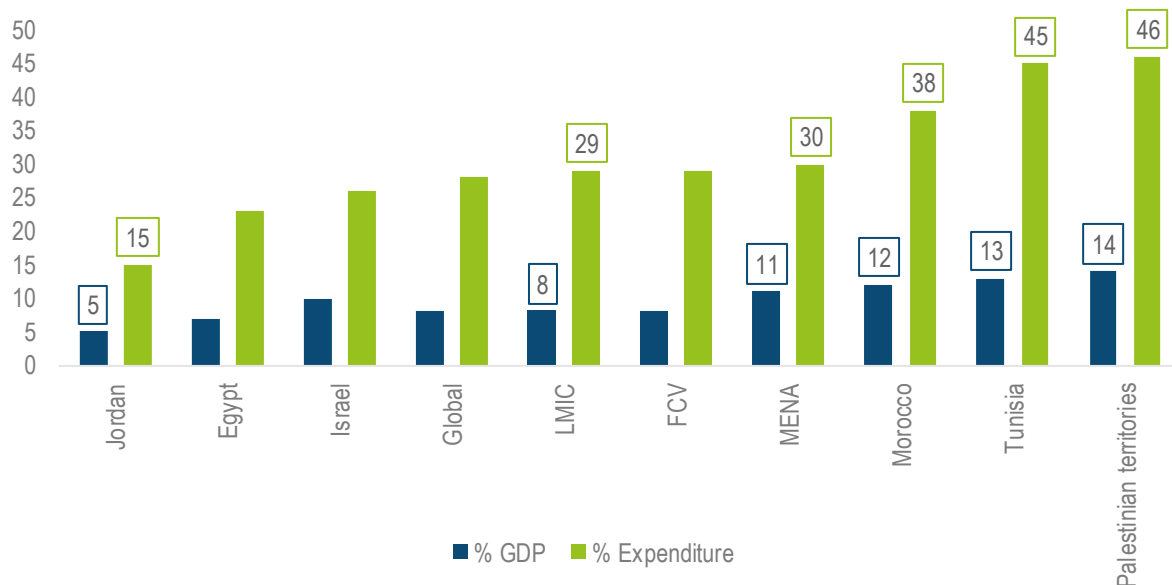
Note: Expenditure figures used are a mix of central or general government, depending on data availability.
Source: Ministry of Finance, Worldwide Bureaucracy Indicators as mentioned in the (World Bank, 2022[7]).

Another challenge hampering PAR efforts relates to public integrity issues. The Palestinian National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti- Corruption 2020-2022 (Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, 2020[8]) refers to the toleration of some integrity issues by considering them socially acceptable. In 2021, the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) received 886 complaints, with favouritism being among the most common forms of corruption (Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, 2020[8]). This slows down reform efforts and endangers successful public administration reform as they protect vested interests and bureaucratic processes. Strengthening institutional oversight, merit-based Human Resources processes and integrity management can therefore bolster public administration reforms. Despite these challenges significant efforts have been made by the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission and the State Audit Administrative Control Bureau to combat this issue, while further work has been pursued by the GPC to strengthen accountability and transparency through the implementation of the Code of Conduct for civil servants.

Furthermore, as argued in the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[3]), sound policy planning and development is a precondition for policy implementation and PAR. PAR will not be successful unless there is a critical capacity to develop sound policy options and plans. On this matter, the Palestinian Authority can be more responsive, efficient, and effective in policy development and make the policy development process more transparent, accountable, and inclusive. To achieve this, the Palestinian Authority is encouraged to streamline its legislative planning processes, strengthen quality insurance practices for legislative proposals, and bolster its capacity for policy formulation and legal drafting. The availability and use of data and evidence for problem identification and assessment can also be improved, as well as the

tools and methods for problem identification, stakeholder consultation, and policy design. Well-embedded legislative planning and development can thus be instrumental in translating political commitments and priorities into medium- and long-term strategies and operational action plans that directly guide the work of government (OECD, 2020[9]).

Lastly, despite uneven official development assistance (ODA), an active donor community can support reforms in various sectors, depending on their expertise and objectives. Donors can even support the PAR agenda-setting and prioritisation process with support to the PAR structures and with technical interventions that span across the PA, such as regarding support on data collection and on results and reporting frameworks. While donors can offer technical support, they cannot substitute the decision-making process and therefore need to ensure that there is sufficient absorption capacity for technical interventions. To ensure effectiveness, donors should further co-ordinate their efforts, a point that has been repeatedly made by various stakeholders. Donor coordination is indeed crucial for supporting public administration reform efforts as it ensures the efficient use of resources and avoids duplication of efforts. It also fosters a unified strategy, enhancing the impact and sustainability of the reforms.

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2 Review of the Strategic Framework for Public Administration Reform in the Palestinian Authority

An overall vision and prioritised objectives, which guide and co-ordinate public administration reform implementation, are required in order to achieve results. It is therefore important to develop a coherent strategic framework for PAR. This section analyses the existing strategic framework for Public Administration Reform in the Palestinian Authority.

A fragmented strategic framework for PAR

The National Development Plan 2021-2023

The PA's "National Policy Agenda (NPA) 2017-2022: Putting Citizens First" (Palestinian Authority, 2016[1]) outlines the main PAR objectives of the PA. This is further recalled in the "National Development Plan 2021-2023" (NDP)[1] (Palestinian Authority, 2020[2]), which was created through consultations with civil society, the private sector, and the international community, and extends the NPA's implementation period.

Overall, the NDP recognises governance reforms as a priority. It includes objectives pertaining to most of the substance areas for PAR as outlined in the OECD/SIGMA Principles of Public Administration (OECD, 2018[3]) and the OECD Framework for Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[4]), most notably regarding policy development and co-ordination, civil service and human resources management, integrity, anti-corruption, gender mainstreaming, organisation of public administration, transparency and accountability, the delivery of public services, and public financial management. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) also made efforts to align the NPA and the different thematic and crosscutting strategies with the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In particular, the second pillar of the NDP titled "Excellent Public Service Provision" establishes PAR priorities along three overarching objectives (see Table 2.1):

- **Improvement of the quality and accessibility of public services** through the development and implementation of a government-wide service improvement strategy and an e-government strategy. Additionally, the partnership between the public, the private, and the non-governmental sector will be strengthened to better deliver services.
- **Strengthening accountability and transparency** through combatting corruption in all its forms, implementing the code of conduct for civil servants, strengthening transparency and access to information, strengthening the role of the financial and administrative audit institutions, strengthening results-based management and integrated planning and budgeting, promoting effective human resources management and development, and institutionalising gender mainstreaming in policymaking, planning and budgeting.
- **Strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of public financial management** through ensuring fiscal sustainability and improving public financial management, expanding the tax base, and enhancing tax collection, rationalising expenditures, reforming the public sector pension system, and rationalising the organisation of the Palestinian Authority's public administration.

Table 2.1. PAR areas covered in the National Development Plan

Overarching goals for PAR in the National Development Plan:
1. Improvement of the quality and accessibility of public services
2. Strengthening accountability and transparency
3. Strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of public financial management

Coverage of PAR areas	PAR-related priority measures in the National Development Plan
Civil service	• Implementing the code of conduct for civil servants • Promoting effective human resources management and development
Organisation and functioning of public administration	• Reform and restructure local government and administration • Reform and restructure public institutions for more efficient service provision.
Anticorruption	• Combating corruption in all its forms
Transparency and accountability	• Reinforcement of the partnership between the public, the private, and the non-governmental sector to deliver services • Strengthening transparency and access to information • Strengthening the role of the financial and administrative audit institutions
Service delivery	• Development and implementation of a government-wide service improvement strategy • Development and implementation of a government-wide e-government strategy • Promoting decentralisation in the provision of services at the local level. • Launching the Government Excellence Programme. • Launching and activating the e-government portal and providing basic services to citizens through it
Public financial management	• Ensuring fiscal sustainability and improving public financial management • Expanding the tax base and enhancing tax collection • Rationalising expenditures, reforming the public sector pension system
Policy development and co-ordination	• Strengthening results-based management and integrated planning and budgeting
Gender	• Institutionalise gender mainstreaming in policymaking, planning, and budgeting

Source: (Palestinian Authority, 2020[2]).

During the 2019-2020 period, the PMO ran an assessment of the current strategic planning framework and found that the comprehensive nature of the NDP, which includes all the sectors without clearly prioritising a limited number of specific results, has not been effective in delivering tangible results compared to what was planned. Therefore, the new strategic planning approach that the PMO put forward in late 2022 proposes a shift from the NDP, which will be dismissed, towards a targeted Government Programme (GP), which will focus on a few main pillars, strategic priorities, and strategic projects. The extent to which the GP will incorporate prioritised PAR objectives remains to be seen.

The Government Reform Agenda (GRA)

In addition to the Palestinian Authority's National Development Plan, the GRA which was prompted by the President of the PA and adopted by the Council of Ministers (CoM) in April 2022, is a second overarching strategic document outlining PAR objectives. The GRA aims to address priority issues that impede the implementation of strategic plans for national development. As such, it is meant to strengthen both governance and accountability in state institutions, and to improve the quality of services towards people.

Line ministries are tasked to operationalise these priorities through executive plans. However, the operational planning process was deemed too recent to assess in this Review.

Building on the previous experiences and the main reform achievements made, the GRA identifies twenty reform priorities grouped into five clusters. Among those, the clusters "Administrative reform," "Financial reform," and in part the cluster on "Economic reform" include relevant priorities for PAR (see Table 2.2):

The cluster on **Administrative Reform** identifies:

- Correcting the public administration and civil service system and handling the employee's salary bill through a) restructuring government institutions and reconsidering their role and the role of employees in the digital economy, b) adopting and applying of proven global models of reform, excellence, and competitive institutional performance in all government institutions, c) reconsidering the Civil Service Law and its amendments, and d) rationalising government posts and developing an early retirement system for military and civilian personnel.

- Combating negative impressions about societal issues, including corruption through a) review and implement the access to information policy, b) developing the relationship with civil society, c) raising awareness and information about the government's efforts in implementing laws and fighting corruption, d) strengthening the principle of accountability and dealing with people's concerns effectively, and e) prosecuting those involved in corruption cases and publishing the results by the law.

- Restructuring government functions and completing the e-government services system through a) building and implementing process models in government institutions, b) implementing excellence systems, international standards, and excellence programmes, c) harmonising joint operations and projects among government institutions, d) completing the project of converting services to electronic and smart methods, and e) building professional service centres for services that are only provided in service centres.

The cluster on **Financial Reform** identifies:

- Reforming the government revenue system and the rationalisation of expenditures through a) reforming the tax system, including laws, policies, and procedures, and utilising technology for this purpose, b) carrying out a study and restructuring of service fees, and c) rectifying the general budget control system, managing development projects, and cash flows, and setting clear disbursement mechanisms.

The cluster on **Economic Reform** identifies:

- Providing a stronger partnership with civil society institutions and enhancement of their role in comprehensive development through a) harmonising and integrating non-governmental and community-based organisations' programmes with the government action plans, b) establishing a sustainable dialogue framework with civil society institutions that allows updating the laws related to their work, and c) ensuring that each government department continues to dialogue with representatives of the sector it represents.

For each reform measure, the GRA presents the fundamental issues to be addressed, the main reform initiatives and the expected results, although the formulation of the latter is not always clear. The strategy also identifies the main responsible institutions and, in several cases, the main partner institutions.

Interviewees during the OECD's fact-finding missions identified several areas for further improvement. The first one being the lack of a clear and concrete implementation timeframe as stakeholders appeared to have different understandings of its actual duration. Furthermore, like the National Development Agenda, the GRA does not provide dedicated performance indicators and overall cost estimates. While a co-ordination mechanism is identified, it is only described in general terms.

Finally, interlocutors mentioned that while the National Development Plan was created in consultation with the civil society, the private sector, and the international community, the GRA is an internal Cabinet document prepared without broad internal and external consultations. To strengthen stakeholder involvement, accountability, and transparency a donor report on the reform agenda is to be distributed and will form the topic of dedicated workshops in 2023 with the private sector, CSOs, and internal stakeholders.

Table 2.2. PAR areas covered in the Government Reform Agenda

Overarching goals for PAR in the Administrative Reform cluster

1. Correcting the public administration and civil service system and handling the employee's salary
2. Combating negative impressions about societal issues, including corruption
3. Restructuring government functions and completing the e-government services system

Relevant PAR area	Specific objectives
Civil Service area	• Rationalising government posts
Organisation and functions of public administration	• Restructuring government institutions and reconsidering their role and the role of employees in the digital economy • Adopting and applying of proven global models of reform, excellence, and competitive institutional performance in all government institutions • Building and implementing process models in government institutions • Harmonising joint operations and projects among government institutions
Integrity	• Raising awareness and information about the government's efforts in implementing laws and fighting corruption • Prosecuting those involved in corruption cases and publishing the results by the law
Transparency and accountability	• Review and implement the access to information policy • Developing the relationship with civil society • Strengthening the principle of accountability and dealing with people's concerns effectively
Service delivery	• Completing the project of converting services to electronic and smart methods, • Building professional service centres for services that are only provided in service centres.

Overarching goals for PAR in the Financial Reform cluster

1. Reform of the government revenue system and rationalisation of expenditures

Relevant PAR area	Specific objectives
Public Financial Management	• Reforming the tax system, including laws, policies, and procedures, and utilising technology for this purpose • Carrying out a study and restructuring of service fees, • Rectifying the general budget control system, managing development projects, and cash flows, and setting clear disbursement mechanisms.

Overarching goals for PAR in the Economic Reform cluster

1. Stronger partnership with civil society institutions and enhancement of their role in comprehensive development

Relevant PAR area	Specific objectives

Transparency and accountability	• Harmonising and integrating non-governmental and community-based organisations' programmes with the government action plans • Establishing a sustainable dialogue framework with civil society institutions that allows updating the laws related to their work, • Ensuring that each government department continues to dialogue with representatives of the sector it represents.

Source: (Palestinian Authority, 2022[5]).

The new strategic planning approach for 2024-2029 does not mention the GRA. Therefore, whether the GRA will be confirmed as an overarching strategic document or adapted to the new approach remains to be confirmed.

Alignment between the National Development Plan and the Government Reform Agenda

The NDP and the GRA present a certain level of alignment of PAR objectives (see Table 2.3). The highest level of alignment relates to the areas "organisation and functions of public administration," "integrity," "service delivery," and "public financial management." Regarding "policy development and co-ordination" and "gender," the GRA does not include these thematic areas.

Overall, the GRA further specifies the general objectives proposed by the NDP. In some cases, the GRA goes beyond the NDP's priorities while sometimes it does not reflect these at all. However, none of the two strategic documents clarify the hierarchy between themselves. Interlocutors reported in the questionnaires and during the fact-finding missions that they consider the GRA as their main guiding strategic document.

During the OECD's fact-finding missions, various institutional interlocutors recognised that the PA's strategic plans are often overly ambitious and not consistent with the reality of both the limited financial resources and the administrative capacities that are necessary to deal with numerous reform areas simultaneously. In fact, during the fact-finding missions and the capacity building activities, it was estimated that at least half of the stated objectives in previous strategies were not being effectively implemented due to overambitious and unrealistic planning. The following table analyses the level of alignment between the NDP and the GRA with recommendations to improve in Chapter 5.

Table 2.3. Alignment between the National Development Plan and the Government Reform Agenda

Level of alignment between the National Development Plan and the Government Reform Agenda per PAR area

Level of alignment per PAR area	NDP	GRA	Assessment
Civil service area	• Implementing the code of conduct for civil servants • Promoting effective human resources management and development	• Reconsidering the Civil Service Law and its amendments • Rationalising government posts • Developing an early retirement system for military and civilian personnel	The level of alignment of the civil service area can be improved as the objectives are not consistent among the two strategic documents.
Organisation and functions of public administration	• Reform and restructure local government and administration • Reform and restructure public institutions for more efficient service provision.	• Restructuring government institutions and reconsidering their role and the role of employees in the digital economy, • Adopting and applying of proven global models of reform, excellence, and competitive institutional performance in all government institutions • Building and implementing process models in government institutions, • Implementing excellence systems, international standards, and excellence programmes • Harmonising joint operations and projects among government institutions	The level of alignment of the organisation and functions of the public administration area is assessed as high. The GRA recalls and further specifies the objective of the NDP in more detail.
Integrity	• Combatting corruption in all its forms	• Raising awareness and information about the government's efforts in implementing laws and fighting corruption • Prosecuting those involved in corruption cases and publishing the results by the law	The level of alignment of the integrity area is assessed as high. The objectives of the GRA can be considered as a specification of the way the PA intends to combat corruption.
Transparency and accountability	• Reinforcement of the partnership between the public, the private, and the non-governmental sector to deliver services • Strengthening transparency and access to information • Strengthening the role of the financial and administrative audit institutions	• Review and implement the access to information policy • Developing the relationship with civil society • Strengthening the principle of accountability and dealing with people's concerns effectively • Harmonising and integrating non-	A certain level of alignment is noted regarding the transparency and accountability area. Both the NDP and the GRA include objectives related to access of information and enhancement of relations with the civil society. The GRA however, does not include the objective related to a stronger financial and administrative oversight.

Level of alignment per PAR area	NDP	GRA	Assessment
		• governmental and community-based organisations' programmes with the government action plans • Establishing a sustainable dialogue framework with civil society institutions that allows updating the laws related to their work, • Ensuring that each government department continues to dialogue with representatives of the sector it represents.	
Service delivery	• Development and implementation of a government-wide service improvement strategy • Development and implementation of a government-wide e-government strategy • Promoting decentralisation in the provision of services at the local level. • Launching the Government Excellence Programme. • Launching and activating the e-government portal and providing basic services to citizens through it.	• Building professional service centers for services that are only provided in service centers • Completing the project of converting services to electronic and smart methods.	The level of alignment of the service delivery area is assessed as high. Both the NDP and the GRA aim to digitalise the public administration and service delivery and mention the need to improve the quality of public services.
Public financial management	• Ensuring fiscal sustainability and improving public financial management • Expanding the tax base and enhancing tax collection • Rationalising expenditures, reforming the public sector pension system	• Reforming the tax system, including laws, policies, and procedures, and utilising technology for this purpose • Carrying out a study and restructuring of service fees • Rectifying the general budget control system, managing development projects, and cash flows, and setting clear disbursement mechanisms.	The level of alignment of the public financial management area is assessed as high. Both the NDP and the GRA envisage measures to increase revenues and increase effectiveness of expenditures.
Policy development and co-ordination	• Strengthening results-based management and integrated planning and budgeting		The policy development and co-ordination area can only be identified in the NDP with the GRA not addressing the NDP's objective.
Gender	• Institutionalise gender		No alignment between both

Level of alignment per PAR area	NDP	GRA	Assessment
	mainstreaming in policymaking, planning, and budgeting		documents can be found regarding the gender area, as only the NDP includes gender mainstreaming among its objectives.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

PAR areas covered by dedicated strategic and planning documents

While the NDP and the GRA include most of the areas for public administration reform outlined by the OECD/SIGMA Principles of Public Administration and the OECD Framework for Sound Public Governance, several PAR areas get further attention in dedicated strategic and operational plans (see Table 2.4 and Table 2.5.

The Civil Service National Strategic Plan, the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022, and the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023 cover the areas of 'civil service and human resources management', 'integrity', and 'gender mainstreaming'. Through its focus on e-services and e-government, the Sectoral Strategy for Technology and Public Administration 2021-2023 partly covers the service delivery area. The Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022 also partly covers the areas of transparency and accountability and civil society engagement. The Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023 includes reforms to increase effectiveness of expenditures, to improve the revenue system, budgetary and expenditure transparency, internal and external control, financial audit and gender-responsive budgeting. The PAR areas on organisation and functions of public administration, and policy development, co-ordination, and monitoring are not covered by dedicated strategic and planning documents.

Table 2.4. PAR areas covered by dedicated strategic and planning documents

Level of coverage of PAR area	Sector/cross-sector strategy	Comments
Civil Service and Human Resources Management	Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023	Good coverage
Service delivery	Sectoral Strategy for Technology and Public Administration 2021-2023	Partial coverage - Only e-services are covered
Integrity	Cross-sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022	Good integrity coverage. Transparency, accountability, and engagement with the civil society are covered to a limited extent.
Transparency and accountability		
Engagement with the civil society		
Gender mainstreaming	Cross-sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023	Good coverage
Organisation and functions of public administration	N/A	Not covered
Policy development, co-ordination, and monitoring	N/A	Not covered
Public Finance Management	Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 - 2023	Good coverage

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The Civil Service National Strategic Plan

In 2021, the CoM adopted the Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023 (SSCS). This is a reform-oriented strategic document which outlines several concrete initiatives aimed at improving the PA's civil

service system. The strategy is based on the mid-term review of the Civil Service Strategy 2018-2022 and was elaborated by the General Personnel Council (GPC) through consultations with the HR units of the different institutions: about 80 HR departments both from ministries and non-ministerial institutions were consulted through workshops and bilateral meetings. There are no records of dedicated consultations with civil society.

Making effective use of PESTLE and SWOT models, the document provides a strong analysis of the context by identifying existing political, institutional, legal, and economic problems, supported by relevant statistics. The SSCS outlines the strategic and operational objectives, which are clearly aligned with both the objectives of the National Development Plan and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. However, the four strategic objectives and related sub-objectives are formulated as means or actions rather than suited improvements[2]. At this stage, the planned objectives fall short in describing the expected changes in the different civil service and human resources areas (e.g., "professionalisation of civil servants," "more effective human resource management practices across the public service," "and ensuring merit-based principles in all aspects of the civil service career").

The strategy also provides for the elaboration of 16 bylaws to implement the revised Civil Service Law, which is still pending adoption. The document does not clarify what specific aspects of the civil service and human resources management system the bylaws will address. However, interviewees during the OECD's fact-finding missions clarified that the strategy aims to address an entire range of areas such as recruitment, job classification, competence framework, implementation of the code of conduct, job descriptions, reorganisation of HR units, digitalisation of HR management and job announcements, development of training plans, and development of civil servants' capacities.

While thought has been given towards the financial aspects with the inclusion of budget tables, these are mostly limited towards the identification of available government resources without differentiating the types of costs. Financial gaps, which could be used for policy dialogues with external donors are not clarified. Concrete cost estimates of individual reform measures are not provided.

The SSCS comes with a dedicated monitoring framework outlining indicators that include baselines, intermediate and final targets. However, chosen indicators only allow for measuring the outputs of the planned measures rather than the improvements they are meant to produce. To address this shortcoming, the GPC has started an initiative to develop a digital planning and monitoring system within the GPC itself. In the future, this will be further connected with the HR departments of the public institutions that fall under the scope of the civil service legislation. This tool would also contribute towards clarifying the responsibilities for implementation and monitoring at the organisational and individual level. In this assessment it was not possible to verify the alignment between the SSCS' monitoring framework and the NDP's Strategic Results Framework.

At this stage, the document would benefit from further clarification regarding the co-ordination and implementation arrangements with other institutions, e.g., co-operation with the Anticorruption Commission in its relation to integrity of the civil service, or co-operation with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on the development of the payroll system.

The Technology and Public Administration Strategy

The Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology (MTIT) in collaboration with the GS released the "Technology and Public Administration Strategy 2021-2023" in 2021. This reform-oriented strategic document offers a framework and a road map for advancing the PA's technological infrastructure, enabling the best possible use of information and communications technology, creating a knowledge-based digital economy, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration, improving the quality and accessibility of public services through digitalisation, and encouraging a knowledge-based workforce. At this stage, the approach does not include a clear prioritisation of the services to be digitalised

and lacks attention towards administrative simplification, a key requirement for successful service digitalisation. The GS, which has a general mandate on service delivery, may have dedicated plans in this regard, though this could not be verified in this Review.

The strategy provides a good context analysis, including the identification of strengths and weaknesses. Among the 5 strategic objectives it puts forward, the first and the second ones are particularly relevant for PAR. The first strategic goal, "Strengthening the ICT infrastructure", calls for building a sufficient and secure fibre-optic network connected to the governmental institutions. The second one, "Raising the level of efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and equity in government operations and services through governance and automation of government services" focuses on the delivery of public services through digital channels.

The strategy clarifies the main institutional responsibilities, identifying the main steering and co-ordination institutions and bodies. In line with the OECD Recommendation for Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014[6]) and building further on the first digital government strategy supported by the OECD in 2013. It includes the participation of the private sector; however, it does not mention the specific involvement of civil society. While it indicates general cost estimates for most of the planned interventions and strategic objectives, it does not identify financial sources and financial gaps that could be used in the policy dialogue with external donors.

A dedicated monitoring framework with outcome-level indicators, including intermediate and final targets, and timeframes for achieving them is included and briefly described as well. This will be supported with a dedicated IT system, yet to be developed, to be used by all involved institutions. It was not possible to verify the alignment of this monitoring framework with the NDP's Strategic Results Framework.

The National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption

In 2020 the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) issued the "National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption (NCSSIA) 2020-2022 (Citizenship - Empowerment - Reform)". It is a reform-oriented strategic document that provides a framework and roadmap promoting an integrity-based and corruption-free society. It is structured around four main pillars differentiating between prevention measures, social participation, law enforcement, and international co-operation.

The strategy proposes 13 specific programmes supporting integrity in the public and private sectors, including countermeasures against corruption, educating the public about the negative effects of corruption, and building institutional capacity for law enforcement. It also encompasses specific measures to increase civil society engagement, openness, and access to information. The linkages with the pillars of the National Policy Agenda and several SDGs are clearly clarified.

The NCCSSIA was developed through consultations with relevant institutions and some civil society organisations since the problem identification phase though it could have also included more actors specialised on governance and anti-corruption issues. The document provides a good situational analysis, including through the identification of strengths and weaknesses and builds on the latest accomplishments in enhancing the integrity and anti-corruption system. Each strategic objective is also coupled with clearly formulated expected results and coherent reform measures.

The PACC is clearly identified as the lead institution, furthermore the strategy identifies the institutions – in some cases from civil society - that are in charge and that must contribute for each of the 13 results and associated interventions. In several cases, the implementation period could be more clearly specified. The PACC has also signed specific agreements with both the civil society and the relevant public institutions to support effective implementation.

The strategy provides a monitoring framework to follow up on the implementation of planned measures. However, there are not performance outcome-level indicators associated to the four strategic objectives.

This fact hinders the possibility of measuring progress against expected improvements. The framework includes only output-based indicators, thus only allowing for monitoring of the implementation of activities.

The monitoring system envisages that implementation parties send short monthly progress reports on the implementation of the measures and activities under their responsibility through a digital portal. The PACC then consolidates the various contributions received.

While the document does not provide for formal cost estimates, interviewees during OECD's fact-finding missions mentioned that a separate document with concrete costs estimates is sent to the MoF. The reliability and the gap between necessary and available resources could not be verified in this assessment.

The "National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022" also outlines PA's reform measures aimed at promoting transparency and access to information. It is worth noting that three out of the 13 programmes of the strategy address transparency and accountability issues. Through its first pillar, the strategy aims to establish a dedicated legal framework and further institutional arrangements to foster access of information on the overall performance of the institutions. to this aim, it promotes the approval of the Law on Right to Access Information by engaging with the civil society. Furthermore, through its second pillar it wants to enhance the oversight role of the civil society and the media and to establish independent, external, internal, and effective oversight arrangements over all public institutions.

While these objectives are truly relevant, the strategy seems to be lacking a mid-term approach towards institutionalisation of public consultations and an enhanced engagement with the civil society at large in the policy cycle as also identified in the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[7]).

The Cross-sectoral Gender Strategy

The "Cross-sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023" was published in 2021 by the Ministry of Women Affairs. It is a reform-oriented strategic document which strives to address the vulnerabilities of women in the PA and give them the tools they need to effectively participate in political and socioeconomic growth. The strategic plan includes institutionalising gender equality and justice issues in public institutions as one of its five strategic goals, along with increasing women's participation in decision-making in governmental and non-governmental institutions. The strategy makes a clear connection between the SDGs, the NPA, and the NDP.

For each strategic objective, the document identifies a set of reform measures, which are clearly linked to the main problems identified in the extensive situation analysis. Implementation responsibilities are roughly identified, though they could be made clearer.

The strategy also provides for a monitoring framework which includes outcome-level indicators complemented with targets. However, it misses to set baselines and the way the identified indicator will be measured is not described. Output-level indicators are provided for all measures, and these include baselines, intermediate, and final targets.

Finally, the strategy includes budget tables. While the tables could more clearly link resources to individual objectives, some of them connect performance indicators with budget lines. Another table identifies the overall volume of governmental resources needed to implement the strategy along with external funds and financial gaps. In the budget table, the document also identifies the main implementing bodies leading and contributing to implementation of the different programmes. For each strategic objective, the table lists related programmes, and for each programme it presents objectives, general qualitative targets, and the responsible institutions (i.e., Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Employment). It falls short in presenting the steering, co-ordination, and monitoring arrangements.

Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023

The "Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023" was issued in August 2020 by the MoF. Overall, the strategy aims to develop an "integrated system for managing public funds that is legally and regulatory harmonious, based on the efficient and fair collection of public resources. Through the preparation and implementation of a realistic general budget based on medium-term programmes in line with the national policy agenda and sectoral strategies, the new system is meant to finance public services in line people's aspirations". The strategy sets three very pertinent strategic objectives which, together, encompass revenue collection, expenditures effectiveness, budgetary and expenditure transparency, financial audit, internal and external control, and gender-responsive budgeting. However, the formulation of the first two objectives could be improved to better describe the expected improvements[3]. The strategy makes a clear connection between the SDGs, and the NDP, and is largely consistent with them.

The situation analysis is based on the 2018 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment. The World Bank issued the final report in June 2019[4], which provided a diagnostic analysis that the PA used to inform the design of the new Public Finance Reform (PFM) reform strategy. Based on this solid analytical basis, the MoF, in partnership with several institutions, performed its own situation analysis. The strategic document provides for substantial evidence to support analytical findings.

For each of the three strategic objectives mentioned above, the strategy sets clear and relevant specific objectives, as well as expected results, complemented by a mixture of output-level and outcome-level indicators, with baselines and annual targets. Moreover, for each strategic objective, the document also identifies a set of reform measures.

The main weaknesses relate to the following:

- The strategy does not provide any information regarding the way it will be co-ordinated and monitored. Indicators, completed with baselines and targets are presented but there is no information about which institution is responsible, and how they will be measured. Moreover, no co-ordination bodies are mentioned except for the Office of the Undersecretary which is described as having a role in managing the implementation of the strategy. However, no information is provided about its specific responsibilities, tasks, interactions with the MoF or other institutions.

- The very limited financial information included in the budget tables does not allow for putting resources, objectives, and reform measures in relation with each other.

- Implementation responsibilities are not clearly identified. If the MoF is identified as the lead institution and the budget table allocate resources to the State Audit Administrative Control Bureau, the High Council for public procurement policies, and the Anti-Corruption Commission, their role cannot be linked to any of the planned reform measures.

- The document does not mention any contribution from civil society or other ministerial and non-ministerial institutions in the identification and planning of public finance management reforms.

Table 2.5. Summary of the quality assessment of existing thematic PAR strategies

Description of quality requirements	Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023	Technology and Public Administration Strategy 2021-2023	National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022	Cross-sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023	Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023
Problem analysis	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient
Strategic and operational objectives	To improve	sufficient	To improve	sufficient	sufficient
Reform measures	To improve	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient
Implementation deadlines	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient
Output indicators	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient
Outcome indicators	Not available	sufficient	Not available	To improve	To improve
Lead institution	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient
Contributing institutions	Not available	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	Not available
Financial information	To improve	To improve	To improve	sufficient	Not available
Co-ordination and monitoring arrangements	Not available	sufficient	sufficient	sufficient	Not available
Link with NPA/NDP	sufficient	Not available	To improve	sufficient	sufficient
Link with SDGs	sufficient	Not available	To improve	sufficient	sufficient
Colour code:	sufficient	To improve	Not available		

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Frameworks for policy development and regulatory governance

As highlighted in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[4]), effective policy development is critical to ensuring that governments are able to translate long, medium, and short-term policy goals into concrete courses of action. It also provides an opportunity for governments to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders and as such is core to the democratic process. It ensures the public governance values - for instance of integrity, openness and transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability - are adopted widely across government, mainstreamed, and integrated not only in the design, but also in the policy implementation process. Translating high-level priorities and the government vision into achievable policies constitutes one of the greatest challenges in policymaking.

The Palestinian Authority's institutional framework and mechanisms are enshrined in the Basic Law of 2003. As identified in the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[7]), this Basic Law only contains limited provisions about the policy development process. Interlocutors during the OECD's fact-finding mission identified that the lack of a coherent and comprehensive legal framework for policymaking or clearer guidelines leads to a lack of clarity of the overall process and to overlaps between functions, which have led to misunderstandings and tensions in the past. Furthermore, the PA also faces issues relating to overlapping mandates for regulatory policy, the administration of ex ante regulatory impact assessments and legislative drafting standards. Regulatory oversight functions are shared by several institutions leading to insufficient quality control of regulatory management tools. Regulatory impact assessments are yet to be carried out in practice, despite an existing formal requirement. However, the OECD's interviews during the fact-finding missions showed that two intricately linked guidance documents issued in 2016 by the PMO and the Ministry of Finance and Planning (General Budget Directorate) are available and still in use, namely the Handbook 2017-2022 and the MTBPM respectively.

Handbook on the Elaboration of Sectoral and Cross-Cutting Strategies for the period 2017-2022

While these guidelines were being reviewed during the creation of this report, making it unable to assess the latest drafts, consulted institutions did not identify significant changes. The main objective of the Handbook 2017-2022 is to ensure consistency between the NPA and the different thematic and cross-cutting strategies and to ensure alignment between strategic mid-term and budget planning. The Handbook 2017-2022 includes principal elements which are necessary to guide the policymaking process and provide for some quality requirements related to policy outputs:

- Linking sectoral and cross-cutting strategies to the objectives of the NPA, as well as the inter-sectoral nature of most public policies and the need to cooperate with other institutions, the civil society, and the private sector.

- Linking the identified strategic objectives and concrete measures and outputs.

- Performing an assessment of the internal and external stakeholders (public institutions, the civil society, and the private sector).

- Clearly identifying co-ordination and implementation responsibilities at the organisational and individual level, most notably through a lead institution for each strategy, and by also clearly identifying contributing public institutions, civil society organisations, the private sector.

- Conducting consultations to discuss reciprocal implementation roles with public institutions, the civil society, and the private sector to identify - and review, where necessary - the overall and strategic objectives and related measures.

- Establishing co-ordination mechanisms among all the relevant programmes and between project managers.

- Considering the existing financial circumstances when identifying public policies and programmesprogramme. This requires each involved institution to estimate the costs of the strategy, programmesprogramme, and the main outputs over a 6-year period and for the upcoming year. This also requires involved institutions to estimate the resources needed for every year, distinguishing between recurrent, running, and one-off costs. They should also specify whether resources are expected to come from the Treasury or from development partners, civil society organisations or the private sector.

- Reviewing the strategic objectives, measures, and ambitions in case available resources are insufficient to achieve the quality of required outputs within the given timeframe.

- Clarifying the financial gaps and linking them to specific programmes programmeand outputs to feed discussions with the development partners.

The Handbook 2017-2022 also briefly describes standard institutional arrangements for planning and budgeting. It provides three alternative arrangements.

When a policy area and related policy objectives are to be achieved by one single public institution without the contribution of other institutions or the civil society or the private sector, the Handbook 2017-2022 provides for each lead institution to establish a Planning and Budget Management Group (PBMG). This group has decision-making responsibility over the identification of overall objectives, strategic objectives, measures, outputs, and the repartition of financial allocations among the programmes programmeand outputs. The PBMG should include:

- The minister or the head of the non-ministerial institution who forms the ultimate decision-maker with the PBMG.

- The deputy-minister or the deputy head of the non-ministerial institution who is responsible for organising and co-ordinating the workings of the PBMG.

- All programme managers, the senior planning officer, and the senior financial officer within the ministry or the non-ministerial institution. The programme managers are responsible for proposing policy options, including outputs and cost estimates. The senior planning officer and senior financial officer provide advice to the programme managers and to the head and deputy head of PBMG.

When the achievement of the envisaged policy objectives requires the intervention of civil society, the Handbook 2017-2022 provides for a wider membership of the PBMG to include major non-governmental organisations. In this case the PBMG is called Strategy, Planning and Budget administration Group (SPBAG).

When the achievement of policy objectives requires the contribution of different ministries or non-ministerial institutions, the lead institution establishes a Sector Strategy Group (SSG), whose composition includes:

- The PBMG of the lead institution.
- The deputy heads of the PBMG from other concerned ministries or non-ministerial institutions.
- A select number of programme managers, planning and finance officers in senior positions from the PBMGs of the relevant institutions.
- The main civil society organisations.

In practice, not all the quality requirements are consistently applied as there is no rigorous quality control mechanism in place to check compliance. This is especially the case regarding the quality of internal and public consultations, the establishment of co-ordination mechanisms gathering all the relevant parties, the reliability of cost estimates, the identification of financial sources and financial gaps, and the review of strategic and operational objectives in line with financial circumstances. Moreover, as reported by interviewed stakeholders during the fact-finding missions, quality requirements for each policy development phase (i.e., problem analysis, prioritisation, objectives setting and formulation, costing, etc.) are not sufficiently clarified and there are no standard tools to support public institutions.

The Handbook 2017-2022 neither provides for description of the overall policy cycle nor for a calendar, the only date provided being the end of June to deliver the first draft of policy proposals. The Handbook 2017-2022 only covers the policy identification and formulation phases; other key stages such as co-ordination, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation are not addressed. Stakeholders confirmed that that they do not have a clear understanding of the overall policy cycle. There are no clear steps identified for delivering policy inputs, for internal and external consultations, or for review of policy documents, until the adoption of policy documents by the CoM, especially as the institutions at the centre of government (CoG) are also not recognised in the Handbook 2017-2022 even though they have a strong role in steering and co-ordinating the policy development cycle. They do not participate in policy discussions within the planning and budgeting groups and their roles and their interactions with the different lead institutions at both the technical and political level are not identified. While verifying the alignment between the line ministries proposals and the government's strategic priorities is the main aspect the CoG, stakeholders reported misalignment between thematic and whole-of-government priorities a recurrent issue.

Finally, while the Handbook 2017-2022 establishes a foundation for personal accountability by giving a mandate to programme managers to ensure the achievement of results and to negotiate with external donors, there are no institutional arrangements to ensure it. During the OECD's fact-finding mission, institutional stakeholder also reported that there are no consequences envisaged for poor performance.

The new "Strategic planning approach" and the new "Strategic planning guidelines" for the planning cycle 2024-2029

The new approach and the new Guidelines 2024-2029 were introduced after this assessment was concluded. However, given that they introduce important innovations and improvements in the process, this Review provides here an overview of both documents.

The new "Strategic planning approach for 2024-2029"

At the time of writing, the current planning cycle is expected to end in December 2023. In 2022, the PMO ran a thorough review of the current strategic planning approach. This assessment process led to the identification of structural issues which are mostly in line with the present Review, namely:

- Insufficient prioritisation of policy objectives which hinders the capacity of government to concentrate its scarce resources on delivering tangible results for the citizens.
- Weak problem analysis and analytical approach to make choices and take decisions regarding the best way to achieve planned objectives.
- Weak linkage between planning and budgeting processes, due to the fact that strategic choices are often made without estimating implementation costs and without considering financial constraints.
- Poor data availability which affects the capacity to analyse the state of play, to set realistic targets, and to monitor progress.

This assessment led to the development of the new Strategic planning approach for 2024-2029 which introduced important innovations, notably:

- A move from a too comprehensive NDP to a narrower government programme (GP), focusing on a limited number of pillars, strategic priorities, and strategic projects and which allows for the concentration of resources. Performance indicators and targets are also expected to be identified and the Strategic Result Framework (SRF) to be narrowed down to focus on GP's strategic priorities and strategic projects.
- The indicative timeline of the overall strategic planning cycle 2024-2029.
- More attention to the problem analysis and the introduction of elements of evidence-based policymaking.
- More meaningful mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, which is also supported by dedicated instructions to the intention of both ministries and non-ministerial institutions.
- A stronger quality control function of the PMO, which is meant to improve the quality of strategic planning documents, and more regular information to the CoM concerning progress towards the achievement of the GP's priorities.
- Stronger synergy between the planning, budgeting, and with aid management processes through more thorough information about key outputs, key activities and, where possible, estimation of implementation costs.
- A renewed effort to identify implementation responsibilities more clearly in order to enhance accountability for results, and to establish stronger interinstitutional co-operation through setting an inter-ministerial co-ordination group for each main pillar of the GP.
- A renewed SRF focusing on the GP's key priorities, the identification of targets for each of GP's strategic priorities and projects, as well as the identification of responsible institutions for each strategic project.
- The introduction of periodic reporting to the CoM on the implementation of GP's priorities.

- A mid-term review of strategies, including objectives, actions, and targets after 3 years.

The new "Strategic planning guidelines for the strategic planning cycle 2024-2029"

To support line ministries and agencies (LMA) in applying the new approach to the preparation of their strategic documents, the PMO developed the new strategic planning guidelines which also introduce important, positive changes. The guidelines notably:

- Outline the main phases of the strategic planning cycle, which is considered a participatory process, and provides LMA with instructions. Some quality requirements are introduced.

- Put more emphasis on the quality of an evidence-based situation analysis and, consistently with the Mid-Term Budgeting Procedures Manual (MTBPM), on the need to clearly prioritise policy objective taking into consideration both the existing administrative capacities and financial circumstances. prioritisation and target setting become inter-institutional processes which take place in the Planning and Budget Management Group, with the participation of the financial units within the LMA and the MoF.

- Introduce the need to estimate implementation costs over the first three years, consistently with the above point. A new budget table promotes stronger result-oriented budgeting. Both operational and development costs are to be indicated for each result.

- Provide instructions for setting strategic objectives, results, and actions, and the related template, which require LMA to link with GP's priorities and with SDGs. For each objective, LMA are requested to outline the expected results and, for each of them, to identify performance indicators and related baselines and interim and final targets. Each indicator is to be clearly linked with GP's and SDGs' indicators.

- Provide instructions for the design of policy interventions and projects, which put more emphasis on internal accountability and require more clarity in the distribution of implementation responsibilities between lead and contributing institutions. For each objective, result, planned intervention, and key output, the template provided by the PMO requires LMA to identify institutional responsibilities and outline the key projects.

- Require LMA to establish co-ordination mechanisms and describe them in the strategic document, along with the description of the mandate, role, and responsibilities of each stakeholder.

- Require LMA to describe how policy interventions and projects will be monitored and evaluated.

- Strengthen the PMO's quality control function whose recommendations to LMA are to be considered as mandatory. Political discussions in the CoM are also introduced for approval of strategic documents.

Given that the new Guidelines 2024-2029 have been introduced very recently, it is too early to assess whether they will concretely improve the strategic planning system, and outputs.

Moreover, methodological instructions remain limited and LMA could benefit from more detailed guidance, tools, and assistance to apply the guidelines' provisions.

Mid-Term Budgeting Procedures Manual

The "Mid-Term Budgeting Procedures Manual" (MTBPM) was elaborated to guide both the mid-term and annual budget preparations process for programmes and reforms implemented by individual ministries and public institutions. It presents the overall mid-term budget preparation cycle and provides more detailed guidance. However, during the fact-finding mission interlocutors clarified that in practice the government prepares and adopts only annual budgets. This is mainly due to uncertainty of financial circumstances. As the Handbook 2017-2022 provides information on the link between planning and budgeting, the MTBPM also extensively addresses the planning aspects, and the new Guidelines 2024-2029 further emphasise

this link. The MTBPM does not provide a uniform calendar but envisages that the deputy head of the PBMG within each ministry sets the planning and budgeting calendar and deadlines. Interviewed interlocutors clarified that the annual budget, and related action plans are to be adopted by the end of the year and no later than March of the following year. However, this is not mentioned in the MTBPM and during this review it was not possible to assess internal guidance issued by individual ministries.

The MTBPM also introduces the Programme Management Team (PMT), which is to be established for each programme of a strategy to carry out the substance work related to planning and budgeting. The PMT represents an important forum to discuss plans and costs of activities at the technical level and prepares the decisions of the Planning and Budget Management Group, which is introduced by the Handbook 2017-2022, and confirmed by the new Guidelines 2024-2029. Neither the MTBPM nor the new Guidelines 2024-2029 mention the Strategy, Planning and Budget administration Group (SPBAG) or the Sector Strategy Group (SSG).

According to the MTBPM, the role of the MoF seems limited with most of the substance work happening in individual ministries and public institutions through Project Management Teams. The MoF launches the mid-term programme expenditure planning procedures and proposes the budgetary ceilings based on the available resources and of previous expenditure levels towards the Cabinet. These ceilings reduce the quantity of expected outputs or postpones their achievements without revising strategic documents. As is the case of the Handbook 2017-2022, the MTBPM does not provide institutions with methodological tools to estimate costs. The new Guidelines 2024-2029 provide a template for presenting cost estimates but could provide additional methodological guidance on how to estimate implementation costs.

In practice, the OECD's fact-finding missions have shown that the MoF receives and verifies ministries and non-ministerial institutions' financial requests throughout the year. Although this is not envisaged by the MTBPM, the MoF holds bilateral and collective budgetary discussions with ministries and public institutions. In the absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council, all the efforts to review the draft budgets of individual ministries and non-ministerial institutions fall on the MoF as well.

Comparing the Handbook on the Elaboration of Sectoral and Cross-Cutting Strategies and the Mid-Term Budgeting Procedures Manual

In general, the two guidelines are consistent and complementary with each other. However, they present some substantial differences which can generate confusion and lead to uncertainty. While the Handbook 2017-2022 recognises the inter-sectoral nature of whole-of-government strategies and provides for the establishment of inter-ministerial working groups, the MTBPM is only about programmes and reforms implemented by individual ministries/institutions. As such the MTBPM does not address programmes needing contributions of other public institutions, the private sector or civil society. Where the Handbook 2017-2022 provides room for negotiations with donors regarding the financial gaps, the MTBPM only provides the mandatory closure of all financial gaps. Addressing these issues would strengthen the usefulness of the guidance offered by both the MTBPM and the Handbook 2017-2022. It is unclear whether any changes were made to the MTBPM following the issuing of the new Guidelines 2024-2029.

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Notes

1 In preparation of the NDP, in November 2020 the government performed a mid-term review of the NPA and sector and crosscutting strategies in co-ordination with all line ministries and other government bodies. To do that, the PMO developed and rolled out a guidance note on the update of sector and crosscutting strategies to all stakeholders. This guide set out several criteria to be observed in the process of updating strategies, including the need to build on a mid-term review of sector and crosscutting results, focus on the improvement pf public service delivery, considering the different crosscutting issues, and ensuring that the new strategies are realistic. However, both the mid-term review and the mentioned sector and crosscutting strategies were not available for review.

2 1) Developing the system of legislation of the civil service sector and strengthening the oversight functions, 2) Develop human resources management policies and systems, 3) Invest in the development and qualification of the human capital of the civil service sector, 4) Develop integrated information systems to manage human resources of the civil service sector.

3 Strategic objective 1: Expenditure of public finance based on what has been defined by sectoral strategies related to the programme's budget and gender-responsive budgets based on a medium-term spending plan; Strategic objective 2: Commitment to transparent, comprehensive accounting systems that are committed to good international standards and linked to an effective internal and external control and audit system; Strategic objective 3: Public revenues are collected efficiently, effectively, and fairly.

4 World Bank, 2018 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Assessment – FINAL Report (June 2918) for West Bank and Gaza, https://www.pefa.org/sites/pefa/files/2020-03/WBGS-Jun19-PFMPR-Public%20with%20PEFA%20Check_0.pdf.

3 Review of the Institutional Framework for Public Administration Reform in the Palestinian Authority

The institutional framework for PAR matters. For the reforms to succeed, the strategic framework needs to find its place in a country's institutional architecture and have support from all the relevant institutions. This section analyses the existing institutional framework for PAR in the Palestinian Authority.

Overview of relevant PAR institutions and committees

PAR Institutions

In the Palestinian Authority, several bodies share functions and competences for public administration reform. However, overlapping and in some cases unclear mandates hamper the effectiveness of subsequent PAR efforts. Based on the desk research, the survey responses and the fact-finding missions the following key institutions could be identified as relevant for public administration reform.

Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was created in 2003 to manage the day-to-day activities of the PA and supports the Office of the President (OoP) with the development of policies. Its main functions are the following:

- Preparing the government programme, setting out annual strategic priorities, and development and implementation of the multi-year priorities for the whole-of-government.
- Co-ordinating the strategic planning process for the National Development Plan (NDP) and the related thematic strategies.
- Monitoring the progress of public policies and sectoral strategies.
- Ensuring alignment of the National Development Plan and the different sectoral and crosscutting strategies with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Leading the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in the PA.

General Secretariat (GS) of the Council of Ministers

The GS provides legal, technical, administrative, and logistical support to the CoM. Its main functions are the following:

- Providing proposals for legislative, financial, or legal reform to the cabinet which are then discussed in preliminary meetings and subsequently ratified or adopted.
- Ensuring coherence, implementation, and monitoring of the GRA.
- Co-ordinating the implementation of e-government and e-services related reforms.
- Issuing instructions towards the monitoring units established in most of the ministries.
- Overseeing monitoring and reporting against the indicators of the NDP's Strategic Results Framework.

General Personnel Council (GPC)

The GPC ensures the application of civil service law. Its main functions are the following:

- Overseeing recruitment planning (e.g., reviewing organisational structures of institutions and suggesting staffing requirements), recruitment processes (exams, interviews, selection, etc.), training public sector staff, and employee evaluation.
- Steering the implementation of the Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023.
- Upgrading and developing public administration.

Ministry of Finance (MoF)

The Ministry of Finance prepares financial policies and manages the public budget. It reviews the financial impacts of legislative drafts prepared by other ministries on an ad hoc basis and provides recommendations to the CoM. Its main functions related to PAR are the following:

- Proposing programmes towards public institutions to support good governance in the management of funds.
- Steering the implementation of the Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021-2023.

State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB)

Following specific request from the PMO or the Office of the President (OoP), the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau conducts financial and performance audits based on the PA's main strategic frameworks the NPA, NDP, the Strategic Results Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC)

The Commission for the Elimination of Illegal Gains was established in 2005. It was replaced by the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission in 2010 by Presidential Decree. The Commission enjoys juridical personality and administrative and financial independence. The PACC has execution, co-ordination, and oversight responsibilities for the Cross-Sector Strategy for Integrity and Anticorruption.

PAR Committees

Based on evidence provided to OECD the following committees have been identified as relevant for PAR in the PA:

Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform

This committee on PAR was created by Presidential Decree in October 2021 with a mandate of one year to enhance the co-ordination of administrative reforms. In October 2022, the duration of the committee was prolonged by six months. In December 2022 it was decided that the committee will seize its operations by June 2023. The committee is chaired by the legal advisor of President Abbas and further includes the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, the head of the GPC, the head of the Financial and Administrative Oversight Bureau, the head of the Palestinian Pension Agency, the Minister of Justice, a representative of the National Security Council, a representative of the MoF, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs, and a representative of the General Intelligence Service.

The Committee reviews all organisational and legal aspects of public institutions to minimise overlaps and redundancies in mandates and to reduce financial burdens. It mainly deals with highly political and pressing issues like the merging of institutions, the civil service law, and the public wage bill (including reviewing salaries, early retirements, lowering pensions, etc.). It regularly meets every Tuesday and presents monthly reports to the President.

Permanent Administrative Committee of the Council of Ministers

The Administrative Committee is one of the permanent committees of the CoM and was created by Decree no. (21) of 2020 concerning the Regulation of the Prime Minister's Office. It is chaired by the Secretary-General and includes the Official Gazette Bureau (Diwan), the GPC, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the MoF, and the Ministry of Justice. It is a technical committee which reviews suggested

organisational changes and restructuring of the public administration. This committee officially adopted the Government's Reform Agenda in April 2022.

National Committee for Planning

Chaired by the PMO and created by a bylaw of the GS, the National Committee for Planning groups the different focal point for planning in the line ministries to guide the National Development Plan.

National Committee for Gender

Chaired by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, this technical committee gathers all 22 ministries, it can also invite relevant Civil Society Organisations to its meetings. The committee forms the main forum to discuss gender policy in the PA.

Higher Committee for Job Planning

Chaired by the GPC and established in 2015 through a Cabinet Decision, this technical committee brings together representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the PMO, and the MoF. It ensures linkages between the various planning processes for human resources within the public institutions. In that sense it deals with issues like job descriptions, job classification, promotions at the most senior level, and organisational structures.

Evaluation Commission for administrative mergers

Chaired by the GS, this commission was formed by the Cabinet to evaluate the possibility for administrative mergers when new institutions are created.

Committee to Review Non-Ministerial Institutions

Formed in 2020 by the CoM, this committee reviews the functioning of different non-ministerial authorities. It recommends mergers to relieve the financial burden on the public administration.

Committee for Technology and Public Administration

Formed by the CoM, this committee is mandated to follow-up on the implementation of the "Technology and Public Administration Strategy 2021-2023". It is chaired by the GS, and composed of all relevant public institutions, as well as the academic and private sectors.

In future, it would be important to verify the mandates of the above-mentioned CoG institutions and Committees in light of the envisaged shift from the comprehensive NDP to the narrower and more targeted GP, and the new focus of the Strategic Results Framework, which is also expected to move from the NDP to the GP.

A fragmented institutional framework and leadership for PAR

As recognised in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[1]) and the SIGMA Principles of Public Administration (OECD, 2017[2]), the centre of government can play a key role in mainstreaming reform across the public administration. Therefore, in OECD Member countries, the CoG is playing an increasingly vital role in driving strategic priorities, intricately linked with their increasing responsibilities on policy co-ordination. In the Palestinian Authority, diverging answers to the OECD questionnaire, in particular regarding the role of the different CoG institutions in policymaking, revealed that there is no uniform understanding of the responsibilities at the centre of government (see Table 3.1).

This was further confirmed by interlocutors during the OECD's fact-finding missions. The lack of formal process, clear institutional mandates, and responsibilities for policy formulation are among the key issues affecting the design and implementation of administrative reforms. While the PMO and the GS are two separate entities, they seem to have competing responsibilities and would benefit from improved co-ordination and communication.

According to the CoM' Decree no. (21) of 2020 Concerning the Regulation of the Prime Minister's Office, the PMO is responsible for the preparation of the government programme by setting out annual strategic priorities and through the development and implementation of the multi-year priorities for the whole-of-government. The PMO co-ordinates with the different ministries via focal points in each ministry and within the National Planning Committee. The PMO's planning team reviews the draft policy documents to identify whether they are in line with government priorities. If this is not the case, they provide comments to the ministries so that they make changes before the definitive version gets submitted towards the Cabinet for review and adoption. It is also mandated to oversee the performance of the ministries and other administrative bodies and to co-ordinate between them. The PMO also establishes Permanent Ministerial Committees to deal with specific policy areas as specified in the decree, and ad-hoc committees to deal with issues outside the scope of these areas.

Respondents to the OECD questionnaire attribute similar responsibilities to the GS, clarifying that the GS is responsible for the elaboration of policy options and proposals for government decisions, policy co-ordination across government, defining thematic annual and multi-annual strategic priorities, the preparation of the government programme, designing and implementing public administration reforms, monitoring and following-up on the implementation of thematic annual plans in line with the NDP and the resulting strategic sectoral result frameworks, and finally of managing the relationship with non-state actors (civil society, academia, think tanks, and the private sector). This is confirmed by the GRA which identifies the GS as the main responsible institution to ensure coherence, implementation, and monitoring of the agenda itself.

Questionnaire respondents did not identify the Office of the President as a major player in policymaking, with its role focussed mainly on the law-making process[1]. However, to boost the implementation of administrative reforms the President promoted the elaboration of the GRA. In addition, the legal advisor of the President chairs the recently established Presidential Higher Committee for Administrative and Legislative Reforms, which is identified as the main PAR committee by some stakeholders.

During the OECD's fact-finding missions, government interlocutors also identified overlapping mandates, unclear responsibilities and gaps between official mandates and actual practices among the main challenges for sound policy development.

Table 3.1. Shared responsibilities between the CoG in the PA

Mandate and functions of the Prime Minister Office	Mandate and functions of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
Policy development and co-ordination	
Setting of annual and multi-annual strategic priorities of the government	Co-ordinating the identification of thematic annual and multi-annual strategic priorities, elaboration of policy options and proposals for government decision, and preparation of the government programme
Guidance and co-ordination of ministries and other administrative bodies for the preparation of the NDP and of sector and cross-cutting strategies, and for the integration of priority SDGs' targets into the NDP and sector and cross-cutting strategies	
Review of draft policy documents to identify whether they are in line with governmental priorities	Review of the action plans for the implementation of the GRA
Co-ordination between ministries and other administrative bodies in relation to implementation of the NDP and related sector and cross-cutting strategies	Policy co-ordination across government for the implementation of the GRA and related sector-specific action plans
Establishment of Permanent Ministerial Committees to deal with specific policy areas specified in the decree no. (21) for 2020, and ad-hoc committees to deal with issues following outside these areas	Establishment of committees to co-ordinate the implementation of the GRA
Monitoring	
Oversight of the performance of the ministries and other administrative bodies	Development of the Strategic Sectoral Result Framework to monitor implementation of the NDP
	Issuing instructions to the attention of the monitoring units established in all ministries monitor implementation of thematic annual plans and programmes in line with the NDP and the resulting Strategic Sectoral Result Framework
	Monitoring and following-up the implementation of thematic annual plans in line with the NDP and the resulting Strategic Sectoral Result Framework
	Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the GRA through an inter-institutional governmental team and co-ordination among thematic teams
Monitoring and oversight of the implementation of SDGs	
PAR-related competences	
Policy development and co-ordination	Relationship with non-state actors (civil society, academia, think tanks, private sector)
	Service delivery

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Regarding PAR, interlocutors reported there is no dedicated institution at the CoG leading the overall PAR agenda. Instead, more than one institution has a potential for leading the PAR efforts:

- The GPC, which is identified by article 87 of the Basic Law as the body in charge of "upgrading and developing public administration".
- The GS as the institution mandated to steer the implementation of the GRA, to monitor the implementation of public policies, and that chairs the Council of Minister's permanent Administrative Committee.
- The PMO, in its role of leading the strategic planning process.
- The OoP, which has recently established the Higher Committee for Administrative and Legislative Reforms.

Lacking a clear political decision, the absence of one lead institution steering the co-ordination of PAR efforts in all the different areas (civil service, organisation, policy development, service delivery, transparency, accountability, and public finance management) affects the overall coherence of the planned and undertaken reform efforts.

At the level of thematic PAR strategies, the five identified PAR-related strategies pinpoint lead institutions which are further confirmed by the GRA. In most cases, the strategic documents also identify the main stakeholders contributing to the implementation and management of the strategy (see Table 3.2). In the case of the Cross-sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022, the various institutions and non-public partners are associated with specific programmes and measures, and for each programme and measures they are assigned with leadership or contributing responsibilities. In the Sectoral Strategy for Technology and Public Administration the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology is the lead institution for all strategic objectives, though the overall leadership is with the GS. For each of them, the strategy provides a list of contribution institutions although a repartition of roles among them is not clarified. The Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023 provides for a general description of roles, without linking them to specific objectives or measures. No description of contributing responsibilities to be performed by other institutions are presented in the Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023. The State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, the High Council of Public Procurement Policies, and the Anti-Corruption Commission are mentioned as relevant institutions, but their role is not described.

Table 3.2. Identified stakeholders contributing to the implementation and management of thematic PAR-related strategies

Sector/cross-sector strategies	Lead institution	Partner institutions and organisations
Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023 (SSCS)	The General Personnel Council	None
Sectoral Strategy for Technology and Public Administration	The Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology	Palestinian Investment Fund, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Ministry of State for Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of education, General Personnel Council, Vocational Training Authority, Vocational University, Monetary Authority, Ministries and service departments, private sector, General Secretariat of the Cabinet.
Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022	The Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission	Ministry of Interior, CSOs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Telecommunications, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Local Governance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of High Education, Custom Police, Border and Passages General Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Economic Crimes Prosecution, Municipal Development and Lending Fund, General Personnel Council, State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, High Council of Public Procurement Policies, CoM, Legislative Council, Central Elections Commission, Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorists Financing Unit, Higher Council for Youth and sport, Cooperative Work Agency, Public Prosecution, security services, political parties, media, Journalists trade union, and some CSOs (including schools, universities, research centres, and the private sector), and others.
Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023	The Ministry of Woman Affairs	Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Employment, other ministries and public institutions, PLC, civil society organisations (i.e., General Union of Palestinian Women, Feminist Framework, education

Sector/cross-sector strategies	Lead institution	Partner institutions and organisations
		institutions, public and private universities, research centres), media, private sector, United Nations agencies.
Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023	The Ministry of Finance	State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, High Council of Public Procurement Policies, Anti-Corruption Commission

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Limited inter-institutional co-ordination on PAR

As highlighted by the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[3]), the PA confirmed the existence and frequent use of ad hoc, temporary, working groups that deal with a wide variety of policy issues. At the level of the centre of government, there are two main committees which seem particularly relevant to ensure co-ordination of PAR efforts. Notably, the CoM Permanent Administrative Committee and the presidential Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform (see Table 3.3 for an overview of the organisational differences between the Administrative Committee and the Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform).

Despite having the potential to give an additional impulse to the PAR agenda and to promote closer inter-institutional co-ordination, the two committees cannot be considered as a full-fledged PAR co-ordination body in line with OECD practices for several reasons.

Firstly, regarding the mandate, none of the two committees covers all PAR substantial areas. They mainly focus on financial, organisational, and civil service-related issues. While their mandate is similar, they work at different levels, the Administrative Committee being a technical body and the Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform being a political committee (although some of its members are senior civil servants). There are no direct lines of accountability and of communication between the two. The only direct link between the two committees is the involvement of the Secretary-General and the Head of the GPC.

Secondly on the composition, their membership does not encompass all institutions leading PAR efforts. Several actors who have a key role are not involved such as the Ministry of telecommunication and Information Technology, the Anticorruption Commission, and the Ministry of Women Affairs. Most notably the PMO, which could play a key role for reforms in policy development, and co-ordination, is also not involved.

Finally, both the civil society and the private sector are not involved in either of these committees. Interviewed civil society organisations during the fact-finding missions reported a lack of transparency in relation to the committees as no documents, including the agendas or reports, are publicly available.

Table 3.3. Comparing the co-ordination bodies for PAR at the CoG in the PA

	Administrative Committee	Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform
Permanent/ temporary Political / technical	Permanent Technical	Temporary, to finalise its work by June 2023 Political
Composition (inclusion or exclusion of the main PAR institutions)	General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers (chair), General Personnel Council, Official Gazette Bureau, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice	Office of the President (chair), General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, General Personnel Council, the head of the Financial and Administrative Oversight Bureau, Public Retirement Authority, Ministry of Justice, National Security Council, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs, General Intelligence Service
	Main PAR institutions not included: PMO, Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology, Ministry of Women, Anticorruption Commission	Main PAR institutions not included: PMO, Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology, Ministry of Women, Anticorruption Commission
Mandate (included or excluded PAR areas)	Included PAR areas: Civil Service and Human Resources Management; Organisation and functions of public Administration	Included PAR areas: Civil Service and Human Resources Management; Organisation and functions of public Administration
	Administrative issues: upgrade of employees, (mainly at the senior level), job descriptions, job classification, promotions, and departmental organisation	Organisational and legal aspects of public institutions to minimise overlaps and redundancies in mandates and to reduce financial burdens: the merging of institutions, public wage bill (including recruitment, salaries, early retirements, pension system, etc.).
	Excluded PAR areas: Service delivery (including e-services), gender mainstreaming, integrity, anti-corruption, engagement with the civil society	Excluded PAR areas: Service delivery (including e-services), gender mainstreaming, integrity, anti-corruption, engagement with the civil society
Accountability line	CoM	President

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The new strategic planning approach put forward in late 2022 is expected to replace the too comprehensive NDP with a narrower, and more focused GP. It introduces the possibility for the PMO to "establish an inter-ministerial co-ordination group for each main pillar" of the GP "to oversee the identification and development of strategic projects to deliver the envisioned results and ensure the proper inclusion in the LMA strategy and (joint) policy interventions". The composition of these groups is not anticipated. The way these committees integrate with the existing ones remains to be seen.

Co-ordination of individual PAR strategies

Sectoral Strategy for Civil Service (SSCS)

The GPC liaises with the different ministries through focal points within the HR (Human Resources) departments of each ministry and non-ministerial institution. The SSCS moves the functioning of the GPC towards a more strategic role focused on the formulation of the policy and legal framework, including

monitoring and evaluation, while the responsibility for implementation is being brought towards the individual institutions.

The GPC participates in the Cabinet's Administrative Committee, which mainly deals with administrative issues. In addition, the GPC chairs the Higher Committee for Job Planning, which was established in 2015. This technical committee ensures linkages between the planning process for human resources management and the financial and human resources available. Annually, it prepares a table of jobs and related job descriptions for all institutions and presents it to the Prime Minister for adoption. During the OECD's fact-finding missions, no other technical or political fora to discuss progress for the SSCS could be identified.

Finally, the GPC is also member of the Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform, which deals with highly political issues related to organisational and legal aspects of public institutions to minimise overlaps and redundancies in mandates and to reduce financial burdens.

Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy

To co-ordinate the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy, a National Committee for Gender was established. Chaired by the Ministry of Women affairs it brings together the 22 ministries of the PA. The National Committee includes dedicated working groups that deal with specific programmes of the gender strategy, selectively involving the relevant institutions. Besides the meetings of the CoM, there are no other co-ordination fora to discuss gender policies at the political level (see Annex C).

Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anticorruption

The Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC) has execution, co-ordination, and oversight responsibilities. The Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anticorruption envisages the establishment of a National Technical Team, chaired by the PACC itself, to oversee, co-ordinate, and monitor the implementation of the strategy. This Team, supported by the PMO, is composed of a group of experts on combating corruption and good governance from the main implementing partners. It forms the main technical co-ordination body where parties discuss and review the progress reports and the expenditures and overall budgetary issues. Interlocutors during OECD's fact-finding missions identified the functioning of the National Technical Team as challenging, with the COVID-19 pandemic further disrupting the work. To combat this, the PACC started an annual national workshop for the annual implementation reports. Unfortunately, due to scarce resources interlocutors could not confirm the yearly organisation. As a result, most of the work is organised within 13 thematic working groups, with each working group chaired by the institution in charge of the programme. Nevertheless, interlocutors identified the frequency and regularity of the meetings as uneven.

Strategy for Technology and Public Administration

In 2020, through Cabinet Resolution No. (44/17/M18/M.W/M.A.) of 2020, the Cabinet established a Ministerial Committee with its main purpose co-ordinating the elaboration of the "Technology and Public Administration Cluster 2021-2023". The committee is composed of the Secretary General of the Cabinet as a rapporteur, the Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology, the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, the Minister of Finance, the Minister Higher Education and Scientific Research, Minister of the National Economy, President of the GPC, and the President of the Monetary Authority. The committee was mandated to outline a clear plan for building and guiding a Palestinian ecosystem that enables the advancement of the technological sector and public administration in all its technical, legal, human, and financial aspects, in co-operation with the relevant partners.

The Ministerial Committee established a technical committee consisting of representatives of the ministries participating in the Ministerial Committee, further adding the Ministry of National Economy and representatives from the private sector. These partners being the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies, PALTEL Group, Ooredoo, the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Association of Banks, the Federation of Consulting and Administrative Companies, and the Engineers Association. This technical committee was meant to analyse the reality of technology and public administration in the PA. And to support the development of a vision and a comprehensive strategy for the technology and the public administration cluster, including interventions, statistical indicators and KPIs, and defining programmes and operational plans.

A Support Team within the GS was formed by the Secretary General in his capacity as rapporteur of the ministerial and technical committees. Based on directions and inputs provided by the two committees, its mission was preparing a draft of the Technology and Public Administration Cluster 2021-2023. It also supported the work of the technical committee. Given the temporary nature of these committees, the OECD could not verify whether this institutional set-up was dismantled after the finalisation of the strategic document, or if it is taking up a co-ordination role.

Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023

There is no information about any co-ordination arrangements. It seems that co-ordination will entirely be done by the MoF and performed by the Planning and Budgeting Department, and the Public Finance Management Development Department, which support the PBMG. The strategy document outlines the main tasks of the PBMG, but it is silent about the involvement of other concerned parties, either internal or external to public administration. A "Technical Committee" is also mentioned, but its composition, mandate, and functions are not described.

Co-ordinating and engaging with local levels

The strategic alignment and co-ordination between central and local levels, and across local levels, are crucial to support the effective design and delivery of public policies and services and ensure that they are properly funded, ultimately contributing to raising the living standards of citizens across the country. OECD Member countries are using a wide range of co-ordination approaches and instruments, including institutionalised task forces and committees to align across the different levels of governance (see Box 3.1). While dedicated task forces and committees are essential at the local level, there is a strong co-ordination need with the central government, that can be a responsibility of a line Ministry (typically Ministries of Interior or of Regional development) or of the centre of government (mostly in federal states) (OECD, 2017[4]). In more than half of OECD Member countries, co-ordination across the levels of government is not a function of the centre.

Besides co-ordination, a number of mechanisms support vertical co-ordination, including support to capacity building, funding instruments and contractualization. For instance, France and Poland rely on systems of contracts for investments and co-financing. While France is using State-region planning contracts (CPER), Poland more specifically has developed "territorial contracts" between line Ministries and local governments, that aim to support "co-ordination of pro-development activities undertaken by the national and local government targeted at achieving common objectives established in relation to the area defined in it", and help redistribute state budget and fund activities to realise national objectives and co-fund investments (OECD, 2021[5]).

Based on the responses provided by interlocutors, local level co-ordination within the PA is characterised by several key points. These include recognition of the need for reform and restructuring within the local government sector, a desire to enhance decentralisation in service provision, calls to expand the powers

of local authorities particularly in taxation and resource management, and emphasis on local economic development. However, challenges such as lack of participation processes, alignment issues with sectoral plans, and centralised influence from the Office of the President are apparent. These insights underscore the importance of addressing co-ordination gaps and empowering local governance structures for effective development planning and service delivery. By implementing this, the PA can enhance co-ordination and engagement with local levels, thereby facilitating better governance.

Box 3.1. Intergovernmental consultation for effective prioritisation and development at central and local levels

Sweden

In Sweden, it is the job of regional development policymakers to convince other ministries that they should wear their "territorial lenses" when planning and designing sector policies. The Forum for Sustainable Regional Development 2022-2030 is one important co-ordination platform. It is positioned as part of the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development throughout Sweden 2021-2030. The forum is chaired by the secretary of state for regional development. It is divided into two groups: one that promotes dialogue between national- and regional-level politicians, and one that fosters dialogue between national- and regional-level civil servants (director-level). Sweden has also created policy labs. There is one dedicated to exploring concrete policy methods for rural development. In addition, Sweden also relies on involving state agencies – both public servants/operational staff and decision-makers – in regional matters because these agencies support the implementation of regional development policy by different sectors while taking into account regional specificities that affect meeting sectoral aims.

Italy

Italy's Strategy for Inner Areas is an integrated strategy tailored to reduce demographic decline and land abandonment in many rural areas by improving the quality of essential services – education, health and mobility – and promoting opportunities for economic activity and jobs. Within the framework of this strategy, the national government defined a set of integrated projects and their expected outcomes through an inter-ministerial committee to align objectives, adapt sectoral policies to specific territorial needs and match different sources of financing. This committee consists of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health and Agriculture; the Department for Cohesion Policy; and subnational levels of government. For each policy area, the national government also identifies an alliance of municipalities willing and capable of working together towards a long-term strategy, including by unifying the management of functions relevant to the common strategy.

Poland

Poland established the Co-ordinating Committee for Development Policy as a permanent inter-ministerial committee led by the Minister of Funds and Regional Policy with sub-committees linked to regional development issues (e.g. Sub-committee for Rural Areas Development, Sub-committee for Territorial Dimension). The committee carries out analysis and drafts documents to facilitate the implementation of the country's Strategy for Responsible Development, which has a strong territorial dimension, and to align national and local priorities. Poland has also established the Joint Committee of National Government and Territorial Self-government that discusses issues related to the functioning of municipalities and the state policy on local government.

Source: (OECD, 2021[6]).

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Note

[1] Since 2007, legislative competences have been assigned to the President due to the absence of a functioning legislature. Article 43 of the Basic Law gives authority to the President – in cases of necessity that cannot be delayed and when the legislature is not in session - to issue decree-laws that have power of legislations and that are enforceable until the role of the PLC is resumed.

4 Public Administration Reform Areas for Improvement and Reform in the Palestinian Authority

Based on the challenges and opportunities identified in previous chapters, this section provides an overview of identified areas of improvement to support and effective development and implementation of PAR in the Palestinian Authority.

Overview of identified areas of improvement

Based on these findings, the Review has identified the following areas of improvement that would concretely strengthen the Palestinian Authority's efforts for public administration reform:

- Developing a coherent strategic framework for public administration reform
- Strengthening the evidence base for public administration reform
- Improved institutional leadership on public administration reform
- Improving institutional co-ordination on public administration reform
- Improving the prioritisation of public administration reform objectives
- Effective operationalisation of public administration reform objectives
- Effective monitoring and reporting practices for public administration reform
- Leveraging costing and expenditure efforts for public administration reform
- Leveraging Human Resources Management for public administration reform
- Improving accountability and transparency for public administration reform through stakeholder participation

Developing a coherent strategic framework for public administration reform

As highlighted in the OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[1]) and the OECD/SIGMA Principles of Public Administration (OECD, 2018[2]), a well-functioning public administration is a precondition for implementing policies successfully while ensuring the effectiveness of expenditures. It enables governments to achieve their policy objectives in all sectors and ensures the proper implementation of political decisions and legal rules, leading towards economic development and democratisation. On the contrary, ineffective public administration causes delays, inefficient of public resources, uncertainty, and integrity challenges. These in turn can have direct impact on trust in government (OECD, 2022[3]).

Achieving an efficient public administration for sound public governance requires reforms in diverse, though closely interlinked, policy areas. When these reforms are planned and implemented in a fragmented manner and on an ad hoc basis, they may not enhance the functioning of the public administration as initially expected. For instance, improving the professionalism of civil servants cannot bring the foreseen benefits if the administration is not rationally organised and if accountability lines between the CoG and line institutions are not clearly establish, or if procedures are not harmonised across institutions. Therefore, efforts to realise PAR should be approached sequentially with a whole-of-government approach that ensures the harmonisation and integration of reform measures.

There is not a univocal vision for setting up the strategic framework for PAR. Reforms can take the form of either a comprehensive document covering the different PAR areas or, as is the case for the PA's approach consist of separate strategic documents targeting dedicated PAR areas. Several governments in the MENA region have launched whole-of state strategies which leverage governance reforms to support the development of their societies and economies (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. Whole-of-government strategies for PAR in MENA countries

Egypt Vision 2030. Sustainable Development Strategy

This is Egypt's first such strategy; It guides ongoing reform efforts to match the 17 SDGs, as well as the African Agenda 2063. In particular, it covers economic, social and environmental dimensions of SDGs and outlines strategic targets and sub-targets to achieve the goals; key performance indicators as well as expected challenges. Public administration reform agenda is specifically highlighted as a priority within the strategy.

Saudi Vision 2030

Launched in 2016, it promotes several Realisation Programmes underpinning three main strategic objectives. These latter pivot around an "ambitious Nation" (through enhanced government effectiveness and enabled society responsibility); a "thriving economy" (to be achieved through economic diversification and growth as well as more employment); and a "vibrant society" (based on Islamic and national identity and enjoying a fulfilling and healthy life).

Qatar National Vision 2030

Dating back to 2008, it is structured around four pillars covering "economic development" (ensuring efficient management of the national economy, taking a responsible approach towards natural resource management and working to develop a knowledge-based economy); "social development" (encouraging the adoption of Islamic philosophy and humanitarian and family values, as well as sport and physical activity); "human development" (improving education and health care, and increasing cultural awareness and employment opportunities) and "environmental development" (advancing the technological frontier, conducting environmental awareness campaigns and promoting sustainable urban growth).

UAE Vision 2030 Master Plan

The plan is a comprehensive set of strategic policies that cover the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, Environment Vision 2030 (Abu Dhabi), Plan Abu Dhabi 2030, Abu Dhabi Transportation Mobility Management Strategy, Surface Transport Master Plan (Abu Dhabi), Dubai Autonomous Transportation Strategy, Dubai Industrial Strategy 2030, Dubai 3D Printing Strategy and UN's 2030 Agenda.

Morocco New Development Model 2035

Adopted in 2021, the new Development Model is "designed by Moroccans, with Moroccans and for Moroccans", having benefitted from insights and ideas discussed in a commission made up of citizens with different and complementary backgrounds. According to the Government, the Model embodies a new way of looking at development, one that is more participative, involving all stakeholders. Through the Model, the Government commits to achieving several targets by 2035, making progress in terms of economy, human capital, inclusion, durability as well as governance and administration.

Source: (Government of Jordan, 2014[4]) (Government of Egypt, n.d.[5]) (Government of Saudi Arabia, n.d.[6]) (Government of the UAE, n.d.[7]) (Government of Qatar, n.d.[8]) (Government of Morocco, n.d.[9]).

In the PA's existing approach, strengthening, and further aligning the current co-ordination and management structures would lead to increased results. If the PA were to change its approach and move towards the development of a single PAR strategy encompassing the different PAR areas, this would need

reflection and planning. The development of a concept paper could in this case act as a first step. This paper would need to include the key milestones and identify the most important stakeholders with their related roles and contributions. Furthermore, the leadership and composition of working bodies, the overall timeframe of the entire process, the resources needed for all parts of the strategy development, and the details of the planned internal and external consultations would ideally be included. Results-based management, as introduced in the NDP but not further operationalised, would also offer an important driver for reforms, and would ideally be further pursued. As introduced with the new strategic planning approach, a well-prioritised and result-oriented GP (which is expected to include indicators and targets to be achieved through the strategic projects) has the potential to streamline reforms. A lead institution at the centre of government with a clear mandate and strong authority over the relevant ministries and non-ministerial institutions would be needed to strengthen the alignment of PAR efforts.

Strengthening the evidence base for public administration reform

As recognised by the OECD's Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[1]), it is important to note that there is a strong link between the overall success of public reforms and the care with which those reforms have been planned. To this aim strategic plans are to be informed with the best available evidence. A well-informed analysis of the current situation allows for the identification of major problems and their root causes, as well as the challenges and opportunities for reform. The problem analysis should be well planned to ensure its timely completion: defining the scope, choosing the relevant analytical methods and tools that are to be used, preparing relevant questions, selecting key data collection methods and data sources, and determining the key involved institutions and stakeholders with their corresponding responsibilities. Moreover, proper analysis should be given sufficient time depending on the available resources and the complexity of the internal and external consultation process needed to develop and validate the findings of the analysis.

Stakeholders during the OECD's fact-finding missions have identified that the PA has a rising interest in strengthening its evidence base. Respondents to the OECD questionnaire mentioned that focus groups and interviews are the most common methods used for problem analysis and policy identification for PAR in the PA. In some cases, other methods are used as well. These include systematic reviews, evaluation reports, national statistics, administrative data, and reports by international organisations. It is important that these methods are further strengthened by the inclusions of performance information, audit reports, internal and external evaluations, expenditure reports and the respective institutions that create these insights to create a robust evidence base for PAR.

The early involvement of the civil society together with institutional stakeholders would also positively impact the problem analysis efforts as this would contribute towards ensuring that strategic frameworks address the most pressing needs in the society. As is the case with the elaboration of the Cross-Cutting Gender Strategy and the Cross-Cutting Integrity and Anticorruption strategy, there are good examples within the PA of the early involvement of internal and external stakeholders in problem analysis (i.e., decision-makers, managers, technical staff, external service users, NGOs, research centres, academia, the private sector, etc.). However, external stakeholders shared during OECD's fact-finding missions that they often struggle with receiving feedback on their contributions towards problem analysis. Nevertheless, while practices for engagement appear to be uneven across institutions, the PA could build further on these experiences.

When revising the existing Handbook 2017-2022, the PA needs to consider setting clearer standard procedures and quality requirements for the involvement of all the relevant institutional and non-state stakeholders during the stages of problem identification, discussion, and validation of the analytical results. In this way, the PA would benefit from a wider range of insights which would ensure that all views are taken into consideration and that the most pressing issues are sufficiently identified. They could take the form of

a legally binding regulatory framework for inter-institutional and public consultations or detailed, mandatory guidelines emanating by the CoG. In both cases, a quality control mechanism in line institutions and at the CoG is best placed to ensure their consistent application. Ideally, these standard procedures for problem analysis should be integrated within a wider regulatory framework or guidelines concerning the entire policy cycle. The recently introduced new Guidelines 2024-2029 could addressing these issues more effectively.

Improved institutional leadership on public administration reform

As recognised by OECD/SIGMA's Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies (OECD, 2018[2]), effective and efficient implementation of PAR is strongly benefited by clear and strong leadership at the CoG that is able to steer the overall reforms. This includes the development of the strategic and operational documents, and the co-ordination and monitoring of its implementation. Leadership and managerial responsibilities should be cascaded down throughout the public administration and include accountability measures. For each dedicated area of reform, one lead institution should be further identified and assigned official managerial responsibilities to ensure its effectiveness.

Given its cross-cutting nature, PAR also requires a collective commitment. The level of leadership at the political and top administrative levels, as well as the perceptions of the decision-makers about the importance of the PAR agenda are critical success factors. In several OECD countries PAR leadership is placed at the level of the Centre of Government (CoG), more specifically at the level of the Prime Minister or Deputy-Prime Minister to ensure sufficient authority to co-ordinate the numerous involved institutions and to ensure a uniform approach towards policy development (see Box 4.2 and Box 4.3).

Box 4.2. The role of the CoG in PAR

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 CoM. The CoG is known under different labels in different countries, such as the Chancellery, Cabinet Office, Office of the President, and Presidency of the CoM. 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.

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 a key 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.

Country examples of centres of government leading PAR efforts

- In **Finland**, while overall reform is led by the Ministry of Finance, the PMO is responsible for reform of the Government's policymaking processes and strategic policymaking.
- In **Ireland,** the Secretary General to the President chairs the Civil Service Management Board, which oversees implementation of the overall Civil Service Renewal Plan.
- The State Chancellery in **Latvia** launched the public administration reform Plan 2020, focusing on achieving a 'results orientated and efficient public administration and human resources policy', which includes, reducing administrative burdens ("zero bureaucracy"), increasing public e-services, revision of small institutions and consolidation of support functions into shared service centres, and regular expenditure reviews.
- **New Zealand**'s Better Public Services reform programme is jointly led by the three 'central agencies' (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Treasury, and the State Services Commission) and includes several publicly reported policy 'Result Areas' with targets, the establishment of whole-of-government 'functional leadership' roles in the areas of ICT, procurement, policy, and legal services, as well as a programme to build leadership capability across government.

Source: (OECD, 2017[10]); (OECD, 2018[11]).

Box 4.3. Strengthening the role of the centre of government in strategic planning in Morocco

In Morocco, the Services of the Head of Government (SCG) were established in 2012 in order to better support the Head of Government, particularly in the co-ordination of public policies and in the achievement of the 5-year governmental programme objectives. The creation of the SCG also aimed to improve decision-making in particular at the Council of Government, for which the SCG have been proposing items on the agenda and reviewing the consistency of the proposals with the government programme during the preparation process of the meeting. The SCG have also enabled greater agility at the centre of government to respond to national issues and immediate or long-term challenges for Morocco.

The role of the SCG was further reinforced in the framework of the implementation of the Government Programme 2021-2026. They have a leading role in steering the implementation of government priorities in co-ordination with line Ministries; they support decision-making by the Head of Government; they ensure the co-ordination and alignment of strategies and policies, providing expertise both on legal and substance matters ;they also contribute extensively to the preparation of the annual budget law by establishing the strategic framework driving the budget distribution that is then validated by the Head of Government for validation before discussions with the Ministry of Economy and Finances.

Moreover, the SCG team is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the strategic priorities and of ensuring that new laws and strategies are line both with the Government Programme and the long-term New Development Model. In addition to these functions, the SCG has been developing a role of delivery unit to steer more specifically some key priorities and accompany line ministries in the development and implementation of those priorities in connection with their sectoral strategies.

Source: (OECD, 2023[12]).

The PA has not identified a lead institution for PAR in the centre of government. The 2002 Basic Law contains limited provisions about the policy development and implementation process. However, it offers an overview of the various institutions involved in the process[1]. In order to identify a PAR lead institution at the CoG, there are many valid options for the Palestinian Authority to consider, such as:

- The **General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers** (GS) is identified as the main institution in charge for the implementation and evaluation of the GRA. It is tasked with establishing and leading an inter-institutional governmental team in charge of the follow-up and monitoring of reform implementation. The GS also monitors the implementation of the National Development Plan, against the Strategic Results Framework.
- The **Prime Minister's Office** leads and co-ordinates the strategic planning process for the National Development Plan, and which has recently established The National Committee for Planning at the Cabinet level that assess legislative, administrative, and financial reform needs.

Leadership and managerial responsibilities should also be cascaded down throughout the public administration with one lead institution clearly identified for each PAR area and dedicated sub-areas. This entails a delegation of responsibility from the lead PAR institution through the institutions leading individual PAR areas, towards the other contributing institutions regarding the achievement of planned objectives. To work efficiently, delegation of responsibility requires a regular top-down and bottom-up flow of information. In some OECD countries, relations are regulated through mandate letters or administrative agreements clarifying commitments, performance expectations, and reporting lines between the CoG and line ministries (see Box 4.4). In the MENA region, some countries like Tunisia adopted performance programmes between the CoG and line ministries, and performance contracts between line ministries and subordinated institutions. In the PA, the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission provides an example in this regard, it has signed agreements with all the relevant institutions contributing towards the implementation of the Cross-Cutting Strategy for Integrity and Anti-corruption.

Box 4.4. Mandate Letters in Canada

Mandate Letter to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement

Mandate letters outline the objectives of each minister's performance expectations, as well as the challenges they are tasked to address. For instance, in the mandate letter destined to the former Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Filomena Tassi, by the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, the continuation of the prioritisation of the procurement of the critical supplies necessary to respond to COVID-19 are highlighted, alongside the need to leverage the government's purchasing power in order to increase access to economic opportunity for a greater diversity of Canadians. In addition, the mandate letter stresses the need to ensure that federal procurement practices support Canada's transition to a green economy.

To achieve these objectives, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement are tasked to deliver the following commitments:

- Continue to procure COVID-19 therapeutics, tests, and vaccines, for adults and children, to ensure all Canadians have access to free booster shots and second-generation vaccines as needed.
- Continue the modernisation of procurement practices so they support Canada's economic policy goals, including balanced procurement opportunities with Canada's trading partners, provide value for money, are open and transparent and require suppliers of goods and services to apply the highest ethical and sustainability standards across their supply chains.

- To ensure that a whole-of-government approach is taken, support the Minister of Labour in introducing legislation to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains and ensure Canadian businesses operating abroad do not contribute to human rights abuses.

- Continue to advance government-wide initiatives to increase the diversity of bidders on government contracts, including small businesses and businesses led by Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialised Canadians, women, LGBTQ2 Canadians and other under-represented groups.

- Lead the implementation of the requirement for federal departments and agencies to ensure a minimum of 5 per cent of the total value of federal contracts are held by Indigenous businesses.

- Strengthen federal procurement practices to prioritise reusable and recyclable products in support of our goal of zero plastic waste and work with the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry to support procurement of Canadian clean technology.

- Continue working with the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and the Minister of National Defence, with the support of the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry, to renew the fleets of the Canadian Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Navy, advance the shipbuilding industry, including the process to add a third Canadian shipyard as a strategic partner to the National Shipbuilding Strategy, create middle class jobs and ensure Canada has the modern ships needed.

- Continue to improve crossings in the National Capital Region, moving forward with Budget 2019 commitments to replace the Alexandra Bridge, addressing the demonstrated need for an additional National Capital Region crossing with the Long-Term Integrated Interprovincial Crossings Plan led by the National Capital Commission (NCC), and investing to rehabilitate and maintain existing crossings, including the Chaudière and Macdonald-Cartier bridges.

- Work with the President of the Treasury Board to resolve outstanding Phoenix Pay System issues for public servants once and for all, while advancing work through Shared Services Canada on the Next Generation Pay and Human Resources System.

- Ensure that Canada Post provides the high-quality service that Canadians expect at a reasonable price and better reaches Canadians in rural and remote areas. You will be supported in this work by the Minister of Rural Economic Development.

- Advance work to rehabilitate and reinvigorate places and buildings of national significance under the responsibility of the NCC and Public Services and Procurement Canada.

- Ensure the ongoing delivery of defence procurements in support of Canada's Defence Policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged.

- Work with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities and the Minister of Natural Resources to introduce a new Buy Clean Strategy to support and prioritise the use of made-in-Canada low-carbon products in Canadian infrastructure projects.

Source: (Government of Canada, 2021[13]).

In the PA lead institutions have been identified for most of the PAR areas. Still, there are some areas that would benefit from better identified leadership:

- Regarding policy development, co-ordination, and monitoring, both the PMO and the GS have policy development responsibilities, the former mainly concerning the development of the NDP, the latter regarding the GRA.

- On the organisation and functioning of public administration, the GRA identifies the GS as the lead institution for reform measures aimed at restructuring public administration and government functions. However, the Basic Law assigns to the GPC a mandate to "upgrade and develop public administration" (Article 87 of the Basic Law). Both institutions participate in the Presidential Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reforms which is tasked to deal with, among other issues, institutional mergers, and a rationalisation of organisational costs.

- On service delivery (beyond e-services) the GS has a mandate. It could be further identified as the lead institution to boost administrative simplification processes and to enhance the accessibility and quality of in-person services.

Finally, during the OECD's fact-finding mission interlocutors shared that individual responsibility and accountability could be more clearly defined within each lead or contributing institution, this can be done through internal notes and updated job descriptions. This point was also emphasised by civil society organisations. As recognised by the consulted stakeholders, this might need a cultural change to create the required enabling environment.

Improving institutional co-ordination on public administration reform

As highlighted in the OECD/SIGMA's Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies (OECD, 2018[2]), due to the cross-cutting nature of PAR and the multiple institutions involved in the implementation of the reforms, it is desirable to have dedicated steering and co-ordination structures to oversee the implementation. The formation of the structures, the institutions (and often appointed individuals), their roles and responsibilities, and the working procedures of the structures should be formalised in a separate decision or explained in PAR strategic documents.

In the PA, different committees currently deal with PAR-related issues. The President established the Higher Committee for Administrative and Legal Reform while Decree 21 of 2020 provides for Permanent Ministerial Committees, among which the Administrative Committee has been active since April 2022, and the possibility to establish ad hoc technical committees. While not in place yet, the GRA also provides for the establishment of governmental teams under the chairmanship of the GS. The mandates of these co-ordination fora are somehow overlapping, not entirely clear, or not fit for purpose with none of them including all the relevant institutional stakeholders.

Co-ordination on PAR at the CoG

To establish a stronger co-ordination for PAR at the CoG, the PA can either enlarge the membership of existing bodies and extend their scope or establish new ones. When doing so it is recommended to clearly set the membership, mandate, working procedures, and responsibilities of each involved institution or individual in a dedicated decision.

To ensure effectiveness, it is beneficial to establish a body both at the political level, for example through a PAR council or ministerial committee, and at the technical level, for example in the form of an inter-ministerial working group. The political body may be chaired by the Head of the lead CoG institution, while the technical body could be headed by a top-level civil servant such as the deputy of the same institution. The membership of the political body should be at the level of Head of institution while the technical body would ideally involve technical experts, possibly at senior civil service level. Both bodies should encompass all the main institutions with responsibilities on PAR implementation. Moreover, it is advisable in both cases to also involve key external stakeholders such as representatives of the civil society, the private sector and academia. This would enhance the accountability, the credibility of reforms and institutional adherence to them. An active role of the civil society would imply that the agenda of the meetings and related preparatory

documents are made available in advance. By making the minutes and conclusions of the meetings publicly available, civil society would be allowed to play its oversight role.

The main mandate of the political-level structure is to steer and oversee the design and implementation of the whole strategic framework for PAR and to decide on policy issues based on well-prepared materials by the technical committee. It could review periodic and ad hoc reports presenting progress against objectives and implemented activities, attainment of targets, budgetary issues, etc. In doing so it provides strategic advice and discuss PAR-related draft decisions such as draft strategic documents, laws, and regulations, concept papers, etc. before they go forward to the CoM for approval. This body co-ordinates and harmonises diverging opinions and takes decisions to address implementation challenges and disputes if the resolution has failed at the administrative level. Ideally, the political-level structure meets quarterly, or at least every six months to ensure a good flow of operations.

The inter-institutional technical body is expected to ensure harmonisation among the different PAR areas, and technical co-ordination. The committee is ideally chaired by the Deputy Head or a top senior representative of the CoG institution leading the overall PAR agenda. It is advisable that its membership encompass representatives of the institutions leading the different PAR areas, senior representatives of the GS, PMO, OoP, MoF, the Diwan, representatives of the civil society, and other members on invitation in function of specific discussion points. It is advisable that the technical-level structure meets at least quarterly.

While being an important starting point, the creation of political and technical inter-institutional bodies is not sufficient to ensure sound management of the PAR agenda. Their functioning needs to be well organised and based on robust evidence. Along with political support and dedicated leadership, the quality of the working documents that support decision-making at the political and technical level is of utmost importance. To this aim, it is advisable that the CoM appoints a technical secretariat within the institution leading the overall PAR agenda to support the practical organisation of the meetings. This secretariat may be tasked with preparing meeting agendas, managing invitations, co-ordinating the preparation of the working materials, reviewing their quality in line with predefined standards and ensuring their timely circulation, selecting suitable non-permanent participants (NGO's, academia, private sector) for the meetings, preparing memos and drafting policy decisions, preparing and circulating minutes and decisions after the respective meetings, and ensuring that decision made by the bodies are duly taken into account and followed. The latter is only possible if decisions taken assign tasks to clearly identified institutions.

In future, it would be important to consider the above when setting the mandate and composition of inter-institutional co-ordination groups established for each pillar of the GP. This point was also emphasised by civil society organisations.

Co-ordination on thematic PAR areas

At the level of thematic PAR areas, the PA may want to consider maintaining the existing structures as provided by the Handbook 2017-2022, and the MTBPM. Notably the Sector Strategy Groups (SSG) and the PMTs. Despite the renewed focus on interinstitutional co-operation, the new Guidelines 2024-2029 do not mention neither the SPBAG and the SSG, which are the fora involving all relevant institutions, nor civil society.

These working groups oversee and discuss implementation progress and identify gaps and conflicting views among the implementing institutions. They develop and approve materials such as reports, and policy notes, and discuss PAR-related draft decisions before they are sent to the inter-ministerial body for endorsement or directly to the political level structure for policy deliberation. Moreover, based on the analytical and operational information available, they discuss any necessary changes to the dedicated PAR strategy and action plan. Due to their technical co-ordination role, it is also advisable that they meet

at least once a month and no less than quarterly. Attention should also be paid to the organisation of meetings of the SSGs and the quality of the received input.

Improving the prioritisation of public administration reform objectives

Experiences across the OECD show that governments often try to address too many problems through their strategic documents, endangering the successful achievement of the set objectives due to unfocused delivery and scarce resources that do not always allow to address all problems simultaneously (OECD, 2018[2]). To respond to this threat, prioritisation should be an important early stage of the strategic planning process and should be derived from the problem-analysis phase. As highlighted in OECD's Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance, a sound prioritisation process can lead to more realistic commitments and better designed interventions which in turn can help governments develop more credible plans (OECD, 2020[1]) (see Annex B).

Interviewees consulted during the OECD's fact-finding missions and capacity building activities recognised that the PA's plans for PAR are often too ambitious and not consistent with the limited financial resources and administrative capacities of the government. Addressing this issue requires effective prioritisation, notably through specifying what really matter and by then setting the most relevant objectives. Prioritisation efforts lead to more credible commitments and better-designed interventions which can help governments to develop more effective policies. Through this exercise, line ministries and non-ministerial institutions would be able to propose a narrower and more realistic set of priorities to the PMO in preparation of the next NDP. Within their respective areas of responsibility, they would be able to focus on more limited programmes better fitting the budgetary ceilings set by the MoF. Too many objectives and programmes split the scarce resources and may lead to unfocused and suboptimal delivery of envisioned policies and reforms for PAR.

Prioritisation can be based on urgency, importance, the administrative capacities, and the available resources. Prioritisation exercises, at the level of each PAR strategy should build on the evidence collected during the problem analysis phase, including consultations with both internal and external stakeholders, and be accompanied with initial suggestions for strategic issues to be addressed. They should involve high-ranking officials holding decision-making power such as high representatives of the major implementing institutions and the heads of the PMTs. Discussions should be well prepared and supported with prioritisation tools (see Box 4.5). Active moderation of discussions should grant all participants the opportunity to actively contribute.

Objective setting can be achieved through a series of inclusive joint meetings or workshops with all stakeholders, which are used to agree on well formulated objectives. The result of this process should be the 'story' of the strategy, told in a logical and sequential way. In the PA, PAR objectives tend to be formulated in the form of activities: e.g., development of legislation, elaboration of reports, establishment of administrative or technical structures, development of IT systems, etc. Instead, objectives should clarify the expected improvement compared to the current state of play: e.g., improvement of the quality and accessibility of public services. This can be obtained through elaborating surveys and assessments, developing legislation, digitalising services, etc. In addition, it is important to remind that setting objectives is not a one-off exercise. It may be necessary to revise the objectives several times before they are finalised. For example, after setting indicators with their corresponding baseline and targets, and after planning and costing the actions.

The different steps for prioritisation and objective setting should be clearly presented in methodological guidelines. An option for the PA's consideration is to integrate detailed guidance in the review of the Handbook 2017-2022. The new Guidelines 2024-2029 could provide more detailed guidance, and tools. Moreover, prioritisation is expected to be performed within the PBMG, which only includes members of the

lead institution. Ideally, prioritisation should involve other contributing institutions as well as external stakeholders.

Consistent application of these procedural steps should be verified throughout the process. Other governments or research institutions within the OECD have also developed fit-for-purpose prioritisation of reforms which could be of interest to the Palestinian Authority, most notably the prioritisation framework of the UK (see Box 4.6).

Box 4.5. OECD prioritisation methodologies and country examples

SIGMA Prioritisation Tool for PAR strategy development

The application of the SIGMA Prioritisation Tool should be co-ordinated by the lead PAR institution and its use should involve all implementing institutions. The use of this prioritisation tool involves the following key steps (OECD, 2018[2]):

Table 4.1. SIGMA Prioritisation Tool for PAR strategy development

No.	Step	Institution
1.	Review of the questionnaire to adjust it to country-specific conditions; decision on participating institutions.	PAR/thematic lead institution
2.	Launch of the self-assessment process. This step may involve organising a joint workshop to explain the purpose of the assessment and how to answer the questions, or alternatively this can be done via a circular letter.	PAR/thematic lead institution
3.	Carry out self-assessment:	Participating institutions
3.1.	Assess the current state of play.	
3.2.	Provide a quantitative evaluation of the current state of play.	
3.3.	Identify main actions.	
4.	Analysis and summary of self-assessment results.	PAR/thematic lead institution (with external assistance if required)
5.	Organise a workshop(s) to discuss and agree the 'skeleton' PAR or sector strategy:	
5.1.	Facilitate a high-level workshop to discuss and agree on the core problems and the relative urgency of the PAR or sector interventions and actions.	Organiser – PAR/thematic lead institution Participants – ministers, other senior-level management
5.2.	Facilitate an additional operational-level workshop to agree on further details of the agreed actions.	Organiser – PAR/thematic lead institution Participants – participating institutions

Using regulatory impact assessments prioritise state interventions and achieve public policy goals

Beyond planning mechanisms, regulations are a valuable tool for achieving social, economic, and environmental priority goals. To maximise efficiency and minimise potential negative externalities,

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Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) provide decision-makers with crucial information on whether and how to regulate to achieve public policy objectives and defend their decision to intervene or not (OECD, 2020[14]).

The OECD best practice principles for RIAs suggest the quality of RIAs depends on systemic identification of problems and sound data governance strategy and systems. The OECD has developed best practice principles for RIAs which could provide the Palestinian Authority with a "practical instrument to better design and implement their RIA systems and strategies" to achieve public objectives. These principles are structured around five pillars:

- Commitment and buy-in for RIAs

- Governance of RIAs – having the right setup or system design

- Embedding RIAs through strengthening the capacity and accountability of the administration

- Targeted and appropriate RIA methodology

- Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of RIAs

Budget-related prioritisation functions in the CoG in the UK

A budget helps determine the extent to which a plan is realistic, and a plan helps prioritise the allocation of resources so it can be achieved. A plan that is disconnected from the budget sets out a vision without the practical means to achieve it.

Although the relationship between budgeting and planning contains an inherent logic, it can be difficult to implement in a government where the functions are not co-ordinated closely. It should not be necessary to have a structural solution such as a single organisation to have a co-ordinated approach. A co-ordinated approach highlights the importance of well-defined governance arrangements that articulate the functional responsibilities and expertise of each organisation, the flow of information that is to occur and the decisions and outputs that are to result from the co-ordination.

The CoG has a role in lifting sights above the detailed requirements to identify the initiatives that matter most across government. In the UK, the CoG (Cabinet Office) focuses principally on strategy, prioritisation, and accountability in relation to the budget.

The CoG in the United Kingdom is principally the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office. Many of the functions performed by the HM Treasury are also relevant to the CoG. On budgeting, the Treasury focuses on budget strategy, prioritisation, and accountability. These functions are also of key interest to the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office. Budget strategy includes the prime minister's involvement in the early stages of the budget process. Prioritisation is largely on the flagship initiatives that help define the government's policy agenda, and the accountability functions can refer to transparency, delivery and guidance on standards and methodologies. The emphasis applied to budget strategy, prioritisation and accountability can vary depending on the priorities of the prime minister of the day and the needs of the government.

As an example, in 2002, the then prime minister, Tony Blair, established a delivery unit to strengthen the CoG's accountability role by monitoring the progress of the government's flagship priorities. Subsequent prime ministers have changed the focus of the unit. The enduring aspects of each function were the ones that were complementary and not duplicative of the functions performed by other ministries.

Source: (OECD, 2018[2]); (OECD, 2020[14]).

> **Box 4.6. Prioritisation in the UK: A focus on outcomes**
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> In 2010, the UK government wanted to signal the priorities they wished to focus on for both civil servants and the public sector frontline – as well as citizens. To this end, they created a dedicated cabinet sub-committee to identify the top priorities for the whole of government. The committee began by asking each department to put forward their priorities which resulted in siloed and numerous priorities. It came to realise that the change it wanted to effect to meet the needs of citizens would only be achieved by departments working together, not focusing just on, what they could do on their own. For example, in order to raise employment levels, it was vital that the policies and programmes of the Department of Work and Pensions were aligned with those of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the Department for Education, the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care. From the departmental priorities, the committee thus brokered a set of priorities that reflected the administration's vision for change – and at the same time changed the way in which government operated through the need for cross-departmental agreement on programmes to achieve the results desired and how progress would be measured. By working collectively and focusing on results, the government had a stronger chance to achieve something in their time in office.
>
> More recently in 2021, the UK government introduced Outcome Delivery Plans, building on, and improving the previous Single Departmental Plans. These plans set out how each UK government department is working towards the delivery of its priority outcomes. Outcome Delivery Plans place a greater emphasis on joint working between departments, enabling departments to plan together to deliver shared outcomes. Outcome Delivery Plans also set out plans for delivering critical enabling activities that are crucial to the successful delivery of outcomes, including: attracting and investing in great people; embracing new ideas; and strengthening functional expertise to support the delivery of better outcomes. Additionally, Outcome Delivery Plans also set out how departments are working towards becoming more sustainable and how work contributes to the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the government's equality objectives, to ensure government departments contribute to these overarching whole-of-government priorities.
>
> Source: (OECD, 2020[14]).

Effective operationalisation of public administration reform objectives

As recognised by OECD/SIGMA's Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies (OECD, 2018[2]) and as recommended in the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[15]) are aligned and associated with clear outputs, operational responsibilities, and a concrete implementation timeframe. Actions related to business as usual should not be included. It is advisable to limit the number of actions to concentrate efforts on the implementation of the most impactful actions and the actions for which resources have been allocated.

Actions should also be defined in an inclusive and participatory way, the responsible institutions in the PA are encouraged to devote sufficient time to organise and run several interactive sessions such as working group meetings, focus groups and brainstorming sessions. Hereby involving all the contributing institutions to fully ensure that the results of the problem analysis, the defined problems and their causes are well understood, the best set of reform-oriented actions are designed to tackle them, and that roles and responsibilities are clear and agreed on. Moreover, to ensure consistent implementation, actions should

be cascaded down from the institution responsible for a certain PAR area to contributing ministries and non-ministerial institutions taking into account leadership and accountability and ensuring that the respective action plans are aligned.

With that in mind, the PA may build on the tables proposed in the new strategic planning guidelines 2024-2029[2] which have the potential to further clarify implementation responsibilities, and accountability lines towards the achievement of joint results.

Effective monitoring and reporting practices for public administration reform

Monitoring is a key management tool to identify implementation barriers and improve the decision-making process, to robust the supply of management and data (also useful for evaluations), and to enhance accountability. It is advisable that the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation system is developed and set up when adopting the strategy, detailing the various roles and responsibilities. However, monitoring is a complex task, which requires a legal basis to undertake monitoring; macro-level guidance on when and how to carry out monitoring and finally clearly mandated institutional actors with allocated resources to oversee or carry out monitoring efforts (OECD, 2021[16]).

At the CoG, the GS has an overall mandate regarding monitoring and reporting. It developed the Strategic Results Framework to monitor the implementation of the NDP, follows the implementation of its plans and programmes, and prepares annual reports on the overall implementation. The GS is also in charge of monitoring the implementation of the GRA. Consulted stakeholders during OECD's fact-finding missions clarified that the monitoring system for both the NDP and the GRA is the same. The workflow and co-ordination practices between the GS and the monitoring units in line ministries and non-ministerial institutions could not be verified.

Concretely, according to the Handbook 2017-2022 and the MTBPM, the monitoring of the NDP and the GRA happens in the different PMTs within ministries and non-ministerial institutions. However, the new Guidelines 2024-2029 do not explicitly confirm this approach. They simply state that LMA have to explicitly describe the monitoring arrangements in the strategic document.

The PMTs monitor the implementation of the annual action plans, notably of the programmes and projects under their responsibility. In particular they monitor the achievement of the outputs (often formulated as activities) outlined in the annual action plans and in the respective programme. Monitoring the achievement of outcomes is not a regular practice. To the extent to which monitoring findings, beyond potential delays in implementation, are discussed in the management bodies at technical and political level could not be verified. There appear to be no current administrative arrangements to share monitoring information efficiently and constantly among CoG institutions as consulted stakeholders mentioned during the fact-finding missions that the PMO only receives information once per year on specific request.

According to the Palestinian Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030ASD), the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), supported by a senior level steering committee, leads the implementation and monitoring of SDGs. The CoM also established 12 working groups tasked with mapping and monitoring the targets and indicators relevant to their associated SDGs. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the PA made efforts to align the SDGs, the NPA, and thematic and cross-cutting strategies. To this aim, the 2016 Handbook for Strategic Planning, as well as the new Guidelines 2024-2029, requires public institutions to highlight the contribution of such strategies to the achievement of the SDGs. Likewise, the PMO ensures the full integration of the priority SDGs into the various parts of the NPA. While the implementation of the SDGs is monitored by the PMO, the GS oversees reporting against the indicators of the NDP's Strategic Results Framework and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the GRA. Due to the unavailability of annual monitoring reports, it is not possible to assess the implementation speed. Without legal provisions concerning the publication of monitoring reports, and in the absence of an adopted Law on Access to Information, the civil society and the public

have little opportunity to be informed about government performance. Moreover, during the fact-finding missions, representatives of civil society reported that they are not involved in any discussion about reform progress with the government and they are not involved in monitoring and evaluation of public policies. Assessment conducted by civil society organisations are funded by development partners.

Consulted institutional stakeholders reported an overall lack of harmonised institutional practices, unclear division of responsibilities, and insufficient co-ordination efforts by the CoG. They added that there is no comprehensive legal framework for monitoring the implementation of the NDP and thematic and cross-cutting strategies. Though there are no full-fledged guidelines for monitoring public policies across institutions, the GS' General Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation issues quarterly report templates rather than outlining the data collection and monitoring process to the monitoring units established in most ministries. While consulted institutions consider them as not sufficiently detailed, these could not be further analysed.

The thematic PAR strategies have their own monitoring frameworks, but their quality is uneven:

- The Technology and Public Administration Strategy 2021-2023 is the strategic document that presents the highest level of quality. It outlines both output and outcome indicators, includes intermediate and final targets and related deadlines for achievement. It also provides for a general description of its monitoring arrangements.
- The Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023 mainly outlines output indicators and includes deadlines for achievements.
- The National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022 mainly identifies output level indicators and includes a few outcome indicators. Deadlines for implementation could be further specified and the monitoring arrangements better clarified.
- The Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023 identifies both output and outcome indicators. However, baselines are not provided for the outcome-level indicators. Deadlines for achievement are specified, as are the monitoring arrangements.

Several challenges can be further identified. None of the monitoring frameworks clarify how each indicator should be measured and what data are needed, which institution owns the necessary data, whether data exist or must be produced and therefore if a budget should be allocated. Further institutional arrangements for monitoring and reporting are also not uniform across the PA's public institutions due to the lack of official mandate for dedicated monitoring and evaluation departments. In practice, some line ministries such as the Ministry of Health have specific monitoring and evaluation units. Others combine the planning function with monitoring and evaluation. Some institutions only have individual focal points.

Most consulted institutions reported capacity issues and indicated the inability to collect data and the consequent unavailability of information on important indicators among the major challenges related to monitoring. They also confirmed that identification and formulation of indicators is not a regular practice and is often not sufficiently precise. This makes them unsuitable for systematic measurement. The OECD experience shows that indicators and especially their baselines and targets are sometimes ignored at the development stage, leaving the strategy as an unspecified document that does not properly guide implementers. The wider audience is therefore left without a clear measurable and traceable definition of the ambitions of the government in reforming the public administration (OECD, 2018[2]).

As recognised by OECD/SIGMA's Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies (OECD, 2018[2]), to ensure its effectiveness, a strategic document should provide a description of institutional arrangements for monitoring, reporting, and evaluating PAR efforts. The proper allocation of responsibilities for implementation and monitoring, and the clarification of internal accountability lines are hereby of critical importance. These responsibilities are about data collection for each indicator, reporting on progress against each indicator/milestones/final targets, and analysis of the reasons behind good or bad performance. It is advisable that each objective

has at least one and no more than three impact or outcome indicators, and each action should have at least one output indicator. It is recommended to not increase the number of indicators, to manage the workload and costs of monitoring, since it is a comprehensive and work-intensive process.

It is also important to remember that good indicators include a set of fundamental quality requirements, such as baselines, interim and final targets, deadlines for completion, information/data needed, information/data owner, frequency of collection of information/data needed, calculation methods, and a budget where additional resources to measure them are needed (e.g., for surveys). Ministerial and non-ministerial institutions would greatly benefit of clear instructions guidance, and tools, concerning the formulation of indicators. It was not possible to observe the presence of all these requirements in any of the assessed monitoring frameworks. This may be developed by the GS and included in the revised Handbook 2017-2022. However, it is also possible that guidance is outlined in internal documents that could not be verified by the OECD. The new Guidelines 2024-2029 do not provide more detailed instructions, nor specific tools or templates, to formulate indicators.

Along with the suitability of an indicator to measure the expected improvements the choice of outcome indicators should be guided by the actual possibility to be measured. There may be several reasons hindering measurability of indicators, e.g., the necessary information is collected sporadically or too infrequency, or data must be produced but there is no available budget to do it. Therefore, the PA is encouraged to develop indicators which can be effectively measured rather than 'perfect indicators' that would be difficult to monitor in practice. To avoid this, the PA may want to consider assessing the soundness of its indicators in accordance with Box 4.7 and replace those that do not include sufficiently precise descriptions, measurement, responsibility as well as a baseline, an intermediate target, and a final target to facilitate monitoring and evaluation. To increase accountability, the PA could also consider uploading and publishing the indicators included in the PAR strategies in a public dashboard (see Box 4.8).

Box 4.7. Defining and presenting indicators

Indicators can be categorised into three categories according to what is measured: input indicators, output indicators, and outcome indicators. The three different indicators can all be part of a framework to monitor the effectiveness of policies, but it is important that each type of indicator is used to monitor only the aspects of a policy it is designed to monitor.

- **Input**: these indicators measure the resources spent on policies (money, staff, and time). Thus, they are measures of efforts.
- **Output**: these indicators measure how efficiently policies are executed. They are produced because policymakers expect them to contribute to desirable outcomes.
- **Outcome/Impact**: these indicators measure what results are achieved by the outputs. Outcome indicators are used to monitor the effective of policies in achieving their objectives.

Indicators need to be accompanied by information that helps interpret their significance. That is why, regardless of their typology, all indicators should be presented in a way that provides enough information:

- **Description** of the indicator: name, unit of measurement, data source and formula.
- **Responsibility** for the indicator: institution, department, or authority responsible for gathering the data.
- **Frequency** of data collection and update of the indicator.
- **Baseline** that serves as a starting point to measure progress.
- **Target** or expected result.

Source: (OECD, 2016[17]).

Box 4.8. Dashboard approach in France

The Minister of Public Transformation and Service launched the barometer of public action results on January 13th, 2021: "Measures that change your life: the results of our action". Responsible for co-ordinating the monitoring of all priority government reforms, the Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation (DITP) was mobilised to design and deploy the barometer of public action results. The objective was to enable French citizens to measure the progress of these public policies in their daily lives.

It displays the status and the concrete results of 25 priority reforms carried out by the government. These cover eight essential dimensions of everyday life for citizens:

- Ecological transition
- Employment and the economy
- Health, family, and disability
- Education
- Security
- Culture
- Public services
- Housing

For each policy, using quantified data, this barometer presents the state of implementation in 2020 and the government's target for 2022. All data is available in open data so that everyone can use them. It will be regularly updated and enriched with new policies, so that French citizens can measure the progress of government action. It is also a real tool for accelerating the execution of reforms at national, regional, and local level.

The DITP will intervene over time to steer the reporting of data from the departments, in co-operation with those responsible for each priority reform in the ministries and the barometer will be updated every three months.

Source: (Government of France, 2022[18]).

Some consulted stakeholders also reported the need for more transparency around monitoring. In the absence of the PLC, interviewees welcomed a reinforced role of the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB) and of internal audit units in monitoring and evaluating performance. The State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB) conducts financial and performance audits following specific request from the PMO or the OoP based on the main strategic frameworks: the NPA/NDP, the Strategic Results Framework and the 2030ASD. However, as reported by consulted institutional stakeholders, the monitoring frameworks are mainly output-based. The lack of solid monitoring and evaluation frameworks with clear, realistic, and measurable outcome indicators, along with gaps in data availability, considerably limits its ability to conduct comprehensive performance audits. Overall, the SAACB is not closely associated to the annual monitoring exercise. Even though the SAACB has the good practice of following up on the implementation of its recommendations, currently it lacks an enforcement mechanism. In view of enhancing integrity, transparency and good governance, the thematic Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021-2023 includes measures aimed to improve the legal environment regulating the work

of the State Audit & Administrative Control Bureau, including the application of Supreme Audit Institution principles, and to strengthen implementation of SAACB's recommendations.

The PA may want to consider to systematically associate the SAACB throughout the process of monitoring PAR efforts. The SAACB has a full and professional department engaged in performance audits which can provide useful inputs regarding efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. Such a role is consistent with major trends in the OECD member countries where State Audit Institutions have gradually widened and increased their contribution to good governance beyond its traditional oversight role. The Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) in several OECD countries provide insight to improve the functioning of processes and programmes, and foresight to help governments in adapting to future trends and risks (see Box 4.9). The administrative and financial independence of public audit and control institutions is paramount to ensure the integrity and accountability of the public administration.

Box 4.9. State Audit Institutions (SAI) in Brazil and Canada

The SAI of Brazil – audit for national development policy

Objective

A series of audits took place between 2009 and 2013 that focused on national policy for regional development and aimed to understand and identify structural features that may be responsible for any successes and performance gaps.

The dedication of effort and time in these audits was justified by the number of public resources invested in the national policy for regional development (around BRL ten billion annually) and the importance of the issue to national development.

Types

Compliance audit, guidance.

Scope and methodology

The scope included the whole governance structure for managing the national policy for regional development, including its formulation, rules, actors, monitoring and evaluations systems, transparency, plans and finance resources - as public funds dedicated to loans for entrepreneurships with favourable interest rates, tax expenditures and budget expenses.

To capture a systemic view of the policy, the TCU included the following: Usage of many teams for auditing the various public agencies and finance tools, distributed by the Brazilian regions elected by the policy, co-ordinated by a common guidance and audit questions provided by the preliminary audit; assessment of compliance between the actions and the legal conception of the policy; usage of many performance audit tools (indicators analysis; problem tree method; mapping the logical model of the policy; stakeholder analysis; survey; consultation to experts); a study of international models, together with the executive bodies and agents responsible for the policy management ; and a strong interaction and open debate with the executive bodies and agents responsible for the policy management.

Criteria

Country laws, key national indicators, entity objectives, international standards, other.

Resources

This comprehensive work involved six audits and 214 business days at a cost of BRL 988 000 (approximately USD 325 000).

Outcomes

The main findings (and related recommendations) were:

- The policy had not been assessed since it started.
- The predicted monitoring and evaluation system had not been built.
- There were no appropriate indicators of performance to guide the management and ensure transparency for the citizens.
- The formulation of the policy did not consider mechanisms to fight the major causes of the problems.
- There was no strong alignment between the diagnostic that guided the policy formulation and the regulation for using the majority of finance resources. There was a lack of co-ordination between the federal agencies concerning the policy.
- There was a lack of co-ordination between the federal, state, and local level concerning the policy planning and implementation.

Many measures were adopted after the recommendations, these are listed below:

- The responsible government body promoted an assessment of the policy that covers the time between its formalisation and the year after the first audit recommendations.
- There was a stronger investment in developing the monitoring and evaluation system.
- A new set of indicators is being used and others are being developed by the government agencies.
- A new conception for the policy was formulated after intensive stakeholder participation across the country. This led to a new project of law and regulation for the policy that considers the need to improve the governance of the policy, especially regarding co-ordination issues.

Good practices used

The TCU adopted a systemic approach to assessing the policy that allowed for the identification of structural issues responsible for the results and the lack of performance.

Recommendations for improvements were made on the governance of the policy and its delivery.

Lessons learned

The capability for providing deeper insights and better foresights concerning a complex public policy depends on knowledge building during at least mid-term work, intensive interaction with experts and policy managers, and usage of a range of appropriate tools.

The SAI of Canada – assessing programme evaluation in the Federal Government

Objective

The government of Canada has had several policies on the evaluation of programme effectiveness since the 1970s. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada has conducted audits of the evaluation function several times, most recently in 2009 with a follow-up in 2013. The objective of these audits was to determine whether the relevant central agency and affected departments were meeting needs for

information on programme effectiveness, and whether they were identifying and making needed improvements to the function.

Type

Performance audit.

Scope and methodology

The audits covered the central agency responsible for the government's policy on programme evaluation (the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) and selected departments subject to the policy. These departments were selected to reflect a cross-section of programme types.

The initial planning phase of the first evaluation audit included broad consultations with experts in the field of programme evaluation and public administration. The decision on audit timing reflected the introduction of a revised policy on evaluation in 2009. The audit methodology included reviewing samples of completed evaluation reports and assessing departmental compliance with the policy.

Criteria

Country laws (The Financial Administration Act requires evaluation of certain types of programmes) and key national indicators (The Treasury Board Policy on Evaluation and its associated directive and standard). Resources The resources committed to the initial 2009 audit were 9 100 staff-hours at a cost of CAD 1.4 million (Canadian dollars). The resources committed to the 2013 follow-up were 6 100 staff hours at a cost of CAD 1.1 million. The team consisted of approximately six members, one of whom was an experienced programme evaluator. Consultants were rarely used.

Outcomes

The six departments OAG examined followed systematic processes to plan their effectiveness evaluations and completed most of the evaluations they had planned. However, each department's evaluations during the audit period covered a relatively low proportion of its total programme expenses: between 5% and 13% annually across the six departments. The actual rate of coverage was even lower because many of the effectiveness evaluations OAG reviewed did not adequately assess programme effectiveness. Departments had often not gathered the performance information needed to evaluate whether programmes were effective. Of the 23 evaluation reports OAG reviewed, 17 had inadequate data, which limited the assessment of programme effectiveness.

The departments OAG examined said that it remains a challenge to find experienced evaluators and that they had made extensive use of contractors to meet requirements. Departments expressed concern about their capacity to evaluate all direct programme spending from 2013, as required by the 2009 policy on evaluation. To ensure full coverage (which includes grants and contributions), departments will have to evaluate an average of 20% of their direct programme spending each year of the five-year cycle.

The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has introduced initiatives to address the need for improvements in evaluation across government. However, it did not provide sustained support for effectiveness evaluation. In particular, it made little progress on developing tools to assist departments with the long-standing problem of a lack of sufficient data for evaluating programme effectiveness. With the exception one department that has processes in place to identify needed improvements, the audited departments do not regularly identify and address weaknesses in effectiveness evaluation. The audit report included recommendations related to several of the findings summarised above. The criteria for this audit were set out in the audit plan accepted by the audited departments.

Good practices used

Since the beginning of evaluation audits in the 1970s, the evaluation function has had periods of comparative strength and weakness, some of which were documented by OAG audits. Overall, the function has strengthened, partly due to a more coherent policy framework and to capacity building within departments. Audit findings have been taken into account by the responsible central agency as it reviewed and refined its policies on effectiveness evaluation.

Lessons learned

Periodic attention by the SAI to the evaluation function over a 30-year period has contributed to its strengthening.

Source: (OECD, 2016[19]).

Leveraging costing and expenditure efforts for public administration reform

A strategy is only valuable if it can be put into practise. The OECD's experience demonstrates that one of the major challenges to effective reform is a lack of funding to carry out the planned initiatives. Therefore, the OECD/SIGMA "Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies" (OECD, 2018[2]), acknowledges that creating a strategy is not only a way to understand what a country identifies as the main issues and how and to what extent it wants to address these issues, but also a way to foresee what resources are needed to make the desired changes.

The two main overarching frameworks for PAR, notably the NDP and the GRA, do not provide an overall estimation of the financial resources needed for their implementation. This can be explained by the uncertainty of financial circumstances such as current financial challenges in the PA regarding collecting revenues, the inability to maintain a firm control over the public budget given PA's dependency on external sources of funding, and lack of control over the annual budget. This is a serious obstacle to planning and budgeting. In the absence of a mid-term budgetary process, budgeting and mid-term strategic planning in the PA remain two separate exercises. The annual budget is issued when strategies and action plans are already finalised. Consequently, the budget cannot be used as a management and implementation tool that allows for the tracking of reforms.

During the OECD's fact-finding missions interlocutors clarified that the MoF establishes ceilings for the different ministries or non-ministerial institutions based on the available resources and of previous ministries/institutions expenditure levels before the official launch of the budgeting process. Within the respective ceilings, each ministry or non-ministerial institution estimates the costs of the annual action plans, distributes allocated resources to different programmes and send their own budget studies to the MoF. The GPC, in co-ordination with other related institutions, participates in the planning and monitoring of staff expenditures. For each programme, a Programme Management Team calculates the costs of each planned output. In this regard, there are two key issues to consider. Firstly, the cost estimations are an output-based process due to the absence of a mid-term budgetary framework. Estimating costs of the envisaged improvements (reforms and outcomes) is not required. This negatively affects the possibility to assess the effectiveness of expenditures. Secondly, consulted government interlocutors reported that there are no detailed methodological guidelines available for cost estimation.

Meetings between the MoF and the different institutions are usually organised to discuss financial needs in relation to the respective goals and objectives of a policy programme. However, according to consulted institutional interlocutors, due to the PA's challenging financial situation, the financial requests mainly focus

on salaries or structural costs. Only a small share of requests is related towards investments. This explains why institutions often refer to external donors for funding. To allow more accurate cost estimates, it is necessary to break down actions into activities and their required inputs. Usually, costing requires a classification of types of activities (i.e., technical assistance, workshops, training, publications, awareness and information campaigns, purchase or development of IT systems, construction of public buildings, purchase of equipment, hiring new people or reorganisation, etc. and the definition of reference unit prices. Calculated estimates can then be aggregated by objective. This would give the decision-makers a reliable indication of costs of expected improvements, the opportunity to assess efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditures, and the possibility to re-appraise the originally set objectives and targets for PAR. Moreover, considering the harsh financial circumstances in the PA, the identification of sources of financing (own budget or external aid) is a fundamental aspect of the costing and the prioritisation process.

The annual action plans are adjusted during the annual budget preparation process. In line with annual ceilings allocated to each ministry or institution, the latter may reduce the quantity of expected outputs or postpone their achievements to the following year. On the other hand, the review of the multi-annual strategies following the reduction of annual ceilings is not laid out in the MTBPM. Consulted stakeholders confirmed that this indeed does not happen. Taking this into account, the annual action plans seem more reliable and financially sustainable than their reference strategic documents. As confirmed by consulted government interlocutors, there is no evidence that detailed and reliable cost estimations take place during the drafting stage of strategies. This is also recognised by the MoF in the Sectoral Strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023, which envisages reform measures to improve cost estimations and to better link strategic planning and budgeting processes.

Despite being provided by the MTBPM, budget tables do not differentiate among temporary, one-off, and recurrent costs and the sources of funding, public budget, or external sources, are not always identified either. Regarding potential gaps between ambitions and resources available, as already mentioned there is inconsistency between the Handbook 2017-2022 and the MTBPM. Furthermore, the calculation method is not clear, and therefore, their accurateness and reliability cannot be confirmed. The new Guidelines 2024-2029 do not add methodological guidelines and tools to make cost estimates more reliable. Instead, they propose a budget table requiring LMA to provide cost estimates (operational and developmental costs) for each expected result[3]. It would be useful if the table also included information about (internal or external) sources of financing.

As part of the reforms of public financial management systems undertaken in the MENA region, tools like the Governmental Financial Management Information System (GFMIS) were introduced in several countries such as in Egypt and Jordan (see Box 4.10) to improve the efficiency of the system by strengthening transparency and implementing international control criteria and safeguards. The main objective of a GFMIS is to support proper budget execution, including daily financial operations and debt management. These tools can notably be essential for helping detect irregularities and provide input to the control and audit institutions.

> **Box 4.10. The GFMIS in Egypt and Jordan aim to support the integration of public financial management processes**
>
> **Egypt**
>
> The Financial Control Manual defines the objectives for implementing the GFMIS:
>
> - Directly linking the different budget authorities/units and accounting units to the Ministry of Finance
> - Reducing the time taken to receive results of works and reports
> - Approving a unified design for the databases of the standard government applications
> - Issuing overall and detailed reports to monitor government spending from the state budget
> - Obtaining clear indications on the volume of spending in due time, to help prioritising spending and rationalising it
> - Providing the data needed to ascertain the availability of cash in due time and the amounts needed to fulfil obligations/liabilities with greater efficiency and as little cost as possible, while assisting decision-makers by determining the deficit or surplus
> - Being able to compare revenues and expenditures, enabling the burden of debt service interest to be reduced in the case of deficits and investment increased in the case of surplus, and helping to plan the issue of treasury bonds and bills
> - Carrying out all government financial payment and collection operations centrally through the e-payment and e-collection system
> - Comparing expected and actual cash flows to show the degree and cause of any deviation, to take it into consideration when drawing up future expectations.
>
> **Jordan**
>
> The GFMIS is used for:
>
> - Providing an electronic financial system that manages the financial processes in all budget institutions
> - Enhancing the accountability and transparency of the public sector accounting system
> - Improving the budget cycle to enhance the effectiveness of governmental performance and provide quality services to the citizens
> - Appling procedures to control the allocation of financial resources in the budget law and unify the government systems for information and the financial and accounting database.
>
> Source: (OECD, 2017[20]).

Leveraging Human Resources Management for public administration reform

Human Resources Management (HRM) is a key area of PAR and a country's public administration, covering areas such as setting objectives, calculating staff costs, and getting the right capabilities in place. Establishing sound HRM policies is crucial as it affect the functioning of the entire public administration (OECD, 2018[2]); (OECD, 2020[1]). Public employees play a key role in achieving society's objectives as they enable innovation and economic prosperity, ensure access and quality of essential public services, and protect citizens from a range of threats. All of this underlines the fact that a professional, capable, and

responsive public service can be a fundamental driver of citizens' trust in public institutions. Reform efforts led by the GPC have modernised HRM through for instance further digitalising the recruitment process by providing greater flexibility for candidates to apply online or establishing competency frameworks to inform performance management. However, the nature of work in the public sector is changing rapidly, and the capabilities of public servants and those who lead them are constantly being required to adjust. To keep pace, governments look for new ways to develop and manage skilled, committed, and trusted public workforces (OECD, 2019[21]).

In the past years, the Palestinian Authority has focused on managing the existing workforce rather than systematic recourse to external recruitment, as well as government policies to boost early retirement. Civil servants in the PA are distributed across 86 ministerial and non-ministerial governmental departments, with a total number of 85,945 civil servants at the end of 2019 and approximately 70% of those being concentrated in the Ministries of Education and Health (General Personnel Council, 2022[22]). In the coming years, the GPC expects to continue this trend of minimising external recruitment and encouraging early retirement in accordance with specific standards to decrease public expenditure.

The Palestinian Authority inherited a fragmented public pension system upon its creation in 1994, reflecting the various administrative cultures that had ruled the regions of the West Bank and Gaza over the previous century. The World Bank has called for a parametric pension reform in the PA, i.e., changing the existing values of pension programme parameters within politically and demographically acceptable limits to prevent the pension deficit from exceeding tolerable levels as defined by the government (see e.g. (Chand and Jaeger, 1996[23])). Recommendations include increasing the retirement age of 60 (or 55 through early retirement), tightening the criteria for disability and survivorship pensions, and bringing the overall pension level in line with international practices to make it more affordable (World Bank, 2022[24]).

The 1998 civil service law [Law No. (4) of 1998 on issuing a Law on Civil Servants] is the legal framework governing the civil service in the PA as well as its 2005 amendments to that law [Law No. (4) of 2005 amending Civil Service Law No. (4) of 1998]. The assumptions in this framework about human capital management and public service capability are largely outdated. Articles 39 and 40, for example, reflect a sanctions-based approach to performance management where civil servants are punished or warned for poor performance rather than supported to develop their skills. Many public administrations across the OECD recognise that performance management should instead be about putting systems in places to identify root causes of poor performance and supporting staff to improve their performance through concrete learning opportunities.

A new draft civil service law prepared by the GPC is currently waiting for final approval from the Cabinet. New provisions are intended to boost the flexibility of the GPC to manage the workforce of the Palestinian Authority, such as establishing career paths based on competency frameworks, designing job classification tables, and developing greater IT co-ordination between government departments, the GPC, and the MoF to facilitate document management and electronic signatures. The revised civil service law can provide an opportunity to modernise concepts of public management and strengthen the link with the public administration reform agenda and provide a stronger basis to follow up on PAR monitoring and evaluation. Reinstating regular meetings of the Committee on updating the civil service law (paused during the COVID-19 pandemic) committee would be a good opportunity to build consensus around the framework for civil service reform and transformation.

The 1998 Civil Service law establishes various duties and functions of civil servants. Apart from a vague reference to the duties of civil servants to "develop […] scientific and practical skills and competences" (Article 66), the 1998 law generally does not refer to competencies or their importance. Articles 5 and 7 establish the functions of human resource departments in line Ministries and the GPC, respectively, but neither refer to competency development. In this light, it is encouraging to see that the draft 2022 civil service law places a greater emphasis on competency development. The terminology related to job competencies is defined in the preamble, and Article 7 on the duties of the GPC has been expanded to

include specific reference to preparing career paths based on the competency framework. Subsequent articles note the role of competencies in the National School of Administration (Article 46), and Article 84 on the duties and conduct of civil servants has also been expanded to state the obligation to develop "public performance competency" in addition to basic technical knowledge such as laws and regulations.

Moreover, the challenge of managing the public sector workforce efficiently in the context of fiscal and budgetary pressure means that performance management is also a particularly valuable tool to get the best out of the workforce. Applied well, competency frameworks can help improve the fairness and effectiveness of performance management processes by setting common standards across a range of tangible areas. But performance management can prove tricky to carry out effectively, particularly in parts of the public sector where goals or objectives may be difficult to quantify.

The Palestinian civil service is a particularly attractive employer in the local labour market due to an underdeveloped private sector and comparatively attractive working conditions. It also benefits from high candidate volume for a small number of posts. This places a premium on recruitment and selection processes working efficiently to make sure that the small number of candidates who do succeed in recruitment processes are being tested for competencies that reflect the types of challenges they will deal with. A recruitment process that only tests a narrow range of skills, such as knowledge of legislation, for example, is ill suited to selecting candidates whose job will be to oversee a cross-governmental change management process, for example.

Appointment of, for instance, senior civil servants need to be merit-based as this has a direct impact on public administration performance and PAR capacity. As nepotism is detrimental for PAR; the new civil service law should provide the necessary guarantees and processes to facilitate an impartial and merit-based recruitment. The Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability (OECD, 2019[21]), encourages governments to recruit, select and promote candidates through transparent, open, and merit-based processes, to guarantee fair and equal treatment, in particular by:

- Communicating employment opportunities widely and ensuring equal access for all suitably qualified candidates.
- Carrying out a rigorous and impartial candidate selection process based on criteria and methods appropriate for the role and in which the results are transparent and contestable.
- Filling vacancies in a timely manner to remain competitive and meet operational staffing needs.
- Encouraging diversity.
- Ensuring effective oversight and recourse mechanisms to monitor compliance and address complaints
- Explaining public sector roles in an attractive way.

To make recruitment and selection procedures more objective and efficient, many OECD countries conduct centralised competition processes. To develop a successful model for centralised competition, the Palestinian Authority could consider the example of the Public Appointments Service, which manages recruitment for the Irish civil service (see Box 4.11).

Box 4.11. The Public Appointments Service in Ireland: an independent and merit-based selection

The Public Appointments Service derives its mandate and was established under the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Acts 2004 to 2013. Most Public Appointments Service recruitment campaigns are carried out under the Office of the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) Codes of Practice. These Codes of Practice set out guidelines and standards for internal and external recruitment in the public service.

Publicjobs.ie is recognised as the leading recruiter for Public Sector jobs in Ireland. They provide an open and transparent recruitment process to identify top-quality candidates for public sector roles, with a formidable reputation for independent and merit-based selection. They support the Irish Government to deliver high-quality public services through the recruitment of a diverse, highly talented and committed workforce that reflects the diversity of the society that it serves. The Publicjobs.ie website provides information on career opportunities for candidates interested in joining the Public Sector.

The services provided include:

- Recruiting for positions in the Civil and Public Service.
- Recruiting for some senior positions in the Local Authorities, Health Service Executive, Harbour Authorities, Fisheries Boards and Vocational Education Committees.
- Selecting candidates for promotion within the Civil Service through inter-departmental tests and interviews.
- Assisting other public service organisations, such as the Nursing Careers Centre, with open
- recruitment.
- Assisting the Top-Level Appointments Committee in making senior appointments within the Civil Service.
- Providing recruitment, consultancy and training to client organisations and public bodies.

Source: (Government of Ireland, 2022[25]).

As in many administrations across the OECD membership, the skills and competencies needed in the Palestinian administration are changing rapidly as the role of the public servant continues to evolve. The objectives of the various national strategic documents and thematic strategies call for modern learning and development systems to boost workforce capability. This means valuing not just technical knowledge, but a broader range of competencies, behaviours, and socioemotional skills. Moreover, it is worth noting that most Palestinian civil servants have open-ended contracts and stay in administration for most or all their careers. This means that while they might have been hired based on a particular skill set or capability, the pace of change means that continual investment in learning is necessary.

This increased need for high-level cognitive and complex social-interaction competencies is leading to new learning and training needs. These competencies contribute to aspects of effective leadership, crisis and change management, innovation and more. They are also capabilities that are being called upon in a variety of positions, making acquiring them essential for organisational and workforce resilience, flexibility, and mobility. Fit-for-purpose learning systems and strategies that enable public servants to upgrade their skills, and acquire new ones, are therefore essential for keeping up with challenges, mitigating skill depreciation, and addressing capacity and competency gaps. The PA has a strong basis on which to build in this area, particularly through a dedicated public administration school – the National School of Public

Administration. The school was established by decree in 2016 and focuses on building the professional capacity of public servants, including through leadership development programmes. Improving the focus on transversal competences, and on their application in recruitment, is one part of building capability in the Palestinian civil service. To further develop and strengthen the capacity for PAR, the PA could roll out capacity building trainings on administrative reform and change management for technical and high-level civil servants together with the National School of Public Administration.

Improving accountability and transparency for public administration reform through stakeholder participation

The OECD Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[1]) and the OECD Recommendation on Open Government (OECD, 2017[26]) [OECD/LEGAL/0438] identify openness and transparency in governance and policymaking as a key pillar of public governance reforms. Openness and transparency policies are crucial to the proper functioning of government and include the accessibility and disclosure of information and data both upon request and in a proactive manner Stakeholder engagement is defined in the Recommendation on Open Government (OECD, 2017[26]) [OECD/LEGAL/0438] as all the ways in which stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery, including:

- Information: an initial level of participation characterised by a one-way relationship in which the government produces and delivers information to stakeholders. It covers both on-demand provision of information and "proactive" measures by the government to disseminate information.
- Consultation: a more advanced level of participation that entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback to the government and vice-versa. It is based on the prior definition of the issue for which views are being sought and requires the provision of relevant information, in addition to feedback on the outcomes of the process.
- Engagement: when stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g., information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy-cycle and in the service design and delivery.

Stakeholder engagement also improves the evidence base for policymaking and reduces implementation costs. Public consultations in particular serve to help with the identification and discussion of problems and solutions. They also have a positive impact on the ownership, credibility, responsiveness, and relevance of the administrative reform process, and reduce confrontations during the implementation of policies as they help to ensure a more inclusive and responsive governance that is based on societal needs.

The PA's National Policy Agenda "Putting Citizens First" focuses on the rights of citizens towards freedom, justice, basic services, economic opportunities, safety, and prosperity. It reflects the societal transformation advocated by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and more specifically SDG 16 on "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" as it includes a mutual focus on the impoverished, marginalised, and vulnerable groups by leaving no one behind. This cannot be done without protected civic space and allowing people to actively participate in the entire policy cycle. In the absence of a functioning PLC and considering weaknesses in the institutional oversight mechanisms, civil society plays a crucial role in keeping the public sector accountable in the PA.

To concretise the "putting citizens first" approach, stakeholders' participation (including information, consultation, and engagement) would ideally become a solid institutionalised routine anchored in a clear set of rules inspired by international good practices and quality criteria. While the PA issued Guidelines on Public Consultations in 2018, further recognising the importance of stakeholder engagement "throughout the legislation preparation process", the OECD Review *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People* (OECD, 2022[15]), reported that these guidelines are not legally binding and that their application across the PA's line ministries is inconsistent.

It is therefore advisable to institutionalise stakeholders' participation through a legally binding framework or through a revision of the Handbook 2017-2022 that grants all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities for consultation as recommended by the OECD Recommendation on Open Government (OECD, 2017[26]) [OECD/LEGAL/0438]. This can be strengthened by a variety of methods such as accessible mechanisms, plain and clear communication, awareness raising efforts and by the establishment of a quality control mechanism ensuring a consistent application of consultation procedures. The recently issued new Guidelines 2024-2029 do not provide more detailed quality requirements and procedural guidance.

While the current version of the Handbook 2017-2022 mentions the key role of the civil society and the private sector, interviewed CSOs during the fact-finding missions shared that they are currently not involved in decision-making and co-ordination committees and highlighted the lack of participatory approach as one of the main governance issues. Likewise, consultations in preparation of laws and strategies are not systematically organised. As such the level of consultation of the civil society depending on the willingness of the lead institutions. While interviewed CSO's mentioned that they received invitations for consultation by various institutions such as the GPC, the Anticorruption Commission, the Ministry of Women Affairs, and the Diwan, there is no structured approach leading to an unclear follow-up process. To better structure stakeholder participation, many countries across the OECD have set up dedicated policy advisory bodies with a wide range of functions, from shaping the policy agenda, to identifying policy options, creating evidence, promoting legitimacy when a particular policy option is chosen, or evaluation (OECD, 2017[27]). A policy advisory body could further support the PA's stakeholder participation. This would also be a way to systemise how the government gathers interdisciplinary expertise, by systematically including research institutions, academia, CSOs, and think-tanks presents the example of Chile's permanent Advisory Council for the Modernisation of the State that may be of interest for the PA see (Box 4.12).

Another principal element for the PA to concretise the "putting citizens first" principle and to enable active participation of the civil society and the private sector in the policy cycle, is improving the overall access to information. Interviews with various institutional interlocutors during the OECD's fact-finding missions clarified that a 2018 draft law exists but is currently awaiting adoption. In the meantime, archiving of public records forms a crucial step. These efforts could be based on the sound practices on archiving and simplifying and analysing business processes from the PA's Ministry of Interior as identified during the OECD's fact-finding missions to the PA. Leveraging this administrative data can then also feed the evidence base for PAR. However, even without a dedicated access to information law, progress reports and strategic and planning documents, should be made publicly available. This is especially the case regarding the existing PAR committees where the meeting agenda's, work plans, minutes could be made available on the PA's web portal. Further extending the membership of the technical committees to the civil society and the private sector - at least as an observer – would be key to strengthen these efforts as well. While creating dedicated workshops in 2023 on GRA progress is a good step forward, the participants could not be verified by the OECD. The above-mentioned policy advisory body see (Box 4.12) could contribute towards solving the issue of identifying the relevant external stakeholders to include.

Box 4.12. Chile: The Permanent Advisory Council for the Modernisation of the State

The Permanent Advisory Council for the Modernisation of the State (referred as the ''Council'' hereinafter) was created by Supreme Decree and is administratively dependent on the Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency. This body includes 12 councillors and a President of the Council, all appointed by the President of Chile and with recognised experience in public and/or private management. The councillors are representatives from the government, municipalities, academia, CSOs, think tanks and the private sector. The Council also has an Executive Secretary serving as a permanent contact between the Council itself and the State Modernisation Secretariat.

The aim of the Council is to provide advice to the President of Chile in the analysis and evaluation of policies, plans, and programmes related to the modernisation reform of the State. Acting as an advisory body, this council provides long-term vision and contributes to a sense of urgency and continuity to the modernisation process. This advisory body also functions as a co-ordinating body that align other government advisory entities whose objectives are directly related to matters of modernisation of the State and public management.

Source: (Republic of Chile, 2022[28]).

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Notes

[1] More detailed information about the mandate of CoG institutions is outlined in specific regulatory documents: Council of Ministers' Decree no. (21) from 2020 Concerning the Regulation of the Prime Minister's Office; references to the regulatory documents concerning the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and the OoP could not be identified.

[2] PMO (Feb. 2023), Ministry and agency strategy guidelines for the strategic planning cycle 2024-2029 – Table A1: Strategic objective and results overview with government programme; Table A2: Strategic objective and results overview with SDGS; and Table B1: Policy intervention overview.

[3] PMO (Feb. 2023), Ministry and agency strategy guidelines for the strategic planning cycle 2024-2029 – Table C: Budget overview 2024-2029.

5 Overview of Recommendations to Strengthen Public Administration Reform Efforts in the Palestinian Authority

Based on the challenges and opportunities identified in previous chapters, this section provides an overview of the recommendations to improve the development and implementation of PAR in the Palestinian Authority.

Overview of recommendations to strengthen public administration reform efforts in the Palestinian Authority

Recommendations to develop a coherent strategic framework for public administration reform

- The PA should consider widening the scope of the existing PAR strategic framework by addressing important reform areas in line with the NDP and identifying clear leadership per each of them. Specific attention should be paid to the development of:
  - a roadmap which outlines specific steps and tools to allow for more expenditure efficiency, notably by reducing costs while maintaining the desired level of administrative capacities
  - a roadmap which outlines specific steps and tools to enhance engagement with the civil society at large throughout the whole policy cycle, from problem analysis to evaluation of impacts
  - a roadmap which outlines specific steps and tools to progressively improve policy development, co-ordination, and monitoring in view of increasing expenditure effectiveness
- The Government should carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the whole PAR agenda to inform the future design of reforms after the PAR strategic documents expire. Clarity on the development of one single cross-cutting PAR strategy or the added value of separate strategic documents should be included at an early stage. This evaluation would encompass the key milestones and identifies the most important stakeholders with their related roles and contributions.

Dedicated recommendations on the thematic strategic frameworks for public administration reform

On the Sectoral Strategy of the Civil Service 2021-2023

- Reconsider the formulation of objectives to clarify the sought improvements in the different civil service and human resources areas.
- Identify outcome level indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of the above-mentioned sought improvements and to feed policy discussions within the government and with the civil society.
- Better define implementation arrangements and co-operation with other institutions contributing to GPC objectives and make sure that roles and responsibilities are agreed and consistently translated into the respective action plans.
- Better identify financial gaps in relation to planned objectives, which can purposely be used to discuss potential support with external donors.

On the Technology and Public Administration Strategy 2021-2023

- Undertake policy discussions with the GS and the civil society to effectively address administrative red tapes before proceeding with digitalisation of services.
- Engage with citizens, the civil society, and the relevant ministerial and non-ministerial institutions for more precise prioritisation of services, and make decisions publicly available
- Better identify financial gaps in relation to planned objectives, which can purposely be used to discuss potential support with external donors.

On the National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Integrity and Anti-Corruption 2020-2022

- Identify outcome level indicators to measure progress the four strategic objectives and expected results and to feed policy discussions within the government and with the civil society.

On the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy for 2021-2023

- Further clarify the steering, co-ordination, and monitoring arrangements.
- Further link resources to individual objectives and further connect performance indicators with budget lines.

On the Sectoral strategy for Public Finance Management 2021 – 2023

- Clarify implementation responsibilities and the steering, co-ordination, and monitoring arrangements
- Link resources to individual objectives, and ideally to implementing partners, and further connect performance indicators with budget lines.

Recommendations towards strengthening the evidence base for public administration reform

- The PA could strengthen its existing methods for problem analysis and policy identification by including more sources of evidence such as performance information, audit reports, internal and external evaluations, and expenditure reports.
- The PA could build further on the existing but uneven practices for the involvement of internal and external stakeholders in problem analysis (i.e., decision-makers, managers, technical staff, external service users, NGOs, research centres, academia, the private sector, etc.).
- The PA may consider complementing the recently issued Guidelines 2024-2029 with annexes providing for:
  o more detailed guidance on how to use recommended problem analysis tools, i.e., the problem tree
  o clearer standard procedures and quality requirements for the involvement of all the relevant institutional and non-state stakeholders during the stages of problem identification, discussion, and validation of the analytical results.
  o A quality control mechanism in line institutions and within the PMO should ensure the consistent application of these procedures and requirements.

Recommendations to improve institutional leadership on public administration reform

- The PA should further clarify responsibilities for steering, implementing, and monitoring PAR at the CoG.
- The PA is encouraged to not only have clear lead institutions for the thematic PAR areas, but also for pursuing a whole-of-government approach in its wide array of PAR efforts.
- If the PA decides to extend the scope of PAR, it should identify lead institutions for the PAR areas currently not covered by the strategic framework, notably policy development, co-ordination and monitoring, and organisation and functions of public administration.
- The PA could install clear organisational and individual accountability lines among the relevant stakeholders and involved institutions. This entails a delegation of responsibility cascading down from the lead PAR institution through the institutions leading individual PAR areas, towards the other contributing institutions regarding the achievement of planned objectives.

Recommendations to improve institutional co-ordination on public administration reform

- The PA should consider enhancing the CoG's existing PAR management structures at both the political and administrative levels and empower them with strong authority to steer and support reform implementation. The CoG's PAR management structures should include all institutions with a stake in the reform process, and their scope should encompass all PAR areas.

- With reference to individual PAR areas, the PA could ensure stability of the existing co-ordination bodies at both political and technical level, to further clarify the PAR co-ordination mechanisms, the roles, and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders and to set standard co-ordination procedures.

- The PA could actively involve the civil society in the PAR management bodies. This would add value to policy discussions and confirm commitment towards more transparency and accountability. For this reason, the association of the SAACB is also recommended.

Recommendation on improving the prioritisation of public administration reform objectives

- Within each PAR area, the PA should invest efforts in better prioritisation of objectives by focusing on a limited number of carefully analysed, agreed, and prioritised issues, in line with the financial circumstances and the most pressing needs in the society.

- Prioritisation exercises at the level of each PAR strategy should build on the evidence collected during the problem analysis phase, including consultations with both internal and external stakeholders. They should involve high-ranking officials holding decision-making power such as high representatives of the major implementing institutions and the heads of the Programme Management Teams.

- The different steps for prioritisation and objective setting should be clearly presented in methodological guidelines, which could be integrated in the new Guidelines 2024-2029 or presented in an annex. Practical tools for prioritisation and objective setting could also be provided. Consistent application of these procedural steps should also be continuously verified by the policy units within ministerial and non-ministerial institutions, and by the PMO as well.

Effective operationalisation of public administration reform objectives

- The PA could review the current operational plans for PAR to ensure that they are aligned and consist of clear outputs, operational responsibilities, and a concrete implementation timeframe.

- The PA could ensure that operational plans only describe focused actions leading to the envisaged results with the available resources.

- The PA could organise interactive sessions such as focus groups and brainstorming sessions with all the institutions contributing to PAR efforts to ensure that the results of the problem analysis, the defined problems and their causes are well understood, the best set of reform-oriented actions are designed to tackle them, and that roles and responsibilities are clear and agreed on.

Recommendations on effective monitoring for public administration reform

- The PA should ensure that the Strategic Results Framework, which is currently used to monitor the implementation of the NPD and the GRA, allows for measuring progress towards expected

improvements, rather than the outputs of the different reform measures. The same apply to the renewed Strategic Results Framework, once defined, which shall allow for measuring progress towards GP's priorities.

- The PA could ensure alignment between the monitoring framework of the different (PAR) sector and cross-cutting strategies and the current, and future Strategic Results Framework.

- The PA could ensure that regular meetings take place among all the relevant PAR institutions (both CoG and line institutions) to discuss progress towards expected improvements, challenges faced and ahead, effectiveness of expenditures, and follow-up on findings and decisions taken.

- The PA could enhance systematic circulation of monitoring information among the CoG institutions and with all the (PAR) relevant institutions. Co-ordination of the monitoring efforts should be strengthened between the PMO and the GS.

- The PA could clarify the mandate of dedicated monitoring and evaluation departments within the administrations to ensure a uniform approach across all institutions and frameworks.

- Given the disparity of capacities across the public administration, the PA is encouraged to keep reinforcing capacities in the planning and monitoring units in line institutions. This can be done through increased trainings and the further allocation of resources.

- The PA could systematically associate the SAACB throughout the process of monitoring PAR efforts, building on its experiences and available data sources.

Recommendation on leveraging costing and expenditure efforts for public administration reform

- The PA should include clear information about sources of financing in the strategic documents for PAR. In addition, in view of the next planning cycle 2024-2029, the PA may consider adding dedicated columns in "Table C: Budget overview 2024-2029" to specify whether allocated funds come for the internal budget or require external financial support. Ensuring that financial gaps are clearly, and systematically identified would increase credibility of reform plans and better inform policy discussions with external donors.

- In line with what the new Guidelines 2024-2029 propose, the PA could aggregate cost estimates per strategic objective to better compare the costing of reforms with the expected improvements and assess its expenditure effectiveness.

- The PA could keep reinforcing capacities in the financial units in line institutions. This can be done through increased trainings and the further allocation of resources.

- The PA needs to harmonise cost estimation methodologies and ensure uniform practices for cost estimations. More detailed guidance on cost estimation methodologies could be presented in an annex to the new Guidelines 2024-2029.

Recommendations to leverage Human Resources Management for public administration reform

- The PA should encourage the adoption of merit, performance, neutrality and impartiality as core principles and values for civil servants.

- The PA should focus on the development of transversal and future-oriented competencies. This could be done through a series of actions such as a competency gap analysis led by the GPC in co-operation with key line ministries.

- The PA should apply competencies in the recruitment process. This could be done through a series of actions such as defining core competencies for each job posting based on a revised competency framework.

- The PA should focus on applying competencies in performance management processes. This could be done through a series of actions such as piloting a revised performance management process based around competencies, with the support of the GPC and/or international partners.

- The PA should continue its focus on providing opportunities for continual learning for all civil servants.

Recommendation on improving accountability and transparency for public administration reform through stakeholder participation

- The PA should move forward with the adoption of a Law on Access to Information in line with international standards and good practices.

- While awaiting the adoption of the Law on Access to Information, the PA could mainstream existing good practices regarding the archiving of public records throughout the entire administration while already sharing progress reports, strategic and planning documents. Especially regarding the existing PAR committees where the meeting agenda's, work plans, minutes could be made available on the PA's web portal.

- The PA could provide for mandatory publication of reports concerning the implementation of thematic and cross-cutting strategies, especially regarding the NDP and the GRA.

- The PA could institutionalise stakeholder participation and consultation to improve the quality and effectiveness of public policies in general and more specifically for PAR, see (OECD, 2022[1]).

Reference

OECD (2022), *Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/68ffa992-en. [1]

Annex A. Simplifying and Improving Service Delivery in the Palestinian Authority

Introduction

This Scan examines the challenges and opportunities regarding the simplification of administrative procedures in the Palestinian Authority (PA). It observes that the PA is developing an extensive programme of digital government projects, which could help to reduce administrative burdens for the public and businesses. It finds that these digital plans have been well integrated into the broader national policies of the PA and enjoy strong political support. Yet, the Scan also observes that businesses and the public face high burdens while interacting with public entities and that the PA is missing specific policies and guidelines for administrative simplification, which should form an integral part of digital government plans. It also provides key guidelines to inform the future delivery of public services in the PA, drawing upon international OECD good practice.

The statute book of the PA is uniquely complex and fragmented, containing laws issued under different regimes dating back to the era of the Ottoman Empire. The law is a blend of Islamic customary law, Urf, and the principles of Islamic Shari'a (the main source of legislation), the stock of legislation applied or enacted under the Ottoman Empire (1516-1917), British Mandate Law (1917-1948), Jordanian legislation applied to the West Bank and Egyptian legislation applied to the Gaza Strip (1948-1967) and, of course, legislation enacted by the Palestinian Authority since 1994. (OECD, 2022[1]) In addition, the political split between Gaza and the West Bank with the different legal traditions has far-reaching implications for the legislative process and impedes consolidation efforts for the Palestinian legal system. In the absence of sound regulatory systems, public officials could benefit from tools or stronger capacities to develop good quality legislation for businesses and citizens. (OECD, 2011[2])

This legacy has created a complex and burdensome regulatory environment for the general public who find administrative procedures time consuming and costly, and for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) which make up around 99% of enterprises in the PA. (EU, 2022[3]) According to the Ease of Doing Business index, which ranks countries worldwide based on the extent to which their regulatory environment is conducive to business operations, the West Bank and Gaza were ranked 117 among 190 economies worldwide, a deterioration from a place of 116 in 2018. (World Bank, 2020[4]) Business regulations in the PA are a big deterrent to entrepreneurship, and the process of registering a business is lengthy and unclear. There is no automated business registration system and lawyers provide inconsistent information to entrepreneurs. While there have been some important recent reforms, such as the streamlining of municipal business licensing (see sub-heading "Simplification projects"), the reform process has been slow and with limited input from business or civic society. (World Bank, 2019[5])

A overly complex stock of regulation also creates many opportunities for non-compliance with laws and regulations, with many SMEs preferring to stay informal[1] in the PA. Research by (Castells and Portes, 1989[6]) and (Portes, 1994[7]) have highlighted noncompliance with government regulations as the main identifier of the informal sector. A more recent study by (Sultan and Tsoukatos, 2019[8]) identified compliance with regulations as a major challenge facing informal firms in the PA. Furthermore, research has shown that the about two-thirds of informal Palestinian entrepreneurs believe that there is no benefit in joining the formal sector. (Fallah, 2014[9]) Home-based entrepreneurs are currently unable to formalise

due to business entry requirements, such as municipal licenses, and national regulatory requirements, such as company and tax registration. Business owners must comply with regulatory requirements on business registration, licensing, taxation, chamber or union memberships. This has significant economic and social impacts, as informal workers account for around 60 percent of the workforce in the PA and are disproportionally concentrated in poor and near-poor households, with no access to formal social protection schemes. (World Bank, 2022[10])

This Scan identifies the most pressing challenges in terms of administrative simplification and development of digital government in the PA. The PA has put in place the basis for digital government services since 2005 and plans to roll these reforms out to a wider range of public services, in co-operation with the World Bank. (World Bank, 2022[11]). However, there have not been enough results in the streamlining and simplification of the "back office". The PA has not yet put in place a comprehensive set of policies and mechanisms to measure and simplify administrative procedures. Civil servants would benefit from guidance and methodologies, as well as sufficient training, to carry such simplification reviews. The Authority faces a number of challenges in implementing digital transformation – including the lack of a digital government strategy (although one is currently being in the process of being developed); a lack of digital skills in ministries; a lack of data on customer's interactions with public services; a need to update the regulatory framework to support digital governance; and difficulty in accessing predictable financing to support digital government efforts (a wider issue facing the whole of the PA). Crucially, administrative simplification will need to be a core part of future digital transformation strategies in the PA, if they are to be successfully implemented.

Administrative simplification is an important tool for updating the stock of regulation

Most OECD countries have enormous stocks of regulation and administrative formalities that have accumulated over years or decades without adequate review and revision. The accumulated costs of this in economic or social terms can be high. It is hard for citizens and businesses to comply with cumbersome regulations. The OECD has found that administrative simplification[2] is one of the most effective ex-post evaluation tools for reducing regulatory complexity and updating the stock of regulations by identifying and weeding out outdated and inefficient laws and regulations. This is a critical prelude to carrying out digital transformation programmes, and should be carried out with a clear understanding of the needs of the users of public services. Its final objective is to provide good quality public services and to promote the rule of law and efficient economic environments. Easier formalities are correlated with higher compliance, as stringent regulatory requirements creates a significant opportunity cost of compliance for residents and business representatives. Moreover, when the cost of complying is particularly high, it can represent an entry barrier for SMEs. (OECD, 2010[12])

Various approaches to administrative burden reduction have been implemented across OECD countries such as consolidation, codification, reviews and revisions of the regulations, streamlining and business process re-engineering. Administrative simplification policies can include ad-hoc measures or can be embedded in comprehensive and long-term strategies (including within Public Administration Reviews) and a whole-of-government perspective with clear objectives and measures and allocated resources. The 2016 Regional Charter for Regulatory Quality, endorsed by the PA, highlighted that regulatory policy is a cross-cutting theme for MENA countries that supports public administration modernisation, open government and citizen participation, and supporting trust in governance. In particular, the Charter advocates for:

> *Regulatory reviews of existing stock of regulations to reduce unnecessary and burdensome regulatory burdens including administrative burdens as well as implementing an ex-post evaluation of new regulatory proposals.*
>
> *(OECD, 2016[13])*

The importance of assessing the ongoing worth of regulations and reducing burdens is also recognised in the 2012 OECD Recommendation on Regulatory Policy and Governance [OECD/LEGAL/0390], as set out in Box A A.1.

Box A A.1. The fifth recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance

Conduct systematic programme reviews of the stock of significant regulation against clearly defined policy goals, including consideration of costs and benefits, to ensure that regulations remain up to date, cost justified, cost-effective and consistent and delivers the intended policy objectives.

- The methods of Regulatory Impact Analysis should be integrated in programmes for the review and revision of existing regulations. These programmes should include an explicit objective to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulations, including better design of regulatory instruments and to lessen regulatory costs for citizens and businesses as part of a policy to promote economic efficiency.

- Reviews should preferably be scheduled to assess all significant regulation systematically over time, enhance consistency and coherence of the regulatory stock, and reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens and ensure that significant potential unintended consequences of regulation are identified. Priority should be given to identifying ineffective regulation and regulation with significant economic impacts on users and/or impact on risk management. The use of a permanent review mechanism should be considered for inclusion in rules, such as through review clauses in primary laws and sunsetting of subordinate legislation.

- Systems for reviews should assess progress toward achieving coherence with economic, social and environmental policies.

- Programmes of administrative simplification should include measurements of the aggregate burdens of regulation where feasible and consider the use of explicit targets as a means to lessen administrative burdens for citizens and businesses. Qualitative methods should complement the quantitative methods to better target efforts.

- Employ the opportunities of information technology and one-stop shops for licences, permits, and other procedural requirements to make service delivery more streamlined and user focused.

- Review the means by which citizens and businesses are required to interact with government to satisfy regulatory requirements and reduce transaction costs.

Source: (OECD, 2012[14]).

In addition, the 2012 Recommendation also points to the use of Information and communication technology (ICT) to support administrative simplification. Digital government processes can simplify government operations and reduce the costs of transactions. This also has benefits for citizens and businesses providing them direct and easy access to information on administrative services/obligations and in some cases the possibility of complying with the formalities required for a business activity. Crucially, administrative simplification and digital processes must go hand-in-hand, as there needs to be a cross-government effort to streamline and simplify the "back office", by mapping the various procedures in place, and then identifying and measuring the key bottlenecks and constraints which could lead to simplification. The use of ICT for administrative simplification shall be examined in the sub-section "Digitalisation in the PA", which shall point to best practices as set out in the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (see Box A A.5).

Measuring administrative simplification

A practice that can contribute to a successful strategy on administrative simplification is the measurement of administrative burdens. Measuring the burdens generated by government formalities, makes it possible to undertake a simplification plan based on more robust evidence and set priorities to tackle the most burdensome regulations.

One of the most popular methodologies used internationally for measuring and reducing administrative burdens that derive from formalities is the Standard Cost Model (SCM). The Dutch Ministry of Finance developed the SCM as a quantitative methodology for determining the administrative burdens that regulation imposes on businesses or citizens. It provides a simplified, consistent method for estimating the administrative costs imposed on regulated subjects by governments and provides estimates that are consistent across policy areas. The SCM is popular across the political spectrum as it aims at removing formalities that are not necessary, but it does not entail changing the policy objectives of regulations.

The purpose of the methodology is to help policymakers evaluate how much time it takes businesses or citizens to comply with information obligations required by regulations. These information obligations may include completing licensing applications, approvals, tax forms, or providing other necessary data to the government or a requirement for the business to collect data and maintain it. The SCM can be applied to measure a single law; selected areas of legislation or to perform a baseline measurement of all formalities in a country at different levels (see Box A A.2).

Box A A.2. The Standard Cost Model

The Standard Cost Model (SCM) has been the international standard method for over 20 years to measure the administrative burden placed on businesses or citizens by government regulation. The purpose of the methodology is to help policymakers evaluate how much time it takes regulated subjects to comply with information obligations required by regulations. These information obligations may include completing licensing applications, approvals, tax forms, or providing other necessary data to the government or a requirement for the regulated subject to collect data and maintain it.

To determine the SCM, one simply multiplies the quantity (i.e. the number of affected businesses) by the price of the information obligation or cost of time incurred in meeting the obligation. The prices are simply the estimated cost per hour of an employee to fill the information obligation, including the hourly wage and the overhead cost per employee. Mathematically, the cost of each information obligation is:

Number of affected businesses x Frequency per year x Number of hours required per year x cost per hour of the employee

According to the SCM, administrative costs can be separated into any number of information obligations (see the figure below). Each information obligation may be separated into different data requirements and activities to fulfil each data requirement.

Description

- Break the regulation down into separate information obligations.
- Separate information obligations into data requirements.
- Estimate the activities to fulfil each data requirement.
- Cost each activity.

Figure A A.1. Structure of the Standard Cost Model
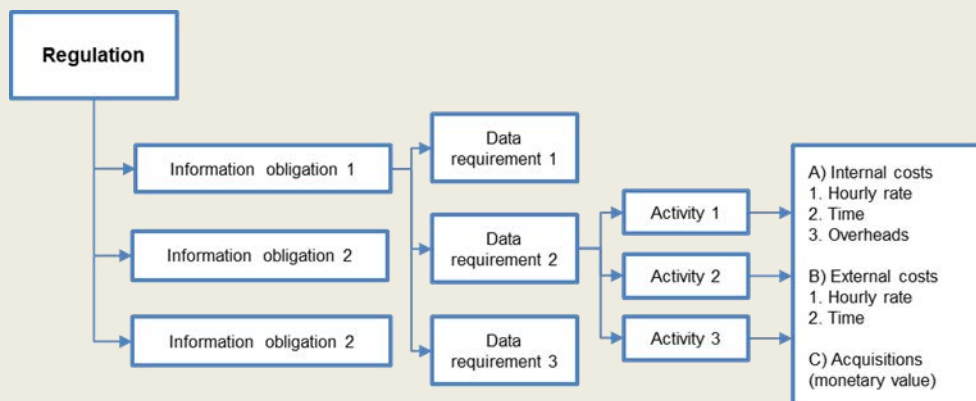
Source: (International SCM Network, 2004[15]).

A case study of the application of SCM can be seen in Germany, where in 2011, the National Regulatory Control Council launched a project entitled *Einreiseoptimierung* ('Entry optimisation'). The purpose of the project was to reduce the time for foreign workers to obtain their visas and to reduce the amount of time the German government spent processing visa applications. The government analysed the internal process and found that involving the Federal Employment Agency often slowed down the process. The Federal government made several changes to the process including, relying more on electronic transfers of information, involving the Federal Employment Agency only when necessary, and waiving certain priority checks. In total, the simplification reduced the waiting time for a new visa from 44 days to an average of only 23 days. Furthermore, the government reduced its own administration time spent processing visa applications from an average of 4.5 hours down to just 2.5 hours (Federal Government of Germany, 2016[16]).

In addition to the SCM, Governments have also attempted to introduce **qualitative, 'bottom-up' approaches to understanding regulatory burdens** through working closely with stakeholders to identify issues of most concern to them. A subset of qualitative techniques consists of perception surveys, which are used in a number of OECD countries, including the United Kingdom, to identify and sometimes measure irritation costs. A selection of different quantitative and qualitative approaches used internationally are set out in Box A A.3 below.

Box A A.3. Good international practices on focusing simplification efforts using quantitative and qualitative techniques

Portugal aimed at reducing 25% of the administrative burdens for companies in 2012 through the Simplex programme. The target considered all laws and regulations that had an impact on the companies' life cycle. The exercise was based on a SCM adapted version and focused on key legislation that would be subject to administrative simplification. The SCM adaptation included the total costs of complying with the regulation as well as the burdens for citizens. It focused on information obligations and integrated the delays and the time spent waiting for an official response. From 2006 to 2011, more than 1,000 measures of administrative and legislative simplification and e-Government were implemented.

In the **United Kingdom**, the perception of businesses reduction is measured yearly as part of an initiative called Business Perceptions Survey, commissioned by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The survey covers several topics. These include the businesses' performance and challenges over the last 12 months, their attitudes towards regulation and the effort and cost of dealing with regulation. Businesses are also asked about their use of external support to comply with regulation, their experiences of dealing with regulators, and their views on the Government's approach to regulation.

In **Denmark**, the Ministry for Business and Growth launched the Danish Business Regulation Forum (DBRF) originally in 2012 to identify and discuss the compliance and administrative burden that businesses face. The members of the forum include industry and labour organisations, businesses, as well as experts with expertise in simplification and digitalisation initiatives. The forum gathers 3 times a year and sends common proposals to the government on the possible avenues for regulatory simplification. These proposals are subject to a "comply or explain" approach whereby the government is obliged to either pursue the proposed initiatives or to explain why these are not pursued. As of 2016, 603 proposals had been made by the forum of which 191 were fully and 189 partially implemented. The total savings to businesses from the implementation of these simplification measures were estimated to amount to 790 million Danish crowns.

In **Germany**, The Federal Statistical Office was commissioned by the Federal government in 2015 to conduct surveys of individuals and companies on their subjective perception of public authorities and the body of law in specific life events. The survey exercise aims to identify measures for a more noticeable bureaucracy reduction and will be repeated every two years. The approach identified typical life events in which citizens people and companies interact with public authorities. 22 life events for individuals were selected ranging from the birth of a child to marriage, unemployment and need for long-term care. Similarly, 10 events for companies based on a company's life cycle were selected, including business start-up, the appointment of employees, and business discontinuation. For every life event, an interactive customer-journey map was constructed displaying the typical and most important offices citizens or businesses have to contact and the procedures they have to complete to obtain the respective service.

Source: (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020[17]), (OECD, 2016[18]), (OECD, 2010[12]).

Current review strategies in the PA

The PA has placed consolidating the body of law as one of its strategic policy objectives. Under Pillar 1 of the "National Policy Agenda 2017-22: Putting Citizens First", the PA has committed to consolidating and modernising the PA's body of law to ensure consistency with international obligations (Pillar 1, National Policy 3). It has also committed to reducing the burden of regulations upon SMEs (Pillar 3, National Policy 13). The document states[3]:

> *"Our national unity will be further advanced by establishing a modern, coherent body of law reflecting our international commitments and replacing the unwieldy mix of Palestinian, Jordanian, Egyptian and Ottoman laws that derives from colonisation and occupation."*

> *"Removing cumbersome regulations and supporting business start-ups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) will expand today's and tomorrow's private sector."*

> *(Palestinian Authority, 2016[19])*

In addition, the legislative drafting guidelines, developed by the Ministry of Justice and introduced by the Council of Ministers Resolution No. (17/174/07), state that a key step in the legislative process is:

> *"Follow-up and evaluation: the party responsible for oversight must evaluate the outcomes and compare them with performance indicators to determine the extent of success of the solution mechanisms in addressing the problem and resolving it."*
>
> *(Ministry of Justice of the Palestinian Authority, 2018[20])*

Finally, the Guidelines on Public Consultation, issued by the Ministry of Justice in 2018, stipulate that evaluation is a key stage in the public consultation process:

> *"Evaluation process: this process starts after preparing and issuing the legislation it includes follow-up, evaluation, monitoring, and revision of the drafted law after implementation. The process is initiated to measure the law's success in arriving at the targets it was set to facilitate."*
>
> *(Ministry of Justice of the Palestinian Authority, 2018[21])*

These strategic documents show a commitment to simplifying the stock of regulation as well as to reducing the burden of regulations affecting SMEs. Importantly, there appears to be strong high-level political support throughout the PA for administrative simplification. However, there is no further detail as to how this might be operationalised. Notably missing is any reference to developing a cross-cutting administrative simplification strategy for the PA, to identify and prioritise in which policy sectors where burdens should be reduced for the general public and business.

Accordingly, there has not yet been any comprehensive review of regulations and formalities in the PA. There have been some initial efforts to reform business regulation (see the next sub-section "Simplification projects in the PA"), and to introduce digitalisation initiatives. However, it is clear that a thorough review of the legislative framework of the PA will be needed to improve clarity of the legislative framework, reduce unnecessary burdens on regulated subjects, and identify any possible obstacles to digitalisation (see the sub-section "Digitalisation in the PA").

Simplification projects in the PA

Although a comprehensive, cross-government administrative burden strategy has yet to be undertaken, the PA has recently introduced a number of important reforms to the business environment, in conjunction with the World Bank. These projects aim to reduce the burden of regulation on enterprises, although they have yet to be fully implemented. Examples of these projects include:

- The **Companies Law** was recently finalised by the Ministry of National Economy and became effective in April 2022. The law aims to improve the Palestinian business environment by offering SMEs, entrepreneurs, as well as overseas investors a more predictable and transparent business legal framework based upon international standards. Some of the reforms to be taken forward include the following:
  - Enabling businesses to register online.
  - Facilitating the incorporation of businesses by removing unnecessary formalities, minimum capital requirements.
  - Regulating SMEs to the extent necessary for the public interest and reduce the compliance cost by removing excessive requirements.
  - Allowing home-based businesses to be registered, to support youth and women entrepreneurs.
  - Removing restrictions to foreign investment.
  - Introducing stronger protections for minority investors.
  - Enabling entrepreneurs to close their businesses faster and through more affordable and predictable procedures for mandatory and voluntary liquidation.

- The **Law of Crafts and Industries** of 1953 was amended in January 2019, by the Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Health, to facilitate municipal business licensing through simplifying the approval process and reducing the cost, as well as automating the process.

However, in the absence of a methodology for identifying and measuring administrative burdens from regulation, it is unclear how the Ministry have been able to analyse and choose which policy areas to prioritise for reform, or to measure the success of the reforms i.e. whether businesses are finding the regulatory processes of the PA less complex and time consuming than before. Certain external stakeholders, such as business groups, have also expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which they have been consulted during the development of these reforms.

Databases of administrative procedures

The PA has undertaken some efforts to introduce transparency in the regulatory process. All laws and regulations are published on the Electronic Reference for the Official Gazette web portal, which is the first official national database for published government legislation introduced by Cabinet Resolution No. (1) of 2022 and is managed by the Official Gazette Bureau, as well as the Al-Muqtafi platform, a legal data bank managed by Birzeit University's Institute of Law. (Palestinian Authority, 2021[22]). However, at the time of drafting this report, the PA did not have a complete inventory of citizen and business formalities, which is one of the primary blocks for administrative simplification, although this is to be addressed as part the World Bank's forthcoming inventory project under the West Bank and Gaza Project – see sub-section "Digital projects in the PA").

Creating an exhaustive inventory with all the formalities and information requirements to which businesses and citizens are subject to, is a necessary step in order to assess the regulatory stock and the administrative burdens correctly. The inventory must be updated, of easy access and free of charge. See Box A A.4 for examples on inventories of administrative procedures in selected OECD countries.

Box A A.4. Centralised Databases

With the increased use of ICT, governments have the opportunity to reduce the administrative burdens that citizens and businesses face due to government formalities. Users of public services do not necessarily know the name or sequence of formalities that they need to follow, which is why it is important to organise information based on life cycle events and clear and simple topics. Finally, allowing for interoperability to the public administrations' websites reduces the time devoted to gathering information and allows for a simplification in the number of information requirements.

In **Turkey**, KAYSİS is an information management system documenting the entirety of the activity of the Turkish public administration. Its goals are to:

- Standardise the identification of government institutions and activities.
- Linking activities of public institutions to their legal bases in terms of articles/paragraphs/subparagraphs and identifying legislation that is no longer implemented in practice.
- Identify bureaucratic processes.
- Plan Digital Türkiye activities.
- Record the historical evolution of the government organization in the digital environment.
- Share official correspondence data, contact data, available services and implemented legislation.

In capturing the organisational structure of public institutions and organisations over time, detailing the services they provide, the documents involved and the legal basis in them, KAYSİS has the potential to allow the identification of redundant services and opportunities to address whole problems that previously were handled by different siloed organisations. Some of the key sub-modules of KAYSIS include the following:

- Service Inventory Management System (HEYS) details the services rendered by public institutions and organisations.
- Public Legislation System (*Kamu Mevzuatı Sistemi*, KMS) is a database of all primary legislation from the Official Gazette as well as secondary legislation that has no obligation of being published. KMS contains bylaws, directives, circulars, communiques, rulings, main statutes, general specifications, and other texts on regulatory procedures.

Source: (Digital Transformation Office, n.d.[23]).

Capacities for implementing simplification

Overall, the work of the PA is affected by important financial and, most importantly, analytical resource constraints.[4] Central institutions and line ministries are often understaffed and legal units responsible for legislative drafting are mostly made up of lawyers and legal specialists. Interviews conducted as part of the development of this Scan shed light on the lack of expertise in staff able to analyse wider social and economic impacts of new and existing legislation, as well as a lack of familiarity with methodological tools such as the Standard Cost Model (see Box A A.2) or Cost-Benefit Analysis. Hiring and correctly allocating those specialists will be essential for a successful implementation of administrative simplification in practice. A new draft civil service law prepared by the PA's General Personnel Council (GPC) has been waiting for final approval from the Cabinet. New provisions are intended to boost the flexibility of the GPC to manage the workforce of the Palestinian Authority, such as facilitating the recruitment of specialists

across key areas of government, including administrative simplification, and developing greater IT co-ordination between government departments, the GPC and the Ministry of Finance to facilitate document management and electronic signatures. The revised civil service law can thus provide an opportunity to not only modernise concepts of public management but also strengthen the link with the public administration reform agenda in the PA, especially around simplifying and improving service delivery.

There is also a lack of practical guidance available to civil servants, explaining the different tools and approaches to carrying out ex post evaluations. Furthermore, there are no training programmes available to civil servants on how to carry out administrative simplification or business process re-engineering in practice. Civil servants not familiar with those practices will need more detailed instructions for them to be able to implement administrative simplification in practice.

Developing digital public services is a key method for simplification

One of the means increasingly used for administrative simplification is the development of digital government services. Digitalisation can decrease the time that citizens and business representatives allocate to gathering, understanding and fulfilling regulatory requirements, thus making their lives easier and reducing the opportunity cost of compliance. However, to reduce burdens on the public and businesses, using ICT to provide online public services or portals by itself is not enough, this also requires a cross-government effort to streamline and simplify the "back office". This involves mapping the various procedures in place, and then identifying and measuring the key bottlenecks and constraints which could lead to simplification.

Digitalisation of government services also enables a faster exchange of information between the administration and other stakeholders, an easier access to information, increased transparency and a reduction in the costs of the administration – thereby becoming more efficient and better meeting expectations. (OECD, 2021[24]) Increasingly, administrative simplification policies are becoming important parts of digitalisation plans and much of this activity is pursuing administrative simplification.

The OECD has developed substantive analytical and normative work to support the development and implementation of digital government strategies, and administrative simplification (discussed in the previous section). The Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies [OECD/LEGAL/0406] aims to help governments adopt strategic approaches in the use of digital technologies and data. Building on these principles in the Recommendation and drawing on the experience of the OECD in analysing countries' digital government transition, the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework was designed to identify key drivers of digital government maturity (see Box A A.5). In addition, the Recommendation of the Council for Agile Regulatory Governance to Harness Innovation [OECD/LEGAL/0464] in turn, stresses the importance of using the full potential of technological solutions to improve the quality of evidence and develop data-driven, risk-proportionate and responsive approaches to regulatory enforcement and delivery.

Box A A.5. The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies (2014) The Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies underscores the paradigm shift from e-government to digital government required to realise the digital transformation of the public sector. According to the Recommendation, digital government is understood as *"the use of digital technologies, as an integrated part of governments' modernisation strategies, to create public value"*. This Recommendation is the basis for OECD Digital Government Reviews, which provide analysis and policy recommendations to help improve digital government maturity around the world.

In 2014, the Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies was adopted by the OECD and subsequently by 10 non-member countries. Over the following years those ideas have crystallised into the importance of six dimensions that help governments leave e-government practices behind. These are:

- **Digital by design:** "Digitalisation" is considered not only as a technical topic, but a mandatory transformative element that is embedded throughout public policy and service processes.
- **Data-driven:** Data are used and managed as key strategic assets in a trustworthy and secure way to generate public value throughout the public policy and service design and delivery cycles.
- **Government as a Platform:** Civil servants are able to focus on meeting the needs of users by working in an ecosystem that leverages shared and integrated tools and resources.
- **Open by default:** Public policy processes, digital tools including algorithms and government data are made available for the public to engage with within the limits of legislation.
- **User-driven:** Users are awarded a central role in shaping and informing public policy and service design and delivery processes, and this is conducted inclusively.
- **Proactiveness:** Civil servants anticipate people's needs individually and collectively and take steps to respond to them rapidly.

Source: (OECD, 2021[24]).

For the digital transformation of government to succeed, digital technologies must be fully embedded in policymaking and service design processes from the outset. The public sector needs to be *"digital by design"*. This implies mobilising existing and emerging technologies and data to rethink and re-engineer business processes and internal operations. The aim is to simplify procedures, innovate public services, and open up multiple channels of communication and engagement with the public and private sectors, civil society and the public.

Over recent decades, the governments of OECD member and partner countries have increased their efforts to digitise public sector processes and services, introducing technologies in different public sector activities. This cross-cutting commitment has generated numerous efficiencies in public sector internal operations and external communications, but has tended to apply digital technologies on top of analogue processes and services. In many cases, such efforts have effectively digitised the existing bureaucracy and reproduced in digital form existing silos and government-centred approaches. A shift from an e-government to a digital government approach is required to embed "digital" throughout the policy lifecycle.

Although digital by design implies the design, development, management and monitoring of internal government processes to fully mobilise the potential of digital technologies and data, this is not equivalent to delivering digital by default administrations and services to constituents. An omnichannel approach will

enable a more inclusive digital transformation, allowing online and mobile services to co-exist with face-to-face or over-the-phone service delivery, ensuring that underlying processes are digitally coherent and integrated. Digital by design should not be confused with digital by default, where services are preferentially delivered online, as the latter approach has the potential to generate discrimination against segments of the population with limited online access or ability to use digital technologies (OECD, 2020[25]).

> **Box A A.6. Committing to an omnichannel strategy: Chile's ChileAtiende Three-Fold Ecosystem**
>
> Chile's ChileAtiende is an ecosystem that includes a website, a call centre and face-to-face locations with self-service kiosks. It involves the whole public sector and its partners in a three-fold service design and delivery: multi-service (i.e. aggregating 274 public services from 28 institutions), multi-channel (i.e. face-to-face, telephone, website, social media, self-service kiosks) and multi-layer (i.e. according to the depth of integration for a given institution). The conceptualisation of ChileAtiende is also made inclusive with the provision of sign language, special spaces for breastfeeding mothers. The staff are also well-trained to be user-centred in understanding their needs and supporting them.
>
> Note: https://www.oecd.org/chile/digital-government-in-chile-improving-public-service-design-and-delivery-b94582e8-en.htm.
> Source: (Welby and Tan, 2022[26]).

One-stop shops have been one of the key tools used in simplifying the delivery of public services across the OECD, and the MENA region, for facilitating access to information and making service delivery user-focused. One-stop shops are digital, or physical, platforms that gather a wide range of information requirements with the objective of providing information to businesses and residents and/or carrying out transactions between the platform's clients and public administration. They can help reduce transaction costs for citizens and increase efficiency. Establishing and managing a one-stop-shop requires human, technological and financial resources. It involves co-ordination and collaboration between different institutions and ideally across levels of government.

Some countries have implemented informational one-stop shops that may also provide advice and guidance to carry out various transactions with the administration, but usually the objective of physical one-stop shops is the delivery of public services. Two basic models exist:

- **Individual services –** Different government entities are present at the one-stop shop providing their own services. Normally each entity has its own separate counter where its officials and public servants deliver the services.
- **Integrated services –** The provision of services tend be based on a single life event (e.g. "having a child", "starting a business", etc.), so that a single official can resolve all the transactions with the citizen or the business in a holistic manner.

To assist governments in implementing one-stop-shops, the OECD has developed a set of Best Practice Principles for One-Stop Shops, summarised in Box A A.7.

Box A A.7. The OECD Best Practice Principles for One-Stop Shops

One-stop shops should form part of broader administrative simplification strategies. They are a critical component of regulatory delivery and can help maximise the potential gains of regulatory reduction programmes. One-stop shops should be user-centred and based on life events. In this way, they can help bring government closer to citizens and business in the least burdensome way possible. The Best Practice Principles for One-Stop Shops cover 10 areas:

1. **Political commitment** – one-stop shops need continual support from the top in order to flourish.
2. **Leadership** – managers need to be openly committed to a culture of experimentation. Mistakes will be made, but it is most important that these form the basis of improved service delivery in the future.
3. **Legal framework** – the early identification of legal barriers to establishing and potentially expanding one-stop shops are crucial to avoid rollout delays.
4. **Co-operation and co-ordination** – the extent to which government agencies can (and are permitted to) work together to better serve citizens and business is a critical component of one-stop shops.
5. **Role clarity** – establishing one-stop shops with a clear objective is central to managing both internal and external expectations.
6. **Governance** – the overarching arrangements are important, particularly for one-stop shops across various levels of government, but should not drive the design of one-stop shops from an operational perspective.
7. **Public consultation** – Citizen and business clients are an important source of information about what may or may not work and may also offer solutions to identified problems.
8. **Communication and technological considerations** – the standard industry communication means should be emulated wherever possible. Interoperability opportunities should also be identified early in the design of one-stop shops.
9. **Human capital** – at the heart of a well-functioning one-stop shop are its people. Like any other part of the organisation, they require investment. They also have valuable insights on the day-to-day operations.
10. **Monitoring and evaluation** – it is important to assess whether one-stop shops continue to meet clients' needs, as these may change over time. Gathering views from citizens and business can help establish what is working well and what can be improved, and foster a culture of continuous improvement in one-stop shop staff.

Source: (OECD, 2020[27]).

The OECD/United Nations report *"The Economic and Social Impact of Open Government"* noted that countries across the MENA region have pursued digitalisation programmes, including developing online portals (see Table A A.1), which could help the move towards open government and participation. They have simplified access to these services through the development of one-stop-shops for digital services, or centrally available lists that define all services provided by the public sector. However, fully developing such an approach requires governments of the region to achieve significant levels of interoperability of public sector information systems and, at times, cross-organisational service solutions.

A number of examples of online public services are highlighted in the report. For example, the "Digital Egypt e-platform" enables people to access public services online. Currently, 155 online services are being

provided, with the project to expand to other governorates. Several online were developed and launched for a number of entities, including law enforcement, notarisation, personal status, family courts, supply, electricity, agriculture, traffic, real estate registration, the Mortgage Finance Fund (MFF), and the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones (GAFI). The project was completed in Port Said, and the same services are being deployed nationwide (OECD/UN ESCWA, 2021[28]).

In addition, the OECD report *"Digital Government in Lebanon"* noted that the government is developing, within its 2020-2030 Digital Transformation Strategy, its single point digital platform for commercial registry and formalities, a courts automation project, a civil servants e-learning project, an e-procurement platform for public entities, a unified database for all public sector planning studies, an e-appointment mechanism in the senior vacant positions in the Lebanese public administrations and institutions, an integrated solid waste management system and a sectoral and organisational performance measurement and inspection programme for civil servants (OECD, 2020[29]).

Table A A.1. Online portals in Arab countries

Country	Relevant Institutions	Online Portals
Bahrain	Information and eGovernment Authority	https://bahrian.bh/
Egypt	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology	http://www.egypt.gov.eg
Jordan	Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship	https://portal.jordan.gov.jo/
Kuwait	Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT)	https://www.e.gov.kw/
Lebanon	Office of the Minister State for Administrative Development (OMSAR)	http://www.dawlati.gov.lb/
Morocco	Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Digital Economy	http://www.egov.ma/
Oman	Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology	https://www.oman.om/
Palestinian Authority	Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology	www.palestine.ps
Qatar	Ministry of Transport and Communications	https://hukoomi.gov.qa/
Saudi Arabia	National Committee for Digital Transformation, which includes the Saudi e-Government Programme (Yesser) of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology	https://www.my.gov.sa
Sudan	National Information Centre (NIC)	www.esudan.gov.sd
Tunisia	Presidency of Government	http://fr.tunisie.gov.tn/
United Arab Emirates	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA)	https://u.ae/
Yemen	National Information Centre	http://www.yemen.gov.ye/portal/

Source: Compiled by ESCWA. (OECD/UN ESCWA, 2021[28]).

Digitalisation in the PA

The first PA e-government strategy was published in 2005, as part of the Palestinian Authority vision to:

> *Empower citizens to participate in government;*
>
> *Connect citizens, the private sector and institutions to drive economic growth and meet community challenges; and*
>
> *Deliver real public value through citizen-centric government services."*
>
> *(OECD, 2011[30])*

In 2011, the OECD published the report *"The Case of E-Government in the Palestinian Authority"* which provided the PA with data and analyses on e-government implementation and an assessment of its strengths and areas for improvements, based on MENA and OECD countries' experiences and good practices. These areas of improvement included the following:

An updated e-government policy document could improve alignment with current PA priorities and address some of the issues highlighted in this Report.

The co-ordination role of the MTIT (Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technologies) could be reinforced to improve the implementation of e-services.

Prioritise legislative actions and infrastructure projects that enable the immediate delivery of key strategic services.

Develop a medium- and long-term plan to increasingly implement all the remaining legal and infrastructure reforms.

Increase awareness among the PA's public officials of the benefits and modalities to support a more direct inclusion of the Palestinian private sector in electronic service design and delivery.

New strategies based on the principles of good management (i.e. management by objective and performance-based budgeting) could increase the allocation and effective use of existing funds for e-government projects.

Creating focus groups, using online surveys and institutionalising public-private forums would allow greater involvement of Palestinians in policymaking, and service identification and delivery.

Implement specific actions to increase access to the Internet and reduce the digital divide through ad hoc training programmes and infrastructure projects.

(OECD, 2011[30])

The OECD subsequently worked with the PA to develop an e-government implementation roadmap to take these recommendations forward. In the following years, the PA implemented an extensive reform programme to develop the foundations for online delivery. PA Ministries have developed websites where information about the ministry and the public services it offers are published online. However, these websites have tended to provide information on public services, rather than provide transactional services (although the PA is implementing an e-payment platform – see sub-section "Digital projects in the PA"). It has also been previously observed that, not all websites of ministries are regularly updated. AMAN Transparency International, a local civil society organisation, stated in its 2019 annual report that according to their survey:

…a sample of 34 public institutions showed that 5 of these institutions do not have websites, and 3 have not updated their websites for the past three years or more. For those who had websites, only 62% had published all services provided to the public and the majority had deficiencies related to publishing contact details, results of tenders and purchased, strategies and action plans.

(AMAN Transparency International, 2019[31])

Public services of the PA are still generally provided in a direct traditional way, requiring a personal presence at an office, paper forms etc. As mentioned before, there have been few attempts at administrative simplification to date, and these processes are time consuming for the public, involving a series of different steps, and sometimes interactions with more than one government agency. One example provided by the PA is the process of obtaining financial clearance from the Property Tax Department to sell real estate, whereby a member of the public must:

…at first, obtain a blank paper form stamped by the Palestinian Land Authority to conduct a real estate sale transaction. Moreover, to make a real estate sale transaction, clearance must be obtained from the local authority, and then a judicial acknowledgement shall be obtained as well from the court indicating that the property is free from mortgage and lease. This is applied in case of renewing a vehicle license and vehicle inspection procedures.

(Palestinian Authority, 2021[22])

In the most recent Global ICT Development Index, the West Bank and Gaza were ranked 123rd out of 176 in a world ranking. The performance was below the global average as well as below the average score of the Arab States. The report stated that the PA's telecommunications sector is characterised by the presence of a private regulated monopoly and increasing competition, and that efficiency in the telecommunication sector will have far-reaching effects throughout on the Palestinian economy. (International Telecommunication Union, 2017[32]) According to the World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index 2022[5], a comprehensive measure of digital transformation in the public sector, the PA has been classified as having a "medium" (Category C) level of GovTech maturity, with a score of 0.392 (out of a total possible score of 1), which is lower than the global average score of 0.552 (World Bank, 2022[33]).

In addition, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) produces an annual Government Electronic and Mobile Services Maturity Index (GEMS) which aims to measure the maturity of government services provided through portals and mobile applications in Arab countries. To achieve this, 84 government services that are essential for both individuals and businesses, in 11 different categories have been selected. The index is mainly elaborated for policymakers, enabling them to assess the situation and to identify the services that still need to be developed. For individuals, these include healthcare, education, employment housing, family affairs, travel and tourism, social well-being, transportation. Whereas, for businesses creation, this includes financing, operations, and the end of the company. In the GEMS 2022 report, the PA received an overall score of 23%, which is up from 18% in 2021, but below the Arab regional average of 34%. From 2021 to 2022, the PA saw improvements across the 3 key pillars of the Index: (i) service availability and sophistication; (ii) service usage and user satisfaction; and (iii) public outreach. The report makes the following conclusion about digital government services in the PA:

> *The overall index score for this year has increased, compared to the 2021 results, due to the increase in the scores of the three main pillars…..The index overall score indicates that e-government services have reached an intermediate level of maturity [in the PA]. To enhance national performance related to this index, it is recommended to focus on increasing the portal and mobile services sophistication levels, taking into account persons with disabilities enablement to access these services, encouraging individuals to use mobile applications and enhancing marketing campaigns for new e-services.*
>
> *(ESCWA, 2023[34])*

Current strategies for digitalisation in the PA

Digitalisation of public services has been well established as a strategic priority in the PA's national policies. The PA's ***"National Policy Agenda 2017-22: Putting Citizens First"*** outlines the PA's strategic policy objectives. Under Pillar 2, National Policy 8, the PA has committed to the implementation of e-government to increase the range and accessibility of online services, including developing an e-government strategy. It also commits to enhance ICT's role in supporting enterprise growth. The following specific measures are set out:

> *Develop and implement a government-wide service improvement strategy, with particular focus on "Area C" and East Jerusalem, in co-operation with our delivery partners.*
>
> *Develop and implement an e-government strategy, focusing on the delivery of on-line services to citizens.*
>
> *Strengthen service delivery through partnerships with the private sector and civil society.*
>
> *Establish a comprehensive approach to land administration that optimises land use, completes land registration and efficiently manages state lands.*
>
> *(Palestinian Authority, 2016[19])*

In addition, the multi-year strategic document of the *"National Development Plan 2021-23"* reiterates this commitment to these same measures, under Pillar 2, National Policy 8 *"Improving Services to Citizens"*. The document also set out an intention to take forward the *"expansion of government online services through the E-Government Programme"* and stated that *"the number of public service delivery hubs will be increased"* (Palestinian Authority, 2021[35]).

Furthermore, in support of the National Development Plan, the *"Sectoral Strategy for Communications and Information Technology - 2021–2023",* produced by the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technologies (MTIT) in 2021, highlights the importance of the ICT sector in advancing e-government. The document highlights that currently there are limited number of interactive e-government services provided to citizens, as well as weak electronic payment systems and services. It then sets out the achievement of integrated e-government and high-quality e-services as one of the main strategic objectives, alongside a modern legislative, regulatory environment. It restates the commitment to developing a new e-government strategy, as well as establishing a new "My Government" electronic services portal (Palestinian Authority, 2021[36]).

The *"Technology and Public Administration Cluster"* was produced by the MTIT and the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in 2021, in support of the National Development Plan. The document sets out a framework and roadmap for developing the national technological infrastructure and building an integrated computerised system to raise the efficiency of government services. It provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses facing the PA digital economy. It sets out five Strategic Goals, the second of which aims to "Raising the level of efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in government operations and services". It also sets out five indicators for measuring progress this goal, including:

1. *The rate of government services provided to beneficiaries through electronic and smart channels.*

2. *The rate of the population who use electronic and smart means to obtain government services.*

3. *The rate of citizens' satisfaction with public services.*

4. *The rate of internal and external partners' satisfaction with government work.*

5. *The rate of the annual savings in operating expenses due to providing services in government institutions.*

   (Palestinian Authority, 2021[22])

The "*National Digital Transformation Policy"* was produced by the MTIT, with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia and published in February 2021. The document contains a SWOT analysis of the key challenges and strengths facing the PA regarding digital reform. This document sets out ten actions for reforms to laws, funding and governance structures to co-ordinate the implementation of digital technology across the PA and the wider economy. Some of the key examples of these actions include:

Create a unified mechanism and general framework to co-ordinate efforts in issuing documents relevant to digital technology, including policies, strategies and plans, by forming a national digital policy team led by the Ministry of ICT, mandated with co-ordinating among government institutions in issuing the necessary policies and streamlining them with action plans in line with the national digital transformation policy.

Complete work on launching comprehensive electronic government services and adopt a specific methodology for selecting priority services (such as impact, cost and ease of implementation), while re-engineering processes in the current phase to automate high quality services to improve the lives of citizens.

Adopt the concept of digital by design services when creating applications and new services, to ensure the applications succeed and fulfill the objectives, regardless of technologies used.

> *Provide one stop shops for citizens, distributed among the areas in the villages, towns and population centers, taking into account gender and persons with disabilities, to offer electronic services to citizens without digital equipment, internet service or digital technology literacy.*
>
> *Build the capacities of the administrative and technical cadres specialised in digital technology on a wider and more comprehensive scale and improve their social and economic conditions.*
>
> *Allocate budgets and support the necessary financial support to develop government institution systems and automate work procedures for their various operations, while designating sufficient budgets to update operation systems according to a unified plan for national priorities and the number of electronic services to be offered to the citizens.*
>
> *Create awareness programmes for citizens on available e-services and means of accessing them and implement them through awareness, guidance and educational campaigns through various media outlets and social media, motivating them to use them, and educating Palestinian women on the safe and ideal utilisation of technology.*
>
> *(Palestinian Authority, 2021[37])*

As mentioned previously, the Palestinian Authority published its **first e-government Strategic Plan in 2005**. This plan aimed to empower citizens to participate in government; as well as to connect citizens, the private sector and institutions to drive economic growth and meet community challenges. (OECD, 2011[30]) The OECD also worked with the PA in 2010 to develop an e-government implementation roadmap to take forward a series of recommendations for reforms. The OECD were informed that the 2005 Strategy doesn't reflect the work that has taken place in the years since. This strategy has not yet been delivered to help prioritise and inform the other digitalisation projects that are taking place.

However, as part of the *Digital West Bank and Gaza project,* MTIT has begun **to develop a new e-government Strategy in 2023, including creating a roadmap of planned developments in areas related to digitalisation work** (Palestinian Authority, 2022[38]). As part of this, MTIT have reviewed relevant policies, strategies and plans, and have carried out questionnaires and interviews with stakeholders to assess the current situation in government departments and understand the gaps between what is on the ground and what is desired.

Notably missing from the plans is a clear commitment to a cross-government effort at administrative simplification to take place before or alongside the various digital initiatives. It should be noted that digital transformation of public services appears to have clear political support within the PA, including within the Office of the President (OoP) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). However, there seems to be resistance to the reform proposals within certain ministries, or parts of ministries, where employees felt they could lose out from the changes. It was suggested that a change management programme could be enacted to promote the benefits of digital government reforms across the PA. The importance of strong political support and clear strategic policies supporting digitalisation can be shown from the experience of Portugal in Box A A.8 and Saudi Arabia in Box A A.9). Finally, although the Palestinian Authority has developed a comprehensive strategic and institutional framework for public administration reform, the lack of fully co-ordinated whole-of-government approach in the development, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of such sectoral strategic plans hinders the effectiveness of the government's action.

Box A A.8. The Simplex programmes in Portugal and experience of change management

Portugal has a consolidated track record in simplifying and reforming public administration, which has relied on strong political support to address the need for simplifying the Portuguese public sector and its service delivery through ICT. The focus has always been on recognising the key value of digital government as a lever for broader administrative simplification activities improving the quality of service delivery.

What makes the Portuguese approach different is the fact that the same Digital Government Strategy connects the three pillars of: Public Service Delivery, Administrative Simplification and Digital Government. The Agency for the Modernisation of the Public Administration (AMA) – responsible for setting the strategy and for co-ordinating its implementation– while performing its tasks related to policy and standards design, and implementation oversight, ensures compliance and use of common standards, platforms and strategic directions. This secures collaboration of actors and alignment of actions in view of common integrated interrelated goals. Initiatives aimed to simplify the administration, strengthen service delivery and foster digital government are coherently intertwined.

The so-called Simplex programme was launched in 2006 with the aim of reducing administrative burden imposed by rules of legal and regulatory national origin by 25% in 2012. From 2006 to 2011, more than 1,000 measures of administrative and legislative simplification and e-Government were implemented. The execution rate of the programme was always above 80%. Portugal placed special attention on the significant events in the life cycle of companies. The SCM methodology was adopted to measure administrative burdens.

The Portuguese Government launched Simplex+ in 2016, which upgrades its predecessor and consists of implementing a suitable mechanism to measure the economic impact of new legislative initiatives approved by the Council of Ministers – notably with respect to SMEs. Simplex+ aims at connecting different areas of the public administration and linking up their services according to a citizens and user-centred approach. In order to gather views from ordinary citizens on how to simplify services, a Simplex+ team criss-crossed the country for four months and interviewed 2,000 people.

The Digital Mobile Key (DMK) is the National mobile eID solution which allows citizens to electronically identify themselves in most public, and some private companies' websites in order to perform digital services, through their smartphones, tablets or laptops. By using the DMK, citizens can access and perform hundreds of online public services in an easy and secure way. Apart from AMA's leading role, the Agency has partnered with several important national entities such as the Social Security, the Shared Services of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, among others, that eventually made the DMK available in their websites to facilitate interactions with citizens.

A key lesson learnt was the importance of engaging all the relevant stakeholders from the beginning. It was important to have them feel that they were part of the solution, and that their points of views were considered. The entities using the DMK were renouncing part of the control they had in terms of security of their online platforms, so it was important that they trusted the DMK, and that they felt comfortable using it. In order to achieve the necessary changes within the public administration for DMK to become a viable authentication instrument, it needed to be disseminated and adopted by several public entities. Since some of these entities feared to lose some control of their online platforms and security protocols, that was not always easy to do. It took a lot of negotiation to make them realise that this was an initiative that would benefit all. That this was successful was only because of a flexible and hardworking team, able to provide out-of-the-box thinking, who were committed to satisfying citizens' needs.

Source: (OECD, TBC[39]); (OECD, 2016[18]); (OECD, 2020[27]) with author's edits.

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Box A A.9.Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's efforts in strengthening its digital government governance within the national reform

As a part of its Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has committed to an effective, transparent, accountable, enabling and high-performing government leveraging digital technologies. This implies embracing transparency, engaging citizens, creating agile public organisations, and tracking government's overall performance.

For the first phase (2016-2020), the government focused on expanding infrastructures across the country and expanding its digital services. For the second phase (2021-2025), it announced the National Transformation Programme: Delivery Plan with 34 specific programme objectives and descriptions. Two main themes - achieving government operation excellence and digital transformation – includes initiatives to foster transparency, improve quality of services for citizens and effective governance and common standards for digital government to support the public sector and improve user experience.

In 2021, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the Digital Government Authority with financial and administrative independence under the Prime Minister to oversee the work of digital government in all government agencies, this in order to reach a digital and proactive government capable of providing highly efficient digital services and achieving integration of digital government efforts of all government agencies.

Source: (Government of Saudi Arabia, n.d.[40]).

</div>

Digital projects in the PA

The PA has implemented an extensive programme of reform, to establish the foundations for the digitalisation of public services. A **number of key ICT projects** to date have been co-ordinated by the MTIT, and include the following:

- The PA has been operating an internal network (GovNet) since 2010, enabling interconnections across ministries and agencies, and the Government Computer Centre (see below). Most civil servants have access to personal computers and adequate internet connections. Most ministries have their own servers and local IT staff to provide technical support and maintenance. Transaction processing and other automation for carrying out core functions are largely done through a mixture of manual procedures and use of personal computers, connected to mostly stand-alone sector systems.

- The Government Computer Centre, a centralised government data and ICT centre, was established within the MTIT to assure the operation of the PA's intranet, e-mails, web pages, as well as backup and archiving for some PA entities. Several shared Government-to-Government systems are also available throughout all ministries. These include an e-mail platform and ministry websites provided by the MTIT, and financial and human resources applications and a payroll system provided by the Ministry of Finance. Core state data registries (e.g. citizens, vehicles, businesses etc.) are in place and are managed under a decentralised model through sectoral data centres.

- A national data carrier (X-Road – based upon an ICT solution introduced by the Estonian Government originally) and an interoperability framework (Zinnar) have been in place since 2015 to allow automated data exchange between various public sector agencies and provide the basis for integrated e-service delivery. (E-Governance Academy, 2015[41]) (World Bank, 2021[42]) At present, 53 agencies across the PA are connected to the X-Road platform, and an upgrade of the

platform is taking place to the latest version (UXPUnified eXchange Platform), to increase capacity and functionality.

- The General Personnel Council have developed a government job application website[6], whereby the public can apply online for employment opportunities with the PA. A number of ministries pointed to this as a successful example of an digital government reform, in light of high numbers of applications being submitted through the website.

- An electronic services portal entitled *"My Government"* (or "*Hukumati*") for the digitalisation of different government services has been developed.[7] The portal consists of a four basic components: a single sign-on system; a unified portal for government electronic services; a unified mobile application; and an electronic payment gateway. The portal was launched on 15th January 2023, enabling citizens to carry out the registration process and access the available e-government services. Currently, the portal provides access to 21 electronic government services, including 10 information services and 11 transactional services, that are provided by 8 ministries and government institutions (see Table A A.2 for a list of these services). To date, 5974 citizens have registered to use the My Government portal.[8]

There are plans for the following **planned digitalisation projects**, to be undertaken by the MTIT in partnership with the World Bank, as part of the *Digital West Bank and Gaza project*[9], over the 2021-2026 period:

- A project to develop an inventory of Government to Citizen and Government to Business public services was commenced in 2023. Through this project, all government services will be listed and analysed, and recommendations will be made to re-engineer the operations of some services and then work on their classification. There are around 1420 public services (of which 991 are fee-paid and 429 non-fee services[10]) currently provided by different ministries and agencies of the PA. Following the inventory exercise, MTIT plans to prioritise the public services to be digitised and added to the My Government portal - although it is not clear which criteria MTIT will use to carry out the prioritisation. These services will then be analysed in workshops with the responsible ministries, and will subsequently undergo Business Process Re-engineering[11] (an analogous exercise to administrative simplification) in order to simplify their delivery and prepare them for e-delivery.

- A feasibility study is currently being carried out to examine the potential to turn the Post Office network into a series of digital access points, or one-stop shops. The one-stop shops would enable service access to those without internet or devices, or who may need assistance with e-services. It is currently planned to establish five of these one-stop shops by 2023[12]. The 85 branches of post office network already offer some government services from the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Transportation and enable users to pay utility bills. The study will consider introducing transactional end-to-end public services within the one-stop shops. As mentioned previously, OECD and MENA countries have implemented a variety of different approaches to establishing one-stop shops over the last couple of decades, with some examples set out in Box A A.10 and Box A A.11.[13]

- The MTIT is planning to develop a National Data Centre to constitute a central location for government institution data, and form a nucleus for government cloud computing and to maintain the security of data and information in the PA.

Table A A.2. Government e-services to be provided by the PA

Service name	Ministry (service provider)
1. Enquiry on passport	Ministry of Interior
2. Enquiry about status of request for address change	Ministry of Interior
3. Driving license renewal	Ministry of Transportation
4. Enquiry on the result of the theoretical exam for a driving license	Ministry of Transportation
5. Enquiry on the result of the practical exam for a driving license	Ministry of Transportation
6. Registration of a newborn	Ministry of Interior
7. Covid test result	Ministry of Health
8. Enquiry and payment of health insurance fees https://www.palestine.ps/eGovApp/Requests/ServiceRequest	Ministry of Health
9. Issuing a property tax receipt by piece	Ministry of Finance
10. Issuing a property tax receipt by taxpayer	Ministry of Finance
11. Issuing a property tax clearance certificate for the purposes of transferring ownership	Ministry of Finance
12. Issuance of a property tax clearance certificate for the purposes of the municipality	Ministry of Finance
13. Issuing a property tax clearance certificate for financial purposes	Ministry of Finance
14. Enquiry about an expense number.	Ministry of Finance
15. Certificate of non-conviction	Ministry of Justice
16. Apartment registration	Palestinian Land Authority
17. Consulting a land record	Palestinian Land Authority
18. Enquiry about the processing of a land purchase permit	Palestinian Land Authority
19. Inquiry about the status of a land/apartment transaction	Palestinian Land Authority
20. Payment of traffic fines	Supreme Judicial Council
21. Work permits inside the green line	Ministry of Labour

Source: Data collected by the author as part of the interviews conducted for this Scan.

Box A A.10. Examples of One-Stop Shops across the OECD

Slovenia: The One Stop Shop Business portal or the e-VEM portal is a government portal which provides several public administration services at once to companies and sole traders with the goal of making the interaction between businesses and administration easy and simple. The e-VEM portal enables users to conduct all administrative procedures related to starting and managing a company online. This includes the submission of forms for social insurance registration, declaration of modifications to information on family members, notification of needs for workers, etc. With the help of digital certificates, users can carry out many of these procedures independently. For more complicated procedures requiring assistance by the administration, 139 one-stop shop contact points as well as a "VEM point" have been established. The portal won the 2009 United Nations Public Service Award in competition with North American and European countries in the "improving the delivery of services" category.

Canada: Created in 2005, Service Canada serves as a single point of access to citizens for many government services, delivering some of the Government's largest and most well-known programmes and services such as Employment Insurance and the Canada Pension Plan. BizPaL was launched in 2005 as a pilot project with a lead group of participating governments. It enables Canadian businesses to easily identify which permits and licences are required from all levels of government and how to obtain them in order to start and grow a business.

Portugal: ePortugal.gov.pt is the starting point for over 1 000 essential government services, providing information, guidance and services for citizens and businesses, as well as detailed guidance for professionals and specific groups such as employees, migrants and others and information on government and policy. Organised on a life events approach, the services offered are provided by 590 entities, from both the central government (17 ministries), local government and private entities.

Germany: The Informationsportal für Arbeitgeber *(Information for Employers)* was established in 2017 as part of a strategy to reduce bureaucracy. It provides employers, including SMEs, which are hiring new employees for the first time, with information on their social security rights and obligations.

Source: (OECD, 2018[43]); (OECD, 2020[27]).

Box A A.11. E-government initiatives in the MENA region

Oman

Oman has developed an e-voting system for the elections of the Shura (Consultative Assembly) and local councils (eleven governorates), which take place every four years. The system allows political candidates to submit their applications online. Electors can also register and vote through on-line polling stations or mobile applications. The identity of candidates and voters is verified through their national registration system with biometric authentication. The system has benefited from the deployment of the national public key digital infrastructure in Oman, with digital identity (eID), mobile identity (mID) and digital signature, connected to 77 electronic e-government services.

Lebanon

As a part of its 2020-2030 Digital Transformation Strategy, Lebanon is developing several digital innovations such as a unified e-government platform for commercial registry and formalities; a courts automation project; a civil servants e-learning project; and e-procurement platform for public entities. Additional initiatives include a unified database for all public sector planning students; an e-appointment mechanism in the senior vacant positions in the Lebanese public administrations; as well as a sectoral and organisational performance measurement and inspection programme for civil servants.

Qatar

Qatar was the first country in the world to implement a generalised electronic patient medical record in 2016. 90 per cent of the country's population are now offered this instrument. The Clinical Information System connects hospitals, primary healthcare centres, physicians and laboratories and enables them to retrieve quickly all information on patient health records.

UAE

In the UAE, several flagship e-government portals (such as "Smart Dubai", "Smart Abu Dhabi" and others) provide all public services and administrative documents interactions through mainly mobile phones application. Users are offered quick access to information without the need to visit government entities or their websites. The UAE also launched electronic ID cards, carrying biometric details for the whole population, nationals and residents, as well as "smart pass" to access e-government services and a "UAE Pass App" with similar functions and secure digital signature on smart phones.

Egypt

In Egypt, the "Digital Egypt e-Platform" enables people to access public services online. More than 155digital government services are being provided, with the project to expand to other governorates. Several e-services were developed and launched for a number of entities, including law enforcement, notarisation, personal status, family courts, electricity, agriculture, traffic, real estate registration, etc.

Kuwait

In Kuwait, all residents have smart civil IDs cards that are designed to allow citizens of all Gulf Co-operation Countries (GCC) to travel freely between member states. These ID cards serve as an ID document in the format of a credit card, allowing cardholders to access digital government services and perform transactions securely. The Public Authority for Civil Information manages a secure data exchange highway, allowing people, the government and companies to share data securely and verify the identity of the other party.

Source: (OECD, 2021[44]).

Governance of digitalisation across the PA

MTIT has overall responsibility for the co-ordination of digital government policy across the PA, as well as the telecommunications, ICT and postal sectors. In the ICT sector, this also includes responsibility for sectoral standards and strategies as well as responsibility for the government computer centre, which manages the government network and a data centre, and hosts the government email system and human resources system. The Ministry also includes a centre for ICT training, which was established in 2014. Across the PA, each ministry has their own IT unit in charge of their system and services, whereas MTIT provides consultancy and support in information security issues as well as sets the general strategic and regulatory framework. (UNDP, 2021[45])

Different committees exist across the PA dealing with digital government-related issues. As already mentioned, their mandates are overlapping, not fully clear, or not fully fitting the purpose. The **Administrative Committee** is one of the permanent committees of the CoM. It is chaired by the Secretary General, and includes representatives from the General Personnel Council (GPC), the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Justice. It is a technical committee which reviews suggested organisational changes and restructuring of the public administration. However, it is unclear to what extent it has discussed digitalisation issues to date.

In 2020, the Cabinet established a **political level Ministerial Committee** with the main purpose of co-ordinating the elaboration of the "Technology and public administration cluster 2021-2023". The committee is composed of the Secretary General of the Cabinet as a rapporteur, the Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology, the Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of National Economy, the President of the GPC, and the President of the Monetary Authority. The committee was mandated to outline a clear plan for building and guiding a Palestinian ecosystem that enables the advancement of the technological sector and public administration in all its technical, legal, human, and financial aspects, in co-operation with the relevant partners.

The Ministerial Committee established a **technical committee** consisting of representatives of the members of the ministries in the Ministerial Committee, and then the Ministry of National Economy was added, in addition to representatives from the private sector partners. Those partners are as follows: the Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies (PITA), the Palestinian Telecommunications Company (PALTEL Group), Ooredoo (an international telecommunications

company), the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the Association of Banks, the Federation of Consulting and Administrative Companies (consultant), and the Engineers Association. A **Support Team within** the General Secretariat was formed by the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers in his capacity as rapporteur of the ministerial and technical committees. In addition, an **e-Government Core Group**, a technical committee which is chaired by the MTIT and meets on a monthly basis, has been operating since 2010, involving representatives of government ministries, academia, and the private sector. Its role has been to discuss and advise on ongoing digital reform projects.

Local municipalities also play a major role in public service delivery. Members of the public tend to have more regular interactions with local municipalities, including major city municipalities and village councils than national agencies. Services offered by municipalities include business licensing requests, building and property permits requests, pest control, build and urban planning, and fees and utility bills payments. Municipalities have pursued their own separate digitalisation programmes, including establishing service portals, but there is an inconsistent level of e-service delivery between different municipalities e.g. the municipality of Ramallah has developed an extensive online public service offer to citizens, with a range of transactional services.[14] MTIT has a longer-term aspiration to establish one online government service portal for all PA services, to be facilitating by connecting municipalities to the X-Road platform.

One potential source of constraint is the historical traditions and path dependencies of the machinery of government. Digital projects, including developing new one-stop shop approaches to service delivery may challenge the "way things are done" within governments, especially where one-stop shops are based on life events that inevitably cross agency boundaries. This raises a number of related issues about solving such difficulties through the use of joint decision-making bodies, resource allocation, and the like. Research has highlighted that the creation of a framework to foster co-operation between agencies in the implementation of one-stop shops is a critical success factor. The framework should clearly state the roles and responsibilities for the government agencies involved in the one-stop shop design and operation (see Box A A.12).

Box A A.12. One-stop shop legal frameworks with various partner agencies: the case of Service Canada

Service Canada was created in 2005 and is a single point of access for many of the Government of Canada's largest and most well-known programmes and services, for example, the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and Employment Insurance. Partnerships between Service Canada and other government departments or levels of government are managed through agreements which set out the framework for the partnership, including roles and responsibilities, privacy considerations, cost-recovery, and more. The partner maintains responsibility for the programme/overall and Service Canada takes on the responsibility for the delivery to Canadians (e.g., Service Canada delivers passport services in Canada on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada). Agreements are not legally binding between federal institutions, but instead act as an understanding between the organisations.

Source: (OECD, 2020[27]).

The Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies [OECD/LEGAL/0406] recognises the "business case" as a fundamental tool and an integral part of sustaining digital government efforts. It is important for these processes to align with service design thinking and simplify access to initial seed funding for research and prototyping activities. Beyond supporting experimentation, teams need to have confidence in ongoing financing to continuously iterate a service and, if necessary, pivot from an original proposal having better understood the problem they are addressing. A business case methodology can

shape the upfront behaviour of teams and help formulate sound value propositions to unlock the funding they need.

Examples can be found in New Zealand where the Better Business Cases methodology has been established to enable smart investment decisions for public value. It involves the use of a business case to demonstrate that a proposed investment is strategically aligned, represents value for money and is achievable. It is designed on internationally recognised best practice standards on five core questions: "what is the compelling case for change?", "does the preferred option optimise value for money?", "is the proposed deal commercially viable?", "is the investment proposal affordable?", "how can the proposal be delivered successfully?"[15].

A second governance process to support public service design are "spending controls". Some OECD member countries have introduced a budgetary threshold above which spending on digital technologies and data comes under greater scrutiny (see example of the United Kingdom in the Annex). That threshold can range from 10 000 EUR in Portugal to as high as 1 300 000 EUR in Denmark. Such spending controls can encourage collective and effective ways of working. For example, in 2018, the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office introduced a formalised spend controls process to help central government organisations optimise spending. The policy provides guidance on following a standardised process in creating and maintaining pipelines in digital government projects, for instance, to receive approval to spend money. This requires the public sector organisations to list all commercial and digital technology spend activity, plan resourcing and capability requirements and improve transparency for the management team[16] (Welby and Tan, 2022[26]).

Capacities for digitalisation

The most critical element in any digital transformation process is its people. It is therefore important to ensure that the project teams have sufficient resources and appropriate staff. As part of this, where one-stop shops emerge from existing government services, consideration needs to be given to matters such as change management, and the design of tailor-made programmes for training the staff. Training ought to be broader than technical competencies and should also include interpersonal skills as the staff are often the face of the organisation (OECD, 2020[27]). A good starting point for considering the capabilities needed for thinking about the capabilities is the OECD Framework for Digital Talent and Skills in the Public Sector (OECD, 2021[46]).

MTIT provides trainings and seminars to PA civil servants in their training centre for ICT. An e-Government Academy was established in 2010, based out of Birzeit University, organised multiple conferences to share best practices over the period of 2010 – 2014. However, the Academy doesn't appear to be active at the present time. As mentioned previously, the organisational capacity of the PA is affected by the ongoing financial crisis. The funding for digital projects relies on unsustainable financing, meaning that ministries are forced to prioritise other key (non-digital) activities. Ministries feel compelled to seek international donor funding for initiatives, thereby becoming dependent on this international support. In addition, projects funded by international donors face continuity challenges when these funds are exhausted or at the end of the project lifecycle. It has been reported that many ministries lack funds for maintenance and upgrades related to their digital projects, and in the absence of continued funding the responsible ministry is unable to complete delivery and guarantee the implementation of the technology. These financial pressures also make it challenging to develop adequate staff capacities in critical policy areas such as digital skills.

Developing digital skills will be a critical factor to support digital government reforms. In particular, the MTIT identified that PA civil servants require specialised training in the following subject areas: *process re-engineering or administrative simplification, big data analytics, Artificial Intelligence, database management, cyber security, and blockchain technology.* Furthermore, the PA finds it difficult to retain skilled ICT staff, and lack the financial capacity to match the salaries offered by the private sector, which leads to high staff turnover. This has led to ministries relying on outsourcing, at the expense of building up

their own ICT capacities. This issue may frustrate MTIT's ability to drive digital government reforms across the PA, and for ministries to implement their own reform projects (UNDP, 2021[45]).

As mentioned earlier, the PA also lacks expertise in staff able to carry out administrative simplification, as well as a lack of familiarity with methodological tools such as the Standard Cost Model (for more information see sub-section "Capacity for implementing simplification"). Developing these skills will be critical to ensuring that simplification, which is essential for the effective digitalisation of services, is carried out. It is also critical that digital initiatives such as one-stop shops focus on a customer/client-centric culture. Ultimately this requires frontline staff to understand clients' experiences in using one-stop shops. In turn, this requires staff to both appreciate the likely means by which clients arrive at the one-stop shop, and their likely information deficit. Management plays a crucial role in recruitment and identification of talent, and also through providing appropriate coaching and training opportunities for staff. Additionally, management need to align organisational strategy with delivery capacity. This necessitates decision-making and resource balancing on the part of management to ensure that the scope of one-stop shops are consistent with their resourcing to deliver the key services to clients. As previously mentioned, the revised civil service law could be an opportunity to provide more flexibility to the PA in recruiting and retaining IT specialists as well as ensuring encouraging the development of relevant skills among existing civil servants. Two examples of bespoke training provided for staff are shown below in Box A A.13.

Box A A.13. Formal training for one-stop shop staff

Service Canada

Service Canada has put a focus on human resources management and development, considering that its employees must be equipped with appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviours, and that they need to share the values and beliefs of Service Canada. Service Canada College was established in 2005 as the corporate learning institution, and provided consistency in the courses and programmes for Service Canada employees. The reason for its creation was that at the time there was a significant amount of variance in the quality of service delivery. The objective of the College was to provide reliability and professionalism to service delivery through the promotion of the principles of Service Excellence.

The key offering of the College was the Service Excellence Certification Programme. It is an applied learning programme that includes on the job coaching, in class instruction and follow-up online sessions, complementing functional and operational training. The service excellence stream of courses were developed and delivered in-house at Service Canada, but in 2014 were transferred over to the Canada School of Public Service and are currently available to all federal employees. The Canadian School for the Public Service was established in 2004. It is responsible for leading the government-wide approach to learning by providing a common, standardised curriculum. It offers subject specific courses at the federal Government of Canada level including courses in its digital academy, Indigenous learning, and public sector skills.

ePortugal

The Administrative Modernisation Agency (AMA) Academy initiative was created in 2019, building on previous training approaches. It aims to give everyone the opportunity to share, participate and collaborate on the development of knowledge, learning and skills and betting on new areas and training methodologies. A series of learning communities have been established and include face-to-face learning, e-learning, coupled with on the job training, self-training initiatives, microlearning, and social learning.

Key success factors of the AMA's training programme have included: the involvement of all agents (Board of Directors, Management Units, Entities, Trainees); utilising a multidisciplinary team for delivery; the use of simple technology, that is both intuitive and interactive; a training model tailored to the target audience and particular context; diverse approaches to the design of teaching materials; and continual evaluation of learning and its effectiveness.

Source: (OECD, 2020[27])

Legal framework for digitalisation

The legal and regulatory framework that is necessary to support digitalisation in the PA is currently incomplete. However, there are critical missing elements in the regulatory framework that would be essential for establishing transactional online services to citizens and businesses. These include laws and regulations on data privacy, protection of personal data, cybersecurity, digital signatures, and certificates. In particular, having clear regulations on data privacy and data protection will be critical for ensuring public trust in utilising online public services.

The PA has attempted to legislate in recent years to address the gaps in the framework. For example, regulatory frameworks for e-transactions, including e-payment and e-wallets were introduced in 2020. In 2017 a cybercrime law was enacted, with subsequent amendments in 2020, concerning online interactions that could potentially include identity theft and illegal access to data. In July 2018, the PA also announced new regulations for the licensing of payment service providers to pave the way for the introduction of e-payments nationally. As part of the Digital West Bank & Gaza project, MTIT is working on addressing the gaps in the legal framework of e-transactions, such as single sign on, digital signature, and digital payments, in co-ordination with different bodies. (World Bank, 2022[11])

OECD research has highlighted that the design of new digital public services, such as one-stop shops, might cause governments to consider how their current laws and regulations may hinder one-stop shops from reaching their potential. It has been found that often information-sharing and privacy arrangements may not be fit for purpose where one-stop shops are based on a multi-agency model which may by design necessitate more open communication and decision-making. In the case of digital one-stop shops, additional issues are raised such as electronic data submission, data exchange, electronic signature systems, information-sharing, and potential delegation of responsibility. By way of example, the UK Government Digital Strategy put in place a process for the Cabinet Office to work with departments with the objective of removing legislative barriers (see Box A A.14).

> **Box A A.14. Removal of legislative barriers in the GOV.UK context**
>
> The UK published its Government Digital Strategy in November 2012, which, among other things sought to "remove legislative barriers which unnecessarily prevent the development of straightforward and convenient digital services". The strategy led to a series of actions with the Cabinet Office responsible for working with departments to achieve the removal of remaining legislative barriers. Individual departments publicly reported their progress with some conducting reviews of the stock of regulations. The process also had an effect on organisational culture within departments, for example the Department of Energy and Climate Change stated that "when drafting new legislation, policymakers will work with digital service delivery as a consideration from the outset, in order to minimise incidents of unnecessary obstructive legislation in the future".
>
> Public progress reports were released that detailed how and where departments had changed laws to ensure they were not hindering the potential development of digital solutions. The reports highlighted that by delivering services digitally, expected savings were in the range of GBP 1.7 to GBP 1.8 billion per year.
>
> Source: (OECD, 2020[27]).

In addition, the **"Only-Once Principle"** has been a central element in digital reform across the OECD and a key tool for reducing burdens on regulated subjects. It refers to the right of citizens and business to provide data to public sector organisations only once, calling to the public sector to establish the governance, standards and infrastructure to share and re-use data respecting data protection and other relevant regulation. According to the OECD Digital Government Index, the principle has been enforced in service delivery through formal requirements (including legal requirements or requirements in standardised business case models), in 70% of OECD members, including Estonia, the UK, Portugal, Italy, and Portugal. Implementing this principle within the PA will require updated legislation on data privacy and protection of personal data, to enable the ministries and agencies to share the necessary information. (OECD, 2020[47])

Proper safeguards and mechanisms should be put in place to protect users' privacy and store and protect user data appropriately, irrespective of the form that the one-stop shop takes. Consequently, countries have created formal requirements, including legislation, to protect citizens across: data collection, data storage, data sharing, data processing and, data opening, release and publication. In order to address issues relevant to privacy and consent, some governments established data rights for businesses and citizens.

In the case of the United Kingdom and Canada, they have consistently done so for both citizens and businesses. They have established practical mechanisms by which citizens and businesses can exercise the right to know which data government organisations hold about them. This is handled through Freedom of Information legislation in the United Kingdom and under the Privacy Act and Access to Information Act in Canada. In Portugal, it is possible for citizens and businesses to query data and in some specific cases, to consent and refuse permission for the citizen or business data they provide to a given public sector organisation to be shared with and reused by other public sector organisations. (OECD, 2020[27]) These initiatives are supported by the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government [OECD/LEGAL/0438], which advocates for governments to establish the necessary open government legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and access to information for citizens.

Public engagement and digital inclusion

The Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies [OECD/LEGAL/0406] referred to earlier identifies the need to encourage engagement and participation of public, private and civil society stakeholders in policymaking and public service design and delivery. Accordingly, it will be critically important that the general public and businesses are consulted during the rollout of the digitalisation programme in the PA, and should play an integral role in informing the development of the new digital transformation strategy, to determine which public services should be prioritised for digitalisation and reform. Having a deep understanding of user needs and an openness to citizen involvement in the design and delivery process helps policy and service teams consider opportunities to apply technology and take advantage of new developments as they arrive, with the underlying aim of better satisfying the final user. (Welby and Tan, 2022[26]) Some MENA countries have adopted such participatory approaches in the development of their Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plans (NAP) and beyond (see Box A A.15).

Box A A.15. Examples of efforts to promote stakeholder participation in select MENA economies

Promoting the participation of Jordanian and Tunisian stakeholders in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) process and beyond

In **Jordan**, the fifth and current OGP NAP (2021-2025) was developed following the advanced consultation model advised by the OGP. A first draft of the methodology for the development of the NAP was submitted for review and approval to a multi-stakeholder forum consisting of representatives from CSOs and governmental bodies and chaired by the Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation (MOPIC). The methodology was then published to receive public comments and feedback. Once it was finalised the methodology was implemented through activities involving governmental and non-governmental institutions to draft the final commitments of the NAP. Notably, MOPIC launched a new version of the Open Government Unit's website, where it published the invitations to the public to participate in the activities, disseminated the results of each stage of the process, and received the feedback from stakeholders.

The Government has also undertaken efforts to open spaces for citizens and stakeholders to take part in its ongoing decentralisation reform. With the support of the OECD, a series of national dialogues were organised convening over 1,500 members of civil society. Recommendations by attendees informed the drafting of the new local administration law and capacity building efforts to strengthen capacities of local and governorate councils.

Similarly, **Tunisia** has already drawn up five NAPs of the OGP in a participatory way through online consultations and workshops. As part of the process, a joint steering committee, including government and civil society representatives, subsequently approved or rejected the proposed commitments.

Open data hackathons in the United Arab Emirates

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) of the UAE developed in 2018 its official Hackathon website. It comprises a number of hackathons that take place at specific locations throughout the seven emirates to provide an opportunity for different groups —including students, entrepreneurs and IT experts—to use and re use open data sets to come up with solutions based on specific themes and challenges facing the administration. The Government also supports the translation of successful ideas into real life projects.

These spaces for stakeholder to directly help in finding solutions to the most pressing policy issues achieved important results. In the first three versions, about 6,306 participants grouped in 764 teams developed 872 ideas based on over 3,566 public datasets. Organisations expressed interest in 161 innovative ideas.

The Open Government Participatory website of Morocco

The open government portal of Morocco was launched with the aim of providing an online interface for the co-creation of the second OGP NAP for the 2021-2023 period, with the support of the OECD. Through its interactive functionalities, stakeholders were able to submit ideas and proposal as well as consult information on and register for thematic events and co-creation webinars along 10 axes: "integrity and fight against corruption, access to information, gender equality, innovation and digital governance, transparency on budget and taxation equity, open justice, participative democracy, inclusiveness and inter-regional equity, quality of public services and environment and access to natural resources". These inputs informed discussions of the OGP steering committee and identified implementing public administrations and resulted in 22 commitments. In addition, in December 2021 Morocco launched the online "civil society space" on the national open government portal to increase the engagement with CSOs on the OGP process and open it more largely to civil society, in addition to the CSO taking part in the OGP steering committee, thus building on the participatory approach adopted in the co-creation process and strengthening it beyond it. Similarly, the new version of the portal also includes a comment section for the implementation of each commitment as well as a public consultation module, in an effort to further engage citizens and CSOs throughout the implementation of the NAP.

Source: (OECD, 2021[44]) (OECD, 2021[48]).

The OECD has found that actively engaging all relevant stakeholders during design processes helps to maximise the quality of the information received and its effectiveness.[17] It also helps to ensure buy-in from affected parties and create a sense of shared ownership. (OECD, 2020[27]) Furthermore, previous OECD research has highlighted that governments have had success in meaningfully pursuing administrative simplification and reducing regulatory burdens by focusing on priority areas that they identified usually in co-operation with regulated subjects, mostly businesses. Experience has shown the "Pareto principle" can be applied to administrative burdens – 20% of regulations usually cause 80% of the administrative burden to regulated subjects (OECD, 2010[12]).

In addition, the PA currently does not possess real-time data on the demand for public services, or levels of public satisfaction with public services. The new e-payment platform should be able to collect data on these metrics. As mentioned previously, a series of digital access points are being rolled out to post office branches, which could assist those facing problems with digital literacy or in need of assistance to access services (these future developments are discussed in sub-section "Digital projects in the PA").

It should also be noted that the municipalities use a variety of digital technologies and some have established their own e-portals (see sub-section "Co-ordination of digitalisation across the PA") and mobile applications. These provide transactional services to both citizens and businesses, allowing them to access information as well as submitting queries and complaints, follow up on applications, pay taxes, access maps, etc.

In pursuit of the expected benefits from moving in-person government services online, it should not be forgotten that internet access is not ubiquitous, that many people lack the necessary digital skills to use it effectively and that online interactions are not always suitable for responding to the needs of the public. Maximising the benefits of digital government and data approaches requires a wider focus on connectivity, digital literacy, and accessibility to ensure that digital divides are reduced and not exacerbated.

An important enabler, and constraint, of digital transformation in the public sector is the level of connectivity. Understanding the digital infrastructure of a country and its population allows for an evidence-based approach to balancing face-to-face provision and digital access for public services (Welby and Tan, 2022[26]). However, utilisation of online public services in the PA is currently undermined by a lack of awareness of digital government and even resistance to this new form of service delivery amongst the population. Basic challenges like the high costs of computer equipment and unstable internet connections are a major challenge for the PA and for the delivery of online services (UNDP, 2021[45]). It could be valuable for the PA to consider developing a cross-cutting and comprehensive strategy for digital inclusion that includes connectivity, accessibility, affordability and capability with the example of France's approach discussed in Box A A.17.

Box A A.16. Australia's Public Engagement on Employment Services

In 2018, the government of Australia created an independent Expert Advisory Panel to produce recommendations on how employment services can best assist job seekers and employers in the future to cope with digitalisation and changes in the labour market. The whole process involved extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. more than 560 people attended 23 roundtables and community forums), user-centred design research (i.e. involving more than 550 people), 450 submissions from stakeholders, deliberation and a public discussion paper by the Expert Advisory Panel.

Note: https://www.dewr.gov.au/workforce-australia/consultation/employment-services-expert-advisory-panel.
Source: (Welby and Tan, 2022[26]).

Box A A.17. France's National Plan for Digital inclusion

The French National Plan for Digital Inclusion (Plan national pour un numérique inclusif) was launched in September 2018 as a strategic action by the French State Secretary for Digital, part of the French National Agency for the Cohesion of Territories (ANCT). Its aim is to support the digital transformation of businesses as well as the development of a safe and human-centric digital society in France. Objectives and priorities relate to the provision of support and training to 1,5 million people in topics relevant to digital technology and 21st century competences and combatting the digital divide.

Another strong focus of the plan is achieving digital inclusion for at least one third of the French population over the next 10 years. According to the estimates of the Agency, this translates to equipping a total of 4,5 million French citizens with basic digital skills. Actions under the French National Plan for Digital Inclusion are launched within the framework of the 2030 targets put forward by the European Commission's Digital Decade, which aims to see 80% of European citizens develop basic digital skills in the next decade. The national plan also operates within the context of the four pillars of the European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition: digital skills for citizens, for the labour force, in education, and advanced skills for professionals in the ICT sector.

Source: (OECD, Forthcoming[49]).

Recommendations: Bringing it all together

This Scan has examined the challenges and opportunities, and suggests some key actions to support the simplification and digitalisation of public services in the PA. It has found that, since 2005, the PA has put in place a solid bedrock for the delivery of digital government services, and has an ambitious programme to roll this out more widely, including through establishing the "My Government" electronic services portal.

However, there has not been a sustained attempt to streamline the back office, or to put in place a cross-government administrative simplification strategy. The PA still has an exceptionally complex and fragmented statute book, containing laws issued under different regimes, that are difficult for SMEs and the general public to understand and navigate. In addition, the PA has not yet put in place a comprehensive set of policies and mechanisms to measure and simplify administrative procedures. Civil servants lack guidance and methodologies, as well as sufficient training, to carry such simplification reviews. The Authority also faces a number of challenges in implementing its digital transformation programme – including a lack of digital skills in ministries, a lack of data on customer's interactions with public services, a need to update the regulatory framework to support digital governance; and difficulty in accessing predictable financing to support digitalisation efforts.

In order to address these challenges, the PA should look to implement to following actions:

- The PA should expand its current efforts to **develop a cross-cutting administrative simplification strategy**, ideally as part of the planned new e-government strategy (see below), focusing on high-impact regulations and formalities, assessing their costs and supporting their simplification and streamlining. This would entail working closely with stakeholders to identify the sectors of the economy and society with the most burdensome administrative procedures and regulations. Such an exercise would also help generate some momentum behind simplifying the stock of regulations. The MTIT could run a series of workshops to identify together with stakeholders in major policy areas and sectors with the corresponding ministries. Beyond looking at regulations in isolation, regular review of regulations and policy measures in key policy areas and sectors that are identified to be of particular economic or social importance can have very high returns. This should inform the development of the new e-government strategy (see below).

- The PA should prepare a long-term plan with the aim of **consolidating and simplifying the exceptionally complex and fragmented Palestinian statute book** - a key strategic policy objective under Pillar 1, National Policy 3 of the *"National Policy Agenda 2017-22"*. The plan could look to undertake a process of consolidation or codification of the statute book, with a view to achieving clearer language, increased capacity for compliance amongst the regulated population. Line ministries and agencies could be asked to compile a database of the existing regulations within each of their respective areas of policy as a starting point. Following this, ministries and agencies could undertake a relatively simple exercise by scrutinising their databases of regulation and utilise a set of simple questions or checklist to decide whether certain regulations should be kept, scrapped or modified. [18]

- A **new digital government strategy should be introduced** (this is currently planned to be undertaken with the World Bank as part of the Digital West Bank and Gaza project), to determine which public services should be prioritised for digitalisation, that places users at the heart and responds to needs across all channels. The strategy would provide a whole-of-government approach for digital transformation, and a prioritised, timeline for the rollout of this across the PA. It should attempt to map out the capacity or skills needs in different parts of the PA. Development of the strategy should include a wide range of stakeholders to determine which reforms will have the greatest economic and social impact.   The new strategy should take draw upon international best practice as set out in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government

Strategies [OECD/LEGAL/0438], and the six dimensions of the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (see Box A A.5).

- The PA will need to **ensure better co-ordination of digital government projects with efforts at administrative simplification**. This effort should be in line with the recommendations laid out in this Review (Chapter 5). The digital government initiatives should be co-ordinated by one body and summarised in one government-wide policy. Projects in the areas of digital government and administrative simplification should be interlinked (ideally part of one wider strategy) and thoroughly consulted. No digitalisation of public services and/or administrative procedures should be carried out without prior assessment of options for their simplification.

- The **legal and regulatory framework of the PA needs on-going reform** to address identified gaps that are an obstacle to digital government. Laws and regulations on data privacy, protection of personal data, cybersecurity, digital signatures, and certificates will need to be introduced. In particular, having clear regulations on data privacy and data protection will be critical for enabling the introduction of one-stop shops, as well as ensuring public trust in utilising online services. Such reforms will also be a necessary precursor to **introducing the Once-only Principle**, which should be significant driver of burden reduction, ensuring that the public and businesses only have to provide data to public sector organisations.

- **Strong cross-government leadership and co-ordination will be required** for the simplification and digital transformation programme. This effort should be in line with the recommendations laid out in this Review (Chapter 5). This will be necessary to ensure that the necessary legal and regulatory changes are enacted and to overcome and hostility or reservations within ministries. The new e-government strategy should be endorsed at high political level to promote the whole-of-government approach. The High Ministerial Committee headed by the Prime Minister could be used to monitor progress of the new strategy and ensure that it has sufficient political support. The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers could also play a role in the co-ordination and monitoring of the strategy's implementation. However, line ministries and agencies should also have a prominent role in the digital transformation programme, including running the programmes of engagement with their key stakeholders, for their respective policy areas.

- **Continue the development and roll-out digital services for the general public and businesses,** as is currently planned as part of the Digital West Bank and Gaza project. This will entail expanding the range of Government-to-citizen and Government-to-Business services available on the My Government e-services portal. This should be informed by the results of the World Bank inventory exercise and the new e-government strategy to determine which services should be prioritised. Furthermore, the results of the feasibility study on establishing digital access points or one-stop shops in the post office network should feed into the e-government strategy to determine whether this could an effective means of promoting digital services to a population with little ICT skills. The My Government portal should also be equipped with the capability of measuring and accessing data on service demand for different public services. This portal could provide an open channel for the public and businesses to make complaints and suggestions concerning service delivery.

- **Capacities will need to be developed in key areas of administrative simplification and digital skills.** This will need to focus upon the following:
  - **Clear and comprehensive guidance and a methodology for administrative simplification** will need to be developed. This methodology should clarify when such a simplification exercise needs to be carried out (e.g. x number of years after a regulation, or group of regulations, are published, prior to undertaking a digitalisation reform of a public service), as well as the processes to be followed and the different tools that ministries can employ to assess impacts e.g. The Standard Cost Model, customer journey mapping. Ministerial staff will need to be trained on how to conduct simplification projects or ensure the quality of reviews contracted out

to academics and to use evaluations of existing regulations before amending regulations. All evaluations should be published online in a central place that is easily accessible to the general public. Resources for reviews could be focused on high impact regulations to avoid evaluation fatigue. The OECD will provide capacity building sessions on administrative simplification methodologies as part of this EU-funded project.

o **Capacities will need to be developed in key areas of digital skills,** to ensure the effective roll-out and implementation of the digitalisation of PA public services. This will need to focus upon building technical capacity in MTIT, as well as other line ministries and agencies where required, in the following **subject** areas: *big data analytics, Artificial Intelligence, database management, cyber security, and blockchain technology.*

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Notes

[1] The informal sector has been broadly characterised as comprising production units that operate on a small scale and at a low level of organisation, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production, and with the primary objective of generating income and employment for the persons concerned. (OECD, 2001[51]).

[2] Administrative simplification is one tool, amongst a number of different approaches, for carrying out ex-post evaluation of the stock of regulation. For more detail, see the OECD report *"Why Is Administrative Simplification So Complicated?"* (OECD, 2010[12]) The OECD report *"Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People"* discusses the wider "portfolio" of different approaches to ex post evaluation of regulation in more detail. (OECD, 2022[50]) This topic is also explored in the *OECD Best Practice Principles for Reviewing the Stock of Regulation*. (OECD, 2020[52]).

[3] These strategic documents were reviewed in more detail, from the wider perspective of regulatory policy and ex-post evaluation in the OECD report *"Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People"* (OECD, 2022[50]).

[4] The challenges facing PA ministries due to understaffing and a lack of analytical resourcing for regulatory policy tools were explored in more detail in the OECD report *"Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People"* (OECD, 2022[50]).

[5] The GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI) measures the key aspects of four GovTech focus areas: supporting core government systems, enhancing service delivery, mainstreaming citizen engagement, and GovTech enablers. More can be found out about it at this address: https://www.worldbank.org/en/programmes/govtech/gtmi.

[6] This website can be viewed at the following address: https://www.gpc.pna.ps/diwan/viewPublicAdvertismentsList.gpc.

[7] www.hukumati.ps.

[8] Information on the portal provided by the PA to the OECD in August 2023.

[9] More information about this project can be found here: https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174355?lang=en.

[10] Figures taken from the PA Technology and Public Administration Cluster 2021-23 (Palestinian Authority, 2021[22]).

[11] Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) is a technique based on a radical redesign of the structure of an organisation to improve its efficiency by optimising processes and reducing costs.

[12] Figure taken from the Telecommunications and Information Technology Sector Strategic Results Framework (2021-2023).

[13] https://www.mtit.pna.ps/Site/New/2470.

[14] For example, the online public services offered by the Ramallah municipality can be viewed here: https://www.ramallah.ps/.

[15] For more information on the New Zealand Better Business Cases methodology, see this address: https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/state-sector-leadership/investment-management/better-business-cases-bbc.

[16] For more information on the United Kingdom Spend Control process, see this address: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/set-up-a-commercial-or-digital-and-technology-spend-controls-pipeline.

[17] The issue of stakeholder engagement by the PA was also analysed in the OECD report *"Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People"* (OECD, 2022[50])*.*

[18] The first two bullets are based upon a recommendation in the recent OECD report *"Rule of Law and Governance in the Palestinian Authority: Delivering Better Policies and Legislation for People"*. (OECD, 2022[50])*.*

Annex B. Prioritising Better for Effective Public Administration Reform in the Palestinian Authority

Introduction

Strategic planning in the public sector necessitates evidence-based problem analysis and prioritisation of public policies. Prioritisation based on objective analysis ensures that resources are directed towards the most critical issues, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of public policies. As highlighted in the OECD's Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance (OECD, 2020[1]), a sound prioritisation process can lead to more realistic commitments and better designed interventions which in turn can help governments develop more credible plans. Failure to prioritise can lead to resource wastage, inefficiency, and diminished public trust. By following a systematic prioritisation process and engaging both internal and external stakeholders, governments can more effectively address societal challenges and work towards building a better future for their citizens.

Experiences across the OECD show that governments often try to address too many problems simultaneously through their strategic documents, endangering the successful achievement of set objectives due to unfocused delivery and scarce resources (OECD, 2018[2]). Various institutional interlocutors of the Palestinian Authority involved in this Review have brought to light similar challenges to the government's reform efforts, citing the PA's strategic plans as overly ambitious and therefore inconsistent with the reality of its limited financial resources and overstretched administrative capacities. Moreover, interlocutors stated that public institutions suffer from insufficient support, clarity, and tools in their fulfilment of each policy development phase, including problem analysis and prioritisation.

This Review (Chapter 5) further underlined that the Palestinian Authority would benefit from more focused prioritisation strategies, allowing for the identification of the most pressing issues in society requiring public intervention and for effective allocation of financial resources. In line with these findings, the Review (Chapter 5) emphasised that the identification of public administration reforms should be informed by the best available evidence and based on a duly planned solid analysis of the current situation. Furthermore, early involvement of civil society and institutional stakeholders in the problem analysis process would increase the likelihood that the strategic framework addresses real needs in society.

In this regard, this Review (Chapter 4) put forward some practical advice supported by country experiences and recommended to invest efforts towards better prioritisation of objectives by focusing on a limited number of carefully analysed, agreed upon, and prioritised issues, in line with the financial circumstances and the most pressing needs in society. It also stressed the need for the PA's prioritisation exercises to build on the evidence collected during the problem analysis phase, including through consultations with both internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, it also recommended the development of more precise guidance, and standardised tools, on prioritisation and objective setting.

In reference to strategic planning, the Palestinian Authority's Prime Minister Office (PMO) is a major player that co-ordinates interinstitutional efforts, provides guidance to line ministries and subordinate bodies, and ensures consistency between the National Development Plan and the different sectoral and cross-cutting

strategies. In this regard, the PMO mentioned that they would be particularly keen to receive specific guidance on both problem analysis and prioritisation of policy objectives.

This Scan seeks to specifically address these two subjects. It is based on information and documents provided by the PMO and line ministries, including identified actors for PAR such as the General Personnel Council (GPC), and the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), through a dedicated questionnaire, document analysis, and fact-finding interviews. According to the assessment methodology, collected information will be considered only if supported with evidence. Moreover, triangulation of information is applied to assess its correctness.

Based on the findings, the Scan forms an institutional review, draws general conclusions and proposes concrete recommendations, where necessary, to further improve the relevance and credibility of public policies. The Scan is articulated in three substantive sections:

1. The first section addresses setting priorities at the national level (national development plan, reform agenda) which are directly related to the tasks of the PA's Prime Minister's Office. This section also provides key guidelines and orientations on how best to clarify and delineate institutional mandates that will help to create a safer, more reliable and favourable institutional environment for strategic co-ordination and quality control from the centre.

2. The second section examines the legal framework, guidance, and tools for the PA's sectoral strategic planning efforts, with a focus on problem analysis and prioritisation. In particular, it assesses:

   - whether problem analysis and prioritisation of problems to be addressed are regulated homogeneously throughout public administration;
   - the comprehensiveness and clarity of existing guidance on inclusive and evidence-based problem analysis and prioritisation, and its compliance to international standards;
   - whether such guidance is complemented by practical tools to support the work of sector ministries.

3. The subsequent sections look at the current problem analysis and prioritisation practices. They assess:

   - whether policy proposals are based on a comprehensive, inclusive, and evidence-based problem analysis;
   - whether practices are compliant with legislation or guidelines.

Leveraging national priorities by the centre of government

The PA faces a challenging landscape when establishing national priorities. Limited resources necessitate a strategic and focused approach to ensure effective implementation. The OECD's work on prioritisation in central government (OECD, 2024[52]) highlights the crucial role of Centres of Government (CoGs) in setting national priorities and translating them into co-ordinated action Figure A B.1). CoGs, such as the PMO, play a key role in formulating long-term visions and ensuring alignment across different planning documents. The Palestinian authorities' context reflects this need for a central entity to guide strategic planning and priority setting.

Figure A B.1. Existence of dedicated units or teams in the CoG to support functions
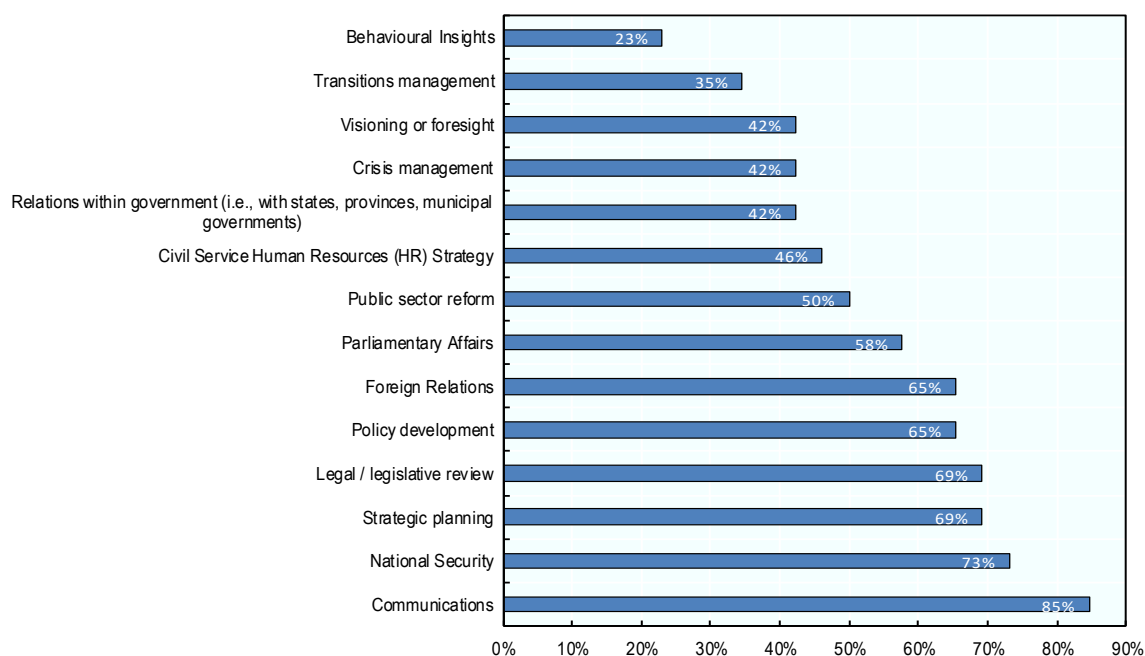
Note: n=26. Respondents to the OECD survey were asked: "Is there a dedicated unit or team at the CoG to support the following functions?". Source (OECD, 2023[53]).

As identified in this Review, the current strategic framework of the PA poses challenges in achieving national objectives. While the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2023 aligns its objectives with various international best practices, such as those outlined in the OECD/SIGMA Principles of Public Administration and the OECD Framework for Sound Public Governance, its extensive scope covering numerous reform areas may hinder effective implementation. This Review has highlighted that overly ambitious planning can lead to the dispersion of limited resources, resulting in insufficient progress across various fronts. Due to shortcomings in delivering tangible outcomes, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) proposed a shift from the NDP towards a more targeted Government Programme (GP) in late 2022, focusing on a few main pillars, strategic priorities, and projects.

The GRA, adopted by the Council of Ministers (CoM) in April 2022, aims to address priority issues hindering national development, emphasising governance and accountability in public institutions and improvements in service delivery. It identifies twenty reform priorities grouped into five clusters, including administrative, financial, and economic reforms. The Government Reform Agenda (GRA) 2022 offers more specific reform measures compared to the NDP. This focused approach aligns with the concept of effective prioritisation at the Council of Ministers (CoM). However, the GRA lacks essential performance management elements for effective priority setting, such as clear timeframes, performance indicators, and a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy. Without clear timeframes, measuring progress and holding contributing actors accountable becomes challenging. The absence of performance indicators weakens the ability to assess the effectiveness of reform efforts. Moreover, limited stakeholder engagement risks hindering ownership and implementation of the reforms.

The alignment between the NDP and the GRA presents certain similarities in objectives for PAR, particularly in areas related to public administration organisation, integrity, service delivery, and public financial management. However, there are gaps in thematic areas such as policy development, co-ordination, and gender. The GRA specifies some NDP objectives and introduces new priorities, but the

hierarchy between the two documents remains unclear. This situation within the PA reflects a broader challenge identified in this Review as the existence of multiple, potentially conflicting strategic documents can complicate prioritisation efforts.

In the PA's case, the unclear relationship between the NDP and the GRA creates uncertainty and undermines the effectiveness of both documents. Furthermore, the OECD's fact-finding missions revealed that some stakeholders within the PA view the GRA, despite its lack of clarity, as the primary strategic document. This highlights the need for a streamlined and coherent framework for national priority setting.

This situation can be addressed by strengthening the role of centre of government bodies such as the PMO in leading work on strategic planning, aligning documents and priorities, and on the definition of the country's long-term vision. CoGs lead work on strategic planning and on country's long-term vision by helping define overall government long-term visions, then translating this into shorter-term plans and action (see Box A B.1). The specific vision for the future of the country is the element that underpins most of the strategic planning process and the content of planning documents (Box A B.2). As identified in Figure A B.2, in 69% of countries, CoGs lead the formulation of the government's long-term vision, through national development plans for example. Such plans provide a common framework for all ministries to align specific actions.

Box A B.1. Boosting performance through focused priorities in New Zealand

Cross-cutting issues can create a challenge requiring comprehensive views and multi-agency cooperation. To address this, in 2012 New Zealand adopted the Better Public Services programme with a limited number of priorities and gathered institutions around their achievement.

The government of New Zealand met several times to agree on the ten most persistent social problems to be addressed by the public administration over a five-year term. The plan prescribed ambitious targets and set out baseline progress indicators. Public reports were published every six months, making the group collectively accountable. Performance increased in all areas.

This approach required the public administration, including the CoG – the Department of the Prime Minister of Cabinet, the Treasury and the Public Service Commission – to overcome agency barriers and silos. Commitment to the goals set out and a relatively stable political environment were key enablers.

Source: (OECD, 2024[54]).

Box A B.2. Latvia's long-term National Development Plan

In 2020, the Latvian government and parliament approved the National Development Plan 2021-2027 (NDP2027). The plan defines the strategic goals, priorities, measures and indicative investment needs for seven years to achieve sustainable and balanced development. The NDP2027 sets 4 strategic goals for 2027 in 6 priority areas and 18 directions for key policies.

The creation of the NDP2027 was centrally led by the Cross-Sectoral Co-ordination Centre, a CoG entity currently integrated into the State Chancellery, with a mandate to develop a long-term strategic approach to public policymaking. The unique position of the PKC made it possible to develop the NDP coherently and collaboratively in accordance with the Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In addition, the NDP incorporates engagement with citizens, experts and other stakeholders. Over 150 different stakeholders work in 6 working groups organised by the PKC under the prime minister's authority. These activities helped the CoG gather insights from different groups, providing valuable input for the plans while building advocacy.

The plan outlines the long-term vision and how it translates into operational plans, including information on indicators, responsible authorities and funding.

Finally, the NDP2027 was created in line with the resources available in the country. Policy changes are supported by public investment from the national budget, European Union (EU) funds and other financial instruments. In this context, abrupt crises might change financial possibilities, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic and the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility response to it.

Source: (ESDN, accessed on 15 March 2024[5]), (Government of Latvia, accessed on 15 March 2024[6]).

Figure A B.2. CoGs are crucial for the development of a long-term vision for the country
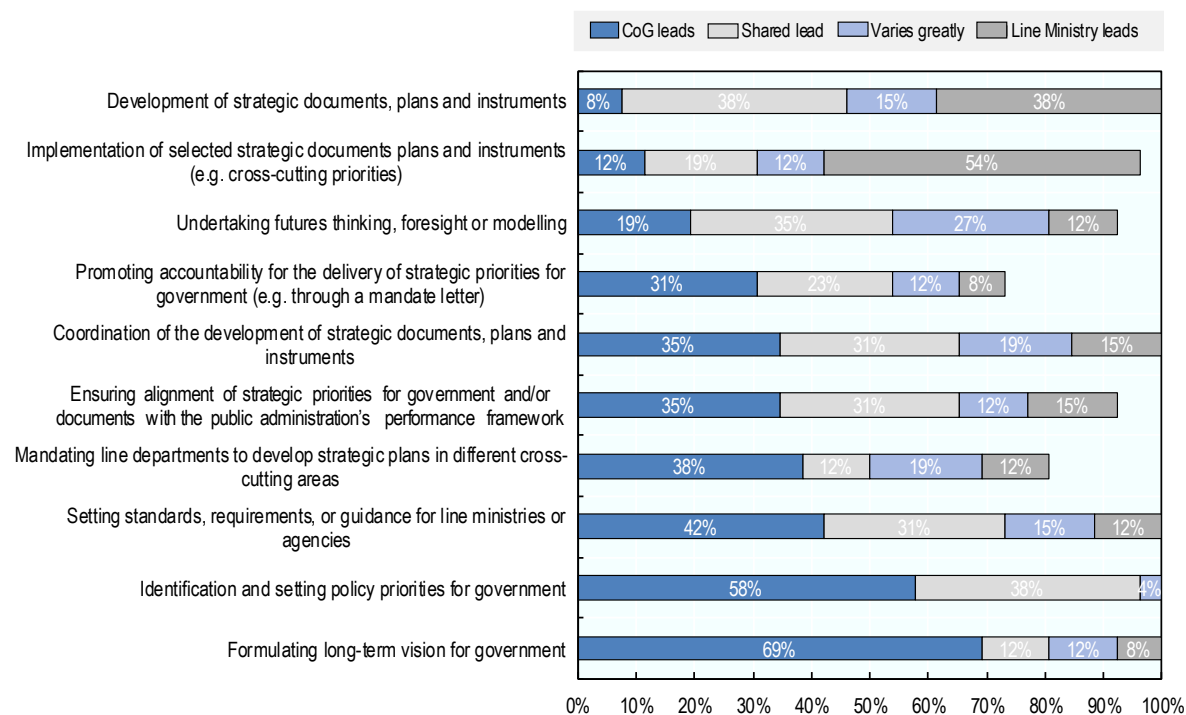
Note: n=26. Respondents to the OECD survey were asked: "For each of the below activities regarding setting the vision, priorities and strategic planning, please indicate who has the primary responsibility".
Source: (OECD, 2023[53]).

Effective development also requires national priorities to be aligned with local realities. The PA's approach could benefit from fostering stronger intergovernmental dialogue and collaborative planning mechanisms. This would allow local actors to contribute to national strategies while ensuring local needs are addressed. Additionally, national strategies should be flexible to accommodate the diverse strengths and challenges of different local entities.

Experiences from OECD member countries illustrate that transparent planning and prioritisation processes, supported by active involvement of external stakeholders, can bolster the credibility and support for overarching national objectives. Box A B.3 highlights the significance of external engagement in Estonia's extensive planning procedures. While the CoG takes the lead in certain engagement efforts, it also oversees the adherence to consultation mandates in strategic documents or instruments prepared by other government sectors.

> **Box A B.3. Estonia 2035 action plan**
>
> The elaboration of Estonia 2035, the national long-term development strategy, was heavily underpinned by stakeholder engagement activities. It gathered views from almost 17 000 participants, including experts, researchers, politicians, business representatives and citizens, among others. Moreover, once a year, the CoG holds the Strategy Day of the Opinion Journey, an event aimed at fostering discussions among policymakers and other stakeholders to overview the achievement of the goals, co-create policies and, in particular, collect data and evidence within the framework of the Estonia 2035 strategy.
>
> During the Strategy Day of the Opinion Journey in 2022, close to 140 discussions were chaired and organised by citizens, involving more than 1 000 people. Approximately 800 ideas and proposals on 12 topics were suggested by the participants. Evidence gathered through this activity will be submitted to the Government Office and will help inform the new version of the Estonia 2035 action plan.
>
> The Government Office organised a roundtable seminar with discussion chairpersons and policymakers across the government to filter out the most relevant solutions and exchange views on what should be prioritised. This was also complemented by innovation sprints: around 40 public sector issues get solved annually by means of design methods facilitated by the Public Sector Innovation Unit of the Government Office.
>
> The development of the action plan, together with a wide range of stakeholders, was important to gather the feedback, experiences and points of view from those who will be mostly impacted by the actions and priorities included in the strategy. In this context, it is important to ensure the constant inclusion and input of minorities and underrepresented groups, leaving no one behind and addressing all needs. Overall, working closely with different stakeholders can foster acceptance and support for the long-term national goals from stakeholders inside and outside the CoG.
>
> Source: (Government of Estonia, 2021[7]).

In numerous OECD countries, the CoG assumes quality review function of documents submitted to cabinet (see Figure A B.3). This function usually entails assessing whether the proposed item is aligned with the government priorities, proper quality standards, processes and procedures have been followed and that the document conforms to consultation, financial and legal criteria. For some of these functions, for example, legal and fiscal conformity, the centre can share its responsibility with other entities. Overall, in 2023, 66% of the surveyed OECD countries declared this quality review function as top or significant priority for their CoGs.

Figure A B.3. Revision of policy proposals, legislation and other policy documents
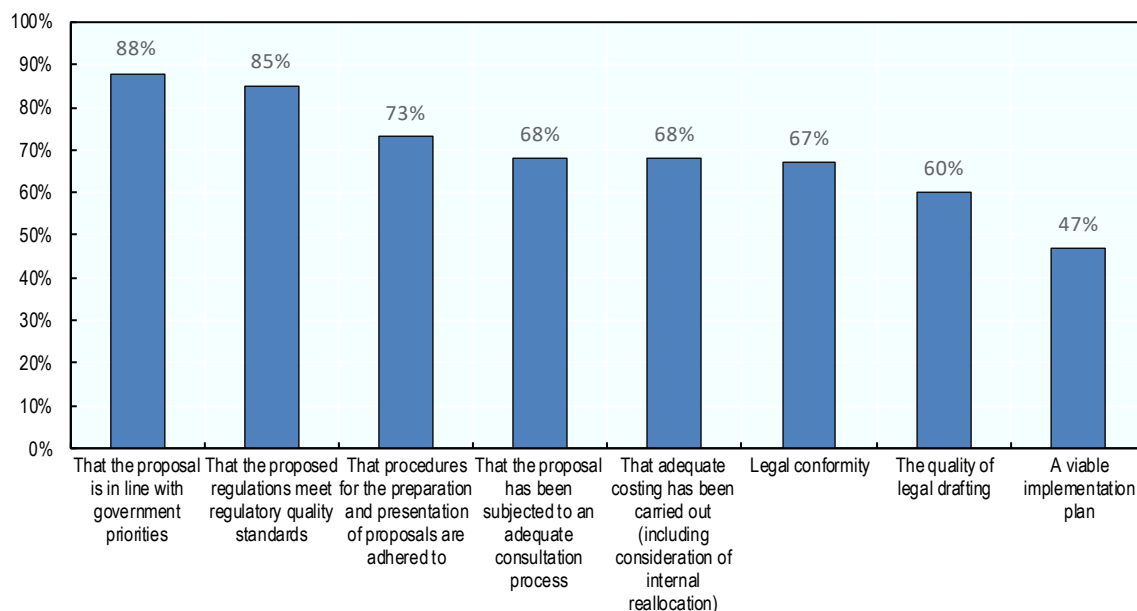
Note: n=24; Respondents to the survey were asked: "When reviewing draft policy proposals, legislation, or other policy documents, which aspects does the CoG ensure?"
Source: (OECD, 2023[53]).

In order to optimise the effectiveness of prioritisation and overall strategic planning efforts within the PA, it is crucial to delineate clear responsibilities across various institutions. By establishing transparent frameworks and defining roles, the PMO can play a pivotal role in fostering collaboration and co-ordination with all involved actors. Through this structured approach, the Palestinian Authority can streamline decision-making processes, enhance accountability, and ensure alignment with national priorities. Moreover, delineating responsibilities will facilitate smoother interagency communication and resource allocation, ultimately leading to more coherent and impactful initiatives. Based on OECD good practices, the PMO can use the following list of principles and guidelines for clarifying and delineating institutional mandates to create a safer, more reliable, and favourable institutional environment for strategic co-ordination and quality control from the centre (see Box A B.4).

Box A B.4. Principles and guidelines for strategic co-ordination and quality control at the CoG

1. Establish clear strategic process and planning frameworks:

Define a clear strategic planning framework with high-level roles and responsibilities, developed by the centre of government and consulted across the government.

2. Define and update mandates for central institutions:

Prepare and regularly update mandates on strategic planning, co-ordination, and review activities for each institution involved particularly at the CoG.

3. Codify roles and responsibilities:

Codify roles and responsibilities by publishing laws, decrees, or a manual reflecting the mandates of central institutions and line ministries.

4. Define clear work principles and procedures:

Define clear and detailed principles of work and procedures (for instance whole-of-government rules of procedures) in preparing, submitting, reviewing and approving government documents to ensure guidelines are effectively communicated to all stakeholders and implemented across the government.

5. Embed the review function in processes:

Embed the review function in processes through specific documents (for instance, presentation notes of documents submitted for review and approval for Cabinet meetings).

Define a challenge and reject function from the centre on documents that are not in line with government priorities, standards or requirements on strategic documents.

6. Ensure comprehensive controls and checks:

Assign quality review functions for documents submitted to cabinet, ensuring alignment with:

- government priorities,
- adherence to quality standards,
- and compliance with consultation, financial, and legal criteria.

7. Leverage virtual processes:

Utilise virtual processes when possible, drawing insights from e-government practices on documents reviews and submissions to enhance efficiency and accessibility.

8. Establish effective interministerial bodies:

Establish and codify interministerial bodies with clear mandates, roles, and tasks to ensure co-ordination and quality control across government agencies and to prepare decision-making from the highest-level of the executive.

9. Ensure government capacities to perform the functions:

Ensure that involved entities have the necessary capacities, both at staff and skills level, to effectively perform their roles in strategic co-ordination and quality control.

10. Support ministries with frameworks and standards:

Provide support to ministries by setting frameworks, standards, guidance, templates and building capacity in strategic planning.

> 11. Facilitate the communication of government priorities:
>
> Contribute to the overall communication of specific government targets and priorities.
>
> Promote consistency of communications by ensuring that the link with government priorities guides all government actions and plans.

To address the above identified challenges and enhance the effectiveness of national priorities, the PA can benefit from adopting a more focused and inclusive approach to national priority setting. This approach could consider the following guiding elements:

- The PA could develop a single, concise strategic plan that prioritises a limited number of key objectives aligned with the highest level of convergence between the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Government Reform Agenda (GRA). These core areas of agreement include the organisation and functions of public administration, integrity, service delivery, and public financial management. By focusing on these strategic priorities, the PA can build upon the strengths of both the NDP and the GRA, while addressing their limitations. This will ensure a more effective and impactful plan that concentrates resources and considers national needs, financial viability, and institutional capacity.
- Actively engaging with intergovernmental entities, civil society, the private sector, and international partners throughout the planning and implementation process is crucial. This engagement fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders, increases the legitimacy of the reforms, and can provide valuable insights to inform the prioritisation process. This Review and compendium of practices at the CoG (OECD, 2024[58]) both highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement for effective priority setting.
- Clear performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms are essential for tracking progress towards the agreed national priorities. These indicators should be integrated into strategic plans to ensure ongoing evaluation and adaptation of strategies as needed. Effective performance measurement allows the PA to identify areas where reforms are succeeding and areas where adjustments are necessary.
- Finally, the PMO can use the list of principles and guidelines for clarifying and delineating institutional mandates to create a safer, more reliable, and favourable institutional environment for strategic co-ordination and quality control from the centre (see Box A B.4).

Review of the Palestinian Authority's strategic framework for problem analysis and prioritisation

When drafting this Scan, the PA's sectoral strategic planning exercise was supported by the Handbook on the Elaboration of Sectoral and Cross-Cutting Strategies. Among all phases of the policy cycle, the guidance offered mainly focuses on the policy identification and formulation phases. The Handbook falls short in providing accurate guidance on evidence-based problem analysis, and prioritisation of objectives. As a result, most of the institutional stakeholders interviewed during the elaboration of this Review recognised that strategic plans are often overambitious and unrealistic, and not consistent with the reality of both the limited financial resources and the administrative capacities that are necessary to deal with numerous reform areas simultaneously.

In view of the new policy cycle 2024-2029, the Palestinian Authority's Prime Minister Office (PMO) conducted a thorough review from September to November 2022 of the strengths and weaknesses in its current approach to enable the government to achieve its national priorities through better use of its

resources and a policy-driven approach. This review has been concretised in a document titled "Strategic planning approach" (Palestinian Authority's Prime Minister Office (PMO), 2022[8]). It provides an overview of current strategic planning practices and proposes a new approach to strategic planning that balances innovation and constraints to public administration capacity.

Consistently with findings and recommendations from this Review (Chapter 5), the document recognises that current prioritisation practices have so far proved insufficient and have therefore undermined the PA's capacity to effectively utilise its limited resources to deliver tangible results as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP). Moreover, it highlights that insufficient problem analysis, including stakeholder analysis, represents a horizontal methodological shortcoming throughout the public administration and that effective situation analysis is hindered by poor data availability. This affects the practicality of strategic decisions, including target setting. Overall, the integration of cross-cutting issues into sectoral policies is recognised as limited.

The new approach aims to promote more effective strategic planning and better integration of planning, budgeting, and aid management. It calls for a shift from an overly comprehensive National Development Plan (NDP) to a new government programme focusing on a narrower set of main pillars, strategic priorities, and strategic projects. It also puts forward a new strategic planning methodology aiming to increase the quality of analysis and planning by promoting stronger results-oriented and evidence-based practices.

Enhanced co-operation among institutions and external stakeholders, improved integration between cross-cutting and sector-specific issues, increased accountability for results and, overall, a more coherent and effective planning process, can aid management and the budgeting system in building the spirit of the new approach. Based on the new approach, in February 2023 the PMO issued new guidelines for strategic planning titled "Ministry and agency strategy guidelines – Strategic planning cycle 2024-2029" to support ministries and public agencies in the development of their sectoral and cross-cutting strategies.

These guidelines outline the overall strategic planning cycle and set content and process requirements. In line with the OECD recommendations outlined in this Review (Chapter 5), the guidelines specifically address the problem analysis phase. As also confirmed by the PMO, neither problem analysis or priority setting is a standard and regular practice among the PA's institutions.

The guidelines recognise the strategic importance of sound problem analysis and the fact that any policy intervention must focus on a limited number of specific problems. The guidelines require ministries and agencies to describe the current situation, including the main issues and their causes, to present the results achieved during the previous policy cycle (2017-2023), as well as the achievement of targets and the reasons behind performance.

The staff working in specific technical areas are clearly indicated as responsible for developing problem analysis. This allows for both reducing the burden of policy and planning directorates and increasing the involvement and responsibility of technical directorates.

The use of problem analysis methodologies, notably problem tree analysis, to better understand the key issues at a deeper level is recommended within the guidelines of the PMO. This is a notable progression, as previous strategic planning guidelines had no mention of any analytical methodology. However, the recommendation is not accompanied by more detailed guidance to support ministries and agencies in their problem analysis.

The guidelines also invite users to consult other relevant institutions and external stakeholders to provide their views. As confirmed by institutional interlocutors, there is no regulatory framework either mandating inter-institutional and public consultations or setting quality requirements, thus leaving these key functions to the good will of each institution. Due to the lack of more detailed guidance-setting process and output standards for inter-institutional and public consultation, the quality of these functions may vary widely throughout public organisations. However, consulted institutions stressed that these recommendations and invitations have been well received and put into practice.

Despite the clear willingness of the PMO to improve the practicality of sectoral strategies, the guidelines only acknowledge problem analysis as a basic step in the prioritisation process; they do not specifically mention the need to prioritise the identified problems. As confirmed by consulted institutions, there is no further guidance on prioritisation.

The OECD also observes that the PA may profit from the adoption of a regulatory framework setting process and output quality standards, and from more detailed methodological guidance. The PMO's quality control authority could also be enhanced, thus allowing it to play a stronger role in promoting the quality of strategic documents.

The effectiveness of the PA's strategic framework's also hinges on how well it facilitates alignment with local development strategies. This could involve mechanisms for incorporating local needs assessments or fostering dialogue between national and local actors.

Finally, the new strategic planning approach introduces renewed efforts to integrate cross-cutting issues into sectoral strategies. This was recognised by institutional stakeholders as an issue during the previous policy cycle. For the period 2024-2029, the new approach provides for ministries and agencies, under the leadership of the cross-sectoral ministries and government agencies, to agree upon and commit to cross-cutting issues before starting the preparation of respective strategic documents. Sectoral documents are consequently required to comprehensively reflect the established cross-cutting commitments. The process envisages broad consultations with both internal and external stakeholders. Agreements among the relevant parties are formalised through memoranda of understanding signed by the top management. These memoranda describe the different conclusions of the consultation process, reached agreements, and responsibilities of each party. The PMO oversees the process and ensures all parties cooperate in a constructive manner. The successful implementation of this new approach would be a positive development in reinforcing the PA's strategic planning capacities. However, at the time of this Scan, memoranda are yet to be signed and it is not possible to assess them in more detail.

Review of problem analysis and prioritisation practices in the Palestinian Authority

Consistent with the new strategic planning approach and guidelines, and in ensuring that the scope of its policy proposals is based on comprehensive, inclusive, and evidence-based problem analysis, the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA) General Directorate of Planning and Policies confirmed that it co-ordinated and conducted problem analysis and prioritisation through a broad participatory process involving the gender units and the planning officers from the partner institutions. The main sectors involved are education, health, labour, economy, protection, equality, justice, and political participation. Data obtained from court proceedings and prosecutions have been underlined as particularly important to detect problems, analyse their causes, and develop protection policies.

As stated by the MoWA, working groups are established to animate debates among technical specialists, also based on existing studies, reviews, reports, and statistics. The problem analysis related to the "Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy 2021-2023", which was undertaken internally by the MoWA itself, provides a thorough description of the general context, including the political context, with the support of available statistics. It analyses the main aspects of gender equity and women empowerment, notably discrimination against women, violence against women, and economic and political empowerment of women. The analysis took into consideration economic, social, infrastructure and judicial variables. The General Planning and Policies Directorate reviewed the "National Intersectoral Strategic Document to Enhance Gender Equality and Equity and Women Empowerment 2017-2022" to identify both achievements and failures. Moreover, the Directorate addressed the weak institutional commitment to gender issues that the MoWA had recognised during the previous policy cycle. The MoWA also relies on qualitative studies such as official government reports, monitoring reports, reports elaborated by international organisations, as

well as other studies. The MoWA stated that it performed a SWOT analysis to assess the low level of women's presence in decision-making positions. The problem analysis procedure also includes a stakeholder analysis and identifies potential new partners. Moreover, as also confirmed by the GPC, the MoWA organised a set of discussion events involving public institutions, civil society, and international federations and commissions. Assessing the quality of these processes and related outputs was not possible as they have not been shared with the OECD.

According to the MoWA, its prioritisation process is based on its own experience. Prioritisation happened in the framework of the problem analysis process, which indeed are closely interlinked processes. Co-operation and technical discussions with regional and international partners have also become a regular practice in the MoWA, especially since the establishment of a permanent Advisory Board, which represents a positive development. As already discussed, the MoWA stated that large-scale consultations with external stakeholders took place during the problem analysis phase. Moreover, the MoWA's Planning and Policy Department also co-ordinated large inter-institutional consultations, which took place in the form of workshops, meetings with decision-makers, and work retreats. In its answer to the questionnaire, the MoWA did not mention specific prioritisation tools they used; the latest strategic document, notably the Gender Sector Strategy 2021-2023, does not provide a description of any prioritisation exercise.

The General Personnel Council (GPC) stated that it makes use of dedicated workshops with internal and external stakeholders to strengthen the evidence-base for its strategic documents. Furthermore, in line with the PMO's guidance, analytical tools such as a complete analysis of political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors (PESTLE), a complete list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), problem tree drawings, and existing evaluations of previous strategies are used to bolster its problem analysis. The OECD could not further assess the quality of problem analysis processes and outputs.

According to the GPC, its planning department takes the lead in its prioritisation processes; group discussions are the most used prioritisation exercises to identify the most important problems that need to be addressed. The GPC further declared that inter-institutional consultations, workshops and public consultation workshops took place as well.

The PMO leads and oversees the strategic planning process in relation to the elaboration of both the National Development Plan (NDP) and the various sectoral and cross-cutting strategies. While it has a specific role in ensuring consistency between sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies and the NDP, the PMO does not actively intervene during the problem analysis and prioritisation phases. Rather, the PMO intervenes later in the strategic planning process.

Though the PMO regularly provides comments concerning consistency between priorities identified in the sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies and those of the NDP, ministries and agencies reserve the right whether to accept or reject them. The PMO's role, and its contribution to the quality of the policy development cycle as a whole, would benefit from a stronger and official mandate giving it the authority to return policy documents to the different institutions if they do not comply with expected quality standards and the PMO's initial comments.

The MoWA flagged that the legal department of the Council of Ministers (CoM) is directly involved in ensuring consistency between government priorities and sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies. The department distributes strategic documents to the various institutions for three readings before approval. However, the MoWA also reported that no feedback mechanism exists and that it is not informed about the result of the written consultation. Evidence regarding how this written inter-institutional consultation is regulated and performed has yet to be collected by the OECD.

Towards enhanced problem analysis and prioritisation in the Palestinian Authority

Strategic planning in the public sector is a critical process that helps governments effectively address societal challenges and efficiently allocate resources. Among the key phases of strategic planning is the prioritisation of public policies, through which governments must make choices among several initiatives, all of which could serve to advance policy goals but cannot be pursued due to various constraints (OECD, 2022[9]). Governments must therefore possess the capacity to analyse the relative urgency of problems faced by their constituents in a systematic, evidence-based manner, and measure the linkage between proposed policy plans and potential outcomes and impacts. Effective policy prioritisation, based on sound problem analysis and bolstered through strong stakeholder engagement, helps lead to more realistic commitments and better-designed interventions which can help governments to develop more credible plans (OECD, 2020[1]).

Enhancing problem analysis

In the public sector, evidence-based problem analysis forms the foundation for effective decision-making and policy formulation. It involves a systematic assessment of societal issues, utilising data, research, and stakeholder inputs, as well as monitoring major results of ongoing and previous strategies drawing from past programmes, reforms, and plans (OECD, 2018[2]). By analysing problems objectively and comprehensively, decision-makers can identify the most pressing issues and allocate resources accordingly. Evidence-based problem analysis ensures that policy priorities are rooted in a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by society and ensures the relevance of public policies.

Strong evidence-based problem analysis forms the basis for prioritisation. Based on it, prioritisation is crucial for the credibility and effectiveness of public policies. By focusing resources on the most significant problems, governments demonstrate a commitment to addressing the most pressing needs of their citizens. Prioritisation allows policymakers to concentrate efforts on issues that have the greatest impact on society, maximising value-for-money, and the potential for positive change. Moreover, clear prioritisation helps to align policies with the overall vision and goals of the government, enhancing the consistency of governments' approach.

On the contrary, the absence of a systematic prioritisation process can have detrimental consequences for government effectiveness. Without prioritisation, governments risk spreading resources too thinly across a multitude of problems, resulting in limited impact and inefficiency. This lack of focus can lead to disjointed efforts, conflicting objectives, and diluted outcomes. Governments might only achieve a few minor goals, or a major goal at the expense of others and as such will not achieve an overarching strategic endeavour (OECD, 2022[9]). Furthermore, without clear prioritisation, public policies may lack credibility and fail to garner public support, diminishing trust in the government's ability to address societal issues effectively and to attract donors' support.

The need to enhance the effectiveness and impact of public policies, to use financial resources rationally and expand co-operation with civil society are among the main reasons for the PA's interest in more effective problem analysis.

Indeed, as repeatedly underlined by the PMO, there is a commitment by the PA to increase the realism of public policies and a rising interest in strengthening their evidence base. In line with the recommendations that the OECD put forward in the context of this Review (Chapter 5), the PMO promotes a new approach to strategic planning and provides ministries and agencies with revised guidelines for strategic planning. These guidelines represent a positive development as they emphasise the need for public policies to be based on well-informed situation analysis and focus on a limited number of priorities.

The guidelines provide some procedural guidance. However, they may provide further detail to effectively support the work of the ministries and agencies. Moreover, the use of SWOT analysis or the problem tree as the favourite analytical method and engagement with internal and external stakeholders, which is not regulated, are not obligatory. While the guidelines include a specific section on problem analysis, the prioritisation phase may be detailed furtherly. Today, without more thorough methodological guidance, tools, and standard procedures, the quality and consistency of problem analysis and prioritisation throughout public administration may largely vary from one institution to another.

The PA may consider developing more accurate guidance on problem analysis to provide a framework that promotes consistency, thoroughness, and effectiveness in analysing complex problems. This advice is in line with the recommendation of the OECD Council on Public Policy Evaluation which put forward the need to develop guidelines to ensure that evaluation designs, data collection processes and analytical methods adhere to methodological best practices (OECD, 2022[10]) OECD/LEGAL/0478.

The **guidance on problem analysis** could include the following elements:

- How to define the objective and the scope of the analysis – this includes 1) an outline of the objectives of the problem analysis, notably what the analysis aims to achieve, and the specific outcomes expected, and 2) a clarification of the scope of the analysis, including the boundaries, constraints, and time frame. As a rule, the scope of the analysis should be as comprehensive and objective as possible to allow for a full picture of the achieved results, key challenges, and problems within the defined scope to be provided, as well as to support their prioritisation moving forward.

- How to identify the main stakeholders who are affected by or have a vested interest in the problem, and those who have a stake in the implementation of the relevant public policy – this depends on the scope of the analysis and determines the perspectives, needs, and expectations of different stakeholder groups. Stakeholder engagement helps understand the diverse viewpoints and ensures their inclusion in the analysis process. Therefore, this entails the identification of key institutions and external stakeholders, and their corresponding responsibilities.

- Acknowledging that even the best-equipped in-house analytical team cannot have all the information and data useful to understanding the current situation and problems, the PA is recommended to reach out to the widest possible set of institutions to ensure that its analysis is credible and robust. Consultations are important in validating the results of the analysis, but also in gathering additional data, information, and insights. In this regard, it is important that all those involved in the analysis are aware of what is expected from them in this process (e.g., provision of statistics, data and information that is not available to the analytical team, provision of opinion, participation in discussions or verification of the analytical findings through meetings, one-to-one interviews, written questionnaires, etc., clarification of information, especially if various sources lead to conflicting findings).

- Choosing the most appropriate data collection and data analysis methods – data collection methods for problem analysis can include surveys, interviews, focus groups, document reviews, data analysis, and literature reviews, while the most common data analysis methods include problem-tree analysis, SWOT analysis (which are proposed in the PA's strategic planning guidelines), and PESTLE. It is important to provide ministries and agencies with guidance on how to select appropriate methods based on the nature of the problem and available resources. The use of specific data analysis methods and tools requires resources, capacities, and co-ordination. However, the PA may also opt for a less tool-intensive (and simplified) process. This is an option when there is a shortage of in-house skills, analytical expertise, and financial resources. In such cases, the recommendation is to identify key areas of analysis and simply start listing the results achieved, the gaps, the main problems, and their root causes. Afterwards, these can be deepened and enriched through "brainstorming" with stakeholders which, even in the case of a simplified approach, the PA is encouraged to promote. Once the analytical and data collection methods have

been designed, the PA is encouraged to find the right balance between the sophistication of the analysis, the available resources and capacities, and actual needs.

- Defining relevant questions according to the agreed scope – these questions should allow to look at: key challenges and problems remaining from previous strategies, stakeholder views, performance gaps from previous reforms and their causes, good practices from other countries. See Box A B.5 for a concrete self-assessment questionnaire based on OECD guidance (OECD, 2018[2]).

Box A B.5. List of indicative questions for problem analysis (self-assessment questionnaire)

1. Regarding the key challenges and problems related to the implementation of previous strategies:
   - What are the key challenges and problems still not addressed or unsuccessfully addressed according to the beneficiaries of previous strategies? Have any other such challenges (or similar) arisen since the start of the implementation of previous strategies?
   - What are the issues that institutions implementing the reform measures complain about the most?
   - What are the views of the stakeholders on the implementation of the previous strategies?

4. Where are the biggest performance gaps of the previous reforms, based on data, including any internal or external assessments and monitoring and evaluation reports?

5. Regarding the key causes of the problems and gaps according to available data (from external and internal assessments):
   - Why were objectives and performance targets not achieved?
   - Why were activities not implemented?
   - What unplanned activities were undertaken and why?

6. What are the views of the implementing institutions and key stakeholders, including beneficiaries, on the causes of the problems and gaps?

7. How significant is the problem or gap based on the available data and complaints of the implementing institutions or stakeholders, including beneficiaries?

8. How is the country performing in the various areas of a particular sector in comparison to others (similar countries, the region, and international best performers)?

9. What are the systemic reasons behind the difference in performance compared to other countries?

10. What reforms or actions can be adapted from other country reforms or from good performers and what are the limitations of such adaptation?

Source: (OECD, 2018[2]).

Enhancing prioritisation of problems to be addressed

As identified in this Review (Chapter 2), interviewed institutional stakeholders have remarked that the PA has attempted to address too many problems through its strategic documents, thus endangering the successful achievement of set objectives. Defining the exact scope of the strategy and prioritising problems in accordance with their relative importance, urgency, and administrative capacities is to master the "art of

saying no". A strategic initiative with a somewhat limited scope but a genuine focus and realistic intervention plans is worth more than a broad strategy which cannot be realistically implemented (OECD, 2018[2]).

Whilst prioritisation is a participatory process, in practice it may be necessary to ask for preliminary inputs about the scope and priorities from the key decision-makers by organising a joint discussion among them to discuss the results of the problem analysis. Then, participatory discussion can help ensure agreement on the most pressing issues requiring reforms while considering implementation capacities and available resources. The final decision on the scope and priorities would then be taken by the top-level decision-makers.

This assessment has demonstrated that the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) appears to invest substantial efforts in the analysis of main issues and in consulting with institutional and civil society stakeholders. According to the MoWA, problem analysis is based on several analytical sources and discussions with the relevant parties. However, the MoWA has not mentioned any specific choice methods (e.g., ranking) used to set priorities among the identified problems.

As also underlined by the PMO, since prioritisation is a relatively new exercise in the PA, it is recommended to provide more detailed guidance to ministries and agencies. This can take the form of a manual, complemented with a standard toolset. Given the fact that problem analysis and prioritisation are closely interrelated processes, the same manual, or detailed instructions, should cover both topics.

The prioritisation process is a participatory process that typically involves several steps:

- Problem identification (as already discussed earlier)
- Criteria development: establishing criteria to evaluate the severity, urgency, and potential impact of each problem. These criteria can include socio-economic factors, public opinion, feasibility, and alignment with government priorities
- Scoring and ranking: assigning scores to each problem based on the established criteria and ranking them to determine their priority level
- Resource allocation: allocating resources, such as funding, personnel, and time, to the prioritised problems to ensure effective policy implementation. Resource allocation should include an indication of funding sources, at minimum distinguishing between the state budget and external funds needed.

There are several common tools and approaches used to prioritise public policies. They can vary depending on the specific policy area, institutional context, and available resources, and can be used in combination with one another. In this regard, as OECD SIGMA has tested in several countries, a simple scoping and prioritisation tool (see Box 4.5) can consist of a self-assessment table allowing various stakeholders to express their position through a simple numerical scale. The table, or questionnaire, includes:

- the list of all identified problems
- a short description of the main features of the current state of affairs
- suggestions as to how to address each identified issue
- a ranking scale from 1 to 4

Its application requires a careful but comprehensive approach to selecting respondents in order to ensure that relevant inputs are collected from all relevant internal, and ideally external, stakeholders. It is equally important that respondents fully understand the purpose of the questionnaire and have a clear mandate (high-level decision-makers or senior managers) to answer, following internal consultation on the proposed answers before they are submitted to the lead institution. The lead institution can then aggregate answers, share them with respondents and launch a participatory discussion involving decision-makers aimed at

reaching consensus and joint conclusions on the identified challenges, as well as broadly defining actions to address them.

More specifically, such discussions should aim to:

- validate the problem analysis and clarify any diverging conclusions
- agree on the selection of the core and most pressing issues or challenges by discussing their importance, urgency and complexity, and the resources necessary and available to address them
- settle on an indicative set of objectives and broad actions

Finally, it is important to recognise that prioritisation is also the result of multiple driving forces, some of which can also occur outside of the strategic framework (see Figure A B.4).

Figure A B.4. Sources of prioritisation
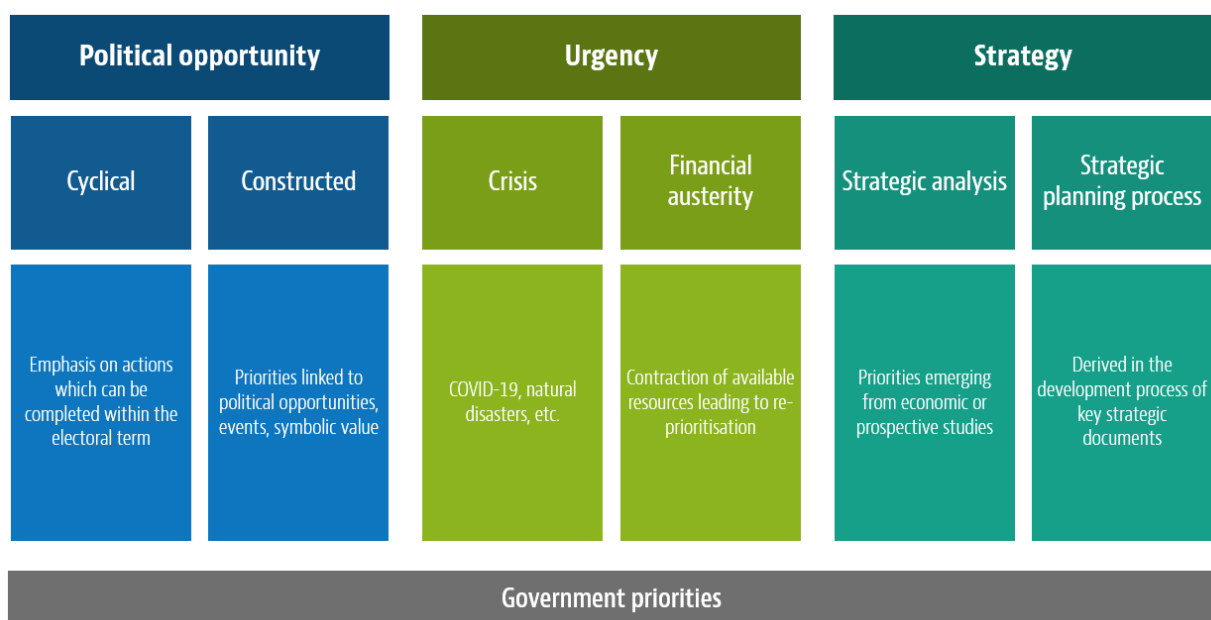
Source: Author's own adapted from (Instiute for Global Change, 2016[11]).

Enhancing quality control functions at the CoG and in line ministries and agencies

Quality control is of paramount importance to the public sector when it comes to strategic planning. It ensures that ministries and agencies operate efficiently, effectively, and in accordance with established standards and procedures. By incorporating quality control measures, public sector organisations can minimise errors, enhance accountability, and maintain the integrity of their operations.

First and foremost, by implementing quality control measures, public institutions can verify that their processes align with legal requirements and internal regulation, or guidance. Secondly, quality control plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality of policy documents. Quality control procedures help verify the accuracy, clarity, and completeness of these documents, ensuring that they are well-structured, logical, and in alignment with the intended goals. By upholding the quality of policy documents, public sector organisations can enhance transparency, credibility, and public trust in the decision-making process.

In the PA, the quality assurance function would benefit from a clearer definition of quality standards and a stronger and officially established authority of the PMO in oversight and authority. This advice is in line

with the recommendation of the OECD Council on Public Policy Evaluation which promotes the quality of evaluations by planning and managing evaluations so that they are fit-for-purpose (OECD, 2022[10]).

Currently, quality control performed by the PMO is rather limited. Beyond co-ordinating the overall policy development cycle, it mainly focuses on ensuring consistency between sector and cross-sectoral strategies, and with the NDP. However, as recognised by the PMO itself, the NDP has a very wide scope encompassing too numerous priorities. With specific reference to problem analysis and priority setting, the PMO assesses whether any problem analysis has been conducted and priorities have been set; attention to the quality of these processes and their outputs is limited.

Moreover, although the PMO provides comments on strategic documents, ministries and institutions have no legal obligation to address them; that there is no legal framework nor rules of procedure for quality control. The PA is therefore recommended to develop a legal act formally establishing PMO's quality control functions. Such control should encompass both the strategic planning process and its policy outputs. Legal requirements should provide for the PMO's right to return policy inputs for revision to the originating institution when their quality is deemed inadequate, or when the process was not compliant with existing rules, and obligate institutions to satisfactorily address the comments of the PMO. Effective assessment of the adequateness of policy inputs and consistency with existing rules is only possible if quality standards are in place and rules of procedures are sufficiently detailed and communicated.

The United Kingdom has developed fit-for-purpose prioritisation templates through their Outcome Delivery Plans that highlight each government department's long-term priority outcomes, strategies for success and relevant performance metrics. These plans also set out initiatives for delivering critical enabling activities essential to the successful achievement of outcomes (see Box A B.6). Establishing a standardised approach to sectoral prioritisation, with particular emphasis on the development of transparent, evidence-based performance metrics, can aid in ensuring quality of policy documents across government agencies.

Box A B.6. Prioritisation in the UK: Outcome Delivery Plans

In 2021, the UK government introduced Outcome Delivery Plans, building on and improving the previous Single Departmental Plans. These plans set out how each UK government department is working towards the delivery of its priority outcomes. Outcome Delivery Plans place a greater emphasis on joint working between departments, enabling departments to plan together to deliver shared outcomes. Outcome Delivery Plans also set out plans for delivering critical enabling activities that are crucial to the successful delivery of outcomes, including: attracting and investing in great people; embracing new ideas; and strengthening functional expertise to support the delivery of better outcomes.

Additionally, Outcome Delivery Plans also set out how departments are working towards becoming more sustainable and how work contributes to the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the government's equality objectives, to ensure government departments contribute to these overarching whole-of-government priorities.

Source: (United Kingdom Cabinet Office, 2021[12]).

Effective quality control should also be supported by proper performance management through performance analysis of line ministries. This can take the form of routine performance check-ups with line ministries track departmental progress of government strategic priorities. Routines, through which data is collected and disseminated according to a set rhythm that creates a recognisable and repetitive pattern, are widely seen as a crucial success factor in promoting the use and value of performance information. Several OECD countries organise routine meetings to review progress on priority goals. The Government

Strategy Secretariat of Finland hosts fortnightly government strategy sessions to verify ministerial progress of strategic objectives (see Box A B.7).

Box A B.7. A targeted number of priorities in Finland's strategic government programme

Finland's strategic planning has been marked by a political tradition of coalition governments and a siloed public administration. As the number of parties involved in coalitions grew, attempts to capture all their objectives in government programmes proved to be difficult and led to the creation of vast unwieldy documents with hundreds of goals. By 2011 for instance, the government was attempting to track approximately 900-line items.

In 2015, the government of Finland attempted to deviate from this trend, moving beyond siloed priorities with its new strategic government programme Finland Vision 2025. This system was built around 26 strategic objectives in 5 policy areas, complemented by a set of structural reforms. The government allocated EUR 1 billion to ensure the effective implementation of those key projects. Representatives of the Government Strategy Secretariat, set up in the Prime Minister's Office in 2015, participated in the work of the five groups of ministers dealing with these priority areas. The strategic government programme was accompanied by an annual implementation plan. Government strategy sessions were held fortnightly – 4-hour evening sessions – with an agenda designed by the strategy secretariat together with the prime minister's political cabinet. The changes introduced in 2015 appear to have made a difference where it matters – in delivering on policy goals. For instance, the government realised its target of raising the employment rate from about 65% to 72%.

Building on this successful initiative, discussions on the importance of interlinkages increased in Finland. Prime Minister Sanna Marin's 2019-23 government programme was developed based on strategic objectives, which support a cross-sectoral approach and aim at addressing interlinkages in an effective manner. The programme is organised around seven strategic "themes" each managed by an inter-ministerial group composed of ministries which have a substantial link to the theme. The government is further focused on four big "priority goals": balanced finances, employment rate at 75%, carbon neutrality by 2035, and decreasing inequality. These strategic themes and priority goals are further specified with around 64 sub-goals with 70 indicators.

Source: (Government of Finland, 2019[13]) ; (Ross, 2019[14]).

Engagement of internal and external stakeholders

The PA recognises that consultations improve the quality of new policies and that it can help greatly in assessing the current situation and challenges and in shaping policy proposals. The new approach to strategic planning recommends the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders working in different areas as they can highlight issues from different perspectives and provide alternative viewpoints and analysis. Broad consultations are also acknowledged as essential to aggregate consensus on policy priorities.

Internal stakeholders, such as government officials at national, regional and local level (see Box 3.1), policy experts, and programme managers, provide valuable insights into the practicalities and feasibility of addressing specific problems. External stakeholders, including civil society organisations, the private sector, academia, and the public, offer diverse perspectives, ensure accountability, and help identify the problems that are most relevant and impactful to the wider society. Stakeholder engagement enhances transparency, legitimacy, and the acceptance of prioritisation outcomes. This is supported by the OECD Council on Open Government, which promotes equal and fair opportunities of all stakeholders to be informed, consulted, and actively involved in all phases of the policy cycle, as well as innovative ways to

effectively engage with stakeholders to source ideas and co-create solutions (OECD, 2017[15]). Likewise, the OECD Council on Public Policy Evaluation [OECD/LEGAL/0478] recommends engaging relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes from the outset in order to create ownership for change and trust in analytical results (OECD, 2022[10]).

Participatory prioritisation is identified in the SIGMA toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation (OECD, 2018[2]) as an efficient tool for public administration reform as it saves time and resources in the implementation and monitoring phase by focusing reforms on the most relevant objectives. In doing so it avoids scattering limited resources on unnecessary processes or on initiatives of less importance or added value. Having a well-facilitated and inclusive discussion on core problems, priority objectives and major actions is of paramount importance for effective prioritisation efforts.

This was clearly highlighted by the MoWA, which stated in the questionnaire having invested significant efforts in consultation. Likewise, the GPS also reported having organised consultations with stakeholders and meetings with the relevant institutions in preparation of its strategic plan. However, it was not possible to assess related evidence such as minutes of discussions, consultation reports, or decisions taken in meetings. However, interviews revealed that neither inter-institutional discussions nor public consultations are supported by dedicated procedures or standards and that representatives of the civil society complained about unsatisfactory consultations. Therefore, the quality of consultations, as well as the quality of inputs that they produce may widely vary throughout the administration. The OECD reiterates the recommendation made in this Review (Chapter 5) to set standards and procedures for both internal and public consultations throughout the public administration, and to establish quality control mechanisms ensuring consistent application.

Embedding inter-institutional consultations, regulation, and guidance into the strategic planning cycle should promote effective discussions on substantive matters and help solve potential conflicts at the administrative level prior to discussion in the Council of Ministers. The PA should set an obligation to consult all affected government bodies, including the Centre of Government bodies (e.g., the PMO, the GS, the MoF, etc.). It should also stipulate a minimum duration for inter-ministerial consultation, which the author ministry of the draft would be unable to shorten on its own initiative. The need to report on and inform the government on the outcomes of the consultation process, such as in a table of responses, is another good practice that the PA is invited to consider. In the PA, if policy departments within ministries are assigned co-ordination responsibilities, it would be important that a quality control unit is clearly identified and accessible at the centre of Government.

Regulation and guidance should set procedures and standards enabling effective public consultations that allow external stakeholders and citizens to participate and influence government policy. The PA could consider good practices such as:

- set out an obligation to inform those likely to be affected by the policy changes and other stakeholders in advance that a public consultation will take place,
- stipulate an obligation to make the draft policy document and other relevant policy documents to be published in tandem, such as explanatory notes or assessment reports, available to the public,
- providing for different forms of public consultations (e.g., public debates, workshops, permanent consultative bodies, etc.),
- establish a minimum duration for written public consultation,
- mandate the lead ministry to report on the outcome of public consultations, whatever forms they take, including the list of comments submitted and feedback, particularly addressing whether the comment was accepted or not and, if not accepted, an explanation,
- finally, oblige the release of the outcome of a public consultation to the public.

In this case, the policy departments within line ministries could play a co-ordinating role. However, regulation should also establish control mechanisms at the Centre of Government, ensuring that procedures and standards are consistently followed and applied. A good indication concerning the effectiveness of public consultation is given by the number of comments and suggestions proposed by the participants in public consultations.

Recent experiences in OECD member countries show that when the planning process is open and includes stakeholder engagement and citizen-driven approaches through citizen participation mechanisms, strategic planning can enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of policies (OECD, 2022[9]). In Brazil, the federal government launched a one-stop digital platform for all government bodies to standardise modes of stakeholder engagement across institutions (see Box A B.8). Furthermore, Box A B.9 outlines successful examples from Italy, Lithuania and Northern Ireland which involved extensive public consultations and/or stakeholder engagement processes.

Box A B.8. Participa + Brazil

The Brazilian government has created the Participa + Brasil digital platform with the purpose of promoting and qualifying the process of social participation, from the availability of modules for the dissemination of consultations and public hearings, research and the promotion of good practices. The platform allows government bodies to upload:

- Public consultations.
- Public hearings.
- Public opinion surveys.
- Information regarding the "collegiates" (also called inter-ministerial commissions or councils in other countries) of the federal public administration, allowing citizens to participate in specific discussions related to the purpose, composition, agendas, minutes of meetings and newsletters.

Through a message to the e-mail address"participacaosocial@presidencia.gov.br", every citizen can send in suggestions for the federal government's public policies.

Source: (OECD, 2022[9]).

Box A B.9. Examples of strategies shaped by stakeholder engagement

The government of Italy: Triannual Development Co-operation Strategy

Italian legislation (Law No. 125/2014) for development co-operation foresees that civil society is consulted during the formulation of the Triannual Development Co-operation Strategy. For this, a permanent civil society-government platform, Consiglio Nazionale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (CNCS), is chaired by the Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs and involves relevant ministries and the Parliamentary Commission for Foreign Affairs.

The government of Lithuania: National Strategy Lithuania 2030

The government of Lithuania has engaged in an in-depth process to define its national strategy Lithuania 2030. The State Progress Council, led by the CoG, was responsible for the drafting process

of the strategy; government authorities, business leaders, community groups and prominent public figures participated in its development. Three working groups were set up on smart economy, smart governance and smart society. The consultation involved the national level and Lithuanians living abroad. The council also travelled to meet with mayors, municipality representatives, young people and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Innovative approaches were developed to involve harder-to-reach groups, including youth and the elderly. The outcome is a national strategy which is guiding the policies of the whole country and whose implementation is monitored in an inclusive process.

Northern Ireland Health Strategy

The Northern Ireland Health Strategy "Investing for Health" (2002) was the outcome of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process and a partnership among different departments, public bodies and district councils. The engagement process included consultations, a debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly, involvement of the Community Development and Health Network, and innovative approaches such as an arts project and a photo competition. The resulting strategy took a broader approach to health than originally planned, focusing on improving well-being and reducing health inequalities.

Source: (OECD, 2016[16]) (OECD, 2019[17]) (Government of Italy, 2019[18])

Overview of recommendations to improve prioritisation in the Palestinian Authority

The PMO should build further on its **new approach for strategic planning**. Its updated guidelines for line ministries represent a positive development as they emphasise the need for public policies to be based on well-informed situation analysis and focus on a limited number of priorities. In particular:

- The PA is encouraged to develop **more accurate guidance on problem analysis** to provide a framework that promotes consistency, thoroughness, and effectiveness in analysing complex problems in line with the recommendation of the OECD Council on Public Policy Evaluation. The guidance could include:
  - How to define the objective and the scope of the analysis – this includes 1) an outline of the objectives of the problem analysis, notably what the analysis aims to achieve, and the specific outcomes expected, and 2) a clarification of the scope of the analysis, including the boundaries, constraints, and time frame.
  - How to identify the main stakeholders who are affected by or have a vested interest in the problem, and those who have a stake in the implementation of the relevant public policy – this depends on the scope of the analysis and determines the perspectives, needs, and expectations of different stakeholder groups.
  - Acknowledging that even the best-equipped in-house analytical team cannot have all the information and data useful to understanding the current situation and problems, the PA is recommended to reach out to the widest possible set of institutions to ensure that its analysis is credible and robust. Consultations are important in validating the results of the analysis, but also in gathering additional data, information, and insights.
  - Choosing the most appropriate data collection and data analysis methods – data collection methods for problem analysis can include surveys, interviews, focus groups, document

reviews, data analysis, and literature reviews, while the most common data analysis methods include problem-tree analysis, SWOT analysis (which are proposed in the PA's strategic planning guidelines), and PESTLE. It is important to provide ministries and agencies with guidance on how to select appropriate methods based on the nature of the problem and available resources. The tools proposed in the strategic planning guidelines, notably the problem tree, or even SWOT analysis, should be clarified further and made mandatory to ensure a standardised approach.

- The PA is encouraged to **develop more detailed guidance on prioritisation**. This can be done through a manual, complemented with a standardised toolset and dedicated trainings that focuses on all steps of the prioritisation process:
  - Criteria development: establishing criteria to evaluate the severity, urgency, and potential impact of each problem. These criteria can include socio-economic factors, public opinion, feasibility, and alignment with government priorities
  - Scoring and ranking: assigning scores to each problem based on the established criteria and ranking them to determine their priority level
  - Resource allocation: allocating resources, such as funding, personnel, and time, to the prioritised problems to ensure effective policy implementation. Resource allocation should at minimum distinguishing between the state budget and external funds needed.

The PA is encouraged to **standardise procedures** for problem analysis and prioritisation. These should also include quality standards for the involvement of inter-institutional and public consultations during the stages of problem identification, discussion, validation of the analytical results, and prioritisation of objectives according to clear criteria.

The PA is encouraged to enhance the **PMO's quality control mandate** to ensure that adequate attention is given to the quality of problem analysis and priority setting processes:

- Develop clear and comprehensive quality standards that outline expectations for problem analysis and priority setting processes. These standards should include legal requirements, internal regulations, and established best practices.
- Ensure the functioning of the Quality Control Unit at the PMO is in line with the recommendations of the OECD Council on Public Policy Evaluation (OECD, 2022[10]).
- Strengthen capacity building at the unit by providing dedicated training programmes on problem analysis, priority setting, and quality control techniques to ensure functioning of the unit and overall improved decision-making.

The PA is encouraged to set pro**cedural rules and quality standards for both interinstitutional consultations and consultation with external stakeholders** to ensure consistent approach across institutions and promote quality inputs for policymaking. In particular the PA may consider the following regulatory standards based on international practices:

- For inter-institutional consultations:
  - Establish opportunity for several forms of consultations (e.g., workshops, informal discussions, working groups, written consultations) depending on the objective of public consultations
  - Set a minimum duration for written inter-institutional consultation allowing all key stakeholders and affected groups for sufficient time to review and comment on policy proposals
  - Stipulate the obligation to consult the CoG bodies (e.g., the PMO, the GS, the MoF)

- Stipulate the obligation to consult all affected government bodies
- Ensure that the lead ministry has sufficient time and resources to collect, analyse, report and use consultees' responses
- Stipulate the obligation to inform the government about the outcomes of the consultation process
- Ensure that a unit (or more than one unit) is responsible for checking the process and outcomes of the public consultation, and that the responsible unit fulfils these responsibilities and provides quality assurance for inter-institutional consultations

- For public consultations:
  - Establish opportunity for several forms of consultations (e.g., workshops, informal discussions, working groups, written consultations) depending on the objective of public consultations
  - Set an obligation to inform those likely to be affected by the policy changes and other stakeholders in advance that a public consultation is to take place, and set a minimum number of days (prior notification)
  - Set an obligation to make available for public consultation other relevant policy documents (e.g., explanatory notes, supporting analysis) that are to be published with the draft policy proposal in addition to the policy proposal itself
  - Set a minimum duration for written public consultation allowing all key stakeholders and affected groups for sufficient time to review and comment on policy proposals
  - Ensure that the lead ministry has sufficient time and resources to collect, analyse, report and use consultees' responses
  - Set an obligation for the lead ministry to report on the outcome of public consultation as part of the documentation submitted with the agenda items for government sessions, including the list of comments submitted and feedback to them (whether accepted/not accepted and, if not accepted, an explanation)
  - Set an obligation to make the report on the outcome of public consultation available to the public
  - Ensure that a unit (or more than one unit) is responsible for checking the process and outcomes of the public consultation, and that the responsible unit fulfils these responsibilities and provides quality assurance for public consultations.

The PA should consider engaging with **regional and international partners** to strengthen methodological, analytical, and organisational capacities for monitoring, evaluation, and prioritisation. External support may also concretise in capacity building through coaching support for problem analysis and prioritisation of pilot policy initiatives. In the short term, the PA may consider focusing on a limited number of public institutions willing to widen their analytical capacities and become pioneers in the PA.

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Annex C. Improving the Organisational and Functional Set-up to Deliver on Sectoral Strategies in the Palestinian Authority

Introduction

This Review (Chapter 3) underlined weaknesses in management and co-ordination of PAR related strategies. Sound co-ordination increases the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes and impact. Collaboration and co-ordination allow for a comprehensive understanding of the problem, effective utilisation of resources, and greater implementation capacity. It enables policymakers to leverage the strengths and expertise of various stakeholders and mobilise collective action towards shared goals. Co-ordinated strategies are more likely to result in sustainable and long-lasting outcomes by addressing the underlying causes of a problem and considering its broader implications. This is particularly true for cross-cutting strategies involve multiple sectors or government entities working together towards a common goal.

In light of the aforementioned observations, this Scan aims at assessing the Palestinian Authority's adeptness in managing and co-ordinating sectoral and cross-cutting strategies. It has involved, through an institutional review, the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Within this context, and on behalf of the request of the PMO, the focus of the investigation centred on the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy (CSGS) as a pivotal lens through which the OECD has appraised the Palestinian Authority's prowess in co-ordination. This effort aligns seamlessly with the broader scope of reviewing public administration reform, where the capacity for effective co-ordination forms a critical linchpin.

Among the global community there is growing awareness that gender equality is a cornerstone of inclusive growth. Gender-balanced leadership and gender-responsive policymaking are more likely to ensure that the benefits of growth are shared equally. Women's full involvement in decision-making and agenda-setting are crucial for adequately reflecting the priorities and needs of all members of society. It also contributes to generate greater trust of citizens in public institutions. Governments continue to face challenges in ensuring that gender equality initiatives are effectively implemented. To be successful, governments need effective governance mechanisms, and sound public sector capacities to ensure effective implementation of gender equality initiatives.

The 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life OECD/LEGAL/0418 (OECD, 2015[1]) provide a clear path for making governments, public administrations, legislatures, and judiciaries more aware and responsive to the perspectives, interests and needs of both women and men (see Box A C.1). To implement a whole-of-government gender equality and mainstreaming strategy, a strong institutional framework and co-ordination mechanisms must be in place, made up of institutions equipped for promoting gender equality in an effective and co-ordinated manner. When these institutions, policies and programmes fully integrate gender into their work, they produce better and more equitable policies for men and women, contributing to good governance (OECD, 2018[2]).

Box A C.1. Key provisions of the 2015 OECD recommendations on Gender Equality in Public Life

Secure leadership and commit at the highest political level, at the appropriate level of government, to the development and implementation of a whole-of government strategy for effective gender equality and mainstreaming, which would enable: i) setting a rationale, action plans, priorities, timelines, objectives, expected outcomes and/or targets, and effective policy planning across public institutions for promoting gender equality; and ii) engaging relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders with a view to ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive coverage of gender equality issues.

Establish an institutional framework to ensure the effective implementation, co-ordination and sustainability of the gender equality and mainstreaming strategy, by: i) establishing clear roles, responsibilities, mandates, and lines of accountability of key governmental and oversight bodies in implementing gender equality and mainstreaming initiatives; ii) bolstering the capacities and resources of gender equality institutions to facilitate a consistent response at appropriate levels of government and to develop, implement and monitor gender-sensitive programmes and policies throughout the government, based on gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators. Effectiveness of gender equality institutions can also be strengthened by placing them at the highest possible level in the government; iii) ensuring the capacity and resources of public institutions to integrate gender equality perspectives in their activities, for example, by identifying gender equality focal points across governmental bodies, by investing resources in promoting gender-sensitive knowledge, leadership and communication, by ensuring the collection of gender and gender-disaggregated statistics in their areas of responsibility and by providing clear guidelines, tools, communication and expectations to public institutions in this area; and iv) strengthening vertical and horizontal co-ordination mechanisms for policy coherence across governmental bodies and levels of government that involve relevant non-governmental stakeholders to ensure synergies and effective implementation of gender equality initiatives.

Integrate the gender perspective in all phases of the budget cycle, as appropriate, so that transparency regarding gender-relevant resource allocation decisions is maximised.

Source: (OECD, 2018[3]).

The effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority's Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy (CSGS) hinges on its ability to address various aspects across institutions. Impactful and focused reforms therefore need effective co-ordination mechanisms that ideally operate at both the political and technical level. Furthermore, effective policy implementation needs clear institutional roles, designated responsibilities, and clear procedures (OECD, 2020[4]).

However, the existence of a formally adopted institutional framework and co-ordination structures is not sufficient to ensure smooth implementation of public policies, especially the cross-cutting ones which generally present a higher level of complexity. First, the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, including governmental gender mechanisms (within ministries, statistics offices, electoral management bodies) and civil society organisations not only creates buy-in, but may also help identify resources and expertise to support policy implementation, and serve as sounding boards and accountability mechanisms. Non-government stakeholders should be allowed to participate and provide feedback on the implementation on the gender equality strategy. Second, the efficiency of both the political- and administrative-level management bodies depend heavily on how their meetings are organised. In this

regard, the quality of the documents they are discussing and making decisions about is of utmost importance. Moreover, availability of reliable monitoring data and, ideally, evaluation information is crucial to effective policy discussions. In particular, the availability of gender-disaggregated data is key to ensure that decisions on the implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming measures are based on evidence.

This Scan is based on information and documents provided by the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) through a questionnaire, document analysis, and fact-finding interviews. According to the assessment methodology, collected information has been considered when supported by evidence. Moreover, triangulation of information was applied to assess correctness. In the case that certain findings are based on opinions, this will be clearly disclosed in the text.

The present Scan is articulated in four sections:

- The first section examines the institutional set-up for management, co-ordination, and delivery of policy objectives. In particular, it assesses the clarity of the distribution of functions and responsibilities at both organisational and individual level in relation to co-ordination of implementation and the existing inter-institutional co-ordination bodies.

- The second section looks at the existence and quality of procedures to prepare the meetings of the working groups and the technical and political committees, which ensure effective policy discussions, and at the extent to which monitoring information feed policy discussions. It also looks at the practice regarding the management and co-ordination meetings. In particular, it assesses what is discussed, the frequency of co-ordination and management meetings, the seniority of participants, whether discussions in co-ordination and management meetings are recorded and available for consultation, and whether monitoring information is used for policy discussion in co-ordination and management meetings.

- The third section draws conclusions and proposes concrete recommendations, where necessary, to further improve management and co-ordination of sectoral and cross-cutting strategies.

- The fourth and final section provides an overview of the main recommendations based on the analysis of the PA's Cross-Cutting Gender Strategy but applicable throughout the PA's co-ordination efforts.

Institutional set-up for management, co-ordination, and delivery of policy objectives in the Palestinian Authority

Implementation responsibilities and operationalisation of gender objectives

The "Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy (CSGS) 2021-2023" is a reform-oriented strategic document which strives to address the vulnerabilities of women in society and give them the tools they need to effectively participate in political and socioeconomic growth. As already recognised in this Review (Chapter 2), the strategy identifies a set of reform measures which are consistent with the extensive situation analysis. The strategic plan includes institutionalising gender equality and justice issues in line ministries and agencies (LMAs) as one of its five strategic goals, along with increasing women's participation in decision-making in governmental and non-governmental institutions. Gender mainstreaming in policymaking, planning, and budgeting is another key objective which is also recalled in the National Development Plan (NDP). For each strategic objective, the document provides a list of relevant programmes and identifies the responsible public institutions.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) is the lead institution responsible for enhancing gender equality, women empowerment, and gender mainstreaming in accordance with national policies and international

agreements. It is in charge of developing the government-wide commitments to gender equality and translating them into strategic plans and policies. It works with other line ministries and agencies to mainstream gender in sectoral policies. Within the MoWA, the General Administration for Planning and Policies (GAPP)[1] is ultimately responsible for the planning and implementation of the CSGS. Among its duties, it monitors and analyses data from a gender perspective, undertakes studies and policy papers, identifies gender-related issues, elaborates strategic and operational plans, develops gender indicators, and is in the lead for the implementation of the relevant SDGs.

The PA's line ministries and agencies are mandated to plan and implement public policies, and national legislation guaranteeing gender equality, and women empowerment, and fighting violence and discrimination against them. Concretely, they are expected to integrate gender-related principles in their planning document and to integrate active measures contributing to the achievement of the objectives outlined in the CSGS. The CSGS formally assigns specific roles to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and the Ministry of Labour (MoL). However, this is only done in the budget tables, and important ministries like the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) are not mentioned in the budget tables.

As is the case in many EU countries (see Box A C.2), the PA has established gender units within the line ministries and non-ministerial institutions to support and guide the mainstreaming of gender and women's empowerment in sectoral policies and to follow up the implementation of government programmes from a gender perspective. These gender units closely cooperate with the MoWA and the planning departments of their own institutions to identify and integrate specific gender-related measures in the respective strategic and operational plans. The gender units are identified as the key institutions responsible for ensuring the implementation of gender-related measures and gender mainstreaming. As confirmed by the MoSD, during the planning phase the MoSD's planning department and the gender unit participated in numerous meetings and workshops with other relevant public institutions, and in several rounds of consultation aimed to identify the gender-related strategic priorities and interventions.

> **Box A C.2. Gender focal points and gender units in EU Member States**
>
> Gender focal points/gender units are generally in charge of ensuring the implementation of the ministries' gender equality and/or gender mainstreaming policy measures, and/or to monitor national gender-equality laws and policies. The number of representatives per ministry and/or public institution varies from country to country. This also applies to the amount of time they are required to dedicate to fulfilling their responsibilities, as the work related to this function is often combined with other responsibilities.
>
> Ten countries (Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, and Lithuania) have gender focal points/gender units at ministerial level, designated as, for example, equal opportunity commissioners, counsellors for equality, ministerial representatives, ministry gender-mainstreaming co-ordinators, gender-equality focal points, and gender equality co-ordinators.
>
> Some countries have created legal or policy provisions for defining a uniform role of gender focal points/gender units, namely Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden.
>
> Source: (European Instiute for Gender Equality, accessed in August 2023[5]).

Based on the information received, it is not clear whether the mandate of the gender units is uniform throughout the PA's public administration. For instance, in the Ministry of Social Development, the gender unit is responsible for several ambitious tasks which require strong expertise and substantial resources. Notably, the MoSD's gender unit:

- Works to include gender issues in the policies, plans, programmes, and budget of the ministry and related institutions.
- Reviews laws and legislation through a gender lens and makes recommendations to strengthen this dimension.
- Promotes equal opportunities between male and female employees in the various government departments.
- Participates in the Planning and Budget Management Group (PBMG) and other committees and teams.
- Reviews agreements, memorandums of understanding, programmes, and projects and makes recommendations to ensure that they are gender-sensitive.
- Supervises and follows up implementation of audits' gender-related recommendations.
- Participates in national committees and teams for reviewing and developing national strategies for gender and women's empowerment, especially the national strategy for gender equality, the national strategy for combating violence against women, and the National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security that affirms Women as essential partners for peace and security and calls for their increased participation in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

Both the MoWA and the MoSD underlined insufficient clarity in the assignment of organisational and individual responsibilities for implementation of gender-related objectives at both the technical and political levels. This is in line with of the OECD's assessment of the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy (CSGS), which found that specific outlined programmes, actions, and indicators are not associated with specific institutions responsible for their implementation. In this regard however, the new "Ministry and agency strategy

guideline for the strategic planning cycle 2024-2029 issued by the PMO in February 2023 (Prime Minister's Office of the Palestinian Authority, 2023[6]) can potentially contribute to address this issue. In fact, for each policy intervention they provide for ministries and agencies to indicate the lead and the contributing institution. In addition, key outputs must be associated to responsible public entity. Finally, the Strategy, Planning and Budget Administration Group (SPBAG) within the main institution mandates that every participating entity should endorse a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This document outlines the intended aim of the collaborative endeavour – encompassing policy interventions, anticipated outcomes demanding combined actions – as well as the shared responsibilities and corresponding achievements. Moreover, it specifies the financial contributions, services, facilities, and expertise committed by each party. The MoU also delves into the co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms to be employed and sets a clear timeline for the duration of this cooperative arrangement.

The MoWA also highlighted shortcomings in the operationalisation of gender-related strategic objectives into the action plans of each relevant institutional body. The MoSD is in direct contrast with MoWA's views. The MoSD stated that a gender action plan prepared by the MoWA encompass all the interventions to be implemented by all the relevant institutions. The action plan clearly identifies gender-related activities, and the responsible departments too. However, as the OECD did not receive such an action plan an assessment could not be performed.

Incorporating gender-related strategic objectives into the action plans of each pertinent institution has highlighted certain challenges. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) has identified a notable constraint in the effectiveness of various gender units within line ministries. While these units are tasked with ambitious goals, exemplified by instances such as the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) as highlighted above, many of them face limitations in terms of authority, human resources, and financial backing, hampering their true potential impact.

The root causes of these limitations are multifaceted, partially attributed to the absence of well-defined operational procedures within partner LMAs. Consequently, the integration of gender units into the realms of planning, execution, and oversight remains inadequate. The success and credibility of these units hinge significantly on the capabilities and dedication of their designated personnel, as well as the commitment of LMAs' leadership to gender-related matters.

In response to these issues, the MoWA has undertaken a reassessment of its approach. Collaborative gatherings now convene officials responsible for planning and gender concerns, a practice also corroborated by the MoSD's planning department and gender unit. These meetings aim to collaboratively establish protocols for infusing gender-oriented principles into the planning process. The outcomes of this revised approach are yet to be verified. Moreover, the MoWA emphasises the necessity to review existing operational protocols and job descriptions within gender units. This holistic effort strives to enhance the effectiveness and standing of gender units within line ministries and public entities.

It is also worth noting that, apparently, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, and mainstreaming gender in sector policies is wrongly conceived as the sole responsibility of the MoWA and the gender units. This is also confirmed by the MoSD's gender unit, which considers itself as the sole responsible structure.

Finally, beyond cascading down gender-related objectives into the operational plans of individual line ministries and agencies, and beyond clarifying implementation responsibilities, the MoWA also stressed that gender-related objectives and actions are not clearly reflected in the budget of LMAs having a stake in the implementation of the CSGS. This is also considered as a major shortcoming which hinder practical implementation of gender-related measures and ultimately the achievement of gender-related objectives at sector level. Lack of accurate cost estimations during the planning phase was already put forward in this Review (Chapter 4). In this regard, the Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029 provide for LMAs to estimate implementation costs and prioritise interventions in the light of available resources.

Management and co-ordination working groups and committees

During the latest policy planning cycle, the MoWA established a **National Gender Team (NGT)** as well as a **senior-level advisory board** formed of high-ranked civil servants and representatives of the civil society. Its main function is to identify and assess gender-related priorities. Moreover, the MoWA established **several technical committees** which are meant to monitor the implementation of gender-related measures included in the ministerial action plans, to streamline interventions, and to provide the MoWA with evidence-based information and insights. Among others, these working groups include the technical committee for the implementation of SDGs, the technical committee on gender-based violence, the technical committee on education, and the technical committee on health.

Moreover, the PA established other inter-institutional co-ordination mechanisms in the form of higher specialised committees, whose meetings are organised by specific departments which are also in charge of co-ordinating with the Committees' members:

- the **National Committee for Violence Against Women** (NCVAW), which was established in 2008 and led by MoWA. It is the official body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy on Combating Violence Against Women. Members of the Committee include government entities and non-governmental institutions. Two specialised committees have been formed at the MoJ as branches of the National Committee on Combating Violence Against Women: the Legal Harmonisation Committee and the Gender Legislative Committee (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018[7]).

- the **Higher National Committee for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325**, which was established in 2012 by a Cabinet Decision and which is the designated responsible body for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the Resolution in co-ordination with members of the committee. The significance of the committee lies in the fact that its membership includes different governmental and non-governmental organisations (Ministry of Women's Affairs - Palestinian Authority, 2020[8]).

- the **National Committee for Gender Responsive Budgeting** established in 2012 by the Palestinian Cabinet to concretise its engagement on gender responsive planning and budgeting which was formalised since 2009 the Cabinet decision on mainstreaming gender in budgetary processes.

- the **National Committee for Women's Employment**, established as an advisory body to the Minister of Labour. Its mandate is to advocate for gender-sensitive policies, legislation, capacity-building interventions, a social safety net for women workers and a healthy work environment, to advocate the promotion of better knowledge and understanding on gender equality and advancement of women's employment opportunities and to co-ordinate and among all actors to promote and increase the participation of women in the economy and remove discrimination in the workplace (International Labout Organisation, accessed in August 2023[9]).

Despite the presence of these various committees, it's important to highlight that the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has indicated the absence of a unified technical committee responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing the comprehensive implementation of the gender strategy. Unlike engaging in collective discussions with other line ministries concerning the gender strategy, the MoSD opts for separate interactions. Specifically, it engages with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) individually to address the integration of gender-related concerns into their strategic plans and the advancement toward strategic gender objectives. Furthermore, the MoSD liaises with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to deliberate the incorporation of gender budgeting practices. In a similar vein, based on the responses provided by the MoSD, discussions surrounding the advancement of the gender strategy's implementation remain disconnected from the political sphere.

For future operations, if gender would be deemed a priority in the Government Programme, the new Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029 give the PMO to possibility to establish dedicated technical inter-institutional co-ordination groups (see Box A C.3). The MoUs signed between the lead institution and each relevant party would provide a good basis to structure future discussions on co-ordination.

Box A C.3. Inter-ministerial structures for gender co-ordination in EU countries

The Beijing Platform for Action makes explicit reference to the need for an inter-ministerial co-ordination structure to carry out the gender-mainstreaming mandate. Fourteen Member States have a structure in compliance with such recommendations. In Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden, the ministerial gender representatives form an inter-ministerial group with the mandate to implement gender-equality and/or gender-mainstreaming measures within the ministry they represent. In France, the ministers themselves form the inter-ministerial group. In Estonia, Lithuania, Spain and the United Kingdom, the ministerial representatives are appointed to attend inter-ministerial meetings to design, co-ordinate, monitor and/or provide recommendations on governmental gender-equality and/or gender-mainstreaming policies. In Denmark, the inter-ministerial structure acts as a forum where the ministries' employees can gain knowledge and exchange experiences on gender mainstreaming; similarly, in Finland, the network of gender-equality working groups provides a forum for sharing experience and good practice and identifying and discussing problems. In Poland, a national advisory body for equal treatment consisting of high-level representatives of all Ministries has been established, as foreseen in the National Programme for Equal Treatment 2013–2016.

Some countries have created legal or policy provisions for defining the role the inter-ministerial groups, namely Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden.

Note: Beijing Platform for Action | Gender Statistics Database | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu)
Source: (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023[10]).

Effectiveness of management and co-ordination meetings

As identified above, there are multiple platforms within the Palestinian Authority dedicated to discussing gender-related matters. These include technical committees within the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and partner ministries. Additionally, various national committees facilitate dialogue between government entities and civil society on these issues. Throughout 2022, the National Gender Team (NGT) convened regularly, holding eight meetings throughout the year. Its members are active participants, and thorough records of these meetings are maintained. These minutes are shared among members for feedback, as well as with international partners and donors. Noteworthy reports are also presented to the Cabinet. According to the MoWA, effective monitoring and implementation of decisions are ensured through follow-up plans and reports. This responsibility falls under the purview of the General Administration for Planning and Policies (GAPP), the Legal Unit, and the Gender Unit. All these entities report directly to the Minister.

As per the responses provided by MoWA in the questionnaire, there exists an opportunity to enhance the organisation of both working group meetings and larger inter-institutional bodies responsible for planning, co-ordination, monitoring, and reporting. This observation is reiterated by MoSD, which confirms that MoWA lacks established written procedures for arranging co-ordination meetings, with such meetings being predominantly scheduled on an as-needed basis. Furthermore, specific quality requirements for the organisation in management and co-ordination meetings are absent. These would encompass aspects like giving advance notice of meetings, defining criteria for the timing and quality of crafting, and disseminating

meeting agendas, as well as gathering and distributing preparatory inputs (including the time allocated for their submission, the contents of preparatory materials, and the timeline for their circulation).

To assess implementation of gender-related measures in the ministries, the General Administration for Planning and Policies (GAPP) and the gender units access monitoring information and data once they are published. The GAPP also directly requests the competent authorities to submit data and information which are not published. For instance, it asks the MoSD to provide data on gender-based violence and protection provided to victims. However, accessing these data is not always easy, sometimes not possible. The MoWA stressed that availability and collection of gender responsive and gender sensitive data throughout public administration is a major weakness and that there are no legal requirements to collect gender-disaggregated data. In some cases, like for the MoSD, the ministry does not have the capacity to collect them. These facts, according to the MoWA, hinder the possibility to develop gender-related databases at the level of individual ministries.

As also confirmed by the assessment of the MoSD's National Development Plan's Annual Follow-up Report for 2021 (MoSD, 2021[11]), the MoWA also highlighted that the measurement of most of the national development indicators does not require gender-disaggregation of data[2]. In this regard, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) recognises that "official statistical information is an essential basis for development in the economic, demographic, social and environmental fields" and that statistics "provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation" (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, accessed in July 2023[12]). In 2022, the agency issued the Manual of Statistical Indicators (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 20211[13]) which standardises how statistics are to be collected and presented and sets the main statistical areas and related indicators, taking the needs of decision-makers and researchers in the country into consideration. The OECD noted that that gender is considered as a stand-alone statistical area under the category "Population and Social Statistics". This is also confirmed by the analysis of the MoSD's Annual Statistical Report 2021 (MoSD, 2021[14]). It includes a full chapter on women; however, data under the other chapters are only gender-disaggregated in very few cases. For now, collecting gender-disaggregated data under other statistical areas and categories does not seem to be envisaged.

To address the lack of gender-responsive data, the MoWA strives to regularly provoke meetings with the competent authorities specifically aimed to discuss data availability and jointly analyse data. In reality, the monitoring and evaluation indicators outlined in the Social Development Sector Strategy 2017-2022 provides for gender-disaggregation of most of the indicators. However, whether this provision is followed in practice or not could not be verified.

Apart from the absence of gender-disaggregated data, another noteworthy concern is that within the Palestinian Authority, indicators are only discussed once every three years. This appears to be a significant drawback that impacts the efficacy of management and co-ordination meetings. The MoWA has highlighted certain shortcomings in how indicators are formulated, pointing out that some indicators do not effectively gauge the accomplishment of objectives. The OECD has also observed that a majority of indicators pertain to outputs and activity implementation. Furthermore, the performance indicators outlined in the strategy lack starting points and specific targets, and the method for measuring these identified indicators is unspecified. These factors collectively impede the assessment of progress. Data is also not analysed to understand the root causes of implementation delays or sub-optimal results. This may also depend on insufficient availability of analytical competencies and capacities in the MoWA itself and in the gender units. It is not clear whether quarterly reports, which are regularly prepared, are discussed in any technical meeting.

In contrast to these findings, overall, the MoWA considers that co-ordination meetings are effective in driving implementation and successfully address shortcomings, and that decisions taken are followed up consistently. The civil society participation in management and co-ordination is recorded as regular.

Towards enhanced management and co-ordination of sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies in the Palestinian Authority

Clarifying implementation roles and operationalisation of objectives

The mainstreaming of effective gender policies covers various policy domains. To effectively manage and co-ordinate initiatives like the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy (CSGS) and similar cross-cutting public policies, it's crucial to translate overarching goals into actionable steps (OECD, 2020[4]). This process should begin during the planning phase. However, the strategic document in the PA lacks clear links between objectives and responsibilities for implementation. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) acknowledges the need for enhancing how objectives are put into practice.

Indeed, vague identification of roles and responsibilities at the institutional and individual staff level and unclear accountability mechanisms are common pitfalls which may endanger implementation of both PAR and sectoral policies. General and specific gender-related objectives should be clearly reflected in the action plans of the partner line ministries and agencies (LMAs), and tangible actions, agreed with the lead institution, should be identified to outline how entities can contribute to their achievement. To be considered as tangible, actions must be associated with implementation responsibility at both the institutional and individual / managerial level (ideally both the institution and the manager or unit within the institution should be specified). Moreover, responsibilities for gender issues should be discussed and well communicated across the government and involve the highest possible level of government for effective implementation.

It should also be made very clear that gender equality, empowerment and mainstreaming are shared responsibilities of all LMAs. The MoWA is in the lead in the overall process. Public entities are responsible for the application of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in legislation, policies, management and for the implementation of planned measures. The gender units within LMAs can provide information on how laws or regulations are enforced, data are collected, sectorial plans are developed, and personnel is trained on gender-sensitive policies.

Based on the information shared with the OECD, the PA's gender units, co-ordinated by the MoWA, work with the planning units in the line ministry or agency they belong to and support them in integrating gender-related measures in their respective action plans (or in developing individual gender action plans).

However, what seems to be missing is a whole-of-government gender-related operational plan agreed between the MoWA, the partner institution and, ideally, external stakeholders, which encompasses all envisaged actions and details implementation responsibilities, timeframe, and targets. The global action plan could take the form of a table reflecting the core policy elements:

- the various levels of objectives and their respective indicators,
- a brief description of the action,
- the deadline(s) for implementation – possibly multiple or phased,
- the output or process-level indicators, complemented with baselines and targets,
- the entities/units responsible for implementation,
- any other LMA contributing to the implementation,
- and any other information needed for efficient implementation, co-ordination, monitoring, and reporting.

Elaborating such an agreed action plan and complementing it with the MoUs envisaged by the new Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029, has the potential to facilitate the task of the gender units which, as seen may suffer from lack authority and limited capacities. In each LMA, the gender and policy units would more easily ensure that the actions envisaging implementation responsibilities for the LMA itself are duly reported in the institutional action plan. Each LMA could also further break down planned actions into

activities and set them in complementary internal documents. In order to support the action planning process, an example of template for operational planning that the PA may inspire to (and which is very similar to the one proposed in the Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029 is provided in the Indicative template for the presentation of key reform actions and the identification of implementation responsibilities below (OECD, 2018[2]).

Finally, given the renovated quality control function that the new Strategic Planning Approach recognises to the PMO (Prime Minister's Office of the Palestinian Authority, 2023[6]), the latter may consider developing dedicated, and simple tools to support its work. The use of checklist to assess the quality of planning documents is an option that the PMO may consider. This checklist may include elements such as:

- Compliance with Quality Standards: Ensuring overall adherence to minimum quality standards as outlined by central-level regulations, recommendations, and guidelines. This includes any adopted quality requirements and standards.
- Using templates: Checking if the correct template, as specified by central-level regulations, recommendations, or guidelines (if applicable), has been used.
- Chapter-specific Compliance: Reviewing each chapter's alignment with specific quality requirements and standards laid out by central-level regulations, recommendations, or guidelines. This involves assessing factors such as including essential content like situational analysis, prioritised issues, strategic and operational objectives, results, actions, indicators (including benchmarks, and targets), consistency with national development plans (NDP) or future global plans (GP), alignment with sustainable development goals (SDGs), lead institution, implementation responsibilities, cost estimates (including funding sources), and any mandatory annexes.
- Elemental Quality: Evaluating the quality of individual elements within the plan, covering all the aforementioned aspects.
- Planning Process Excellence: Assessing the quality of the planning process, including aspects like consultations among institutions and engagement with civil society.
- Document Readability and Clarity: Gauging how easily understandable and clear the final document is as a whole.

Enhancing competences and raising awareness on gender perspectives

Cross-cutting policies like gender require enhanced competences and awareness for effective implementation. As mentioned earlier, the ability of civil servants within each gender unit and within each LMA to recognise gender perspectives in their work and policy fields and concentrate on them towards the goal of gender equality is a prerequisite for successful gender mainstreaming. It is vital that all staff members are aware of their respective tasks and responsibilities and that these are understood to be mandatory. The uneven level of competences among the staff of the gender units was underlined by the MoWA as one of the main shortcomings. Moreover, gender sensitivity among top positions within each public institution and recognition of gender equality and mainstream as a direct responsibility are equally important. They can determine whether gender perspectives are purposely and concretely integrated in all government programmes and policies and whether the gender units can effectively fulfil their duties.

Internal gender training and awareness raising initiatives are crucial for integrating a gender perspective into policies, programmes, projects, and services that respond to the different needs of women and men. Several OECD countries such as Finland (Box A C.4) have put in place internal capacity building and awareness raising programmes to develop the relevant knowledge, skills and values that allow them to contribute to the effective implementation of the gender-mainstreaming strategy in their field, organisation, institution, or country. Gender equality training and awareness rising initiatives can increase sensitivity, understanding and knowledge about gender (in)equality, provide reliable and accessible information to

build a better understanding of gender equality as a core value of democratic societies, and create positive change.

Box A C.4. Finland – The Gender Glasses Initiative

Finland introduced training in gender mainstreaming for officials in all its national ministries with the intention to equip staff in the national administration with a basic understanding of gender mainstreaming principles and how to evaluate the gender impact of policymaking. This initiative also sought to develop and mainstream methods, guidance and training related to gender mainstreaming. It specifically meant to strengthen knowledge and skills related to gender equality and mainstreaming by developing training, resources, and information tailored to the ministries' exact needs.

This was organised in three phases, which progressed from the general to the specific. It was structured in three phases, notably:

- Phase 1 - Introducing gender glasses. The accent was on simplicity and practicality, as previous training had attracted criticism for being too complex and theoretical.
- Phase 2 – Using gender glasses, which consisted in four thematic seminars mainly addressing the members of the equality working groups in each ministry, though they were open to all staff.
- Phase 3 - Better results with gender glasses which focused on specific ministries.

To complement this training initiative, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health issued the Handbook "Gender Glasses in Use" to support ministries' gender equality work.

Source: (Government of Finland, 2013[15]).

Overall, to effectively mainstream gender, civil servants should be able to identify gender inequalities in their field of activity, define gender equality objectives, take account of gender when planning and implementing policies, monitor progress, and evaluate programmes from a gender perspective. Since accountability for gender mainstreaming is primarily established by the senior management of an organisation, training on gender mainstreaming must attract senior officials and those directly in a position of drafting budgets, laws, and programmes in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated into everyday practice at the ministries. Moreover, it is important that training programmes on gender mainstreaming take the evolving needs of participants into consideration and progress from fairly generic, basic forms of training to more individualised approaches. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has developed a practical manual guiding public institution in the design, implementation, and evaluation of gender training initiatives (see Box A C.5).

Box A C.5. The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit from the European Institute for Gender Equality

The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is a practical guide for integrating gender equality into all policies and actions. It provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of gender mainstreaming and the practical steps that can be taken to implement it. The toolkit includes a variety of tools and resources to help organisations implement gender mainstreaming.

It includes several guiding principles such as:

- Gender mainstreaming is a long-term process that requires commitment and resources. This principle acknowledges that gender mainstreaming is not a quick fix. It is a long-term process that requires sustained effort and investment.

- Gender mainstreaming should be integrated into all levels and stages of policymaking. This principle means that gender equality should be considered at all stages of the policymaking process, from the initial problem identification to the implementation and evaluation of policies.
- Gender mainstreaming should be based on evidence and analysis. This principle means that gender mainstreaming should be informed by data and research on gender inequality. It also means that gender mainstreaming should be open to feedback and revision.
- Gender mainstreaming should be participatory and inclusive. This principle means that gender mainstreaming should involve all stakeholders, including women, men, and other marginalised groups. It also means that gender mainstreaming should be sensitive to the different needs and perspectives of different groups.
- Gender mainstreaming should be evaluated regularly. This principle means that the impact of gender mainstreaming should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. This will help to ensure that gender mainstreaming is effective and that it is continuously improving.

The toolkit also offers concrete steps that authorities can take to ensure the quality of gender equality competence development initiatives:

- Set clear objectives and outcomes. What do you want to achieve with the gender equality competence development initiative? What are the expected outcomes?
- Identify the target audience. Who are the people who will participate in the initiative? What are their needs and expectations?
- Choose the right methods and tools. There are a variety of methods and tools that can be used to promote gender equality competence development. The choice of methods and tools will depend on the objectives and outcomes of the initiative, as well as the target audience.
- Ensure the quality of the content. The content of the gender equality competence development initiative should be accurate, relevant, and up-to-date. It should also be sensitive to the different needs and perspectives of the target audience.
- Provide opportunities for feedback and reflection. Participants should be given opportunities to provide feedback on the initiative and to reflect on their own learning. This will help to ensure that the initiative is effective and that it meets the needs of the target audience.
- Evaluate the impact of the initiative. The impact of the gender equality competence development initiative should be evaluated to assess its effectiveness. This will help to improve the initiative and to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

Source: (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016[16]).

Enhancing the organisational architecture for management and co-ordination

The key role of the lead institution

As shared by institutional interlocutors, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) stands prominently as the frontrunner in advocating for gender equality and integration throughout governmental policies in the PA. As the foremost accountable body responsible for executing the Comprehensive Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming (CSGS), it orchestrates the formulation and execution of the strategy to continually fulfil objectives and benchmarks. The ministry actively cultivates gender equality and integration across governmental policies and within the society as a whole.

Nevertheless, as for any sector or cross-sectoral strategy, the key roles of the lead institution in terms of management and co-ordination should be focused on:

- Establishing a comprehensive cross-institutional monitoring and reporting mechanism that aligns with any existing country-level monitoring and reporting requisites, if applicable. This involves ensuring the mechanism's implementation and gathering information from partner LMAs. This information is collected through gender focal points or gender units and pertains to the progress of actions assigned to them, specific objectives and targets within their purview, as well as associated expenditures.

- Developing routine reports and other operational documents designed to prepare discussions and decisions within inter-ministerial co-ordination bodies. These reports include an analysis of progress vis-à-vis broader national aspirations, agreed-upon objectives and targets, assessment of encountered challenges, bottlenecks, and critical implementation risks. Furthermore, these documents propose potential corrective measures for deliberation within the inter-ministerial bodies, as required.

- Initiating the deliberation of challenging issues at higher echelons, as necessary, in addition to engaging with line ministries to identify viable solutions.

- Undertaking secretariat functions and efficiently organising the proceedings of the inter-ministerial bodies.

- Delivering consistent methodological assistance to LMAs during the phases of planning, monitoring, and reporting. This includes aiding in the organisation of technical working sessions, which some LMAs might be responsible for.

Box A C.6. The National Women's Agency (SERNAM) in Chile

In Chile, the National Women's Agency (SERNAM), created in 1991, is the supervisory agency which ensures that the public sector incorporates a gender focus when planning, budgeting, implementing, and monitoring public policies. SERNAM has worked closely with the Presidency in evaluating the work of the ministries and presenting their achievements. In 2015, SERNAM was reconstituted as a full-fledged Ministry. The same year, the Chilean Government created the Ministry for Women and Gender Equity to strengthen governance of gender equality with a more robust institution and stronger regional presence.

Source: (Ministry for Women and Gender Equity of Chile, accessed in August 2023[17]).

Gender units as critical gender equality and mainstreaming support mechanisms

The responsibilities of the line ministries and agencies (LMAs) associated with the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy and other transversal strategies that require the involvement of a wide range of institutional actors encompass overseeing activity implementation and delivering on the assigned objectives. They must also furnish monitoring information for the overall strategy's progress as their role entails data collection, analysis, and information provision to the lead institution. Active participation in inter-ministerial meetings is expected, and they might lead specialised working groups when necessary.

To make this work, a prevalent best practice in cross-sectoral strategies, such as gender-focused ones, involves creating focal points within line ministries as is the case in Sweden (see Box A C.7). These focal points facilitate the fulfilment of responsibilities for contributing entities. Gender focal points or units serve as vital mechanisms to support gender equality and mainstreaming efforts. They aid LMAs in discharging their duties. As identified in the OECD Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality (OECD, 2018[3]), the effectiveness of these units hinges on their authority level, integration into planning

and co-ordination processes within their respective LMAs, staffing, gender-related expertise, and policymaker interest in gender matters. These factors are intertwined.

To bolster the integration of gender units within the PA's public sector, the MoWA has introduced a new approach – uniting gender units with policy/planning units. This approach could potentially become a standard administrative procedure through MoWA's initiatives. While increasing staff numbers might pose limitations, the MoWA could facilitate knowledge dissemination among partner LMAs and heighten policymakers' awareness of gender inequality repercussions. Recognising that addressing gender inequalities is a collective governmental responsibility, the MoWA can champion this cause. Additionally, if the MoWA embraces OECD's monitoring recommendations (as discussed in the following paragraph), gender units could play a more pivotal role in elevating the quality of monitoring inputs, enriching management and co-ordination discussions.

Box A C.7. Gender focal points in Sweden

In Sweden, each ministry has a gender focal point that co-ordinates and supports gender mainstreaming efforts by developing an annual action plan. The action plans are specific to each ministry and address gender equality issues depending on the sector and political areas. The Gender Equality Agency is responsible for collecting and analysing the measures adopted by relevant government agencies and other actors, which are designed to reach the goals of Sweden's gender equality policy. The agency presents an official report to the parliament through the Budget Bill, wherein the government reports on how its priorities in the gender equality policy have an impact and contribute to more effective implementation of Swedish gender equality policy. Gender mainstreaming has been a strategy in Sweden since 1984 and is both a binding policy approach and the main strategy the Swedish government uses to achieve gender equality policy objectives. The gender equality perspective must therefore be included in all government agencies' decision-making and policy development.

To summarise, Sweden's Gender Focal Points play a vital role in promoting gender equality. By working to integrate gender perspectives into all aspects of policy and practice, they are helping to create a more just and equitable society for all. Their roles are summarised as follows:

- Provide training and support to staff on gender equality issues.
- Identify and address gender-based discrimination in policies and practices.
- Develop and implement gender mainstreaming action plans.
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Source: (OECD, 2018[3]) (WPS Focal Points Network, Accessed in August 2023[18]).

A need for strong inter-institutional management and co-ordination mechanisms

Sound implementation of the Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy and of any other cross-sectoral policies calls for strong management and co-ordination mechanisms at both political and administrative levels . Such mechanisms or groups can help to keep gender issues on the political agenda, prevent duplication, and allow stakeholders to collaborate and share expertise and experience. Gender ministries and gender units should not be given the exclusive responsibility within the government for promoting gender equality. Rather, they should provide advice and guidance to government and LMA and monitor improvements in relation to gender equality. They need sufficient resources, visibility, and authority to co-ordinate a government-wide initiative (OECD, 2018[3]).

In the international practice, generally, inter-ministerial co-ordination bodies are administrative-level co-ordination forum established to ensure regular monitoring of implementation of cross-sectoral strategies or sector strategy against the objectives, targets, activities, and budget. Their key roles are to:

- Regularly meet, quarterly or at least every six months, and discuss progress in implementing objectives, targets, activities, and the allocation and use of financial resources,
- Identify bottlenecks and challenges to successful implementation and propose corrective measures to be taken by implementing LMA,
- Discuss the required regular reports to be submitted to the political level inter-institutional body (if any) or to the CoM,
- Resolve disputes that arise between different LMA during the implementation process,
- Forward any unresolved issues to the upper level, e.g., the political level inter-institutional body (if any) or to the CoM.

In case a certain public policy is considered as a government priority, establishing a political-level inter-institutional co-ordination body such as in Italy (Box A C.8) provides for higher political ownership and boost its implementation. It can provide a top political-level co-ordination forum to steer implementation and provide directions to lead and implementing LMA. The key roles of such a body are to:

- Regularly meet, at least once a year and whenever necessary, and discuss progress in implementing objectives, targets, activities, and the allocation and use of financial resources;
- Hear, discuss, and challenge or endorse all regular reports of the strategy;
- Steer the implementation of the strategy by providing strategic guidance and policy advice;
- Take corrective measures, and decisions to strengthen implementation;
- Resolve any issues between different LMA in implementing the strategy if the resolution has failed at the lower levels (e.g., at the inter-ministerial technical body or between different LMA);
- Co-ordinate with development partners financial contributions and the allocation of resources.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the new Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029 (Prime Minister's Office of the Palestinian Authority, 2023[6]) give the PMO to possibility to establish dedicated technical inter-institutional co-ordination groups to co-ordinate Government Programme's priority pillars. In addition, the MoUs signed between the lead institution and each relevant party would also provide a good basis to structure co-ordination discussions.

Box A C.8. Inter-institutional co-ordination and support structures in Italy

Governance of gender equality policies will be strengthened by setting up an inter-institutional Steering Committee and a National Observatory for the integration of gender policies.

The Steering Committee, chaired by the President of the CoM or by the delegated political authority, will liaise between the different administrations involved, and departments at different levels of government.

The National Observatory for the Integration of Gender Policies, a technical body supporting the Steering Group, has been established within the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the CoM with the aim of implementing and monitoring the Strategy.

Information on the monitoring of the Strategy implementation is acquired by the Department for Equal Opportunities, also by means of a web-based information system specifically developed for this purpose.

Source: (Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers, 2022[19]).

As it happens in the PA, inter-institutional co-ordination bodies and working groups can involve a broad array of stakeholders and levels of engagement (e.g., senior management across government institutions, gender focal points, advisory councils, committees and working groups). It is important to ensure the right level of representation for the task required. For example, an inter-ministerial commission tasked with promoting the political agenda and monitoring gender equality would require cabinet level representation, rather than representatives from different units within government institutions (e.g., human resources or administrative departments) who might be less able to influence broader policy and priority setting or to translate the decisions of the Commission into concrete follow up actions (OECD, 2018[3]). Table A C.1 proposes possible options concerning the composition and mandates of the political-level and the administrative-level structures. The PMO may also consider what is presented in the box in view of the establishment of inter-institutional co-ordination groups for the different priority pillars of the Government Programme.

Table A C.1. Possible composition and mandate of inter-institutional co-ordination structures

Political-level structure

COMPOSITION	The political-level body is usually comprised of members of the government (or at least their political deputies). It may be chaired by either the head of the government or by the head of the lead institution (the minister). Other heads of institutions (ministers) are to be selected and appointed according to their role in the reform process. In case certain reforms address institutions outside the executive (for example, the Judiciary), their political leaders should also be members of the political-level body. In addition, it is advisable to involve key external stakeholders (such as representatives of NGOs or academia) in the political-level body, either as members or as observers, to enhance the accountability and credibility of the government's commitment to reform.
MANDATE	The role of the political structure in the co-ordination, monitoring and reporting process is crucial as it has all the tools to provide high-level feedback and incentives for participating institutions to strive to achieve the stated targets. High-level decision-makers can use political leverage to "push" institutions to move faster towards meeting the targets or – if evidence shows that this is not possible – to revise the strategy. It is recommended that the political-level body meets at least every six months to discuss the progress of implementation and any emerging difficulties in a timely manner.

Functions of the political-level structure

1. Steer and oversee the implementation of the CSGS and all gender-related actions included in the action plans of the relevant institutions.
2. Take or propose corrective measures to ensure effective implementation of gender-related reforms and measures. Review (via six-monthly, annual, and ad hoc monitoring reports) should include regular oversight of the implementation of objectives and activities, attainment of targets, execution of the budget, financial gaps, etc.
3. Discuss and provide strategic advice on specific gender-related issues, including specific policy directions. Review and discuss gender-related draft decisions that go forward to the government for approval (such as draft laws, regulations, concept papers, etc.).
4. Co-ordinate and harmonise diverging opinions (dispute resolution). Discuss other gender-related issues and solve any challenges that arise during the implementation of the strategy and of the gender-related actions included in the action plans of the relevant institutions.
5. Lead the communication within and outside the public administration about the reform design and its implementation.

Administrative-level structure

COMPOSITION	In addition to the political-level body, an administrative (or inter-ministerial) body, or several thematic working groups, should be established to co-ordinate the various areas of the CSGS at the more technical level. Such inter-ministerial body(ies) is/are comprised of representatives of the key institutions (usually ministries and agencies) with a stake in the implementation of the CSGS. The chair of the body is usually a senior civil servant of the lead institution (ministry) in charge of gender. When area-specific administrative-level bodies are established, those should be led by the institution leading the given area.
MANDATE	The main mandate of such thematic working groups is similar to that where there is only one inter-ministerial group but limited to their respective gender-related areas. Members of the administrative-level bodies should be competent civil servants (preferably at senior managerial level with some decision-making authority). External stakeholders should also be invited to the meetings of the administrative-level structure(s) either on a case-by-case basis or by pre-defined invitation (through the establishment and formalisation of the structures). It is recommended that the inter-ministerial body meets at least every three months (quarterly) to discuss the progress related to the implementation of the activities.

Functions of the political-level structure

1. Identify gaps in the CSGS implementation and conflicting views on gender-related issues. Oversee and discuss the progress in implementing the activities of gender strategies and relevant action plans, either on an ad hoc basis or through regular reports.
2. Support the effective work of the political-level management and discussion in the political level structure through the preparation of materials for policy deliberation (reports, policy notes, etc.) as well as for communication and visibility purposes. Discuss gender-related draft decisions that go forward to the political level structure (such as draft laws, regulations, concept papers, etc.).
3. Co-ordinate the actions of the institutions in charge of implementing various gender-related activities and discuss and solve issues that impede or hamper the successful and timely implementation of gender activities, objectives, and indicators.
4. Based on the analytical and operational information available to the inter-ministerial body, discuss any necessary changes to the CSGS and propose such changes to the lead gender institution or the political level structure.

Source: (OECD, 2018[2]).

Enhancing effectiveness of management and co-ordination meetings

Setting rules to organise co-ordination and management meetings

Apart from the human and financial capacities for managing and co-ordinating the implementation of public policies, the effectiveness of any co-ordination body largely depends on how meetings are organised. Standardised instructions for the organisation of co-ordination meetings would allow for the unification of processes across LMAs having a stake in the implementation of the strategy's action plan and, ultimately, improve the quality of preparatory documents and of co-ordination discussions.

For effective co-ordination, co-ordination meetings should become a routine rather than being organised on an ad hoc basis (OECD, 2018[2]). Procedures should be in place to set the frequency and a calendar of co-ordination meetings for each type of co-ordination bodies (e.g., political-level or administrative-level inter-institutional bodies and inter-institutional working groups). Moreover, setting instructions and rules concerning the organisation of management and co-ordination meetings has the potential to increase effectiveness of meetings. Instructions may include:

- the indicative composition of each body while allowing for the involvement of non-member organisations. All LMA and external organisations having a stake in the implementation of the strategy should be involved,

- A tentative calendar for each type of co-ordination body to set the indicative frequency of meetings: for instance, 1) working groups meet monthly or every fifteen days and wherever necessary, on call of the institution leading the working group, 2) the administrative-level inter-institutional body (if any) meets quarterly or every six months on call of the strategy lead institution, 3) the political-level inter-institutional body (if any) meets every six months or annually on call of the strategy lead institution. Ideally, meetings should be aligned with the monitoring timeframe,

- Timeframe to prepare the agenda and to submit technical inputs to feed discussions to the institution leading the co-ordination meeting,

- Provisions concerning advanced calling of meetings,

- Rules and quality requirements for the elaboration and circulation of the meeting agenda

- Quality requirements for the contents and formats of technical inputs and preparatory dossiers,

- Time and quality requirements for collection and advanced circulation of preparatory inputs,

- Format and minimum contents of inter-institutional decisions

Good-quality preparatory documents for more effective management and co-ordination meetings

Along with the perceptions of the decision-makers about the importance of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the quality of reports and related supporting documents, (i.e., whether they clearly state the key challenges, gaps and risks which are to be communicated), and the way conclusions and decisions are drafted and communicated are important factors which contribute to determine whether the potential leverage of the political-level body is used or not.

The preparatory working materials for co-ordination and management meetings are usually prepared by whoever is to present the subject, in consultation with the institution calling and leading the meeting. If needed, the latter may ask other members of the inter-ministerial body at both the political and technical levels to contribute to the preparation of such working material.

Given the importance of the quality preparatory materials for effective co-ordination meetings, it's a good practice that one or more specialised units are appointed as the secretariat of the inter-institutional co-ordination body, this being a council or commission, or working groups (OECD, 2018[2]). This secretariat is expected to:

- prepare and propose relevant agenda items well ahead of meetings,

- manage invitations (including the identification of non-permanent members),

- co-ordinate the preparation of the working materials for the meetings (including the preparation of regular monitoring reports and any other analytical inputs) and review their quality,

- circulate the working materials well ahead of meetings, where possible,

- prepare memos and draft policy decisions, and

- ensure that any decision made by the political- or administrative-level forums are duly followed up and taken into account.

Using monitoring reports for management, co-ordination, and decision-making

The regular review of how much progress has been made in gender equality and gender mainstreaming implementation forms a basis for systematic process management. Monitoring government performance is critical to ensuring public administrations gather information on the progress made towards their stated policy goals. If the evidence collected is trusted by high-level decision-makers and used to enhance decision-making, this continual feedback can greatly improve of implementation effectiveness and efficiency (OECD, 2024[87]).

As discussed in chapter 2, monitoring reports are not used in management and co-ordination meetings for the implementation of the Cross-Cutting Gender Strategy. The MoWA also highlighted that indicators are not always suitable for measuring progress against objectives. Monitoring reports, however, along with other supporting documents, represent a powerful tool to structure co-ordination and management discussions. There are several areas of improvement that the PA is encouraged to consider in order to enhance the usefulness of monitoring reports for decision-making.

First, the MoWA's monitoring report that the OECD could assess (MoWA, 2023[21]) only focuses on what the MoWA has done over the year. It does not include information on what other line ministries and agencies have done to promote gender equality and to mainstream gender issues in the different sectors. It does, however, clearly outline what the MoSD did in relation to gender-related activities, notably providing quarterly cash assistance to marginalised, female-headed households below the extreme poverty line, and providing free medical insurance to poor and marginalised families headed by a woman. However, without the possibility to look into the above-mentioned gender action plan prepared by the MoWA, it is not possible to verify the consistency between the latter and MoSD's reported activities. Therefore, the PA may want to consider elaborating a more comprehensive monitoring report encompassing activities put in place by all the relevant stakeholders. An annotated template (table) for monthly or quarterly reports in line with the guidance developed by SIGMA is provided at the end of the report (OECD, 2018[2]).

Second, the current form of monitoring reports is merely output-based. They allow for reporting on the implementation of activities while they fail to monitor performance and progress towards the achievements of results and objectives. This is also due to the fact that performance indicators are incomplete, as they do not identify baselines and interim and final targets. Therefore, the PA is encouraged to invest more efforts in developing measurable, outcome-level indicators. An effective approach that the PA may consider for the development of performance indicators is suggested in Box A C.9.

Box A C.9. Indicators' passport

Practice shows that the use of indicators requires much more than just agreeing on the indicator definition, baseline, and targets. It requires clarification and agreement on how the values will be calculated, what data will need to be collected by whom and when, and what sources will be used. The major challenge most frequently encountered in relation to the use of indicators in the course of the implementation and monitoring of a strategy is that the institutions charged with providing the data, or measuring a given indicator, do not know how to calculate the indicator values, what data will be required to do this, or precisely what the indicator is measuring. As a consequence, it may be that the institutions responsible for the indicator claim that it is not possible to provide information on the indicator, the indicator is not relevant, it is not possible to collect data, or that the indicator is not what was intended when the strategy and action plan were being developed.

Developing and using an indicator passport is a practical way to systematise data and its collection, increase data availability and quality, and mitigate the risk of the above-mentioned scenario.

Table A C.2. Indicator Passport Table

Brief title of indicator				
Link to sector strategy objective				
Brief definition of the indicator				
Data to be collected				
Source of data				
Institution and department responsible for gathering data				
Frequency of data collection				
Frequency of data publication				
A brief description of the calculation/measurement methodology				
Information on trend and baseline value	Year	Trend [year]	Trend [year]	Baseline [Year]
	Value			
Information on target values	Year	Target [year]	Target [year]	Target [year]
	Target Value			

Source: (OECD, 2018[2]).

Thirdly, the utilisation of activity- or output-based monitoring reports can serve a deliberate purpose in monthly or even quarterly co-ordination meetings. However, for more comprehensive insights into both successful and unsuccessful activity implementation, as well as progress towards anticipated outcomes and objectives, biannual and annual analyses can be immensely valuable to the PA. Presently, monitoring reports are confined to tables outlining planned and executed activities. These entries offer details about implementation timelines and achieved targets, but they lack any assessment of encountered challenges. To enhance this approach, a more in-depth narrative analysis could be integrated annually or semi-annually to supplement the quarterly reports. While the new Strategic Planning Guidelines 2024-2029 maintain the existing monitoring template, a potential structure for semi-annual and annual reports is presented in Box A C.10, offering inspiration to the PA. Additionally, annexed to this document are annotated templates (tables) intended for six-month and annual monitoring reports (OECD, 2018[3]).

Box A C.10. Possible layout of six-month and annual monitoring reports

SIX-MONTH MONITORING REPORTS

This **structure is indicative** and can be adjusted based on country-specific needs.

1. **Summary information (3 pages max)**

1.1 Overall progress

In this section, the following information is provided:

- The overall number of valid actions and corresponding activities for the 6 months covered

- Information on the overall implementation rate, e.g., the percentage implemented activities and their status (fully or partially implemented, or not implemented)
- Those areas showing the best and the worst performance (based on objectives).

1.2 Problems and risks

Present a summary of the main reasons for delays in implementing activities (if any) and highlight any risks to the future implementation of activities and achievement of objectives.

1.3 Next steps

Suggest possible solutions to the problems identified are presented and next steps towards implementation of the strategy.

2. Detailed information on the implementation of activities

Provide information on the implementation status of the actions and their corresponding activities, along with a brief description of the progress against each activity, (output) indicators, any problems identified and the proposed next steps.

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS

The **structure proposed below is indicative** and can be adjusted according to country-specific needs.

1. Executive summary

Describe the progress against each strategic objective of the strategy, based on both the indicators and the implementation of key reforms in the sector. Only achievements in the implementation of the most important actions should be presented. The importance of activities is decided according to the scope of their impact, political attention, and media or civil society interest. Graphs and tables may be used too.

Summarise reforms successfully implemented in the year, the key challenges and risks, areas needing improvement in implementation, and necessary corrective measures, and overall budget execution.

This section should be used to brief decision-makers, the general public and stakeholders. The executive summary will be short and concise, up to five pages long.

2. Progress in implementing strategy objectives

This section is divided in as many sub-sections as there are objectives in the strategy.

2.1 Progress against objective 1 - [title of objective]

Describe the progress made against the concerned strategy objective according to indicators and the overall progress in implementing actions under the objective.

Present information on whether indicator targets were achieved.

Describe the key reforms implemented as well as reasons for any failure to achieve the targets. This information will give a sense of whether the strategy is moving closer to achieving the targets. It is especially important to mention the successes, gaps and challenges, along with recommendations for overcoming the gaps and challenges. Priority actions to improve the performance should also be outlined.

Each sub-section could include the following information:

1. assessment of the main achievements, using indicators and graphs

2. success stories

3. assessment of challenges, gaps, and bottlenecks

4. conclusions and recommendations for the next steps.

Graphs and tables may be used to illustrate

2.2 Progress against objective N - [title of objective]

3. Risks and steps to address them

Assess any risks to the overall implementation of the strategy and describe steps to address them. Such risks can relate to institutional capacity, financial capacity, the regulatory environment, partnership and engagement with other institutions, and other factors external to the strategy.

This section is prepared by the ministry responsible for the implementation of the strategy based on the inputs provided by implementing institutions. The lead institution or ministry must instruct participating institutions to provide such information through the reporting process.

Source: (OECD, 2018[2])

Finally, there has been a shift in the last decade within OECD countries from the traditional approach of data creation and dissemination towards routines fostering the use of information for management and accountability purposes. For instance, the US government (Box A C.11) introduced data-driven review meetings to discuss the progress achieved during the most recent quarter, overall trend data, the likelihood of meeting the expected level of performance against quarterly targets and milestones.

Box A C.11. Data Driven Review meetings in the United States

The 2010 Government Performance Reporting and Modernisation Act (GPRAMA) introduced the need for quarterly review meetings on each long-term federal government priority goal to discuss the progress achieved during the most recent quarter, overall trend data, the likelihood of meeting, and the planned level of performance against quarterly targets and milestones.

The federal government priority goals are categorised according to their risk of not achieving their planned level of performance. For those federal government priority goals that have the greatest risk of not meeting their planned level of performance, review meetings allow for the identification of prospects and strategies for performance improvement, including any needed changes to agencies, organisations, programmes activities, regulations, tax expenditures, policies, or other activities. Accuracy and reliability of the data used to measure progress towards the priority goal is also discussed.

These meetings are organised by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget with the support of the Performance Improvement Council. Meetings include officials from the agencies, organisations, and programme activities that contribute to the accomplishment of each Federal Government priority goal.

Since then, agencies started to organise regularly scheduled, structured, and rigorously prepared data-driven meetings to review performance indicators with department or programme personnel. According to the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), to engage in data-driven reviews, it is necessary that programmes have identified their strategic priorities, that there is authentic leadership support to engage in the process, and that programmes have the capacity to gather and synthesise data related to those priorities. On the latter, though several agencies are able to produce data-rich analyses that identified trends and potential performance issues. Performance Improvement Officers reported that having accurate, timely, and useful data available remains a major challenge.

Source: (White House of the United States, 2019[22]) (White House of the United States, 2010[23]).

Generating gender-disaggregated data

Gender-differentiated data and information must be available for policymakers to be able to assess the situation and develop appropriate, evidence-based responses and policies. Such data must be collected and analysed within the policymaking process, ideally covering several years to track changes and take corrective action. Therefore, the OECD Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality (OECD, 2018[3]) recommends:

- that gender-disaggregated statistics and data are collected on the impact of policies and programmes on gender equality.
- and that decisions on the implementation of gender equality and mainstreaming strategies are made on the basis of gender-disaggregated evidence and data.

The MoWA however, underlined that the availability and collection of gender responsive and gender sensitive data throughout the PA's public administration is a major weakness as there are no legal requirements concerning the collection of gender-disaggregated data. Furthermore, measurement of most of the national development indicators does not require gender-disaggregation.

To combat this, it is not unusual in OECD countries (see Box A C.12) that legal frameworks set the obligation to produce and publish sex-disaggregated data annually. Often, statistical institutions are in

charge of measuring national gender-equality indicators while other countries established independent gender equality institutions for this purpose. Civil society organisations, including NGOs and women's groups, can also be precious allies in gathering information about the potential or actual impact of government policies, and they should be consulted regularly. As identified in the OECD Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality (OECD, 2018[3]) surveys, interviews, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking are effective methods for obtaining and analysing data on diversity policies, as well as desk review, household interviews, focus group discussion. Considering that the production of gender-disaggregated data and evaluation require additional resources which may not be always available in the PA, this could open as a potentially important area of co-operation with international development partners.

Box A C.12. Gender-disaggregated statistics and measurement of national gender equality indicators

Spain

Article 20 of Spain's Organic Law 3/2007 (Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo, para la igualdad mujeres y hombres) states that public authorities must systematically include the sex variable in their statistics, surveys, or data. The National Statistical Plan, which covers a four-year period, is the main instrument to organise the statistical activity of the General State Administration. It is approved by Royal Decree and during its drafting procedure an "ex ante" gender impact assessment report is carried out. Once the Plan is approved, it is implemented via Annual Programmes.

Moreover, the database Mujeres en Cifras (Women in Figures) of the Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities (IWEO), contains more than 300 indicators, showing the situation of women in different sectors. Furthermore, the IWEO collaborates closely with the National Institute of Statistics (INE by its Spanish acronym) to jointly carry out the online publication Mujeres y Hombres en España (Women and Men in Spain), which provides updated data on the situation of men and women in the main social and economic areas.

Norway

Since 2008, Statistics Norway has published national gender equality indicators, including:

- Share of one- to five-year-olds in kindergarten, gender distribution in municipal council representatives, education;
- Gender distribution in the workforce, distribution of income, gender distribution in part-time work, use of fathers' quotas;
- Gender distribution in business structures, gender distribution in the public sector; gender distribution in the private sector, gender distribution among leaders, and gender distribution in educational programmes.

Results are published on a national scale and are also available by county and municipality to allow policymakers to address regional and local issues.

Sweden

In Sweden there are two main institutions producing sex-disaggregated data and measuring Sweden's national gender equality policy.

Statistics Sweden is commissioned by the Government to produces gender statistics to describe changes in society from a gender equality perspective in various policy areas, and to regularly follow

up and present on the web a total of 88 indicators for the development of gender equality in Sweden, which cover the main gender equality objectives. Statistics Sweden also publishes the book "Women and men in Sweden – Facts and figures" every second year, this presents the situation and development of gender equality in Sweden based on the indicators.

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency works on policy-analysis and follow-up of progress against the gender equality goals, co-ordination and support to government agencies and universities on gender mainstreaming, as well as international exchange and co-operation. Established on 1 January 2018 to contribute to effective implementation of the Swedish gender equality policy, the work of the Agency requires close co-operation with other government agencies, municipalities, county councils, regions and civil society. An important part of the mandate is supporting implementation and monitoring of Sweden's national ten-year strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, including female genital mutilation, honour-related violence, and oppression, as well as prostitution and trafficking in human beings.

Moreover, the Swedish Government has introduced a requirement in an ordinance that all governmental public agencies must present individual-based statistics in their annual reports disaggregated by sex, to ensure that access to sex disaggregated statistics improve. This is needed to make gender inequality in society visible and to facilitate effective process of change.

Notes: Spain : Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo, para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres. (boe.es); Instituto de las Mujeres - Mujeres en cifras (inmujeres.gob.es); Spanish Statistical Office (ine.es); Products and Services / Publications / Publications for free download (ine.es); Sweden: Gender statistics (scb.se); Distribution by sex increasingly more even in many areas, but equality rarely reaches all the way (scb.se); Swedish Gender Equality Agency.
Source: (Statistics Norway, Consulted in August 2023[24]); (Statistics Sweden, Consulted in August 2023[25]); (Institute of Women and for Equal Opportunities, Consulted in August 2023[26]).

Recommendations to strengthen the management and co-ordination of sectoral strategies in the PA

Clarifying implementation roles and operationalisation of objectives

The PA may consider **improving the clarity of organisational responsibilities** for the Cross-Cutting Gender Strategy by moving from individual institutions' operational plans to a whole-of-government operational plan encompassing all objectives and activities implemented by the plurality of stakeholders.

- For each general and specific objective, the action plan should outline all planned actions. It should also clarify deadline(s), the lead responsible institution, any contributing institutions, the identified process/output and outcome indicators, and ideally the necessary budget and related sources of funding.

- The PA may consider undertaking this exercise on a pilot basis, notably by starting with one or a few specific objectives or reform areas. Then assess whether this practice has concretely improved clarity of organisational responsibilities for implementation, and extend this practice to all of its objectives and actions.

- The PA may also consider strengthening the new template proposed by Strategic Planning Guidelines by including elements from the first template proposed below.

Enhancing competences and raising awareness on gender perspectives in public policies

The PA may consider developing and delivering a modular **training and awareness raising programme** on gender mainstreaming addressing the gender units, officials, and decision-makers in ministerial and non-ministerial institutions. The programme should provide in-depth knowledge and practical skills related to recognising and integrating gender perspectives into policy development and implementation.

- The programme should consider the different target audiences. Shorter initiatives to raise awareness of decision-makers could be integrated with more specialised training initiatives to develop more specialistic knowledge and skills tailored to the ministries' specific needs. Dedicated trainings should also target top leadership positions within public institutions.
- The MoWA should continuously assess the competences of staff in gender units and related positions. It should also provide training opportunities to bridge any competence gaps.
- Training materials should be updated regularly to reflect evolving gender issues and best practices.
- Internal awareness campaigns that emphasise the importance of gender equality and mainstreaming should utilise various communication channels, such as workshops, seminars, newsletters, and online platforms to ensure that all employees are well-informed about the content of the Cross-Cutting Gender Strategy.

Enhancing the organisational architecture for management and co-ordination

The PA should make further efforts to **strengthen the contribution of gender units** in the planning, monitoring, and co-ordination process by addressing the main shortcomings affecting their capacity to fulfil their role, notably 1) their level of authority, which is strongly dependent on the top management's commitment to gender mainstreaming; 2) the uneven competences of the gender units themselves with reference to gender equality, gender mainstreaming, and methodological analytical skill for planning and monitoring, 3) the uneven level of integration of gender units in the planning and monitoring processes with the institutions they belong to.

This could be done by:

- Developing and implementing awareness campaigns (see above) addressing both the managerial and the technical levels to promote gender mainstreaming principles, key elements, and practices among technical staff and top management.
- Revising work procedures so that gender units are systematically involved in the planning, monitoring and co-ordination processes. Concerning the latter, where a specific institution is in the lead of a specific technical working group, the gender unit may be appointed as its secretariat.
- Standardising the new planning approach adopted by the MoWA which consists in putting gender and planning units together. The same could be done to strengthen the monitoring process.
- Strengthening the technical skills and capacities of the gender units, in co-operation with internal partners and specialised civil society organisations. The PA should also further develop methodological and analytical skills in the gender units, in doing so the units can play an even more incisive role in enhancing the quality of planning documents and analytical inputs such as monitoring reports that can feed management and co-ordination discussions.

Robust inter-institutional management and co-ordination practices are crucial for the successful implementation of cross-sectoral policies, including gender strategies (see Box A C.8). To enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation and to ensure cohesiveness the PA could:

- Ensure inter-institutional co-ordination mechanisms at both administrative and political levels to oversee the implementation of cross-sectoral policies. These mechanisms should include representatives from relevant ministries, agencies, and stakeholders to facilitate collaboration, information-sharing, and problem-solving.

- Hold regular meetings, at least quarterly or biannually, to review the progress of policy implementation. These gatherings should serve as platforms for sharing updates, discussing challenges, and proposing solutions. Regular reviews help prevent bottlenecks and maintain momentum.

- Empower inter-ministerial co-ordination bodies to identify obstacles and challenges in the policy implementation process. These bodies should have the authority to propose corrective measures and work with implementing bodies to overcome hurdles effectively.

- Require regular reports from implementing bodies, and ensure that these reports are discussed and challenged or endorsed at the appropriate co-ordination forums. This practice enhances transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making.

- Provide clear conflict resolution mechanisms within the co-ordination bodies to address disputes that may arise during the implementation process. Effective conflict resolution prevents delays and maintains the policy's momentum.

- Maximise the value of MoUs (Memoranda of Understanding) signed between lead institutions and relevant parties. Structure co-ordination discussions based on the principles and commitments outlined in these MoUs.

Enhancing the effectiveness of management and co-ordination meetings

The PA may want to consider defining **clear rules and instructions** for effective management and co-ordination meetings. These guidelines can enhance the quality of discussions, decision-making, and the overall co-ordination efforts. Guidelines should include:

- Setting clear procedures to determine the frequency of co-ordination meetings. Meetings should become routine and predictable rather than ad hoc and should take into account the nature and urgency of the discussions.

- Ensure that all relevant LMAs and external organisations with a stake in implementation are included to provide diverse perspectives and expertise.

- Specifying the timeframe for preparing the meeting agenda and submitting technical inputs to the lead institution. Ensure that technical inputs are submitted in advance to allow thorough preparation and informed discussions.

- Officially appoint a secretariat that is in charge of several elements that ensure rich discussions and decisive actions such as: preparing and proposing relevant agenda items well ahead of meetings, managing invitations (including the identification of non-permanent members), co-ordinating the preparation of the working materials for the meetings (including the preparation of analytical inputs) and reviewing their quality, circulating the working materials in a timely manner, preparing memos and draft policy decisions, and ensuring that any decision made by the political- or administrative-level forums are duly taken into account and followed-up.

The PA may consider **enhancing the quality of analytical inputs** such as monitoring reports for strengthened co-ordination and decision-making. This may be done in the following manner:

- Moving from monitoring reports of individual institutions to a global monitoring report related to the strategy. This comprehensive report should include the actions of all involved institutions to ensure their performance against their specific objectives.

- Moving from an activity-/output-based report to a performance report targeting progress against objectives measured through outcome-level indicators, at least once a year, ideally semi-annually (see also Box A C.10).

- Complementing semi-annual or annual performance reports with more analytical content. This analysis should for example include shortcomings that stakeholders may have encountered during implementation, implementation risks ahead and envisaged mitigation measures, and the next steps.

- Regularly discuss progress reports (output-based quarterly reports and semi-annual/annual performance reports) in co-ordination meetings. Better define performance indicators to measure progress against objectives. Performance indicators should be limited in number and measure only the major changes and improvement that the strategy intends to introduce. The PA should also clearly identify what information (and sources) are needed to measure them, consider their availability, assign institutional responsibilities for gathering the necessary data, for analysing them and calculating the values (see Box A C.9).

- Setting legal obligations to produce gender-disaggregated statistics and data on the impact of policies and programmes throughout the overall public administration and use them for policy decisions. Statistics on gender should be published at least annually.

- Creating partnerships between the statistical institution and the civil society and strengthened co-operation with international partners may be considered as a suitable means to overcome the scarce resources to conduct surveys, reviews, opinion polls and benchmarking studies.

Indicative template for the presentation of key reform actions and the identification of implementation responsibilities

No.	Objectives and actions	Deadline(s)	Lead institution (in bold) and contributing LMA	Budget [currency]	Funding sources	Indicators
I.	General Objective 1: [title]					
I.1.	Specific Objective 1: [title]					
1.	[Action title and brief list of key elements]					
2.	[Action title and brief list of key elements]					
I.2.	Specific Objective 2: [title]					
1.	[Action title and brief list of key elements]					
2.	[Action title and brief list of key elements]					
	Total budget for General Objective 1:					
	Of which capital:					
	Of which recurrent:					
	Total budget for the Action Plan:					
	Of which capital:					
	Of which recurrent:					

Indicative monthly/quarterly monitoring report template (with instructions)

	Action	Responsible institution	Timeframe	Progress	Problems and next steps and risk analysis	Budget
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	OBJECTIVE 1: as in the strategy					
1.	(as in the Action Plan)	(as in the Action Plan)	(as in the Action Plan)	Description of progress in implementing the action and its activities. It should clearly indicate the following: Status of activity implementation – consider using traffic light system: Full is green Partial is yellow No is red Brief description of progress made or lack of progress. If targets are identified in the action plan, indicate progress towards them	Actions behind schedule or not implemented according to the plan. Solutions and key targets for the next period. Key risks to implementation of the action and its corresponding activities.	Budget utilised as compared to the plan.
	Total for Objective 1:					
	Total for strategy:					
	Completion instructions:					
	Column 1	*Actions and their corresponding activities are replicated here from the Action Plan. Filled by the ministry leading the implementation of the strategy*				
	Column 2	*The institutions responsible for the implementation of each action and its corresponding activities are indicated here as per the Action Plan. Filled by the ministry leading the implementation of the strategy*				
	Column 3	*This shows the Action Plan deadline for completion of the action (and its activities). Filled by the ministry leading the implementation of the strategy*				
	Column 4	*Filled by the respective institution leading the specific action (as indicated in column 2). The realisation status of actions (and activities) is provided here. The status can be "fully implemented", "partially implemented" or "not implemented". A fully implemented activity is one which has been implemented in full according to the scope defined in the Action Plan. A partially implemented activity is one which is between 50 and 99 percent implemented. A not implemented activity is one which is between 0 and 49 percent implemented. The realisation status is defined by experts within the institution itself. However, the status can change following review by the institution responsible for central planning and monitoring co-ordination and discussion with the institution in charge of the activity. The status is shown both in words and by colour code. The first column is highlighted in green for a fully implemented activity; in yellow for a partially implemented activity and in red for a not implemented activity. In addition, the major achievements, or challenges in implementing the activity are described in this column. The aim is to provide only strategic information to justify the realisation status assigned to the activity. The achievements should be supported by evidence, if possible, such as statistical data and comparisons. Routine and administrative information (the number of meetings organised, working groups established, etc.) should not be included. For example, if the law implementing the activity has been prepared, the achievements should explain what will change as a result, briefly summarising the main benefits of the new law, rather than just stating the fact that the law has been prepared and when.*				
	Column 5	*This column is to be completed by the respective institution leading the action (as indicated in column 2), but only for those actions and activities whose status is "partially implemented" or "not implemented". The reasons for deviation should be briefly explained. The next steps to implement the action and activity should also be provided here.*				

	If possible, a brief description of the main risks that "partially implemented" or "not implemented" actions (and their corresponding activities) will not be implemented according to the plans
Column 6	Information in this column is to be completed according to the money spent to implement the action and its corresponding activities, as compared with the planned budget. Any substantial over- or underspending should be highlighted, with proposals for dealing with the financial implications.

Indicative six-month monitoring report template (with instructions)

Outcome	Outcome indicators	Activity	Deadline	Realisation status of activity Full is green Partial is yellow No is red	Achievements	Next steps (milestones) and a expected date of realisation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completed by the Ministry leading the implementation of the strategy				Completed by the LMA responsible for the implementation of the concerned action		
Completion instructions:						
Column 1	*In this column the Outcome from the Action Plan is indicated.*					
Column 2	*In this column the indicators for the realisation of outcomes are listed. All indicators should be provided. They are taken from the Action Plan of the Strategy.*					
Column 3	*In this column the activities from the Action Plan are provided. Only activities that are relevant for the reporting period are provided.*					
Column 4	*In this column the deadline for implementation of each respective activity is provided.*					
Column 5	*In this column the realisation status of the activity is given. The status can be <u>fully implemented</u>, <u>partially implemented</u> or <u>not implemented</u>. A "fully implemented" activity is one which has been fully implemented according to the scope defined in the Action Plan. A "partially implemented" activity is one which falls within the range 50%–99% implemented. A "not implemented" activity is one falling within the range 0%–49% implementation. The realisation status is established by experts within the LMA itself. However, the status may change following review by the Ministry leading the implementation of the strategy and discussion with the LMA responsible for the activity.* *The status is expressed in writing and through the use of colour codes. The cell is highlighted in **green** for a fully implemented activity, in **yellow** for a partially implemented activity and **red** for a not implemented activity.*					
Column 6	*In this column the major achievements in implementing the activity are described. The aim here is to justify the realisation status of the activity. The ministry responsible for the implementation of the concerned action should provide only strategic information on those aspects which helped to bring about the outcome. The achievements should be supported by evidence, if possible (e.g., statistical data and comparisons). Routine and administrative information (the number of meetings organised, working groups established, etc.) should be avoided. For example, if a new law was prepared to implement the activity, the achievements should explain what will change as a result, briefly summarising the main benefits of the law, rather than simply stating that the law was prepared and when.* *If the activity's realisation status is "partially implemented" or "not implemented", then the reasons for deviation should be briefly explained.*					
Column 7	*This column is completed only for those activities whose status is "partially implemented" or "not implemented".* *In this column the next steps to implement the activity should be provided. It should also indicate the new anticipated date of realisation of the activity based on the next steps.*					

Indicative annual monitoring report template (with instructions)

OBJECTIVE/ Outcome	Outcome indicators	2014 Actual	2015 Actual	Target 2017	Action/activity	Deadline	Realisat. status of Activity Full is green Partial is yellow No is red	Achievements	Next steps (milestones) and expected date of realisation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Column 1	*This column is filled in by the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the strategy.* *In this column the Outcome from the Action Plan is indicated.*								
Column 2	*This column is filled in by the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the strategy.* *In this column the indicators for the realisation of outcomes are listed. All indicators should be provided. They are taken from the Action Plan of the Strategy.*								
Column 3	*This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome.* *In this column the actual result of the indicator achievement in the year preceding the reporting year is indicated. If there is no data available, the value is indicated as "N/A".*								
Column 4	*This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome.* *In this column the actual result of the indicator achievement in the reporting year is indicated. If there is no data available, the value is indicated as "N/A".*								
Column 5	*This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome.* *In this column the target value for respective year is provided. The target value has to be in line with that indicated in the Indicator Passport. If there is no target value available, the value is indicated as "N/A".*								
Column 6	*This column is filled in by the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the strategy* *In this column the activities from the Action Plan are provided. Only activities that are relevant for the reporting period are provided.*								
Column 7	*This column is filled in by the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the strategy* *In this column the deadline for implementation of the respective activity is provided.*								
Column 8	*This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome. Co-operation with LMA having implemented actions or activities related the concern output may be necessary.* *In this column the realisation status of the activity is given. The status can be <u>fully implemented</u>, <u>partially implemented,</u> or <u>not implemented</u>. A "fully implemented" activity is one which has been fully implemented according to the scope defined in the Action Plan. A "partially implemented" activity is one which falls within the range 50%–99% implemented. A "not implemented" activity is one falling within the range 0%–49% implementation. The realisation status is established by experts within the LMA itself. However, the status may change following review by the MPA and discussion with the LMA responsible for the activity.* *The status is expressed in writing and through the use of colour codes. The cell is highlighted in **green** for a fully implemented activity, in **yellow** for a partially implemented activity and **red** for a not implemented activity.*								
Column 9	*This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome.* *In this column the major achievements in implementing the activity are described. The aim here is to justify the realisation status of the activity. The LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome should provide only strategic information on those aspects which helped to bring about the outcome. The achievements should be supported by evidence, if possible (e.g., statistical data and comparisons). Routine and administrative information (the number of meetings organised, working groups established, etc.) should be avoided. For example, if a new law was prepared to implement the activity, the achievements should*								

	explain what will change as a result, briefly summarising the main benefits of the law, rather than simply stating that the law was prepared and when.
	If the activity's realisation status is "partially implemented" or "not implemented", then the reasons for deviation should be briefly explained.
Column 10	This column is filled in by the LMA responsible for the achievement of the concerned outcome and only for those activities whose status is "partially implemented" or "not implemented".
	In this column the next steps to implement the activity should be provided. The new anticipated date of realisation of the activity based on the next steps should also be indicated.

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Notes

[1] It includes five departments, notably the Department for Studies, the Policy Department, the Planning Department, the Economic Empowerment Department, and the Gender Responsive Budget Department.

[2] The OECD could not access more recent follow-up reports or follow-up reports pertaining to other institutions.

OECD Public Governance Reviews

Palestinian Authority
STRENGTHENING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

Public administration reforms can lead to a more accountable and effective civil service, better organisation of the administration, and higher quality public services for citizens and businesses. This report analyses the institutional and strategic framework for public administration reform in the Palestinian Authority. It includes recommendations for improving this framework as well as the co-ordination mechanisms, systems, and processes for public administration reform.

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