ALTERNATIVE MONITORING REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR) ACTION PLAN FOR 2019-2020

Direction 4: Public Service Delivery

2021

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CONTENTS

MAIN FINDINGS

The analysis of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the Public Service Delivery direction of the Action Plan for 2019-2020 reveals that the documents mainly address the challenges relevant during their development and accordingly define priority directions. However, in a number of cases, insufficient or technical activities are defined for the implementation of objectives, undermining their significance.

The Roadmap has not been updated since 2016 and, therefore, there are several inconsistencies between the Action Plan and the Roadmap. It is crucial for the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the Action Plan to be in compliance with each other and for the Action Plan to be developed in accordance to challenges outlined in the Roadmap. Otherwise, the significance of the Roadmap is undermined.

Objectives and indicators of the Public Service Delivery direction of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan 2019-2020 require refinement according to S.M.A.R.T. criteria. In addition, in order to actually achieve the objectives, more activities are necessary to be defined and real efforts need to be made for their implementation.

The Action Plan provides insufficient and less ambitious indicators for the measurement of some objectives which undermine the importance of the objectives.

In some cases, the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the activities specified in the Action Plan for the objectives does not affect the implementation of the objective.

Out of the seven objectives envisaged by the Public Service Delivery direction of the Action Plan, one is fully implemented, one is mostly implemented, three – are partly implemented and two are unimplemented by the end of 2020. Out of nine outcome indicators two are fully implemented, four are partly implemented and three are unimplemented.
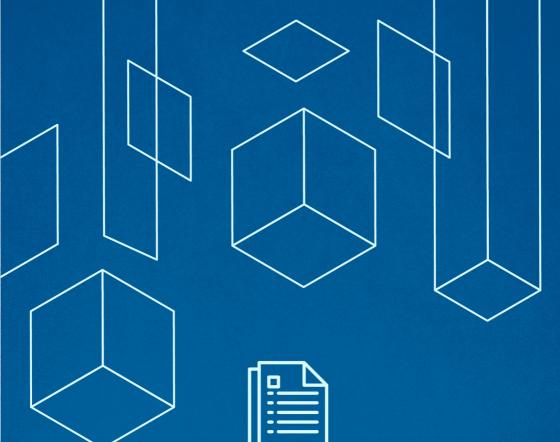
As for the activities, out of 28 activities outlined for 2019-2020, eight are fully implemented, four are mostly implemented, 12 are partly implemented and four are unimplemented. Out of 40 output indicators (including additional indicators), 15 are fully implemented, three are mostly implemented, 12 are partly implemented and 10 are unimplemented

The monitoring process revealed a number of shortcomings and challenges that characterize the policy-making process in Georgia, including the absence of mechanisms for reduction or elimination of identified risk in the action plan, lack of cooperation and coordination between agencies, weakness of oversight, and etc.

The responsible agencies do not seem to take the PAR Action Plan and the commitments set out in the plan seriously. This is evidenced by the use of the pandemic as a deterrent to most commitments as a template without specific indication of specific

factor caused by the pandemic and how it caused the failure to take a specific measure.

The monitoring of the implementation of objectives and activities in the Public Service Delivery direction by regional civil society organizations at the local level revealed that the representatives of self-governing bodies do not have information about the PAR strategic documents and the degree of their involvement in the planning and implementation of the Public Administration Reform is low. It should also be noted that the Action Plan for local self-government direction focused on the development/approval of a decentralization strategy, which was successfully implemented. In addition, according to local civil organizations, the Action Plan does not envisage involvement of the local non-governmental sector, which is crucial for progress.

The monitoring carried out by regional civil society organizations also revealed shortcomings, such as: implementation of policy documents depending on policy changes; Lack of coordination between public agencies; Low degree of public involvement in the reform process and governance in general, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Georgia recognized the importance of public administration reform along with signing the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union. The Agreement emphasizes commitment to good governance, including cooperation in the directions of public ad- ministration and public service reforms. According to the Association agreement between Georgia and the European Union, the country has to implement in-depth reforms in the direction of public administration and public service.[1] In order to comply with the mentioned commitment, the Government of Georgia approved the Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020 in 2015. The Document is meant to create a comprehensive conceptual framework and mechanisms "aimed at transparent, predictable, accountable and effective public governance, meeting European standards and satisfying public needs".[2]

In order to implement the Public Administration Reform, the Government of Georgia, once in every two years approves the Public Administration Reform Action Plan. The most recent Action Plan for 2019-2020 approved by the Government of Georgia in June 2019 aims at the implementation of goals defined by the Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020.

The Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the Action Plan feature six directions: policy planning and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, public service delivery, public finance management and local self-government. This document addresses the fourth direction of the Action Plan – the Public Service Delivery and the implementation of the activities and objectives envisaged by the Action Plan for this direction for two years.

Monitoring the implementation of policy documents, identifying gaps and challenges and setting measures for responding to these challenges are crucial for the successful implementation of any policy. It is noteworthy that unlike previous years the Administration of the Government has started monitoring the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan and made monitoring results public for the first time in 2019. This document represents an alternative monitoring report and may not be in full compliance with the monitoring results published by the Administration of the Government.

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[1] Article 4, Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part; ('Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union').

[2] Page 6, Public Administration Reform Roadmap of Georgia 2020.
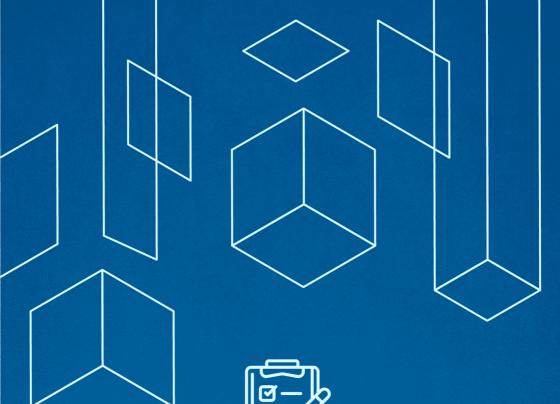
2. METHODOLOGY

The subject of the monitoring was to assess the progress of the implementation of the objectives and activities envisaged by the Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020 as of the end of 2020.

The implementation of the objectives and the activities defined by the Action Plan are described by one of the following four statuses:

1. **FULLY IMPLEMENTED** – an activity/objective is fully or almost fully implemented and only a minor part of it has not been completed;

2. **MOSTLY IMPLEMENTED** – a major part of an activity/objective was implemented, while part of it has not been completed;

3. **PARTLY IMPLEMENTED** – a part of an activity/objective was implemented while a major part remains incomplete;

4. **UNIMPLEMENTED** – an activity/objective was not implemented at all or a minor part is implemented and it is impossible to observe progress.

The monitoring was based on public information – the primary source of information when conducting the monitoring was the Administration of the Government of Georgia and responsible agencies defined by the Public Administration Reform Action Plan. Therefore, in the beginning of the monitoring process, the information about the implementation of each objective and activity was requested from responsible agencies. The draft was submitted to responsible agencies for comments and their position, to the possible extent, was considered while shaping the final version of the document.

Monitoring of the Public Service Delivery direction objective and activity implementation at the local level was carried out by civil society organizations: Research Center for Human Rights and Social Justice (Poti), Youth Center for Civil Development (Akhmeta), Association "Imedi" IDP Women's Movement for Peace (Zugdidi), CRI "Bright Future" (Kutaisi) and Kvemo Kartli Media (Marneuli).

3. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

The chapter on General Assessment of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020 reviews the compliance of objectives defined by the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the Action Plan with challenges facing public administration in the direction of public service delivery. For these purposes, the situation has been analyzed based on the reports of international organizations, researches and recommendations; priority challenges have been identified and the compliance of objectives defined by strategic documents with existing challenges have been assessed. The same chapter assesses the structural order of the direction of public services of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan as well as sufficiency and relevance of the activities; to what extent do objectives, indicators and activities of the Action Plan meet the so-called S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) criteria. [3]

3.1 COMPLIANCE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY DIRECTION WITH THE EXISTING CHALLENGES

The Public Administration Reform Roadmap[4] and the Action Plan for 2019-2020[5] were approved in the corresponding order in August 2015 and June 2019. The Public Administration Reform Roadmap was updated in 2016[6], however, mainly technical amendments were incorporated and the content remained mostly unchanged. It should be noted that the Roadmap is a living document, which shall be updated in accordance with relevant challenges. However, the Roadmap has not been updated since 2016. Considering the abovementioned, this part of the document discusses, on the one hand, the challenges faced by the state in developing the Roadmap and, on the other hand, the challenges existing when developing the 2019-2020 Action Plan, which should have been reflected in both the Roadmap and the Action Plan.

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[3] Information available at: https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php.

[4] #427 Ordinance of the Government of Georgia, Dated 19 August 2015, on the Approval of the Strategic Documents for the Implementation of the Public Administration – "Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020 of Georgia" and "Policy Planning System Reform Strategy 2015-2017"; available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2953552?publication=1.

[5] #274 Ordinance of the Government of Georgia, Dated 10 June 2019 on the Approval of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020; available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/4586360?publication=0.

[6] #186 Ordinance of the Government of Georgia, Dated 18 April 2016, on the Amendments to the N427 Ordinance of the Government of Georgia, dated 19 August 2015, on the Approval of Strategic Documents for the Implementation of Public Governance – Public Administration Reform Roadmap 2020 and Policy Implementation System Reform Strategy 2015-2017; available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/3259832?publication=0.

There have been challenges in the direction of public service delivery for years. These challenges have been repeatedly discussed at international and local levels. During the past decades, several important changes were implemented in this area, facilitating access to services as well as the development of public services and e-governance (e.g. the development of community centers, provision of public services via the single window principle by public service halls, implementation of the unified platform (My.gov.ge) for the provision of public services for citizens). However, despite the progress achieved in the area of public services, there were number of challenges facing this direction in 2019. One of the main challenges was an absence of the unified standard for the creation and delivery of services, as a result of which, fragmented development as well as a heterogeneous nature and inconsistency were characteristic to public services.[7] Therefore, in the process of creation of strategic documents, the priority should have been the development and practical implementation of the unified policy for the creation and delivery of public services. **Mentioned challenges were noted in the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the lack of the unified policy for the provision of high quality services as well as the absence of unified legislative framework in the direction of service provision were identified as problems**.[8] As for the Public Administration Reform Action plan for 2019-2020 creation of a unified standard for the public service delivery is outlined as an objective (Objective 4.1.).

Offering electronic services to consumers was one of the equally important challenges. By 2019, only very few of Government agencies in Georgia offered online services to customers especially in the regions. Georgia ranked 60th among 193 countries with 0.69 points, according to the 2018 UN Electronic Governance Index. In the direction of electronic services, Georgia lags far behind not only the European average, but also the countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus and others. [9] In its Action Plan for 2018-2020, the Government confirmed the need of sophisticating online services and digitalizing new additional public services and listed the creation of electronic governance policy as one of the priorities.[10] **Deriving from the afore-mentioned, improving access to electronic services should have been made a**

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[7] ACT – Analysis and Consulting Team, Interim Report on the Current State of the Public Administration Reform, 2019, page 105. Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/DG/UNDP_GE_DG_PAR_civil%20service_public%20perceptions_midterm%20study_2019_geo.pdf.

[8] Administration of the Government of Georgia; The Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020, 2015 page 29. Available at: http://gov.ge/files/423_49307_925454.

[9] UN E-Government Survey 2018. Available at: https://publicadministration.un.org/en/research/un-e-government-surveys

[10] The Government of Georgia, Governmental Programme for 2018 – 2020, pages 35–36. Available at: http://gov.ge/files/68_67099_111823_2018-2020.pdf

priority when developing the Document.

It is important to emphasize public involvement when discussing the provision of public services. According to the study prepared by ACT, more than half of the respondents (51%) did not have an opportunity to provide service-related feedback, while only 7% of those who did have such an opportunity, actually provided their feedback.[11] 18% of respondents cited the lack of the information on the form/means of complaint submission as the reason for refraining from the provision of service-related comments to the public agency. This clearly indicates the need for raising public awareness. In addition, public awareness levels differ according to services offered by different agencies; awareness level is low for electronic services. As an example, in 2019, the majority of ID card holders (84%) had never used cards for electronic operations. In addition, the population does not frequently take advantage of the possibility of electronic submission of their application.[12] **Deriving from the afore-mentioned, one of the Government priorities should have been the development of electronic governance, raising public awareness of government services and increasing public involvement in the direction of the public service delivery.**

Analysis of the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and the Action Plan for 2019-2020 reveals that the documents, in most cases, take into account challenges relevant during the process of their development and list afore-mentioned directions as priorities. However, as it has already been pointed out, in number of cases, insufficient or technical activities are defined for achieving objectives (objectives 4.1.1.; 4.6.1. as examples), undermining the significance of the objective itself. With regards to the Roadmap, it addresses relevant challenges, however, it has never been further updated.

Assessment of the Public Service Delivery Direction of the Action Plan

The Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020 defines seven objectives for the direction of Public Service Delivery. Outcome indicators, as well as baseline and target indicators, sources of verification and risks are defined under each objective. The Action Plan envisages the relevant activities for the achievement of the objectives, output indicators of which are defined to evaluate the quality of performance and the sources of verification of the outputs are listed. The Action Plan defines responsible agencies (together with partner agencies, if relevant) for the implementation of each activity and sets deadlines for the implementation (by indicating years

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[11] ACT – Analysis and Consulting Team, Interim Report on the Current State of the Public Administration Reform, 2019, page 107-108. Available at: https://www.undp.org/content/dam/georgia/docs/publications/DG/UNDP_GE_DG_PAR_civil%20service_public%20perceptions_midterm%20study_2019_geo.pdf.

[12] Ibid, page 133.

are quarters). The Action Plan defines the agency responsible for the implementation of each activity (together with the partner agency, if any) and the deadline for the implementation of the activity (indicating the year and quarter). The Action Plan also provides columns for budget (indicates whether administrative costs are used for the activity) and source of funding (indicating whether funding is provided from the state budget, by the donor or there is a deficit) for each activity.

It should be noted that the new Public Administration Reform Action Plan has been significantly improved from a technical point of view compared to the previous one-measurable indicators and sufficiently specific objectives have been added to better assess performance progress. Numbering objectives, activities and indicators makes the document easier for guidance and perception. In addition, the presence of base-line and target indicators allows to measure the outcomes and outputs and simplifies monitoring. The new Public Administration Reform Action Plan contains all elements of the mandatory structure of a similar policy document, except for the goal and impact indicator. Despite the fact that the Policy Planning Handbook, applicable for the period of approving the Action Plan for 2019-2020, [13] did not make it mandatory to define the goal in the Action Plan, it is crucial for the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan to define goals – as the mean of solving problems identified for the sector, as well as Government's long-term vision on desired results.

In the process of developing the Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020, the method of public consultations was applied for the first time and the draft Plan was published on official Government website,[14] for comments and opinions of wider audience. Civil society, including the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), as the member of the Interagency Coordinating Council of the Public Administration Reform was also involved in the process of developing the Plan.

However, despite the positive trends mentioned above, there are several gaps in the Public Administration Reform Action Plan for 2019-2020:

Improperly defined risks - the absence of the need for the creation of new services and inactivity of state agencies are defined as risks, for instance. In the first case, actual data is confused with the risk. More specifically, it is not acceptable to describe the absence of the need/necessity for the creation of new services as a risk, as it actually represents part of situation analysis that defines commitments and had

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[13] Ordinance N629 of the Government of Georgia, dated 20 December 2019, on the Approval of the rule for the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents. Available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/3526319?publication=0.

[14] Declaration on Launching Public Consultations, Official Webpage of the Government of Georgia: http://gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=423&info_id=69990.

to be carried out in the process of the development of the Action Plan. Therefore, the Action Plan shall not include items for which no need of creation exists. Listing the inactivity of state agencies as a risk, implies gaps in the planning process, since in order to meet the criteria of "realistic" and "achievable", each objective and activity of the Action plan shall be planned taking the readiness of the Agency into consideration. Otherwise, the significance of the policy planning process is undermined. The existence of such gaps suggests that neither an in-depth situation analysis nor proper coordination was carried out in the process of developing the Action Plan. Identifying risks in the policy documents is necessary to plan relevant steps for their elimination or reduction. **Therefore, risks in the Action Plan is recommended to come along with the information on measures of their elimination/reduction and this is not the case for the PAR Action Plan.** This leaves an impression that either risks are only formally defined or they are aimed at allowing the agencies to justify their failure to implement the specific objective or activity, in the process of monitoring the Action Plan.

Improperly defined indicators - although indicators have been improved in comparison to the previous Action Plan, there still are some vague ones, incapable of properly measuring outcomes. E.g., the indicator under objective 4.1. is insufficient for measuring the outcome (this objective is formulated more like an activity, which is discussed below). The indicator, in this case, could have been the increased quantity of customers and/or the increased level of customer satisfaction. There is a similar situation with regards to 4.2. and 4.5. outcome indicators. The indicators are insufficient for measuring outcomes. "Increased access to electronic services on My.gov.ge; (the content itself is poorly formulated) cannot fully measure whether access to state and private sector electronic service has been improved. In order to measure this, it is necessary to assess customer satisfaction and/or the daily usage of adapted services on My.gov.ge by the user. Similarly, 4.7. outcome indicator, "an increase in the total weighted score of the assessment of critical infrastructure entities by 20%" cannot actually assess whether the safety of critical infrastructure has been strengthened. For this measurement, the indicator could have been the response rate on gaps identified as a result of assessing critical infrastructure entities.

The policy document may define outputs and output indicators for each activity. Output indicators are used to identify to what extent expected result for the specific activity has been achieved. Quantitative as well as qualitative measurement of output is feasible via the output indicator. The new PAR Action Plan features columns for activities and output indicators, however, instead of output indicators, mentioned columns mainly list outputs (or sub and parallel activities, in some cases), making quantitative

and/or qualitative measurement of the output result difficult when monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan.

Couple of examples from the direction of provision of service of the new PAR Action Plan, where outputs are listed instead of output indicators in the relevant column, are given below.[15] Here are also examples, how the output indicators should have been formulated:

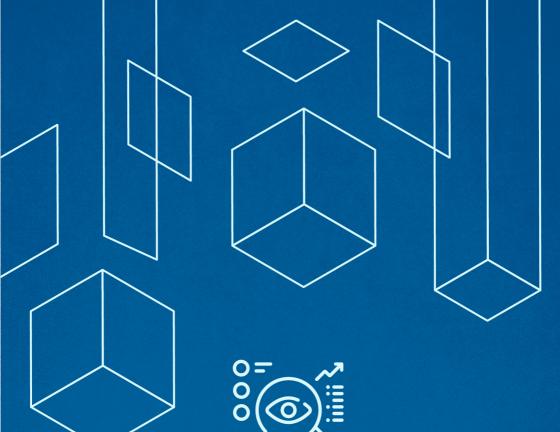| #	ACTIVITY AS PER THE ACTION PLAN	OUTPUT INDICATOR AS PER THE ACTION PLAN	WHAT THE OUTPUT INDICATOR COULD HAVE BEEN
4.2.1.	ELABORATE LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS ON PUBLIC SERVICES	AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW IS SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT	1. QUANTITY OF [INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS/RECOMMENDATIONS] REFLECTED IN THE AMENDMENT PACKAGE 2. DURATION OF PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS
4.2.2.	ELABORATE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES OF SERVICE DELIVERY	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES ARE ELABORATED	SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND PRACTICAL ADVICE ARE OFFERED IN THE SERVICE PROVISION GUIDE

Improperly defined objectives - Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook approved by Government Ordinance[16] according to the existing international standards defines objective as a more specific statement about the improvement of a narrower aspect (related to root cause of a main problem) of a specific area(s) of a sector. The mentioned document defines activity as a sum of one or more measures carried out for the implementation of policy. Contrary to what is defined by government ordinance (it should be noted that the Action Plan was developed before the approval of decree), the Public Administration Reform Action Plan contains objectives that are formulated as specific activities. In case of the objective 4.1. – "[...] devel-

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[15] Same is relevant for the following activities 4.1.1.; 4.1.2.; 4.3.1.; 4.3.3.; 4.3.6.; 4.5.1.; 4.5.2.; 4.5.3.; 4.6.1.; 4.7.1.; 4.7.3.; 4.7.4.

[16] Ordinance N629 of the Government of Georgia, dated 20 December 2019, on the Approval of the rule for the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents. Available at: https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4747283?publication=0.

oping unified standard for the creation of public services, based on the involvement of the user" - "developing a standard" cannot actually be applied as an objective of the Action Plan, since it is too specific and can only be used as an activity or sub-activity. Instead of the mentioned statement, the objective could have been defined as, for instance, "the provision of public services tailored to customer needs". Another example of such objective is "the introduction of compatibility framework" (objective 4.6.) Introducing compatibility framework is more of an activity, while the objective could have been defined as "ensuring the development of e-governance and access to information".

Improperly formulated objectives and non-ambitious activities, not measurable and vague indicators and formally identified risks featured in the direction of Public Service Delivery of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan – all represent significant gaps of the Action Plan.
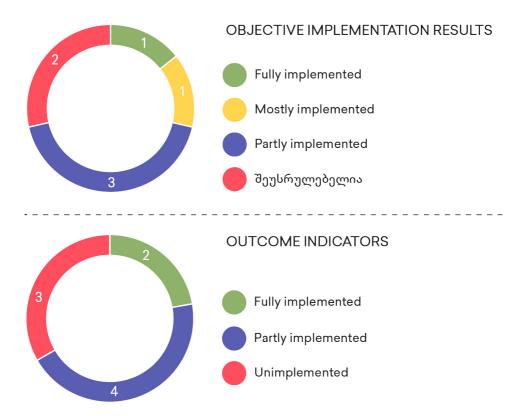
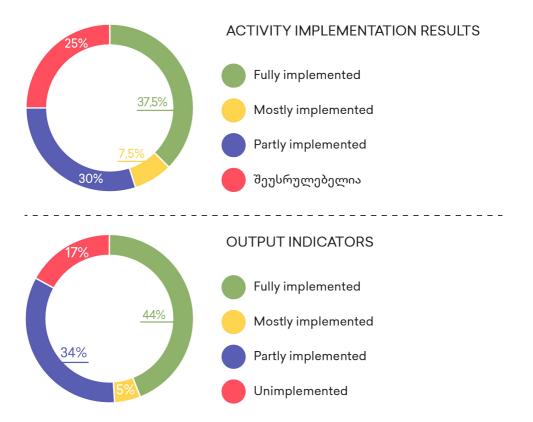# 4. IMPLEMENTATION OF OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Public Service Delivery is the fourth direction of the Public Administration Reform Action Plan and it envisages seven objectives. Implementation of each objective is assessed based on outcome indicators defined for them by the Action Plan. For the cases where the indicator does not comply with the S.M.A.R.T. criteria,[17] making it impossible to assess the implementation of the objective, additional indicators are defined.

Out of seven objectives one is fully implemented, one is mostly implemented, three are partly implemented and two are unimplemented by the end of 2020. Out of nine outcome indicators, two are fully implemented, four are partly implemented and three are unimplemented.

OBJECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

- Fully implemented
- Mostly implemented
- Partly implemented
- შეუსრულებელია

OUTCOME INDICATORS

- Fully implemented
- Partly implemented
- Unimplemented

[17] S.M.A.R.T.: S - specific, significant, stretching; M - measurable, meaningful, motivational; A - agreed upon, attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented; R - realistic, relevant, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented; T - time-based, time-bound, timely, tangible, trackable. Information available at: https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php.

As for the activities, out of 28 activities outlined for 2019-2020 eight are fully implemented, four are mostly implemented, 12 are partly implemented and four are unimplemented. Out of 40 output indicators (including additional indicators) 15 are fully implemented, three are mostly implemented, 12 are partly implemented and 10 are unimplemented.

ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

25%
37,5%
7,5%
30%

- ● Fully implemented
- ● Mostly implemented
- ● Partly implemented
- ● შეუსრულებელია

OUTPUT INDICATORS

17%
44%
34%
5%

- ● Fully implemented
- ● Mostly implemented
- ● Partly implemented
- ● Unimplemented

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.1.

Objective 4.1 of the Action plan implies the development of unified standard for the creation of public services, based on the principle of customer involvement. The outcome indicator for the objective is defined as the number of services created/adapted at the central level, after the approval of the Policy Document on the Creation and Delivery of Public Services (PSDP), which comply with basic requirements of the Standard.

Objective 4.1. Develop a unified standard for Public Service development focusing on citizen engagement in order to ensure citizen-oriented service delivery

Outcome indicator(s): Number of developed/adapted services at central level that are in compliance with PSDP standards

Baseline 2018: 0
Target 2020: 15

Objective implementation status: unimplemented

According to the information provided by the Public Service Development Agency, by the end of 2020, all five methodological guidelines envisaged by the Unified Public Service Strategy had been developed. However, they have not been approved in any legal form and therefore their implementation is not mandatory for the agencies making it impossible to identify the number of services adapted according to the outcome indicator. According to the agency, the pandemic significantly hindered the timely implementation of objectives and activities. In addition, one of the risks in creating a unified design standard for public services initially identified became an issue - in particular, the process of selecting and contracting an appropriate expert has been delayed, as well as the work process itself - expert visits were postponed, it became necessary to adapt to the new format of work, etc.

The information submitted by the agency reveals a number of shortcomings and challenges that characterize the policy-making process in Georgia, including the absence of mechanisms for reduction or elimination of identified risk in the action plan, lack of coordination between agencies, neglecting the importance of the Action Plan and commitments under it, and more. As for the implementation of Objective 4.1, the responsible agency indicates that new standards have been developed but are not bind-

ing and therefore it is impossible to measure the objective implementation according to the outcome indicator. According to the IDFI monitoring team, when measuring the fulfillment of the obligations, the agencies should avoid a superficial approach and use all the means at their disposal to carry out quality monitoring. The non-binding nature of the unified standards should not have been an obstacle to measure the implementation of the Objective 4.1 as the agencies could adapt their services to the mentioned standards. IDFI could not find the document of unified standards on the website of the responsible agency, which, as explained by the responsible agency, has not been published yet and will be made public after its approval. According to the agency, the document is shared with all relevant public institutions.

As for the activities envisaged by the Action Plan to achieve Objective 4.1., three activities were to be implemented during two years for the assessment of which five output indicators were defined. The activities implied submission of the policy document on public services to the Government (2019), development of Service Design guideline and instructions (2019) and development of Service Design training module (I quarter of 2020). The first activity out of the three was considered partly implemented and the two activities – unimplemented in the framework of the alternative monitoring. Later progress was observed on two unimplemented activities. In particular the Service Design documents, working on which was not even launched during the reporting period – 2019, were developed in 2020, however they were not presented to the public as prescribed by the indicator (according to the responsible agency, the reason for this is the situation caused by the pandemic). Thus, the activity was considered partly implemented. After the reporting period, the third activity on training module development and training was partially completed.

As the information provided by the agency regarding the implementation of the objective does not indicate meeting the indicator and at the same time, none of the activities defined for the objective is fully implemented, the **Objective 4.1 should be considered as unimplemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.2.

Objective 4.2 of the Action Plan implies increasing access to public services by implementing the common standards for service delivery addressing the customers' needs. The outcome indicator defined for this objective is the number of central services created/adapted after the approval of PSDP that meet basic requirements of the unified Standard.

Objective 4.2. Improve access to public services through introducing a unified user-oriented standards of service delivery

Outcome indicator(s): Number of developed/adapted services at central level that are in compliance with unified standard requirements after adoption of PSDP

Baseline 2018: 0
Target 2020: 15

Objective implementation status: unimplemented

According to the information provided by the Public Service Development Agency, by the end of 2020, all five methodological guidelines envisaged by the Unified Public Service Strategy had been developed. However, they have not been approved in any legal form and therefore their implementation is not mandatory for the agencies making it impossible to identify the number of services adapted according to the outcome indicator. According to the agency, the pandemic significantly hindered the timely implementation of objectives and activities. In addition, one of the risks in creating a unified design standard for public services initially identified became an issue - in particular, the process of selecting and contracting an appropriate expert has been delayed, as well as the work process itself - expert visits were postponed, it became necessary to adapt to the new format of work, etc.

As mentioned in connection with the previous objective, a number of shortcomings and challenges that characterize the policy-making process in Georgia are observed in the attitude of the agency, including the absence of mechanisms for reduction or elimination of identified risk in the action plan, lack of coordination between agencies, neglecting the importance of the Action Plan and commitments under it. The position of the responsible agency that it is impossible to measure the implementation of the objective according to the indicator as the new standards are not legally approved is

unacceptable. According to IDFI, the agencies should take more responsibility for the fulfillment of their obligations and oversight of their implementation and use all the means at their disposal to carry out quality monitoring. The non-binding nature of the unified standards should not have been an obstacle to measure the implementation of the Objective 4.2 as the agencies could adapt their services to the mentioned standards. IDFI could not find a unified standard document on the website of the responsible agency, which does not appear to be published and it is unknown whether (and in what form) it was shared with all public agencies.

The Action Plan envisaged three activities to achieve Objective 4.2 during two years which were assessed by six output indicators (including additional indicators). The activities implied elaboration of legislative amendments on Public services, elaboration Standard Operating Procedures of Service Delivery and development of a service delivery training module. The first activity was to be implemented in 2019, the other two - in the first half of 2020. The first and second activities in the alternative monitoring framework were considered partly implemented, and the third - unimplemented. Progress was observed in all three activities after the relevant reporting periods. A package of legislative changes was prepared as part of the first activity, however, according to the indicators, it should have been submitted to the government and stakeholders should have been involved in the process. The first of these two indicators is not implemented, as for the second, according to the information provided, only state agencies participated in the working group, which does not ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, therefore, despite some progress, the activity is still partly implemented. The second activity implied the development of service delivery SOPs, which were implemented after the reporting period based on best practices, therefore it was considered fully implemented. As for the third activity, which was considered unfulfilled, after the end of the reporting period, it was fully implemented - the training module and training materials were prepared. 37 employees of 12 state service providers attended training of trainers, which meets the activity output indicator.

Overall, since the information submitted regarding the outcome indicators do not prove its implementation, **the Objective 4.2 should be considered unimplemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.3.

Objective 4.3 of the Action Plan implies the quality assurance of public services by implementing the unified standard for the assessment and improvement of quality. The outcome indicators defined for this objective is the number of public services, quality of which is assessed according to the Service Index Methodology and customer satisfaction results provided by three service provider agencies.

Objective 4.3. Ensure quality assurance of public services through the implementation of the Unified Standard for Quality Examination and Improvement

Outcome indicator(s):

Number of public services' quality of which is evaluated according to the Service Index Methodology

Baseline 2018: 0

Target 2020: 5

Customer satisfaction level of 3 public service provider agencies

Baseline 2018: 0

Target2020: 70%

Objective implementation status: partly implemented

According to the information provided by the Public Service Development Agency regarding the first outcome indicator, a public service index methodology has been developed for the reporting period. However, no electronic service index platform has been developed to identify the number of public services that have been assessed using the index methodology. The agency indicates that work on the issue was temporarily suspended due to an alleged change of the agency responsible for its implementation. It should be noted that according to the information provided by the Agency in 2019, the concept of the Public Services Index with a specific plan was developed to implement the objective and work was underway to create a state portal of the index. According to the plan, the evaluation process was to begin in September 2020.

With respect to the second indicator, the agency indicates that for the reporting period, no customer satisfaction survey was conducted based on the new standard and the agency's customer satisfaction level was not assessed, the reason for which is the general delays caused by the pandemic.

As for the activities defined for the Objective 4.3 the Action Plan outlines eight activities with 16 output indicators (including additional indicators). Three of these ac-

tivities were to be carried out in 2019, two in the first half of 2020, and three in the second half of 2020. Activities implied Development of the concept and methodology of Service Index and agreement with stakeholders, development of Service Index Portal, elaboration of customer satisfaction survey standard, introduction of respective training module, conduct of customer satisfaction survey, elaboration of methodological guideline and handbook on the Common Assessment Framework, development of CAF training module and respective materials, introduction of CAF methodology. In the framework of the alternative monitoring, one activity was considered fully implemented, two activities were considered mostly implemented, two activities were considered partly implemented, and three were considered unimplemented. After the relevant reporting periods, progress was observed on three activities: The third activity on developing a Service Index concept and methodology that was unimplemented was later partly completed. In particular, the document envisaged by the activity was prepared, however, it will be published after approval, so the document could not be evaluated, therefore the activity was considered only partly implemented. The fourth activity, which was partially completed, was considered fully implemented due to the progress made later, as a Customer Satisfaction Survey training module was developed and 45 staff members from 14 public service providers were trained which meets the indicator. The seventh mostly implemented activity was also considered fully implemented, as the training module was introduced according to the indicators and 63 employees of 12 service providers were trained.

According to the information provided, despite the efforts made, almost nothing has been done to achieve the outcome indicators by 2020 and, consequently, no progress has been made in the performance of any of the indicators**.** By the end of 2019, the agency responsible for the implementation of the objective had taken certain measures, based on which the objective was considered partly implemented, thus **the Objective 4.3 should still be considered partly implemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.4.

Objective 4.4 of the Action Plan implies the establishment of fair and effective pricing approach for public services by creating unified methodology for service pricing. The outcome indicator for this objective is defined as the number of newly developed/adapted public services that are priced in compliance with a new methodology of pricing.

Objective 4.4. Establish a fair and effective approach to the pricing of public services through the elaboration of unified methodology of service pricing

Outcome indicator(s): Number of newly developed/adapted public services that are priced in compliance with a new methodology of pricing.

Baseline 2018: 0
Target 2020: 15

Objective implementation status: partly implemented

According to the information provided by the Public Service Development Agency, a standard for public service pricing has been developed as a guideline for the reporting period, however the guideline is not approved which is why the pricing of services based on the new standard is not mandatory for agencies. Accordingly, the responsible authority considers that it is impossible to identify the number of services adapted to this standard according to the outcome indicator. At the same time, the Agency notes that the spread of the virus and the creation of a pandemic situation have significantly hampered the timely completion of objectives and activities.

As underlined with regards to the Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 a number of shortcomings and challenges that characterize the policy-making process in Georgia are observed in the attitude of the Agency, including lack of coordination between agencies, superficial approach to meeting the commitments set out in the Action Plan. The position of the responsible agency that it is impossible to measure the implementation of the objective according to the indicator as the new standards are not legally approved is unacceptable. IDFI monitoring team believes that the agencies should be more responsible in performing the objectives and measuring their results, and should do their best to achieve the set objectives and carry out quality monitoring. As in the case of the objectives above, the non-binding nature of the unified standards should

not have been an obstacle to measure the implementation of the Objective 4.4 as in case of respective coordination and cooperation the agencies could adapt their services to the mentioned standards. The unified standard is not published yet (it will be published upon its approval), according to the information submitted, it is shared with respective public agencies.

As for information on activities, the Action Plan provided for a total of two activities for the objective with three output indicators. One of the activities was to be completed in 2019 and the other in 2020. The activities implied elaboration of a handbook on new pricing methodology and a training module. Within the framework of alternative monitoring, the first of them was considered partly implemented and its status remains unchanged. As for the second activity, which was unimplemented, it was considered fully implemented, as a training module was developed and the thematic staff representing the public service providers were trained according to the indicator.

Progress in performing the activity is welcome, but not enough to influence objective implementation. Since no tangible progress was observed during the recent monitoring regarding the implementation of the indicators, **the Objective 4.4 should still be considered partly implemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.5.

Objective 4.5 of the Action Plan implies improving the access to public and private sectors' e-services by enhancing My.gov.ge. The indicator for the objective is defined as the increased number of electronic services available at My.gov.ge.

Objective 4.5. Improve access to public and private sectors' e-services by enhancing My.gov.ge

Outcome indicator(s): Number of electronic services available at My.gov.ge

Baseline 2018: 427
Target 2020: 470

Additional outcome indicator: Increased number of private sector electronic services available at My.gov.ge

Baseline 2018: 0
Target 2020: 10

Objective implementation status: mostly implemented

According to the information provided by LEPL Digital Governance Agency, up to 700 state electronic services were available by the end of 2020. The agency notes that the placement of services on My.gov.ge does not derive from the legal obligation, which makes it difficult to cooperate with agencies on the integration of their services. Part of the agencies are creating alternative channels to provide services within their area of authority.

The target outcome indicator for 2020 is 470 state electronic services. By the end of 2020 the number of services significantly exceeded the target indicator which should be assessed positively and the objective 4.5 can be considered fully implemented according to this indicator. At the same time, it should be noted that it is desirable to define more ambitious target indicators for the next Action Plan in order to achieve the real progress. It is also noteworthy that weak coordination and the lack of cooperation between agencies is indicated by the fact that without a legal obligation they find it difficult to agree on a unified approach to achieve the set objective and it is necessary to take measures in this regard.

The indicator defined by the Action Plan is not sufficient to measure the implementation of the Objective 4.5 since the objective indicates to an increase in access to public and private services while the indicator by which the objective is evaluated measures the increase in public services only. Accordingly, an increase in private e-services was identified as an additional indicator for monitoring purposes. By 2019 several private e-services were available at the unified e-services portal, but the agency did not provide information regarding increase of private sector services on the portal during 2020. Therefore, the second indicator remains partly implemented.

The Action Plan identified five activities to be implemented for the objective (with five output indicators), all of which were to be completed in 2019. In the framework of the alternative monitoring, two activities were considered partly implemented and three were mostly implemented, and as no progress was made on any of them later, their statuses remained unchanged.

Since one outcome indicator is fully implemented and the other indicator is partly implemented, **the Objective 4.5 should be considered mostly implemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.6.

Objective 4.6 of the Action Plan implies the introduction of the interoperability framework to develop e-governance and ensuring the access to information. The outcome indicator for the objective has been defined as number of public services integrated into the Data Exchange Infrastructure.

> **Objective 4.6.** Introduce the interoperability framework to develop e-governance and ensure the access to information
>
> **Outcome indicator(s):** Number of public services integrated into the Data Exchange Infrastructure
>
> Baseline 2018: 140
> Target 2020: 196
>
> **Objective implementation status: fully implemented**

According to the information provided by the LEPL Digital Governance Agency 192 services were integrated into the Data Exchange Infrastructure by the end of 2020 which in fact meets the target indicator. Of course, it is desirable for the two-year action plan to have more ambitious targets for the objectives, however the Objective 4.6 can be considered implemented with given information.

Three activities were to be implemented according to the Action Plan for this objective (with three output indicators) - all three by the end of 2020. According to the output indicators given for the activities, one activity was partly implemented and two were considered unimplemented. These activities implied update a portal of the Registry of Registries and elaboration of mechanisms for enforcing submission of information, integration of additional services into the data exchange infrastructure. The fact that none of the three activities defined for the objective is fully completed, however, the objective itself is implemented according to its indicator, should be considered a serious shortcoming in the development of the policy document, as it seems that the activities set to achieve the objective do not actually affect the implementation of the objective. As for the objective itself, according to the outcome indicator, **the Objective 4.6 is fully implemented.**

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 4.7.

Objective 4.7 of the Action Plan implies enhancing critical infrastructure security through raising awareness and developing the teaching methodologies. The outcome indicator for this objective has been defined as an increased weighted score of assessing the critical infrastructure assets by 20%.

Objective 4.7. Enhance critical infrastructure security through raising awareness and developing the teaching methodologies

Outcome indicator(s): Weighted score of assessing the critical infrastructure assets is increased by 20%
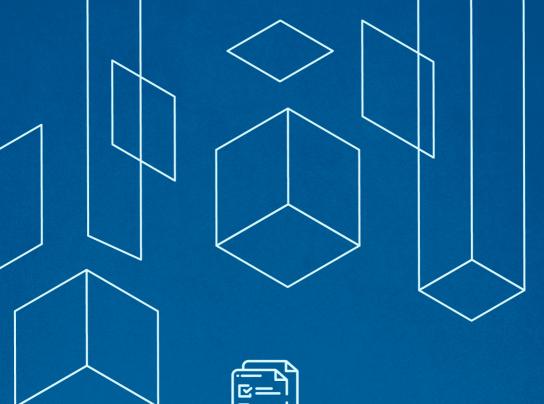
Baseline 2018: 24
Target 2020: 29

Objective implementation status: partly implemented

According to the information provided by the LEPL Digital Governance Agency, the outcome indicator could not be measured (the increase of the total weighted score) as during 2019 work on developing a third cybersecurity strategy was underway, however, a draft law was in the Parliament of Georgia, which envisages amendments to the Law on Information Security. As the bill passed the third hearing, there was an expectation that it would become law and the agency's mandate would be delegated to another authority in this area. Consequently, the passivity of agencies in terms of reporting has increased. As the weighted score calculation depends entirely on the evaluation of the information provided, the weighted score could not be estimated.

It should be noted that in the information provided at the end of the first half of 2020, the agency did not speak about the delay of the process and indicated that it would measure the indicator at the end of the year. In any case, the implementation of such a significant change during the implementation of the two-year action plan, which hinders the achievement of the objective, still indicates the shortcomings of the policy-making and implementation process, as well as the fact that the responsible agency has not properly analyzed the passivity of the agencies as a risk nor has it developed effective mechanisms to reduce it. Overall, the lack of cooperation and coordination between government agencies, the lack of a common approach, the lack of oversight, the formalistic nature of policy-making, and the superficial attitude towards the issue seem to pose serious challenges and hinder the performance of the set objectives.

The Action Plan envisaged four activities for the implementation of the objective with seven output activities. All activities were to be completed in 2019. Activities implied development of methodology for defining critical information system assets, introduction of sensor network monitoring system in public agencies, update of the basic training materials on cyber security at e-training platform and development of Cyber Hygiene training discipline for schools. Within the framework of the alternative monitoring, one activity was considered fully implemented, two activities were considered partly implemented, and one was considered unimplemented. Progress was later made on the fourth activity, which was considered unimplemented. In particular, the agency developed an appropriate learning material for schools and translated it into Georgian, based on which the activity was considered fully implemented.

Overall, the result of the previous monitoring remains unchanged and **the Objective 4.7 should still be considered partly implemented**

5.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of the Public Service Delivery direction of the PAR Action Plan for 2019 – 2020 reveals that outcome and target indicators defined for the confirmation of the implementation of the objectives under Action Plan undermine the significance of objectives and/or make it impossible to measure their implementation in most of the cases and activities outlined for the objectives are not sufficient to achieve the results.

The challenges revealed through monitoring of the Public Service Delivery direction show that current objectives and indicators still require refinement according the S.M.A.R.T. criteria. In addition, defining more activities and setting realistic deadlines for their implementation, identification of risks and available resources when elaborating an action plan is necessary in order to achieve the objectives.

The PAR Action Plan does not define sufficient activities for the municipalities and the representatives of self-governing bodies do not have information about the strategic documents of PAR. In addition, the Action Plan does not envisage involvement of the local non-governmental sector, which is crucial for progress.

Overall, the lack of cooperation and coordination between government agencies, the lack of a common approach, the lack of oversight, the formalistic nature of policy-making, and the superficial attitude towards the issue seem to pose serious challenges and hinder the performance of the set objectives.

In order to eliminate the afore-mentioned gaps and challenges, the following recommendations need to be considered:

- Eliminate the formalistic and superficial approach in the process of developing policy documents in the direction of the Public Service Delivery and increase their importance for agencies;
- Improve cooperation and coordination between government agencies in the process of policy development, monitoring and implementation of the Public Service Delivery direction; make effective use of government oversight role;
- Facilitate the involvement of the public, including local civil society organizations, in the direction of public service policy;
- Promote the involvement of municipalities in the Public Service Delivery direction and outline relevant objectives and activities for them;
- Include S.M.A.R.T. objectives and indicators in the Public Service Delivery direction of the Action Plan;
- Define targets and indicators necessary for the actual implementation of objectives under the Public Service Delivery direction;
- Consider the activities necessary to achieve the given objectives of the Public Service Delivery direction and determine the deadlines for their implementation respectively.