

Israel Report

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024

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Executive Summary

The past year has been troubling, and posed many challenges to democracy and the sustainability of governance in Israel. Since January 2023, the government has been promoting a judicial overhaul, and democratic backsliding is evident in all aspects of politics and policymaking. The government has also weakened the civil service, and undermined professional and scientific knowledge. In particular, the government has decreased public investment in innovation, scientific knowledge and evidence-based policymaking.

The electoral and party systems allow for the broad representation of interests and groups. Civil society remains vibrant and has even gained significance since October 7. At the same time, party and government accountability have decreased. Many parties do not publicly communicate their agendas, and the government fails to comprehensively and transparently share its plans. Moreover, there has been a noticeable decline in press freedoms, as the media has become more reluctant to criticize the government and public trust in the media has waned.

Oversight of government activities has become less effective due to a weak legislature and the powerlessness of the state comptroller. Furthermore, the government has weakened law enforcement agencies and the court system. This endangers civil rights and liberties, which are not constitutionalized for the most part.

Israel's war with Hamas, which began on October 7, and its impact on domestic issues have highlighted the weakness of horizontal coordination between government departments. Similarly, the weakness of the Prime Minister's Office has resulted in a lack of comprehensive policy and affected services provided to those impacted by the war.

At the same time, access to government information and freedom of information has improved. The government and public services have become more open and accessible, while participation and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors across all fields have improved. In addition, the analytical capacities of members of the Knesset have increased

thanks to the Knesset's research center. Similarly, the regulatory impact assessment framework has improved significantly following the establishment of the Regulatory Authority. The independence of these two organizations should be maintained.

Strategic planning is frequently undertaken in fields to which Israel is committed due to its OECD membership and ratification of international treaties. However, even in areas where a strategic plan exists, there has been little progress in implementation and monitoring. For example, many other areas, such as gender equality and the circular economy, lack strategic planning and comprehensive policymaking.

Israel lacks clear sustainable governance goals. This is evident in social, economic and environmental policy issues. Nevertheless, systems in some areas function better, and more adequately address current social and economic risks. However, this is primarily due to past policymaking and well-built systems (e.g., healthcare and immigration) rather than strategic planning. In fields that lack comprehensive, resilient systems (e.g., the pension system), there is a discrepancy between social and economic risks, and the policies enacted. These discrepancies are widening, exposing more citizens to social, economic and environmental risks.

The last year has shown that many Israeli policymakers are not strongly committed to democratic values and the protection of civil liberties, and have failed to promote sustainable governance and policymaking. In contrast, civil society has demonstrated its viability and strength, as seen in the large-scale protests against the government's judicial overhaul and following October 7. Civil society has proven that Israeli citizens are dedicated to democratic values and building a more sustainable government.

Key Challenges

Israel has a deep-rooted history of improvisation in policymaking (Sharkansky and Zalmanovitch 2000). When it comes to long-term processes and strategic planning, Israel typically demonstrates weak policy performance. Although improvisation can be advantageous in uncertain environments, it creates challenges in addressing long-term global issues. Furthermore, this approach becomes problematic when policy responses necessitate collaboration between various national and international actors.

One mechanism that can support strategic planning and implementation is a strong central coordination agency. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) could fulfill this role. However, over the last couple of years, the capacity of the PMO has decreased, mostly due to politicization and the level of coordination between ministries. Israel's government should invest more heavily in strengthening the PMO, especially its strategic planning and coordination departments.

These departments and the general director should play a more active role in coordinating and managing collaboration between ministries and effectively monitoring the implementation of various projects. Currently, this task is primarily conducted by the Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for fiscal and economic issues, while professional input from other perspectives is lacking. One way to strengthen the PMO is to set higher formal standards for the general director of the PMO.

The Israeli government tends to adopt strategic plans on issues seen as global problems, with specific goals and measures developed by external actors, and formalized in treaties and agreements. In addition, international actors, such as the OECD, should develop measures for domestic issues, similarly formalized in treaties and agreements. This might induce the government to act on these measures, and translate them into specific policy responses and strategies.

The second challenge is accountability. Israeli policymakers and authorities often do not see themselves as accountable to the public. This deeply affects issues placed on the agenda and policy implementation. To improve accountability, the legislature's monitoring capacity should be strengthened. Specifically, the number of members of the Knesset should be increased, so that they can effectively participate in Knesset committee meetings and provide the committees with more effective monitoring tools. Additionally, the State Comptroller's Office should be strengthened. Currently, the state comptroller has broad investigative authority; however, its reports are non-binding and often ignored by policymakers. The state comptroller's reports include important information on gaps in sustainable governance. Increasing the power of the state comptroller would contribute to the better implementation of these reports.

Although freedom of information provisions have been improved, the department of the Ministry of Justice in charge of freedom of information is very small and has little power. To further improve the provision of government information and thereby strengthen accountability, the ministerial department should be expanded and provided with the coercive authority to address deviations from the Freedom of Information Law.

A third challenge concerns vertical coordination. More formal coordination mechanisms should be implemented and greater authority delegated to local authorities. This will improve government responsiveness. At the same time, institutionalizing mechanisms of collaborative governance should be enhanced, providing more influence to various stakeholders, and contributing to the democratization and accountability of policymaking (Sher-Hadar et al. 2021).

The past year has demonstrated the power of civil society. A vibrant civil society will be crucial for sustaining democracy. It can also increase responsiveness and communication between government and citizens. Both national and international actors are encouraged to strengthen Israeli civil society. However, this empowerment should enable civil society to work with the government, not replace it.

Of course, addressing these challenges greatly depends on how the war in Gaza evolves, and its national and international consequences. The political arrangements adopted following the war will significantly impact the government's willingness to promote and fulfill non-security-related strategic goals.

Democratic Government

I. Vertical Accountability

Elections

Free and Fair
Political
Competition
Score: 8

The registration procedures for candidates and parties meet the transparency and fairness criteria. Any party can register with the registrar of political parties as long as the party has 100 or more supporters who are aged over 18 and are Israeli citizens. The registration fee is small (ILS 2,400), which enables broad participation. De jure, there are several limitations; a party is not allowed to register if the party's goals or activities reject the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish, democratic state; incite racism; support the armed struggle of an enemy state or terrorist organization against the State of Israel; or hint at covering illegal activity (Party Registrar).

Before each election, each party submits its list of candidates to the Central Election Committee. Any citizen over the age of 21 can run for office unless a court disqualifies them for promoting racism or denying the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state. Additionally, a citizen who has been convicted cannot run for office for seven years.

De facto, there have been very few cases of candidates or parties being disqualified from running. However, in the last couple of years, members of the Knesset have increasingly attempted to disqualify candidates from Arab minority parties, arguing that they support terror (Shani and Fuchs, 2022). Several cases have arisen in which the Central Elections Committee decided to disqualify Arab candidates, but these decisions were later overruled by the Supreme Court, which reviews Central Elections Committee decisions.

In the most recent coalition agreement, signed in December 2022, the parties agreed to amend the Basic Law: The Knesset clause that defines eligibility for running for office, eliminating racism as a disqualifying factor. To date, the government has not attempted to pass this amendment.

Each party must submit its financial records for inspection by the government comptroller, who publishes reports after every election detailing the violations of each party and the fines they need to pay. The parties are required to provide all information on donations and finances to the comptroller. Parties that violate the party finance law can be sanctioned by the comptroller. However, in many cases, these sanctions are not imposed (State Comptroller).

All parties enjoy free access to the media. However, some candidates often receive more attention than others. In recent elections, the extreme right-wing party leader Itamar Ben Gvir received significantly more media attention than other candidates. This was not due to discrimination but rather the media's interest in extreme views and sensationalism.

In the last few election cycles, the media has focused more on personal issues than the policy positions of candidates. As a result, more policy-oriented parties have received little coverage.

The Israeli electoral system is a single-district proportional system. Therefore, there are no institutional limitations on political participation.

In the November 2022 elections, the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) warned decision-makers about Iranian and Russian interference through social media. However, during the elections, there was no concrete evidence of such intervention (Shuker and Siboni, 2019).

Free and Fair
Elections
Score: 7

Voting rights are granted to all citizens, including felons, prisoners and newly arrived immigrants. No prior registration is required before voting and all citizens are eligible to vote. The elections are managed by the Central Election Committee, which is chaired by a judge, and operates as an independent body with its own budget and professional administration. The administration of recent elections, including those held during the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced no significant issues. Elections are conducted 90 days after the dissolution of the Knesset. While the schedule is usually followed, the 2023 elections for the local authorities were postponed from October 31, 2023, to February 27, 2024, due to the war with Hamas.

During the last elections in November 2022, there were 6,788,804 eligible voters and 12,495 polling stations. These included 222 polling stations in hospitals, 102 in embassies abroad, 55 in prisons, 5,121 accessible polling stations for people with various disabilities, 232 polling stations in care homes and 279 polling stations for people with COVID-19 (Central Election Committee). Public transport was free on election day to facilitate access to

polling stations. Regular polling stations were open from 07:00 to 22:00, while polling stations in cities with fewer than 350 voters and those in hospitals were open from 08:00 to 20:00. Because polling stations were located in schools, water facilities and restrooms were available for voters. Voters who used special polling stations, such as those in hospitals or accessible stations, used a double envelope to prevent double voting.

During the 2022 elections, several complaints were made to the Central Election Committee regarding irregularities, such as attempts to vandalize voting ballots. These complaints were infrequent and resolved on site by the polling committee at each polling station.

However, in East Jerusalem, Palestinian residents are considered permanent residents of Israel rather than citizens, a status that grants them certain social rights and the right to vote in municipal elections but not in national elections. In “area C,” which is under the full control of Israel rather than the Palestinian Authority, Palestinians do not have the status of citizens and do not have any voting rights.

Quality of Parties and Candidates

Socially Rooted
Party System
Score: 5

The electoral system in Israel is proportional, allowing multiple parties representing various groups and interests to participate. In the last election, 49 parties and 40 lists appeared on the ballot. However, since 2014, the electoral threshold has been increased to 3.25%. As a result, parties now need to win at least five out of the 120 seats to enter the Knesset. This change limits the representation of many groups and forces parties to join lists to ensure their entry into the Knesset. It is well known that the intention behind raising the threshold was to prevent smaller, Arab parties from entering the Knesset. Notably, one of these parties, Balad, failed to surpass the threshold in the last election.

Israel’s traditional major parties have local branches, but their activities have been limited in recent years. Additionally, parties with primaries have reserved candidate slots for representatives of various minorities (women, immigrants, Arabs) and localities (Southern, Northern, Jerusalem and Kibutz districts). However, in most parties, representatives elected by a specific group or region compete in the general list. Therefore, their incentive to address the needs of their constituency is relatively low. The constituency link in the Israeli system is perceived to be relatively weak for the main parties, which lack an electoral incentive to promote their constituencies’ interests (Itzkovitch-Malka, 2021). This is not true for sectoral parties, which by definition represent specific

groups, such as ultraorthodox Jews, immigrants and settlers. Nowadays, more mainstream parties also tend to lack effective internal democratic mechanisms (Shapira and Fridman 2019).

Not all parties publish manifestos (Manifesto Project). Currently, the parties in opposition have detailed manifestos representing the diverse concerns of their electorates. However, Likud, the formateur party, has not published a manifesto since 2013. This omission makes it difficult to judge Likud's agenda and the extent to which it represents the interests of its voters. Ultraorthodox parties also do not publish manifestos, and their voters are guided by community leaders to vote for the party, regardless of the party's agenda or achievements in government.

While it is challenging for voters to evaluate a party based on its pledges, it is safe to say that the sectoral parties that entered the coalition represent their constituencies through coalition agreements. These agreements outline the issues the parties consider most significant (Moury 2011). According to data from the Israeli Agenda Project (Cavari et al. 2022), coalition agreements contain numerous clauses on key issues, including education for ultraorthodox students, state and religious issues, and settlements in the West Bank – all of which are typically crucial to the parties forming the coalition.

The problem remains for the formateur party, Likud, which lacks a party manifesto or a coalition agreement. Likud's 2022 election campaign focused on security and cost of living issues. However, the party subsequently made judicial reform the main issue on the government's agenda. For example, the coalition agreement stated that judicial reform would be the first issue the government would address during its tenure. Notably, this is in spite of the fact that Most Important Problem surveys conducted before the elections did not find the issue to be among the most important issues for the public or Likud voters (INES, 2022). Consequently, despite the representative system and the variety of parties, it is unclear to what extent the major parties represent their voters.

Effective Cross-Party Cooperation
Score: 4

The effective polarization between parties has increased over the last two governments, leading to a decline in inter-party collaboration. The opposition to the previous administration, the so-called Change Government (2021 – 2022), refused to cooperate on all issues, resulting in highly polarized Knesset votes. This trend persisted even when the proposed legislation came from opposition members in the preceding Knesset. Furthermore, upon assuming power, the current government eliminated most policy changes made by the earlier administration through coalition agreements. This rollback applied not

only to ideologically contentious issues but also to non-partisan matters, such as transportation.

The present government shows little commitment to liberal democratic values, as evidenced by its attempts to overhaul judicial legislation, eliminate checks and balances between the three branches of government, and weaken the judiciary. According to the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, the formateur party, Likud, is extremely populist (Gidron 2023). Other parties in the coalition are likewise not committed to liberal democratic values, with some even explicitly opposing them.

The ultraorthodox parties are illiberal, rejecting the supremacy of the rule of law and not allowing women to run for office within the parties. The other two parties are extremely right-wing, advocate for Jewish supremacy and discriminate against minorities (Chapel Hill Expert Survey). This is also reflected in the coalition agreements, which state that the government will support a ban on discrimination against minorities in providing services.

The parties supporting liberal democracy are currently in opposition. During the attempt to reform the judiciary, opposition parties united against the government's moves. However, since the beginning of the war with Hamas on October 7, opposition to the government has decreased. One opposition party has even entered the government, while the remaining opposition parties are ideologically distinct from one another, which makes it difficult for them to collaborate. As a result, the government's anti-democratic activities face little organized opposition from elected politicians.

Access to Official Information

Transparent
Government
Score: 7

The Freedom of Information Act, legislated in 1998, allows anyone to request information from any authority without having to explain the purpose of the request. Several exemptions to the law include issues related to security, privacy and difficulty in obtaining the information. When an authority declines a request, it must provide a written explanation. The authority has 30 days to respond to the request and can receive an additional 30-day extension. In practice, 50% of requests are answered in less than 14 days and another 30% within 30 days. A person whose request for information is declined can petition the courts. In 2022, 469 petitions were filed.

To receive information, a person should file a request and pay a fee. Some organizations, such as research institutions, are exempt from the fee. Each authority has a member of staff who is responsible for freedom of information.

In addition, each authority must issue a detailed annual report of its activities. The Unit for Freedom of Information in the Ministry of Justice is responsible for enforcing the legislation. However, the unit includes only one director and two students, making it difficult to enforce the legislation across departments. In addition, the unit lacks the legal tools to enforce the provision of information.

Each authority has to submit an annual report of its activities. Only 70% of the authorities submitted a report in 2022. In 2022, there were 13,028 requests submitted. The respective authority provided full information to 50% of requests and partial information to 16% of requests, while 17% of requests were declined. The most common reasons for declining a request were violation of privacy (21% of requests), unavailability of the requested information (20%), another authority holding the information (15%) and lack of a legal requirement to provide the information (20%).

If the respective authority does not provide the information on time or provide an explanation for declining the request, a person can file a complaint with the Ministry of Justice. In 2022, there were 203 complaints, of which 116 were found to be justified (Ministry of Justice 2022).

II. Diagonal Accountability

Media Freedom and Pluralism

Free Media
Score: 6

Freedom of the press is based on Supreme Court rulings and has no constitutional protection (Hanegbi 1995). This freedom is best demonstrated by the willingness of most media outlets to publicly and harshly oppose Israeli governments, particularly the current government's attempts to overhaul the judiciary.

In Israel, there is a single public broadcaster, which operates one TV channel and several radio channels. In recent years, it has become very active on digital media platforms. Prior to 2015, the public broadcaster was subject to political intervention. However, since 2015, it has operated independently, although there has been constant pressure from politicians to close it down or increase their control. These threats have increased under the current government, with the minister of communication submitting a reform to increase political control over the media and threatening to close the public broadcaster.

The press and most media outlets operate generally free from political intervention, although not completely. Prime Minister Netanyahu is accused of attempting to influence media coverage in two newspapers. The newspaper Israel Hayom was established by billionaire Sheldon Adelson and distributed for free to increase support for the prime minister, which it did (Grossman et al. 2022). Additionally, Channel 14, originally founded as a heritage channel, was transformed by politicians into a news channel to support the government and criticize its opponents. In his press conferences, Prime Minister Netanyahu consistently attacks the media, accusing it of being one-sided. According to the Israeli Democratic Index, public trust in the media is only 37% (Israel Democracy Institute, 2022).

Despite the attacks on the media, no legislation limiting freedom of the press was officially introduced to the Knesset. Hence, if there is self-censorship, it is the result of the stated intentions of the politicians and not their actions.

The 2023 World Press Freedom Index gave Israel a score of 57.7, which is categorized as problematic. Israel dropped 11 places to rank 97 out of 180 countries. The report said that press freedom in Israel decreased due to the current government's constant threats to press freedoms.

The private broadcasting channels are regulated by a public council. This council is not entirely independent, as its budget and personnel are dependent on the ministry and, therefore, the minister. The minister also nominates the chair of the council. The current council is relatively weak, fails to enforce violations and does not prevent the publication of fake news.

Private broadcasting entities are controlled by powerful corporations and face the constant threat of closure due to a lack of funding. Consequently, journalists find it difficult to criticize the corporations that own the channels, resulting in self-censorship.

The government censors publications related to security issues. According to the World Press Freedom report, Palestinian journalists reporting from Israel are harassed and attacked. Crimes against Palestinian journalists are not prosecuted sufficiently. Self-censorship is especially prominent concerning security issues, particularly in the context of the war in Gaza, where mainstream press outlets have barely reported on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza (Somfalvi et al. 2024).

Pluralism of
Opinions
Score: 8

The ownership of private media is transparent, as stated by the media monitoring organization the Seventh Eye. Most media owners are businessmen with little involvement in the media. Consequently, they are significantly influenced by government regulation. Although almost all private media outlets criticize the government to some extent, the amount and type of critique depends on the personal interests of the owners (The Seventh Eye).

Public radio and television in Israel are highly committed to the plurality of opinions and the representation of different segments of the population. This commitment is evident in the diverse profiles of their journalists, who come from various minority groups and sectors. Additionally, there are channels dedicated to amplifying the voices of different groups.

Israeli media broadcasts and publishes in multiple languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, English, Russian, French and Amharic. There are also specific channels for different population groups. Moreover, in several major news programs, two hosts representing different political and partisan affiliations are featured to ensure a plurality of perspectives.

Private broadcasters also employ journalists from different groups. An examination of these journalists reveals that there are left- and right-wing journalists working for every channel.

However, private media programs present less plurality due to profit considerations. Although formal regulations require a specific amount of time to be dedicated to various groups and populations, this is rarely enforced in practice.

Over recent years, the media in general has been accused of being one-sided or leaning to the left. However, there is no empirical evidence of such bias. Research has found that perceived biases are a function of the political perceptions of the observer and have little to do with any actual bias (Yair & Sulitzeanu-Kenan 2018).

Civil Society

Free Civil
Society
Score: 6

Freedom of association is not a constitutionally protected right. Instead, it is protected via a Supreme Court ruling. In Israel, there are relatively few legal barriers to forming associations. A group of people can register as an association with the Association Registrar. Similarly, freedom of assembly is not legally institutionalized but rather guaranteed through a Supreme Court ruling. In practice, there are also relatively few limitations on protests.

During the recent protests against overhauling the judiciary, the minister of national security (formerly minister of police and internal security) and the prime minister made several attempts to limit the demonstrations. However, these attempts were thwarted by the attorney general. During the ongoing war with Hamas, there have also been attempts to limit demonstrations calling for a cease-fire, but these restrictions were overruled by the Supreme Court.

In general, as the extensive protest against overhauling the judicial overhaul demonstrates, freedom of assembly in Israel is a protected right and is maintained even under the current populist government.

In recent years, there have been constant attempts to limit the operation of various civil society organizations by restricting their fundraising capabilities or attempting to make some associations illegal. These efforts primarily target left-wing and human rights organizations that rely on external funding, for example, from the European Union. These attempts remain ongoing, with little success. Although some left-wing organizations have been banned from entering schools, this remains an exception.

Nonetheless, during Israel’s war with Hamas and the protests against overhauling the judiciary, the police have used excessive force to stop demonstrations, including violent and in some cases seemingly political arrests. This was also part of the minister’s policy, which encouraged the police to use force and threatened to dismiss the police officer in charge of the Tel Aviv District, who said he would not authorize violence during the protests. The use of excessive force by the police can more frequently be seen in cases involving Arab or Palestinian protesters, as well as when protesters belong to Jewish minority groups such as those of Ethiopian descent or ultraorthodox groups.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 6

Civil society organizations representing a diverse spectrum of economic opinions are very active in the public sphere. Comparative OECD data from 2017 indicates that 25% of Israeli employees are members of labor unions (OECD, 2017). The unions are consulted on and negotiate wage agreements across different sectors. For public service employees, membership in a labor union is mandatory. Membership fees are not tax deductible. Large organizations have the financial and informational strength to formulate policies, and many have registered lobbyists in the Knesset. In many cases, different organizations form coalitions and work together on various issues.

When major organizations put forward policy proposals, the government responds to them. This is evident in many pieces of legislation initiated by civil society organizations. These organizations also receive media attention

and can voice their demands publicly. Although they influence policy design, the power of labor unions, as a key actor in policy design, has been decreasing since 1985. The primary institutions involved in formulating macroeconomic policy are the Ministry of Finance and Israel’s central bank. Thus, although the organizations still have some veto power, their power is weaker than before and dependent on the specific political circumstances (Bondy and Maggor 2023). Moreover, public support for major labor unions is decreasing because they are perceived as representing more powerful and organized interests.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 7

A large proportion of social welfare policy is implemented by civil society organizations (Shiffer 2018). As a result, civil society organizations greatly influence policy formulation because policymakers and the public perceive them as having knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. At the same time, their dependence on public budgets limits their inclination to criticize the government and advocate for alternative policies.

Some donations to civil society organizations are tax deductible. In addition, civil society organizations participate in a policy design roundtable coordinated by the Prime Minister’s Office, and committee Knesset hearings where they present policy proposals and reports. Moreover, major organizations are also members of various interministerial committees.

Lastly, reports concerning at-risk youth and poverty published by central organizations receive broad media coverage. At the same time, it should be noted that government-contracted social service providers face fierce competition, which might hinder their ability to effectively cooperate with each other.

Almost all major activities of social welfare organizations are promoted through coalitions of several organizations working together to meet a common goal. Each organization brings its own resources in terms of public support, expertise, media access, political connections, and more.

The organizations have no veto power over government decisions. However, they do have significant public legitimacy. Therefore, when they place an issue on the agenda that receives public and media interest, the government is more likely to respond.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Environment)
Score: 6

Israel’s major environmental organizations are very active in the policy sphere. Most environmental initiatives, such as the Bottle Deposit Law and Clear Air Law, were initiated by civil society organizations. Since environmental issues are not high on the government’s political agenda, these organizations are the main policy entrepreneurs in the field. They also have

research departments and expertise, which enables them to formulate policy proposals. In addition, they are seen as non-partisan, which ensures broad public support for their activities.

However, because environmental issues are not high on the political agenda, civil society organizations often fail to promote their goals and the public participates relatively little in their activities.

Environmental organizations include several large groups and a few smaller ones. In most cases, these organizations collaborate on and form coalitions around environmental issues. There is also a relatively clear division of labor among the organizations based on each one's resources. Some organizations focus more on lobbying, while others focus on public education and grassroots activities. Additionally, an Israeli think tank supports environmental activities, trains activists, and provides tools and knowledge to enhance environmental efforts. This think tank collaborates with local authorities and participates in policymaking.

III. Horizontal Accountability

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Effective Public
Auditing
Score: 6

The State Comptroller's Office is an independent audit office that audits government ministries, local and municipal governments, and other independent governmental organizations, including public universities, all military branches and government-funded corporations. The scope of its audit powers is one of the broadest in the world, giving the comptroller jurisdiction over 1,400 organizations. The office derives its authority from the Basic Law: The State Comptroller, which authorizes it to receive immediate information from bodies being audited.

Additionally, the state comptroller is responsible for auditing campaign and party finances, and reviewing the accounts and finances of party candidates and government ministers. The office also serves as the State Ombudsman, responding to complaints from the public regarding the organizations under its jurisdiction. The State Comptroller's Office acts independent, and its reports and conclusions are widely covered in the media and public discourse.

The comptroller reports on government ministries and local authorities. The decision on which issues and departments to investigate lies with the comptroller. The reports are also presented in parliamentary committees. Each agency examined must collaborate with the comptroller. Additionally, each agency must provide a response to the comptroller's reports and findings, explaining their activities and the corrections being made. The comptroller, however, has no legal authority to force an agency to make the necessary amendments.

The state comptroller is elected in a secret vote by the Knesset for a period of seven years. The budget of the State Comptroller's Office is determined by the Knesset Finance Committee to ensure its independence from the executive branch. The Knesset also decides the state comptroller's salary and holds the power to remove them from office, although no state comptroller has ever been removed from office in Israel.

The State Comptroller's Office publishes various types of reports, most of which are discussed by the Knesset. The media discusses the major annual report as well as reports it believes are of public interest. For example, the reports on the fire in Carmel in 2008, housing expenses of Prime Minister Netanyahu and issues that could lead to criminal charges have been discussed in the media.

The current state comptroller was appointed in 2019. Upon entering office, the state comptroller announced several changes to how the State Comptroller's Office would function, including issuing positive reports in addition to negative ones. Furthermore, the state comptroller closed the department responsible for examining corruption issues and made it more difficult for whistleblowers. Because the state comptroller lacks legal authority to enforce his recommendations, his power derives from his personal influence and the media coverage his reports receive. As the present state comptroller has repeatedly expressed a desire to limit his critique of government activities, it appears that the power of the State Comptroller's Office has diminished.

Effective Data
Protection
Score: 9

The Privacy Protection Authority, located within the Ministry of Justice, enforces the Privacy Protection Act (1981) and the Digital Signature Act (2001). It regulates and enforces privacy and personal data issues. According to the Privacy Protection Law, the authority is granted regulatory and enforcement power over personal data. It is responsible for protecting all personal information held in digital databases. The regulation includes administrative and criminal enforcement, and applies to all entities (public and private) in Israel that hold or process personal data.

In January 2024, the European Union categorized Israel's privacy protections as adequate.

The authority has full discretion over the investigations it conducts. Although its budget is part of the Ministry of Justice's budget, it is managed separately to ensure independence. The chair of the authority must hold qualifications that make them suitable to be appointed as a judge and have no criminal record or indictment. The chair is appointed for a single six-year tenure. These measures ensure independence.

De facto, the findings of the authority are reported mostly in niche media that handle issues of data and privacy, and do not reach the broader public agenda. The authority has the legal tools needed to initiate criminal investigations and uses these tools when necessary.

Rule of Law

Effective Judicial
Oversight
Score: 8

Judicial oversight is conducted by the Supreme Court, which oversees government decisions, appointments, rules, regulations, ministerial decisions and legislation. The Supreme Court is not codified but is based on norms and previous rulings. Therefore, the court has broad discretion and autonomy on the subject (Lurie 2023). In the past year, the current government has tried to significantly limit judicial oversight, transferring more power to the executive. This attempt has so far failed due to mass public protests.

Anyone can petition the Supreme Court without having to prove direct damage or personal impact from the decision being challenged. However, the court does not hear all petitions and only a proportion of petitions are accepted.

The judges are appointed by a committee composed of three Supreme Court judges, two representatives of the Law Bar Association, two ministers and two members of the Knesset. This composition limits political interference. To appoint a Supreme Court judge, a majority of seven committee members is required. This ensures consensus and the representation of various interests. However, in the past year, the minister of justice has sought to reform the committee, aiming to politicize it and align the majority of members with the executive. Although the minister failed to reform the committee, he continues to aspire to do so in the future, as evidenced by his refusal over several months to appoint new judges to the committee (an activity under his responsibility).

The Supreme Court, despite its broad discretion, is often reluctant to interfere in politically salient issues and matters of legislation. It prefers to return such

cases to the executive or the Knesset, asking them to legislate on the issue. In recent years, the executive has frequently chosen not to decide on various salient issues, forcing the court to intervene, only to later accuse it of interference (Galnoor 2014).

The government complies with the court's decisions. However, during the judicial overhaul, government ministers threatened not to follow the Supreme Court's ruling if it overruled the judicial reform. In the end, however, the government followed the court's decision.

Universal Civil
Rights
Score: 5

Most civil rights in Israel are not constitutionally protected. There are two basic laws that safeguard civil rights – the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Freedom, and the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. Other civil rights rely on the court's interpretation of these laws. Consequently, the protection of civil rights hinges on the Supreme Court.

The right of due process is protected by legislation and overseen by the court. There is a law against discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or religion. The current government's coalition agreement aims to change this law, weakening protections against discrimination. However, this has not materialized yet. In addition, the attorney general is responsible for protecting civil rights in policymaking (legislation and decisions).

Over the past year, efforts to overhaul the judiciary have put civil rights protections at risk. Senior politicians argue there is no need for the court to protect civil rights, claiming politicians would assume this role. Additionally, a clause in the coalition agreement signed by the current government proposes to transfer more responsibilities for family issues from the court to religious courts. Although this change has not yet been legislated, if it is it will affect the rights of women, who face discrimination in religious courts. This proposal also demonstrates the limited commitment of many within the government, especially those belonging to religious parties, to protecting civil rights.

Moreover, the police have begun systematically violating civil rights by preventing protests against the government, using extreme violence and arresting protesters without cause, thereby implying a political motivation. The policies implemented by the state are generally effective in preventing discrimination. The civil service code of conduct emphasizes the prevention of discrimination and the importance of impartial service provision. Government practices and procedures are also impartial. There is affirmative action for women in the civil service, along with special positions opened for various minorities to increase equity and diversity. Additionally, each ministry should meet a quota for recruiting people with disabilities or an Arab background.

According to the State Comptroller (2021), the outcomes of these measures are limited and insufficient. Although more employees come from disadvantaged groups, they are often not recruited to managerial positions. Furthermore, the 10% goal for recruiting Arab employees has not been updated for many years and does not reflect their share in the population or labor force.

There has been significant progress toward equality for same-sex couples and families. Recently, the right to adoption was also expanded to include same-sex couples and there are laws against workplace discrimination.

All individuals have access to the court system and, as mentioned earlier, the ability to petition the Supreme Court was expanded to increase access.

Effective
Corruption
Prevention
Score: 7

The Department of the Accountant General in the Ministry of Finance is responsible for budget execution and government contracting. This department ensures that all government communications comply with the law. It has the authority to withhold funds or halt communications if it deems them illegal or problematic. Each ministry has a permanent employee from the general accounting office. The department is regarded as very powerful, and the accountant in each ministry often succeeds in preventing corruption or misuse of power.

The law on party funding limits private donations to political parties and candidates. Individual candidates can receive donations of ILS 1,000–2,000 from each donor, while a political party can receive donations of no more than ILS 5,000 from each donor. Parties represented in the Knesset receive funding from the state.

Each officeholder must submit a conflict of interest statement as well as a statement of assets. In practice, many ministers and members of the Knesset do not comply, and enforcement is very weak. Each party or candidate is required by law to publish all sources of donations received, including the donor's identity and the amount. This regulation is followed.

The state comptroller is responsible for overseeing party donation rules. After each election, the state comptroller issues a report detailing violations of the Party Funding Law. However, the comptroller lacks sanctioning powers and, as a result, parties often disregard the imposed fines.

Legislature

Sufficient
Legislative
Resources
Score: 7

Each member of the Knesset has three assistants who are hired directly. Each member of the Knesset also has a personal budget to use at their discretion. In addition, members of the Knesset can utilize the resources of the Knesset Research and Information Center. The center has significantly increased its staff in the last couple of years and now has about 50 full-time employees. The center publishes about 300 research papers a year, including budget assessments for bills, policy papers and comparative reviews on specific issues. It can also respond to short questions from members of the Knesset. This significantly improves the analytical capacity of members of the Knesset and, as a result, enhances their oversight ability. Demand for the center’s papers and evaluations increases every year.

In addition, each committee chair has a legal advisor who can assist with legislation brought before the committee and the Knesset has a legal advisory department to assist members of the Knesset.

At the same time, the budget for each member of the Knesset is limited and typically used for political purposes rather than research. Although the number of assistants increased from two to three, it remains insufficient. One assistant generally handles media issues, another oversees legislation and only one is responsible for all other tasks, including oversight. Furthermore, while some members of the Knesset have very experienced assistants, many others recruit young, inexperienced assistants who are frequently replaced. This high turnover is partly due to the relatively low salaries. Thus, although members of the Knesset have greater access to resources than before, these resources remain insufficient for effective oversight.

Effective
Legislative
Oversight
Score: 6

In general, Knesset committees in Israel are considered weak compared to parliamentary committees in other countries. Each member of the Knesset is a member of several committees, which is problematic because they cannot attend all the meetings, making it more difficult to professionalize. The norm that committees are chaired by members of the opposition has been violated in the last four years. This further reduces committee powers (Hazan 2001). Knesset committees can summon any official in the executive and request any information. While representatives of the executive are not legally obligated to appear before a committee or present documents, they have typically appeared before committees. However, in recent years, there have been increasing instances of ministers instructing their officials not to appear before a committee, which has weakened the Knesset’s oversight power.

Each committee holds at least one meeting a year with the respective minister, during which the minister introduces the ministry's work plan for the upcoming year. This usually occurs during deliberations for the annual budget. The minister answers the committee's questions and high-ranking officials always accompany the minister to address additional inquiries.

Committees often ask for documents, which are frequently not provided on time. This is either because the ministry does not have the information or because it is trying to delay the response. In most cases, however, the information is eventually provided, even when it is uncomfortable for the government.

Members of the Knesset frequently use parliamentary questions as a tool to obtain information. However, ministers often do not provide answers in a reasonable timeframe and some ignore the questions altogether. There is no mechanism to compel ministers to respond.

Effective
Legislative
Investigations
Score: 5

The Knesset has the authority to establish a parliamentary inquiry committee. To do so, a majority in the plenum is required. This makes it difficult for the opposition to establish such a committee.

Even if such a committee is established, the law does not define its legal mandate. Therefore, parliamentary inquiry committees lack the authority to compel witnesses to appear before the committee and their powers are similar to those of a regular parliamentary committee. Over the years, several dozen such committees have been formed. However, while the respective reports were often critical of the government, the recommendations were rarely implemented.

Legislative
Capacity for
Guiding Policy
Score: 7

In the Israeli Knesset, there is alignment between the task areas of Knesset committees and government ministries. In general, there are fewer committees than ministries. Some committees oversee only one ministry. For example, the Immigration and Absorption Committee oversees the Ministry of Absorption. Other committees oversee many ministries. The Economic Affairs Committee oversees the ministries of transportation, energy, environment, communication, economy, agriculture and tourism. The Economic Affairs Committee is, therefore, overwhelmed with both oversight and legislative tasks. Most committees, however, are less overwhelmed, overseeing two or three ministries, most of which do not produce much legislation.

The cross-cutting issues of finance and legal matters are addressed by the Finance Committee, and the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee,

respectively. By having each committee handle specific ministries, they can specialize in their respective issue areas.

The committees meet three times a week, with two or three meetings each day. This schedule allows for the discussion of many issues.

A member of the opposition chaired the Economic Affairs Committee until 2019, when they were replaced by a member of the coalition government. Today, only marginal Knesset committees are chaired by members of the opposition.

Draft legislation often changes following committee deliberations. There are, however, some important exceptions. The judicial reform suggested by Minister of Justice Levin was deliberated for a very short period and remained unchanged following the deliberation.

Governing with Foresight

I. Coordination

Quality of Horizontal Coordination

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms of
the GO/PMO
Score: 5

The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) is responsible for coordinating between departments, monitoring and coordinating the preparation of annual plans, and overseeing the implementation of cabinet decisions (Galnoor 2010). The general director of the PMO chairs many of the interministerial committees aimed at developing and implementing interministerial programs.

Ministers do not need to obtain consent from the PMO for their proposals. However, if they want to introduce a cabinet decision, the prime minister must agree to place the decision on the cabinet’s agenda. The PMO does not hold meetings with ministers to hear about their proposals. The PMO can receive information on proposals either when they are introduced to the cabinet or if they pertain to committees chaired by the PMO general director. Otherwise, ministers are not required to submit their plans to the PMO.

The PMO has several departments responsible for coordination and planning. Until recently, the PMO was seen by the line ministries as a powerful entity capable of promoting interministerial projects. However, over the past two years, many officials in the PMO have either left or been replaced by individuals who are less professional and more partisan. Additionally, the general director of the PMO – the person responsible for coordinating all the ministries – is currently a loyalist who lacks the necessary skills and experience for the position, especially when compared to previous general directors. As a result, the PMO has become weaker. This was evident following October 7, as the government failed to respond to mounting social and economic needs, and coordinate between government departments.

At the same time, the void left by the absence of a powerful PMO has been filled by the Ministry of Finance. Almost all proposals need to be reviewed by

the Ministry of Finance. The ministry often uses its power to modify proposals even if they do not have financial implications. In addition, the ministry often drafts many of the ministerial legislative proposals as part of the Arrangements Law introduced with the annual budget (Kosti 2021). Hence, for line ministers to promote their policies, they often need the approval of the Ministry of Finance.

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms
within the
Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 5

Interministerial coordination primarily occurs when an interministerial committee is established (Shatz et al. 2016). Such committees are usually created to promote specific programs, such as the committee for at-risk youth or the committee addressing violence in the Arab sector. Additionally, there is a forum for general directors, which aims to facilitate the exchange of information. This forum was very active under the previous government, but rarely meets under the current administration. One reason for this is that the current general director of the PMO, who is responsible for summoning the forum, does not do so.

When preparing a government decision, the respective ministry is mandated to consult and obtain the agreement of all ministries relevant to the decision’s implementation. This is another mechanism for information sharing and collaboration. The same is true for legislation drafted within a ministry. This practice usually allows for deliberation between ministries and the modification of proposals.

Ministries do not have access to the digital platforms of other departments. Job rotations occur regularly in the Ministry of Finance. In other ministries, employees can apply for positions in different ministries, but the decision is personal and there are no incentives for such shifts.

In most cases, ministries are not caught off guard by the policies of other ministries. Although there is no systematic coordination mechanism, there are consultations and information sharing between individuals. However, there are instances where conflicts arise between departments due to a lack of coordination.

Complementary
Informal
Coordination
Score: 7

Informal meetings between officials occur frequently. For instance, they happen before and after weekly cabinet meetings, in the Knesset when officials attend committee sessions, and when parties convene. These meetings occur at all levels, among ministers, general directors, and finance directors across various ministries and the Ministry of Finance. Such meetings help

coordinate policies. However, informal meetings are typically held to solve problems, complementing rather than replacing formal coordination mechanisms.

Quality of Vertical Coordination

Effectively
Setting and
Monitoring
National
(Minimum)
Standards
Score: 5

In general, there is no national standard for the provision of local services. These services fall into two categories: those regulated by law and primarily funded by the central government; those funded by municipalities through local taxes, which are not regulated by the central government (Finkelstein 2020). Education and welfare services belong to the first category. The government funds 75% of these services, while localities contribute 25%. Most services are regulated in terms of target populations, content and benefits. Affluent localities with large budgets can supplement these services from their own funds, while poorer localities struggle to meet the 25% funding requirement. This disparity creates inequality in the services provided by different localities.

In the second type of services, there is no regulation and the decision on standards is left to the local authority. For instance, the local authority determines how many times a week trash should be collected and what cultural activities are provided. In education and welfare, the central government oversees the local authority to ensure that standards are met. In all other areas, there is no oversight.

Healthcare is national, and local authorities are minimally involved in decisions regarding the placement of clinics and services. Public transport is also national and falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Transportation, which regulates all aspects.

Effective
Multilevel
Cooperation
Score: 6

Almost all ministries responsible for providing services have regional offices. These offices oversee service provision at the local level and consult with local authorities. In addition, each local authority has departments for education, welfare and planning, which regularly exchange information with the central government. These communication channels are bureaucratic mechanisms, meaning they do not involve elected local politicians.

However, elected politicians at the local level who are part of the coalition often hold responsibility for specific fields and act like ministers at the local level. Therefore, they frequently try to promote their agendas by utilizing bureaucratic mechanisms.

Local authorities are united under the Local Authorities Center. This organization unites the heads of the local authorities (political rank) and represents the needs of their localities to the central government.

Policymaking in Israel is extremely centralized, and local governments have little autonomy and limited opportunities to express their views regarding policies (Finkelstein 2020). This applies to both bureaucrats and politicians. During the COVID-19 crisis, there was a demand to increase the autonomy and discretion of local authorities. So far, this has not occurred.

II. Consensus-Building

Recourse to Scientific Knowledge

Harnessing
Scientific
Knowledge
Effectively
Score: 6

There are no formal mechanisms for integrating scientific knowledge into policymaking. Often, the government establishes a committee to examine specific issues. These committees include experts, such as scientists from academia. Many committees are chaired by a judge and are generally independent. Committees analyze the problem and suggest solutions based on their professional understanding of the situation. Such committees have been formed for several significant legislative initiatives and reforms, including changes to the education system, the natural resource tax regime and land issues in the south concerning the Bedouins.

Hence, although no formal or regular mechanism for consultation exists, consultation with scientists and experts frequently occurs. However, the consultation process and the protocols of committee meetings are often not transparent. Nevertheless, most committee reports are made available to the public.

In addition, scientists from academia are often invited to various professional forums to share their opinions and findings. Many government ministries collaborate with academia by providing research grants for specific questions of interest or access to information. For instance, the Ministry of Education often issues calls for proposals on topics such as student evaluations and special education. The Prison System has issued calls for proposals that use data provided by the Prison System and the Ministry of Environmental Protection often provides grants for research on environmental issues. Furthermore, the Ministry of Science offers specific grants aimed at promoting

collaboration between government agencies, departments and academia to improve policymaking and public access to information. These various grants from the ministries and the Ministry of Science help to widen the circle of scientists consulted.

In the last year, the judicial overhaul has sparked significant criticism from scientists, particularly economists, legal scholars and political scientists, regarding government policy. Critics argue that mounting scientific evidence suggests the government’s policies will harm the economy and democracy in Israel. The government, however, has dismissed these critiques as partisan.

In the most recent national budget, the government imposed severe budget cuts on many scientific institutions and attempted to close the main scientific office of each ministry. This suggests that the current administration does not view science or scientists as important contributors to policymaking.

Non-governmental experts often criticize government policy. This is evident in their frequent appearances in the Knesset, the issuance of policy papers on various subjects and media interviews.

Involvement of Civil Society in Policy Development

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 6

Generally, there are no institutionalized mechanisms for tripartite consultation. A roundtable of employer, labor union and government representatives was formed in 2009 as part of the coalition agreement based on a Labor Party demand. However, the roundtable was discontinued after that coalition dissolved (Bondy and Maggor 2023). Currently, any consultation with employers and unions occurs on an ad hoc basis.

Moreover, the government generally avoids such consultation unless the cooperation of labor or capital is required for policy implementation. This applies to collective agreements in the public sector or when the government wishes to promote a reform in government-owned companies.

Unions participate in roundtables at the ministry level, alongside other stakeholder groups. For example, teachers’ unions are invited to roundtables held by the Ministry of Education.

The consultation process is not transparent to the public and is often not inclusive. Some governments have attempted to promote various reforms without consultation or with limited consultation. Other governments have taken a more inclusive approach. However, consultations are not formalized

and, therefore, depend on the minister or ministers in power. In many cases, the lack of inclusive consultation has resulted in strikes and hindered progress in the suggested reforms.

Usually, the government does not play an active or productive role in resolving conflicts between labor and capital.

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 7

Many welfare services in Israel are provided by NGOs and for-profit businesses (Paz-Fuchs et al. 2018). As a result, these entities are deeply involved in many stages of the policymaking process. The social ministries (education, welfare and immigration) often conduct roundtables with both for-profit and nonprofit organizations, where these organizations provide input on the discussed policies. Additionally, the ministries frequently use data provided by these social organizations and rely on their expertise. These organizations participate in many professional committees, are invited to Knesset meetings (usually by members of the Knesset rather than the ministries) (e.g., Gal & Weiss-Gal 2010) and issue numerous policy papers used by the government.

The consultation process lacks transparency, making it unclear whether a plurality of voices is represented or if the same organizations maintain a monopoly on specific fields due to their expertise. Consequently, it is challenging to determine the inclusivity of the process. There is no formal directive regarding who should be invited to the consultation; this is typically at the discretion of the department in charge.

The PMO hosts a roundtable that regularly consults with social organizations. However, there is no formal directive on the frequency of these consultations and no assessment of their actual effect on the policies implemented.

Social organizations express their dissatisfaction with government policy primarily when there are budget cuts or significant policy changes. Additionally, critique arises if a major scandal or severe problem is uncovered by the media. Given that social services in Israel have faced retrenchment over the past two decades, such critique has become more frequent. The government is minimally involved in resolving disputes within major organizations.

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Environment)
Score: 6

The main formal mechanism for the involvement of environmental organizations is the Law of Representation of Public Environmental Organizations (2002). According to this law, every statutory committee handling environmental issues (e.g., water, land and planning) must include a representative from an environmental organization. This ensures that these organizations can express their opinions and have them considered, as they are

full members of the committee. Although the decisions of the committees are transparent, the deliberations are not. In most cases, the minister of environmental protection selects the organizations that send representatives. Typically, environmental organizations agree among themselves on which organization will participate in which committee to prevent disputes and ensure inclusiveness.

In addition, environmental organizations are very active on planning issues, especially at the local level but also at the national level, particularly with regard to policymaking processes in the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Energy. Environmental organizations are regularly consulted on various policy issues, and can provide input through both formal and informal channels.

Moreover, environmental organizations often express their dissatisfaction with government policy in Knesset committees and through the media. Because environmental issues are not high on the government's agenda, politicians usually do not pay much attention to them.

Openness of Government

Open
Government
Score: 7

In recent years, the Israeli government has developed the platform GOV.IL, which includes quantitative data from various governmental departments and subjects. The data can be downloaded in various formats to facilitate use. This platform does not include administrative data, such as rules, regulations or cabinet decisions. These types of data can be found on each department's website. For instance, the Prime Minister's Office publishes cabinet decisions, the Ministry of Justice publishes all laws and rules introduced, and each ministry publishes its respective regulations.

When the government publishes a draft law or regulation, it allows the public to comment on the legislation or rule. All public comments are transparent. In most cases, there is sufficient time for the public to comment. However, over the past year, there have been several instances in which the public was given only a few days to comment. In most cases, the data is of high quality.

The type of data provided differs between ministries. The PMO refuses to publish summaries of cabinet meetings and often releases cabinet decisions with significant delays. The Ministry of Finance, on the other hand, publishes very detailed budgetary data, and information on various contracts between the ministries and third parties to address the demands of various groups.

The comparability of the data also varies. On the data.gov.il website, data is comparable across regions, groups and time periods. For other types of data, comparability is mostly absent. This website reflects the efforts of the specialist National Digital Agency, which is dedicated to enhancing the transparent digitalization of the government.

Government decisions are often not connected to the decisions they modify. This is also the case for data from the Ministry of Justice and most other ministry regulations. The only exception is the Ministry of Education, where data on previous regulations concerning the same issue are provided for each regulation.

Data is not provided in a timely manner across all departments, although new regulations and laws are published promptly. However, cabinet decisions are typically delayed by several weeks and statistical data on some issues are published only after several years.

The statistical data is user-friendly, while budgetary data can be downloaded as CSV or Excel files. However, the rules, regulations and decisions are not user-friendly, and are available only in PDF or HTML formats.

III. Sensemaking

Preparedness

Capacity for
Strategic
Foresight and
Anticipatory
Innovation
Score: 5

Since 2006, nearly all government ministries have established new departments for strategic planning and policy. The power and resources of these departments vary by ministry. For some ministries, they play a significant role in policymaking, while in others they are less meaningful. For instance, the strategic planning department in the Ministry of Health is highly influential. Its director participates in all management meetings, and the department issues numerous assessments and reports used for policy planning. Conversely, the strategic planning department in the Ministry of Social Welfare has less influence.

The PMO is responsible for coordinating these units and providing guidance and tools. In addition, the National Security Council, the National Economic Council, and the Planning, Coordination and Organization Division operate within the PMO. Each of these bodies is responsible for developing national strategy in the domains of defense, economy and government, respectively.

In practice, a large proportion of strategic development takes place in other bodies, most prominently the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance. Meanwhile, cooperation and coordination between the bodies is not stable. For example, in recent years, the National Economic Council has become increasingly perceived as politicized and its cooperation with the Ministry of Finance has been limited.

The PMO also includes the National Digital Agency, which is responsible for developing digital tools to improve government activities and promote transparency.

There is no strategic policy regarding policy experimentation. Some departments promote more experiments than others. For instance, the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of Transportation promote many policy experiments based on random sampling and scientific procedures. The Ministry of Welfare promotes many pilot projects on various programs and services. However, these are often not randomized trials and the targets are purposefully selected. All ministries have research departments, but their budgets are not large and their capacity to promote policy experimentation is limited. The current government initially intended to close down the scientific departments, but decided not to do so only after public pressure.

Foresight and innovation are not considered the main traits for the recruitment of civil servants.

In general, strategic plans do not include various scenarios and, in most cases, strategic planning units do not contribute significantly to the policy planning process. However, there are exceptions. For instance, the Ministry of Health has a very powerful strategic planning department that often issues policy proposals and scenarios. An attempt to empower the strategic planning department in the Ministry of Social Welfare did not succeed largely due to the objections of ministerial staff. At the same time, almost all Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health programs are piloted before being rolled out.

Analytical Competence

According to Government Decision No. 2118 of October 22, 2014, any new regulation must undergo a regulatory impact assessment before implementation. In 2021, the Regulatory Principal Law was passed. According to the law, regulations should be based on scientific principles and knowledge, should be transparent to the public, and involve relevant stakeholders. The law

defines the process for establishing new regulations and improving existing ones.

The law also established the independent Regulation Authority. Officially created in January 2023, the authority aims to consult regulatory agencies on regulations and develop strategic regulatory planning in Israel. The authority is designed as an independent organization, and its members should include experts with relevant academic and professional experience. Currently, however, the Regulatory Authority is understaffed, with only 10 employees as of mid-2023 (Eretz 2023).

Regulatory assessments should involve relevant stakeholders and regulatory impact assessment (RIA) reports should be published online. The authority oversees the RIA process across different departments. Both the authority and departments should publish periodic reports on the regulatory process, and the departments must also introduce long-term regulatory plans to the authority.

The law requires that a RIA be conducted for any new legislation. The only exemption is if urgent regulation is needed due to prevent severe public harm. Additionally, each department must re-examine existing regulations. The authority has set specific evaluation measures for the RIA process, including both input and output goals, such as the number of new businesses opened, the number of reports submitted, the amount of money saved and changes in Israel's ranking in international measures (e.g., PMR and IREG). Standards rely on quantitative measures and assessments based on reports provided by the agencies, excluding behavioral economic measures and techniques. The guidebook for introducing new regulation requires the use of data, scientific evidence and public deliberation when designing legislation.

Stakeholders are involved in the assessments because they provide information on RIAs. One measure of success is the percentage of evaluations conducted using public deliberation. Additionally, another measure examines the characteristics of stakeholders and the cost of compliance. RIAs are supposed to affect legislation because they include recommendations on whether to adopt the respective legislation or seek alternatives. However, an NGO that monitors these issues reports that the quality and effectiveness of RIAs vary significantly between ministries and government bodies. Evaluating government RIAs, the NGO found that in many cases there are no clear assessment criteria or systematic analysis of policy alternatives (<https://rnaki.org.il/regulation-and-ria/>).

The Regulatory Authority's website publishes periodic reports, including a recent report from 2021 that maps existing challenges and gaps in regulation

policy in Israel. Additionally, the annual regulatory plans of different agencies, updated for 2024, are also available on the website.

Effective Sustainability Checks
Score: 1

Neither the law, government decisions nor detailed guidelines on RIAs include any reference to a sustainable development strategy. There are no sustainability checks or assessments. The law and detailed guidelines only refer in passing to the need to assess environmental and social implications.

Effective Ex Post Evaluation
Score: 4

There is no general legal or formal requirement for ex post evaluation of policies. When evaluations do occur, they are typically initiated by individual ministries. Consequently, only some policy programs include an integral evaluation component and undergo periodic evaluations. There is no systematic information on whether and how these evaluations affect policy modifications. In recent years, the Ministry of Finance has advocated for increased funding for the evaluation of various projects, infrastructure and social programs.

When evaluations are conducted, they usually include public participation and consultation, as well as input from the main stakeholders. While evaluations were once primarily conducted by independent research institutions, it now appears that more evaluations are conducted by private strategic consulting firms.

Moreover, not all results are published. Publication depends on the responsible department. In some cases, the main results are published in the media, but the full report is not. In other cases, full reports are available on the respective ministry’s website, the research institution’s website or both.

Sustainable Policymaking

I. Economic Sustainability

Circular Economy

Circular
Economy Policy
Efforts and
Commitment
Score: 3

There is no circular economy strategy or roadmap, and the development of such a roadmap is only in its very early stages within the Ministry of Economy. However, there is a strategic waste disposal plan. The main goal of the plan is to reduce the amount of waste buried from 80% at present to 20% by 2030. The plan has a detailed roadmap and clearly defined goals. The action plans are geographically rather than sector specific, and encompass plans for waste disposal within municipal borders and between municipalities. The overall plan does not address all aspects in detail and cannot be seen as comprehensive. A more detailed plan was supposed to be developed in 2021; however, this did not take place. The last report by the Ministry of Environmental Protection on the subject was published in March 2022. Most efforts and funding were targeted toward building and improving waste disposal facilities and recycling centers. No progress has been made regarding new regulations. Since the change in government in December 2022, the strategic plan has not been discussed.

There are sporadic projects promoted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. For instance, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Economy have a joint project involving industrial partners, which aims to repurpose waste from one factory as material for use in another factory. The ministries help coordinate between the various industrial partners. The project began in 2021 and has resulted in 140 deals being signed so far.

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Resilient
Critical
Infrastructure
Score: 5

Viable Critical Infrastructure

In 2023, the government passed legislation that includes a list of critical infrastructure projects by categories, including tunnels, electricity, water, oil and gas, transport, and waste. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for coordinating policy regarding critical infrastructure. According to law, critical infrastructure projects will be prioritized over others. Additionally, the relevant government department will appoint a specific individual responsible for coordinating and managing critical infrastructure projects. Furthermore, various regulatory and other barriers that face regular infrastructure projects can be bypassed in the case of critical infrastructure projects. The schedule for critical infrastructure projects will be published publicly.

According to the Planning and Construction Law, the government must establish a ministerial committee for critical infrastructure. The committee is chaired by the prime minister, and its members include the minister of finance, the minister of the interior, the minister of environmental protection and the relevant minister based on the subject matter handled by the committee. A minister who wishes to promote a national planning program related to critical infrastructure must present the program to the ministerial committee and receive its approval before moving forward.

Because this amendment to the law is new, the committee has not yet issued any decisions. The amendment also requires the National Mapping Center to map all infrastructure projects for prioritization. This mapping exercise took place recently; however, no strategic plan has been prepared. The Ministry of Finance is the administrative organization responsible for planning and coordination, but it has not introduced any strategic plan yet.

In 2020, the state comptroller reported that there were many gaps in the readiness of Israel’s defense system to protect critical infrastructure from missiles, rockets and other air threats. The comptroller noted that, despite the 2011 decision to safeguard critical infrastructure, no action had been taken. Furthermore, the Ministry of Defense, which is the responsible department in this case, has not provided any operative plans (State Comptroller, 2020).

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving a Decarbonized Energy System by 2050
Score: 4

Decarbonized Energy System

A carbon tax was approved in January 2024, although its implementation has been postponed to 2025 (Ashkenazi 2024). The new carbon tax will include government subsidies to industry, but lacks specific requirements for improved energy efficiency in factories. Alongside the adoption of the carbon tax, the government increased subsidies for natural gas supply, which the Ministry of Environmental Protection opposed. The government also approved subsidies for enhancing energy efficiency, although it has been argued that these are under-budgeted. This reflects the government’s general reliance on market regulation rather than significant public investment.

The prevailing taxation on fossil fuels mainly pertains to gas for cars and industry. The existing policy does not compensate for the full costs and externalities of using carbon, as found in a policy paper prepared by the Ministry of Environmental Protection in 2021.

In 2021, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, along with the ministries of economy, energy and Transportation, and the OECD, began a strategic process to develop a roadmap for decreasing carbon use by 2050. The programs are broken down by sector: energy, transportation, construction, industry and waste. Each sector includes a detailed plan with specific measures and goals (Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2021).

In addition, the Ministry of Environmental Protection has proposed the Climate Law to address carbon and energy-related issues; however, the law has not yet passed. The OECD stated in May 2023 that Israel was failing to meet all the climate standards set by the organization.

Adaptive Labor Markets

Policies Targeting an Adaptive Labor Market
Score: 5

The main body responsible for vocational training is the Ministry of Labor. One of the ministry’s official goals is to provide training for people over the age of 18 to reduce socioeconomic inequalities and improve productivity. Until recently, the budget for and scope of vocational training, which had always low by international standards, was declining over time. However, following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has increased significantly (Adva 2024). Nevertheless, over the years, vocational training has become a policy targeted at the lower classes rather than a tool to develop human capital. Employees are not expected or encouraged to develop their skills during their careers. This is problematic due to the growing shortage of industrial workers

in general and high-tech workers in particular. In addition to the Ministry of Labor, other ministries promoting vocational training include the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defense, which provides much of the practical training for prospective tech sector workers.

There is no comprehensive policy with specific roadmaps and goals for different sectors, resulting in loose coordination among organizations (State Comptroller 2021). Moreover, no single coordinating body is responsible for overseeing vocational training and ensuring it meets its goals. Most training is conducted by private organizations and, until recently, no entity matched existing training programs to industry needs. Many training programs are financed by vouchers provided to trainees. Furthermore, there is little oversight of the types of training these vouchers support and their usefulness for the economy or individuals. The main stakeholders are not involved in the vocational training process (State Comptroller 2021).

The existing situation does not facilitate mobility nor does it provide tools for employees to handle economic shocks. This was evident during the COVID-19 crisis. The vocational training policy also does not facilitate worker mobilization.

There are no short-time work schemes to mitigate economic shocks. During the COVID-19 pandemic and the current war with Hamas, the government allowed employers to furlough employees, who were then able to claim unemployment benefits (Debowy et al. 2022). As a result, it appears that more working hours were lost and more employees were detached from their current workplaces.

Policies
Targeting an
Inclusive Labor
Market
Score: 5

Israel’s earned income tax credit program aims to encourage unemployed individuals to participate in the labor market. The program provides benefits to low-paid employees who participate more in the labor market. The National Insurance Institution and the Bank of Israel (the central bank) monitor the utilization of the program and its effects on labor market participation. Over the years, the process for receiving income tax credits has been improved and the benefits received have increased, enhancing the program’s effectiveness. Labor market participation is particularly low among Arab women and ultraorthodox men. For Arab women, various programs, including vocational training, are promoted by non-governmental and governmental agencies. Although the employment rate of Arab women increased to 41% in 2023, it remains low compared to Jewish women. The current programs are insufficient to address gaps in human capital and do not tackle infrastructural barriers, such as the need in Arab villages for effective public transport (Knesset Research Center, 2023).

The government implements various programs, including vocational training, to increase the employment rate of ultraorthodox men. However, despite significant investment in this area, progress remains limited. One of the main reasons for this lack of progress is that ultraorthodox men can avoid being drafted into the army if they remain in the Yeshiva until age 26. This policy disincentivizes ultraorthodox men from participating in the labor market. Moreover, the government does not mandate the teaching of basic skills, such as mathematics and English, in ultraorthodox schools for boys. Consequently, students in the ultraorthodox school system often lack essential workplace skills (Knesset Research Center, 2022).

Women working in the civil service are eligible to work one hour less if they have children under age five and are employed full time.

In addition, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the civil service issued a directive that allows employees to work remotely several times a week and complete extra hours remotely. While this directive should improve work-life balance, it applies only to workers directly employed by governmental bodies, as a result its effect is limited.

Policies
Targeting Labor
Market Risks
Score: 6

There are various protections against labor market risks, but these are generally limited in scope.

Unemployment benefits are comparatively low in both replacement rate and duration, partly due to a lack of funding following reductions in employers' payments (Koreh 2020). Employees are eligible for unemployment benefits if they have worked for at least 12 out of the last 18 months.

Self-employed workers are not eligible for unemployment benefits. Various attempts to change this situation over the years have failed. Self-employed workers are also not eligible for other benefits such as paid leave, sick days or vacation.

In Israel, a mandatory pension law has been in place since 2018, requiring 18.5% of the value of an employee's salary to be paid into a pension fund. Employees contribute 6% of their salary, while the employer covers the rest. Self-employed workers are also subject to this requirement. This mandatory pension system reflects a privatized scheme, ensuring that all employees have privately managed pension funds (Lurie 2018).

All government employees (including civil servants and local authority workers) are represented by the central labor union. However, this does not

include workers in outsourced public services, who are usually not organized and enjoy only basic mandatory work benefits (Paz-Fuchs 2018). In addition, unionization of private sector employees has been increasing in recent years, particularly among workers of high-tech and service provision companies. In 2022, 30% of employees in Israel were members of a labor union (Kolerman 2022).

Sustainable Taxation

Policies
Targeting
Adequate Tax
Revenue
Score: 6

Tax policy includes tax exemptions for individuals and companies to encourage investment and labor market participation. For individuals, there are tax exemptions for women, Israeli citizens, parents with small children and university graduates. Employees do not need to file an annual tax report to receive an exemption.

There are also exemptions for companies, especially high-tech firms, and those operating in peripheral regions, to encourage investment in Israel, particularly in areas where there is a shortage of jobs.

The administrative capacity to collect taxes is generally sufficient. However, over the past two years, a personnel shortage in the Tax Authority has made it more challenging for the agency to meet its goals. In Israel, only self-employed workers are required to file an annual tax report, which makes it difficult for the authority to identify tax evasion. To address this, the Tax Authority has launched a platform for receiving anonymous reports on tax evasion and conducts investigations to uncover such cases. Nevertheless, these efforts do not cover the entire scope of tax evasion.

The current war with Hamas has dramatically increased public spending on military and social needs. However, it is still unclear how the government will increase revenues following the war.

Policies
Targeting Tax
Equity
Score: 6

Income tax in Israel is progressive, though the exemptions described in the previous section tend to reduce its progressiveness, as exemptions mainly apply to high earners. Over the years, there has been a steady decrease in the income and corporate tax burden, accompanied by a rise in indirect taxes (especially VAT), which are regressive. The VAT in Israel is quite high at 17% and is set to increase to 18% in 2025 due to the costs of war. The VAT is consistent across services and areas, except for fruits and vegetables, which are completely exempt. There is no inheritance tax in Israel, but there is a tax on capital that contributes very little to government revenue.

Each year, the government designates several areas of the country (mostly peripheral regions) as eligible for tax exemptions, which individuals can deduct from their overall tax liabilities, including labor and capital. Corporate taxes also include various exemptions for companies located in peripheral areas to encourage investment in these regions.

In addition, there is no VAT in Eilat, a touristic city in the south of Israel.

Policies Aimed at
Minimizing
Compliance
Costs
Score: 9

Israeli employees do not have to file a tax report, which increases compliance and reduces administrative costs. Employers report their income annually. An employee working for more than one employer has to file a request for tax coordination. In recent years, this request can be filed online via the tax authority website. Individuals receive the necessary form electronically and immediately, which further increases compliance.

Self-employed individuals must submit an annual tax report. To do so, many use accountancy services. In general, tax regulations are accessible and well explained on the tax authority website, and the tax authority has branches in many localities.

Lastly, each Israeli citizen can access their personal files from and track the progress of various requests with the tax authority.

Policies Aimed at
Internalizing
Negative and
Positive
Externalities
Score: 6

Several measures are used to internalize externalities. There is a special tax on gasoline for cars and on the purchase of cars. Additionally, there is a special tax on tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes. The previous government promoted a tax on road usage during rush hours, although this initiative was dropping following the elections. The previous government also added a tax on plastic tableware and cutlery. However, the current government has removed this tax.

The government provides tax deductions for projects defined by the Authority for Innovation as research and development. Additionally, recognized research and development companies are entitled to other deductions and benefits.

Sustainable Budgeting

Sustainable
Budgeting
Policies
Score: 5

Israel’s budgetary policy operates under two main fiscal rules: a deficit ceiling and an expenditure rule that limits year-on-year budget growth. Additionally, a mechanism records all future expenditures based on cabinet decisions and legislation. Consequently, even if certain ministries increase their funding, the

government often balances the budget through flat rate cuts across all departments or targeted cuts to specific projects.

During crises, these rules can be marginalized. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government allocated additional funds for various health and economic needs regardless of the fiscal rules. Nevertheless, while Israel has the fiscal capacity to increase spending during crises, the Ministry of Finance is commonly reluctant to do so.

Each ministry has budgetary reserves. In addition, national reserves are maintained for periods of crisis. The use of these reserves is solely at the discretion of the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, as noted in various reports by the state comptroller, the Ministry of Finance also holds hidden budgetary reserves. These reserves are intended not only for crises but also to counter possible political pressures to increase spending. An example of a hidden reserve involves allocating significantly more funds than needed to a line item for salaries or other rigid expenditures.

There is no prioritization of public investment in existing budget rules. Additionally, there is no long-term planning or evaluation of budget impact. The fiscal rules primarily aim to limit public spending rather than differentiate between regular expenditures and long-term investments (Strawczynski, 2023).

The budgetary process lacks transparency. The Ministry of Finance prepares the budget through the Budget Department, which drafts budget documents and presents them to the ministries. These documents, which detail the necessary budget adjustments, are not available to the public. Following negotiations, each ministry signs a budget agreement with the Ministry of Finance. These agreements also lack transparency. Recently, a petition was filed in court to make these agreements publicly accessible. Moreover, the budget agreements include both the changes introduced to the Knesset and additional changes that will occur during the fiscal year. Because of this lack of transparency, the Knesset remains unaware of the additional promised sums and therefore approves an incomplete budget.

Any budgetary changes made during the budget implementation stage are transparent. All budget transfers are published before being approved by the Knesset's Finance Committee. In addition, all budget figures are publicly available after the budget is approved.

Specific budgets do not include target lines; however, budget figures are accompanied by a more general economic overview from the Ministry of

Finance, where goals are mentioned. Additionally, each ministry includes budget objectives, which are part of the budget documents submitted to the Knesset and publicly accessible.

Sustainability-oriented Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Score: 5

In general, Israel's research and development (R&D) sector is based on three pillars: scientific research, primarily conducted in academia at seven universities; research performed in government and public research institutes; and research carried out by civil-industrial partnerships. Government and public bodies are the primary sources of R&D funding, providing financial support for well over half of Israel's R&D activities. The major share of these funds for civil R&D purposes is allocated for economic development, mainly in the industrial and agricultural sectors (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Science, n.d).

The Israel Innovation Authority is the leading government agency responsible for national innovation efforts. This includes enhancing startups and the high-tech industry as a whole. The authority has several units that focus on startups, growth, international efforts and infrastructure. It provides grants and consults with various companies.

The authority's focus includes climate and sustainability issues. According to its recent report, USD 0.14 in every U.S. dollar invested in Israeli high-tech are directed toward climate-related ventures. Between 2022 and 2023, there was a 13% increase in Israeli companies developing various technological solutions to address climate challenges (an increase of 90 companies).

In 2022, the government adopted the 1685 decision, "encouraging Israeli innovation and promoting collaboration with the high-tech industry to address the issue of climate change." The decision includes various activities to encourage the tech sector to invest more in developing solutions for climate change and increase the use of renewable energy. However, the decision did not increase the budget for the Ministry of Science nor the Innovation Authority, and explicitly stated that any additional funding will come from the ministry's existing resources. Thus, while the decision was an important step in promoting innovation and research on climate change, the resources provided were insufficient.

The government does not periodically monitor these activities.

Global Financial
Policies
Score: 6

Stable Global Financial System

The financial system in Israel is regulated by two main bodies: the Banking Supervision Division within the Bank of Israel, which supervises Israeli banks, and the Capital and Insurance Supervision Authority at the Ministry of Finance, which supervises insurance companies and institutional investors. A third body, the Israel Securities Authority, supervises the stock exchange. Coordination between these bodies is limited, and a committee formed to define the exact division of labor and cooperation between the financial regulators has not yet completed its work (State Comptroller 2024).

The financial regulators have adopted the Basel III regulations and the Banking Supervision division within the Bank of Israel conducts regular stress tests. Conversely, the state comptroller (2024) recently found that the resources of the Capital and Insurance Supervision Authority, which is part of the Ministry of Finance, are relatively low compared to similar agencies in other countries and that its risk assessment apparatus has not been functioning well in recent years.

The main goal of the financial regulators in recent years has been to expand competition within a system that was previously very uncompetitive and conservative. (This was one of the reasons cited by the Bank of Israel for the relatively mild effects of the 2008 financial crisis in Israel). In practice, the increased competition has so far mainly benefited big businesses, given reduced credit costs, rather than households and SMEs (Flaiszhaker 2022). One of the steps taken in this direction has been the formation of a credit rating database for individuals. However, it is still unclear whether this step has increased competition for households and lowered their credit costs.

Israel has not been proactive in eliminating tax havens. Moreover, in 2010, it passed a law that provides a 10-year tax exemption for Jewish immigrants and returning Israeli residents, which effectively made Israel a tax haven. On the other hand, Israel participates in the OECD's international treaty to prevent corruption and combat money laundering through the Authority of Prohibition of Money Laundering, and has been a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) since 2018. The FATF has recognized Israel as a leading country in tackling money laundering.

II. Social Sustainability

Sustainable Education System

Policies
Targeting Quality
Education
Score: 5

The Ministry of Education budget accounts for 14% of the national budget. According to an OECD report, total expenditure on primary and secondary educational institutions as a percentage of GDP in Israel is 6.4%, compared to the OECD average of 5.1% (OECD, 2023). However, in per capita terms, national spending on education in Israel is 13% – 37% lower than the OECD average. This discrepancy affects teachers' salaries, which are 10% to 15% lower than the OECD average (Knesset Research Center, 2023a).

There is a significant shortage of educators at all levels. Since 2018, the number of teaching and education graduates has decreased. Only 70% of those who graduate enter the school system. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in the retirement of veteran teachers and a decrease in the entrance of young teachers. Additionally, the share of young teachers leaving the education system increased from 13% in 2018 to 21% in 2021 (Knesset Research Center, 2023b).

The school curriculum does not align with labor market demand. Additionally, there are very few lifelong learning opportunities. The Ministry of Education department responsible for adult education offers limited programs and has suffered severe budget cuts over an extended period.

The government has several programs aimed at recruiting highly skilled educators. These include excellence programs in university faculties and providing benefits to high-tech workers who become teachers. However, these programs are very exclusive and small. As a result, the number of graduates from these programs does not meet the need for highly skilled educators.

To improve the education level of existing teachers, various incentives are provided to those who complete a master's degree. Additionally, secondary school teachers are required to hold a master's degree. The Ministry of Education promotes various training programs for teachers and offers financial incentives for completing these trainings.

There are some classes and workshops on sustainable development; however, this is not integrated into the school curriculum.

Policies
Targeting
Equitable Access
to Education
Score: 6

All children in Israel are eligible for free public education from age three until 12th grade. The education system ensures equal access until 12th grade regardless of a child's economic status (Knesset Research Center 2015).

Preschool teachers are qualified and supervised by the Ministry of Education. The preschool curriculum aims to prepare all children for primary education. Children from peripheral areas and localities with low socioeconomic status are also eligible for after-school programs. In other localities, after-school programs are partially subsidized by the central government and, in some cases, by the local authority.

Most daycare services for children aged under three are private. Some semi-public daycare services are supervised and subsidized by the Ministry of Labor. Low-income families pay subsidized tuition based on various criteria. Private daycare services are not supervised. Recently, the government introduced subsidies for children aged three and under who attend private daycare, although primarily through tax exemptions that benefit high earners. Alongside the public education system, there is a private education system for ultraorthodox children. Some schools within this system are not supervised at all by the Ministry of Education, while are partially supervised. Boys' schools that lack supervision do not teach mathematics or English. This contributes to severe inequalities, as graduates from these schools face challenges integrating into the labor market and society. The partially supervised schools offer minimal mathematics and English instruction, and their graduates also struggle in integrate into the labor market. Although girls' schools also lack supervision, they do teach mathematics and English, and their graduates often take the general graduation exams, allowing them to enroll in universities. Notably, the current government has decided to increase funding for unsupervised schools, despite the refusal of such schools to accept any supervision or changes to their curriculum.

The regular education system is divided into three branches: general, religious and Arab. Pupils in religious schools receive preferential budgeting of approximately 30% more compared to pupils in general schools, while pupils in Arab schools suffer from reduced budgeting of about 9% less compared to pupils in general schools (Knesset Research Center 2023). Opportunities for second-chance education exist predominantly at the local level. These programs, typically operated by nonprofit organizations and subsidized by the Ministry of Education, receive minimal funding. Universities also offer second-chance opportunities. For example, students can enroll for an additional year before their undergraduate studies, with their grades from exams taken during that year serving as a substitute for general graduation exams.

Policies
Targeting Equal
Access to
Essential Services
and Basic Income
Support
Score: 5

Sustainable Institutions Supporting Basic Human Needs

The main agency tasked with managing social security benefits and subsidies for people in poverty in Israel is the National Insurance Institute (NII). In recent years, the NII has proactively attempted to inform eligible individuals of their rights and benefits. The institute was very active throughout the COVID-19 crisis and has remained so following the outbreak of Israel’s war with Hamas in October 2023. The NII has also established a special center to further increase take-up and inform individuals of their social rights. The Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for the income tax credit, has also taken a proactive approach, notifying people of their eligibility for the benefit and urging them to apply. However, the basic income paid to individuals and households is low, and has not kept pace with the rise in the average wage.

Israel’s public housing policy is very thin. There is very little public housing, and many properties require significant repairs and are located in peripheral areas where there are fewer job opportunities. The waiting list for public housing is very long, often taking several years.

The waiting list for public housing is composed of two types of populations: people in poverty and elderly individuals who immigrated from Russia in the 1990s. These two groups are on different waiting lists. Elderly immigrants from Russia are eligible for public housing or elderly care. Some of the elderly care facilities they are eligible for are run by the Ministry of Housing, but most are private.

While waiting for public housing, the two eligible groups receive rent assistance. However, due to Israel’s very high property prices, the amount of the benefit is, in most cases, insufficient.

Individuals receiving benefits from the NII are eligible for reduced electricity and water rates. In addition, the electricity company cannot disconnect their service if they do not pay their bills on time. They are also eligible for reduced public transport and city taxes.

There are no benefits related to digital services, and issues such as debt relief are discussed with an individual’s bank and are not under a government mandate.

Policies
Targeting Quality
of Essential
Services and
Basic Income
Support
Score: 3

The basic income is insufficient to fulfill basic needs. It ranges from ILS 1,569 per month to ILS 4,990 per month. The current average salary is ILS 12,492 per month and the minimum wage is ILS 5,880 per month. The 2023 Alternative Poverty Report argued that the minimum cost of living for a family is ILS 12,900 per month.

Rent assistance for a family with three children, which is eligible for the basic income, is ILS 1,170 per month. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the city center of Tel Aviv is about ILS 4,000 per month. “Families are eligible for a 50% discount on their electricity bill. They are also eligible for a 50% discount on public transportation. There are no discounts or reduced rates for digital services or financial services.”

High poverty rates among the country’s Arab and ultraorthodox populations reduce public support for expanding assistance to poor families.

Sustainable Health System

Policies
Targeting Health
System
Resilience
Score: 8

Israel’s healthcare system is highly centralized and digitalized and operates mainly through four health funds. The high level of centralization and digitalization facilitated effective monitoring of COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as vaccination and response efforts.

Strategically, Israel’s healthcare system is based on the 1994 State Health Insurance Law, which aims to provide accessible healthcare to all Israeli residents. To ensure the continued expansion of healthcare services and technologies, a special intersectoral committee under the auspices of the Ministry of Health meets annually to decide on additions to the healthcare services “basket” available to the Israeli public.

One of the main challenges facing Israel’s healthcare system, which has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis and Israel’s war with Hamas since October 2023, is the availability and diversity of public mental health services. Both crises increased the need for mental health services and the system is struggling to meet the demand. A significant step toward addressing this issue involved providing special grants for psychologists in the public healthcare system to boost the availability of their services and encourage them to work in the public rather than the private sector.

To offset the costs of an aging population, the Ministry of Health has developed a strategic plan with measurable goals and indicators to monitor the

health situation of elderly people and relevant services. Among the programs being implemented are collaborative initiatives with local authorities to promote healthier lifestyles among elderly people. In addition, health funds proactively monitor the health situation, detecting chronic diseases, and improving rehabilitation facilities and services.

Policies Targeting High-Quality Healthcare
Score: 8

Israel’s healthcare system invests in preventive treatment. The “health basket” (i.e., basic services provided to the entire population) includes early check-ups for various types of cancer, a Papilloma vaccine and treatments for tobacco addiction, among other things. In the last couple of years, more preventive treatments have been added to the health basket and medicine basket (i.e., the drugs and technologies provided to all citizens).

Policies for adopting a healthy lifestyle are less developed; however, there are various programs and vouchers available to encourage beneficiaries to be more physically active.

One of the main problems facing Israel’s healthcare system is the waiting period for various healthcare services, such as MRI scans or appointments with specialist physicians. These issues are particularly severe in peripheral regions, where individuals can wait several months for an MRI appointment and over a month to see a specialist. Despite these delays, the services provided are of high quality.

The healthcare system is highly digitalized, which enables integrated treatment, and the flow of information between experts and healthcare facilities.

Policies Targeting Equitable Access To Healthcare
Score: 6

There are differences in the availability of healthcare services between the center and periphery of the country. The average distance to the closest healthcare facility in the center is 29.7 km, while the average distance in the north is 133 km. The number of hospital beds is also lower in peripheral regions than in the center, as are waiting times for specialist services.

In 2018, the Ministry of Health issued a directive that health equity should be considered in all healthcare policymaking. The ministry has provided guidelines on promoting health equity when designing policies. Additionally, it created a database on health inequalities and gaps among various populations, which is periodically updated.

One of the barriers to equitable health treatment is the availability of expert physicians in peripheral areas. To address this issue, expert physicians

working in these regions and specializing in fields where there is a shortage of physicians will be eligible for a special grant.

Equality in healthcare provision is somewhat hindered by the availability of private medical services, which operate within some semi-public hospitals, and are financed by private and semi-private insurance. These services and insurance plans mainly serve middle-class families and allow them, for example, to choose a surgeon or to receive medical treatments that are not included in the universal healthcare basket (Filc 2018).

Gender Equality

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality
Score: 3

There is no comprehensive strategy to achieve gender equality. Gender equality has not been declared one of the government’s official goals, nor has the government set any goals or measurable targets. Moreover, gender equality and the commitment to promote it have decreased since the current government came to power. The number of women in senior positions has significantly declined. Of the 34 government ministries, only one has a female general director, compared to 10 under the previous government. Additionally, senior politicians consistently attack gender equality in the army and the opening of more positions for women. However, despite these attacks, the inclusion of women in more senior army positions continues.

The current government established a special ministry to promote the status of women. However, this ministry was closed after less than a year, although this had little impact on the status of women, as the ministry lacked both funding and authority.

In the civil service, there is an affirmative action directive to increase women’s representation. A taskforce is also examining the barriers facing women in academia.

Strong Families

Family Policies
Score: 6

Israeli family policy includes 15 weeks of maternity leave on full pay for employees who have been employed for the last 12 months, along with an additional 11 weeks of unpaid leave. For families with more than one child, the mother is eligible for an additional three weeks of paid leave. After six weeks, the second partner can replace the mother and take parental leave. The

second partner is also eligible for three sick days after the birth of a child. The employer cannot fire a woman returning from maternity leave for 60 days following the end of the leave.

Parents have eight sick days to care for children and elderly parents. However, Israeli policies largely fail to promote shared responsibility. For example, the second partner can only take parental leave by replacing the first partner.

Childcare is accessible and available for children from the age of three, with mandatory free public education. For children under three years old, there are very few publicly subsidized childcare slots and those that do exist are provided by non-governmental organizations. These organizations face difficulties recruiting staff due to low wages, which also limits the number of available slots. Single-parent and low-income families are eligible for reduced tuition fees. Tuition for other families is relatively high but not as high as in private childcare centers. Most childcare for children under three is private. In some areas, there are waiting lists of several months for childcare. Tuition in private childcare centers is extremely high and can be 1.5 times more than in public childcare centers.

All parents receive a child allowance from the National Insurance Institute. These allowances are universal and automatic upon the child's formal registration at birth. Therefore, their take-up is high. Additionally, working parents receive tax exemptions for children under the age of five.

Sustainable Pension System

Policies Aimed at
Old-Age Poverty
Prevention
Score: 4

Each elderly citizen in Israel is eligible for a monthly allowance of ILS 2,337. Elderly citizens without an additional pension receive a supplementary benefit, bringing their total monthly allowance to ILS 3,237. Unlike in many other OECD countries, most elderly people's income in Israel comes from private, not public, sources. Consequently, about 65% of elderly people continue to work past the official retirement age. Among those who do not work, 54% lack pension savings and thus depend on government support, with many falling below the poverty line (Macro 2021).

The average income of an elderly person is ILS 7,381 per year, while their average expenses amount to ILS 8,563 per year. One in five elderly citizens lives in poverty.

Following the large wave of immigration from Russia in the 1990s, a significant proportion of the population lacks any pension at all. Additionally,

a sizable veteran population lacks pension savings. Mandatory pension coverage has only been in place since 2008 and applies exclusively to employed individuals. As a result, the pension savings of those in precarious jobs are low and their rights are sometimes compromised due to inconsistent payments (Lurie 2018).

Taken together, the existing pension system does not cover the basic needs of Israel’s elderly population. While the mandatory pension improves the situation for workers entering the labor market, it is insufficient for older people who did not have enough time to save for a pension, including immigrants who do not receive pensions from their countries of origin.

Policies
Targeting
Intergenerational
Equity
Score: 5

Current policies encourage people to continue working after the retirement age of 67. For each additional year of work, the old-age benefit provided through the National Insurance Institute increases. Since 2019, people receive an additional 2% to the old-age benefit for every year they pay into the insurance scheme, up to a maximum of 50%. Additionally, if a senior citizen decides to postpone eligibility for an old-age benefit, they will receive an additional 5% for each year.

The retirement age is currently 65 for women and 67 for men. Only after this age can people receive their pension and old-age benefits.

The pension system does not guarantee elderly people sufficient income following retirement, because pension payments are based on defined contributions not defined benefits. As a result, people who did not start saving early enough for their pensions or who did not save enough will not have sufficient income following retirement.

National Insurance Institute funding is insufficient and, unless this situation changes (e.g., an increase in payments or a curtailment of rights), the institute will run out of resources in the next 10–20 years (Koreh 2019).

Sustainable Inclusion of Migrants

Integration Policy
Score: 7

In Israel, integration policy is targeted exclusively at Jewish immigrants who immigrate under the Law of Return. These immigrants receive Israeli citizenship upon arrival and are thus eligible for all social benefits provided to veteran citizens. Additionally, a comprehensive integration policy is coordinated by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. Each immigrant is eligible for free Hebrew classes for the first six months. The classes are

offered either by the Ministry of Education or through private organizations via vouchers. Furthermore, more advanced classes are available to specific sectors, aimed at improving the language skills needed for employment as physicians or other professionals.

Each immigrant is also eligible for a vocational training voucher, which they can use to enroll in one of the many available private training programs. Immigrants who wish to become self-employed are eligible for a business loan, and several hours of guidance and consultation at entrepreneurship centers located across the country. For scientists, there are programs in which the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption pays the scientist's salary for several years. Additionally, there are programs in which the ministry pays the salary of immigrants for six months at governmental departments and institutions.

The accreditation of skills acquired abroad falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which examines the academic degree. In addition, physicians must pass several exams to practice medicine. The ministry provides a preparation course for the exams and pays an allowance during the preparation time. Some parts of the exam can be taken in the immigrant's native language. Exams are also mandatory for other professions, such as psychologists and architects. Accreditation in these professions is managed by the respective professional organizations.

Under the Law of Return, immigrants eligible to enter Israel must provide evidence that they, one of their parents, or one of their grandparents were Jewish. The spouse of an eligible immigrant under the Law of Return is also eligible to enter Israel and receive citizenship. However, a parent of an eligible immigrant is not eligible and must apply for permanent resident status, which is difficult to obtain.

Immigrants are eligible to vote upon arrival. In addition, the government supports various grassroots immigrant organizations that help immigrants integrate into society.

The number of immigrants coming to Israel each year is relatively small. As a result, the ministry has adopted a "one-on-one" approach, providing each immigrant with a tailor-made integration program and a contact person to guide them during their first year following arrival.

A special Ministry of Immigrant Absorption department is responsible for university students, and provides tuition support, assists with bureaucracy and organizes various social activities.

The ministry's annual work plan outlines the strategic goals for the upcoming year and the measures to achieve these objectives. For example, in 2023, one of the ministry's goals was to improve the initial integration of immigrants by increasing the percentage of immigrants who meet a ministry representative three weeks after their arrival.

Integration policies are coordinated by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and implemented by a range of ministries. Therefore, several interministerial committees handle various immigrant absorption issues.

While integration policies for immigrants with a Jewish background are well developed, the opposite is true for non-Jewish immigrants. Most non-Jewish immigrants to Israel enter illegally and the government largely refrains from processing asylum requests. Immigrants who enter the country illegally are eligible only for very basic medical cover, have limited social rights and do not receive any public support to integrate into the labor markets. Nevertheless, their children can enroll in public schools.

Effective Capacity-Building for Global Poverty Reduction

Management of
Development
Cooperation by
Partner Country
Score: 5

The agency responsible for international development is the Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV). It is located within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The agency is tasked with developing and implementing foreign aid policy. It provides guidance and consultation to various countries on issues where Israel has a relative advantage, such as agriculture, healthcare, education, innovation and entrepreneurship, and community planning. The agency trains local personnel on these issues and provides advice. Since its establishment in 1958, it has provided guidance to more than 350,000 people (MASHAV, 2024).

MASHAV's main task is to facilitate access to knowledge and technology, either through training or consultation, as well as attract leaders from various fields to train in Israel.

In healthcare, MASHAV focuses on capacity-building, urgent care medicine, trauma care and mass casualty incidents, areas where Israel has a relative advantage. Additionally, in 2022, Israel established an emergency hospital in Poland near the border with Ukraine to assist refugees fleeing the war with Russia.

All activities are promoted in collaboration with local organizations and local leadership.

The department operates based on the United Nation’s 17 goals for international development, set in 2015 (SDGs). These also serve as the unit’s strategic goals.

The programs are not frequently monitored. While MASHAV publishes an annual report, the report only highlights the department’s various activities and does not evaluate any programs.

Israel’s funding for aid and development is low compared to other OECD countries. On average, Israel allocates \$200–0 million per year, which is only 0.07% of its GDP – the lowest share among OECD countries (OECD). To expand its activities, MASHAV collaborates with various international aid organizations.

III. Environmental Sustainability

Effective Climate Action

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050
Score: 5

In 2018, the Ministry of Environmental Protection introduced a detailed plan addressing how Israel should handle climate change. The plan outlined climate change risks in the area and the programs various ministries should implement to address these risks. The national strategy had five goals: decrease costs and promote the economy, improve the sustainability of natural systems, strengthen and empower existing scientific knowledge, advance public education, and promote technologies that address climate change problems.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection is responsible for collaborating with various ministries to develop specific, detailed plans for each goal. The designed plans are intended to be flexible, subject to re-evaluation and modification every few years based on accumulated scientific knowledge. The final program comprises 31 specific initiatives addressing different aspects and departments.

In September 2023, the Ministry of Environmental Protection introduced the Climate Law, formally codifying the 2018 plans. The law sets a national goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 compared to 2015 levels (the base year) and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The law

includes roadblocks, measures and monitoring procedures to ensure implementation and progress. It lays out a five-year plan for all government departments to address climate change, and establishes an independent expert committee to monitor the law's implementation and guide various authorities. According to the law, the ministry must report to the Knesset on progress.

The law aimed not only to reduce existing climate change risks but also to make climate change a key policymaking consideration for all government departments. Therefore, the law states that every relevant program has to submit a climate risk evaluation to ensure that climate change considerations are taken into account when new policies are introduced. Moreover, each local authority will have to submit a program detailing how it plans to address climate change (Ministry Environment, 2023). While this law is an important step toward addressing the dangers of climate change, due to Israel's war with Hamas, which broke out on October 7, the Knesset is yet to pass the law. At present, it is unknown when it will be placed on the Knesset's agenda.

Because the law has not been passed, the program has not been divided based on sectors and areas. There are no specific measures, only a general strategy. Moreover, the implementation of the law falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. While staff within the ministry and the Ministry of Energy are committed to environmental causes, the Ministry of Environmental Protection has historically been weak. It has a small budget, low prestige and its ministers are usually not politically powerful. Therefore, even if the law passes, it is questionable whether the ministry will be able to oversee its implementation effectively.

While an encompassing strategy has not yet been codified into law, Israel addresses climate change and promotes the net-zero emissions goal through various specific efforts. These efforts include the gradual electrification of cars and buses, the shift from coal to natural gas in power plants, the enhancement of sustainable energy production and the promotion of greater energy efficiency in economic activity. According to the Heschel Center, an environmental NGO, the goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 is achievable but depends on government action, which so far has been lacking.

Effective Environmental Health Protection

The Clear Air Law, passed in 2008 and implemented in 2011, is the principal air quality policy in Israel. Following the implementation of the legislation, the government established air quality measures for various pollutants, which are periodically updated by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The law established two types of values. The first type includes aspirational values, with deviation from these values considered harmful to people's health and quality of life. These values are not legally binding. The second type includes values from which deviation signifies significant air pollution.

Following the legislation, the two ministries monitor 28 pollutants. In 2013, the government approved the national program for the reduction of air pollution in Israel (Decision No. 707). The program is comprehensive, and includes concrete goals for 2015 and 2030, which are broken into sectors such as electricity, energy and transportation, among others. For instance, the Ministry of Transportation is tasked with decreasing the number of old cars on the roads and transitioning to green public transportation.

By 2020, the program was almost completely implemented. The progress of this program and the implementation of the Clear Air Law are monitored by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health issues a biennial report that presents the policies, as well as health and environmental risks. The report is written in collaboration with the Life and Environment organization.

Water quality has been regulated since the 1970s. The regulations outline the desired concentration of various chemicals in drinking water. Water suppliers are required to periodically monitor drinking water and report their findings to the Ministry of Health.

In 2018, the Ministry of Health sampled drinking water in schools across the country. More than 99.5% of the samples met the required standards. In cases where standards were not met, the ministry conducted an inquiry, and the respective school and local authority were required to make the necessary corrections. The results of these drinking water samples are publicly available.

In 2020, a new law was enacted, stipulating that water packages cannot contain more than the minimum allowable amount of lead.

At the same time, we should note that pollution of water resources is monitored but only to a limited degree. Though there is effective enforcement against factories that intentionally violate the law, significant pollution of underground water resources and the sea still occurs in areas near the Tel Aviv metropolitan area due to various reasons, including leaks from gas stations and repositories. According to the state comptroller (2021), purification activities are lagging significantly.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection is responsible for soil pollution. It has a detailed policy that covers the identification, prevention and rehabilitation of polluted soil. The policy distinguishes between current and past activities that lead to soil pollution. The ministry prioritizes polluted soil based on clear and transparent criteria, with guidelines, and an order of intervention tailored to each case and sector.

In all the above-mentioned environmental health risks, the policy is being updated based on new research and evidence. For each type of pollution, there are several measures and categories, as can be seen in the Ministry of Health report (The Ministry of Health and Life and Environment Organization, 2020). In each field, the ministry or ministries publish periodic reports describing the progress made and the challenges remaining. However, not all ministries comply with the effort. For instance, the Ministry of Transportation did not meet many of the goals set in the air pollution reduction plan. Furthermore, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Ministry of Health cannot enforce compliance by other departments.

Effective Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Preserving Ecosystems and Protecting Biodiversity
Score: 4

Israel has ratified various international treaties regarding the preservation of biodiversity. In 1995, it ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity, which provides guidelines for preserving biodiversity. Two government bodies are responsible for implementing the policy on this issue: the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the Authority for Nature and Parks.

In 2010, specific goals and measures were established for each signatory country to the treaty, requiring each country to report on its progress. The 2020 report found that Israel’s progress was insufficient in 14 out of 19 goals. Moreover, no measures were set for two goals: fundraising for promoting biodiversity and the rehabilitation of ecological systems. The goal of developing a strategic plan was reported under the status of “no progress” (State Comptroller Report, 2022). The ministry publishes monitoring reports as part of its commitment to the OECD. According to the OECD, Israel is ranked last in preserving open areas and allocating sea reserves to maintain biodiversity.

In 2020, the Planning Administration presented guidelines for preserving marine ecosystems. Additionally, Israel ratified the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Treaty, which addresses the preservation of coastal and marine areas of the Mediterranean, and prevention of pollution. Following this ratification, Israel enacted several laws to protect

the sea, including the Order for Prevention of Oil Pollution of Sea Water (1980), Prohibition of Sea Pollution (1983) and Prohibition of Sea Pollution from Terrestrial Sources (1988).

The treaty also included several protocols for the protection of various species and biodiversity in the Mediterranean, as well as the prevention of oil and waste pollution. Israel did not ratify these protocols.

Israel has ratified several other treaties, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, among others.

According to a report by the state comptroller, the 2010 biodiversity preservation plan did not include specific operational activities. There were also no measurable goals, deadlines or sources of funding. Moreover, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, which designed the program, did not introduce it to the cabinet, so it did not receive the formal status of a cabinet decision. Consequently, its recommendations are not binding.

Lastly, according to the plan, a professional committee should be established to develop standards and measures. However, the established committee has never met.

Effective Contributions to Global Environmental Protection

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 4

Environmental collaboration in the Middle East is crucial. However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict complicates the development of a strategic plan with specific goals and measures. Generally, there is more willingness from the Israeli side to collaborate than from Israel’s neighbors. Consequently, most policy efforts are based on scattered programs and loosely coordinated initiatives. Since the 1990s, there have been several environmental collaborations between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. These collaborations can be divided into three types: sustainable agriculture, training and education on sustainability, and biodiversity preservation.

In the field of agriculture, several projects are underway. These include the promotion of organic pesticides, which encompasses developing infrastructure, and providing training and information. The Ministry of Regional Collaboration sponsors the project, with additional local partnerships between regions in Israel and Jordan. Other initiatives involve training and

guiding farmers in Jordan and the Palestinian Authority, as well as promoting joint agricultural projects.

One challenge to such collaboration is the discrepancy between farmers' willingness to receive guidance and their need to conceal this cooperation for political reasons. Consequently, expanding collaboration is difficult and is often based on bottom-up initiatives.

In the field of sustainability education and training, all projects are conducted by non-governmental research centers and organizations that receive some support from the government. These projects include research collaborations with Palestinian and Jordanian scholars and students, joint ecological centers, and student exchange programs. However, all these projects are limited in scope because they are non-governmental.

In the field of biodiversity protection, an Israeli-Jordanian collaboration aims to protect the coral reef in the Red Sea. This collaboration includes a joint effort to monitor oil pollution in the Red Sea, as well as joint projects between the IDF and the Jordanian army to protect various species and engage in research collaborations. However, as in other fields, the Jordanians and Palestinians are reluctant to develop broader collaborative projects due to the conflict (Mitvim, 2020).

After signing the normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Israel has also begun collaborating to promote joint environmental research and development projects in the fields of climate change, desert management, and agriculture with the United Arab Emirates.

Overall, there are various collaborative projects; however, they are not coordinated by a single governmental organization nor is there a comprehensive policy that covers this issue.

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