

Independent Reporting Mechanism

Midterm Review:
Latvia 2021-2025

Open
Government
Partnership



Independent
Reporting
Mechanism

Overview

In February 2022, Latvia submitted a four-year action plan to the Open Government Partnership. At the midpoint, Latvia took stock of the action plan's progress and context after two years of implementation. Based on this reflection, Latvia submitted a refreshed action plan in July 2024.¹ This IRM document reviews the refreshed action plan, the status of implementation at the midpoint, and alignment with the minimum requirements under the Participation & Co-Creation Standards.²

Latvia's refresh process did not substantially change the action plan. Based on input from the multi-stakeholder forum (MSF), the State Chancellery added three milestones to existing commitments. Two pertain to open data and one to local government openness. The government also pledged in the refresh document to step up the implementation of existing commitments on public communication, civic participation, and open local government.

Senior stakeholders at the State Chancellery, including the point of contact to OGP, saw the refresh process as a valuable opportunity to document the status of the commitments.³ However, the refresh process itself was not fully participatory. Latvia's regulatory framework does not allow the government to amend policy planning documents during implementation unless considerable contextual changes have occurred.⁴ The rules also require any amendments to go through the same formal co-creation and approval procedures applied to the document's initial adoption. Since the context around the OGP action plan remained largely the same, the State Chancellery limited the refresh process to consultations within the MSF.⁵ The State Chancellery also published the draft refresh plan on the national OGP website for a two-week public consultation in July 2024, receiving two comments from members of the MSF but none from the public.

In the first two years, Latvia has made progress on all six commitments, albeit to different degrees. The State Chancellery has had difficulty securing funding for some commitments and coordinating the commitments that require close collaboration between multiple organizations.⁶ For example, the implementation of Commitment 6 (promoting openness and citizen participation in local government) has been difficult because the central government has limited information on local municipalities and little leverage to compel them to implement OGP commitments.⁷ The new milestone of Commitment 6 to increase the availability of comparative data on municipalities partly responds to the IRM Action Plan Review's recommendation to assess local governments' performance in transparency and participation.⁸ While the plan will focus on social, educational, and sustainable development indicators, the government could consider including open governance indicators in the scope of this work.⁹ Commitment 2 to promote existing public participation opportunities has progressed the fastest, with three of the five milestones completed by the midterm.

In the remaining two years of the action plan, the government could prioritize implementation of Commitment 6 by harnessing the Local Government Law adopted in 2022. The law establishes a legal framework for citizens' councils as a new voluntary public participation method at the local level and requires local governments to implement participatory budgeting.¹⁰ Both are among the objectives of Commitment 6. The State Chancellery plans to meet with the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development (MoSARD) and the

Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (LALRG) in 2025 to discuss progress on this commitment.¹¹ To support completion of this commitment, these meetings could be held regularly. The IRM also reiterates its recommendation to provide institutional support to municipalities in implementing new open government practices like citizens' councils or participatory budgeting through OGP's international platform.¹² Furthermore, the State Chancellery, MoSARD, and LALRG could build on the capacity-building activities of this commitment by facilitating permanent peer support for municipalities.¹³ The State Chancellery could also provide more opportunities for public monitoring of the action plan during the remaining two years of implementation.

¹ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025: Mid-Term Assessment, July 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/19590/download?attachment>; State Chancellery, Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan of Latvia 2022-2025: Information on Four-Year Refresh (Annex to the Plan), July 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/19623/download?attachment>

² Open Government Partnership, OGP National Handbook 2024, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/ogp-national-handbook-rules-and-guidance-for-participants-2024/>; OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards, 2021, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation-co-creation-standards/>

³ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

⁴ Republic of Latvia, Rules for the development of development planning documents and impact assessment (Attīstības plānošanas dokumentu izstrādes un ietekmes izvērtēšanas noteikumi), Cabinet of Ministers regulation no 737, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/270934-attistibas-planosanas-dokumentu-izstrades-un-ietekmes-izvertesanas-noteikumi>

⁵ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

⁶ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

⁷ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

⁸ Open Government Partnership, Independent Reporting Mechanism, Action Plan Review: Latvia 2022-2025, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-review-2022-2025/>

⁹ Viesturs Razumovskis (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 17 September 2024.

¹⁰ Republic of Latvia, Local Government Law (Pašvaldību likums), adopted on 22 October 2022, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/336956-pasvaldibu-likums>

¹¹ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

¹² Open Government Partnership, Independent Reporting Mechanism, Action Plan Review: Latvia 2022-2025, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-review-2022-2025/>

¹³ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, milestone 6.2, pp 58-59, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

Section I: Action Plan Refresh

Latvia did not adopt any new commitments during the refresh process but added new milestones to Commitments 5 and 6. The new milestones support the objectives of the existing commitments and do not constitute significant changes in their scope and ambition based on the available evidence.

The ideas for the additional milestones came from members of the Supervisory Council, Latvia's multi-stakeholder forum. At the council's meeting on 30 April 2024, the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development (MoSARD) presented their plan to develop a new open data strategy and train public officials on high-value data under Commitment 5. Meanwhile, the independent think tank PROVIDUS proposed enhancing public monitoring opportunities of municipalities' performance under Commitment 6.¹

The State Chancellery published the refresh document with changes to the action plan on Latvia's OGP website for a two-week public consultation on 2 July 2024.² It received comments from two members of the Supervisory Council: the Ministry of Finance and the Latvian Youth Council. The State Chancellery accepted the Ministry's proposal to remove from Commitment 5 the reference to publishing "information on the use of municipal budget data and public access to national budget data." It also agreed to take on the Youth Council's proposal for Commitment 2 to involve youth in the next round of public dialogues on societal trust.³ The Youth Council's two other suggestions for Commitment 2 on developing youth participation skills at the national and European levels and introducing participatory budgeting principles in schools were not incorporated in the refresh document but added to the discussion agenda of the Supervisory Council's meeting in October 2024.⁴ However, these changes were not reflected in the refresh document. For Commitment 1 (strengthening the framework for public participation and raising awareness for effective participatory processes) some milestones changed during implementation. For instance, the State Chancellery focused on improving the functionalities of the TAP portal, a government portal for projects under consideration by the Cabinet of Ministers, instead of developing a new participation platform (milestone 1.4).⁵

Commitment 5: Promoting the availability and comprehensibility of data by increasing citizens' access to and development of data-based solutions

This commitment aims to raise awareness and use of government data by the public and within public administration. The refresh process added two milestones: developing a new open data strategy and conducting a training for public officials on high-value data from the EU Open Data Directive. The MoSARD completed the second of these milestones on 20 September 2024 by conducting a webinar for over 500 public officials on the concept of high-value datasets, presenting examples of data reuse, and providing instructions for releasing open data.⁶

Regarding the first added milestone, as the government's previous open data strategy ended in 2022, the MoSARD plans to develop a new strategy for 2025–2029, which will apply to the whole public administration. A more strategic focus on open data could strengthen the results of this commitment, as the government is considering amending the Law on Freedom of Information to create stricter legal obligations for public institutions to open data.⁷ However, as

the strategy's ambition will only become clear during its development,⁸ its potential for results remain modest.

Commitment 6: Promote openness and citizen involvement and participation in local government

This commitment aims to improve transparency and public participation in local governments. The refresh process added a milestone to improve comparative socio-economic data on municipalities, an objective of the current government's program published in January 2024.⁹ This milestone aims to aggregate, visualize, and open up comparative data on local municipalities' socio-economic development, educational indicators, and contributions to climate neutrality targets.¹⁰ This will be done by expanding the datasets and functionalities of the public regional development indicators module ("RAIM" in Latvian) of the Territorial Development Planning Information System.¹¹ RAIM already has a database of over 200 socio-economic development indicators on municipalities.¹² The development of the monitoring system will continue beyond 2025. The main objectives for the action plan period include assessing the availability of data and additional data needs, creating a methodology to compare local governments' development, and engaging experts in planning new functions to the RAIM.¹³ This activity mostly seeks to combine data that already exists in national registers and portals. However, if needed, additional data (e.g. on public sentiment) may be collected from municipalities.¹⁴ The IRM recommends including open government indicators within the scope of the monitoring system.¹⁵

¹ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting no 4, 30 April 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19092/download?attachment>

² State Chancellery, Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan of Latvia 2022–2025 Information on Four-Year Refresh (Annex to the Plan), 30 July 2024.

³ The State Chancellery and the Latvian Rural Forum launched a series of public discussions (Dialogue circles) on the topic of societal trust in 2023. The discussions use the National Dialogues method developed as part of Finland's fourth OGP Action Plan. More information on the Latvian dialogues, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/dialoga-apli>

⁴ State Chancellery, Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan of Latvia 2022-2025: Information on Four-Year Refresh (Annex to the Plan), July 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/19623/download?attachment>

⁵ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

⁶ Laima Amatniece (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 19 September 2024.

⁷ Laima Amatniece (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 19 September 2024.

⁸ Laima Amatniece (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 19 September 2024.

⁹ Valdības rīcības plāns Deklarācijas par Evikas Siliņas vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību īstenošanai, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/17910/download?attachment>

¹⁰ Viesturs Razumovskis (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 17 September 2024; Valdības rīcības plāns Deklarācijas par Evikas Siliņas vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību īstenošanai, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/17910/download?attachment>

¹¹ RAIM – Reģionālās attīstības indikatoru modulis, <https://raim.gov.lv/?spatvk=1000>

¹² Viesturs Razumovskis (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 17 September 2024.

¹³ Viesturs Razumovskis (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 17 September 2024.

¹⁴ Viesturs Razumovskis (Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development), correspondence with the IRM, 17 September 2024.

¹⁵ See also the IRM's recommendations in the Action Plan Review:Open Government Partnership, Latvia Action Plan Review 2022-2025, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-review-2022-2025/>

Section II: Implementation Update

This section provides an overview of the implementation status of the action plan at the midpoint, July 2024. It is based on information available online or, if necessary, on evidence provided by key stakeholders.¹ It includes commitments identified as promising in the Action Plan Review, submitted under the Open Gov Challenge, or where there is notable evidence of progress online.² This is not an assessment of completion or early results, which the IRM will carry out in the Results Report at the end of the implementation period.

By the midterm, Latvia has made progress on all six commitments. Commitment 2 (promoting opportunities for public participation, including the involvement of young adults and NGOs) has progressed the fastest, with three of the five milestones completed. Commitments with more ambitious objectives and a more complex structure have seen mixed progress. For Commitments 1 (strengthening the framework for public participation and raising awareness for effective participatory processes) and 3 (strengthening dialogue with society in decision-making processes), which the IRM's Action Plan Review considered promising,³ the government has trained CSOs to use the TAP public participation portal and organized experience-sharing discussions among public institutions on public participation once or twice a year. The State Chancellery has also aggregated a detailed overview of ministries' and agencies' public engagement practices (milestone 3.1)⁴ but not all institutions have yet published easily accessible information on participation opportunities on their websites, one of the commitment's objectives. Some milestones in Commitment 1 have been delayed due to limited human resources.⁵

As part of Commitment 4, the government has trained public officials to use clear administrative language and made progress in providing more public information in understandable, user-friendly, and accessible formats. These activities have included legislative amendments and measures to improve the accessibility of public services and information for people with functional limitations.⁶ At the same time, the planned public communication campaign to explain complex policy issues (milestone 3) is scheduled to take place in 2025, while the State Chancellery has noted the need to do more work to disseminate methodological guidelines on public communication among public officials (milestone 4).⁷

For Commitment 5, government ministries and agencies have raised public awareness of existing open datasets (milestone 1) and developed tools and visualizations to facilitate the use of the data. The government also provided new datasets in open data format (e.g. milestone 3: mass media ownership). Other datasets (e.g. milestone 3: public officials' asset declarations) were not provided in open data format after political and legal discussions.⁸

Commitment 6, also assessed as promising in the IRM's Action Plan Review, has been difficult to implement. By the midterm, the MoSARD and its public sector and CSO partners have promoted the openness standards drawn up before the start of the action plan (milestone 1) and coordinated municipalities' networking and capacity building in open government (milestone 2).⁹ They also developed guidelines for transparency regulations for local budgets and set up citizens' councils – a new type of advisory body with a legal basis in the 2022 Local Government Law to involve residents in local decision-making processes.¹⁰ In addition, the MoSARD prototyped a digital tool to support municipalities in implementing newly mandatory

participatory budgeting processes (milestone 3).¹¹ However, the central government has limited leverage over local municipalities' decisions and activities.¹² The MoSARD has been occupied with familiarizing municipalities with the new Local Government Law¹³ and did not contribute to the government's midterm self-assessment.¹⁴ So far, for this commitment, MoSARD has provided guidelines, capacity building for municipalities, and facilitated peer learning on new public participation measures such as citizens' councils and participatory budgets. However, the progress of this commitment is difficult to assess since the central government lacks an overview of the status of most milestones, which local municipalities are responsible for implementing on their own.¹⁵

The multi-stakeholder forum (Supervisory Council) established on 7 June 2022 for monitoring the implementation of Latvia's fifth action plan has discussed action plan progress twice a year since 2022. However, publicly available information on implementation has so far been limited to the council's meeting minutes, published on the national OGP website. More recently, the government's midterm self-assessment report published in June 2024 provides a comprehensive overview of the implementation status of all commitments. To improve public oversight of the implementation process, the State Chancellery could integrate a user-friendly progress tracker to the website along with functionalities allowing the public to comment on commitment implementation.

¹ Latvia's national Open Government website, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba>

² Open Government Partnership, Latvia Action Plan Review 2022-2025, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-review-2022-2025/>

³ Open Government Partnership, Latvia Action Plan Review 2022-2025, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/latvia-action-plan-review-2022-2025/>

⁴ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, milestone 3.1, pp 19-24, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

⁵ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

⁶ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

⁷ State Chancellery, Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan of Latvia 2022–2025: Information on Four-Year Refresh (Annex to the Plan), 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/19623/download?attachment>

⁸ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

⁹ State Chancellery, Latvia's Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

¹⁰ Republic of Latvia, The possibility to establish local citizens' councils is described in Section 58 of the Local Government Law adopted on 22 October 2022, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/336956-pasvaldibu-likums>

¹¹ Republic of Latvia, The requirement to implement participatory budgets is stipulated in Sections 59-62 of the Local Government Law adopted in 2022, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/336956-pasvaldibu-likums>

¹² Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

¹³ Republic of Latvia, Local Government Law (Pašvaldību likums), adopted on 22 October 2022, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/336956-pasvaldibu-likums>

¹⁴ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

¹⁵ Inese Kuške and Zane Legzdiņa-Joja (State Chancellery), interview by the IRM, 12 September 2024.

Section III: Participation & Co-Creation

The IRM uses the OGP Participation and Co-Creations Standards to assess countries' participatory practices throughout the action plan cycle.¹ Countries are encouraged to aim for the full ambition of the standards and to meet the minimum requirements.²

Table 1. Alignment with minimum requirements at the midpoint

Minimum requirement	Met?
<p>1.1 Space for dialogue: A Supervisory Council consisting of government and four civil society representatives was set up in June 2022 to oversee the implementation of the fifth action plan. Its general rules of operation were discussed and documented in the minutes of its first meeting in 2022.³ The council has met twice a year since the start of the action plan: on 5 October 2022,⁴ 21 March 2023,⁵ 1 December 2023,⁶ and 30 April 2024.⁷</p>	Yes
<p>2.1 OGP website: The State Chancellery maintains a public OGP website throughout action plan implementation. The website contains the current and previous action plans, related documents, the refresh document of the fifth action plan, and information on the composition and meetings of the Supervisory Council.⁸</p>	Yes
<p>2.2 Repository: The national OGP website contains documents and links to public consultations held during the co-creation process.⁹ The State Chancellery also published its midterm self-assessment report on the website in June 2024. The report includes evidence on the status of the commitments.¹⁰ The repository has been updated at least twice a year with minutes and presentations from the Supervisory Council's meetings.¹¹</p>	Yes
<p>3.1 Advanced notice: The State Chancellery did not provide advanced notice for the two-week public consultation on the action plan refresh process from 2-16 July 2024. However, they informed the Supervisory Council of the upcoming refresh at the council's meeting on 1 December 2023.¹² The State Chancellery collected ideas for new activities at the council's meeting on 30 April 2024.¹³</p>	Yes
<p>4.1 Reasoned response: The State Chancellery published stakeholders' comments from the July 2024 public consultation on the refresh and responded to these comments in the refresh document annexed to the action plan. The annex was published on the national OGP website in Latvian¹⁴ and English.¹⁵</p>	Yes
<p>5.1 Open implementation: The Supervisory Council has met twice a year during the first two years of implementation. The council's civil society representatives have commented on implementation at all meetings and reported on implementation progress in their capacity as co-implementers of certain commitments.¹⁶</p>	Yes

This brief was written by IRM researcher Maarja Olesk in collaboration with IRM staff and reviewed by external reviewer Andy McDevitt.

¹ “OGP Participation and Co-Creation Standards,” Open Government Partnership. 2021.

<https://www.opengovpartnership.org/ogp-participation-co-creation-standards/>; Open Government Partnership National Handbook 2024. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/ogp-national-handbook-rules-and-guidance-for-participants-2024/>.

² “IRM Guidelines for the Assessment of Minimum Requirements,” Independent Reporting Mechanism, 2022.

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IRM-Guidelines-for-Assessment-of-Minimum-Requirements_20220531_EN.pdf.

³ See <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/15412/download?attachment>

⁴ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 22 October 2022,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/15412/download?attachment>

⁵ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 21 March 2023,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/15705/download?attachment>

⁶ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 1 December 2023,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/17736/download?attachment>

⁷ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 30 April 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19092/download?attachment>

⁸ State Chancellery, Open Government, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba#uzraudzibas-padome>

⁹ State Chancellery, Development of the Fifth OGP Action Plan, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba#piekta-nacionala-atvertas-parvaldibas-plana-izstrade>

¹⁰ State Chancellery, Latvia’s Open Government National Action Plan 2022-2025 Mid-Term Assessment, 2024,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19593/download?attachment>

¹¹ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meetings, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba#uzraudzibas-padome>

¹² Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 1 December 2023,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/17736/download?attachment>

¹³ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meeting on 30 April 2024,

<https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19092/download?attachment>

¹⁴ Open Government Partnership, Latvijas Piektais nacionālais atvērtās pārvaldības rīcības plans 2022. – 2025. gadam:

Informācija par plāna aktualizāciju (plāna pielikums), <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/media/19620/download?attachment>

¹⁵ State Chancellery, Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan of Latvia 2022–2025: Information on Four-Year Refresh (Annex to the Plan), 2024, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/media/19623/download?attachment>

¹⁶ Minutes of the Supervisory Council meetings, <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/atverta-parvaldiba#uzraudzibas-padome>