

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REPORTING ON REFORM AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

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INTRODUCTION

The knowledge product “Tips and Tricks for Reporting on Reform Agenda Implementation” provides practical, experience-based guidance for more efficient and effective reporting. While it details the obligations arising from the Reform and Growth Facility (RGF) Regulation for beneficiaries, it is important to note that this document is not official guidance from the European Commission (EC). Although the tips and tricks outlined here represent widely accepted good reporting practices, they are not mandatory. The template provided by the EC will be standardized and obligatory for all beneficiaries.

This knowledge product is divided into three main sections. The first section outlines the reporting requirements according to the EC Regulation for the implementation and achievement of the RGF’s objectives. The second section offers practical tips and tricks for reporting on the implementation process, followed by useful examples. The third section explains performance indicators and shares best practices for reporting on the achievement of the reform objectives.

1

UNDERSTANDING THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR REFORM AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

Reporting on the implementation of the Reform Agenda (RA) is mandated by the [Regulation for the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans](#).

The draft Facility Agreement (FA)¹, which stems from the RGF Regulation, outlines reporting as one of its specific arrangements (Art. 2, FA draft). In this context, reporting serves as a product of interconnected processes – management, control, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation – and forms the basis for audits. Periodic reports on RA implementation allow the EC to assess whether the beneficiary has met the payment conditions outlined in the RA. Therefore, effective and coordinated reporting is crucial for the successful implementation of the RGF.

The RA must include provisions for monitoring, reporting, and evaluating the achievement of measurable qualitative and quantitative steps, as well as the achievement of general and specific objectives through key performance indicators (KPIs) (Art. 13, RGF Regulation). The national coordinator of the RA implementation coordinates reporting and ensures the submission of reports to the EC (Art. 5, FA draft).

¹ The Facility Agreement is currently available only in draft form, with individual final versions to be negotiated, signed, and adopted by the beneficiaries and the EC.

EACH BENEFICIARY IS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT TWO TYPES OF REPORTS PER YEAR, WRITTEN IN ENGLISH, DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RGF:



1. SEMI-ANNUAL REPORTS ON THE FULFILLMENT OF THE REFORM AGENDA'S PAYMENT CONDITIONS

These reports must clearly show the satisfactory completion of both qualitative and quantitative steps outlined in the RA, including all necessary evidence. These reports accompany the semi-annual requests for the release of funds and must be submitted twice a year (Art.16, FA draft).

To request the release of funds, the beneficiary must provide specific documentation proving that each required qualitative and quantitative step has been completed (Art. 16, FA draft):

- A summary explaining how the quantitative or qualitative steps (including all constitutive elements) were satisfactorily fulfilled.
- A copy of any new law published in the Official Journal.
- Copies of adopted strategies or plans, with links to their websites.
- Copies of unpublished reports.
- Certificates signed by the contractor and the competent authority, proving that a system (e.g., an IT system necessary for the fulfillment of a step) is legally established and operational.

The EC may require additional documents, request more evidence, or involve external experts to verify the information.

To ensure effective coordination during RA implementation, representatives from the EC, the coordinator's office, and other beneficiary institutions will address specific implementation challenges and any significant risks to the timeline for the completion of any step at regular technical meetings (Art. 24 of the FA draft).

In accordance with semi-annual reporting requirements, the Scoreboard, which will be operational by January 1, 2025, will provide timely and accurate updates on the progress of the beneficiaries' RA implementation and will be published online twice a year by the EC (Art. 26, RGF Regulation). EC will define the detailed elements of the Scoreboard with a view to displaying the progress of the implementation of the RGF.



2. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM AGENDA

This report should detail how well the RA has been implemented in relation to the progress made towards achieving the RGF's general and specific objectives, as outlined by the KPIs in the RA. It covers the previous 12 months and is based on the semi-annual reports on implementation of RA, except for the final annual report, which covers the entire RA implementation period (Art. 23, FA). The annual report must be submitted using the template provided by the EC, along with the beneficiary's Economic Reform Programme (ERP), ideally by January 15, but no later than March 1 each year. The purpose of the report is to facilitate the Economic and Financial Dialogue on the progress made in implementing the reform-related aspects of the RA (Art. 25 and 28, RGF Regulation, and Art. 24, FA draft).

To support RA implementation and achieve the RGF's objectives, the EC and the beneficiary will establish an RGF Monitoring Committee, consisting of representatives from the EC, the coordinator, and relevant stakeholders, six months after the FA comes into effect (Art. 24, FA).

Based on the beneficiary's annual report, complemented by biannual presentations on the state of the RGF implementation, the **EC will provide an annual report to the European Parliament and the Council** on progress towards the achievement of the RGF's objectives (Art. 25 and 29, RGF Regulation). The report on RA implementation will also inform ministerial-level discussions between the EU and the enlargement countries during the Economic and Financial Dialogue, held annually in late spring.

2 TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REPORTING ON REFORM AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

The main purpose of reporting is to collect data that helps evaluate, assess, and analyze performance based on the obtained facts and latest figures.

A data report presents gathered and merged information from multiple sources. It serves as an organized and timely record showing the current state or dynamics of selected criteria over a period of time. Traditionally, such data were handled manually with numerous amendments and calculations done by hand. Obviously, this time-consuming process required many resources and often lacked the freshest updates. Modern reporting tools, however, help automate and upscale reporting, making the data easier to comprehend and process. By using well-formatted information that is updated in real-time, decision-makers can draw conclusions and take action faster.

The formats for semi-annual (process-based) and annual (KPI-based) reports will be standardized and determined by the EC to enable monitoring the consistency of implementation. However, standardized and externally imposed reporting may not capture all the data needed by policy- and decision-takers, and monitoring bodies. Therefore, it is highly recommended that national RGF Coordinators set up reporting that not only satisfies the EC requirement but also meets these additional needs. Here are some practical tips and tricks to help in this regard.

2.1 GENERAL TIPS AND TRICKS



1 UNDERSTAND THE REFORM FRAMEWORK AND INDICATORS (QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STEPS)

Ensure all team members of the working group for reporting understand the entire RGF framework, including its requirements, objectives, principles, and the indicators targeted for specific reforms.

5 INTRODUCE THE SYSTEM OF MONITORING AND REPORTING TO THE EC AND REGULARLY INFORM THE GOVERNMENT

on the achievement of qualitative and quantitative steps through the defined indicators.

2 USE EC TERMINOLOGY FOR REPORTING ON ACHIEVEMENT OF STEPS AND RELATED INDICATORS

Ensure that the terminology in the reports is consistent with the language and terms used in the RGF regulations and other EC documents. Consistently using the same terminology and structure ensures clarity and consistency.

6 SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH REPORTING

Use reporting to identify reasons for delays in completing the steps, and suggest corrective actions that should be taken by decision-makers to ensure better implementation in future.

3 PROVIDE CLEAR AND FOCUSED NARRATIVES

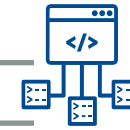
Alongside data, include narratives that explain the context, challenges, and successes in reform implementation. Focus on the progress of reform steps, not on explaining the scope of work of public servants or line ministry departments.

7 ADOPT A FORWARD-LOOKING APPROACH

Ensure reports not only cover past achievements but also monitor progress towards upcoming steps to be completed in the next or the next two periods. This enables timely identification of implementation risks and taking corrective actions.

4 BE TRANSPARENT AND HONEST

Be open about any difficulties or delays in implementation. Our experience shows that the EC values transparency and is more likely to offer support if challenges are clearly communicated.



2.2 SET UP THE REPORTING FRAMEWORK

8 CREATE YOUR OWN REPORTING TIMELINE

Align it with the timeline regulated in the RGF, but it can be broken down into daily, weekly, monthly, or any other additional periods of evaluations and reports. For example:

- Weekly implementation report for the RGF Coordinator, covering main figures, such as available and used funds, overdue milestones, and practical implementation bottlenecks
- Weekly or monthly report for the minister in charge
- Monthly or quarterly report for the Government
- Quarterly or semi-annual report for the Parliament
- Reports and communication for the general public and media should be transparent, clear, and simple (“less is more”)

9 PREPARE “INDICATOR PASSPORT”

Create a list or table that includes information, such as type of indicator (output or outcome), method of calculation, periodicity of indicator’s availability, source of data, institution responsible for supplying indicator values for the reporting, and for indicators not provided by official national or international statistical sources, the method of data collection and the source of verification. Wherever possible, use the information on indicators already provided in the RA’s table of reform steps.

10 INVOLVE HIGH OFFICIALS

Formally inform the Government about the process and timeline of RA implementation reporting. Ensure that the reporting framework is clear to both high officials and implementers. Regular explanatory and fact/truth-finding meetings should be set up at the level of state secretaries as part of the reporting framework to address issues before report submission.

11 USE THE RGF MONITORING COMMITTEE FOR REGULAR CLARIFICATIONS WITH THE EC

Use the committee to address both high-level and technical issues. Keep the EC member of the Committee informed and ask for their input on any dilemmas during the monitoring and reporting process (informal communication, early exchanges of documents, occasional high-level contact).

2.3 CONTENT OF THE REPORTS



12 ADHERE TO THE EC RULES FOR REPORTING ON RA IMPLEMENTATION (RGF REGULATION AND FA) AND USE THE REPORTING TEMPLATE.

Whether you use the standardized template provided by the EC or create your own with more reporting elements for internal use, make sure that it meets all EC requirements.

13 BE AWARE OF USUAL REPORTING ELEMENTS, BEFORE GETTING THE OBLIGATORY ONES. HERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS THAT CAN TRIGGER THINKING ABOUT WHAT USUALLY NEEDS TO BE REPORTED:

- **Reform area** – the title of the reform area from the RA being addressed.
- **Sector** – the title of the reform sector from the RA being addressed.
- **Quantitative/qualitative step** – a unique identifier for each implementation indicator associated with the reform.
- **Step description** – a brief description of the specific step and KPI.
- **Responsible unit/department** – the unit, team, or department responsible for executing the step.
- **Baseline** – the starting point (metric or status) before the step began.
- **Target** – the goal or target to be achieved by the end of the reporting period.
- **Actual** – the actual metric or status achieved during the reporting period.
- **Gap** – the difference between the target and the actual results, calculated automatically.
- **Progress percentage** – the percentage of completion of the step, calculated as $(\text{Actual}-\text{Baseline} / \text{Target}-\text{Baseline}) \times 100$.
- **Start date** – the date when the step was initiated.
- **End date** – the expected or actual completion date of the step.
- **Status** – current status of the step (e.g., not started, in progress, completed, delayed).
- **Risks** – description of any obstacles or risks that have materialized during implementation.
- **Mitigation actions** – actions taken or planned to address challenges or risks.
- **Budget allocated** – the budget allocated for the step's implementation.
- **Budget spent** – the actual amount of budget spent on the step's implementation.
- **Financial gap** – the difference between the allocated budget and the spent budget.
- **Data verification source** – confirmation that the data have been reviewed and validated.
- **Source of data** – reference to the sources of data that prove achievement of the indicator, such as reports, databases, or documents.
- **Stakeholder involvement** – stakeholders involved or consulted in the step's implementation.
- **Notes/comments** – additional remarks, observations, or context.
- **Next steps** – planned actions or adjustments to continue progress on the step in the next period.

You will not just track individual steps and indicators but also understand how they collectively contribute to the overall reform goals. Each element, from baseline metrics to budget gaps, should be viewed in the context of its impact on broader reform objectives, ensuring that the progress made aligns with the strategic vision.

14 UPDATE REPORTING PRACTICES.

Regularly update the reporting process based on lessons learned and EC's recommendations during informal communications and RGF Monitoring Committee meetings.



2.4 SET UP DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL / IT SYSTEM

15 CREATE A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR MONITORING AND REPORTING

This will ensure that no steps are left open to interpretation, and that all members of the reporting team clearly understand their tasks and deadlines.

19 LEVERAGE DIGITAL TOOLS

Use data visualization tools to present complex data in an accessible way, such as charts, graphs, and dashboards, which can be used in preparing reports/documents for the wider audience as part of your communication and visibility plan. Link different data channels, enable comparisons, and facilitate understanding of information.

16 CLARIFY THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BEFORE SETTING UP A REPORT

1. What is the **main source of your data**?
2. Is there a **special IT system needed for data collection and reporting**?
3. Have you **nominated and connected with contact report coordinators and “data persons”** at line ministries and other relevant institutions for the reporting working group?

20 ENSURE ALL INFORMATION IS CREDIBLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE

Back each statement with relevant data or documentation, with a focus on including quantifiable metrics that clearly demonstrate progress towards reform objectives.

17 CREATE A DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR REPORTING

Consider using a secure online platform for submitting reports, allowing for easy updates, tracking, and feedback.

21 DOCUMENT CONSULTATIONS

If necessary, provide evidence of stakeholder consultations, such as meeting minutes, feedback summaries, and details on how their input has influenced the reforms.

18 SIMPLIFY/AUTOMATE YOUR REPORTING

Once the basic structure is in place, not much time should be spent on daily, weekly, or monthly reporting.

22 HOLD FACE-TO-FACE PERIODICAL MEETINGS

Regular in-person meetings with the coordination team are a good way to identify implementation obstacles, discuss their reduction or elimination, and find solutions.

2.5 EXAMPLES OF GOOD REPORTING PRACTICES AND TIPS



AT-RISK REPORT

With adequate time into the implementation, the feasibility of some of the agreed-upon milestones / targets / investment deadlines will be challenged. Keep track of these as an addendum to regular reporting, discuss them internally within the line ministry and with the Government and the EC to find solutions (plans B).

23 REPORT ON DELAYS AND EXPLAIN DEVIATIONS

Be transparent about any delays or setbacks, providing reasons and outlining corrective measures. If there are deviations from the planned reforms or timeline, provide clear explanations and the steps being taken to address them.



EXAMPLES:

- Act on Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) (due Q4/2024) – due to heated debates between relevant expert stakeholders, the deadline is no longer feasible as the draft act has not entered the parliamentary procedure yet.
- Number of young unemployed with subsidized employment for indefinite period (due 02/2026) – the pool of the unemployed in this age group is not big enough to be able to meet the target.
- Number of firms with obtained certificates of energy efficiency – not enough interest from the target group of firms to meet the deadline.
- Awarded public tender for construction of a hospital – due to numerous complaints filed by unsuccessful bidders, the deadline is not feasible.

BIG PICTURE REPORT

24 SHOW THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR RGF

(financing, milestones, deadlines, line ministries in charge).



EXAMPLE:

Payment request No.	Planned amount (m EUR)	No. of milestones/targets in payment request	No. of milestones/targets in payment request fulfilled	Official deadline for payment request	Revised deadline (estimated by Line Ministry (LM))	LMs in charge of delays
1	10	23	15	Q4/2024	Q4/2024	LM1 (M 2.5), LM2 (M 3.1)
2	20	12	3	Q2/2025	Q2/2025	...
3	25	15	3	Q4/2025	Q2/2026	...
4	20	23	1	Q2/2026	Q3/2026	...
5	10	17	1	Q4/2026	Q4/2026	...
6	20	27	0	Q2/2027	Q3/2027	...
7	25	22	0	Q4/2027	Q4/2027	...

TRAFFIC LIGHT REPORT BY PAYMENT REQUEST

25 USE A TRAFFIC LIGHT REPORT

This is a visual management tool that uses the colors red (significant problems that require immediate attention), yellow (potential issues or delays), and green (everything is on track) to indicate the status or progress of different tasks, projects, or initiatives. This is relevant for government sessions and it is a very powerful tool, as no minister wants to be “red” (delayed in any way).



EXAMPLE:

Payment request No. 1, due Q4/2024					
Milestone code	Target/milestone, short description	LM in charge	Planned deadline	Risks involved	
1.	M8	Energy efficiency management action plan in the economy	LM1	6/2025	Analysis for the preparation of the basis for the action plan was ordered. Adoption planned at government level in June 2025.
2.	M29	Entry into force of the Resolution on the National Program for Protection against Natural and Other Disasters	LM2	3/2025	Due to the floods, it was necessary to amend the resolution. Preparation of the resolution is ongoing, but due to coordination procedures with relevant stakeholders, the resolution will be adopted with a delay.
3.	M55	Operating company for the management of public passenger traffic	LM3	✓	
4.	M70	Development and application of green budget methodology	LM4	✓	
5.	T107	Additional 100 Gb/s backbone fiber connections	LM5	✓	
6.	M138	Submission of a legislative proposal for amendments to the Pension Insurance Act to the National Assembly	LM6	6/2025	Due to the delay of M137, there is a high risk of delay in M138 milestone.
7.	M182	Establishment of an independent body for quality monitoring and control in the healthcare system	LM7	✓	
8.	M190	Awarding the contract for the construction of the Infection Clinic	LM7	✓	The public tender may be challenged by unsuccessful bidders.
9.	M197	Entry into force of the Long-Term Care Act	LM8	✓	
10.	M198	Entry into force of by-laws of the Long-Term Care Act	LM8	2/2025	Out of 15 by-laws, 8 have been adopted and 7 are in the coordination process.
11.	M210	Entry into force of the Act on the introduction of devices for the production of electricity from RES	LM3	✓	

3 TRICKS AND TIPS FOR REPORTING ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE REFORM AND GROWTH FACILITY

RAs should be results-based and include both qualitative and quantitative steps in semi-annual reports for the envisaged implementation of the reforms, as well as KPIs for assessing progress towards the achievement of the general and specific objectives in annual reports (Art. 3, RGF Regulation).

Progress reports should not only monitor the implementation of the RA in terms of qualitative and quantitative steps proposed for payment and associated indicators but also include KPI values that reflect progress towards achieving the general and specific objectives of the RGF. There are:

- **Four general objectives:** Support of the enlargement process through the adoption of reforms, acceleration of regional economic integration and progressive integration into the EU single market, acceleration of socio-economic convergence of the Western Balkan (WB) economies with the EU, promoting cooperation and good relations in the WBs, encouraging reconciliation and conflict resolution, and fostering connections between people across the region, and
- **Thirteen specific objectives** related to the fundamentals, public financial management (PFM), (regional) economic integration, environmental protection, digitalization, innovations and research, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, increasing the quality of education, improvements in skills, employment of targeted population groups, social protection and rights, and decreasing poverty.

Achievement of the RGF's objectives by implementing the RAs should be monitored and presented in annual reports using the KPIs defined and developed by the beneficiary. These indicators should, where appropriate and relevant, be based on internationally agreed indicators and existing indicators related to the beneficiaries' policies. Additionally, indicators should be coherent, to the extent possible, with key corporate indicators included in the [IPA III Results Framework](#), in the [European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus \(EFSD+\) Results Measurement Framework](#), and in the [WBIF](#).

In addition, the RGF Regulation stipulates that RAs must be consistent with the latest macroeconomic and fiscal policy framework submitted to the EC in the context of the Economic and Financial Dialogue with the EU. In this regard, the annual report on the overall implementation of the RA, including both indicators related to the quantitative and qualitative steps, as well as the RGF's objectives, should be submitted together with the beneficiary's ERP, ideally by January 15, but no later than March 1 each year. Both the RGF Regulation and the Guidance Note for the preparation of the ERP 2025–2027 emphasize that there should be consistency between the macro-fiscal framework presented in the ERP and the macro-fiscal impact of the reforms presented in the RAs.

BESIDES GENERAL REPORTING PRACTICES, BEAR IN MIND THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC TIPS AND TRICKS FOR REPORTING ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GENERAL AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE RGF REGULATION:

26 INTRODUCE/DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF MONITORING AND REPORTING TO THE EC AS WELL AS TO THE GOVERNMENT

on the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the RGF through defined KPIs. Develop and regularly update the database with the list of all relevant KPIs.

29 USE RESULTS-ORIENTED (OUTCOME AND IMPACT) INDICATORS,

i.e., KPIs for assessing the impact of reforms on a targeted or wider groups of businesses and/or citizens. Focus on the KPIs that can be (directly) influenced by the implementation of the reforms in the RA. Take into account the timely availability of the (national or international) indicator values.²

27 ALIGN KPIS WITH OBJECTIVES

Use the general and specific objectives as the starting point for defining/developing KPIs (i.e., where we are now and where we want to be after the implementation of the reforms presented in the RA).

30 SET REALISTIC TARGETS FOR KPIS THAT ARE ACHIEVABLE WITHIN THE TIMEFRAME

Define the limit values for tolerance and limit values for better understanding progress (fully achieved, partially achieved, or no progress).

28 CHOOSE APPROPRIATE KPIS FOR MONITORING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE RGF'S OBJECTIVES

KPIs should be defined at the level of the RA, not for individual reforms. However, some of the KPIs could be defined for reforms in the same policy area, if their values indicate progress made with regard to the general and specific objectives. In addition to the KPIs already introduced in the RA, you may use additional KPIs in the annual reports, if necessary.

31 ENSURE GOOD ARGUMENTS FOR THE CHOICE OF KPIS AND THEIR TARGETS

– for the EC as well as for the Government.

These recommendations are of major importance, as the RGF Regulation and the Guidance Note for the preparation of the ERP 2025–2027 envisage the consistency, links, and assessed impact of the implementation of the reforms presented in the RAs with the macro-fiscal frameworks from the ERPs. Well-designed KPIs, particularly impact indicators, and their further utilization for monitoring the achievement of the general and specific objectives of the RGF should largely enhance the preparation of progress reports. In addition, they emphasize the importance of the reforms chosen to be part of Ras, and provide further justification for how reforms contribute to the achievement of the RGF's objectives.

² Further guidance on choosing results-based indicators for reforms can be found in the CEF's Manual for Selecting KPIs for Monitoring the Results of Structural Reform Measures in ERPs, available at: https://www.cef-see.org/assets/files/FISR2_ERP%20Manual%20for%20selecting%20key_web_spread.pdf.



EXAMPLE:

Sector	Indicative reforms	Contribution of reforms in achieving the RGF's objectives	Proposals of KPIs
Employability, activation support, social services	Addressing labor market mismatches through lifelong learning and increasing the employability of graduates through practical work, including jobs in the green and digital economy	Boosting quality education, training, reskilling, and upskilling at all levels, with a particular focus on youth, including tackling youth unemployment, preventing brain drain, and supporting vulnerable communities and support employment policies, including labor rights, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, and fighting poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth employment rate • Poverty risk rate • Employment rate of women • Number of primary and secondary schools that have an EdTech Hub • Impact on the employment rate-Impact on GDP
	Increasing the participation of women in the workforce		
Education and skills development	Reforming the system of social and child protection for a more efficient, effective, and transparent use of public funds	Promoting the digital transformation and digital skills as an enabler of sustainable development and inclusive growth	
	Investing in all levels of education Digital education: upgrading the concept and curricula of the Digital Academy outside the public administration and implementing it in the whole society in an organized and socially inclusive way; Implementation of the Strategy for the Digitalization of the Education System (2022-2027) and related action plans		

4

CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of the RA in the WBs will be made easier by introducing meaningful reporting practices.

This knowledge product provides essential tips and tricks to streamline and enhance the reporting process, ensuring alignment with the EC's requirements and fostering transparency, consistency, and accountability. By leveraging modern reporting tools, standardized templates, and clear communication channels, beneficiaries can present comprehensive and accurate semi-annual reports that complement payment requests as well as annual progress reports.

The use of qualitative and quantitative steps as implementation indicators, alongside KPIs, allows for real-time monitoring and evaluation of reforms. The focus on evidence-based reporting and regular updates ensures that all challenges are addressed promptly, facilitating the achievement of the RGF's objectives. At the same time, governments strengthen their monitoring and reporting capacities, necessary for any kind of government activity.