Policy co-ordination in the Western Balkans

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Policy co-ordination

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The Regional School for Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organisation for enhancing regional cooperation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. As such, it helps governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and helps prepare them for membership and integration into the European Union (EU). The ReSPA Members are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, while Kosovo* is a beneficiary.

Contents

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CoG	Centre of Government
DDGG	Department for Development and Good Governance
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GCS	Government Co-ordination Secretariat
GSG	General Secretariat of the Government
IPMG	Integrated Policy Management Group
LO	Legislative Office
LOs	Liaison Officers
LMs	Line Ministries
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MTBF	Medium-term budgetary framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PC	Programme Committee
PFM	Public Finance Management
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
ReSPA	The Regional School of Public Administration
SEA	Secretariat for European Affairs
SGG	Secretariat-General of the Government
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management[1]
SPC	Strategic Planning Committee
SPM	Sector for Strategy, Planning and Monitoring
SPO	Strategic Planning Office
WBs	Western Balkans

Foreword

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is an inter-governmental organization for enhancing regional co-operation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. The countries included within ReSPA membership are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, while Kosovo*[2] is a beneficiary. ReSPA's purpose is to help governments in the region develop better public administration and to improve public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, as well as supporting them in preparing for membership of the European Union (EU).

ReSPA establishes close co-operation with ministers, senior public servants and heads of functions in its member countries. ReSPA also works in partnership with the EU, specifically with the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), other regional players such as OECD/SIGMA and the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), as well as agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs). Since its inception as an international organization and a key regional endeavour in Public Administration Reform (PAR), ReSPA has contributed to capacity-building and networking activities through in-country support mechanisms, peering, and the production of regional research material.

Following consultations with ReSPA members and the expressed interest of these countries, it has been decided that ReSPA should continue with the development of specific analytical papers and studies devoted to important topics related to successful reforms of public administration in the region. The current policy paper focuses on policy co-ordination.

This paper was developed by Liis Kasemets from the Ministry of the Environment in Estonia. The expert would like to thank the representatives from the Western Balkan administrations for their input and debate regarding the current situation and the recommendations of this study. The expert would also like to thank Dragan Djuric, who assisted with collecting the responses to the questionnaire and with obtaining materials from the Western Balkans for this analysis, as well as organising the seminars with representatives from the Western Balkans. Finally, the expert would like to thank the OECD/Sigma experts for providing comments and feedback on the study.

1   SIGMA is a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU.

2   * This designation is used here without any prejudice to or position on status and this usage is in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ's Advisory opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence.

Executive summary

The goal of this analytical paper is to identify key ways to strengthen policy co-ordination as a tool for more efficient implementation of public administration reform in the region.

The evolving debate on policymaking has identified the potential of policy co-ordination to facilitate improvements in the management of the complexities of governance and to deliver on government-as-a-whole agendas amidst all the interlinked problems faced by governments. Policy co-ordination concerns not only the structures to which specific responsibilities are assigned but also the mandates they are equipped with and their capacities to carry out these responsibilities.

On a larger scale, the culture of governance in any specific country constitutes the context of the relationships among these structures/institutions and the way in which that state is governed. A key concern in policy co-ordination, therefore, is the mandate given to the Centre of Government (CoG) to perform the tasks to which it has been assigned. Policy co-ordination also includes the checks and balances in the administration vis-à-vis the CoG and the line ministries involved in the policymaking process.

Policy co-ordination is thus crucial for the following purposes:

- for managing the complexities of interlinked challenges and policy responses to these challenges;

- for coherent decision-making and monitoring the performance of the government agenda;

- for ensuring that all tasks and collective objectives are performed and met by the line ministries while avoiding any form of micro-management.

As the institution closest to the centre of power, CoGs tend to be the entities most susceptive to dynamic changes, according to the priorities and governing style of the government in office. This is reflected in the evolution and expansion of CoG tasks to meet the current needs of political leaders. In many countries, CoGs now provide a range of services that include strategic planning, real-time policy advice and intelligence, leadership of major cross-departmental policy initiatives, and monitoring of progress and outcomes.[3] The changing needs of CoGs are also reflected in the more flexible combination of committees, most notably the establishment by serving governments of ad hoc committees in addition to permanent committees. In the future, CoG functions will most probably include future foresight, capacities to provide leadership in tackling cross-cutting policy problems, collaborative leadership, and participatory governing skills.

In order for public administration reforms to be effective, the necessary mechanisms and capacities

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3   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries, p. 3. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

need to be built. Centres of government need to be dynamic in order to meet the needs and challenges of the Prime Ministerial and the government-as-a-whole agenda. Therefore, the role and functioning of COGs may differ in time and across countries. Major overarching reforms require a government-as-a-whole commitment to deliver on these reforms. In order for the COG to support the head of government and the cabinet collegially and effectively, the COG needs to be assigned the necessary mandate and functions and to have developed sufficient capacities to provide this support.

Recommendations:

• CoGs must take an active part in leading the government agenda;

• CoG reform takes time and needs clear decisions, planning, legislative change, resources, and upskilling;

• CoG capacities in co-ordination must be mirrored by increased policymaking capacity for ministries.

In order to equip CoGs with more effective tools with which to mainstream the government agenda and coordinate it effectively, it is important to assign the tasks together with the feedback loop to enable ensure transparency and accountability. Policy processes need to be supported by regular communications to foster effective interaction. Moreover, CoG co-ordination should include more than mere technical assistance in order to be able to provide substantive policy advice to the Prime Minister and/or the Government/Council of Ministers. This in turn requires the assignment of expert resources to ensure competence and reliability, financial resources to enable room for manoeuvre and for establishing links between the goals and the budget, and resources for the institutional setup to enable the CoG to steer if needed and to bring in partners to collaborate with.

The following functions may be outlined to form a stronger set of tools to coordinate policy agenda:

• co-ordinating the preparation and approval of the government's strategic priorities and work programme;

• co-ordinating the policy content of proposals for government decisions, including defining the policy preparation process and ensuring coherence with government priorities;

• ensuring that policies are affordable;

• co-ordinating public sector resource planning;

• monitoring progress on government performance.

1

Introduction

Good governance is of paramount importance in all modern democratic societies in which governments are major actors in leading long-term socio-economic and environmental development. Strengthening policy-co-ordination to ensure good governance has gained increasing support and momentum as a means of meeting rising expectations of public services required to meet ever more complex objectives. The EU's Enlargement Policy, for example, emphasises that public administration reform is the most important and effective means of strengthening governance at all levels. The ability of the countries of the Western Balkans to implement public administration reforms effectively is thus crucial for the successful accession of these countries to the EU. Accession requires states to adopt the EU's Acquis Communautaire, which itself constitutes a vast administrative undertaking that requires an effectively performing public administration with well-co-ordinated policymaking. It is important to mention that such reform is also necessary to ensure that policymaking processes can easily integrate EU affairs into the administration of domestic affairs after becoming a Member State of the EU.

Several assessments have been conducted by the EU and other relevant bodies of the progress achieved on public administration reform (PAR) and related aspects in the countries of the Western Balkans, with all such reports concluding that preparations for accession to the EU still need further work. For example, the 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy stated that delays in implementation and the financial sustainability of reforms in the Western Balkan countries

remain matters of concern.[4] The European Commission's 2019 assessment of the preparedness of these countries for EU accession rated Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia as being 'moderately' prepared for accession, Kosovo* as being 'partly prepared', and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as still being at an early stage in its preparations for accession.

Assessments of policymaking in the countries of the Western Balkans have generally concluded that strategic planning and co-ordination functions are fragmented in these states. In particular, reports have found that most structures have a weaker mandate and less resources assigned for policy co-ordination than for performing traditional functions such as preparing government sessions. The 2017 Monitoring Reports of the Principles of Public Administration produced by SIGMA similarly indicated an overall low rate of implementation of both PAR and public finance management (PFM) strategies in the Western Balkan countries,[5] while also noting that recent years have seen a strengthening of policy dialogue on PAR and PFM. According to SIGMA Paper 53 on 'The Functioning of the Centres of Government in the Western Balkans',[6] the key challenges for the institutions that comprise the Centres of Government (CoGs) in the Western Balkans include the need to create greater linkages between planning and the financial affordability of policies, the need to reduce the fragmentation of sectoral strategies and the need to improve the quality of strategy development. In accordance with these findings, OSCE/SIGMA has produced important toolkits to support governments in increasing the linkage between policies and budgets, complementing the comprehensive PAR tools previously developed by ReSPA.[7] Another key challenge is that of reducing the fragmentation of public policies. This issue still requires further analysis in order to identify and provide the preconditions for the development of further documents that could serve as additional useful tools for governments undertaking the process of improving policy co-ordination.

While the countries of the Western Balkans have taken important steps to establish basic legal and institutional frameworks for PAR, there remains a need for more efficient implementation of reforms through stronger policy co-ordination. More precisely, there is a need for improved co-ordination of public policies among public administrative institutions. As policy objectives become more complex and more co-ordination is needed in order to deliver on government promises, the co-ordinating role performed by CoGs in many countries is increasingly important to help governments deliver on government-as-a-whole agendas. In order to be effective, PAR needs to be an overarching priority of the government as a whole.

The strategic frameworks of PAR in the countries of the Western Balkans thus need to be examined and analysed in order to ascertain whether each country's governance system reflects the intended strategic reform, especially as PAR is considered one of the three key pillars of reform in the EU accession process alongside the pillars of rule of law and economic governance. Analysis is also required of the functioning of the COGs in these countries in order to evaluate the capacities of these governments for whole-of-government co-ordination and to identify and reduce any objectively existing divergences between sectoral priorities and policies.

The role of co-ordinating public policies developed by CoG institutions is assigned differently in the different countries of the Western Balkans. Although these structures have differing capacities and levels of experiences in applying the co-ordination role, analysis is needed to assess the extent to which the strategic planning and co-ordination functions are fragmented and whether these structures have a weaker mandate and less resources for co-ordinating planning as compared to the classical functions related to preparing government decisions and ensuring legal conformity. The clarity of roles also needs to be analysed, as well as the institutional capacities to deliver on the effective co-ordination of the government agenda.

The goal of the current study is to support the effective implementation of public administration reform (PAR) through the strengthening of policy co-ordination. In addition to comprehensive desk research, the study draws on close communications with the ReSPA Programme Committee and the members of ReSPA working groups. These communications aimed at attaining a better understanding of the different national contexts and the current PAR situation in the Western Balkans in order to select the thematic discussion that best serves the needs of ReSPA countries for further improving the role of public administration and policy co-operation and co-ordination.

The study first presents a summary of developments in academic debate that reflect the dynamically evolving challenges faced by contemporary governments. The first chapter begins with a review of the relevant literature on policy co-ordination, drawing on comprehensive desk research conducted in the preparatory stages of this study. While the first chapter summarises the importance of policy co-ordination in general, the second chapter highlights some of the relevant policy co-ordination practices in OECD member states. The following chapters analyse the current state of policy co-ordination in the Westerns Balkans and offer key recommendations for further strengthening policy co-ordination.

In order to analyse the current state of affairs and dynamics of policy co-ordination in the countries of the Western Balkans, a questionnaire for representatives of these countries was designed by the expert specifically for the purpose of revealing the inner workings of policy co-ordination processes in these countries. The questionnaire focused on the development and functioning of the strategic framework for co-ordinating PAR, PFM and European Integration (EI). The questionnaire was based on a synthesis of the key requirements provided in SIGMA/OECD's 2017 publication, The Principles of Public Administration,[8] the SIGMA paper on The Functioning of the Centres of Government in

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4   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM (2018) 450/. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf
5   See Country Overview 2017: Summary of key findings from SIGMA reports (2017), recommendations from PAR Special group meetings, recommendations from ReSPA comparative studies/baseline analysis and recommendations for possible interventions.
6   Functioning of the Centres of Government in the Western Balkans. SIGMA paper No 53. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/functioning-of-the-centres-of-government-in-the-western-balkans_2bad1e9c-en.
7   The comprehensive PAR Toolkit produced by OECD/SIGMA6 and the more specific Methodological Guide for the Costing of Government Strategies produced by ReSPA are useful tools available for governments.

8   http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-of-Public-Administration-2017-edition-ENG.pdf

the Western Balkan Countries[.9] as well as other previous assessments of governance in the Western Balkans by the European Commission and SIGMA/OECD. In accordance with the study assignment parameters, the questionnaire focused primarily on the policy co-ordination aspects of PAR and PFM without seeking to cover all the details of PAR and PFM. The paper also benefited from official and unofficial reports on co-ordination models and mechanisms in the ReSPA member states and Kosovo*.[10] The analysis presented in this study further incorporates the outcomes of discussions held in October 2021 about ways to improve the explanation of facts related to policy co-ordination in Western Balkan countries.

2

Governance and the importance of policy co-ordination

2.1. Developments in governance

Academic debate on policymaking places in the context of evolving needs and drivers of change, further reflecting the directions of change. Developments in theories about the role of governments and how they should execute their responsibilities can be seen as reflecting broader developments in global economic processes that also shape expectations about governments' activities and the ways governments are expected to steer or contribute to people's lives. These theoretical developments also explain the need for greater co-ordination in policy-making and guiding reforms. Although policy co-ordination has been an issue in government for centuries, it has become a matter of special concern since the 1980s onwards. This new emphasis on co-ordination arose partly as a result of the widespread adoption of the New Public Management approach adopted by governments. This approach placed greater importance on the management of individual programmes and the creation of autonomous or quasi-autonomous agencies, thereby exacerbating the fragmentation of the already fragmented public sector.[11]

New Public Management

The New Public Management (NPM) reform narrative that first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s marked an increase in the use of structural-functional models in comparative politics that reflected

9   https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/functioning-of-the-centres-of-government-in-the-western-balkans_2bad1e9c-en
10   *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ's Opinion on the Kosovo* Declaration of Independence.

11   Peters, B. G. (2018). *The Challenge of Policy Co-Ordination: Policy Design and Practice, Volume 1.* https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946

the growth of markets and quasi-markets within public services, the empowerment of management and active performance measurement. NPM draws its intellectual inspiration from public choice theory and agency theory.

New Public Management was a major and sustained development in the management of public services and was an approach adopted by in a number of leading developed countries. The advent of NPM is often linked to broader changes in the underlying political economy that have become most apparent since the 1980s and are associated with the rise of the New Right as both a political and an intellectual movement.[12] Structural-functional models became popular in comparative politics, with accounts of social and political evolution often involving notions of modernity and development and resistance to change that was even more severe in systems approaches of that time. The advantages claimed of NPM include greater value for money and the restoration of effective governability to an overextended public sector. According to critics of this approach, NPM includes an excessive concern for efficiency rather than democratic accountability and an entrenchment of agency-specific "silo thinking".[13] Examples of countries in which NPM has had the greatest impact include the United Kingdom and Sweden.

Breaking down the silos

In the quest for increased efficiency, NPM shifted the focus to the specialised demands of specific programmes. However, with this narrower focus comes the risk of failing to set and achieve broader goals. How can a government be responsible when trust depends on the individual´s personal decisions (i.e safety, years lived without diseases)? Moreover, the growing recognition of 'wicked problems' that transcend policy areas and silos has highlighted the need for 'joined-up' government. Such 'wicked' problems are complex and intertwined issues that transcend specific policy areas and whose solution thus requires a clear vision of the greater good to be achieved through government actions and a clear understanding of the larger interconnections and mechanisms at work within the system. This in turn requires a coordinated response, i.e. a whole-of-government response from a joined-up government that is able to respond in a unified manner. Accordingly, there has been a shift since the 1980s from NPM to co-ordination,[14] i.e. from a policy-based approach to a focus on addressing wicked issues that require a government-as-a-whole mindset in which the government is understood to be one of the key players shaping the rules of the larger system.

In the 1990s, for example, the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair began to call for more "joined up" government. This period also saw calls for more holistic government,[15] with New Zealand developing

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12   Ferlie, E. (2017), The New Public Management and Public Management Studies. Business and Management. Oxford Research Encyclopedias. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.129. https://oxfordre.com/business/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.001.0001/acrefore-9780190224851-e-129

13   Ferlie, E. (2017), The New Public Management and Public Management Studies. Business and management. Oxford Research Encyclopedias. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.129. https://oxfordre.com/business/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.001.0001/acrefore-9780190224851-e-129

14   Peters, B. G. (2018). The challenge of policy co-ordination, Policy Design and Practice, 1:1, 1-11, DOI: 10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946. https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946

15   Perri, S. D. Leat, K. Seltzer, G. Stoker (2002). Towards Holistic Governance: The New Reform Agenda. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

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a programme to "restore the center".[16] The development of a multi-layered regulatory system at international level in this period[17] also shows connections to the EU accession process.

Bringing the state back in

The last two decades have seen the rise of a functionalist approach in discussions about state autonomy and capacities. This approach draws attention to the need for greater links not only within the public sector but also between the public sector and actors outside this sector. Such links are especially important in order to overcome deeply rooted assumptions about the absolute causal primacy of socioeconomic processes and "bring the state back in".[18]

The functionalist model of governing was developed to address some of the issues in the debate about the relative roles of the state and social actors in governing. The functionalist approach enables us to identify interactions among social actors and the state, emphasizing the manner in which these potential sources of governance interact. Finally, the functionalist approach to governance helps to identify processes as well as actors involved in governance. However, the functionalist approach has also been criticised for its inability to cope with change.[19]

While there are numerous interesting aspects of politics in all the countries of the WB, all of these relevant to PAR can be understood in terms of the basic need to govern. Elections and other aspects of individual-level behaviour are relevant to this topic as they contribute to governance. As conceptualised in this paper, governance is a much more dynamic than usually assumed and is able to cope with change and even drive change within the public sector itself and in society as a whole. This dynamism of our model is in part a function of the responsiveness of the governance system to external demands. This democratic premise about change is important, but there are also options for change from within governance institutions themselves. In comparative terms, more étatiste governance systems that have greater control over social and economic processes or are more willing to exercise such control may be more capable of producing change.

Interesting new initiatives have been undertaken as part of New Zealand's Better Public Services reform programme to establish whole-of-government "functional leadership" roles in ICT, procurement, policy, legal services, leadership capability across government, etc. The UK government's functional leadership model since 2013 is also relevant to note, bringing together appointed Functional Leaders in the centre to improve technical skills across government on commercial, digital, project delivery, and HR. A 'Function' delivers expertise and services to departments and the civil service as a whole, and sets quality standards.[20] These examples deserve further examination.

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16   Peters, B. G. (2018). The Challenge of policy co-ordination. Policy Design and Practice, Volume 1, 2018. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946

17   OECD (1994) Regulatory Co-operation for an Interdependent World. Public Management Studies. Paris. p.18. https://www.anu.edu.au/fellows/jbraithwaite/_documents/Articles/Lessons%20for%20Regulatory%20Co-operation.pdf#page=16

18   Fukuyama, F. (2014). Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

19   Peters, B., Pierre, J. (2016). Comparative Governance: Rediscovering the Functional Dimension of Governing. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781316681725

20   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries, p. 33. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

Francis Fukuyama has argued that the key to successful government can be reduced to three key elements: a strong state; the rule of law; and institutions of democratic accountability. Fukuyama argues that many of the failures of modern governance are a function of weak states, weak institutions, and weak commitment to the ideals and values that provide the justification for "good government" – meaning "capable, impersonal, well-organized, and autonomous" – and not merely "accountable," in terms of responsiveness to key constituencies.[21]

One might argue in favour of one approach over another, but the underlying lesson from the evolution of this debate is that it presents us with a shift in focus aimed at better addressing the emergence of new challenges that need to be taken into account in continuously re-thinking and re-designing governance. This is crucial in order to design governance better suited to the changing needs of the future. In the context of limited resources and amidst rising expectations, governments need to tackle the right problems in an effective and inclusive way.

2.2. Policy co-ordination

Governments have been in the business of governing for some centuries, but the hierarchical, linear concept of steering that is inherent in a traditional state-centric model of governance is far too simple for the social and political complexity that now confronts any would-be system for governance.[22] Governments now confront a seemingly endless sequence of "wicked problems" that require some form of response, even if no enduring solutions may be impossible,[23] and even if they may be facing those problems with diminished legitimacy and resources.[24]

Designed originally to incorporate the complexities of EU integration in the decision-making processes, Metcalf's scale of policy co-ordination reveals the increasing need for greater co-ordination and leadership as more complex policy issues are encountered that need to be mitigated and policy actions that need to be consolidated and coordinated in order to deliver on wider policy goals.

21   Fukuyama, F. 2014. Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.
22   Peters, B., Pierre, J. (2016). The Theory of Governance. In *Comparative Governance: Rediscovering the Functional Dimension of Governing* (pp. 20-59). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781316681725.003
23   Head, B. W., Alford, J. (2015). Wicked Problems: Implications for Public Policy and Management. Administration & Society, 47(6), 711–739. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399713481601
24   Fukuyama, F. 2014. Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

Table 1. Metcalfe's policy co-ordination scale[25]

❾ Government Strategy
❽ Establishing Central Priorities
❼ Setting Limits on Ministerial Action
❻ Arbitration of Policy Differences
❺ Search for Agreement Among Ministers
❹ Avoiding Divergences Among Ministers
❸ Consultation with other Ministers (Feedback)
❷ Communication with other Ministers (Information Exchange)
❶ Independent Decision-Making by Ministers

The scale illustrates the relation between the increasing need for co-ordination to match the growing complexity of the matters handled by governments. Although policy co-ordination is usually conceived of as operating at horizontal level, some degree of vertical co-ordination is important in all political systems, especially in federal systems as a means of attaining greater coherence amongst substantially autonomous sub-national governments. Vertical co-ordination is also needed in international formations such as the EU in domains where member states have delegated some of their competencies. In this respect the EU is somewhat similar to a federal political structure.[26] The linear functioning of a state apparatus is insufficient to cope with contemporary complex challenges, meaning that policy co-ordination is needed to better manage these challenges.

The above summary of the evolution of debate on policymaking has outlined the potential of policy co-ordination to facilitate the management of the complexities of governance and deliver on government-as-a-whole agenda amidst the interlinked problems the governments face. Different models of co-ordination may vary in many respects, depending on the particular needs and context:

1. hierarchy: creating a stronger hand, even if not by intent, tends to create unbalanced systems of unequal parties

25   Metcalf, L. (1994). "International Policy Co-ordination and Public Management Reform." International Review of Administrative Sciences 60: 271–290.
26   Bolleyer, N., Börzel, T., A. 2010. "Non-hierarchical Co-ordination in Multilevel Systems." European Political Science Review 2: 157–185. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-political-science-review/article/nonhierarchical-policy-co-ordination-in-multilevel-systems/9CD0D70B20C5AC264265E60F1A0A14F5

2.   collaboration: enabling partnerships of relatively equal partners

3.   networks: creating partnerships the public sector domain.[27]

There is a tendency to push for matters to be taken on board by the Government Office in order to benefit from the attention of the Prime Minister exercising a stronger hand. However, this needs to be balanced with the competencies of line ministries and the government's agenda.

It is important to create mechanisms of co-operation among formal government institutions and partners for the goals that transcend individual policy areas in order to achieve the following:

1.   to develop a broader vision of these goals and their interconnections,

2.   to enable a better overview of the resources needed and available finances vs insufficiencies in funding and of human resources and capacities vs shortcomings.

3.   To foster a better understanding of the internal workings of the other institutions, by enabling the establishment of personal contacts,

These are all crucial elements of effective policy co-ordination necessary to enable the attainment of the government-as-a-whole agenda, as well as for mobilising necessary resources and counterparts, fostering "implementability", legitimacy and acceptance of goals, and broader communication.

3

Policy co-ordination in OECD member states

Governments across the world are searching for solutions to similar challenges, including the need to meet increasing expectations in the face of limited resources and the need to ensure policymaking processes can deliver legitimate outcomes and public policies that achieve the desired impacts.[28] Expectations of governments have increased not only in terms of policy outputs but also with regard to the wider impacts of policies that transcend individual policy areas, with such policies now expected to be legitimate, to be shaped in co-operation with stakeholders and accepted by the public as well as to be effective in serving the goals set. In the context of a continuously changing environment, agile states need to be able to set government-as-a-whole strategic visions to tackle more complex problems. The *modus operandi* of government must support the attainment of these goals through resource allocation mechanisms designed to meet the strategic goals, together with internal working mechanisms that ensure the attainment of these goals these goals by establishing the necessary co-operation and support.

27   See also Peters, B. G. (2018). The challenge of policy co-ordination, Policy Design and Practice, 1:1, 1-11, DOI: 10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946. https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2018.1437946

28   See SIGMA governance papers: http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/public-governance-papers.htm

3.1. The benchmarks

A number of analyses of governance have been published by the OECD[29, 30,31,32]. These analyses concur that it is essential to take account of the specific needs of each country and its political, institutional and cultural context. The working model can be seen also in other countries, like the Western Balkan countries. There is a need to learn from other countries and to seek solutions to similar problems, to identify the internal working methods and tools of each government and mutually learn and combine efforts in a shared search for more inclusive, effective and affordable solutions in an ever-changing environment.

The benchmarks developed by OECD/SIGMA target the following **crucial elements** of governance:[33]

1. Commitment by the *political leadership* as a necessary precondition and tool for enhancing coherence.

2. The establishment of a *strategic policy framework* to help ensure that individual policies are consistent with the government's goals and priorities.

3. Decision-makers need *advice* based on clear definitions and good analyses of issues, with explicit indications of possible inconsistencies.

4. The existence of a central overview and co-ordination capacity is essential to ensure *horizontal consistency* among policies.

5. Mechanisms to anticipate, detect and resolve *policy conflicts* early in the process help identify inconsistencies and reduce incoherence.

6. The decision-making process must be organised to achieve an effective reconciliation between policy *priorities and budgetary* imperatives.

7. Implementation procedures and monitoring mechanisms must be designed to ensure that *policies can be adjusted* in the light of progress, new information, and changing circumstances.

8. An administrative culture that promotes cross-sectoral co-operation and a *systematic dialogue* between different policy communities contributes to the strengthening of policy coherence.

29   OECD (2015), *Estonia and Finland: Fostering Strategic Capacity across Governments and Digital Services across Borders*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264229334-en.

30   OECD (2015), *Slovak Republic: Better Co-ordination for Better Policies, Services and Results*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264247635-1-en

31   OECD (2011), *Estonia: Towards a Single Government Approach,* OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264104860-en

32   OECD (2010), *Finland: Working Together to Sustain Success,* OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264086081-en

33   OECD, Ben-Gera, M. (2004). Co-ordination at the Centre of Government: The Functions and Organisation of the Government Office Comparative; Analysis of OECD Countries, CEECs and Western Balkan Countries. SIGMA Papers No. 35, p.14 https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kml60v4x2f6-en

For the purpose of explaining the inner workings of government, i.e. the role of the COG in the interconnected politico-administrative system, these elements can be grouped into three essential categories. The first of these categories is the will and the principles of the strategic leadership (elements 1-2), since any policy initiative, whether a reform or a new policy, needs political commitment and a basic framework within which to operate in order to succeed. Such strategic policy frameworks facilitate prioritisation and direct government attention to the most crucial reform agenda, including the prioritization of resources and human resources and capacity to implement the reform. The second category is that of government-as-a-whole functioning mechanisms (elements 3-6), while the third category relates to the need for dynamic and agile governance (elements 7-8).

3.2. The centres of government in OECD Member States

Governments need specific mechanisms to guide policy co-ordination that support the delivery of whole-of-government agendas. The **centre of government** (CoG) is the body or group of bodies that provide direct support and advice to the head of government and the council of ministers or cabinet. The focus here is on permanent administrative (apolitical) functions, though it is recognised that in most systems the centre includes important political elements.[34] This chapter will focus on the functions, mandate and resources of CoGs in OECD countries.

The key roles of COGs in OECD countries reveal a variety of organisational arrangements. The mix of different options derives from the country-specific context as well as the managerial style of the political leaders they serve.

34   OECD. Profiles of Centres of Government. Central Policy Management Systems in OECD Countries. Paris. (25 OECD countries)

Table. Key roles of the CoGs classified according to their level of responsibilities[35]

	Preparing Cabinet meetings	Communicating government messages	HR strategy for the public administration	Public administration reform	Strategic planning	Risk management/ strategic foresight	Preparing the Government Programme	Policy analysis	Policy co-ordination	Regulatory quality and coherence	Monitoring policy implementation	Relations with sub-national government	Relations with the Legislature	International Development and aid	Supranational co-ordination/ policy
Australia	●	○	❑	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○
Austria	●	●	○	○	○	❑	❑	○	●	○	○	●	○	❑	○
Belgium	●	●	❑	❑	●	●	●	●	●	❑	●	●	○	❑	○
Canada	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	❑	●	○	●	❑	❑
Chile	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	●	❑	○
Denmark	●	○	❑	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	❑	●
Estonia	●	●	❑	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	❑	●	❑	○
Finland	●	●	❑	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	●	❑	○	❑	○
France	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	❑	○
Germany	●	○	❑	❑	●	❑	●	○	●	❑	○	○	○	❑	○
Hungary	❑	○	❑	❑	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	❑	○	❑	○
Iceland	●	○	❑	○	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	❑	●	❑	❑
Israel	●	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	●	❑	❑	●	❑	❑
Italy	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Japan	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	❑	○	○	❑	○	○	○	❑
Korea	○	○	❑	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Netherlands	●	○	❑	❑	○	❑	○	❑	●	❑	○	❑	○	❑	○
New Zealand	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	●	❑	●	❑	❑
Norway	●	○	❑	○	○	○	○	●	●	❑	○	❑	●	❑	❑
Portugal	●	●	❑	❑	●	❑	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
Slovak Republic	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	❑	○	○	○
Slovenia	●	●	❑	❑	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	❑	○	❑	❑
Spain	❑	○	❑	❑	○	●	●	○	○	❑	○	○	○	❑	○
Sweden	●	○	❑	❑	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	❑	○
Switzerland	●	○	❑	○	●	❑	●	❑	○	○	●	○	○	❑	❑
Turkey	●	●	○	○	❑	❑	❑	❑	○	●	○	❑	●	❑	❑
United Kingdom	●	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	❑	○
United States	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
OECD Total															
●	25	10	3	6	14	7	16	4	19	7	15	5	14	0	1
○	1	18	9	13	13	15	10	20	9	14	10	12	14	6	18
❑	2	0	16	9	1	6	2	4	0	7	3	11	0	22	9

● Responsibility of the CoG.
○ Shared responsibility between the CoG and another body.
❑ Responsibility of another part of government.

The share of resource allocation should mirror the government's agenda for the CoG. In 2011, the share of CoG employment in OECD countries ranged around 2%[36] over central government employment.

35   OECD (2015), Government at a Glance 2015, OECD Publishing, Paris, pp 95. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ gov_glance-2015-en Source for the table: *2013 OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248705
36   The highest shares of CoG employment were in Chile: 11%; the Czech Republic: 6%; and the UK: 4%. Four

Between 2008–2012, employment in CoG increased in 48.3% of OECD countries and decreased in 31.0% of OECD countries. Similarly, while the budget for CoG increased in 44.8% of OECD countries, this budget decreased in 27.6% of OECD countries.

This comparative perspective reveals that there is no "one best" solution but rather that the model chosen must be able to deliver on the whole-of-government agenda and fit appropriately within the broader institutional, legal and cultural context. CoG capacities include not only allocation functions within the administrative system but also procedural capacities (e.g. the right to veto), financial resources (e.g. budgetary allocations and constraints) and human resources (personnel numbers, skills, etc.).

It is not only the structures that determine how specific responsibilities are assigned but also the mandate they are equipped with and their capacities to carry out these responsibilities. On the larger scale, the culture of governing in any specific country is the context of relationships and the way a state is governed. It is important, therefore, that the CoG be given the mandate it needs to perform the tasks to which it is assigned. This also relates to the checks-and-balances in the administration vis-à-vis the COG and line ministries in the policy process.

More than two-thirds (68%) of CoGs in OECD countries have a check and reject role. Notwithstanding the role of confirming legal conformity, however, the authority of CoG's to reject items submitted to cabinet has reduced since 2013 in terms of checking compliance with regulatory and financial criteria and in the adequacy of consultation provided. This could imply that the CoG's role in mostly confined to checking compliance with procedures and not so much with checking the quality of regulatory analysis itself.[37]

Co-ordination discussions prior to cabinet meetings are held in 40% of OECD countries in the form of briefings or other formats, and in 60% of countries in the form of ministerial committees, though for some 10% of COGs there is no responsibility assigned to hold such discussions.[38] The CoGprovides the key support to cabinet and cabinet committees, including co-ordinating policies and resolving differences prior to cabinet meetings. CoG's in more than three-quarters of countries (78%) organise meetings of ministers, reflecting their closeness and involvement with the wider executive.[39]

As is evident from these comparisons, there is no overarching solution to how functions should be allocated to CoGs or reflected in the power-balance. In the following section, therefore, we look at the perceived influence of COGs in OECD countries.

countries had a share of 2% or slightly above, while the rest had a share of below 2%. (All country figures are presented in OECD (2015). Government at a Glance 2015. OECD Publishing: Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ gov_glance-2015-en
37   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries. P.8. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf
38   OECD (2015), Government at a Glance 2015, OECD Publishing, Paris, pp 95. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/ gov_glance-2015-en
39   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries. P.8. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

Figure1. Level of influence of CoGs over line ministries to encourage them to co-ordinate with each other,

● High   ● Moderate   ● Low
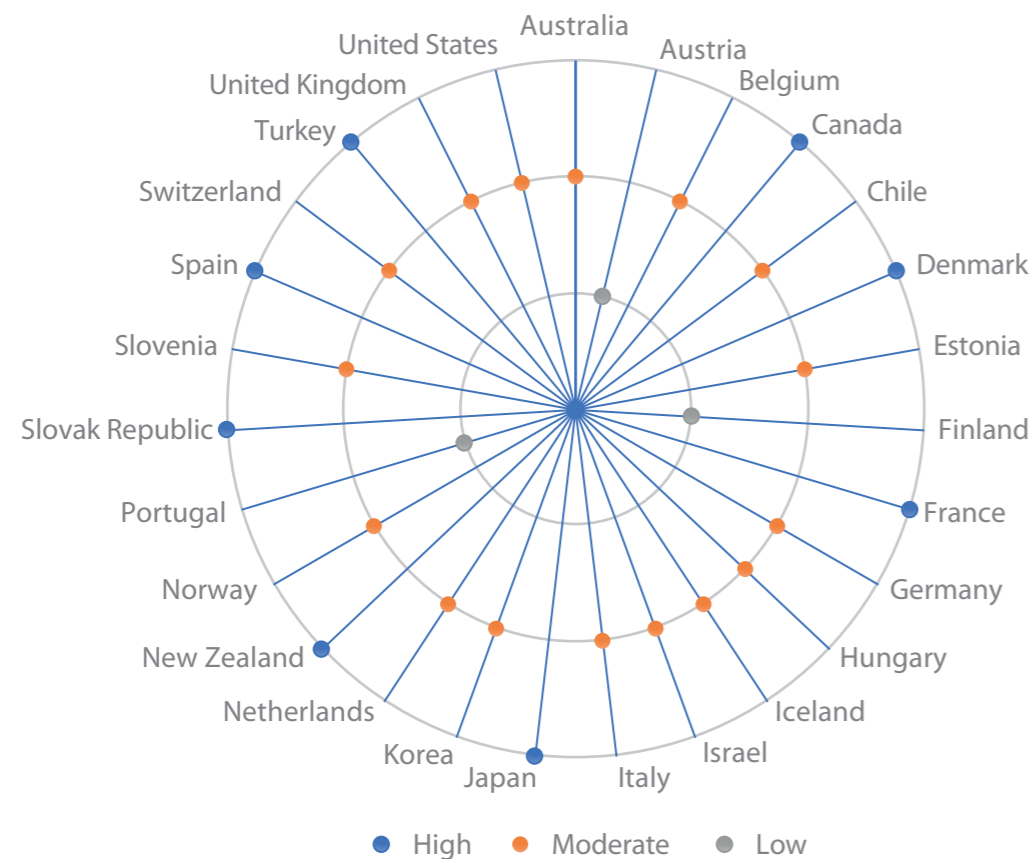
In a survey of OECD member states published in 2013,[41] 29.6% of the states ranked their CoG as having a high level of **influence** over line ministries in encouraging them to coordinate with each other, while 59.3% states reported a moderate level of such influence, and 11.1% of states reported a low degree of influence.[42] Also, 27% of centres felt they had 'high' influence over other ministries (34% in 2013), and 73% considered their influence 'moderate'.[43] For CoG's, therefore, 'proximity to power' is important but may not be sufficient to retain influence over other parts of the administration. More collaborative strategies for achieving policy goals suggest a role for the centre that is less about serving as a watchdog and more about providing active facilitation, support and implementation advice to ministries or groups of ministries.[44] This is especially the case for meeting cross-cutting policy goals.

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40   OECD (2015), Government at a Glance 2015, OECD Publishing, Paris, pp 97. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/gov_glance-2015-en Source for the table: *2013 OECD Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the Centre of Government.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248705

41   OECD (2013) Survey on the Organisation and Functions of the COG. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248713

42   OECD report builds on 1st benchmark survey in 2015 (based on 2013 data) compared to the current mapping from 2018 (on 2017 data), revealing that all these changes are not omnipresent in all OECD countries but instead we may see a shift

43   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries. P.8. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

44   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries, pp.8. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

The trend towards a more inclusive facilitator role for CoGs needs to be reflected in the allocation of sufficient resources to build the necessary skills to fulfil this role. The necessary tools also need to be given to the CoG in terms of power balance, since the CoG must be equipped with the policy field expertise and generalist skills needed to select from amongst the multitude of research and policy options presented to provide the head of government and the cabinet with "best of class" advice for evidence-informed and balanced policy as well as sound policy-making mechanisms and co-operation facilitative processes.

As the structure closest to the power centre, the CoG tends to be the state entity the most affected by dynamic changes according to the priorities and governing style of the government in office. We can see the evolution in the tasks to meet the current needs and hotspots for the leaders. 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.[45] Changing needs are also reflected in the more flexible combination of committees, which is perhaps most remarkably presented by the ad hoc committees established by the serving government in addition to permanent committees.

3.3. Future trends in centres of government

The cross-cutting nature of today's policy challenges requires CoGs to transition to a role of leadership in governance. Modern government requires CoG influence to extend across governmental structures, that is to facilitate and network. Centres of government coordinating high-level advice and various actors in the policy process not only need to establish rules and procedures but also to lead collaborative policy processes.

Policy co-ordination is more about leadership than the traditional role of checking compliance with formal rules and procedures. COGs co-ordinate wide-ranging reforms such as PAR as well as high-profile thematic topics. Stepping up to a leadership role requires expertise and collaborative strategies. The more substantive role of contemporary COGs further requires that public administrations have commensurately greater capacities to support this role.

An agile governance that is responsive to change and anticipates future change. In times of rapid and sometimes radical change, methodological guidelines need to be reflected in increased capacities for ministries and the whole public administration in order to meet the requirements of policy substance and ensure the quality of the processes involved. On this basis it is recommended that guidelines be complemented with more dynamic methods of co-operation that not only facilitate close and regular collaboration among the various branches of the administration but also enable civic participation.

In accordance with current trends, future perspectives of CoG functions should include the following aspects:

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45   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries, pp.3. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

(1) future foresight: taking greater account of future considerations in policymaking *(policy frameworks, methodological tools and institutional capabilities) and assuming a longer-term stewardship role while respecting the strategic direction of elected governments.*

(2) sufficient capacities to tackle cross-cutting policy problems. *Develop policy capability at the centre to cope with the growing pressure to lead cross-cutting or cross-ministerial initiatives. Facilitate and encourage improvements in policy capability (skills, methods, evidence base) across the whole of government.*

(3) collaborative leadership: *develop a more collaborative style of leadership that is less about command and control and monitoring performance and more about providing active facilitation, support and advice to line ministries in order to collectively meet complex, cross-cutting and often intransigent policy challenges. This would include mechanisms to bring ministries together in the pursuit of common goals or outcomes, and performance management methods for incentivising, acknowledging and rewarding contributions to collective goals.*

(4) participatory government*: build participatory open government to improve policy quality and effectiveness. This would involve developing deliberate approaches to public participation, understanding and building capability in methodologies for incorporating user insights into policy, and shared understanding of when and for what types of policy public participation is most appropriate.*[46]

4

Policy co-ordination mechanisms in The Western Balkans

Analysing and taking account of the different roles, needs and responsibilities of public administrations in the countries of the Western Balkans is vital not only to provide context for the analysis but also for ensuring that the current analysis is up to date with the national reform agendas of these countries and for defining the crucial themes and aspects to be taken into consideration.

Accordingly, discussions were held in September 2020 with representatives from all the Western Balkan administrations to inquire as to the stage these countries are currently at in their PAR path and what targets they have set in their PAR agendas. The analysis of these discussions further enabled us to benchmark[47] the extent to which these targets are aligned with EU standards, thereby providing a better understanding of their contribution to their EU accession goals. It is also important to examine what these countries see as the policy co-ordinating role of the COG, their PFM trajectories, and what they could learn from other countries´ experiences. The discussions with representatives from the WB administrations thus also included analysis of whether the governance systems of their countries reflect the planned strategic transformation, since PAR is fundamental to the EU accession process.

46   OECD (2018). Centre Stage 2. The organisation and functions of the centre of government in OECD countries, pp.3. https://www.oecd.org/gov/centre-stage-2.pdf

47   Toolkit for the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of public administration reform and sector strategies: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/toolkit-for-the-preparation-implementation-monitoring-reporting-and-evaluation-of-public-administration-reform-and-sector-strategies_37e212e6-en

Indeed, PAR is one of three key reform pillars, along with rule of law and economic governance. These discussions were important for attaining a better understanding of national contexts and an outline the current situation. For recommendations to be applicable they must be contextualised, hence it is of great importance to understand the national reform agenda and the goals set.

In order to tailor this analytical paper to the special needs of the Western Balkan countries, a questionnaire was designed based on the Principles of Public Administration[48] used to assess the progress of reforms in EU candidate countries as well as potential candidates. This questionnaire was distributed to representatives of the CoG in each of the WB administrations. The questionnaire also took into account the baseline measurement reports published by OECD/Sigma and the European Commission monitoring reports that periodically analyse the progress of the reform path of EU candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as several European Neighbourhood countries.[49]

The European Commission has outlined the following six key areas for public administration reform:[50]

1. A strategic framework for PAR, including political commitment to the reform process, political leadership and technical co-ordination and monitoring of implementation.

2. Policy development and co-ordination, including strategic planning, the functioning of the centre of government, policy co-ordination and policy development and analysis.

3. Public service and human resource management, including the organisation and functioning of the civil service, depoliticization, merit-based recruitment and promotion, training and professionalisation.

4. Accountability, including transparency of administration, access to information and the possibility for administrative and legal redress.

5. Service delivery, including improving services for citizens and business, efficient and improved administrative procedures and e-government services.

6. Public financial management (PFM), including a commitment to adopt a more comprehensive approach to improving PFM finances and the overall budgetary process through the preparation and implementation of multi-annual PFM programmes and engagement in PFM policy dialogue.

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48   These principles were developed in 2014 and later updated. See SIGMA (2014). The Principles of Public Administration.   http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-Public-Administration-Nov2014.pdf; SIGMA (2017). The Principles of Public Administration 2017 edition: http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/ Principles-of-Public-Administration-2017-edition-ENG.pdf SIGMA. Principles of Public Administration for EU candidate countries and potential candidates.   http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration-eu-candidate-countries-and-potential-candidates.htm

49   2015 reports for Albania, BiH, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia (baseline), 2016 (monitoring), 2017 (monitoring), 2019 (monitoring).   http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/monitoring-reports.htm

50   European Commission (2014). Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15, European Commission, Brussels, pp.4-5.   https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-strategy-paper_en.pdf.

In accordance with the focus and scope of this paper, the current analysis will focus on three of these key issues for PAR: the strategic framework for public administration reform; policy development and co-ordination; and public financial management.

4.1. The centres of government

Centres of government provide support to the Head of Government or the Cabinet of Ministers, streamlining the government agenda and enhancing good governance. Government-as-a-whole functioning mechanisms require the capacity and powers to guide one-government one-agenda policy synergies and co-operation. Such mechanisms also require tools to mitigate policy disputes at administrative level and to oversee items presented for government discussions and approval in order to ensure the alignment of specific policy proposals with the government's agenda.

While specific mechanisms and tools must be tailored to the political, legal and cultural context, these tools should be assigned to the CoG in countries in which the CoG is tasked with ensuring that the mechanisms of the administration function as a collective joined-up effort to support the government in delivering on the government agenda. This division of tasks reduces the risk of government becoming overloaded by the need to micro-manage specific policy issues that could be resolved at administrative level through closer co-operation, thereby also providing the government with evidence-based policy options that are better weighted and whose potential impacts have been assessed.

Dynamic and agile governance enables the effective functioning of the government-as-a-whole administrative mechanism, thereby potentially affording more room/time for the government for substantive policy debate and for anticipating cross-sectoral impacts. This in turn lays the ground for the government to respond more dynamically to challenges and potential risks. This also may prove efficient in creating more space in government for discussions on agile long-term visioning and prospects for its citizens (including individuals, businesses and non-profit organisations, etc.).

The functions of a COG may change over time to better meet the needs of the sitting government as well as in response to developments in the political-economic context. Examples may vary but the specific policy items assigned to COGs usually refer to wider policy reforms or

issues of major importance to the government agenda. Once reforms have passed the initial or crucial phases, therefore, these policy issues tend to be shifted to line-ministries. In Estonia, for example, this was the case with PAR and IT, as well as with upskilling the coordinating competences of civil servants on EU matters prior to accession.

The core functions of centres of government derive from the need of governments to have a mechanism of co-ordination. While CoGs need to match the specific context and goals set by specific governments, their core functions may be summed up as providing essential co-ordination for:

- managing the complexities of interlinked challenges and policy responses to these challenges;

- coherent decision-making and monitoring the performance and delivery of the government agenda;

- ensuring that all officials / civil servants in the CoG performs their tasks and meet collective objectives while not carrying out the work of line-ministries or micro-managing them.

4.2. Streamlining the government agenda

There are a number of crucial elements that need to match the role assigned to CoGs. However, these structures have different capacities and experiences in applying the co-ordination role.

A tool needs to be designed to help the CoG mainstream the government agenda and coordinate it effectively. This tool needs to encompass tasks that enable internal checks and balances mechanism. It also needs to be supported by regular communications to foster co-operative interaction. CoG co-ordination should entail more than mere technical assistance in order to be able to provide substantive policy advice to the Head of Government or the Cabinet of Ministers. This requires assigning resources to improving skills and building competencies – in order to be competent, reliable in finances – to enable room to manoeuvre and establishing links from goals to budget, in institutional setup – to be able to steer if needed and bring partners to collaborate.

The role of co-ordination of public policies assigned to CoG institutions differs in the various countries of the Western Balkan region. In Albania and Kosovo* the key CoG structures are placed in the Offices of Prime Minister. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia, the co-ordination roles are assigned to the General Secretariats of their Governments. In Serbia the key co-ordination function belongs to the Public Policy Secretariat. These differences do not necessarily disallow comparison, however. For example, in Finland the PMO performs quite similar functions to the Government Office in Estonia. Therefore it is crucial to look at the functions and the tasks these structures carry out.

Table. Institutions and units performing CoG functions in the Western Balkan countries[51]

	Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo*	Montenegro	North Macedonia
co-ordination of the preparation of the government sessions;	OPM/ RD/ RAU	COM SG	GCS	SGG	GSG/ SG
ensuring legal conformity;	OPM/ RD	LO	LO	SL/ SGG	LS/ SEA
co-ordination of the preparation and approval of the government's strategic priorities and work programme;	OPM/ Cabinet/ DDGG	COM SG/ OC	SPO	SGG	GS/ SPM
co-ordination of the policy content of proposals for government decision, including defining the policy preparation process and ensuring coherence with government priorities;	DDGG	-	GCS/ SPO	SGG	GS
ensuring that policies are affordable and co-ordinating public sector resource planning;	DDGG/ MFF	MOFT	MOF/ SPO	MOF/ SGG	MOF
co-ordination of government communication activities to ensure a coherent government message;	MSP/ OPM/ Cabinet	COM SG/ Ms	PCO	SGG	PMO
monitoring of government performance to ensure the government collectively performs effectively and keeps its promises to the public;	OPM/ Cabinet	-	GCS	SGG	GSG
handling relations between the government and other parts of the state (the president, the parliament);	MSP	COM SG	GCS	SGG	GSG
co-ordination of European Integration affairs.	OPM/ MEFA	DEI	OPM[52]	EIO PMO	SEA

For Albania and Kosovo* there are Departments for Development and Good Governance (DDGG) and Strategic Planning Offices (SPO) listed as having a part in all these functions. In Albania, nearly all CoG functions are concentrated in the Office of the Prime Minister, while the DDGG acting as the Secretariat is responsible for the co-ordination of the policy content of proposals submitted for government decisions and takes part in setting government priorities together with the PMO. The DDGG also works with the MFE in ensuring that proposals are financially affordable.

The Office of the Prime Minister also plays a key role in Kosovo*, where the COG functions are mainly carried out by the Government Co-ordination Secretariat (GCS). The Strategic Planning Office within the Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for translating the political agenda into the Government Programme (i.e. the official document for government priorities). The GCS works in co-ordination with the line ministries to translate these priorities into actual activities, as well as in co-operation with the Ministry of European Integration and the Ministry of Finance in their respective areas of responsibility.

In Montenegro and North Macedonia, the COG functions are more concentrated in the General Secretariat.

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51   *no data available from the questionnaire

52   By Regulation no 06/2020 on the areas of administrative responsibility of the Prime Minister and Ministries (adopted in June 2020), the Ministry of European Integration ceased to exist and all relevant offices now reside under the Prime Minister's Office.

In the case of Montenegro, besides the Secretariat-General of the Government (SGG), the tasks related to ensuring legal conformity are assigned to the Secretariat for Legislation, while tass related to financial planning are undertaken by the MOF. Nearly all the core CoG functions are concentrated in the SGG. Government-level committees have been established to solve possible policy debates through regular meetings and providing input for government sessions. Gatekeeper functions are performed by the SGG, and the MOF is tasked with providing opinions. What is important is their mandate/positioning in the system and whether or not the outcome of their work feeds into government. With regard to institutional reforms and the co-ordination of -relate affairs, it is important to create future capacity to integrate those co-ordination functions into domestic arrangements to create capacities and to develop the skills needed for the time when these could become home affairs. It is easier to integrate them once they become home affairs, capacities/experience in line-ministries.

The General Secretariat of the Government of Republic of North Macedonia is responsible for the organization and preparation of sessions of the working bodies and the Government, as well as for providing co-ordination and expert support in the Government's decision-making processes and ensuring that individual policies are in line with the Government programme. The sector for strategy, planning and monitoring is responsible for co-ordinating the process of preparing the strategic plans of the ministries and other state administrative bodies and for the co-ordination and preparation of the annual working programme of the Government.

In North Macedonia the General Secretariat of the Government is also responsible for coordinating the compilation of the government programme and monitoring government performance. Co-ordination of policy content is a shared function of the General Secretariat, which is tasked with ensuring the conformity of the documents with the procedural rules of the Government. The Ministry of Information Society and Administration is responsible for the quality of regulatory impact assessment process and the Secretariat for European Affairs is responsible for EU-related topics. The role of ensuring that proposals are affordable is assigned to the MOF. The PMO coordinates the communication activities of the government.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) a complex governance system needs to be carefully considered in designing PAR. In this context, co-ordination functions are even more important for setting up an effective model. Special attention should be directed to some of the crucial functions that have thus far not received sufficient attention, including the co-ordination of policy content and the monitoring of the attainment of results, which are important aspects in the policymaking cycle to ensure goals are reached. While PAR is still at an early stage in BiH, it is important to set up mechanisms that reflect the core needs of the government and governance. It is important to create links between the strategic framework, and to establish check-mechanism for reviewing whether policy proposals are being designed in co-operation and abide by the government programme and strategic agenda. The mechanism of checking financial affordability should be carried out in close co-operation between the COG and the Ministry of Finance before going to the government session.

Remarkably, the co-ordination of EU affairs is arranged differently in each of the countries of the Western Balkans. These affairs are coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office or a separate Ministry on EU affairs (as in North Macedonia), a Directorate (in BIH), or a shared function between these

authorities (as in Albania, Montenegro). In Kosovo*, MEI has been ceased and EI functions shifted to PMO.

The key functions and tasks for co-ordinating policy agenda are:

- co-ordinating the preparation and approval of the government's strategic priorities and work programme;

- co-ordinating the policy content of proposals for government decisions, including defining the policy preparation process and ensuring coherence with government priorities;

- ensuring that policies are affordable and co-ordinating public sector resource planning;

- monitoring the extent to which the government is delivering on its promises.

4.3. Mitigating and balancing mechanisms

One of the core measures of a government's work is its ability to deliver on its promises. This relates to the government's ability to strike a balance between possibly controversial policy objectives. Therefore, it is important for governments to stay strategic and focused. What are the mechanisms for political and administrative co-ordination? It is important to develop the position of a "gate-keeper" on the administrative side to settle potential disputes before government session?

For policymaking to be balanced and effective, mechanisms need to be in place to identify early on any possible obstacles, controversies and anticipated negative and positive impacts arising from different policy initiatives. It is important, therefore, to identify how these functions are being carried out and to analyse whether they are sufficient to enable debate and evidence-based policy input as well as to facilitate achieving common ground. In order to be strategic and deliver on the government agenda, however, the governments have to channel down to decision-making, since decisions ultimately must be made. Thus, it is important to ascertain whether these balancing mechanisms have been put in place, where they are located in the government system and how they function.

It is also important to ascertain how disputes are handled and under whose responsibility. In Montenegro, two bodies have been set up for this purpose: a Commission for the political system, internal and foreign policy, and a Commission for economic policy and the financial system. In Kosovo*, the Council of General Secretaries has been tasked with setting up a Strategic Management Group (SMG), a Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG), and a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). In North Macedonia, the Secretariat General is tasked with resolving disputes.

There are also formats to enable co-ordination to mitigate possible disputes prior to these being presented to government sessions. These formats may include coordinating formats for debate at administrative and political level. In terms of disputes within the administration, in Albania there is the IMPG, in Kosovo* the CGS, in Montenegro on expert level, in North Macedonia the Collegium of State Secretaries. In order to enable debate on possibly conflicting issues at political level, in Albania

there is the SPC (PM). In Montenegro the place for such debate rests in government sessions. In North Macedonia, government commissions are set up that have the right to give their opinions on materials submitted to the government.

These mechanisms may have varying powers. Another mechanism is the gatekeeper function or format on the administration side to settle disputes before government sessions. In some cases, this mechanism may also be equipped with powers to block matters from going to government session. In Albania, the GS of the Council of Ministers (the PM decides) is assigned this role, while in Kosovo* it is the SPO (under PM) and in Montenegro it is the Commissions of the Government (cannot block). In North Macedonia the powers of the General Secretariat are constrained by the possibility of materials approved by the GS being sent back if they have not been prepared in accordance with the rules.

Such mechanisms are usually set up with the aim of identifying any possible points of dispute early on in order to enable the resolution of such disputes at a suitable level prior to these matters reaching the government session. It is important to develop such mechanisms in order to provide room for settling possible disputes and also for ensuring that matters are submitted to the government agenda only after these have been sufficiently prepared, weighted and discussed.

Basic recommendation: *Mitigating and balancing mechanisms should be set up to assist the government in focusing on the strategic agenda and on matters that have passed the necessary preparations, as well as to enable better-informed decision-making. These mechanisms may enable additional room for discussions. Depending on their mandate, institutional setups and powers may further help governments avoid micromanaging, thereby providing additional time for discussions if needed prior to submitting such matters to the government for decision.*

4.4. Streamlining good governance, evidence-based policymaking

The European Commission's 2019 assessment of the preparedness of the countries of the Western Balkans for EU accession reached the following conclusion: "There has been some progress with improving policy planning, but further efforts are needed to ensure a strong quality control by central governments. Policies, legislation and public investments are still often prepared without impact assessments and inter-institutional and public consultations."[53]

There is a need for action on multiple fronts, including on developing the expertise and streamlining RIA in policymaking as a compulsory part of every policy initiative. In order to attain a qualitative increase in building trust and delivering policies that meet civic needs, the mechanisms of regular consultation to open up the policy process need to be incremental.

The governments typically establish a high-level co-ordinating mechanism located within the CoG to play a proactive role in promoting, improving and ensuring the **quality** of sectoral and inter-sectoral strategic documents and policy co-ordination. These structures are organised differently and their mandate typically still requires additional support in the form of resources and capacities for identifying and addressing policy divergences and conflicts within policies. Encouraging and facilitating formal governance arrangements and informal working practices that support effective communication between ministries and departments and between ministries and other public sector bodies is also an important part of the mandate of such structures. In order to enhance the practical effects of co-ordination, the clarity of roles and responsibilities within the various structures of the Centres of the Governments also needs to be improved.

The administrations of the Western Balkan countries tend to rely more heavily on **written guidelines** than on informal co-operation methods to promote inter-institutional /inter-ministerial collaboration on policy solutions to problems that cut across the lines of ministerial responsibility. In this regard, the following features have been identified:

- Emphasis on formal such as cabinet meetings rather than informal such as ad hoc meetings of senior officials or task forces.

- Decision-making powers are concentrated at the political top, which may overload the cabinet with issues that could be solved at administrative level, thus leaving more time for discussions on policy substance in order to meet complex goals that require collaborative efforts to deliver on the top priorities of the government agenda.

Reform requires changes in mandates and culture that needs to go beyond applying rules and procedures because giving **advice** requires making judgements. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Practices in the OECD and the EU member states vary due to the need for solutions that meet certain goals and fit the specific contexts. The difference is in which powers are assigned to different parties. The links between strategic perspectives and powers to decide are more limited in the Western Balkans than the OECD countries.[54] In budgetary terms this includes the powers to re-allocate funds as well as the management of fiscal risks.

In the Western Balkans, a shift from support to **advice** should be anticipated to increase co-ordination capacities for the attainment of the government-as-a-whole agenda. The institutional setup must resemble but not necessarily duplicate the complexities, and align these complexities with the essential needs of the PM and Cabinet. Depending on the specific context and needs, COGs could be tasked with facilitating various things. In the event of substantive differences, CoGs could give advice on policy options to manoeuvre between different expert advice, while in the event of institutional problems, CoGs could provide neutral ground for the settlement of disputes.

Commitment-building, communications, co-ordination and resource allocation are the cornerstones of any reform. One of the key prerequisites of fulfilling core tasks is to have the knowledge and mandate to guide the setting of strategic priorities, to review the proposals being submitted to

53   https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf, p. 6

54   OECD (2020). Government at a Glance: Western Balkans. OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787(a8c72f1b-en.

government sessions (to verify that these contribute to the attainment of government priorities) and to check the budgetary costs of these proposals (in terms of affordability as well as to ensure the priorities have been adequately costed and costs covered), with this latter task often entailing close co-operation with the Ministry of Finance.

The more complex **outcomes** that are sought, the more co-ordination is needed for joined-up-government. The functions of the executive and of quality checking ought to be separated and preferably not performed by the same authority. In cases where functions are divided and located by their nature and coordinated by a neutral party in the system, the quality check functions may be outsourced but not the safeguarding of joined-up government goals.

In countries in Northern Europe[55] it is quite common practice to use **informal meetings and networks** among higher civil servants to enable discussion to solve possible policy disputes before submitting policy papers to government sessions. These meetings and networks, whether on a regular or ad hoc basis, allow for discussion at an early phase of policymaking. There are regular meetings between ministerial leaders as well as thematic working groups and networks at the level of civil servants. In addition, there are networks to engage relevant stakeholders and other partners. This fosters a better understanding of policy matters as well as their possible interconnectedness and the possible impacts of various policy options. Such arrangements also contribute to the openness of policymaking and the transparency of governance.

On matters of greater importance to the government agenda and/or that transcend the governing areas of specific ministries, governments have also set up special task forces. A possible recommendation for the Western Balkans could thus be to use special task forces for goals that cut across policy areas, with these forces composed of formal counterparts and partners to install and give practical experience of how effective co-operation works, its benefits and risks and challenges. However, there are some crucial elements required to make task forces work. A task force must have a clear task and mandate for what it has to deliver and a clear understanding of the resources attributed to this task. Task forces could be set up for a limited timeframe. In Estonia, for example, task forces are established by a Government Decision and for a maximum of three years. These task forces report to the Cabinet on the attainment of goals and submit a report outlining the mechanisms by which the proposals or other outcomes of the work of the task force will be implemented after the task force has concluded its work.[56] In this way, task forces can

- create a broader vision of the goals and their interconnections;

- provide a better overview of the resources needed and available finances vs insufficiencies in funding, human resources and capacities vs shortcomings.

- foster a better understanding of the internal workings of other institutions and personal contacts with key counterparts.

55 See OECD (2015), *Estonia and Finland: Fostering Strategic Capacity across Governments and Digital Services across Borders*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing: Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264229334-en.

56 For example see the Zero bureaucracy task force in Estonia, from 2016-2018. https://www.mkm.ee/en/zero-bureaucracy-0

These are all crucial elements for effective co-ordination to enable a government-as-a-whole agenda to be attained and for mobilising necessary resources and counterparts. Task forces can also be used as an additional mechanism to lead a priority that is complex in nature and as a dynamic co-operation mechanism that can transcend ministerial and private sector boundaries to best match the assignment.

Recommendation: *The culture of administration in Western Balkans should be guided to embrace collaborative problem-solving in policymaking and support the emergence of networks that cut across ministerial lines and initiate regular consultation formats with civic society as well as business representatives.*

5

Co-ordination between public policies in the Western Balkans

The underlying problems that have been identified in the functioning of CoGs in the Western Balkan countries relate to the fragmentary character of strategic planning and co-ordination functions. There is thus a need for more efficient PAR through stronger policy co-ordination, and more precisely for improved co-ordination among public policies by public administration institutions. Specifically in regard to PAR and PFM, this proposal also entails exploring possible alternative means of co-ordination such as setting up task forces. Even where the principles and a system are in place, however, the question remains as to whether this system serves to make co-operation smoother and delivers on the government-as-a-whole agenda. This relates to the question of how to break silos, how to open up to collaboration, how to engage stakeholders and their expertise from outside the government, and how to communicate change and the goals set by the government on order to reach a greater audience among the general public.

5.1. Commitment and current level of reform advancement

Public administration reform is of paramount importance for strengthening governance at all levels. Countries should therefore establish inclusive structured dialogues on reform priorities with the

inclusion of civic society.[57] With the Western Balkan governments having declared their aspirations to join the EU, this commitment needs to be channelled into government agendas with a working plan that lays out clear steps to attain reform. Approximation to the EU Acquis is a vast undertaking that take years to complete and requires clear political commitment in order to proceed and reach the goal.

The EU has declared public administration reform (PAR) to be of crucial importance to strengthening governance, noting that delays in the implementation of reforms remain a concern in addition to the financial sustainability of these reforms.[58] Since the EU and Western Balkans Summit was held in Thessaloniki in 2003,[59] the EU has provided guidance on smooth accession to the EU, underlining the need for enhanced governance in the Balkan countries, stressing that the rule of law, justice and fundamental rights must have priority in accession negotiations.

The extent of a country's commitment to PAR is often revealed in the level of ambition and pace of change. Such commitment has varied over time in some countries in the Western Balkans. There have been critical assessments that Kosovo* has experienced insufficient political commitment to EU integration,[60] and also that North Macedonia has struggled with assuring political commitment to PAR.[61] In BiH, the implementation of PAR could be described as pending, with evidence that the country is struggling with the strategic framework and commitment to the reform agenda.[62] Although the extent to which the level of political commitment or the time in office of a particular government may have slowed the pace of reform in some Western Balkan countries, it is clear that strong political support for any reform manifests itself in greater opportunities for advancing the implementation of the reform agenda. In times of frequent changes in government, it becomes increasingly important to have political consensus among political parties to the reform, thereby potentially reducing the need for continued changes in the reform agenda and enabling a greater focus on the implementation of the reform. In order to deliver on a reform of such magnitude, it is essential for governments not to waver on their commitment to the reform agenda.

In Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, progress on administrative reform has been assessed by the EU as "moderately prepared".[63] However, there are crucial elements that still need to undergo important

57   Communication from the Commission of the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions: A Credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans, Strasbourg, 6/2/2018 COM(2018) 65 final. Pp.1, 3, 5. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/roadmap-factsheet-tallinn_en

58   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Strasbourg, 17/04/2018 COM (2018) 450. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417_strategy_paper_en.pdf

59   EU – Western Balkans Summit Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003. 10229/03 (Presse 163). https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_03_163

60   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives
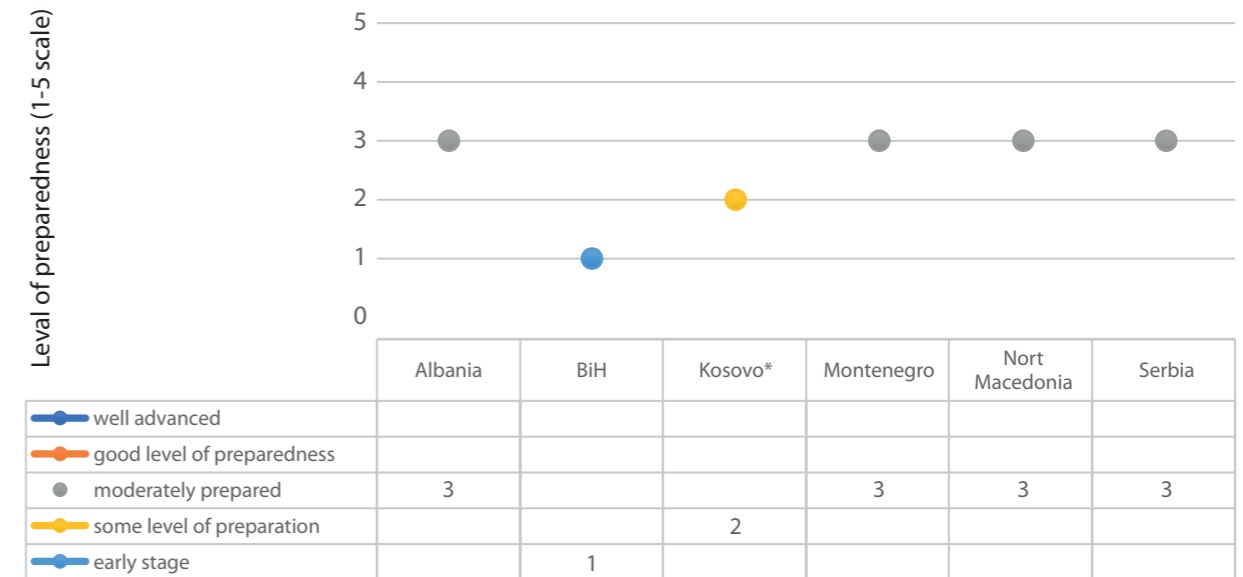
61   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives

62   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives

63   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD(2018) 151 final, pp 12-14.

changes, including institutional consolidation in some countries and the introduction of medium-term budgeting and progress on public finance reform.

Table 2. The European Commission's assessment of preparedness for Western Balkans, 2019[64] (The Western Balkan regional average is 2.5 on a 5-point scale)

	Albania	BiH	Kosovo*	Montenegro	Nort Macedonia	Serbia
well advanced						
good level of preparedness						
moderately prepared	3			3	3	3
some level of preparation			2			
early stage		1				

Governments of Western Balkan countries have taken important steps in establishing basic legal and institutional frameworks for the improved co-ordination of various public policies. These efforts are led by the need to ensure whole-of-government co-ordination in order to mitigate and diminish objectively existing divergences between sectoral priorities and policies. The Western Balkan governments have progressed at a varying pace in their efforts to implement PAR, which is one of the indicators reflected in EU assessments of the readiness of these countries to move towards negotiation talks. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo* have been declared potential EU candidate countries, while Albania and North Macedonia are already candidate countries. Negotiations have been launched for the accession of Montenegro and Serbia to the EU, with the prospect of their becoming members by 2025, although this perspective is considered by the EU as "extremely ambitious".[65]

Every reform starts from the will to change. The shared commitment of different political parties to joining the EU is very important to limit the possible disruptions arising from the political cycle. First and foremost is the motivation and commitment to the reform agenda. This underlines the need for a shared commitment to the agenda of the core reforms, which may in part entail the assignment of more responsibilities and some decisions to the administrative level. Otherwise, political fluctuations may reduce the capacity of the administrative system to develop competencies in policy fields and this in turn can erode trust in administration at political level.

64   OECD (2020). Government at a Glance: Western Balkans. OECD Publishing, Paris, pp.27. https://doi.org/10.1787(a8c72f1b-en

65   European Parliament, Fact Sheets on the European Union: the Western Balkans, 12/2019. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/168/the-western-balkans

It is essential, therefore, that all the Western Balkan governments clearly commit to PAR as one of the crucial pillars of developing their governing systems to support systemic change in policymaking. PAR is further essential to ensure that all necessary support and advice is provided in addition to benchmarks outlining the crucial elements and steps to deliver on this change and reshape public administration to match the needs and aspirations of these countries.

Attention from the government is one of the most valuable currencies in politics. While this requires a commitment to steering change, in many cases governments are faced with questions as to "how strategic we really are". There are examples of government programmes that merely list tasks of minor changes, while other programmes include wide-ranging reforms, as well as government programmes that are equal in length to the volume of a small book. Integration into the EU requires governments to approximate legislation and administrative practices to EU standards. This has tended to boost strategic planning in policymaking, in many countries resulting in a myriad of strategy documents that need to be consolidated. CoGs need a strategic vision to guide this process. Influence comes with recognition, and one of the CoG's functions is to communicate the government's messages. Such communication also helps to build trust in government and broaden understanding of the government agenda as well as to explain the reasoning behind policymaking decisions.

Recommendation: *In order for the reform of public administration to take effect, the following mechanisms and capacities need to be built:*

- CoGs must take an active part in leading the government agenda

- CoG reforms takes time, requiring clear decisions, planning, legislative change, resources and upskilling;

- CoG capacities for policy co-ordination must be mirrored by increased ministerial capacities for policymaking.

5.2. Linkages in the strategic framework

For PAR to be effective, planning must be harmonised and aligned with financial capacities to ensure the attainment of the government´s objectives. Strategic documents need to be linked to the budgetary process, i.e. the medium-term budgetary framework (MTBF) and the annual state budget, etc., as well as to the informed policy process and the attainment of the goals linked to the budgetary process. Good governance and public administration are among the most important horizontal reform areas since they provide the framework for implementing other policies and enable the building of systems that can provide a sound basis to implement the EU acquis.

In Albania, although the system of policy co-ordination is in place and structural changes outside the centre are envisaged, the country is struggling with the legislative pace required for PAR.[66] The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) inevitably involves at least some political element. According to the

66   All information and findings presented here are drawn from the responses to the questionnaire prepared

EU, progress on administrative reform remains "moderate".[67] Policy planning is fragmented among various CoG institutions and ministries. The policy co-ordinating capacities of the administration still need to be increased. In general, policy needs to be better aligned with fiscal planning and government priorities.

From a total of 80 strategic planning documents in use in Albania, five concern PAR. The highest-level strategic planning document is the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI). The current medium-term strategic framework encompasses the Government Programme, confirming the political priorities and objectives for 2017–2021, the NSDI II, which sets out the vision and direction of reforms over the medium term, the MTBF, and the National Programme for EI.

Albania has been implementing an Integrated Strategic Planning System. This system includes the following components: strategic public policy planning; the participants in the planning process; the management of the public policy-planning process; the process of aligning the content of strategic documents with other planning documents and legal adjustments; and linking and aligning the process of adopting and implementing policies with the mid-term budgeting process.

The organisational and individual/managerial responsibility for co-ordinating and steering PAR has already been established in Albania. The Deputy Prime Minister, through the IPMG-PAR GG structures, provides overall political leadership and co-ordination for PAR. The preparation, monitoring and reporting of overall reform implementation, as well as the outcome and output indicators of the PAR Strategy and other PAR-related strategies, are now carried out through the framework of the Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) for Good Governance and PAR structure and the relevant Thematic Groups with the support of the IPMG secretariat on Good Governance and Public Administration.

The NSDI currently comprises a set of policy documents that include cross-cutting and sectoral strategies. Such a significant number of sectoral strategies is helpful to highlight how that all the possible policy areas contribute to and are affected by the overall implementation of the NSDI. The set of indicators presented in NSDI II consist of: i)10 Indicators in the framework of integration commitments, for which there is agreement with the EU; ii)15 High macroeconomic and development level economy indicators; iii) 25 Sector indicators. Also, in the list of indicators there are references on the respective sectorial strategies. The Integrated Planning System ensures that:

- financial and policy planning are introduced as components of a single planning system;

- public investment and foreign assistance are initially identified in sectoral and priority strategic documents and therefore included in the mid-term budgeting framework;

- the government sets strategic policy priorities within the macroeconomic fiscal framework;

- the Mid-Term Budget Programme accommodates 1–3-year action plans of strategic documents

for the current analysis and completed by country representatives.

67   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: Albania 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD(2018) 151 l, pp 12-14.

within the budget programme structure, ensuring that decisions on programme spending will depend on policy goals, objectives, and expected measures.

The links between the adopted strategies and the MTBF are annually monitored by the EU through Sigma, which prepares annual reports examining the approved strategies before the adoption of the respective MTBFs. The requirements of the Stabilization and Association Agreement for EU membership should be reflected and integrated in all stages of the strategic and mid-term planning process, especially in the legislative and MTBP planning processes.

Recommendations:

• There is currently a reform of suborganisations being implemented. It is hoped that delays in legislative harmonisation will be resolved by the introduction of a new package on Integrated Planning System (IPS) and IPSIS to further regulate the functioning of the strategic framework. Strengthening the quality of strategic documents and public consultations could benefit the implementation of PAR.

• There is a need for better co-ordination to guide the implementation of the reforms. Institutional reform should aim at simplifying the system, with a clear outline of the division of functions between different authorities in order to contribute to qualitative change in policymaking. There is an evident need for analysis of whether current institutional reforms are able to deliver since there is a serious backlog in the rate of implementation. This rate has decreased from over half to a quarter,[68] which at least in part tends to be associated with the current structural reforms. Progress on implementation is monitored on a weekly basis and regularly reported to the PMO, with proactive discussions on implementation and inter-institutional working groups now reorganised.

• Policy needs to be better aligned with fiscal planning and government priorities. In coordinating PFM reforms, there are concerns related to the monitoring of progress and delays in passing legislation and regulations. There is a need for more active management of risks and for achieving overall objectives alongside specific objectives.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)** the complexities of the PAR implementation mechanism are mirrored by the complexity of the BIH governance system. It is nonetheless advised that PAR implementation should be made more effective. Such improvement should include the clearer assignment of mandates within the system. Enabling inputs from various counterparts' decisions could help in the implementation of the reform. At the central level, the PAR strategic framework has not been adopted by the Government of Republika Srpska (RS), and the development of a PAR Action Plan is still ongoing. At the level of the Federation of BiH, individual financial management strategies should be developed for BIH institutions but are currently delayed. In Republika Srpska it has been agreed that the initiated but delayed activities in the 2014 PAR Strategy will continue in 2018–2022 to improve the PAR process at all four administrative levels.[69]

In its communication of 2018, the EU concluded that PAR in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) remains at an early stage. In BiH the implementation of PAR can thus be described as 'pending' due to difficulties with implementing the strategic framework and commitment to the reform agenda.[70] BiH still needs to put in place a comprehensive strategic framework and to overcome the overall fragmentation of CoG functions. There is still a need to create co-ordination mechanisms and develop the skills of coordinators. The policymaking system is fragmented. The legal framework for evidence-based policymaking and inclusive policymaking processes is not fully coherent.[71]

Recommendations:

• In order to proceed with the PAR and strengthen CoG it is recommended that BiH adopt a new country-wide strategic framework for PAR and PFM as well as a national programme for the legislative harmonisation of the Acquis, and that more effective HR management be developed.

• Policy co-ordination remains fragile as there is no common framework for state level and entities. The current quality reviews for policy proposals and financial affordability are insufficient.

• European Integration evaluation and the functionality of the policy co-ordination system ought to be strengthened at the level of the BiH Federation. A model for the management of IPA III should be developed, and there is a need to strengthen and establish systems of co-ordination of the legal conformity assessment process in all cantons, and also to strengthen the capacities of the co-ordinators.[72]

In Kosovo*, the legal basis and institutional structures for a coherent and coordinated policymaking system, including EU-related reforms, are largely in place.[73] The strategic framework in Kosovo* needs functional integration within a single system for greater coherence between different levels of planning and to coordinate sectoral policies and embed strategic directions in budgetary programmes. Targets developed for the National Development Strategies derive from sector strategies for the areas covered. Development objectives are presented as a list of macroeconomic indicators that may be affected by measures in several sectors. This has had only a minimal effect on establishing linkages among the targets of different strategies.

Reform of the strategic planning system in Kosovo* started in 2016 with the adoption of the Strategy

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70   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives
71   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD(2018) 155 final, pp 3-7.
72   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives
73   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: Kosovo* 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD(2018) 156 final, pp 9.11.

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68   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives.
69   Responses to the questionnaire prepared for the current analysis and filled by country representatives

for the Improvement of Policy Planning and Co-Ordination 2017–2021, which is part of Kosovo*'s strategic framework for public administration reform. The strategy aimed to set the basis for an integrated planning system through establishing operating principles and supporting structures to ensure that government planning and monitoring as a whole takes place in an efficient, integrated and harmonised way. However, the system needs to be implemented consistently.

The assessment of the existing strategic planning system in Kosovo* and the results of previous related projects demonstrate that important elements of the National Strategic Planning and Management Framework are already in place. However, there is a need for the functional integration of elements into a single system to ensure coherence between different levels of planning, co-ordinate sectoral policies and embed strategic directions in specific budgetary programmes.

In financial management, costing is made only for three-year action plans in Kosovo*, while strategies may be defined for five or more years. The costing exercise is not sufficiently comprehensive to assess all costs of implementation and the affordability of the budget. For example, long-term financial commitments to strategic investment projects are not necessarily protected or guaranteed in the following year's budget. The action plans and budgets (plans) of strategies do not have the same elements, and although attempts have been made to link these, this has not been undertaken in a clear and uniform way. There is a limited possibility of linking strategic objectives / activities with expenditures and for measuring the efficiency of spending. In the budgetary process it is not possible to control whether the same costing calculation results and amounts are planned in the budget. There is also no clear distinction between "strategic" and "regular" activities, and it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the new strategy will bring expenditure above the ceiling.

In Kosovo* the following actions are recommended:

- A clear policy intervention logic needs to be established. The subordination of strategic goals and objectives across all IPS documents, and linkages with the MTEF and annual budgets are seen as crucial for such transformation.

- A consistent performance measuring system should be developed and a hierarchy of objectives and targets, priorities, pillars, etc., between the National Development Strategy (NDS) and other long and mid-term planning documents.

- Kosovo's* parliament and government have adopted numerous EI-plans (NPISAA, ERA, ERP, etc.). However, the issue remains the extent of the actual implementation of adopted plans. In order to build commitment, it would be advisable to start with higher representatives, later delegating to lower levels while maintaining regular meetings.

- The legal framework for policy co-ordination is already in place. According to the Rules of Procedure, the Strategic Planning Office should check the quality of strategies while the Legal Office and General Co-ordination Secretariat should check the quality of other proposals. It is important to strengthen the quality control processes and the provision of guidance by the

CoG (when needed) to ensure all existing requirements are met. There is a need to strengthen the quality review mechanism to safeguard policy proposals, align strategies and link these by strengthen the CoG's quality review mechanism the COG to ensure that all requirements are met. There is a need to strengthen the practice of public consultations to improve the currently inadequate level of public scrutiny over government work.

- A consistent system of performance indicators has not yet been developed. For example, there are no descriptions or instructions about who collects the information on particular indicators or how this is done. It is recommended that the system of indicators be linked to the budgeting scheme within a single system. However, the relevant indicators first need to be developed, including ensuring the collection of data for these indicators and consistently implementing monitoring. In parallel, a core ability should be introduced for short-term fiscal planning (e.g. on an annual basis), and later also medium-term planning. There is a need to safeguard the alignment of strategies with the mid-term expenditure framework in order to ensure these strategies are adequately costed.

- A national strategic management framework needs to be developed.

According to the EU assessment, **Montenegro** is 'moderately' prepared for PAR.[74] Montenegro aims to reduce the number of strategies in its strategic framework, to fully implement drafting and monitoring procedures, to better align new strategies with economic and rational planning principles, to align strategies with current budget framework, and to improve the quality of reports and the quality of reporting on outcomes. However, the alignment of indicators is currently loose in that there are no compulsory indicators at national level that could also help link strategic goals to the budget. The current planning system includes only indirect connections between the attainment of goals and the budgetary process. In co-ordinating PAR, there are challenges in establishing an IT system for monitoring PAR processes and the need for a more proactive role of the PAR Council in the reform process and of the Interdepartmental Team in the implementation of the action plan.

In Montenegro, the following actions are recommended:

- The MTBF Programme Budget still needs to be established and implemented in order to link the goals and the budget. As in Kosovo*, Montenegro first needs to make sure that the short-term capacity to plan finances is in place (including the management of commitments) before preparing binding MTBFs (which are not currently planned).

- The legal framework for policy planning and medium-term planning is in place and is being implemented step by step. However, there is a need to improve the quality of policy planning and medium-term planning to allow for the better integration and consistency of strategies.

- Montenegro should pay attention to the openness of policy processes in order to encourage proper civic engagement and improve the quality of regulatory impact assessments.

The EU assessment in 2018 encouraged **North Macedonia** to start to implement PAR.[75] The current PAR Strategy 2018–2022 has re-designed the co-ordination and implementation process, thereby delivering the expected results. Considerable effort has been invested in solving previous problems related to lack of political commitment, horizontal capacities and implementation structures. On EU matters, a revised negotiation methodology was adopted in March 2020 that grouped the chapters into six thematic clusters. This requires the reorganisation of negotiation structures and training. The NPAA strategic framework has been adjusted to the methodology.

The following actions are recommended in North Macedonia:

- An Organic Budget Law should be adopted to serve as a backbone for PFM.

In **Serbia**, PAR strategy previously tended to be rather a narrative, with analyses and evaluations being non-obligatory.[76] The PAR 2030 Strategy needs to be aligned with new planning legislation introducing an obligatory structure for strategy, RIA, ex ante and ex post evaluations.

In Serbia the programme structure of the budget is determined in accordance with the hierarchical functions of the state and the Government's goals, which are in the competence of the budget users. The identified sectors in which budget users operate are the basis for planning and managing sectoral policies and the budget, as well as the framework for setting the government's strategic priorities and objectives. The relation between the sectors and the lower levels of the programme structure (programmes, programme activities and projects) enables the analysis of user activities at all levels of government that contribute to the implementation of sectoral policies. The sectoral approach to planning allows better co-ordination of the joint work of the government, donors and other key actors within particular sectors. Line ministries follow a systematic approach. In order to measure the effect of spending adequately, the programme structure of the budget logically groups different activities of budget users and related costs. The goals which the budget user plans to achieve by implementing programmes, programme activities and projects are tied to the programme structure. The programme budget is prepared in accordance with the medium-term plans of the beneficiaries and other strategic documents related to this field.

In the medium-term budgeting process in Serbia, all existing policies that have already been verified

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75   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD(2018) 154 final.

76   Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Commission Staff Working Document: Serbia 2018 Report. Strasbourg, 17.4.2018, SWD (2018) 152 final.

through the medium-term planning process and through the adopted budget are separate from the new policies proposed by the authorities to the Government. Public policies are reflected in the programme budget, with all costs directly related to the implementation of programmes, programme activities and projects that implement public policies.

In Serbia the following actions are recommended:

- To align NPAA with the government programme and medium-term budgeting.

- The programme budget, which includes goals and performance indicators, allows for monitoring the results of the implementation of public policies. Further work should be undertaken to add monitoring and indicators.

Annexes

1. The response rate of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed in May and June 2020 and was disseminated among representatives of Western Balkan administrations in June 2020. The completed questionnaires were collected in July and August. The following table presents the response-rate to 91 of the items in the questionnaire:

Themes in the questionnaire / Responses received	Strategic framework	Co-ordination of Public Administration Reform	Co-ordination of Public Financial Management	Co-ordination of European Integration matters
Albania	yes	yes	yes	yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	partly	partly	partly	partly
Kosovo*	yes	missing	partly	yes
Montenegro	partly	missing	missing	missing
North Macedonia	yes	partly	missing	missing
Serbia	missing	partly	partly	missing

2. The Questionnaire for the analytical paper on policy co-ordination

The analytical paper on policy co-ordination for ReSPA

The Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) is the inter-governmental organization for enhancing regional co-operation, promoting shared learning and supporting the development of public administration in the Western Balkans. ReSPA's purpose is to help governments in the region develop better public administration, public services and overall governance systems for their citizens and businesses, and to prepare for the membership of the European Union. The ReSPA members comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, while Kosovo* is a beneficiary.

ReSPA has requested an analytical paper on policy co-ordination to contribute to the more efficient implementation of public administration reform (PAR) in the region by strengthening the policy co-ordination of public policies, especially the co-ordination of PAR and PFM strategies.

This questionnaire is part of the process of developing an analytical paper for ReSPA on policy co-ordination to be used by the countries in the Western Balkan region, with a focus on the co-ordination of PAR and PFM strategies. The analytical paper will focus on policy co-ordination in general, and more precisely on the role of public administration institutions in the improvement of co-ordination among public policies. The concrete examples provided in the study should relate to co-ordination between PAR and PFM strategies.

The aim of the questionnaire

Co-ordination can be understood as the management of processes. As part of the analytical paper, this questionnaire has been designed to understand the deeper functioning of the policymaking processes in your respective countries. In this questionnaire you are asked to outline the functioning of current policy developments and co-ordination procedures and practices. You are also asked to provide insight into recent changes or amendments, identifying any underlying problems and the reasoning behind the changes your countries have enacted. You are also asked to offer your insights as to whether these changes have delivered the expected results.

Points of departure

The following questionnaire builds on a synthesis of the Key Requirements of the Principles of Public Administration,[77] the SIGMA paper on the Functioning of the Centres of Government in the Western Balkan countries,[78] and prior assessments by the European Commission and SIGMA/OECD.

The outline and build-up of the questionnaire

The questionnaire has four main parts: the overall strategic framework; policy development and the co-ordination of PAR; the co-ordination of PFM; and the co-ordination of European integration. This questionnaire marks the key points and does not comprehensively cover all the details of PAR and PFM, focusing primarily on the co-ordination aspects as set out in the assignment.

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[77]   http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Principles-of-Public-Administration-2017-edition-ENG.pdf

[78]   https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/functioning-of-the-centres-of-government-in-the-western-balkans_2bad1e9c-en

The questionnaire

Strategic framework

Please indicate whether there is a mechanism for translating the government´s political agenda into an overarching government work programme.

1. Please describe this process, including who manages this process and which institutions/units are engaged?

2. Who bears responsibility for achieving an actionable plan and managing the potential conflicts of policy goals?

3. Who co-ordinates the implementation of the government work programme?

4. Please name the institutions and their units responsible for the following roles in your country:

Responsibilities	Please insert the responsible institution/ unit
co-ordination of preparation of the government sessions;	
ensuring legal conformity;	
co-ordination of the preparation and approval of the government's strategic priorities and work programme;	
co-ordination of the policy content of proposals for government decisions, including defining the policy preparation process and ensuring coherence with government priorities;	
ensuring that policies are affordable and co-ordinating public sector resource planning;	
co-ordination of government communication activities to ensure a coherent government message;	
monitoring of government performance to ensure the government collectively performs effectively and keeps its promises to the public;	
handling relations between the government and other parts of the state (the president, the parliament);	
co-ordination of European Integration affairs.	

Please describe the overall strategic management system in your country.

5.   Is there an overall hierarchy of strategies in your country? If so, please explain the system.

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6.   Are there different levels of strategic documents (e.g. overarching strategies, sectoral strategies, etc), and what are the core differences between these documents?

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7.   In the planning system, are there strategy documents that are compulsory and are there documents that are voluntary (e.g. that are based on a Minister's discretion)?

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[                                                                    ]
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8.   How many strategic documents do you have? Please classify how many of them are hierarchically and whether they are compulsory or voluntary.

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[                                                                    ]
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9.   Where does the PAR[79] strategy stand in this hierarchy?

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[                                                                    ]
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Linkages in the strategic framework

10.   Are the different strategic documents linked to each other? If so, please describe how.

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[                                                                    ]
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11.   Are strategic documents linked to the budgetary process (the MTBF[80] and the annual state budget)? If so, please describe how.

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[                                                                    ]
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12.   Are the targets in different strategies linked to each other?

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[                                                                    ]
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79   Public administration reform
80   Medium-term budgetary framework

13.   How is the monitoring of the attainment of goals structured and managed?

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[                                                                    ]
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14.   Is the attainment of goals linked to the budgetary process? What is the backlog ratio?[81]

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[                                                                    ]
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Does legislation set formal requirements for strategy documents? (Please outline these requirements.)

15.   Are there formal rules for the process of drafting?

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[                                                                    ]
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16.   Are there formal rules regulating which institutions, stakeholders, etc., need to be engaged?

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[                                                                    ]
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17.   Is there a requirement to set baselines, target levels and indicators for the goals?

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[                                                                    ]
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18.   Is there a requirement to assess the impacts of policy proposals? Is there a requirement to conduct regulatory impact assessments (RIA)?[82] To which cases does this apply? Are there formal rules regulating how RIA must be conducted?

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[                                                                    ]
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19.   How is the attainment of goals monitored? By whom and based on what data? How often is it monitored?

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[                                                                    ]
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20.   How are strategic documents adopted (e.g. by the parliament, government collegially, ministers, etc.)?

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[                                                                    ]
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81   Backlog is the amount of items that are carried forward from one year to another, based on a comparison of two consecutive years of the government work plan and the European integration plan. See the Principles of Public Administration (2017).
82   Regulatory impact assessment

Is the compilation and management of strategies regulated (based on a law or government decree)?

21. What are the stages of policy development and who are the main counterparts engaged?

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22. How is the policymaking process coordinated? Please outline both the formal and informal processes.

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23. In case of disputes, how are disputes managed and under whose responsibility?

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24. What are the formats of political co-ordination? In which cases and how often are these used? Please describe their form and functioning.

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25. What are the formats of co-ordination in the civil service?

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26. Is there a "gate-keeper" institution/ format on the administration side to settle disputes before government sessions? How do these work? Can they "block" matters from going to government session?

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Stakeholder engagement and public scrutiny

27. Are the responsible authorities required to invite possible stakeholders to give their opinions?

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28. Is the policy development process open to any interested institution or person (at what stages)?

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29. Are the draft documents publicly available (at what stages)?

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30. Is there a mechanism to safeguard scrutiny and public access to information? Are there limitations to access to information and if so in which cases?

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31. Are documents that have received final approval publicly available?

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Latest changes

32. Please outline any problems or shortcomings in the functioning of strategic framework.
   Have there recently been any changes to the strategic framework or its functioning to address these problems or shortcomings?
   What kind of solutions have been suggested and implemented?
   Have these changes delivered the expected results or have they created new problems? Please elaborate on these.

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Co-ordination of Public Administration Reform (PAR)

Does the reform agenda address the key challenges?

33. What are the key challenges to PAR in your country? By what mechanism have these been defined?

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34. How do these key challenges feed into the reform agenda? Does the reform agenda mirror these challenges?

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35. At what levels and in which formats has the PAR been discussed?

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36. Who was the party responsible for compiling the strategy? How was the compilation process designed, what steps did it comprise, and who was invited to take part?

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37. Have any major reform decisions been taken (e.g. laws adopted, etc)?

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Is PAR a political priority?

38. Is PAR included in the government agenda or government work programme? Please provide the relevant document.

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39. Has a PAR strategy been adopted? At what level has this PAR strategy been adopted and what is the status of this document? What is the timespan of the PAR strategy (i.e. the years for which it is in force)?

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40. Has a financial plan been adopted for the PAR action plan? What time period does this financial plan cover (how many years)? At what level has the financial plan been adopted?

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41. Are there other strategies linked to the PAR strategy? Please describe how are they linked (goals, finances, outcomes, etc.).

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42. How are the targets linked?

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43. How is the implementation managed? How are the processes linked?

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Is planning harmonised and aligned with financial capacities to ensure the attainment of the government´s objectives?

44. Does the medium-term planning system encompass the whole-of-government PAR objectives?

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45. Are the whole-of-government objectives aligned with financial capabilities?

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46. Does the medium-term planning system encompass the European integration objectives?

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47. Are the European integration objectives integrated in domestic policy planning?

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48. Please describe if the co-ordination of European integration procedures is connected to PAR.

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Does PAR have clear policy objectives? (Please outline these objectives.)

49. Have targets been set? Please outline the specific targets.

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50. How have the targets been set? Please list the baselines and indicators if these exist.

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51. Was an RIA conducted prior to the PAR strategy or action plan activities? Please describe how the impacts were assessed.

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52.   Is the attainment of the targets being monitored? What is this monitoring based on? Is the regular? What are the monitoring results used for?

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Does the PAR strategy action plan outline clear steps to attain these objectives? Please outline these steps.

53. Has the need for resources been assessed for the whole PAR strategy for the entirety of its implementation period?

54. If the financial needs have been assessed for the whole PAR strategy period, at what level were the decisions taken? If the financial needs have been assessed for a shorter period, at what level were the resourcing decisions taken? (Please identify the period for which financial needs have been assessed.)

55. Are the PAR objectives in the strategy and in the action plans linked to indicators and activities?

56. Have the activities been costed and is their expenditure being monitored? Please describe how.

57. Please describe the process of assigning resources to policies, including requests for funds. Which institution is responsible for such assignment? When is this done and in how much detail?

58. Have there been differences in costing and spending on reforms? How have such situations been handled?

Management

59. Please describe the PAR-related functions and responsibilities and their allocation among institutions.

60. Please describe the functions of the centre of government (CoG) in PAR.

61. Please describe the PAR management scheme at political level. Does it differ from the management of other strategies? If so, in what ways and why does it differ from regular operational mechanisms?

62. Please describe the PAR management scheme at administrative level? Does it differ from the management of other strategies? Does it differ from the management of other strategies? If so, in what ways and why does it differ from regular operational mechanisms?

63. Please describe the PAR management and co-ordination mechanisms (formal bodies).

64. Please describe the roles of different institutions in these mechanisms.

65. Please describe the frequency and the nature of matters discussed.

66. Please describe any informal co-ordination and communications undertaken in managing PAR. Has it been used and for what reasons/purposes?

Transparency

67. Please outline the stages of the process of drafting legislation in the government and the responsible party at each stage. Which institutions have a co-ordination role in this process, at which stages and with what powers? Does the co-ordination of PAR/PFM differ from the co-ordination of other matters? Does the co-ordination of European Integration matters differ from the co-ordination of other matters?

68. Please outline which of the legislative drafting stages in the government are open to which stakeholders (ministries, agencies, social partners, private sector, business community, civil society, etc.). Are these stakeholders provided with legislative drafts, impact assessments, and other documents?

69. Are government legislative drafts published? Please outline at which policymaking stage(s) the drafts/ materials are open to the public at large.

70. Does parliament exercise scrutiny over the government's implementation of PAR? Please describe how this scrutiny is conducted.

Latest changes

71. Please outline any problems encountered in designing or implementing PAR.
    Have there recently been any changes to PAR or its functioning aimed at addressing these problems or shortcomings?
    What kind of solutions have been suggested and implemented?
    Have these changes delivered the expected results or have they created new problems?

Co-ordination of public financial management (PFM)

Public financial management reform and budget transparency

72. Do the MoF's circulars of instructions to line ministries clearly outline the macroeconomic and budgetary parameters?

73. Please describe the data and the sources on which the MTBF is based and compiled.

74. What is the role of ministries? Does the MTBF include information from existing sectoral policies and do ministries provide systematic input to the MTBF? Please provide relevant details.

75. Do the budgetary appropriations allow to see the costs of policies? Please explain, to what detail.

76. Are the strategic plans (PAR) in line with the MTBF and does it distinguish between the costs of existing policies and the costs of new initiatives that need additional funding? Please outline in detail how this is done.

77. Do spending estimates clearly show the costs of existing policies and services and the costs of new initiatives?

78. Does the cash management cover the revenue and expenditure? Please explain in more detail if this is not the case in your country.

79. Is there a clear debt management strategy in place? Please explain in more detail if this is not the case in your country.

80. Is there an independent body to scrutinise compliance with fiscal rules and policies? Please outline the duties of this body.

81. Is the information on public finances published regularly to enable the parliament and citizens to see the revenue and expenditure? How frequently is such information published? Please explain which datasets are published.

82. Does the annual financial report mirror the presentation of the budget and explain any deviation from the budget figures? If not, please explain.

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Accountability of the administration

83. Please describe the institutional framework of accountability lines and managerial accountability.

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84. Please explain how the civil oversight and right to access public information are guaranteed.

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85. Please explain the mechanism of serving the right to administrative justice.

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Latest changes

86. Please outline whether there have there been any problems in designing or implementing PFM?
Have there recently been changes to the PFM or its functioning to address these problems or shortcomings?
What kind of solutions have been suggested and implemented?
Have these changes delivered the expected results or have they created new problems?

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Co-ordination of European Integration matters (EI)

87. Please describe the planning process for European Integration matters. Does it differ from managing the preparation, resourcing and decision-making for other matters? Please explain.

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88. Please describe the financial planning, the costing and the monitoring of adherence to the fiscal rules of European Integration matters. Does this differ from the financial management of other matters? Please explain.

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89. How are European Integration matters being co-ordinated? What are the steps involved in such co-ordination and what are the co-ordination mechanisms? Which institutions and actors are responsible for coordinating EI matters and what powers they have? Is there any format/institution that can veto EI matters from going to the government session?

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90. Please outline whether there have been problems in coordinating, planning or implementing EI matters?
Have there recently been changes to the management of European Integration issues to address these problems or shortcomings?
What kind of solutions have been suggested and implemented?
Have these changes delivered the expected results or have they created new problems?

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