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# Kosovo's Public Administration Reforms: Challenges, Progress, and the Road Ahead



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# Contents

Key Findings	6
1. Introduction	8
2. Methodology	9
3. An overview of the challenges persisting in Public Administration Reforms	10
3.1 Undermining Transparency and Public Consultation in Governance	10
3.2 Challenges in Political Leadership of Public Administration Reform	12
3.3 Digitalization and Public Administration Reform (PAR)	13
3.4 Digitalization at the municipal level in Kosovo	16
3.5 Administrative Burden Reduction in Kosovo	18
4. Priority areas of public administration reform	19
5. Kosovo's Cooperation with the EU and OECD/SIGMA: Strengthening Coordination and Advancing Reforms	24
Conclusion and Recommendations	29
Public Administration Reform (PAR) Scorecard for Kosovo	31

# Key Findings

- The implementation of Kosovo's Public Administration Reform (PAR) agenda has revealed significant gaps and challenges that hinder its progress and alignment with European Union (EU) standards. The findings highlight issues that undermine transparency, accountability, and the efficiency of public administration, despite the government's stated commitment to reform.
- Recent changes to key regulatory frameworks have raised concerns about the government's commitment to transparency and accountability. The new Regulation on Internal Procedures, which replaced the Regulation on Minimum Standards for Public Consultation, significantly weakens the consultation process. Article 37 stipulates that draft laws and sub-laws are subject to public consultation only at the discretion of the proposing institution's Secretary General. This discretionary power contradicts established principles of inclusivity and openness, effectively sidelining civil society and the public from critical decision-making processes. The absence of meaningful public consultations undermines trust in governance and violates international standards for transparent policymaking.
- The government has struggled to implement critical legislative measures outlined in the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS 2022–2027) and related frameworks. Amendments to the Law on Public Officials, intended to professionalize the civil service, faced constitutional challenges, delaying their enforcement. Additionally, the rationalization of agencies, a core priority for streamlining public administration, progressed slowly, with critical action plans deferred to 2024. These delays exacerbate inefficiencies and hinder the realization of a merit-based, professional civil service.
- The Special Group on Public Administration Reform, a key coordination mechanism between Kosovo and the EU, did not convene in 2023. This absence reflects strained relations and a lack of effective cooperation, undermining Kosovo's ability to align its reforms with EU standards. Additionally, the government's reluctance to consult international expertise, such as OECD/SIGMA, on critical legislative reforms has led to poorly aligned policies and further delays.
- Although Kosovo has made strides in expanding digital services through the e-Kosova platform, significant challenges persist. While the number of online services increased to 150 by 2023, technical issues, limited interoperability, and inadequate public awareness have hindered adoption. Nearly half of Kosovo's citizens remain unaware of the platform's existence, undermining the potential of digital transformation.

to enhance service delivery and transparency. The lack of investment in infrastructure and staff training further limits the effectiveness of these initiatives.

- Kosovo's public administration continues to operate under a system plagued by acting appointments in senior positions. Out of 16 key institutions, only four have appointed permanent Secretary Generals, with the remaining positions filled by temporary officials. This reliance on acting roles diminishes accountability and long-term strategic planning. Moreover, the failure to establish a functional job classification system, a prerequisite for implementing the Law on Salaries, has stalled progress in ensuring equitable and transparent compensation structures.
- Mechanisms for engaging civil society and the public in the reform process remain inadequate. The government has bypassed consultations on several critical laws, including regulations related to civil service admission procedures and job classification. This lack of inclusivity not only undermines the legitimacy of reforms but also alienates key stakeholders who could contribute valuable insights to the policymaking process.
- The government has made progress in reducing administrative burdens, simplifying 152 services, and integrating them into the e-Kosova platform, resulting in projected savings of over €1.5 million annually. However, many planned measures remain unimplemented, including harmonizing laws with the Law on General Administrative Procedure and operationalizing new e-services. These delays reduce the effectiveness of burden reduction efforts and perpetuate inefficiencies in service delivery.
- The key findings underscore a pattern of missed opportunities, inadequate coordination, and weak institutional capacity in advancing Kosovo's PAR agenda. The government's actions, including weakening transparency mechanisms and bypassing public consultations, have eroded trust and undermined its reform commitments. Strengthening cooperation with international stakeholders, addressing systemic inefficiencies, and ensuring inclusive policymaking processes are critical for accelerating reforms and aligning Kosovo's governance with European standards.

# 1. Introduction

Public Administration Reform (PAR) is a cornerstone of Kosovo's efforts to build a transparent, accountable, and efficient governance system capable of meeting the expectations of its citizens and aligning with European Union (EU) standards. As Kosovo pursues its European integration aspirations, the reform of public administration has become an essential prerequisite for strengthening institutional capacities, fostering public trust, and ensuring the effective delivery of public services. Guided by the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022–2027, the reform agenda aims to address systemic inefficiencies and enhance the professionalism of the civil service, while aligning domestic governance structures with the principles of good governance promoted by the EU. The significance of PAR extends beyond institutional reform—it is pivotal for Kosovo's broader development objectives and the fulfillment of its commitments under the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).

Despite the presence of a robust strategic framework, the implementation of the PAR agenda has faced significant challenges. Political instability, limited institutional capacities, and strained relations with the European Commission have hindered progress in achieving critical reform objectives. Key legislative initiatives, such as amendments to the Law on Public Officials, have encountered delays and constitutional challenges, creating uncertainty around the professionalization of the civil service. Furthermore, digital transformation efforts, while progressing, have been constrained by technical and infrastructural limitations, limiting the accessibility and efficiency of public services.

This report seeks to provide analysis from the point of view of the civil society of Kosovo's progress in public administration reform during the most recent reporting period, offering a comprehensive overview of the achievements, challenges, and gaps in the implementation of reform measures. The primary purpose of this report is to empower civil society and foster greater public scrutiny of the government's work on the PAR agenda. By informing citizens, policymakers, and international stakeholders of key obstacles and successes, the report aims to encourage accountability, transparency, and inclusivity in Kosovo's governance reforms.

The report is organized into thematic sections that delve into major aspects of public administration reform, including transparency and public consultation, digital transformation, administrative burden reduction, policy and legislative coordination, and Kosovo's cooperation with international stakeholders, particularly the EU. Each section evaluates the current state of play, analyzes challenges and progress, and offers recommendations for strengthening the reform agenda.

By examining the implementation of PAR agenda priorities, the report identifies systemic barriers to reform and proposes actionable strategies to overcome them. The findings underscore the importance of political leadership, institutional coordination, and stakeholder engagement in advancing the public administration reform agenda. Ultimately, the report aspires to contribute to a more inclusive and participatory reform process that aligns with Kosovo's democratic values and its aspirations for European integration.



## 2. Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on a mixed-methods approach that incorporates both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through written interviews with government officials involved in the implementation of public administration reforms, offering firsthand insights into the challenges and successes of the process. This approach provided critical context on institutional capacities, interagency coordination, and the political dynamics influencing reform efforts.

Secondary data sources were extensively analyzed to triangulate findings and provide a comprehensive assessment. These include official government documents, such as reports on the implementation of the PARS 2022–2027, NPISAA, and SRC for PAR, as well as independent evaluations from civil society organizations, think tanks, and international stakeholders like the European Commission.

By integrating these diverse sources, the report ensures a nuanced understanding of the reform efforts, capturing the interplay of technical, institutional, and political factors. This mixed-methods approach provides a robust foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the reforms, identifying gaps, and offering evidence-based recommendations for future initiatives. It reflects a commitment to delivering a balanced and in-depth evaluation that considers multiple perspectives and data points.

### 3. An overview of the challenges persisting in Public Administration Reforms

The implementation of Kosovo's Public Administration Reform (PAR) agenda has revealed significant gaps and challenges that hinder its progress and alignment with European Union (EU) standards. The findings highlight systemic issues that undermine transparency, accountability, and the efficiency of public administration, despite the government's stated commitment to reform.

Key achievements over the past two years were underscored, including the adoption of the **National Development Strategy 2030**, which introduces a clear hierarchy of objectives and indicators, strengthening Kosovo's strategic planning framework. The Program **for the Prevention and Reduction of Administrative Burden** and the successful implementation of related measures, such as simplifying and digitizing services for citizens and businesses. They added that the adoption of the **e-Governance Strategy** complements these initiatives and reflects strong donor support for their execution.

However, significant challenges persist. The delays in adopting necessary legislation, compounded by legal challenges, including constitutional reviews of key provisions brought forth by the opposition. These hurdles have slowed the pace of reform and created uncertainty about the legislative agenda.

On Kosovo's relationship with international stakeholders, the official maintained that "partnerships with the European Commission and OECD/SIGMA continue, despite disagreements, particularly regarding the government's legislative approach." They described digitalization and administrative burden reduction as areas of substantial progress, bolstered by donor support, but recognized the need for further institutional capacity-building and innovative approaches to sustain reforms.

#### 3.1 Undermining Transparency and Public Consultation in Governance

The recent regulatory changes enacted by the Government of Kosovo represent a concerning departure from established commitments to government transparency and public consultations in the decision-making process. The newly approved Regulation (GRK) - No.17/2024 on Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo<sup>1</sup> abolishes the Regulation (GRK)

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1 See the Regulation No.17/2024, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=92322>

No. 05/2016 on Minimum Standards for Public Consultation<sup>2</sup>, and significantly undermines the principles enshrined in this regulation concerning public consultations. For instance, Article 37 of the Regulation No. 17.2024, introduces a discretionary provision, allowing the secretary-general of the proposing body to decide whether draft laws and sub-laws will undergo public consultation.

This adjustment modifies the framework for public consultations on draft laws and sub-laws, which had been a key feature of the decision-making process under the 2016 Regulation. By centralizing greater decision-making authority within a single office, the new approach may inadvertently limit opportunities for citizens and civil society to contribute during critical stages of policymaking. This development could pose challenges to maintaining the principles of transparency and inclusiveness that support the democratic functioning of public institutions.

The government has already started to apply this new norm for public consultations as evidenced in the case of the Regulation for Civil Service Admission Procedures which was approved without public consultations, despite its critical role in shaping a fair and merit-based recruitment system for the public sector. Of six other recently enacted regulations by the government that are of relevance for public administration reform only the Regulation on Job Classification underwent prior public consultation, indicating a broader pattern of sidelining participatory decision-making process. Such limited engagement with public consultations raises concerns about adherence to established transparency principles in Kosovo. It also risks hindering the objectives set forth in the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022–2027 and the Government Program 2021–2025, which emphasize inclusiveness and democratic governance. Strengthening participatory processes would align more closely with Kosovo's stated commitments to good governance and reform.

The PARS 2022–2027 underscores accountability and transparency as essential pillars of public administration reform, aiming to increase public trust, engage citizens in policymaking, and foster open communication between government institutions and stakeholders. The recent discretionary regulatory changes, however, starkly contradict these objectives, eroding the institutional credibility of Kosovo's reform agenda. This is further reflected in the 2023 Implementation Report for PARS, which reveals that only 46% of planned reform measures were implemented and transparency indicators achieved a mere 7.8% success rate. These challenges underscore systemic weaknesses in adherence to Kosovo's commitments to open governance.

The implications of these changes are profound. By sidelining public consultations, the government risks eroding trust in public institutions, weakening public accountability, and creating opportunities for arbitrary decision-making. Moreover, Kosovo's aspirations for European integration—grounded in adherence to participatory governance and transparency—may face setbacks due to these deviations from democratic standards.

To address these challenges, the government must take immediate corrective actions, including reinstating the public consultation standards: Mandatory public consultation for all draft laws and sub-laws must be restored, as per the 2016 regulation. If these corrective measures are not taken the current trajectory risks undermining Kosovo's democratic principles and the broader

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2 See Regulation No. 05/2016, <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15036>

reform agenda. A commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and accountability is essential to fostering trust in governance and advancing Kosovo's path toward the European integration.

The "Kosova PAR international conference", organized in 2023 and 2024, stands out as a commendable initiative by the Government of Kosovo to elevate the discussion on public administration reform (PAR).<sup>3</sup> Bringing together local and international stakeholders, the conferences have provided a valuable platform for sharing best practices, exploring innovative strategies, and discussing the challenges of modernizing public administration in Kosovo. These events highlight the government's recognition of the importance of engaging with diverse actors and fostering dialogue to support the reform agenda. The conferences have also served to reinforce Kosovo's image as a country committed to improving governance and aligning with European standards.

However, for public administration reform to achieve its intended goals, initiatives like KosovaPAR must be complemented by concrete actions that align with the commitments outlined in the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022–2027. The conferences should serve as a catalyst for deeper engagement and sustained efforts to implement meaningful reforms, rather than as the sole hallmark of the government's PAR agenda.

### 3.2 Challenges in Political Leadership of Public Administration Reform

The political leadership of Public Administration Reform (PAR) in Kosovo has been undermined by structural and leadership issues, stemming primarily from the government's decision at the start of its mandate to merge the former Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). This merger, intended to streamline governance and integrate PAR more fully into the government's priorities, has largely failed to achieve its objectives. Instead, it has created institutional fragmentation and weakened the political leadership necessary to drive the reform agenda forward.

The merger of the MPA into the MIA has not resulted in an integrated policy approach to PAR. Instead, the two portfolios have continued to operate largely as separate entities, with no genuine cohesion or shared strategic focus. As a result, the ambitious goals of the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022–2027, such as enhancing accountability, improving service delivery, and strengthening transparency, have been left without the high-level political backing and coordinated oversight required to drive their implementation. This structural dysfunction has left the PAR agenda deprioritized within the broader scope of the MIA's responsibilities, which include pressing issues like law enforcement and security. For instance, it is rarely the case the Minister of MIA himself is involved with PAR issues, and MIA web site is dominated by security related news and information, and there are rare news articles about PAR in the web site.

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<sup>3</sup> Read more about Kosova PAR 2023 Conference, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/4839/The-first-international-conference-KosovaPAR2023-has-started>; Speech of Minister of Internal Affairs at the opening of the PAR 2024 Conference, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/6916/Ministri-Sve%C3%A7la-ne-hapjen-e-konferencas-22KosovaPAR-2024%22->

In addition to these challenges, the Department for the Management of Public Officials (DMPO) continues to face ongoing difficulties in addressing its institutional weaknesses. As an important entity responsible for overseeing civil service policies and managing human resources within public administration, the DMPO has been affected by limitations such as insufficient staffing, training gaps, and resource constraints. These challenges have made it difficult for the department to fully carry out its mandate, which in turn affects efforts to professionalize and strengthen Kosovo's civil service. The absence of a fully functional DMPO has made it more challenging to achieve the broader goals of transparency, meritocracy, and accountability in civil service management.

Another challenge has been the government's inability to establish a centralized mechanism for coordinating public services, as outlined in the former Strategy for Modernization of Public Administration 2015–2020. Although the concept and terms of reference for this new structure were developed, the mechanism has not been implemented. It was intended to streamline service delivery, reduce institutional inefficiencies, and provide a unified framework for citizens and businesses to address public service-related issues. However, the absence of this critical reform has resulted in fragmented and inconsistent service delivery across various institutions. This lack of centralized coordination has affected user satisfaction, increased administrative burdens, and made it more difficult for the government to achieve the citizen-centered public administration envisioned under the PARS 2022–2027.

These challenges underscore the broader implications of insufficient political leadership and institutional fragmentation that continue to affect the progress of Public Administration Reform (PAR) in Kosovo. The failure to resolve these longstanding issues highlights the urgent need for stronger political commitment, better allocation of resources, and a more coordinated approach to reform. Addressing these gaps is crucial not only for achieving the objectives of PAR but also for restoring public trust in government institutions and ensuring the effective delivery of services to all citizens.

### 3.3 Digitalization and Public Administration Reform (PAR)

While Kosovo's adoption of the Digital Agenda 2030<sup>4</sup> and the e-Government Strategy 2023–2027<sup>5</sup> demonstrates a commitment to modernization, the path to full digital transformation is fraught with significant challenges that threaten to undermine these ambitious objectives.

One such challenge, as already discussed is the lack of a centralized mechanism for coordinating public services. Although earlier strategies like the Modernization of Public Administration 2015–2020 envisioned such a mechanism, it has yet to materialize. This gap has resulted in a fragmented digitalization process where institutions develop and implement services independently, leading to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and inconsistencies in service quality. Without a centralized coordinating body, achieving the interoperability and integration outlined in the e-Government Strategy remains a formidable hurdle.

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4 Government approves Kosovo Digital Agenda 2030, <https://me.rks-gov.net/en/blog/government-approves-kosovo-digital-agenda-2030/>

5 e-Government Strategy Kosovo 2023–2027, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/EN/2700/e-Government%20Strategy%20Kosovo%202023-2027.pdf>

Another challenge will be pronounced shortage of IT professionals within Kosovo's public administration. The current number of skilled personnel falls short of what is required to implement and maintain advanced digital systems effectively. This skills gap extends beyond public institutions to the broader labor market, with an inadequate supply of IT specialists being trained through the education system. Despite the Digital Agenda's goal to have 5% of the population employed in the IT sector, this ambition is constrained by limited university programs, underfunded education systems, and a lack of alignment between academic curricula and labor market needs.

Although over 95% of Kosovo's population uses the internet, there remains a significant digital divide in terms of the productive application of digital tools. Citizens often use the internet for basic communication and entertainment rather than accessing e-government or e-commerce services. This underutilization is attributed to low levels of digital literacy, lack of awareness about available e-services, and socio-economic disparities. Rural and marginalized communities are disproportionately affected, exacerbating inequalities in access to public services.

Kosovo's digital infrastructure, while improving, still falls short of meeting the demands of the Digital Agenda 2030. Fixed broadband infrastructure, dominated by coaxial cable technology, struggles to provide the gigabit-level speeds required for a future-ready digital society. The rollout of 5G networks and the expansion of optical fiber connectivity remain in early stages and require substantial investments. Additionally, Kosovo's mobile networks, which primarily rely on 2G, 3G, and 4G technologies, face quality and capacity issues due to unallocated frequencies and insufficient investment by the national telecommunications operator, Telecom of Kosovo LLC.

The rapid expansion of digital services has exposed weaknesses in Kosovo's cybersecurity infrastructure. Public institutions often lack robust mechanisms to protect sensitive data, making them vulnerable to cyber threats. Citizen awareness of cybersecurity remains low, further complicating efforts to ensure safe and secure use of e-services. The National Cyber Security Strategy 2023- 2027<sup>6</sup> has laid a foundation for addressing these risks, but its implementation will require sustained resources and capacity-building efforts.

Another challenge lies in shifting societal attitudes toward digitalization. Many citizens remain hesitant to adopt e-government services due to concerns about reliability, data privacy, and unfamiliarity with online processes. Changing this mindset requires not only improved service delivery but also targeted public awareness campaigns to highlight the benefits of digitalization and build trust in government systems. Kosovo government has made some progress by adopting the Law No. 08/L-173 on Cyber Security, which among others, foresees the establishment of the Cyber Security Agency.

The ambitious goals of the Digital Agenda 2030 and e-Government Strategy require significant financial investments. From upgrading broadband infrastructure to training IT personnel and deploying 5G networks, the costs are substantial. While the government plans to rely on a combination of state budget allocations and donor funding, such as support from the

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6 National Cyber Security Strategy 2023- 2027, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/EN/2692/Strategjia%20p%C3%ABr%20Siguri%20Kibernetike%20-%20ENG..pdf>

European Union and international financial institutions, the availability of resources remains uncertain. Ensuring sustainable funding for these initiatives is critical to their success.

Two critical sectors—healthcare and education—face unique challenges in digitalization. The goal of digitizing all medical records and achieving universal digital identification is ambitious but currently constrained by weak infrastructure and interoperability issues among healthcare institutions. Similarly, Kosovo's education system is poorly equipped to integrate digital tools into teaching and learning processes. This limits the potential for e-education to address the skills gap and prepare citizens for the demands of a digital economy.

Kosovo still lacks an Internet State Code—a critical element for asserting its digital sovereignty. While there have been discussions about applying to ICANN for a national domain, such as “.ko” or “.ks,” progress has been slow, reflecting broader administrative inefficiencies in addressing technical requirements for digital governance.

Kosovo's digital transformation is essential for achieving the goals of PAR and advancing the country's EU integration aspirations. However, without addressing these challenges, the ambitious objectives of the Digital Agenda 2030 and e-Government Strategy risk being delayed or diluted. A focused effort is needed by starting with development of program that support capacities and establish a centralized coordination mechanism for digitalization. Government also needs to think of ways to help education sector establish and provide high quality digital programs that will prepare Kosovar youth and citizens with the new and evolving demands of IT sector.

The European Commission's 2024 report on Kosovo highlights both progress and challenges in the country's digitalization efforts, particularly as part of its alignment with EU standards.<sup>7</sup> Kosovo has shown some level of preparation in digital transformation, bolstered by the adoption of the e-Government Strategy 2023–2027 and the National Cybersecurity Strategy. These frameworks underscore Kosovo's commitment to modernizing its public administration and fostering digital growth. Kosovo also ratified its Association Agreement with the European Commission to join the EU-funded Digital Europe Programme, a significant step toward integrating with EU digital initiatives.

Despite these advancements, the report identifies several areas requiring improvement. One critical recommendation is the alignment of Kosovo's legislation with key EU directives, including the European Electronic Communications Code, the NIS2 Directive, and the Digital Services Act. The alignment process has been slow, hindering Kosovo's ability to fully integrate into the EU's digital regulatory framework. Additionally, the lack of resources for telecommunication and media regulators poses a significant challenge, limiting their capacity to ensure compliance and enforce regulations effectively.

The report also highlights gaps in critical digital infrastructure, such as the implementation of number portability and 5G cybersecurity measures. These gaps impede the competitive and secure use of digital platforms, thereby limiting Kosovo's digital economy's growth. The Commission emphasizes the need for sustained investment in infrastructure and capacity-

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7 Kosovo Country Report 2024 by the European Commission, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/c790738e-4cf6-4a43-a8a9-43c1b6f01e10\\_en?filename=Kosovo%20Report%202024.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/c790738e-4cf6-4a43-a8a9-43c1b6f01e10_en?filename=Kosovo%20Report%202024.pdf)

building to address these challenges and foster a robust digital environment that meets European standards. Addressing these shortcomings is essential for Kosovo to unlock the full potential of digital transformation and advance its EU integration agenda.

#### Digitalization at the municipal level in Kosovo

Digitalization at the municipal level in Kosovo is emerging as a critical area for improving service delivery, transparency, and citizen satisfaction. Municipalities like Podujeva, Lipjan, and Drenas have begun implementing digital solutions, such as e-Kiosks, for issuing civil status documents and providing limited online services like grant applications and vacancy announcements. These steps demonstrate the growing recognition of digital tools as a means to streamline administrative processes and enhance accessibility.

However, challenges persist in making digitalization more comprehensive and citizen-centered. Municipal services currently lack integration into a centralized system, making it difficult for citizens to navigate or access consistent digital services across municipalities. For example, the lack of interoperability between municipal systems and the national e-Kosova platform limits the potential of digital services to serve as a cohesive framework for public administration. Citizens also highlight the need for more advanced digital services, such as scheduling appointments at Family Medicine Centers, applying for agricultural subsidies, and digitizing property records and libraries. These gaps indicate that digitalization at the local level remains in its early stages.

Citizen feedback collected by D4D underscores the demand for improved and expanded digital services.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 70% of surveyed citizens expressed that receiving services digitally would be easier or much easier than traditional methods, especially in rural areas. However, digital illiteracy among older populations and a lack of awareness about available services continue to be significant barriers. Additionally, technical and infrastructural challenges, such as e-Kiosks only accepting specific coin denominations, further limit the usability and reach of these services. Addressing these issues through targeted investments, staff training, and public awareness campaigns will be critical for accelerating digitalization and ensuring equitable access to services for all citizens.

The digitalization of services at the municipal level in Kosovo has brought significant changes, particularly in the delivery of civil status documents through the e-Kosova platform. Between June and December 2022, citizens retrieved 238,015 documents online, which contrasts sharply with the 2.2 million documents still issued in paper format by civil registry offices during the same year. The transition to digital services has allowed citizens to access documents like birth certificates, marriage certificates, and death certificates without visiting municipal offices, providing substantial time and cost savings. According to the GAP Institute, the online retrieval of civil status documents is expected to save citizens over €1.5 million annually, highlighting the financial benefits of digitalization.<sup>9</sup>

The rollout of digital services has also introduced efficiency gains for municipalities. By

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8 Provision of digital services at the local level in Kosovo: Municipality of Podujeva, Lipjan and Drenas Prepared by Democracy for Development Institute Prishtina, March 2022, [https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/D4D\\_Digi-Ko-munat\\_ENG\\_web-1.pdf](https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/D4D_Digi-Ko-munat_ENG_web-1.pdf)

9 The Impact of digitalization of civil status services on municipal budget revenues, GAP Institute, [https://www.institutigap.org/documents/8083\\_The%20Impact%20of%20digitalization.pdf](https://www.institutigap.org/documents/8083_The%20Impact%20of%20digitalization.pdf)



reducing reliance on in-person service delivery, municipalities can streamline operations and reallocate resources. For instance, the integration of the “e-Municipality” section within the e-Kosova platform now enables certain municipalities, such as Prizren and Lipjan, to offer online access to a growing array of services. The Ministry of Local Government Administration plans to extend these digital services to nine additional municipalities by the end of 2023, aiming for comprehensive digitalization of local government services by 2025. This digital transformation aligns with broader goals outlined in Kosovo’s Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022–2027.

However, the financial implications of digitalization for municipalities remain mixed. While larger municipalities like Prishtin and Prizren report higher revenues from administrative services compared to their expenditures, many smaller municipalities face deficits. For example, in 2022, Prishtinë generated €289,191 in revenues with expenditures of €220,500, while Skenderaj incurred costs of €90,766 against revenues of €55,389. The shift toward online service delivery may further exacerbate this disparity, as the growing adoption of the e-Kosova platform reduces municipalities’ reliance on fees for document issuance. Nevertheless, the overall impact on municipal budgets is limited, as revenues from civil status services contribute just 1% to 4% of total municipal revenues in most cases.

The digitalization of local government services marks an essential step toward modernizing public administration in Kosovo. It not only reduces administrative burdens for citizens but also positions municipalities to better manage resources and improve service delivery. The ongoing expansion of digital services and planned infrastructure upgrades will be critical in addressing disparities and ensuring that all municipalities, regardless of size, can benefit from the efficiencies of digitalization.

### 3.4 Administrative Burden Reduction in Kosovo

The Government of Kosovo has made some progress in implementing the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme (2022–2027)<sup>10</sup>, which aims to simplify administrative processes, enhance service delivery, and reduce costs for citizens and businesses. Adopted in September 2022, the program represents a critical component of Kosovo’s broader Public Administration Reform (PAR) efforts, targeting inefficiencies that have long hindered effective governance.

Since the program’s launch, significant milestones have been achieved. Across the central and local levels, 152 services have been simplified, leading to an annual savings of over €2 million for citizens and businesses.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the elimination of 64 services in three municipalities has further reduced redundancies and streamlined interactions between the public and administration. Key reforms include the merging of permits, reducing documentation requirements, and extending the validity periods of essential administrative documents. These measures align with the “only once” principle, minimizing repetitive submissions of the same

10 Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme (2022–2027), <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ZPS-shtator2022-PPZBA-2022-2027-dhe-PV-2022-2024-Shtojca-1-6-FINAL-ENG.pdf>

11 Report on Implementation of the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme (2022–2027) <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Raporti-Final-Anglisht-Updated-1.pdf>

information by citizens.

Digitalization has been a cornerstone of these efforts. Numerous services, such as obtaining criminal record certificates, applying for grants, and securing land surveying licenses, have been digitized, significantly improving accessibility through the e-Kosova platform. The government plans to digitize an additional 50 services by 2024, further enhancing service delivery and aligning with the goals of the Digital Agenda 2030. These advancements underscore the government's commitment to integrating technology into administrative processes, fostering a more efficient and citizen-centered public administration.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Municipal-level capacity constraints have slowed progress in certain areas, as many local governments lack the expertise and resources necessary for implementing complex reforms. Additionally, limited awareness among citizens and public officials about simplified and digitized services has hindered their full utilization. Addressing these gaps will require sustained investment in institutional capacity-building, training programs for public officials, and targeted public awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of these reforms.

Kosovo's progress in reducing administrative burdens not only addresses longstanding inefficiencies but also enhances transparency and citizen satisfaction. These reforms lay the groundwork for a more responsive and efficient public administration, reinforcing Kosovo's commitment to European integration. With sustained focus, strong leadership, and continued digital innovation, Kosovo is poised to achieve even greater success in modernizing its public administration and building trust with its citizens.

### 3.5 Priority areas of public administration reform

There has been some progress concerning access to governmental documents has seen some improvement through digitalization, which has bolstered transparency. However, there is a need for more robust enforcement of laws that facilitate access to these documents and alignment of secondary legislation with the Law on Access to Public Document, because often this becomes an impediment to transparency of the Government and access to public documents.

Key legislative reforms, including the Law on Public Officials (LPO) and the Law on Salaries, have faced significant setbacks, with constitutional challenges delaying implementation and undermining progress. The amended LPO, adopted in early 2023, was partially repealed by the Constitutional Court, mandating further revisions. The government has continued to reject recommendations from the EU Office in Kosovo and the OECD/SIGMA concerning the Law on Public Officials. Changes pushed by the Kosovo government jeopardize career based civil service and meritocracy in the recruitment process for the public sector. The decentralization of recruitment procedures and reliance on acting officials across key institutions continue to weaken stability and accountability in public administration. Out of 16 ministries and the Office of the Prime Minister, only four have appointed permanent Secretary Generals, reflecting the systemic reliance on temporary roles.

Kosovo's legal framework for public administration, while established, suffers from inadequate implementation. Rationalization of agencies remains slow, with minimal progress in integrating or restructuring institutions as outlined in strategic plans. The absence of a job classification system further complicates the enforcement of the Law on Salaries, delaying equitable compensation and professional management.

Policy coordination and inclusivity remain weak, despite the adoption of the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2022–2030, which outlines Kosovo's economic, social, and governance objectives. The lack of publicly available progress reports on the NDS hampers transparency and public oversight. Additionally, bypassing public consultations for key laws and regulations has limited civil society participation, undermining the principles of open governance.

While the Government of Kosovo has demonstrated commitment to modernization through initiatives like administrative reduction and the e-Governance Strategy, sustained focus on institutional capacity-building, legal compliance, and enhanced transparency is essential. Addressing these challenges is crucial for advancing PAR objectives, fostering trust in public administration, and aligning Kosovo with European governance standards.

The implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) for 2023 has demonstrated both achievements and significant challenges in advancing Kosovo's public sector efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Persistent obstacles hinder the realization of many strategic objectives. Out of 142 planned reform measures for 2023, only 46% (66 measures) were implemented, while the remaining 54% (76 measures) remained unexecuted. This underachievement reveals systemic weaknesses in planning and execution across various strategic objectives.

The implementation of performance indicators stood at a mere 7.8%, with only five indicators achieved. Thirty-four indicators were either partially implemented or stalled, reflecting the complexity of transforming policies into measurable outcomes. The suspension and partial annulment of key legislation, such as the Law on Public Officials, by the Constitutional Court created delays and uncertainties. Despite amendments, decentralizing recruitment and enhancing meritocracy faced significant implementation barriers. Government's proposed changes on the Law for Public Officials will open the civil service for political interference in the appointment of mid-level and senior management positions.

Although progress was made in digitalizing 150 services on the e-Kosova platform, technical issues, limited public awareness, and inefficiencies in service delivery mechanisms were significant obstacles. Over 46% of citizens remain unaware of the platform, undermining its utility. The rationalization of agencies, a cornerstone of the reform, remains incomplete. The plan for rationalization of agencies for 2023 addressed only six agencies, far below expectations. Institutional resistance and lack of approved organizational regulations hindered progress. Poor coordination among institutions was noted as a recurring problem. For example, defining clear roles and responsibilities for service delivery institutions and improving interagency collaboration were areas of minimal progress.

Mechanisms for engaging civil society in the reform process remain inadequate. Despite previous attempts, participation from civil society organizations was almost negligible in 2023.

The recent meetings of the Ministerial Council for Public Administration Reform (PAR)<sup>12</sup>, as reported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, underscore a concerning trend of limited inclusivity and transparency in the reform process. While the Council has a crucial mandate to oversee and guide the implementation of Kosovo's Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS), the absence of civil society participation in these discussions highlights a critical gap in ensuring accountability and stakeholder engagement. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in monitoring public sector reforms, providing expertise, and representing citizen interests in policymaking processes.

The Government's focus on digital transformation is evident with the development of new services and the introduction of tools for citizens with disabilities. Over 11 million services were accessed through e-Kosova, and a total of 840,168 users were registered, indicating growing adoption despite awareness challenges.

The integration of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the approval of methodologies for aligning sectoral laws with the Law on General Administrative Procedure (LGAP) are important, however harmonization of law with the LGAP remains low. More than 529 government officials were trained on performance management, strategic planning, and other essential areas, contributing to the professional development of public servants.

While Kosovo's PARS implementation for 2023 laid a foundation for reform, addressing challenges in legislative coherence, digitalization, and institutional coordination is critical. The failure to establish a comprehensive job classification system remains a significant impediment to the effective implementation of Kosovo's Public Administration Reform (PAR) agenda. This gap has directly impacted the enforcement of the Law on Salaries, which came into force in February 2023 but remains partially unimplemented due to the absence of this foundational mechanism. A robust job classification system is essential for ensuring fairness, transparency, and efficiency in the allocation of salaries and responsibilities within the public administration.

Many institutions have not finalized internal organizational regulations that include job classification procedures. This delay has left civil servants unable to appeal decisions regarding their roles and responsibilities, as appeals cannot be processed by the Independent Oversight Board for the Civil Service of Kosovo (IOBCSK) without these regulations in place.

*With respect to progress on implementing planned reform measures for the improvement of the policy and legislative planning*, the approval of the National Development Strategy 2030 and the three-year National Development Plan marks an important milestone. The strategy is structured around four primary pillars: sustainable economic development, equitable human development, safety and the rule of law, and good governance. These pillars are designed to synchronize with other strategic documents, underscoring the NDS's role as a central development blueprint<sup>13</sup>. During 2023 the government also published the list of strategic documents that are valid, to help provide clarity<sup>14</sup>. However, the government has not produced publicly accessible reports on the progress with the implementation of the NDS 2030.

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<sup>12</sup> Meeting of PAR Ministerial Council, <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/4782/The-next-meeting-of-the-Council-of-Ministers-for-Public-Administration-Reform-was-held>

<sup>13</sup> See NDS 20230, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/national-development-strategy-2030/>

<sup>14</sup> Read more from the Office of the Prime Minister: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/list-of-strategic-documents-valid-update-with-13-june-2023/>

The NDS 20230, has helped in shaping a more structured framework for defining public policy sectors as the two documents define Kosovo's priorities, which has been consistently applied, extending to the Statement of Government's Medium-Term Priorities, which is aligned to a large degree with NDS 2030 and the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2024-2026<sup>15</sup>, as also reflected in the 2024 Budget Law.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, a methodology for codifying objectives and activities has been successfully developed in order to improve policy planning and coordination<sup>17</sup>.

Another noteworthy accomplishment is the establishment of a three-tiered indicator framework for policy planning and coordination. This encompasses (1) impact indicators, for development goals; (2) main result indicators, for strategic goals; (3) result indicators, for strategic measures, and (4) outcome indicators, for activities. This comprehensive set of indicators at the national level will undergo continuous improvements during the review of the National Development Plan and regular annual revision processes.

At the same time, there have been efforts directed towards the review and operationalization of Government coordinating bodies responsible for strategic planning.

Moreover, the formulation of institutional plans has progressed, with ongoing discussions involving the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Ministry of Economy (ME) and the Ministry of Local Government and Administration (MLGA) to establish the form and initiate the methodology for such plans.<sup>18</sup>

However, despite the efforts and progress in 2023, the policy planning and coordination processes in the Kosovo government still encounter difficulties and challenges. These persist due to uncertainties surrounding roles and mandates within the Office of the Prime Minister, especially following the merger of the former Ministry of European Integration in the Office of the Prime Minister which has not been functioning effectively<sup>19</sup>. Notably, the country report for 2023 continues to assess this process as weak and fraught with challenges, indicating the need for continued attention and improvement in this critical area.

*With respect to accountability and transparency*, existing reports show several limitations in Government transparency that continued in 2023<sup>20</sup>. The Law on Access to Public Documents establishes a framework ensuring that both individuals and legal entities have non-discriminatory access to documents held or produced by public institutions<sup>21</sup>. The Information and Privacy Agency (IPA) is responsible to monitor and enforce the implementation of the Law on Access to Public Documents<sup>22</sup>. The Agency received and processes complaints regarding both data protection and access to public documents, and conducts inspections in public institutions to ensure compliance with the legislation, and when appropriate it can issue

15 See Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2024-2026: <https://mfpt.rks-gov.net/desk/content/media/0d26adce-6faf-4dd6-942f-ca8cffba65c3.pdf>

16 See Kosovo Budget For Year 2024: [https://www.assembly-kosova.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/Lawno.08-L-260\\_YwaAsUa6dz.pdf](https://www.assembly-kosova.org/Uploads/Data/Documents/Lawno.08-L-260_YwaAsUa6dz.pdf)

17 Interview with senior official from DPAR/MIA.

18 Meeting with senior official from the Department for Public Administration Reform, Ministry of Internal Affairs

19 Interview with former senior official of the Ministry of European Integration.

20 See for instance The National PAR Monitor Kosovo 2021/2022: <https://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/WeBER-2.0-National-PAR-Monitor-2021-2022-Final.pdf>

21 See Law 06/L-081, available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=20505>

22 Read more at: <https://aip.rks-gov.net/en/about-us/>

fines for institutions. However, the challenge is that both the private and public sector often ignore and do not implement the decision issued by IPA, including in cases for access to public documents. The available data indicates that the Law for Access to Public Documents is frequently used and that public institutions generally respond favorably to requests. In 2022, out of a total of 4,481 requests for access to public documents, only 154 were denied<sup>23</sup>.

An important challenge is the lack of a publicly available comprehensive report on the Information and Privacy Agency's official website regarding the state of play of implementation of the Law on Access to Public Documents<sup>24</sup>. Previously, the Office of the Prime Minister regularly published similar reports, which served as a crucial source of information<sup>25</sup>. In July 2023, IPA submitted a detailed report to the Assembly Committee on Public Administration, Local Government, Media and Regional Development, and such a report should be made publicly available.

However, the Information and Privacy Agency (IPA) website does provide information about the agency's actions related to access to public documents, including agency decisions, guides for citizens, and other resources<sup>26</sup>. Additionally, the civil society online platform [dumidite.org](https://dumidite.org), developed by FLOSSK with support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), offers a valuable resource for citizens seeking quick access to public information and guidance on how to submit requests for access to public documents.

Additionally, in July 2023 IPA initiated steps to streamline accessibility of public information through the web sites of public institutions. It requested the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) and the Information Society Agency (ISA) within MIA to align their secondary legislation with IPA mandates under the Law No. 06/L-081<sup>27</sup>. This includes compliance with Article 5 of the Law for Access to Public Documents, which focuses on proactive publication of documents and data by public institutions and harmonizing sub-legal acts with the Law on Access to Public Documents.

The inaugural KosovaPAR2023 conference, organised by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Pristina on 22 November 2023, marked an important development in Kosovo's approach and promotion of public administration reform<sup>28</sup>. Themed "Reforms in Public Administration for Flexible and Stable Governance," the conference brought together a mix of stakeholders, including state officials, international diplomats, academics, and representatives from civil society and the public sector. The conference featured diverse panel discussions, addressing themes like corruption, ethics, public service renewal, and digital governance.

Monitoring by FOL Movement has also shown that up-to-date policy and statistical data are scarce in MIA's web site especially on issues related to PAR. The most recent news on PAR in

23 See the 2023 Kosovo Country Report from the European Commission, available at: [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/760aacca-4e88-4667-8792-3ed08cdd65c3\\_en?filename=SWD\\_2023\\_692%20Kosovo%20report\\_0.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/760aacca-4e88-4667-8792-3ed08cdd65c3_en?filename=SWD_2023_692%20Kosovo%20report_0.pdf) p.31

24 See for instance: <https://aip.rks-gov.net/en/plans-and-reports/>

25 See for instance this report from 2015 [https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2015\\_ANG\\_200416.pdf](https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2015_ANG_200416.pdf)

26 See for instance: <https://aip.rks-gov.net/en/ipa-actions/actions-for-access-to-public-documents/>

27 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027 Action Plan 2022-2024

28 Read more at: <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/4839/Ka-filluar-punimet-Konferenca-e-par%C3%AB-nd%C3%ABrkom-b%C3%ABtare-KosovaPAR2023>

the PAR dedicated web section of MIA's website is from September of 2023<sup>29</sup>. The Government of Kosovo has also foregone the practice by previous governments to organise a consultation meeting with civil society organisations before the meetings of the Special Group on PAR<sup>30</sup>. Overall, during 2023 the government of Kosovo did not perform satisfactory with respect to transparency<sup>31</sup>.

A central aspect of reform measures to improve transparency and accountability, includes the process of rationalization of agencies, which is a reform target included in PARS 2022-2027 as well as in the Sector Reform Contract for Public Administration Reform. In terms of progress, a working group was established to draft and approve a new action plan for rationalization of agencies and preparing necessary legislation for this purpose<sup>32</sup>. Government also adopted on February 16, 2023, a 'Methodology for the Preparation of the Proposal for the Creation, Merger, and Extinction of Agencies' to guide the process of rationalization of agencies in line with the Law on the Organisation and Functioning of State Administration and Independent Agencies (LOFSAIA)<sup>33</sup>.

The Law on the Organization and Functioning of State Administration and Independent Agencies (LOFSAIA) and its accompanying legislation, has been a central to improving accountability in the public administration. However, despite being in force for five years, the practical implementation of this law has not been very effective as shown with the process of rationalization of agencies, and limited progress in institutions harmonizing their internal regulations with LOFSAI. There are notable delays in the rationalization of agencies, with a recent legislative effort only altering the status of two agencies from an initially planned twenty. These agencies are the Agency for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety and the Kosovo Agency for Energy Efficiency, both of which have not yet started functioning as mandated by the legal revisions due to unapproved internal organizational regulations. There is a paradox in the Government's approach: while the rationalisation process aims at reducing the number of agencies, new bodies and agencies continue to be established by the Government<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, there is a significant institutional resistance to the decisions of independent constitutional institutions, particularly those by the IOBCSK<sup>35</sup>. This resistance has persisted without any significant attempts to address it, sometimes accompanied by government attempts to limit the institution's constitutional role through legislative changes aimed at unjustifiably increasing its membership and reducing its jurisdiction over top-level positions.

*Regarding management of human resources in the public administration, evaluation and implementation of the current by-laws issued by the Legal Office of the Office of the Prime Minister has been carried out<sup>36</sup>. The online Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) has been fully operationalized with all modules considered to be functional<sup>37</sup>. According*

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29 See, <https://rap.rks-gov.net/#lajme>

30 Consultative meetings with civil society prior to the conduct of the Special Group on PAR between Kosovo and the EU were regularly organized in the past.

31 See this comprehensive assessment from Kosovo Law Institute (KLI), available at: <https://kli-ks.org/mungesa-e-transparences-minimale-perballe-premtimit-per-transparence-radikale/>

32 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027

33 Ibid.,

34 FOL monitoring activities

35 Ibid.,

36 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027

37 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027



to the Law on Public Officials, "the Human Resources Management Information System shall be the central electronic system serving for the management of human resources for all public institutions of the Republic of Kosovo."<sup>38</sup> However, despite its functionality and legal mandate for its utilization by all institutions, challenges persist. Some institutions do not fully utilize HRMIS or its modules, and there are gaps in data completion and compliance by institutions<sup>39</sup>.

Furthermore, in terms of progress, during 2023, Regulation (OPM) No. 03/2023 on amending and supplementing Regulation (OPM) No. 01/2021 on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs<sup>40</sup> was approved as well as Regulation (MIA) No.01/2023 on Personnel Planning<sup>41</sup>, has been approved by the Prime Minister, with Decision No. 493/2023, dated 31.03.2023. In addition to this, during 2023, MIA approved the administrative instructions for performance appraisal<sup>42</sup>. The job catalogue has also been updated to reflect new legal requirements, and job descriptions have been standardized, promoting principles of professionalism, meritocracy, and equal treatment<sup>43</sup>.

During 2023, out of the 15 ministries comprising the Government of Kosovo, only four were headed by secretaries with a full mandate: the remaining operated under acting secretaries, including the Prime Minister's office. This prevalent use of acting secretaries has raised concerns about the accountability, efficacy and stability of government operations.<sup>44</sup> This issue is further exacerbated during recruitment processes. Despite having orderly procedures, the selection often bypasses potentially qualified candidates, turning it into a recurring phenomenon<sup>45</sup>.

There are also concerns regarding the state of centralized civil service recruitment processes and completing the job classification and organization to ensure merit-based recruitment<sup>46</sup>. In addition to this, there are serious concerns over the potential impact of the new Law on Public Officials and its potential to increase the risk of corruption and political influence among public officials and the process of recruitment<sup>47</sup>.

With respect to the service delivery, a central reform target of the public administration reform process is the reduction of administration burden. For this purpose, the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme 2022-2027 and its associated Action Plan 2022-2024, was approved by the Government of Kosovo on September 14, 2022, with the purpose to rationalize, reduce and streamline administrative requirements, procedures and processes<sup>48</sup>.

38 Article 19 of the Law No.08/L-197 on Public Officials, available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=81430>

39 Interview with senior official from DPAR/MIA

40 Read more at: [https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/2561/RREGULLORE%20\(ZKM\)%20NR%2003%202023%20PËR%20NDRYSHIMIN%20DHE%20PLOTËSIMIN%20E\\_RREGULLORES....pdf](https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/2561/RREGULLORE%20(ZKM)%20NR%2003%202023%20PËR%20NDRYSHIMIN%20DHE%20PLOTËSIMIN%20E_RREGULLORES....pdf)

41 Read more at: <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/2560/Projekt%20rregullore%20per%20Planifikimin%20e%20Personelit.pdf>

42 Read more at: [https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/2471/Udhezuesi%20Nr.01%20per%20Menaxhimin%20e%20Performances\\_alb\\_27.01.2023%20\(2%20files%20me....pdf](https://mpb.rks-gov.net/Uploads/Documents/Pdf/AL/2471/Udhezuesi%20Nr.01%20per%20Menaxhimin%20e%20Performances_alb_27.01.2023%20(2%20files%20me....pdf)

43 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027

44 Albanian Post. (2023). [In Albanian: "11 ministri dhe Zyra e kryeministrit funksionojnë me ushtrues detyre të sekretarit", thotë raporti i GLSP-së], available at: <https://albanianpost.com/11-ministri-dhe-zyra-e-kryeministrit-funksionojne-me-ushtrues-detyre-te-sekretarit-thote-raporti-i-glsp-se/>

45 Albanian Post. (2023).

46 EU and Kosovo held the 12th Public Administration Reform Special Group on 27th September 2022, available at: <https://mpb.rks-gov.net/f/57/2708/BE-ja-dhe-Kosova-mbajten-Grupin-e-12-te-Special-per-Reformen-e-Administrates-Publike-me-27-shtator-2022->

47 Klan Kosova. (2023). [In Albanian: Szunyog: Reforma në Administratën Publike, çelës për anëtarësim në BE], available at: <https://klankosova.tv/szunyog-reforma-ne-administraten-publike-celes-per-anetaresim-ne-be/>

48 See Government Decision No.27/96 of September 14, 2022, p. 37, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Vendimet-e-Mbledhjes-se-96-te-te-Qeverise.pdf>



Implementation of this plan is supervised by the First Deputy Prime Minister and coordinated by the Strategic Planning Office of the Prime Minister's Office, which includes a designated Administrative Burden Coordinator facilitating the implementation. A total of 85 actions have been initiated under the Programme, with 62 completed during 2023 or 73 percent implementation rate<sup>49</sup>. Significant efforts in training and digitalization are underway, alongside the simplification or elimination of numerous services at both central and local government levels. These measures have notably reduced administrative burdens, yielding substantial financial savings and improving efficiency.

Over 30 services have begun the process of digitalization, which involves users applying, performing required actions with the institution, and receiving services online<sup>50</sup>. Services nearing the completion of digitalization include those for free professions by the Ministry of Justice, land surveying by the Kosovo Cadastre Agency, and driving school-related services by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. Early-stage digitalization efforts include diploma recognition services by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation, and grant and subsidy services by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports. There are plans to digitalize more than 50 additional services in 2024 using the same strategy. To alleviate administrative burdens, 46 initiatives have been launched across both central and local government levels. Of these, 39 are at the central level with 12 still in progress, and all seven at the local level have been completed. At the central government level, 49 services across four ministries have been streamlined, resulting in savings of approximately 1.6 million Euros<sup>51</sup>. Specifically, 32 services in the Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship, and Trade, 14 in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, two in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, and one in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development have been simplified. At the local government level, 103 services have been streamlined and 64 eliminated across three municipalities, saving approximately 628,688 Euros. The municipalities involved are Prizren, Ferizaj/Uroševac, and Peja/Peč, with Prizren simplifying 37 administrative procedures and eliminating 25 services, Ferizaj/Uroševac simplifying 50 and eliminating 26, and Peja/Peč simplifying 16 and eliminating 13<sup>52</sup>. In 2024, about 100 additional services are anticipated to be simplified in other municipalities.

The methodology for the alignment of special laws with LGAP has been drafted, and an alignment plan has been proposed, which is expected to be implemented over the next two years. About 97 laws are expected to be aligned in the first year and 84 in the second one<sup>53</sup>. Additionally, an analysis was carried out to clarify and rationalize the roles and responsibilities of institutions and their organisational units in relation to service provision<sup>54</sup>.

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49 Government Report on the implementation on the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme 2022-2027 and Action Plan 2022-2024, available at: <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/blog/report-on-the-implementation-on-the-administrative-burden-prevention-and-reduction-programme-2022-2027-and-action-plan-2022-2024/>

50 Government Report on the implementation on the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme 2022-2027

51 Government Report on the implementation on the Administrative Burden Prevention and Reduction Programme 2022-2027

52 Ibid.,

53 Mid-term implementation report of PARS 2022-2027

54 Ibid.,

The creation of a dedicated unit for service delivery within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is a key objective outlined in the Action Plan 2022-2024 for the implementation of PARS 2022-2027. This initiative also featured in the earlier PAMS 2015-2020 strategy; however, the government has not yet established such a unit. With the assistance of a European Union-funded technical support project, both the analysis and the conceptual framework for this unit have been developed, along with its terms of reference<sup>55</sup>. The absence of this unit compromises the government's ability to effectively oversee and enhance service delivery, highlighting a critical gap in administrative reform efforts.

The examination of the state of play concerning the implementation of domestic planned reform measures, as delineated in the Public Administration Reform Strategy (PARS) 2022-2027, warrants a parallel analysis of the progress and challenges associated with the reform measures driven by Kosovo's European integration process. This dual approach is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of both national and European dimensions of public administration reform.

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55 Interview with senior official from DPAR/MIA

## 5. Kosovo's Cooperation with the EU and OECD/SIGMA: Strengthening Coordination and Advancing Reforms

Kosovo's collaboration with key European partners, including the European Union and OECD/SIGMA, is essential to advancing its Public Administration Reform (PAR) agenda. The absence of meetings for the Special Group on PAR in 2023, a key mechanism for coordinating reform efforts, underscores the need to enhance communication and coordination in this process.

The European Commission's 2024 Kosovo Report highlights areas where Kosovo's reform efforts, particularly in PAR, could benefit from further progress. While Kosovo maintains its commitment to European integration, fostering closer collaboration with EU stakeholders remains pivotal to achieving alignment with European standards and advancing reform priorities.

Several recommendations outlined in previous reports, such as improving merit-based recruitment, streamlining independent agencies, addressing the reliance on acting officials in senior roles, and enhancing interministerial coordination, remain priorities. Public consultations on key legislative and regulatory measures, such as amendments to the Law on Public Officials, could further reinforce inclusiveness and transparency in governance, in line with the principles of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA).

Engagement with international standards and best practices, including collaboration with the Venice Commission and OECD/SIGMA, represents an opportunity to elevate reform quality. Enhancing these partnerships would support alignment with European expectations, ensuring that reform measures are both comprehensive and impactful.

The National Programme for the Implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement (NPISAA 2022–2026) and the Sector Reform Contract for Public Administration Reform (SRC for PAR) serve as critical frameworks for Kosovo's reform efforts. These initiatives aim to modernize public administration, fostering a transparent, efficient, and merit-based civil service. However, timely implementation of planned actions and legislative measures remains a key area of focus to ensure continued progress.

The SRC for PAR, which links EU financial support to specific reform milestones, has demonstrated progress in areas such as adopting a methodology for agency management. However, further efforts to finalize associated action plans and improve performance monitoring will help maintain the momentum of reforms and ensure alignment with strategic objectives.

The European Commission's 2024 Kosovo Report emphasizes the importance of continued efforts to professionalize the civil service, streamline administrative processes, and enhance policy coherence. Regular dialogue with EU counterparts and international stakeholders will be instrumental in driving reforms forward and ensuring alignment with European standards.

By prioritizing transparent policymaking, timely implementation, and proactive collaboration with international partners, Kosovo can strengthen its public administration and reinforce its commitment to European integration. These efforts will not only support the aspirations of Kosovo's citizens for a modern and efficient public administration but also enhance its standing as a reliable partner in the European reform process.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this report underscore the significant challenges Kosovo faces in implementing its Public Administration Reform (PAR) agenda. Despite strategic frameworks like the PAR Strategy 2022–2027 and support mechanisms such as the Sector Reform Contract (SRC) for PAR, progress remains limited and inconsistent. Key areas such as transparency, meritocracy, institutional coordination, and relations with international partners have seen setbacks, hindering the realization of a modern, efficient, and citizen-focused public administration.

One of the most concerning developments is the weakening of public consultation mechanisms. Recent regulatory changes have granted discretionary powers to government officials, allowing them to bypass consultations for key laws and regulations. This undermines transparency, erodes public trust, and contradicts Kosovo's stated commitments to inclusive governance.

While digitalization initiatives have made some strides, with over 150 e-services available through the e-Kosova platform, systemic challenges persist. Technical issues, limited public awareness, and inadequate investments in infrastructure and IT capacities hinder broader adoption. Similarly, progress in administrative burden reduction and agency rationalization has been slow, with many planned reforms deferred or poorly implemented.

Institutional coordination for PAR remains weak, exacerbated by structural inefficiencies such as the merger of the Ministry of Public Administration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This has diluted leadership focus and undermined the prioritization of the reform agenda. The overreliance on acting officials in senior positions further detracts from accountability and stability in governance.

Kosovo's legal framework for public administration, although comprehensive, suffers from inadequate implementation. The failure to establish a functional job classification system, critical for enforcing the Law on Salaries, exemplifies this gap. This has resulted in inequities and inefficiencies in public administration management.

Despite these challenges, areas such as administrative burden reduction and digitalization offer promising opportunities. Simplifying services and expanding e-governance initiatives have demonstrated tangible benefits, including cost savings and improved service delivery. With stronger leadership, enhanced coordination, and sustained investments, these initiatives could serve as a foundation for broader reform.

The report concludes with a call for renewed commitment to the principles of transparency, meritocracy, and accountability. Strengthening cooperation with international stakeholders, fostering civil society engagement, and ensuring inclusive policymaking are imperative for advancing Kosovo's public administration reforms. Only through a concerted and collaborative effort can Kosovo overcome its current challenges and build a governance system that meets the aspirations of its citizens and aligns with European standards. In order to address these concerns, some of the measures below are important for the government to urgently implement:

- 1 Reinstating robust standards for public consultations by revising the **Regulation on Internal Procedures** to guarantee mandatory and inclusive consultations for all draft laws and sub-laws. Ensure that civil society organizations, citizens, and other stakeholders are actively engaged throughout the policymaking process.
- 2 Accelerate the rationalization of agencies by finalizing and implementing the action plan for agency mergers, reorganizations, and closures. Clearly define roles and responsibilities within institutions to eliminate redundancies.
- 3 Reestablish regular dialogue with the EU, including convening the **Special Group on Public Administration Reform (PAR)** to coordinate reforms and align with EU priorities.
- 4 Seek technical assistance from international experts, such as OECD/SIGMA, for the development and implementation of legislation, ensuring compliance with international best practices.
- 5 Launch a nationwide awareness campaign to increase public knowledge and utilization of digital services, emphasizing the benefits of transparency and efficiency in public service delivery.
- 6 Eliminate the reliance on acting appointments by appointing permanent officials to key positions, ensuring accountability and stability in public administration leadership.
- 7 Finalize and operationalize a comprehensive job classification system to enable the effective implementation of the **Law on Salaries**, ensuring transparency and equity in compensation structures.
- 8 Reach out to civil society and invite NGOs to attend as observers the meeting of the Ministerial Council on PAR. The government should not invite only NGOs it perceives as friendly to its agenda;
- 9 Department for PAR in MIA, should organize thematic based consultation meetings with the civil society organization on PAR challenges and progress
- 10 Populate the PAR dedicated web site with updated information.

# Public Administration Reform (PAR) Scorecard for Kosovo

The **Public Administration Reform (PAR) Scorecard** provides an evidence-based assessment of Kosovo's progress in implementing its reform agenda, focusing on six critical indicators: transparency and accountability, civil society consultation, relations with the European Union (EU), digitalization, institutional coordination for PAR, and meritocracy in recruitment. These indicators are fundamental to Kosovo's aspirations for democratic governance, efficient public administration, and alignment with European standards.

The relevance of this scorecard lies in its ability to inform citizens, policymakers, and international stakeholders about the state of PAR in Kosovo. By highlighting both progress and challenges, the scorecard fosters public scrutiny and encourages accountability. It also serves as a tool for civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage more effectively in the reform process, ensuring that government actions align with public expectations and democratic principles.

The scorecard is particularly timely as Kosovo faces critical junctures in its European integration process. Public administration reform is a cornerstone of the **Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)** and a precondition for advancing negotiations with the EU. However, as this analysis reveals, significant gaps persist in Kosovo's efforts to meet these standards.

The scorecard employs a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive evaluation of PAR implementation. It is based on both qualitative and quantitative data drawn from primary and secondary sources. **Primary Data:** Insights from written interviews with government officials involved in PAR provided firsthand accounts of the challenges and successes in implementing reform measures. These inputs were critical in understanding institutional dynamics and political constraints. **Secondary Data:** The analysis incorporated official government reports, independent assessments from civil society organizations and think tanks, and evaluations by international stakeholders such as the European Commission.

Each indicator was scored on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents "very poor" and 5 represents "excellent." The scores were determined based on concrete evidence of progress, gaps, and systemic challenges across the six indicators. The average score provides an overall assessment of Kosovo's performance in public administration reform.

The scorecard is designed not only to evaluate progress but also to identify areas where Kosovo needs to prioritize reforms. By addressing the weaknesses identified in this analysis, Kosovo can strengthen its public administration, enhance transparency and accountability, and align more closely with European governance standards.

## Transparency and Accountability

Score Poor

Recent regulatory changes undermine transparency by replacing mandatory public consultation standards with discretionary provisions, allowing Secretary Generals to bypass consultations for draft laws and sub-laws. The lack of a comprehensive and accessible report on public administration reform progress reduces public accountability. While over 4,000 requests for public documents were processed in 2022, the lack of enforcement for the decisions of the Information and Privacy Agency (IPA) limits effective transparency.

## Civil Society Consultation

Score Inadequate

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are largely excluded from critical decision-making processes. The government bypassed consultations for key laws such as the Regulation on Civil Service Admission Procedures. No civil society representatives attended the Ministerial Council on PAR in 2023, highlighting a lack of inclusivity. Bypassing public consultations for six out of seven recent regulations related to PAR violates principles of participatory governance.

## Relations with the EU

Score Strained

The Special Group on PAR, a key coordination mechanism between Kosovo and the EU, did not meet in 2023, signaling strained relations and a lack of effective cooperation. The government has resisted aligning legislation, such as the Law on Public Officials, with EU recommendations, isolating Kosovo from European integration efforts. The European Commission's report emphasizes limited progress on EU recommendations, weakening Kosovo's credibility as an integration candidate.



## Digitalization

Score Developing

Over 150 e-services have been launched on the e-Kosova platform, with 11 million services accessed by 2023. However, technical issues and limited public awareness hinder broader adoption. Digital infrastructure, particularly broadband and 5G networks, requires substantial investment to meet the goals of the Digital Agenda 2030. Lack of centralized coordination for digital services limits interoperability across institutions, creating inefficiencies in service delivery.

## Institutional Coordination for PAR

Score Weak

The merger of the Ministry of Public Administration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs has resulted in fragmented leadership, with no clear prioritization of PAR objectives. Only 46% of planned reform measures for 2023 were implemented, with inter-ministerial coordination identified as a recurring bottleneck. Acting appointments dominate senior public administration roles, diminishing accountability and long-term planning.

## Meritocracy in Recruitment

Score Declining

Amendments to the Law on Public Officials risk increasing political influence in civil service appointments, undermining merit-based recruitment. Only four out of 16 ministries have appointed permanent Secretary Generals, with the remainder relying on acting officials. The lack of a comprehensive job classification system continues to stall the full implementation of the Law on Salaries, exacerbating inequities in public administration.

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Indicator	Score	Rationale
<b>Transparency and Accountability</b>	<b>2</b>	Regulatory changes weaken public consultations; limited enforcement of Information and Privacy Agency decisions. Few tangible improvements despite modest gains in transparency of document requests.
<b>Civil Society Consultation</b>	<b>1.5</b>	Civil society remains largely excluded from PAR processes. Public consultations are bypassed for key reforms. No civil society representation in critical decision-making forums such as the Ministerial Council on PAR.
<b>Relations with the EU</b>	<b>2</b>	No meetings of the Special Group on PAR in 2023; limited alignment with EU recommendations; weakened EU-Kosovo coordination, as noted in the European Commission's report.
<b>Digitalization</b>	<b>3</b>	Expansion of e-services (150 services on e-Kosova) is a positive step, but adoption remains low due to technical issues and limited public awareness. Investments in infrastructure are insufficient for long-term goals like 5G coverage.
<b>Institutional Coordination for PAR</b>	<b>2</b>	Fragmented leadership post-ministry merger; reliance on acting officials undermines accountability. Poor inter-ministerial collaboration leads to delays in reforms, with only 46% of planned measures for 2023 implemented.
<b>Meritocracy in Recruitment</b>	<b>2</b>	Amendments to the Law on Public Officials increase risks of politicization. Reliance on acting appointments and lack of a comprehensive job classification system impede fair recruitment practices.

**Overall Assessment:** *(Sum of all scores / Number of indicators) = 2.08*



Kosovo's overall PAR performance is below satisfactory, with an average score of **2.08 out of 5**, reflecting significant systemic challenges. Transparency, civil society consultation, and meritocracy require immediate attention to ensure alignment with democratic principles and EU standards. Digitalization, while showing promise, needs stronger investments and awareness campaigns to maximize its potential impact. Enhanced cooperation with the EU and better institutional coordination are critical to addressing reform bottlenecks.



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