

Recommendations from the European Reform Barometer

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Contents

Introduction	4
Achievements and Challenges of the Government's Planning Framework in the Field of European Integration	5
Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers (MFLT)	5
Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI)	6
Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)	6
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD)	7
Ministry of Justice (MJ)	8
Ministry of Economy (ME)	8
Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)	9
Ministry of Health (MoH)	9
Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MASTI)	10
Ministry for Communities and Returns (MCR)	11
Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade (MIET)	11
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD)	12
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS)	12
Ministry of Regional Development (MRD)	13
Conclusions and Recommendations	14
Recommendations for strengthening the planning and implementation framework	16

Introduction

During 2023 and 2024 Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS) and the European Policy Institute of Kosovo (EPIK), with the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kosovo, published two annual European Reform Barometers. The barometers aimed to offer an independent, systematic and holistic evaluation of the Government performance in the implementation of the EU reforms.

Against this backdrop this paper aims to draw lessons from the two editions of the barometer and offer key findings and recommendations for the future.

Key Findings:

- While most ministries demonstrated improvements in planning and implementation, significant structural challenges persist.
- There is a recurrent misalignment between government planning frameworks and the obligations stemming from the EU agenda. In some cases, less than 30% of required EU measures are integrated into ministry planning.
- Implementation gaps remain wide, with some ministries delivering less than 40% of their planned actions, despite high complexity in their strategic documents.
- Some ministries, notably the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Transfers (MFPT), achieved substantial progress, improving alignment with EU obligations from 31% in 2023 to 87% in 2024, and maintaining consistent implementation rates.
- Conversely, several ministries (e.g., Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Regional Development) displayed minimal engagement or underperformance, either through absence of planned measures or poor implementation.
- The Barometer also highlights the volatility of reform progress, with certain ministries backsliding year-over-year due to lack of institutional continuity.

Main Recommendations:

- Strengthen strategic alignment between national planning documents and the EU integration agenda.
- Invest in institutional capacities to ensure effective implementation of complex reform measures.
- Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms across all line ministries.
- Institutionalise EU integration as a cross-sectoral priority, ensuring reforms are embedded in core planning processes.
- Improve inter-ministerial coordination, particularly with the Prime Minister's Office, to enhance coherence and accountability.
- Provide targeted support for underperforming ministries, through mentoring, technical assistance, and policy guidance.

Achievements and Challenges of the Government's Planning Framework in the Field of European Integration

Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers (MFPT)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers (MFPT) has shown a good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it has scored 53 points. Its planning framework for fulfilling European reforms is characterized by fairly complex measures. Even in terms of implementing the planned measures, the ministry showed a good performance by ensuring the implementation of 63% of the measures foreseen within the framework of the PKIE. However, it has been noted that there has been a significant mismatch between the planning of measures by the MFPT within the framework of the Government's planning framework and the obligations of the MFPT within the framework of the European agenda. Only 31% of the obligations within the framework of the European agenda were addressed in the planning of the MFPT. Also, during 2023, the EU Report did not evidence better progress compared to the previous year.

In the barometer of the year 2024, the MFPT has shown better performance in fulfilling European reforms than in 2023. In total, it earned 83 points. Its planning framework for fulfilling European reforms was characterized by quite complex measures and, as in 2023, the MFPT also ensured in 2024 a consolidated implementation of the planned measures of 65%. This time, the MFPT also ensured a consolidated harmonization between the government's planning framework and the obligations within the framework of the European agenda of 87%. This good performance was also recognized by the European Commission within the annual report, in which the MFPT's efforts were positively assessed in particular within the framework of chapter 19: social policies and employment, as well as chapter 29: customs union.

From two rounds of the European reform barometer, we can conclude that the MFPT has reached an advanced stage of planning and implementing European obligations. Also in the last year of the MFPT barometer, noticeable progress was recorded in the harmonization of the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process. Now it remains for the ministry to maintain the positive trend of European reforms, which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI)

As part of the 2023 Barometer, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure (MESPI) demonstrated good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it is assessed with 64 points. Its planning framework for fulfilling European reforms was characterized by quite complex measures. In terms of implementing the planned measures, MESPI also showed good performance by ensuring the implementation of 72% of the measures foreseen under the National Program for European Integration. However, on the other hand, it was observed that there is a noticeable lack of harmonization between the planning of measures by MESPI within the government's planning framework and its obligations under the European agenda. Only 49% of the obligations stemming from the EU integration process have been addressed within MESPI's planning framework. Additionally, during 2023, the EU Report did not note better progress compared to the previous year.

From the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure (MESPI) has reached an advanced stage in planning European obligations and a consolidated stage in implementing the measures foreseen under the National Program for European Integration (NPEI).

However, a challenge remains in achieving better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as in maintaining the positive trend of European reforms, which are regularly evaluated by the European Commission.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)

The evaluation within the 2023 barometer framework, shows a good performance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 56 points. Its planning framework for fulfilling European reforms was characterized by fairly complex measures.

In terms of implementation, the MIA also showed good performance, ensuring the execution of 77% of the measures foreseen under the National Program for European Integration (NPEI).

However, it was observed that there is a significant lack of harmonization between the ministry's planning of measures within the government's planning framework and its obligations under the European agenda. Only 32% of the obligations stemming from the EU integration process have been addressed within the ministry's planning framework.

Additionally, during 2023, the EU Report did not identify better progress compared to the previous year.

From the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has reached an advanced stage in planning European obligations and a consolidated stage in implementing the measures foreseen under the National

Program for European Integration (NPEI). However, a key challenge remains the better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms, which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD)

As part of the 2023 Barometer, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development (MAFRD) demonstrated a good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 60 points. Its planning framework for the implementation of European reforms was also characterized by quite complex measures. Furthermore, MAFRD ensured a consolidated implementation of the foreseen measures in 2023, reaching a rate of 71%.

On the other hand, a noticeable lack of harmonization was observed between the planning of measures by MAFRD within the government's overall planning framework and the ministry's obligations under the European agenda. Only 24% of the obligations stemming from the EU integration process were addressed within the ministry's planning framework. Moreover, the 2023 EU Report did not identify better progress compared to the previous year.

As part of the 2024 Barometer, MAFRD again demonstrated good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 61 points. Its planning framework was characterized by highly complex measures, although it was implemented at a rate of only 38%. At the same time, the ministry faced challenges in harmonizing its planning framework with the obligations arising from the European integration process, as only 31% of obligations from the European agenda were addressed within the ministry's planning framework. Nevertheless, its efforts in 2024 were positively evaluated by the European Commission in Chapter 11: Agriculture and Rural Development and Chapter 12: Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy.

From the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that MAFRD has reached an advanced stage in planning European obligations and a consolidated stage in implementing the measures foreseen under the National Program for European Integration (NPEI). However, challenges remain in achieving better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as in maintaining the positive trend of European reforms, which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

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Ministry of Justice (MJ)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 53 points. Within the framework of the government's planning framework in the field of European integration, the MOJ's measures were characterized by a planning of measures of very high complexity. Also, the MOJ ensured a consolidated implementation of the envisaged measures of 67%. However, the MOJ has not managed to ensure harmonization between the planned measures and the obligations within the framework of the European agenda. As such, during the year 2023, the EU Report did not evidence better progress compared to the previous year.

Within the framework of the 2024 barometer, the MOJ showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 57 points. Within the framework of the government's planning in the field of European integration, the MOJ was characterized by planning of measures of very high complexity. Likewise, the MoJ has ensured a consolidated implementation of the measures planned for 2024 of 63%. On the other hand, the MoJ's policy planning framework was also characterized in 2024 by inconsistencies between the policy planning framework and the obligations arising from the EU integration process. Therefore, during 2024, the EU Report did not evidence better progress compared to the previous year.

From two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the MoJ has reached an advanced stage of planning European obligations and a consolidated stage of implementing the measures foreseen within the framework of the European Integration Policy. However, a better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process remains a challenge, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Economy (ME)

In the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Economy (ME) showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 64 points. Within the framework of the government's planning framework in the field of European integration, the ME's measures were characterized by a planning of highly complex measures and its reform efforts were positively assessed also within the framework of the European Commission's 2023 report. On the other hand, the planning of ME measures within the framework of the government's planning framework was characterized by a limited connection between the obligations within the framework of the European agenda and the planned measures. Also, the ME achieved only limited progress in the implementation of the planned measures, as it ensured the implementation of 46% of the measures foreseen within the framework of the PEI.

In the framework of the 2024 barometer, the MoJ showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it earned 54.5 points. The MoE planning framework was characterized by highly complex measures, although the MoE ensured only limited implementation of them. On the other hand, the MoE measures within the government planning framework were characterized by a limited alignment with the obligations arising from the EU integration process. 42% of the obligations arising from the EU integration process were addressed within the MoE planning framework.

From two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the MoE has reached an advanced stage of planning European obligations and a limited stage of implementation of the measures foreseen within the framework of the EICP. In this regard, the challenge remains better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)

In the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it earned 39 points. Within the framework of the government's planning framework in the field of European integration, the OPM is characterized by a planning of measures of significant complexity and at the same time, the OPM has ensured a high level of implementation of its planning framework of 71%. On the other hand, the OPM's planning framework does not reflect the obligations arising from the integration process.

Based on the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the OPM has reached a good stage of planning regarding the European obligations and a limited stage of implementing the measures foreseen within the framework of the European Integration Policy. In this regard, the challenge remains to better harmonize the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as to maintain the positive trend of European reforms, which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Health (MoH)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Health (MoH) showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it earned 45 points. Within the framework of the government's planning framework in the field of European integration, the MoH was characterized by a planning of quite complex measures. Though, it has been evidenced that there is a significant mismatch between the planning of measures by the MoH within the framework of the Government's planning framework and the obligations of the MoH within the framework of the European agenda. At the same time, the MoH ensured only limited implementation of the planned measures

during 2023. Although the EU report assessed the efforts of the MoH to advance within Chapter 28 - Health and Consumer Protection, it also confirmed that there was no change compared to the previous year.

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the MoH showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 48 points. Its planning framework was characterized by measures of high complexity, but on the other hand it did not address a significant part of the obligations stemming from the European agenda. At the same time, the MoH showed limited performance in implementing the measures foreseen for 2024, as only 33% of the measures foreseen for 2024 were implemented by the ministry.

Based on the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer we can conclude that the MoH has reached a good stage of planning for European obligations and a limited stage of implementing the measures foreseen within the framework of the European Integration Plan. In this regard, the challenge remains to better harmonize the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as to maintain the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MASTI)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Infrastructure (MASTI) showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it scored 60 points. Most of the planning measures for 2023 were complex and MASTI achieved a consolidated level of implementation of the measures foreseen within the framework of the integration process. At the same time, in the 2023 report, the EC positively assessed the progress made in Chapter 25 – Science and Research. On the other hand, MASTI was characterized by a limited level of harmonization of planning measures with the requirements of European integration, since only 33% of the obligations within the framework of the European agenda are addressed by MASTI's planning.

Within the framework of the 2024 barometer, MASTI showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it earned 44 points. Most of the planning measures for 2024 were complex and MESTI achieved a consolidated level of implementation of the measures foreseen within the framework of the integration process of 61%. However, MESTI continues to be challenged by a limited level of harmonization of planning measures with the requirements of European integration. Also, unlike 2023, during 2024 MESTI failed to maintain the reform trend indicated a year earlier in the framework of the EC annual report.

Based on the two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that MESTI has reached a good stage of planning European obligations and a consolidated stage of implementation of the measures foreseen within the framework of the European Integration Policy. In

this regard, the challenge remains better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry for Communities and Returns (MCR)

The evaluation within the 2023 barometer framework, shows a limited performance of the Ministry of Communities and Returns (MCR), in fulfilling European reforms. Overall, it is evaluated with 46 points. Although the MCR measures in the integration process were characterized by limited complexity, the MCR ensured a high degree of implementation of the planning framework in the field of European integration. However, MCR did not manage to ensure a better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations within the European agenda.

Also, in the 2024 barometer, the MCR shows similar performance in fulfilling European reforms, compared to the assessment of the 2023 barometer, by being evaluated with even a slight decrease in points. Overall, it is rated with 42 points. Likewise, the MCR measures in the integration process were characterized by limited complexity and inconsistency between the policy planning framework and the obligations stemming from the EU agenda. Although, the MCR ensures a consolidated level of implementation of the measures foreseen in 2024.

From two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that the MCR has reached a limited stage of planning European obligations and a consolidated stage of implementing the measures foreseen within the framework of the European Reform Agenda. In this regard, the challenge remains better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade (MIET)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade (MIET) showed good performance in fulfilling European reforms. It is assessed with 56 points, in total. MIET bears great responsibility within the integration process. MIET is responsible for one of the most difficult parts of implementing European legislation. Consequently, MIET within the government's planning framework in the field of European integration is characterized by a large number of complex measures. At the same time, during 2023 MIET ensured a consolidated implementation of the planning framework and this progress was also recognized by the European Commission within the framework of the annual report on Kosovo. However, MIET has not managed to ensure a more effective

connection between its planning framework and obligations under the European agenda.

In the 2024 MIET barometer, it showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. In total, it is evaluated with 34 points. Its planning framework was characterized by measures of considerable complexity, but on the other hand it did not address a significant part of the obligations stemming from the European agenda. At the same time, MIET showed limited performance in implementing the measures foreseen for 2024.

From two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that MIET has reached a consolidated stage of planning European obligations and a limited stage of implementing the measures foreseen within the framework of the National Plan for European Integration (NPEI). In this regard, the challenge remains better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora (MFAD) was not part of the barometer for 2023. During 2024, the MFAD showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. Overall, it is assessed with 30 points. Most of the planning measures for 2024 were complex and the MFAD achieved a consolidated level of implementation of the measures envisaged within the framework of the integration process. The only thing that has penalized the MFAD's better evaluation is the failure to address the EC recommendation to begin drafting Kosovo's foreign humanitarian and development policy. Consequently, with very little commitment, the MFAD can provide a better assessment within the barometer.

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS)

Within the framework of the 2023 barometer, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. It is rated with 36 points in total. Although the MCYS planning framework was quite ambitious, it suffered from a low level of implementation, as well as a lack of harmonization between planned measures and obligations within the European agenda.

Likewise, within the framework of the 2024 barometer, MCYS again showed limited performance in fulfilling European reforms. Overall, it is rated with 25 points. Although the MCYS planning framework was characterized by highly complex measures, it suffered from poor alignment with the obligations stemming from the EU agenda and the low level of implementation of measures within the framework of the NPEI.

From two rounds of the European Reform Barometer, we can conclude that although MCYS has reached a limited stage of planning for European obligations, the challenge remains the degree of implementation of the measures foreseen within the framework of the NPEI, better harmonization between the planning framework and the obligations arising from the European integration process, as well as maintaining the positive trend of European reforms which are regularly assessed by the European Commission.

Ministry of Regional Development (MRD)

The Ministry of Regional Development (MRD) was not part of the 2023 barometer. Within the framework of the barometer for 2024, it received 0 points because, despite the obligations in the integration process, the MRD did not foresee any measures within the framework of the NPEI.

The MRD can easily address this issue in the framework of the preparation of the next NPIE by ensuring it will plan measures that will address these obligations stemming from the integration process:

- Approval and implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan for Regional Development;
- Adoption of the Law on Regional Development and, in parallel, the relevant implementing legislation;
- Strengthening institutional and administrative capacities;
- Improvement of the single project line, including indications for project completion and fulfillment;
- Defining initial steps in order to prepare the Chapter 22 roadmap.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Barometer findings provide a complex but instructive picture of Kosovo's institutional preparation and performance in the field of European integration. While some sectoral ministries show encouraging signs of progress, the overall picture highlights systemic challenges that continue to hinder the full and effective integration of EU reforms into government structures.

The discrepancy between the Government Planning Framework and the EU Agenda

A recurring challenge in most ministries is the lack of strategic coherence between national policy planning and obligations stemming from the European integration process. Many ministries fail to fully incorporate EU-related tasks into their formal planning framework, which significantly reduces the relevance and effectiveness of reform efforts.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) represents a clear example of this discrepancy. In 2024, only 14% of its obligations stemming from the EU agenda had been addressed in planning documents, despite having well-developed plans and a relatively high rate of implementation. Likewise, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) addressed only 24% of such obligations in 2023 and 31% in 2024, showing a continued inconsistency of national policies with EU priorities. In contrast, the Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers (MFLT) demonstrated that compliance is possible. After initially addressing only 31% of EU obligations in 2023, the ministry achieved an impressive 87% compliance in 2024. This shows that with the right internal mechanisms and political will, ministries can close the gap between national planning and EU expectations.

Limited Implementation of Planned Measures

Another major challenge relates to the effective execution of planned reforms. While some ministries manage to draft complex and ambitious measures, they often fail to implement them. This implementation deficit reveals critical weaknesses in institutional capacity and operational planning.

For example, the Ministry of Economy (MoE) implemented only 46% of its planned measures in 2023, and performance deteriorated further in 2024. Similarly, the Ministry of Health (MoH) managed to implement only 33% of planned actions in 2024, reflecting major institutional blockages. These shortcomings not only reduce the credibility of the reforms, but raise concerns about the absorptive capacity of ministries in managing EU-led changes.

High Complexity of Measures Despite Institutional Capacities

A notable trend is the increasing complexity of reforms planned by ministries. Although this complexity is often necessary to meet EU standards, institutional capacities for their implementation are lacking.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), for example, planned a large number of complex reforms, maintaining implementation rates above 60% in both years. However, the ministry did not manage to align these reforms with specific EU obligations, limiting their impact on the integration process.

Similarly, the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (MESPI) experienced a sharp decline in implementation performance—from 72% in 2023 to just 48% in 2024—despite 92% of its measures being categorized as complex. This suggests that the sophistication of the plans does not match the internal capacities needed to successfully implement them.

Inadequate Planning in Some Ministries

While many ministries struggle with compliance and implementation, others do not engage meaningfully in the planning process at all. The most prominent case is the Ministry of Regional Development (MRD), which received zero points in the 2024 barometer due to the lack of planned EU-related measures within the National Program for European Integration (NPIE). This indicates a worrying lack of institutional ownership over the European integration agenda and signals the need for urgent corrective measures.

Lack of Consistency in the Dynamics of Reforms

Another concern is the inconsistency in reform performance over the years. Some ministries that had performed relatively well in one cycle failed to maintain this pace in the following year. This indicates a lack of institutionalization of reforms and reliance on temporary or ad-hoc initiatives.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MASTI) is an example of that. It fell from 60 points in 2023 to just 44 points in 2024, and the European Commission noted the stagnation in its annual report on the country. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MKYS) also suffered a drop from 36 to 25 points between the two cycles, highlighting the risk of a backsliding on reforms.

Recommendations for strengthening the planning and implementation framework

Strengthening Strategic Planning and Policy Alignment

Ministries should align their policy frameworks more closely with the European integration agenda. This includes integrating EU obligations into annual and medium-term planning documents. The positive example of the MFLT which improved compliance from 31% to 87% in one year shows a valuable model to follow.

Increasing Implementation Capacities

Ministries should be supported in developing administrative, technical and human resource capacities for the effective implementation of complex reforms. It should be provided support, targeted to underperforming ministries such as MoE, MIET and MoH.

Development of Powerful Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

There is a need to improve internal monitoring systems to track progress in real time and enable rapid corrections. Ministries such as the MoJ and MESTI would benefit from institutionalizing monitoring tools that can bridge the gap between plans and actual results.

Institutionalizing EU Reforms in Sectoral Policies

The integration agenda should be seen as an essential part of sectoral development strategies and not as a parallel process. Sectoral ministries should be forced to include EU obligations in their policy documents as standard practice.

Ensuring Continuity and Institutional Ownership of Reforms

To reduce dependence on individual staff or short political cycles, ministries should integrate EU reforms into their internal work processes, job descriptions and performance management systems. The decline in MESTI and MCYS performance between 2023 and 2024 shows the risk that comes from relying on temporary initiatives or project-based planning.

Improvement of Interministerial Coordination

Effective coordination—particularly between sectoral ministries and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)—is essential to ensure coherence, avoidance of duplication, and overall monitoring of reform implementation. The OPM itself needs to play a more proactive and strategic role in leadership; its implementation performance fell to 40% in 2024, despite its central role in coordination.

