

GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

A Series of Policy Discussion Papers

REVIEW OF 63 PROVINCIAL E-SERVICE PORTALS FROM A USER PERSPECTIVE IN 2024

August 2024

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RESEARCH TEAM

Nguyen Quang Dong

Nguyen Duc Lam

Tran Dang Quang

(Institute for Policy Studies and Media Development)

and

Do Thanh Huyen

(United Nations Development Programme)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EMC	System for monitoring and measuring the level of services provision and usage
FAQ	Frequently Asked Question
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
IPS	Institute for Policy Studies and Media Development
IT	Information Technology
MOIC	Ministry of Information and Communication
NESP	National E-Service Portal
OPAS	Online Public Administrative Service
PAPI	Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index
PDP	Personal Data Protection
PESP	Provincial e-Service Portal
QR	Code
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SMS	Short Message Service
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VNPT	Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications Group
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

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The research team includes **Mr. Nguyen Quang Dong**, Director of IPS; **Mr. Nguyen Duc Lam**, Policy Advisor at IPS; **Mr. Tran Dang Quang**, former research fellow at IPS; and **Ms. Do Thanh Huyen**, Public Policy Analyst at UNDP Viet Nam.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from the user-driven evaluation of provincial e-service portals (PESPs) of all 63 provinces conducted by the Institute for Policy Studies and Media Development (IPS) in 2024, after the first round in 2023. The research has been done in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Viet Nam. The purpose of this review is to propose measures to improve the performance of PESPs and to suggest policy actions for developing user-centered online public administrative services (OPASS) in Viet Nam.

In this second review, the research team evaluated 63 PESPs from the user's perspective based on four groups of criteria: (i) PESPs' interfaces; (ii) features and tools to guide users before performing administrative procedures on PESPs; (iii) features and tools to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs; and (iv) the assurance of the rights and interests of users on PESPs. Additionally, the provision of OPASS is further analyzed across six aspects: (i) the extent to which user needs are met; (ii) synchronization; (iii) transparency; (iv) specialization; (v) effectiveness; and (vi) factors influencing OPAS delivery.

Below are the key findings and recommendations drawn from the 2024 review of PESPs.

1. Key findings

1.1. None of 63 PESPs fully meet criteria on convenience, ease of use, and accessibility

The review results in 2024 shows improvement in the provision of OPASS on of 63 PESPs in a number of evaluation criteria compared to 2023 findings. However, there are significant limitations in terms of the access to PESPs, the availability of essential information, the guidance on document submission, the availability of full-cycle OPASS, and the accessibility of PESPs for persons with disabilities.

All 63 PESPs have inconvenient aspects, especially for users in remote areas, islands, and people with disabilities. None of 63 PESPs have achieved attained more than 50 percent of the evaluation criteria at a 'good' level. Even the Phu Tho province's PESP, which scored the highest, only met the 'good' level in four out of nine criteria. Additionally, the differences between PESPs' evaluation scores are minimal. This indicates that all 63 PESPs have room for improvement in terms of convenience, user-friendliness, and accessibility.

Only 24 PESPs performed well in the "Providing supporting information" criteria and 22 PESPs performed well in the "Ease of use of lookup tools" criteria. This suggests that basic functions such as search and information retrieval are being prioritized for improvement. Specifically, for online services for providing criminal records, **30 PESPs achieved a 'good' level** in the criterion of "Level of completion of features so that public services are provided online throughout the entire process."

Up to 60 PESPs did not meet the "Personal data protection and privacy" criterion and 39 PESPs did not meet the "Access for people with disabilities" criterion. Therefore, on a national scale, there remains a significant gap that needs to be addressed in these two critical user rights related aspects.

Most PESPs were at the average level in terms of compatibility with both computers and smartphones. Up to 60 PESPs achieved only an average level in the criteria "Compatibility on computers" and "Compatibility on smartphones." Currently, administrative procedures are difficult to be done on smartphones while more than 90 percent of citizens now use this device. To meet these two criteria, PESPs need significant technical improvements.

Provinces with good infrastructure and technology development do not necessarily implement well on their PESPs, and vice versa. Municipalities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City were at an average level, while provinces with less developed technology such as Phu Tho, Tuyen Quang, Lai Chau, Dak Nong, Tra Vinh, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, and An Giang received higher ratings for their PESPs.

1.2. Behind the Numbers: Factors Affecting Users' Experience with Online Public Administrative Services

In-depth analysis from this study and users' feedback across 63 PESPs reveals important limitations in meeting user needs, synchronization, transparency, and specialization. The provision of public administrative procedures on 63 PESPs is more influenced by administrative processes, infrastructure, technology, human resources, and support measures.

PESPs have not served users effectively. Most users must rely on direct guidance or assistance from civil servants at one-stop shops. Reported issues on PESPs' opinion sections indicate that many applicants for public administrative papers had to visit State agencies' one-stop shops in person to complete administrative procedures. This shows that PESPs have not yet achieved their primary goal of providing convenience for users, i.e., users not having to visit the one-stop shops in person, especially for those living in remote areas, islands and those with disabilities.

Consistency and synchronization in public administrative service provision across provincial and national ESPs needs improvement. Although there was progress in 2024 compared to 2023, users have still struggled with varying interfaces and implementation methods on PESPs due to the lack of linkage between PESPs and the National E-Service Portal or with ministries' ESPs. Issues remain in the synchronization of interface design, process guidance, procedures, and weblink structures across PESPs.

Transparency in the workflow of public administrative procedure handling on PESPs needs to be enhanced. While PESPs are doing well in publicizing the status of administrative procedures, there is still a need to improve the provision of detailed and transparent information about the process for handling administrative procedures, making it difficult for users to understand OPAS steps. Users have faced challenges in completing the steps on PESPs and tracking the progress of their applications due to a lack of updated information at each stage.

Services provided on PESPs are not intensive. Features and tools for document submission and online procedures are not following a digital process using web-based e-forms. Rather, users still submit hand-signed PDF files onto OPAS links. Collected citizen data and already-digitized data held by State agencies have not been utilized in OPAS and on PESPs to simplify the electronic application process. Features like manuals, search engines, information lookups, virtual assistants, and privacy protections are either inconvenient or unavailable. Additionally, users have faced difficulty in making online payments on PESPs.

Public administrative processes and procedures remain complex, unsuitable for online services. Most public administrative procedures are inherently complicated as they involve multiple layers of governments and state agencies. Meanwhile, OPASs on PESPs are still processed basing on the administrative processes and procedures being applied for traditional, in-person interactions. This conventional approach is a key challenge for effective delivery of OPASs.

Limitations in technical infrastructure has reduced the effectiveness of OPASs provision. Many localities, particularly in poor communes, mountainous areas, islands, and regions with weak connectivity, struggle with inadequate technical infrastructure, leading to unstable and inefficient online service provision.

The digital competency of public officials, civil servants and public employees across different government levels is inconsistent. The varying levels of digital skills among public officials, civil servants and public employee have affected the quality of support and the processing of user documents in the online environment. Additionally, local civil servants have been overwhelmed by the increased workload in handling administrative procedures both offline and online, as they often need to provide direct guidance or complete tasks on behalf of OPAS users.

Support measures for performing OPASs are not yet effective. Various initiatives to encourage the use of online services, such as fee exemptions, non-terrestrial administrative procedures, and the Community Digital Technology Teams, have not successfully attracted users to perform services independently at home or in residential areas. Users have still frequently relied on direct support from civil servants at local one-stop shops.

2. Recommendations: Innovation from mindset to action

2.1. Embracing a Digital-First Approach with a User-Centered Focus

The development and implementation of policies regarding OPASs must embrace a "digital governance" mindset. Leveraging digital technology, connecting digital data, and delivering services through digital platforms necessitate the elimination of outdated geographical administrative barriers in our increasingly interconnected public service environment. Traditional paper-based administrative processes are no longer suitable in this context. A "digital governance" approach also underscores the significance of data, data sharing, and data integration, as data is essential for delivering OPASs. This mindset promotes interaction between the government and citizens on digital platforms, gradually reducing the reliance on in-person interactions for the provision and utilization of public administrative services.

The development and implementation of policies for public administrative services, including public service delivery, must begin with and adhere to the principle of "user-centered design," using user satisfaction as the primary metric. This principle should guide the entire process of designing, building, and delivering public services. In addition to service provision, it is crucial to continuously review and assess the effectiveness of these services, particularly concerning user-friendliness, ease of use, consistency, and continuity. Special attention must be given to the needs of individuals in remote areas, on islands, and those facing challenges related to mobility, hearing, vision, or proficiency in the Vietnamese language when providing OPASs.

2.2. Improving the Delivery of Online Public Administrative Services

Enhancing the quality of OPASs to attract users. Focus should be placed on improving the efficiency of essential OPASs that are frequently used and have a high transaction volume related to the lifecycle of individuals at both national and local levels. Digitalization efforts should prioritize public administrative procedures that have demonstrated consistent online transactions, while lower priority can be given to those that have not generated online activity for an extended period. When delegating targets for delivering OPASs to lower levels of government, it is important to consider the socio-economic conditions of each locality and the appropriate capacities of government agencies. This approach will help avoid placing undue pressure that could lead to unreliable and inaccurate reporting on user rates, ultimately hindering the digital capabilities of both civil servants and citizens.

Self-reviewing OPASs platforms to maintain "user-centered services". Provinces should conduct self-reviews of their OPAS platforms to maintain a focus on "user-centred services." It is essential to address and rectify any technical errors on their PESPs. Priority should be given to enhancing features and tools that significantly impact the rights and needs of all users. This includes improving page loading speed, implementing interactive electronic forms instead of requiring users to download forms as images or compressed files, and designing smartphone-friendly electronic forms for OPASs, all in accordance with local technical conditions and budget constraints. Additionally, it is important to streamline internal processes within and between state agencies before digitalizing single-sector administrative procedures that are legally favourable for OPASs, such as simplifying the processes for administrative procedures already mandated for full online operation.

Enhancing the effectiveness of OPASs. It is vital to supplement and improve features and tools that enable users to complete documents and administrative procedures entirely online, with online payment playing a key role. OPASs should evolve from merely digitizing administrative procedure documents to fully digitizing the entire process of performing administrative procedures. This involves connecting, sharing, and utilizing existing information and data more effectively. Gradually expanding features, tools, and applications to create smartphone-friendly OPASs will help meet the needs of a broader user base. Moreover, government agencies must simplify the processes and procedures for handling frequently encountered administrative tasks.

Ensuring publicity and transparency of OPAS providers. The PESPs must provide comprehensive information, including email addresses and phone numbers, for all agencies and units responsible for delivering services, enabling citizens to reach out with questions or feedback. PESPs should be equipped with tracking functions similar to those used by goods delivery and taxi apps, allowing users to track the pathway of their applied procedures. Information regarding the focal point responsible for monitoring and updating OPAS results should be made public, accompanied by an automatic notification mechanism that informs organisations and individuals via email or Zalo about the status of their OPAS requests.

2.3. Finalizing the national policy framework and promoting the innovation of OPASs

Finalizing legal documents related to OPASs. It is essential to finalise and thoroughly implement the policies outlined in the 2023 Law on Electronic Transactions, which represents a foundational shift in digital transformation, including the provision OPASs. This is particularly important in areas such as the legal validity of electronic transactions, data messages, and full-process electronic transactions. Regulations that currently prohibit the performance of administrative procedures in an electronic environment should be amended to narrow or eliminate the requirements for in-person interactions, thereby facilitating the implementation of online services. Additionally, it is important to review, streamline, or even eliminate administrative processes and procedures that no longer align with the digital environment.

Exempting or reducing fees for citizens using OPASs. Consideration should be given to increasing fee exemptions and reductions, as well as expanding the range of administrative procedures eligible for such exemptions or reductions for citizens using OPASs. Potential compensation for these exemptions could be sourced from local government budgets. Initially, local governments could waive or reduce fees for all organisations and individuals using OPASs. After an initial implementation period, these exemptions and reductions should be specifically targeted at disadvantaged groups, including the poor, near-poor, ethnic minorities, and residents of underserved areas.

Performing non-terrestrial administrative procedures. This measure should be implemented in regions where residents must travel long distances, such as mountainous or island areas, or for temporary residents in large cities, particularly for high-volume, straightforward administrative procedures. Civil servants at public administrative service centres or one-stop shops at district and commune levels should be encouraged and motivated to digitise entire application files from the moment of initial receipt. It is also crucial to address issues of authority, processes, procedures, and coordination between different levels of government when implementing this policy.

Diversifying financial resources for OPAS delivery. In accordance with the 2023 Law on Electronic Transactions, government agencies can utilise annual state budgets to hire consultants for building databases, managing operations, and ensuring cybersecurity for information and technology (IT) systems that support OPASs. Additionally, resources from the National Target Programmes can be utilised, and contributions from businesses can be mobilised to enhance IT equipment, thereby improving the provision and accessibility of public services in remote and underserved areas.

Enhancing the OPAS capacity of public officials, civil servants and public employees. A competency framework for OPAS provision should be developed for public officials, civil servants and public employees, particularly at the commune level, integrating online public service provision skills into civil servant training programmes. Specific training content could include skills for using OPAS software, processing applications online, guiding and assisting citizens in

completing administrative procedures online, and ensuring information security, especially when using social network applications for communication with OPAS users.

- ***Increasing public awareness of PEPSs.*** Efforts should focus on raising public awareness of PEPSs, beginning with community digitalization support teams, Youth Unions, and community meetings, ensuring that every household has at least one person familiar with PEPSs. More creative approaches to promoting PEPSs should be developed, such as organizing competitions (e.g., Hackathons) to encourage youth initiatives aimed at improving public administrative services, thereby attracting greater public attention to OPAS.

- ***Establishing a single National E-Service Portal toward 2030.*** In the long term, aiming for 2030, it may be necessary to establish one single National E-Service Portal (NESP) that is a single, unified portal for all OPASs, following the examples of leading e-government countries such as South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The structure of this unified NESP should include six sections: (1) a search engine for public administrative services; (2) provision of OPASs; (3) information provision; (4) feedback and complaints; (5) public consultation on administrative procedure-related policies; and (6) public sector data transparency./.



OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW

Review of 63 provincial e-service portals from a user's perspective in 2024

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted from the perspective of users, including the participation of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and residents of islands, to evaluate the online public administrative services (OPASS) of 63 provinces/cities.



Direct Review: Assessed the functionality, features, and tools of the provincial e-service portals (PESPs) based on four groups of criteria, including criteria for visually impaired users.

User Experience: Two rounds of testing were carried out with visually impaired users and two rounds with non-visually impaired users when registering for criminal records.

Feedback and Complaints: Aggregated and analyzed user feedback from the National Public Administrative Service Portal.

In-depth Interviews: Conducted with local citizens and officials, alongside a small-scale online survey targeting people with disabilities.

Information Comparison: Used data from indices such as the 2023 PAPI and administrative procedure information system evaluations from 2022 to 2024.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

① *PESPs' interfaces*

② *Features and tools to guide users before performing administrative procedures on PESPs*

③ *Features and tools to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs*

④ *The assurance of the rights and interests of users on PESPs*

Additionally, the local PESPs were further analyzed across six aspects:

- ▶ The extent to which user needs are met
- ▶ Synchronization
- ▶ Transparency
- ▶ Specialization;
- ▶ Effectiveness
- ▶ Factors influencing OPAS delivery.

THE REVIEW RESULTS BASED ON THE 4 CRITERIA GROUPS

Phu Tho: Rated highest, with 4 criteria assessed as "good," 3 as "average," and 2 as "below average."

- 11 provinces (17.5%) had 3 criteria rated as "good."
- 20 provinces (31.75%) had 2 criteria rated as "good."
- 17 provinces (27%) had 1 criterion rated as "good."
- 14 provinces (22.3%) had no criteria rated as "good."

Key Finding: No province achieved more than 50% of criteria rated as "good", with minimal differences between PESPs' evaluation.

1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Review Background

The provision of OPASs is Viet Nam's top priority within the nation's programmes and strategies for digital transformation, e-government, digital economy, digital society, and administrative reform. These initiatives emphasise a user-centred approach, with user satisfaction serving as a key measure of evaluation. Ministries, agencies, and local authorities have developed and operated an information system for handling administrative procedures to provide OPASs to citizens and businesses, of which PESPs are a core component.

However, the utilisation of OPASs has remained consistently low. According to reports from the 9th meeting of the National Committee for Digital Transformation in July 2024, the rate of eligible full-cycle administrative procedures reached only 48 per cent, while the rate of online submissions for full-cycle OPASs at the provincial level was merely 17 per cent. The 2023 Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI)¹ recorded an even lower rate of PESP users at only 7.6 per cent. If this low rate of PESP users for OPAS continues, achieving the target of having at least 70 per cent of public administrative procedures provided online at the provincial level by 2025 will be challenging. In this context, the initial assessment identified findings and proposed recommendations to improve PESPs and OPAS provision upon a thorough review of the legal and policy framework on OPASs.²

Based on the results of the 2023 assessment, a review of 63 PESPs from a user's perspective was conducted in 2024. This review involved updating content, criteria, and evaluation methods. The aim is to propose solutions that will assist central and local government agencies in improving the user-friendliness and accessibility of PESPs, as well as enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of OPAS provision.

1.2. Review Objectives

This study aims to:

- Review and evaluate 63 PESPs on their ability to meet requirements and features that support and enhance user experience, including persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and islanders, with the goal of leaving no one behind.
- Propose specific recommendations to improve the provision of OPASs from a user experience perspective.
- Provide recommendations on the policy orientation to develop OPASs at the national level, ensuring OPASs-related regulations' consistency and synchronization regarding technology, infrastructure, processes, procedures, and human resources across provinces nationwide.

¹ See the 2023 PAPI Report at https://papi.org.vn/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PAPI2023_REPORT_ENG.pdf

² IPS & UNDP (2023). *First Review of Accessibility and User-friendliness of 63 Provincial E-Service Portals in 2023*, available at: <https://ips.org.vn/en/library/first-review-of-accessibility-and-userfriendliness-of-63-provincial-eservice-portals-in-2023-ct270.html>

1.3. Review Approach, Methodology and Timeline

Applying the 2023 review approach with several new and updated indicators, during the first six months of 2024, a second review of 63 PESPs was conducted with the participation of a selection of users, including researchers, individuals with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and islanders in the first six months of 2024. The following specific steps were undertaken to collect and analyse data:

- ▶ **1.** Two rounds of direct review and evaluation were conducted on several functions, features, and tools of PESPs based on four sets of criteria, including those assessing the extent to which the needs of visually impaired users are met (see Table 1 in Section 1.4), from February 2024 to April 2024.
- ▶ **2.** Two rounds of direct user experience reviews were conducted with average users during the same period (February 2024 to April 2024).
- ▶ **3.** Two rounds of experience reviews were undertaken with a group of visually impaired users utilising PESPs for online services related to criminal records provision in the second half of March 2024.
- ▶ **4.** Feedback and recommendations from users regarding OPASs posted on the National E-Service Platform (NESP) were gathered and analysed from February 2024 to April 2024.
- ▶ **5.** In-depth interviews were conducted with citizens who had previously done OPASs on PESPs, including individuals from ethnic minorities and island communities. Additionally, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were held with officials at the provincial, district, and commune levels of OPAS provider agencies in Binh Thuan and Ha Tinh. Further interviews were conducted with provincial and district officials in Quang Ninh, Nghe An, Quang Binh, Ba Ria - Vung Tau, and Ho Chi Minh City.
- ▶ **6.** A small-scale online survey with the participation of 119 persons with disabilities, alongside in-depth interviews with several persons with disabilities, was conducted from February 2024 to July 2024.
- ▶ **7.** Information was cross-referenced with relevant indices such as the 2023 Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI); the Index for Assessing the Information System for Handling Administrative Procedures of Ministries and Provinces in 2023; and the Index for Serving Citizens and Businesses in Performing Administrative Procedures and Providing Public Services for the period 2022-2024.

Regarding the review of 63 PESPs from the user experience, the number of PESPs that met or failed to meet the evaluation criteria in the study were accounted as of April 2024. Changes made to several PESPs since then have been noted in this report.

1.4. Review Criteria

The 2024 review of PESPs from a user perspective is primarily based on the evaluation criteria established in 2023 with modifications made by referencing relevant indices both globally³ and

³ UN's E-government index, GovTech Maturity Index, OECD Digital Government Index, ITU's ICT Development index, EU's Digital Economy and Society Index.

within Viet Nam⁴, as well as selecting specific content from Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT.⁵ As presented in Table 1, the evaluation criteria are categorised into four sets: (i) PESP interfaces; (ii) features and tools to guide users prior to undertaking administrative procedures on PESPs; (iii) features and tools to assist users in executing administrative procedures on PESPs; and (iv) the assurance of users' rights and interests on PESPs.

Additionally, the analysis of Provincial OPASs is conducted based on four factors: (1) the extent to which user needs are fulfilled; (2) synchronisation, which encompasses the coordination of technical factors, procedures, and human resources within a PESP and among various PESPs; (3) transparency of information, data acquisition, resolution processes, outcome dissemination, and the technical depth of features and tools; and (4) the effectiveness of OPAS provision, evaluated by assessing the achievement of ultimate goals while cross-referencing with the allocation of financial resources, human capital, and time.

Beyond the aforementioned criteria groups, the quality and effectiveness of OPAS provision are influenced by factors related to OPAS providers. These include general infrastructure and technical conditions at both governmental levels; standard procedures for implementing public administrative services; officials' capacities; and policies and measures that facilitate OPAS implementation, such as fee exemptions, reductions, and the establishment of Community Digital Technology Teams.

Table 1. Review Criteria Group for PESPs

Criteria	Review Content
Criteria group 1	PESP interfaces
1.1. PESPs compatibility on computers and smartphones	Assessing the portal's compatibility on two devices based on four Level 3 criteria: (i) page loading speed; (ii) accessibility; (iii) best practices; (iv) Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
1.2. Publicity of basic information on PESPs	Assessing the basic information publication on OPASs based on eight Level 3 criteria: 1. Providing contact information (i) phone numbers and email addresses of OPASs' contact points; (ii) information of all relevant agencies and units; (iii) ease of information retrieval; (iv) placement of information. 2. Providing the status of the settlement of administrative procedures (i) transparency of the status in handling public administrative procedure; (ii) statistical data for each agency and unit; (iii) disclosure of the number and list of documents resolved on time or delayed; (iv) real-time statistics.

⁴ Set of indices for assessing digital transformation for ministries, ministerial-level agencies, government agencies, provinces, cities directly under the central government, and the nation (DTI); Set of indices for directing, managing, and evaluating the quality of service to citizens and businesses in real-time administrative procedures and public services in the electronic environment.

⁵ Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT dated December 31, 2023, stipulates the functions and technical features of the information system for handling administrative procedures at the ministerial and provincial levels.

Criteria group 2	Functions and tools to guide users before performing administrative procedures on PESPs
2.1. Availability and usability of functions and tools to guide users	Assessing features guiding users to access and perform OPASs based on four Level 3 criteria: (i) instructional materials for commonly used public services; (ii) frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses; (iii) tools for users to submit questions and receive online answers; (iv) virtual assistant for guiding and addressing user inquiries.
2.2. Usability of look-up tools	Assessing features supporting users in searching based on two Level 3 criteria: (i) administrative procedures; (ii) results of the settlement of administrative procedure.
Criteria group 3	Functions and tools to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs
3.1. Level of support to help users create electronic records on their own	Assessing features supporting users in creating electronic administrative records on OPASs based on six Level 3 criteria: (i) connection with NESP account (at evaluation time of 04/2024) ⁶ ; (ii) preliminary document review; (iii) automatic information filling; (iv) display of instructions for completing information fields; (v) immediate notifications for incomplete information filling; (vi) options to save, update, or cancel records.
3.2. Functions to enable full-cycle delivery of OPASs	Assessing several features for full-cycle OPASs execution based on four third-level criteria: (i) enabling online submission of document; (ii) enabling online receipt of results; (iii) enabling online payment; (iv) enabling users to perform digital signatures.
Criteria group 4	Assurance of users' rights on PESPs
4.1. Accessibility for persons with disability	Assessment based on six Level 3 criteria for basic accessibility of a website at Level A, in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. In addition, this criterion is evaluated through the experience with application for criminal records by a group of visually impaired users.
4.2. Protecting personal data and privacy	Assessing the display of personal data protection (PDP) and privacy on the PESPs based on four Level 3 criteria: (i) publication of policies on PDP and privacy by PESPs; (ii) identification of the responsible entity for the rights of data subject rights; (iii) assurance of the rights of data subject regarding personal data; (iv) options to limit information exposure or anonymize personal information.
4.3. Ensuring users' rights to evaluate OPASs	Reviewing the execution of user rights to evaluate OPASs based on two Level 3 criteria: (i) feedback and recommendations on the settlement of administrative procedure and access to response results; (ii) participation in survey of satisfaction level and access to response results.

1.5. Evaluation Values and Review Scope

In Viet Nam, this is the first annual research series to evaluate PESPs from a user's experience perspective. Existing indices worldwide, as well as in Vietnam, primarily focus on e-government and digital transformation within the country in general. Among these, indices related to OPAS constitute a minor component, and there has been no in-depth evaluation of user experience with PESPs. A few indices assess OPAS at the local level based on technical indicators, statistical data, or opinion surveys conducted among relevant agencies, without considering users' experiences and opinions.⁷ To bridge this gap, this study addresses two questions regarding the effectiveness of OPAS provision on PESPs: (1) What specific aspects require improvement to make OPASs on PESPs more convenient and user-friendly; and, (2) What factors can influence the quality of OPAS provision and usage.

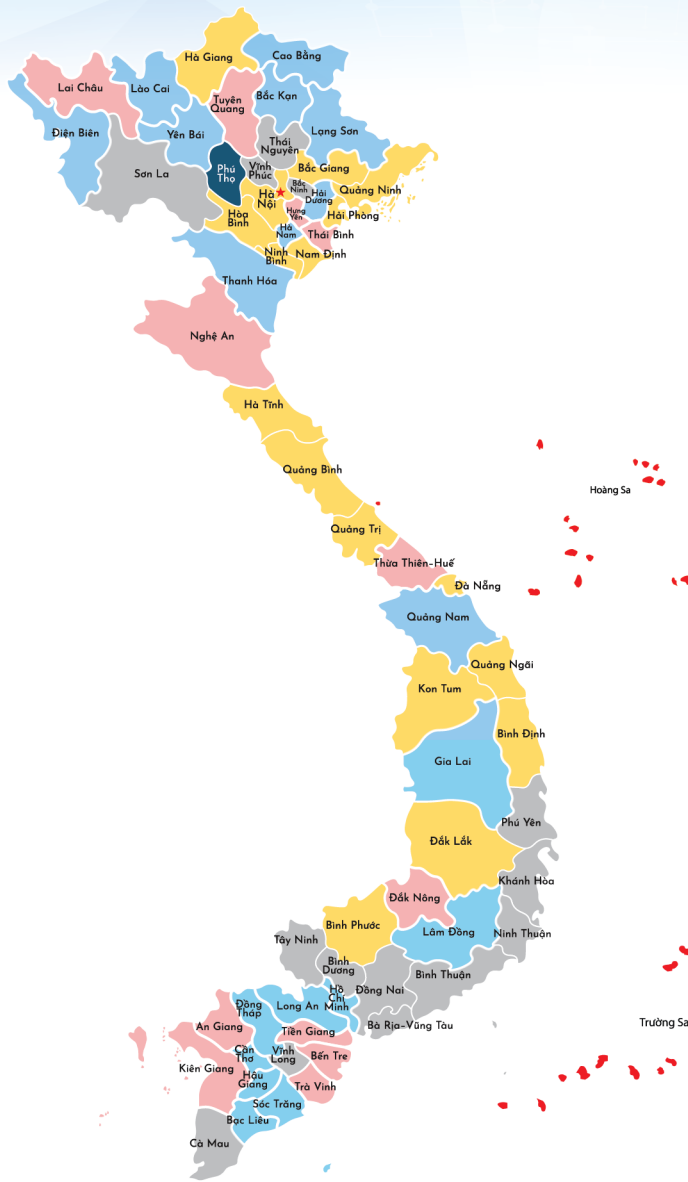
This review was conducted on 63 PESPs based on four sets of criteria and actual user experiences in processing application for criminal record via PESPs. However, these two sources of information have not encompassed factors underlying the PESPs, such as the infrastructure conditions of information technology; the capacity and attitude of officials involved in OPAS provision; citizens' awareness; and the appropriateness of relevant policies and procedures. This limitation has been addressed by synthesising and analysing feedback and recommendations from users of OPASs as published on the NESP, as well as through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with officials and citizens in selected provinces.

As the scope of this study is confined to citizens' experiences with local OPASs, other related content concerning OPASs is not considered. Furthermore, this study has not evaluated OPASs in terms of users' experiences with various administrative procedures; the ability of different population groups to utilise OPASs; the time taken by citizens to familiarise themselves with OPASs and successfully complete administrative procedures; or the classification of the most common difficulties users encounter when conducting online procedures via PESPs. Consequently, this report does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of OPAS provision in Vietnam. This gap must be addressed through subsequent reviews and further studies in the future.

⁶ PESPs were reviewed before July 1, 2024, when administrative procedures on them were still being carried out through various accounts connected to the NESP, and not solely through VNeID as required starting July 1, 2024.

⁷ The United Nations has assessed the Local Online Service Index (LOSI) as part of the quality of service to citizens and businesses in real-time administrative procedures and public services in the electronic environment; and a set of criteria for evaluating the functions and technical features of the information system for handling administrative procedures at the ministerial and provincial levels.

EVALUATION RESULTS OF PROVINCIAL E-SERVICE PORTALS (PESPS) BASED ON FOUR CRITERIA GROUPS



CLASSIFICATION OF PROVINCES BY COLOR GROUPS

The evaluation criteria are divided into four groups, corresponding to nine criteria:

Classification by Performance:

- GROUP 1:** 4/9 criteria rated as "good"
- GROUP 2:** 3/9 criteria rated as "good"
- GROUP 3:** 2/9 criteria rated as "good"
- GROUP 4:** 1/9 criteria rated as "good"
- GROUP 5:** 0/9 criteria rated as "good"

Note: The only OPSP in Group 1 is Phu Tho.

Group 1 Criteria:

- 1.1. Compatibility on computers and smartphones
- 1.2. Publication of basic information

Group 2 Criteria:

- 2.1. Availability and ease of use of instructional features for administrative procedures
- 2.2. Ease of use of lookup tools

Group 3 Criteria:

- 3.1. Support for users to create electronic profiles
- 3.2. Level of completion of features so that public services are provided online throughout the entire process.

Group 4 Criteria:

- 4.1. Access for people with disabilities
- 4.2. Personal data protection and privacy
- 4.3. User rights to evaluate online public administrative services (OPASS)



GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS:

- ✓ **Southeast Region:** 4 out of 6 provinces had no criteria rated as "good" (Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Ba Ria - Vung Tau).
- ✓ **South Central Coast:** 4 out of 8 localities had no criteria rated as "good" (Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa).
- ✓ **In North Central,** most provinces excelled in the criterion "Providing support information."
- ✓ **North Central and Central Highlands:** All provinces had at least 1/9 criteria rated as "good."
- ✓ **In Central Highlands,** 4 out of 5 provinces scored well in the criterion "Level of completion of features so that public services are provided online throughout the entire process." (Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Nong, Lam Dong).

2

RESULTS FROM REVIEW OF PROVINCIAL E-SERVICE PORTALS

2.1. Overview of Provincial E-Service Portal

The review results of 63 PESPs, along with an analysis of feedback and recommendations regarding OPASs posted on the National E-Service Portal, as well as opinions gathered from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, reveal that provinces have undertaken specific actions leading to improvements in OPAS provision up to 2023. However, there remains room for enhancement across all four criteria groups of PESPs from the user perspective: (1) Accessibility of the PESPs interface and basic contact information; (2) User information guidance prior to performing administrative procedures on PESPs; (3) Tools to support users in executing administrative procedures on PESPs; and, (4) Assurance of users' rights and interests on PESPs (see Section 2.2 below for details).

The overview results of the 63 PESPs are presented in Figure 1 below. Accordingly, the Level 2 criteria of each portal are evaluated across three levels: 'good', 'fair', and 'not achieved'; each level is associated with a corresponding colour: green for 'good', yellow for 'fair', and red for 'not achieved'. Phu Tho's PESP has the highest number of criteria rated as 'good', with 4 criteria achieving this rating, alongside 3 criteria rated as 'fair', and 2 criteria rated as 'not achieved'. Eleven PESPs (accounting for 17.5 percent) achieved 3 criteria rated as 'good', including those from Hung Yen, Tra Vinh, Tuyen Quang, Lai Chau, Thai Binh, Nghe An, Thua Thien Hue, Dak Nong, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, and An Giang.

Among the remaining PESPs, 20 have 2 criteria rated as 'good' (accounting for 31.75 percent); 17 have 1 criterion rated as 'good' (accounting for 27 percent); and 14 have no criteria rated at the 'good' level (accounting for 22.3 percent). The criteria "Providing support information", "Level of completion of features to ensure public services are provided online throughout the entire process", and "Ease of use of lookup tools" received the highest number of PESPs rated as 'good' (green), with 24, 22, and 30 portals achieving this rating, respectively. This indicates that essential functions such as searching, finding information, and features supporting the provision of full-cycle OPASs are being improved on PESPs.

Conversely, 60 PESPs have been rated at the 'not achieved' level (red) concerning the criterion "Protecting personal data and privacy", while 39 PESPs have been rated at the 'not achieved' level regarding the criterion "Access for persons with disabilities". This highlights a significant gap that needs to be addressed in two user rights-related criteria at the national level. Similarly, 60 PESPs were rated as 'fair' (yellow) concerning two criteria: "Compatibility on computers" and "Compatibility on smartphones". These criteria require improvement from a technical perspective in the development of PESPs. None of 63 PESPs have achieved more than 50 percent of the evaluation criteria at a 'good' level. Phu Tho's PESP only met the 'good' level in four out of nine criteria. Additionally, the differences between PESPs' evaluation scores are minimal.

The review results suggest that all 63 PESPs have room for improvement users in terms of convenience, user-friendliness, and accessibility. This assessment aligns with the evaluation results from the Ministry of Information and Communications (MOIC) regarding the Information System for Handling Administrative Procedures at both ministerial and provincial levels.⁸ Accordingly, at the provincial level, out of the 63 PESPs assessed, 39 reached level C, 15 reached level D, and 9 reached level E; however, none attained level A or B.

⁸ Ministry of Information and Communications (MOIC), National Digital Transformation Report for the First Half of 2024, 9th Session, National Committee on Digital Transformation, Hanoi, July 2024.

Figure 1. Review results of 63 PESPs based on four criteria groups in 2024

Province	Criteria group 1: PESP interfaces			Criteria group 2: Features to guide users before performing administrative procedures on PESPs		Criteria group 3: Functions to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs		Criteria group 4: Assurance of users' rights on PESPs		
	1.1: PESPs' compatibility on computers and smartphones		1.2: Publicity of basic information on PESPs	2.1: Availability and usability of functions and tools to guide users	2.2: Ease of use of lookup tools	3.1: Level of support to help users create electronic records on their own	3.2: Functions to enable full-cycle delivery of OPASS	4.1: Accessibility for persons with disabilities	4.2: Protecting personal data and privacy	4.3: Ensuring users' rights to evaluate OPASS
	Compatibility on computers	Compatibility on smartphones								
Ha Noi										
Ha Giang										
Cao Bang										
Bac Kan										
Tuyen Quang										
Lao Cai										
Dien Bien										
Lai Chau										
Son La										
Yen Bai										
Hoa Binh										
Thai Nguyen										
Lang Son										
Quang Ninh										
Bac Giang										
Phu Tho										
Vinh Phuc										
Bac Ninh										
Hai Duong										
Hai Phong										
Hung Yen										
Thai Binh										
Ha Nam										
Nam Dinh										
Ninh Binh										
Thanh Hoa										
Nghe An										
Ha Tinh										
Quang Binh										
Quang Tri										
Thua Thien Hue										
Da Nang										
Quang Nam										
Quang Ngai										
Binh Dinh										
Phu Yen										
Khanh Hoa										
Ninh Thuan										
Binh Thuan										
Kon Tum										
Gia Lai										
Dak Lak										
Dak Nong										
Lam Dong										
Binh Phuoc										
Tay Ninh										
Binh Duong										
Dong Nai										
Ba Ria-Vung Tau										
HCMC										
Long An										
Tien Giang										
Ben Tre										
Tra Vinh										
Vinh Long										
Dong Thap										
An Giang										
Kien Giang										
Can Tho										
Hau Giang										
Soc Trang										
Bac Lieu										
Ca Mau										

Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

Map 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the review results of 63 PESPs based on the four aforementioned criteria groups. Based on the review results according to the four criteria groups (the number of rated 'good' 'fair', and 'not achieved', PESPs are evaluated on five performance levels of user-friendliness, with Group 1 having the most favourable results and Group 5 having the most shortcomings. Accordingly, only Phu Tho's PESP belongs to Group 1 (dark blue); provinces in Group 2 (pink) are scattered in different regions; Group 3 provinces (light blue) are concentrated in the northern and southern mountainous regions; Group 4 is more concentrated in the Northern Delta region; and Group 5 are mainly in the South-Central Coastal region and some neighbouring provinces in the Mekong River Delta.

The map displays the following provinces categorized by group:

- GROUP 1 (Dark Blue):** Phú Thọ
- GROUP 2 (Pink):** Lai Châu, Lào Cai, Tuyên Quang, Yên Bái, Sơn La, Nghệ An, Thanh Hóa, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Thừa Thiên-Huế, Đắk Nông, Lâm Đồng, Bình Phước, Tây Ninh, Bình Dương, Đồng Nai, Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Kiên Giang, Cà Mau, Bạc Liêu, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, Bến Tre, Vĩnh Long, Tiền Giang, An Giang, Đồng Tháp, Long An, Hồ Chí Minh.
- GROUP 3 (Light Blue):** Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Lạng Sơn, Thái Nguyên, Bắc Giang, Quảng Ninh, Hải Phòng, Thái Bình, Nam Định, Ninh Bình, Hòa Bình, Điện Biên, Lai Châu, Lào Cai, Yên Bái, Sơn La, Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị, Quảng Nam, Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định, Gia Lai, Phú Yên, Khánh Hòa, Ninh Thuận, Bình Thuận, Đồng Tháp, Long An, Tiền Giang, Kiên Giang, Cà Mau, Bạc Liêu, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, Bến Tre, Vĩnh Long, Hồ Chí Minh.
- GROUP 4 (Yellow):** Hà Giang, Cao Bằng, Bắc Kạn, Lạng Sơn, Thái Nguyên, Bắc Giang, Quảng Ninh, Hải Phòng, Thái Bình, Nam Định, Ninh Bình, Hòa Bình, Điện Biên, Lai Châu, Lào Cai, Yên Bái, Sơn La, Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Thừa Thiên-Huế, Đắk Lắk, Đắk Nông, Lâm Đồng, Bình Phước, Tây Ninh, Bình Dương, Đồng Nai, Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Kiên Giang, Cà Mau, Bạc Liêu, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, Bến Tre, Vĩnh Long, Tiền Giang, An Giang, Đồng Tháp, Long An, Hồ Chí Minh.
- GROUP 5 (Grey):** Sơn La, Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Thừa Thiên-Huế, Đắk Lắk, Đắk Nông, Lâm Đồng, Bình Phước, Tây Ninh, Bình Dương, Đồng Nai, Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu, Kiên Giang, Cà Mau, Bạc Liêu, Sóc Trăng, Trà Vinh, Bến Tre, Vĩnh Long, Tiền Giang, An Giang, Đồng Tháp, Long An, Hồ Chí Minh.

Islands shown include Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa.

2.2. Review Results

2.2.1. Provincial E-Service Portal Interfaces

The interface of 63 PESPs was reviewed based on two aspects: (1) the portal's compatibility on desktop and smartphone devices; and (2) the publicity of basic information on the portal. Overall, most PESPs ensure accessibility for most users. However, the page loading speed remains slow, particularly on smartphones. Additionally, numerous technical errors and a lack of synchronisation currently exist within the display interface of the PESPs (see Figure 2 below for details).

Figure 2. Review results of the interface of 63 PESPs in 2024

Province	Criteria group 1: PESPs' interfaces									
	1.1: PESPs' compatibility on computers and smartphones								1.2: Publicity of basic information on PESPs	
	1.1.1: Compatibility on computers				1.1.2: Compatibility on smartphones				1.2.1: Publicity of contact information of government agencies	1.2.2: Information about OPAS settlement status
	Page loading speed	Accessibility	Best practices	Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	Page loading speed	Accessibility	Best practices	Search Engine Optimization (SEO)		
Ha Noi										
Ha Giang										
Cao Bang										
Bac Kan										
Tuyen Quang										
Lao Cai										
Dien Bien										
Lai Chau										
Son La										
Yen Bai										
Hoa Binh										
Thai Nguyen										
Lang Son										
Quang Ninh										
Bac Giang										
Phu Tho										
Vinh Phuc										
Bac Ninh										
Hai Duong										
Hai Phong										
Hung Yen										
Thai Binh										
Ha Nam										
Nam Dinh										
Ninh Binh										
Thanh Hoa										
Nghe An										
Ha Tinh										
Quang Binh										
Quang Tri										
Thua Thien Hue										
Da Nang										
Quang Nam										
Quang Ngai										
Binh Dinh										
Phu Yen										
Khanh Hoa										
Ninh Thuan										
Binh Thuan										
Kon Tum										
Gia Lai										
Dak Lak										
Dak Nong										
Lam Dong										
Binh Phuoc										
Tay Ninh										
Binh Duong										
Dong Nai										
Ba Ria-Vung Tau										
HCMC										
Long An										
Tien Giang										
Ben Tre										
Tra Vinh										
Vinh Long										
Dong Thap										
An Giang										
Kien Giang										
Can Tho										
Hau Giang										
Soc Trang										
Bac Lieu										
Ca Mau										

Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

Compatibility of PESPs on computers and smartphones

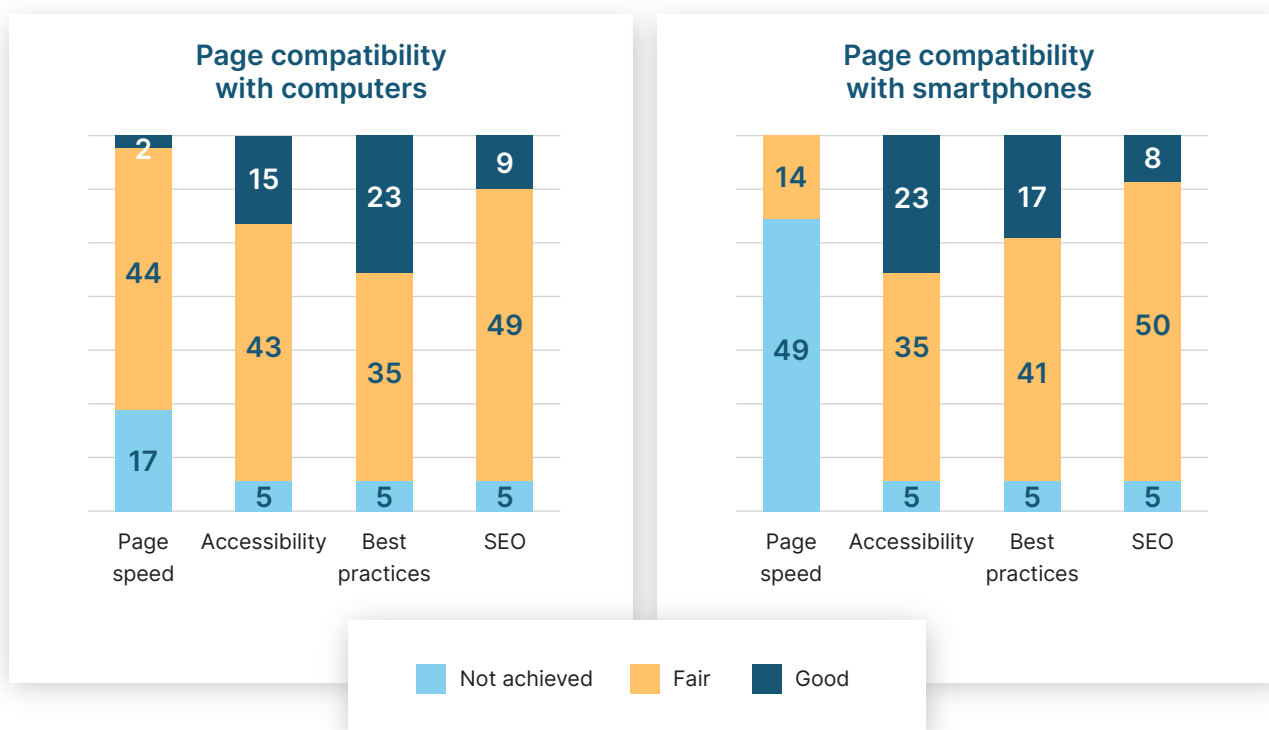
This criteria group includes four evaluation indicators: (1) page loading speed, (2) accessibility, (3) best practices, and (4) Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). The research team utilised Google PageSpeed Insights to analyse and evaluate the interfaces of the PESPs. This tool is designed to ensure objectivity in the evaluation process, minimising the impacts of external factors such as device speed, internet connectivity, and traffic volume at any given time.

Compared to the initial evaluation in 2023, certain interface errors have been partially rectified, particularly concerning content misalignment with the screen, small font sizes, and closely arranged elements. However, according to the automated analysis from the second evaluation in 2024, the display of most PESPs contains errors on both computers and smartphones. These errors include insufficient contrast ratios between foreground and background colours, incorrect aspect ratios in displayed images, distribution of low-resolution images, and non-functional hyperlinks.

Figure 2 illustrates the evaluation results regarding the compatibility level of each PESP on computers and mobile phones. The data indicates that Binh Phuoc's PESP demonstrates a superior compatibility level across both types of devices compared to other portals. In terms of page loading speed, Binh Phuoc's and Dong Thap's PESPs exhibit strong loading speeds on computers (see Figure 2).

The overall review results concerning the compatibility level of 63 PESPs are also presented in Figure 3. Accordingly, no portal met all four criteria at a "Good" level on both types of devices. In particular, the loading speed of most portals across both device types is inadequate: 49 Portals are rated at the 'Not Achieved' level (below 50 points), with none reaching the 'Good' level (90 points and above) for the loading speed criterion on smartphones. Generally, the compatibility level of PESPs on computers is superior to that on mobile devices.

Figure 3. Compatibility level of 63 PESPs on computers and smartphones



Publicity of basic information on PESPs

This criterion evaluates the ease of searching for information on PESPs based on two sub-criteria: (1) contact information of government agencies serving as the focal point for OPAs, and (2) information on the overall status of the settlement of administrative procedures.

(a) Providing contact information

According to this sub-criterion, the PESPs are reviewed to determine whether they provide phone numbers and email addresses of the focal points of OPASSs, and whether they offer complete contact information of all relevant agencies and units. Although this is a straightforward task that does not require complex technical skills, many PESPs still fail to provide contact information of government agencies. Specifically, only six PESPs (Hoa Binh, Lang Son, Phu Tho, Hung Yen, Nghe An, and Long An) provide full contact details of all agencies and units. Additionally, 23 PESPs provide email and phone contacts but not for all agencies and units, including Cao Bang, Tuyen Quang, Lai Chau, Son La, Bac Giang, Vinh Phuc, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, Binh Dinh, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Binh Duong, Tien Giang, Ben Tre, Tra Vinh, An Giang, Can Tho, Hau Giang, and Ca Mau. On the other hand, 33 PESPs do not provide contact information of focal points or agencies and units at all.

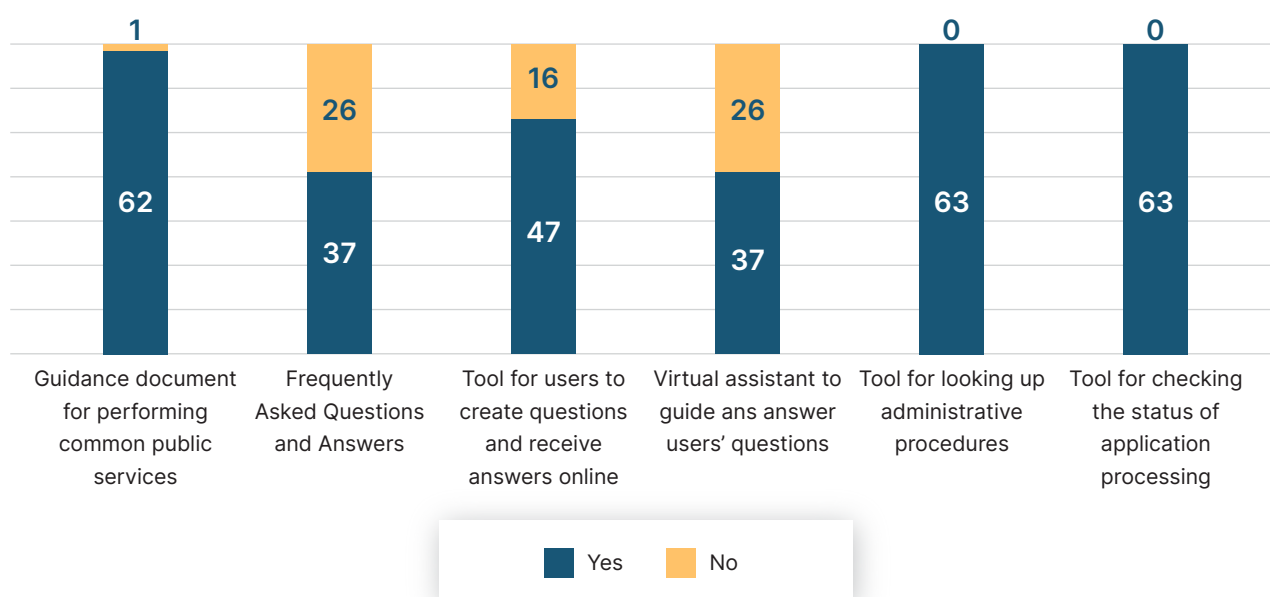
(b) Providing status of the settlement of administrative procedures

Through the review results, 60 out of 63 PESPs met the criterion of providing the status of the settlement of administrative procedures. At the time of the review in April 2024, Vinh Phuc's PESP was being constructed and testing this feature, while Bac Lieu's and Ca Mau's PESPs had not yet publicized the status of the settlement of administrative procedures.⁹ Among the 60 PESPs, 49 Portals clearly report the data of each unit, with each unit having a complete list of on-time and overdue documents. An Giang's PESP has posted detailed information on the status of the settlement of administrative procedures of each department, agency, district, and commune (recorded at the time of the review). The data reveals that most district-level People's Committees have a significant number of overdue cases, with the highest number being Cho Moi District People's Committee (5,068 cases). Besides, 11 PESPs still do not fully publish the status of the settlement of administrative procedures on PESPs. For example, Binh Thuan's PESP only publishes the number of resolved cases and the level of satisfaction of citizens regarding the settlement of administrative procedures.

2.2.2. Guidance and Support before Performing Administrative Procedures on PESPs

This set of criteria assesses the guidance and support provided to users preparing to perform administrative procedures on PESPs based on two indicators: (1) the availability and usability of functions and tools to guide users; and, (2) the usability of lookup tools. Figure 4 presents the review results of these two indicators on PESPs.

Figure 4. Level of availability of instruction and information lookup tools



⁹ As of July 2024, the PESP of Ca Mau and Bac Lieu provinces have publicly disclosed information on the status of handling administrative procedures.

Instructional materials and tools for guiding users

Instructional materials and tools for guiding users are generally well-provided at the provincial level, assisting citizens in familiarising themselves with the operations and functions of the PESPs. This, in turn, facilitates their access to OPASSs, utilisation of features and tools, and completion of online procedures. The results presented in Figure 4 indicate that 62 out of 63 PESPs have uploaded guidance materials; only 6 PESPs continue to rely on guidance materials provided by technical service providers, a decrease from 17 in 2023. Notably, 32 provinces have demonstrated good practices by providing these materials in three formats: text, images, and videos, with provinces such as Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, and Ninh Binh serving as exemplary cases. These results reflect an improvement compared to 2023 when only 23 PESPs provided guidance materials.

In addition, the 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) section has been introduced on 37 PESPs, representing a significant increase from 11 PESPs in 2023. However, many portals link to the FAQ section of the NESP. Gia Lai's and Can Tho's PESPs have published detailed FAQs categorised by field and by central and local levels, which were compiled by the provinces. Nevertheless, since these documents are in PDF format, they are convenient for viewing on computers but may pose difficulties for smartphone users who do not have a PDF reader on their device.

The virtual assistant tool (chatbots), designed to guide and answer user queries, has been found on 33 PESPs in 2024, a notable increase from 15 PESPs in 2023. Seven of these portals (Son La, Yen Bai, Lang Son, Nghe An, Binh Dinh, Binh Thuan, and Dak Lak) offer voice responses. However, at the time of review, only 19 chatbots were functional; the remaining 14 chatbots were either inactive, unresponsive to queries, or provided incorrect responses.

The tool on PESPs that allow users to submit questions and receive responses online has shown promising results, with 47 PESPs currently offering this feature; of these, 20 regularly update their FAQs. This indicates a positive trend in the development of this tool and its potential for further expansion in the future.

Despite these improvements, some PESPs still present certain inconveniences for users. For instance, there is an absence of a suggested list of public services on the homepage and a lack of instructional videos or materials in ethnic languages. The design of these portals assumes that users possess prior experience with online transactions and are aware of which governmental agency is responsible for the service they wish to conduct. This, however, can lead to significant confusion and difficulty for citizens who have never engaged in online transactions.

One limitation of the instructional materials is their lack of consistency. Specifically, the search location varies across different PESPs and their nomenclature differs as well (e.g., 'Support,' 'Others,' 'List of Administrative Procedures,' 'Feedback Evaluation'), making it challenging for users to identify them as instructional guides. Additionally, ten PESPs use English terms or abbreviations (e.g., "Kiosk" or "KHO KQGQ TTHC") to name subpages, which further contributes to a lack of clarity.

Information lookup and search tools

According to the 2024 review results (see Figure 4 at Section 2.2.2), all 63 PESPs provide a search tool for administrative procedures as well as advanced search functionality. Additionally, seven PESPs have integrated voice responses, significantly assisting citizens in locating the appropriate administrative procedures. However, the advanced search feature is often located on different subpages, leading to inconsistencies in how these subpages are organised and named. This makes it challenging for citizens to find the necessary administrative procedures.

All 63 PESPs offer a feature that allows users to check the status of online application processing. Furthermore, 22 PESPs provide additional methods for status tracking such as SMS notifications, Zalo messages, or QR codes. For instance, citizens in Lao Cai can check their application status via Zalo with specific and detailed instructions.

Figure 5 illustrates the performance levels of all 63 PESPs for each criterion related to instructional materials, tools for guidance, and administrative procedure search features ('Good' is represented in green; 'Fair' in yellow; and 'Not Achieved' in red). Many PESPs have performed well in criteria such as 'Tools for Searching Administrative Procedures,' 'Tools for Checking the Status of Application Processing,' and

'Instructional Materials for Common Administrative Procedures'. Conversely, numerous PESPs have fallen short in criteria such as 'Frequently Asked Questions', 'Tools for Submitting Questions Online and Receiving Answers', and 'Virtual Assistant'. Some provinces such as Ha Noi, Dak Lak, and Binh Thuan have scored relatively well by providing features for guiding users through administrative procedures; all achieved four criteria rated as 'Good'. Meanwhile, some provinces have significant room for improvement: Bac Kan had four criteria rated as 'Not Achieved', while Ha Giang, Kien Giang, and Ca Mau had three criteria rated as 'Not Achieved'.

Figure 5. The review result on guidance of performing procedure and provision of lookup tools across 63 PESPs

Province	Criteria group 2: Features to guide users before performing administrative procedures on PESPs					
	2.1: Availability and usability of functions and tools to guide users				2.2: Ease of use of lookup tools	
	2.1.1: Guidance document for performing common public services	2.1.2: Frequently asked questions and answers	2.1.3: Tool for users to create questions and receive answers online	2.1.4: Virtual assistant to guide and answer users' questions	2.2.1: Tool for looking up administrative procedures	2.2.2: Tool for checking the status of application processing
Ha Noi						
Ha Giang						
Cao Bang						
Bac Kan						
Tuyen Quang						
Lao Cai						
Dien Bien						
Lai Chau						
Son La						
Yen Bai						
Hoa Binh						
Thai Nguyen						
Lang Son						
Quang Ninh						
Bac Giang						
Phu Tho						
Vinh Phuc						
Bac Ninh						
Hai Duong						
Hai Phong						
Hung Yen						
Thai Binh						
Ha Nam						
Nam Dinh						
Ninh Binh						
Thanh Hoa						
Nghe An						
Ha Tinh						
Quang Binh						
Quang Tri						
Thua Thien Hue						
Da Nang						
Quang Nam						
Quang Ngai						
Binh Dinh						
Phu Yen						
Khanh Hoa						
Ninh Thuan						
Binh Thuan						
Kon Tum						
Gia Lai						
Dak Lak						
Dak Nong						
Lam Dong						
Binh Phuoc						
Tay Ninh						
Binh Duong						
Dong Nai						
Ba Ria-Vung Tau						
HCMC						
Long An						
Tien Giang						
Ben Tre						
Tra Vinh						
Vinh Long						
Dong Thap						
An Giang						
Kien Giang						
Can Tho						
Hau Giang						
Soc Trang						
Bac Lieu						
Ca Mau						

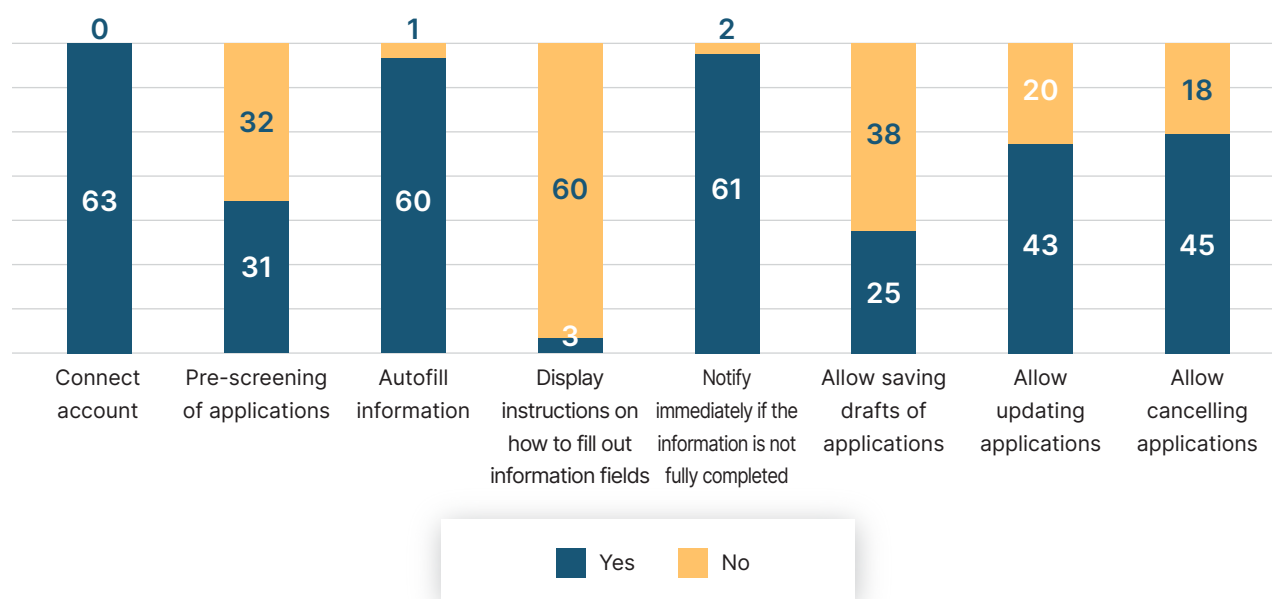
Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

2.2.3. Functions and Tools to Support Users in Performing Administrative Procedures on PESPs

This group of criteria assesses the level of support provided to citizens when conducting administrative procedures, specifically for requesting a criminal record, on PESPs. The criteria include: (1) Level of support to help users create electronic records on their own, and (2) The functions to enable full-cycle delivery of OPASS

Figure 6 presents the overall assessment of the extent to which users can independently create electronic files without the assistance of civil servants.

Figure 6. Functions to help users create electronic records on their own (for the service of issuing criminal record certificates)



Regarding account login, as of the April 2024 review, all 63 PESPs allowed linking provincial e-service accounts to the NESP, facilitating users' logging in. Moreover, to enhance account security, two-factor authentication was implemented on 49 PESPs, enabling users to verify their accounts using the VNeID application (which show one's verified unique identification number).¹⁰

Concerning the level of support for filtering applications, 31 PESPs allowed citizens to pre-filter applications based on factors such as processing time and applicant age. For instance, users could choose between a 10-day or 15-day processing time and specify the applicant's age (under 14 or 14 and above). However, a significant number of PESPs (32) did not offer pre-filtering options. Moreover, similar to previous assessments, the filtering criteria were often limited and designed to meet the immediate needs of processors rather than the convenience of applicants, forcing them to understand the procedures and categorise their applications accordingly.

Regarding the auto-filling personal information function, 60 PESPs now have retrieved data from the NESP login. This represents a 10-portal increase compared to 2023. Common auto-filled fields include full name, citizen ID number, and date of birth. However, gender information was often missing or not auto-filled. As of the review, three provinces – Khanh Hoa, Binh Thuan, and Bac Lieu – have not yet implemented this auto-fill feature.¹¹

On in-field instructions for users, these have been offered by only three PESPs in Dien Bien, Da Nang, and Quang Nam. Compared to the 2023 review, this feature has been improved with Vietnamese instructions and support for users to supplement incomplete or incorrect information after auto-filling.

¹⁰ This is the result of the review conducted before the mandatory use of VNeID accounts for carrying out administrative procedures in the electronic environment, which will take effect from July 1, 2024.

¹¹ As of mid-July 2024, the PESP of Bac Lieu has implemented the auto-fill function.

Real-time notifications for incomplete information have been implemented on 61 PESPs, using methods such as highlighting missing fields in red or displaying pop-up messages. However, 12 PESPs have only provided generic notifications without specifying the missing fields. For instance, the PESPs in Bac Ninh, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, and Quang Tri only indicate that information is missing. Moreover, the PESPs in Thua Thien-Hue and Khanh Hoa do not have this notification feature. This lack of specificity poses challenges for users in completing their applications.

Regarding the ability to save drafts, update, and cancel applications, PESPs have only achieved a moderate level of functionality. Notably, 38 PESPs¹² have not offered a draft-saving feature, while 20 PESPs¹³ have not allowed users to update their applications after submission. On the positive side, 45 PESPs have now permitted application cancellation, an increase from 39 in 2023. This provides users with more flexibility to withdraw their applications if they discover errors or no longer need the service.

The review of features and tools supporting users in creating electronic applications for criminal records across 63 PESPs was categorised into three levels: "good," "fair," and "not achieved," represented by green, yellow, and red, respectively, in Figure 7. Overall, PESPs performed well in "auto-filling information" (60 PESPs rated "good") and "real-time notifications for incomplete information" (49 PESPs rated "good"). However, there is room for improvement in "displaying instructions within fields" (62 PESPs rated "not achieved," with only one PESP in Dien Bien rated "good") and "pre-filtering applications" (32 PESPs rated "not achieved," 31 PESPs rated "good"). Several PESPs, including Ninh Binh, Da Nang, Gia Lai, Long An, and An Giang, achieved a "good" rating in all four criteria. Additionally, a significant number of PESPs (28) achieved a "good" rating in three criteria, such as Hanoi, Ha Giang, Phu Tho, Hai Duong, Hai Phong, Ca Mau, Can Tho, Kien Giang, and Dong Thap. Conversely, some PESPs, including Bac Ninh, Ninh Thuan, Binh Phuoc, and Dong Nai, only achieved a "good" rating in one criterion.

¹² Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Yen Bai, Hoa Binh, Thai Nguyen, Lang Son, Bac Giang, Phu Tho, Vinh Phuc, Hung Yen, Thai Binh, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Khanh Hoa, Kon Tum, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, Lam Dong, Binh Duong, Tien Giang, Kien Giang, Can Tho, Bac Lieu, Ca Mau.

¹³ Hoa Binh, Thai Nguyen, Lang Son, Bac Giang, Vinh Phuc, Bac Ninh, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Da Nang, Tay Ninh, Vinh Long, Dong Thap, Can Tho, Hau Giang, Bac Lieu.

Figure 7. Review results of the level of support to help users create electronic records on their own

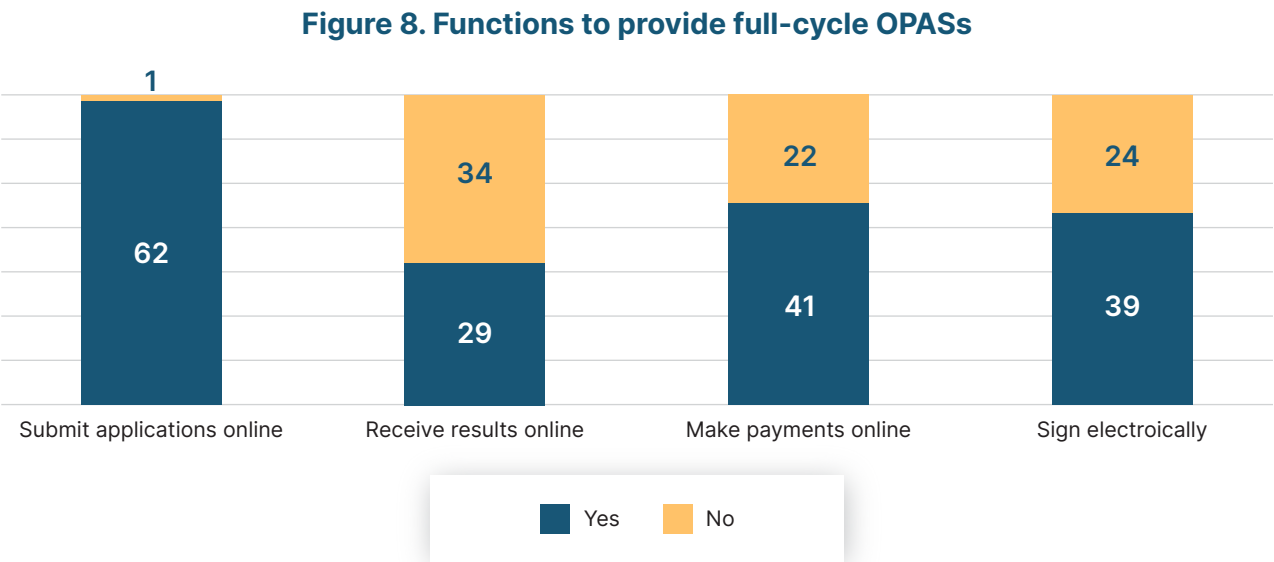
Province	Criteria group 3: Functions to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs					
	3.1: Level of support to help users create electronic records on their own					
	3.1.1: Connect account with PESPs	3.1.2: Pre-screening of applications	3.1.3: Auto-fill information	3.1.4: Display instructions on how to fill out information fields	3.1.5: Notify immediately if the information is not fully completed	3.1.6: Allow saving drafts of applications
Ha Noi						
Ha Giang						
Cao Bang						
Bac Kan						
Tuyen Quang						
Lao Cai						
Dien Bien						
Lai Chau						
Son La						
Yen Bai						
Hoa Binh						
Thai Nguyen						
Lang Son						
Quang Ninh						
Bac Giang						
Phu Tho						
Vinh Phuc						
Bac Ninh						
Hai Duong						
Hai Phong						
Hung Yen						
Thai Binh						
Ha Nam						
Nam Dinh						
Ninh Binh						
Thanh Hoa						
Nghe An						
Ha Tinh						
Quang Binh						
Quang Tri						
Thua Thien Hue						
Da Nang						
Quang Nam						
Quang Ngai						
Binh Dinh						
Phu Yen						
Khanh Hoa						
Ninh Thuan						
Binh Thuan						
Kon Tum						
Gia Lai						
Dak Lak						
Dak Nong						
Lam Dong						
Binh Phuoc						
Tay Ninh						
Binh Duong						
Dong Nai						
Ba Ria-Vung Tau						
HCMC						
Long An						
Tien Giang						
Ben Tre						
Tra Vinh						
Vinh Long						
Dong Thap						
An Giang						
Kien Giang						
Can Tho						
Hau Giang						
Soc Trang						
Bac Lieu						
Ca Mau						

Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

Functions to enable full-cycle delivery of OPASs (for the service of issuing criminal record certificates)

Figure 8 presents the overall review results of the level of completeness of features for providing full-cycle OPASs.

Regarding the completeness of features for full-cycle OPASs, 62 out of 63 PESPs allow online submission of documents, providing greater convenience for users (an increase of 6 provinces compared to the 2023 review). Additionally, 29 PESPs allow users to receive results online (an increase of 12 provinces). However, 34 PESPs still require users to receive results by mail or in person, despite the fact that providing criminal records is considered a full-cycle OPAS.



Concerning online payment options, 41 PESPs have implemented this feature. Of these, 33 PESPs allow payment after submitting the application, while 8 PESPs require payment beforehand. The latter approach necessitates a refund process in cases where the application is rejected or incomplete.

Additionally, at the time of the review, 39 PESPs had implemented the digital signature feature to authenticate documents within applications. This feature enhances the reliability and certainty of public servants in reviewing submitted applications. ¹⁴

The review of features for fully OPASs (for criminal records) across 63 PESPs was categorised into three levels: "good," "fair," and "not achieved," represented by green, yellow, and red, respectively, in Figure 9. The predominant colour is green, indicating that a significant number of PESPs achieved a "good" rating, especially in "online submission" (all PESPs) and "online payment" (46 PESPs). Notably, 15 PESPs achieved a "good" rating in all four criteria, including several in mountainous provinces such as Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, Lai Chau, Yen Bai, Dak Nong, and Lam Dong. However, some PESPs, including Son La, Hoa Binh, Thai Nguyen, Dong Nai, Ho Chi Minh City, and Ba Ria-Vung Tau, achieved a "not achieved" rating in three out of four criteria.

¹⁴ By July 2024, according to the National Electronic Authentication Center, only PESP of Khanh Hoa had not yet integrated with the E-Sign Portal.

Figure 9. Review results of the level of support to provide full-cycle OPASs

Province	Criteria group 3: Functions to support users in performing administrative procedures on PESPs			
	3.2: Functions to enable full-cycle delivery of OPASs			
	3.2.1: Allow online application submission	3.2.2: Allow online receipt of application results	3.2.3: Allow online payment	3.2.4: Allow users to perform digital signing
Ha Noi	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Ha Giang	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Cao Bang	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bac Kan	Green	Green	Green	Green
Tuyen Quang	Green	Green	Green	Green
Lao Cai	Green	Green	Green	Green
Dien Bien	Green	Green	Green	Red
Lai Chau	Green	Green	Green	Red
Son La	Green	Red	Red	Red
Yen Bai	Green	Green	Green	Green
Hoa Binh	Green	Red	Red	Red
Thai Nguyen	Green	Red	Red	Red
Lang Son	Green	Red	Red	Green
Quang Ninh	Green	Green	Green	Green
Bac Giang	Green	Red	Red	Green
Phu Tho	Green	Green	Green	Green
Vinh Phuc	Green	Green	Red	Green
Bac Ninh	Green	Red	Red	Green
Hai Duong	Green	Green	Green	Green
Hai Phong	Green	Red	Green	Green
Hung Yen	Green	Red	Green	Green
Thai Binh	Green	Red	Red	Green
Ha Nam	Green	Green	Green	Green
Nam Dinh	Green	Red	Red	Green
Ninh Binh	Green	Green	Red	Green
Thanh Hoa	Green	Green	Green	Red
Nghe An	Green	Red	Green	Green
Ha Tinh	Green	Green	Green	Green
Quang Binh	Green	Red	Red	Red
Quang Tri	Green	Red	Red	Green
Thua Thien Hue	Green	Red	Yellow	Green
Da Nang	Green	Red	Red	Red
Quang Nam	Green	Red	Green	Green
Quang Ngai	Green	Green	Green	Red
Binh Dinh	Red	Red	Red	Red
Phu Yen	Green	Red	Red	Green
Khanh Hoa	Green	Green	Red	Red
Ninh Thuan	Green	Red	Red	Green
Binh Thuan	Green	Red	Green	Red
Kon Tum	Green	Green	Green	Red
Gia Lai	Green	Green	Green	Red
Dak Lak	Green	Green	Red	Green
Dak Nong	Green	Green	Green	Green
Lam Dong	Green	Green	Green	Green
Binh Phuoc	Green	Red	Yellow	Red
Tay Ninh	Green	Red	Yellow	Red
Binh Duong	Green	Green	Yellow	Red
Dong Nai	Green	Red	Red	Red
Ba Ria-Vung Tau	Green	Red	Red	Red
HCMC	Green	Red	Red	Red
Long An	Green	Red	Yellow	Green
Tien Giang	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Ben Tre	Green	Red	Green	Green
Tra Vinh	Green	Green	Green	Green
Vinh Long	Green	Red	Green	Red
Dong Thap	Green	Red	Red	Green
An Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green
Kien Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green
Can Tho	Green	Red	Green	Red
Hau Giang	Green	Red	Green	Red
Soc Trang	Green	Red	Green	Green
Bac Lieu	Green	Red	Green	Green
Ca Mau	Green	Red	Green	Red

Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

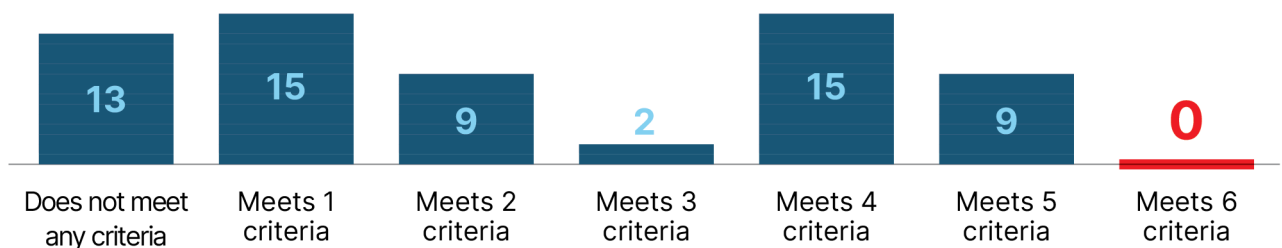
ACCESSIBILITY OF 63 PROVINCIAL E-SERVICE PORTALS (PESPs) FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The accessibility of PESPs for people with disabilities was evaluated based on 6 criteria from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0:

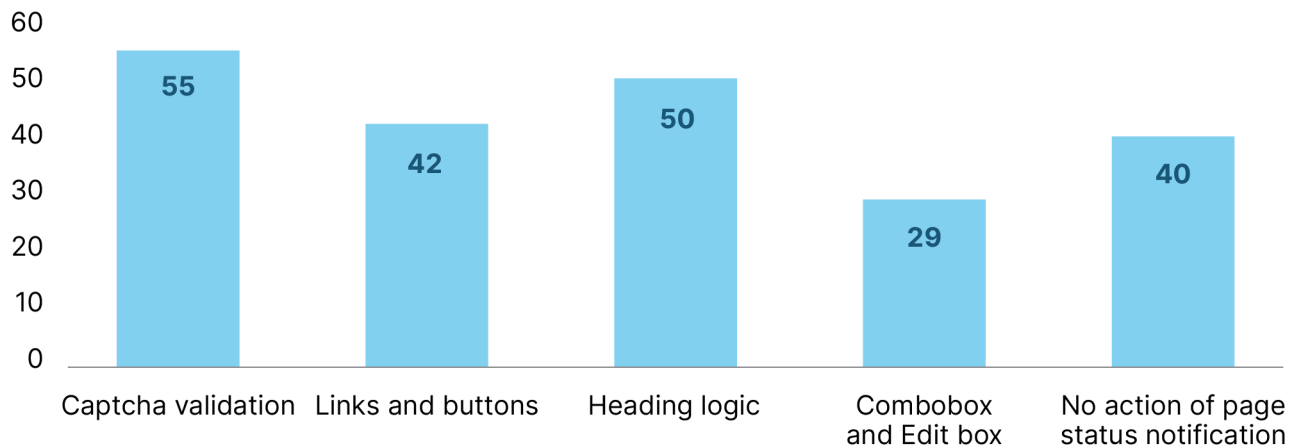
6 CRITERIA FROM THE WEB CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES (WCAG) 2.0:

SC 1.1.1	▶ Providing text alternatives for non-text content.
SC 1.3.1	▶ Ensuring that information conveyed by images or audio remains unchanged when presentation formats are altered.
SC 2.1.1	▶ Ensuring that content is accessible via keyboard or keyboard interface.
SC 2.4.4	▶ Helping users understand the purpose of each link.
SC 2.4.6	▶ Helping users comprehend the structure and content of the website.
SC 3.3.2	▶ Providing clear instructions and labels for form controls.

EVALUATION OF 63 PESPs ACCORDING TO 6 WCAG 2.0 CRITERIA



NUMBER OF PESP(s) NOT MEETING 5 CRITERIA FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED ACCESSIBILITY



CHALLENGES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- ▶ People with disabilities face challenges using PESPs due to limitations specific to their type of disability.
- ▶ Many PESPs either lack guidance or provide minimal, unclear, and unspecialized instructions for different types of disabilities.
- ▶ 30 portals only offer one or two types of instructions, making it difficult for people with disabilities to navigate the services.
- ▶ Users with motor impairments encounter difficulties because of the lack of shortcuts that would allow easier use of the mouse.

2.2.4. Assurance of users' right on PESPs

The evaluation results show that PESPs have begun to pay more attention to accessibility for persons with disabilities and the right of users to evaluate services. However, the level of personal data protection to ensure user privacy has not yet been prioritized on PESPs.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities

Similar to 2023 review, the 2024 review of PESPs accessibility for persons with disabilities was based on the six criteria for Level A accessibility of a website as outlined in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (see Table 2).¹⁵ These criteria are also stipulated in Circular No. 26/2020/TT-BTTTT and Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT.¹⁶

These criteria focus on evaluating the effectiveness of keyboard navigation for screen readers. Thus, they are particularly significant for visually impaired users, especially those who are completely blind and rely entirely on keyboards and screen readers for access. Furthermore, these criteria are fundamental in ensuring the understandability and accessibility of the interface for all users when interacting with PESPs.

Table 2. Six criteria for evaluating level of accessibility for persons with disabilities

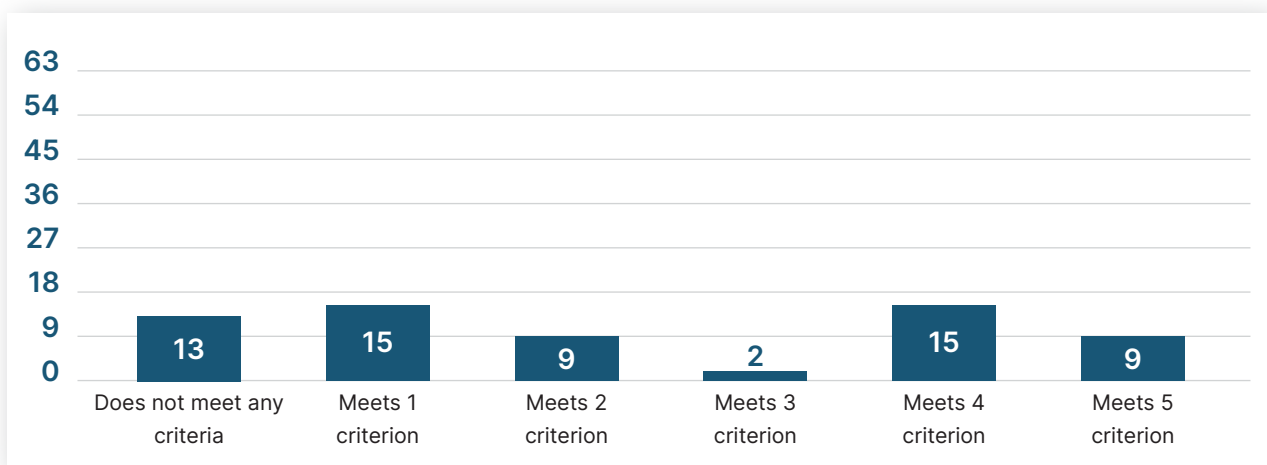
No.	Criterion	Feature
1	SC 1.1.1	Ensure that information conveyed through non-text content is readable by providing an equivalent text alternative.
2	SC 1.3.1	Ensure that information and relationships presented in visual or auditory formats are preserved when the presentation format changes.
3	SC 2.1.1	Ensure that, whenever possible, content can be accessed via keyboard or keyboard interfaces (to accommodate alternative keyboards).
4	SC 2.4.4	Help users understand the purpose of each link so they can decide whether they want to follow it.
5	SC 2.4.6	Help users understand what information is contained on web pages and how that information is organized.
6	SC 3.3.2	Provide guidance or labels that identify form controls so users know what data input is being conveyed.

While only one PESP met five out of six criteria in the 2023 assessment, the second assessment revealed that nine PESPs achieved this result. The number of PESPs that did not meet any criteria decreased from 24 in 2023 to 13 in 2024. This indicates that PESPs have paid more attention to the needs of visually impaired users and have adjusted their websites to comply with international standards and improve accessibility. However, no PESPs has yet met all six criteria. Notably, only five PESPs met SC 1.3.1, which requires that information and relationships presented in visual form can be programmatically determined from the content or structure (See Figure 10).

¹⁵ Although these criteria are derived from the WCAG 2.1 guidelines, they are Level A criteria, so they essentially represent the minimum standards already covered in WCAG 2.0.

¹⁶ Circular No. 26/2020/TT-BTTTT regulates the application of standards and technologies to assist people with disabilities in accessing and using information and communication products and services; Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT specifies the functions and technical features of the information system for handling administrative procedures at the ministerial and provincial levels.

Figure 10. Evaluation of 63 PESPs according to 6 WCAG 2.0 criteria

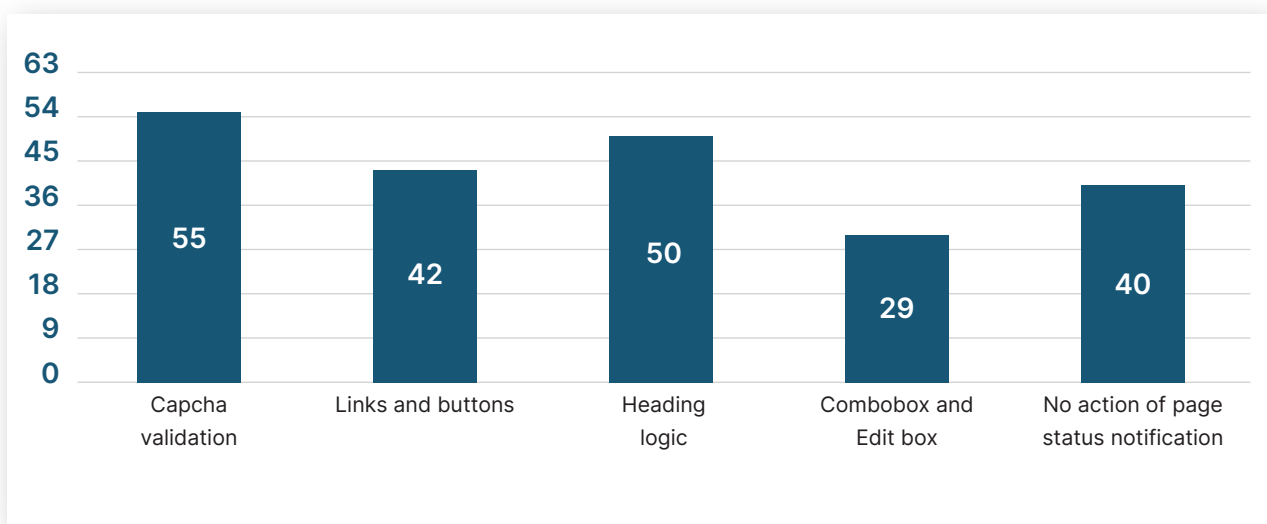


Concurrently, the research team consisting of two totally blind individuals and one partially sighted person participated in two rounds of assessments of 63 PESPs from March 22 to March 31, 2024. In the second round, team members cross-checked each other's assessment results. The five evaluation criteria remained the same as in 2023 and included: (1) Presence or absence of CAPTCHA verification errors; (2) Presence or absence of errors in links and buttons; (3) Presence or absence of errors in heading logic; (4) Presence or absence of errors in combo boxes and custom edit boxes; and (5) Presence or absence of errors in not notifying the status of operations or the website.

The evaluation results showed a slight decrease in the number of PESPs with errors in all five criteria compared to the 2023 assessment. However, all 63 PESPs had technical issues that posed challenges for visually impaired users (see Figure 11). Notably, the most common error was the inaccessibility of CAPTCHA verification for screen readers, affecting 55 PESPs.

The number of PESPs with errors based on the evaluation criteria are presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Number of PESP(s) not meeting five criteria for visually impaired accessibility



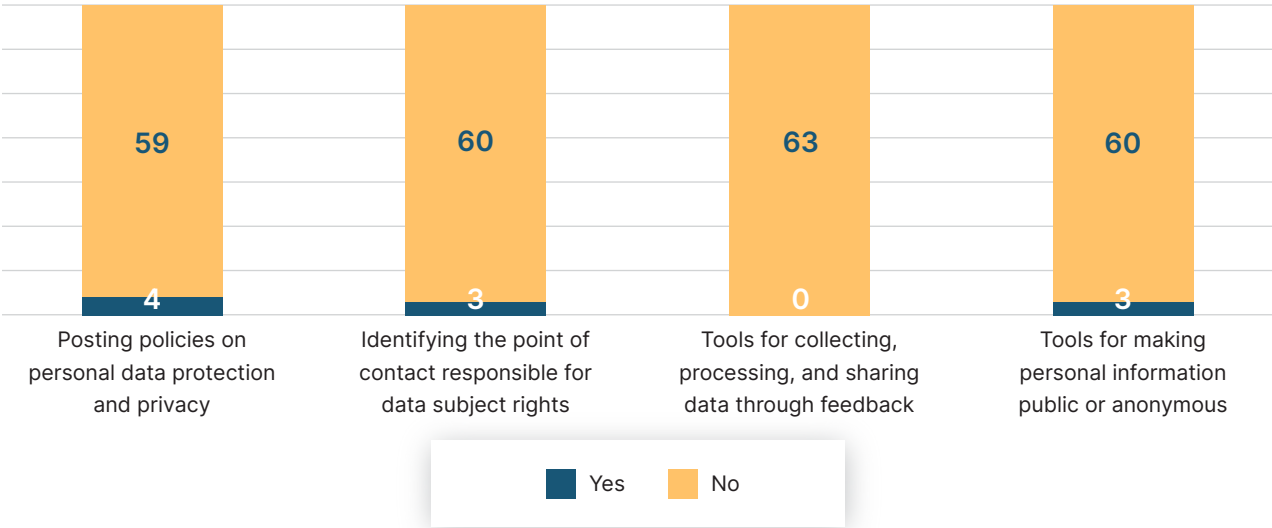
Additionally, according to an online survey conducted by IPS with 119 citizens with disabilities in April 2024, 111 of them (93 percent) reported a need for OPASs. They believed that digital platforms enable citizens with disabilities to access public services more easily, from anywhere, and avoid discrimination. However, only 36% of the surveyed individuals indicated that they had used PESPs, a significantly lower percentage than the actual demand of the disability community.

This situation arises because persons with disabilities face various challenges, depending on their specific disability, when using computers and mobile devices to access OPASs. In addition to the technical issues mentioned above, the most common objective reason cited by respondents was the lack of, or inadequate and incomprehensible, instructions on PESPs. The content and format of these instructions have not been tailored to the specific needs of different disability types. For instance, 30 PESPs provided instructions in both text and image formats but lacked video instructions, or only offered text-based guides. Moreover, PESPs do not provide keyboard shortcuts for individuals with motor disabilities, making it difficult for them to navigate using a mouse.¹⁷

Protecting personal data and privacy

The overall assessment results of the level of personal data protection for users on 63 PESPs are shown in Figure 12. The review results show that local authorities have not paid attention to protecting privacy and personal data on the PESPs. Only 4 PESPs (Bac Giang, Thua Thien Hue, Gia Lai, Can Tho) have posted privacy policies, compared to 3 in the 2023 assessment.

Figure 12. Performance in personal data protection on PESPs



The content of the privacy policies posted on PESPs remains rudimentary and does not comply with the personal data protection regulations outlined in Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP. These documents contain typographical errors, missing sentence elements, illogical layouts, and a mixture of Vietnamese and English. The PESPs of Bac Giang, Gia Lai, and Can Tho provide only email addresses, leaving it unclear who is responsible for personal data protection; furthermore, the PESPs of Gia Lai and Can Tho list the email addresses of service providers.

The PESPs of Bac Ninh and Soc Trang provinces include a commitment not to share user information with other agencies without the user's permission, except in specific circumstances, in their terms of use. The PESPs of Thua Thien Hue, Long An, and Tien Giang allow users to choose whether to make their personal information public or anonymous before submitting feedback or complaints. However, none of 63 PESPs have a tool to seek consent for the collection, processing, sharing, and management of personal data in the form of an attached link, as required by Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP on personal data protection.

This assessment further reinforces the findings from the evaluation of user privacy protection on local government interaction interfaces conducted by IPS and UNDP in 2022,¹⁸ as well as the results of the first review of PESPs in 2023. According to the 2023 PAPI survey, one-third of

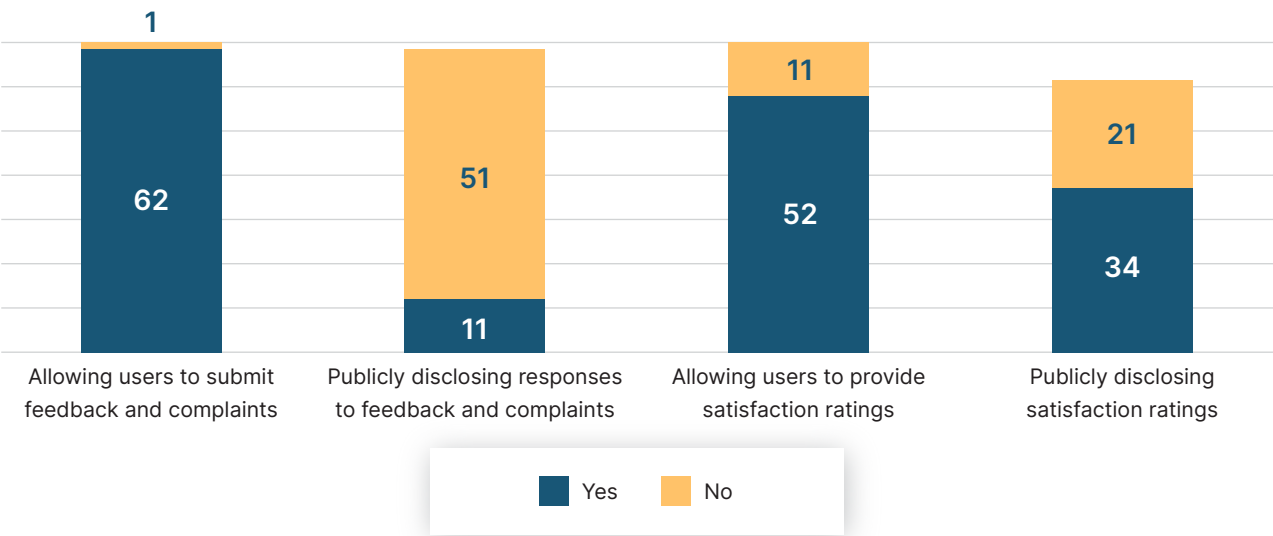
¹⁷ CEPEW, Report on Accessibility of Public Administrative Services for People with Disabilities. Towards Inclusive Design, 2021. Access at <https://cepew.org.vn/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Tiep-can-dich-vu-hanh-chinh-cong-doi-voi-nguoi-khuyet-tat-Huong-den-su-thiet-ke-dung-hop-.pdf>.
¹⁸ IPS & UNDP, Review of Local Governments' Implementation of Personal Data Protection on Online Government-Citizen Interaction Interfaces, 2022, Hanoi: 2022, available at <https://pa-pi.org.vn/eng/danh-gia-viec-bao-ve-du-lieu-ca-nhan-tren-cac-nen-tang-tuong-tac-voi-nguoi-dan-cua-chinh-quyen-dia-phuong-nam-2022/>.

surveyed users of both the NESP (33.1 percent) and PESP (30.7 percent) expressed concerns regarding the privacy and security of these two portals.

Ensuring users’ right to evaluate OPASs

Ensuring that users can evaluate the quality of services is implemented on many PESPs. Of the 63 PESPs, all except Quang Ninh’s have a feedback and complaint subpage that links to either the feedback and complaint section of the NESP or has a self-built form. Notably, the PESPs of Cao Bang and Tuyen Quang also provide a phone number for receiving user feedback and complaints. However, 51 PESPs do not publicly disclose the government's responses to user feedback and complaints (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Functions for users to evaluate service quality



52 PESPs allow users to rate their satisfaction after experiencing a service; however, among them, 21 PESPs do not publicly disclose these evaluation results. Notably, ten PESPs either lack an evaluation form or have a faulty evaluation form that cannot be accessed. At the PESP of Phu Yen, accessing the "Evaluation" subpage redirects users to the Feedback and Complaints section of the NESP. 31 out of the 52 mentioned PESPs publicly disclose the results of user satisfaction ratings. Additionally, PESPs from three provinces—Binh Thuan, Dong Nai, and Ba Ria-Vung Tau—provide information and publicly disclose satisfaction rating results even though they do not have an evaluation form, or their evaluation form is inaccessible.

Furthermore, the results of the assessment of user rights across 63 PESPs are categorised into three levels: good, fair, and not achieved, corresponding to green, yellow, and red colours in Figure 14 below. Accordingly, red is the dominant colour, covering most of the colour palette in Figure 14. This indicates that PESPs still exhibit numerous shortcomings and limitations in ensuring basic user rights, including access to OPASs for citizens with disabilities; rights concerning personal data; and rights to evaluate services. Among the twelve criteria assessed, only criterion SC 2.1.1 for visually impaired users received a good rating (green), indicating that these PESPs provide tools for visually impaired individuals to transmit content via keyboard or alternative keyboard interfaces. Similarly, several PESPs received good ratings for participation in satisfaction surveys and being informed about survey results. The PESPs achieved satisfactory results (yellow) in terms of feedback and complaints regarding administrative procedures and being informed about responses. For the remaining nine criteria, red is predominant; in other words, most PESPs did not meet the requirements.

Figure 14. Review results of the level of user rights assurance on 63 PESPs

Province	Criteria group 4: Assurance of users' rights on PESPs												
	4.1: Accessibility for persons with disabilities					4.2: Protecting personal data and privacy				4.3: Exercising users' rights to evaluate OPASs			
	4.1.1 (SC 1.1): Non-text Content	4.1.2 (SC 1.31): Info and Relationships	4.1.3 (SC 2.1.1): Keyboard	4.1.4 (SC 2.4.4): Link Purpose (In Context)	4.1.5 (SC 2.4.6): Headings and Labels	4.1.6 (SC 3.3.2): Labels or Instructions	4.2.1: Posting policies for personal data protection and privacy	4.2.2: Identifying the point of contact responsible for data subject rights	4.2.3: Tools for collecting, processing, and sharing data	4.2.4: Tools for making personal information public or anonymous	4.3.1: Allowing users to submit feedback and complaints, and receive responses	4.3: Ensuring users' rights to evaluate OPASs	
Ha Noi	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ha Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Bac Kan	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Tuyen Quang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Lao Cai	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Dien Bien	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Lai Chau	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Son La	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Yen Bai	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Hoa Binh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Thai Nguyen	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Lang Son	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Quang Ninh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Bac Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Phu Tho	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Vinh Phuc	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Bac Ninh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Hai Duong	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Hai Phong	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Hung Yen	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Thai Binh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ha Nam	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Nam Dinh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ninh Binh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Thanh Hoa	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Nghe An	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ha Tinh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Quang Binh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Quang Tri	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Thua Thien Hue	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Da Nang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Quang Nam	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Quang Ngai	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Binh Dinh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Phu Yen	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Khanh Hoa	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ninh Thuan	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Binh Thuan	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Kon Tum	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Gia Lai	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Dak Lak	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Dak Nong	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Lam Dong	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Binh Phuoc	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Tay Ninh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Binh Duong	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Dong Nai	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ria-Vung Tau	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ho Chi Minh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Long An	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Tien Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ben Tre	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Tra Vinh	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Vinh Long	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Dong Thap	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
An Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Kien Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Can Tho	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Hau Giang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Soc Trang	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Bac Lieu	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Ca Mau	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved													

Legend: Green: Good; Yellow: Fair; Red: Not achieved

3

EVALUATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING UTILIZATION OF ON-LINE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

This section assesses several factors that influence the implementation of administrative procedures and the use of OPASs by citizens on PESPs. The five factors evaluated include: (i) the extent to which user needs are met; (ii) synchronization; (iii) transparency; (iv) specialization; and (v) effectiveness. In addition, the study also considers several factors related to service providers that affect the quality and efficiency of OPASs provision on PESPs, including infrastructure and technical conditions; procedures for providing OPASs; human resources; and supporting policies for implementing OPASs.

3.1. Factors Influencing Citizens' Usage of OPASs

3.1.1. The extent to which user needs are met

Despite the improvements made since 2023, there are still areas where the PESPs fall short in terms of user convenience and friendliness.

Firstly, administrative procedures still require the use of computers as the features and support tools on the PESPs are not yet compatible with smartphones. Meanwhile, among the population aged 16 to 64, 97.4 percent own smartphones to access the Internet; 55.4 percent own laptops or desktops, and 27 percent own tablets.¹⁹ Similarly, according to the PAPI 2023 survey results, 90.8 percent of respondents said they use smartphones.²⁰ However, because the portals are not designed for use on smartphones, it is difficult for users to access and perform administrative procedures on the online public service portal. This challenge is particularly pronounced in disadvantaged areas such as mountainous, poor rural, remote and isolated regions, where many people lack access to computers and cannot perform administrative procedures at home or in their villages.

Users still face numerous difficulties when conducting online procedures. They must click many times to complete a procedure on the PESPs; download forms to their computers, fill them out, print them, sign them and send the electronic copies to the portal; or scan or take photos of various types of documents to upload to the PESPs. Many administrative procedures require online applicants to combine multiple information and forms as required for direct application. Additionally, online applicants are still required to supplement documents in person at the local receiving and result returning department.

“As a civil servant, I handle and process numerous administrative documents and procedures daily, yet I still face many challenges when dealing with online procedures. For elderly individuals, people with low levels of education, those unfamiliar with the procedures, or those not accustomed to the internet and technology, the difficulties are even greater.”

(Administrative procedure control officer, Office of the Provincial People's Committee of a coastal province in Central Viet Nam, in discussion with the research team, May 2024)

Furthermore, the needs of certain specific user groups in accessing and using OPASs have not been fully met. For example, no PESPs met all six minimum standards of level A accessibility for

¹⁹ We Are Social, Digital 2024: Viet Nam, 1/2024, access at <https://www.pvm.vn/we-are-social-toan-can-h-digital-tai-viet-nam-dau-thang-1-2024-phan-1-thoi-gian-trung-binh-nguoi-viet-su-dung-internet-la-6-gio-18-phut/>.

²⁰ UNDP, 2023 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) Report, p.33, access at <https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/2023-provincial-governance-and-public-administration-performance-index-papi-report>.

a website;²¹ none of 63 PESPs met five standards from the perspective of the needs of the visually impaired. There is a lack of effective methods and tools on PESPs to support ethnic minority people who do not know or have limited knowledge of Vietnamese, and persons with disabilities.

3.1.2. Synchronization

The synchronization between each PESP and among them is still insufficient. The evidence are as follows:

Firstly, there are still cases of inconsistency between technical factors, processes, procedures, and human resources in the operation of a PESP. Technical issues are reflected in the inability to submit applications, outdated data, failure to update the status of application processing, inability to make online payments, inconsistent information on the system, and difficulties in operating the system. Process and procedural issues include delays in processing and returning applications, complex and cumbersome online application procedures, and citizens submitting applications online but being required to supplement documents in person at the receiving and result returning department of the People's Committee at the commune, district or provincial level. Additionally, there are issues related to the people behind the PESPs, such as returning applications without stating a reason or an unsatisfactory reason, not answering the phone to respond to citizens' questions, being unfriendly in responding to citizens, and not providing specific guidance to citizens.

Secondly, maintaining 63 PESPs simultaneously can cause a lack of consistency and synchronization in their development and operation. There are still different ways of presenting, arranging features, purposes, tools, applications to support users, evaluating satisfaction, publicizing results of administrative procedure settlement, contact methods, etc. between the portals. These limitations were pointed out in the 2023 review, but the portals have not been fully addressed.

Thirdly, the synchronization and interconnection between PESPs and the NESP have not been fully ensured, despite being connected by user accounts. In some provinces, according to the feedback of one-stop-shop officials, user information updated on the NESP is not connected to the PESP and the electronic one-stop-shop system, making it difficult to handle and process administrative procedures for citizens; or the system often displays an error message "Error Occurred while Uploading Data" when "Submitting Application", but the application still reaches the one-stop-shop system and some components of the application are lost.

3.1.3. Transparency

In some aspects, the transparency of the PESPs is quite good. Specifically, 49 PESPs have posted data on the status of administrative procedure processing for each unit with a complete list of on-time and overdue cases. The publication of such detailed data helps citizens easily monitor and supervise, while also reminding civil servants and government agencies that are slow to process applications to complete their work on time.

However, there is still a gap that needs to be addressed to improve the level of transparency of the PESPs. For example, the PESPs lack basic contact information, making it difficult for citizens to know which agency, unit or individual to contact when they need to report or seek clarification on OPASs. In many PESPs, the search features and tools are insufficient and inconvenient for citizens, especially for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with limited Vietnamese proficiency. There are provinces where a large number of dossiers are processed in a traditional manner (in person and on paper), and the information is not updated on the portal system, but the processed dossiers are publicized online.

Many PESPs do not publicly disclose government agencies' responses to citizens' feedback and suggestions (instead providing individual responses only to those who have submitted feedback or suggestions in accordance with regulations) and/or do not disclose the results of evaluating user satisfaction with OPASs. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for the general public to

²¹ The level of accessibility of the PESPs for people with disabilities is assessed based on six basic accessibility criteria of Level A in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0), namely SC 1.1.1, SC 1.3.1, SC 2.1.1, SC 2.4.4, SC 2.4.6, and SC 3.3.2.

understand how the service-providing agency has received, considered, and responded to their opinions, thereby diminishing the value and effectiveness of the features and tools available for users to exercise their right to evaluate services.

Notably, administrative procedures on PESPs are conducted in a closed-loop process that encompasses receipt, assessment, approval, digital signing, and result delivery. However, in many instances, users are left unaware of whether their application has been accepted, unclear about the progress of the procedure, uncertain as to why there are delays, and uninformed about when their application will be processed. Additionally, they often do not know the main contact person responsible for addressing any difficulties. Consequently, individuals report feeling safer and more secure when submitting applications directly at the one-stop-shop because they can ask questions, engage in discussions, present detailed opinions, and provide additional information to civil servants. Through discussions with both citizens and civil servants in various localities, it is evident that the inability to track the steps of administrative procedures on the online public service portal is a primary reason why individuals prefer to conduct administrative procedures in person at local governments' one-stop-shops.

"Citizens say, 'When we come here, we can still see the officials in person and ask them questions if needed. We know our documents have been submitted and can follow up if necessary. But when we submit online, we don't know where our documents are, if they have been accepted, when they will be processed, or whom to ask.'"

(Feedback from a civil servant at the Public Administration Center of a coastal province in Central Viet Nam, in discussion with the research team, May 2024)

3.1.4. Specialization

In-depth reviews and discussions with civil servants and local residents have revealed that some new features and tools have only been added to the PESPs at a basic level and have not been sufficiently developed in terms of technology and content to effectively serve users.

Specifically, the quality and usefulness of the guidance documents have not received adequate attention. These documents are often compiled in a general manner, lengthy, filled with technical jargons, and difficult to understand. Some PESPs continue to repost technical guidance documents from Viet Nam Post and Telecommunications Group (VNPT) without any adjustments or updates. Many portals provide guidance documents in only one format—texts, images, or videos. While the portals have included search tools and advanced search features, these are not prominently displayed on the homepage but are instead buried within sub-categories; moreover, the keyword search function has not been optimised. The Q&A sections on the portals often experience delays in providing answers to citizens (typically responding after several days or not at all).

Regarding support for administrative procedures related to issuing criminal records on PESPs, although this service has been recognised as a full-cycle OPAS, its actual implementation has only progressed to providing a partial online service. The steps for payment and document return have not been fully integrated online across many portals. The 2024 evaluation reaffirms findings from the 2023 evaluation report, which indicated that the criminal record issuance service has only achieved document digitisation (converting original documents from paper to electronic form) but has not yet reached the level of process digitisation (optimising the use of digital data to simplify the electronic file processing workflow).

The current state of chatbots (virtual assistants) supporting users exemplifies another area where PESPs have not achieved depth and substance in their provision of OPASs. The operations of these chatbots are limited to retrieving basic information available on the portal; none can address more complex questions that require real-world context processing. For instance, the chatbot for Dien Bien's PESP redirects inquiries about the criminal record procedure to the Kon Tum's PESP. Additionally, the chatbot on Tra Vinh's PESP is inconvenient for citizens as it requires them to know in advance which agency is responsible for the procedure they are inquiring about before they can ask questions.

3.1.5. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of providing OPASs from the outset of the PESP, or during the conduct of an administrative procedure, can be assessed by the page loading speed. For many PESPs, it takes several minutes for users to load the local portal page, whereas the regulation in Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT stipulates that this should occur within a few seconds. This represents a significant time inefficiency. Furthermore, although all 63 PESPs have tools for users to search for information, the results of the PAPI 2023 survey indicate that the proportion of individuals able to find information about administrative procedures and related forms on the portals remains low, at only 14.6% in 2022 and 20.4% in 2023.²²

While online payment for OPASs is essential for a service to be considered fully operational, a review conducted in 2024 revealed that many PESPs do not have this function. Several PESPs require users to pay before submitting their applications; however, obstacles persist that hinder the completion of the submission process. Findings from surveyed localities indicate that some users are unable to pay service fees, experience slow or no receipt of successful payment notifications despite having completed payments, and find limited options for intermediary payment banks or other payment methods. When errors occur, technical support from intermediary banks for online public service providers is often untimely, which further delays the processing of dossiers and the return of settlement results.

Conducting administrative procedures on PESPs through VNeID accounts has the advantage of connecting a large number of accounts to national databases. However, the VNeID system itself requires improvements in several areas, including identification levels; ensuring 24/7 system operation; system security and safety; speed and capacity; as well as addressing other technical errors encountered by VNeID account users, including those with visual impairments.²³ These issues need to be resolved, especially in light of regulations that will mandate the use of a single VNeID account for administrative procedures in the electronic environment from July 1, 2024.

The exploitation and use of data in providing OPASs on PESPs have not yet reached the desired level of efficiency. As of July 2024, it is reported that 61 out of 63 provinces, and 11 out of 22 ministries have completed the connection between their electronic data management warehouses for organisations and individuals on both ministerial and provincial administrative procedure settlement information systems and the electronic data management warehouse on the NESP to facilitate the settlement of administrative procedures and provision of public services.²⁴ However, in practice, individuals still find themselves having to photocopy and upload identical documents multiple times, resulting in unnecessary difficulties and waste for both submitters and government agencies. Official statistics from the NESP and the MOIC indicate that the exploitation and reuse of results from administrative procedure settlements on PESPs remain limited.

More importantly, although the number of online procedures is increasing, many citizens are unable to complete these tasks themselves on the PESPs.²⁵ Civil servants have to not only provide guidance but also fill in and submit applications on behalf of numerous organisations and individuals. Civil servants in the surveyed localities reported that, due to this reality, the time required to complete a dossier has increased significantly; when individuals complete it directly, it takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes, whereas online submissions take over an hour. One civil servant remarked: "If a public administrative service is processed in person, a civil servant can handle many dossiers in a day; however, when processing online, they can only manage four to five dossiers." Thus, the efficiency of OPASs is greatly diminished in terms of both time and the number of completed dossiers.

Furthermore, the actual proportion of dossiers submitted and processed online is even lower than reported, with a larger number of individuals still needing to visit government agencies to carry out administrative procedures than official statistics suggest. This indicates inefficiencies in

²² UNDP, *2023 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) Report*, p.33, access at <https://www.undp.org/vi/vietnam/publications/bao-cau-chi-so-hieu-qua-quan-tri-va-hanh-chinh-cong-cap-tinh-o-viet-nam-papi-nam-2023>.

²³ Statement by Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang at the fourth session of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Administrative Procedure Reform, May 3, 2024.

²⁴ MOIC, *National Digital Transformation Report for the First Half of 2024, Session 9 of the National Committee on Digital Transformation*, Hanoi, July 2023.

²⁵ MOIC, *Report on the Evaluation of Online Public Administrative Services for the first half of 2023*.

providing OPASs and highlights that the ultimate goal of creating convenience for users—particularly those living in remote and mountainous areas far from district or commune one-stop shops—has not yet been achieved.

“Instead of working only during office hours, we often have to work overtime until noon or late in the afternoon, work through weekends, or take work home to not only guide citizens but also keep up with the daily workload that hasn't been completed.”

(Feedback from a civil servant in a coastal province in Central Viet Nam, as surveyed)

Additionally, many administrative procedures provided as OPASs have not generated any dossiers for an extended period. This finding aligns with official reports. According to the Government Office, some agencies and units offering OPASs for certain administrative procedures frequently do not generate dossiers.²⁶ Data from the NESP indicates that, in the first six months of 2024, the average rate of OPASs without generated dossiers was approximately 19 percent.

Civil servants in surveyed localities reported that indicators for providing OPASs in areas with few dossiers place significant pressure on them. Moreover, some indicators for OPASs are set too high relative to available human resources, time constraints, and technical infrastructure; additionally, some indicators are uniformly applied across all areas, localities, and professional fields, which does not reflect actual conditions. Some civil servants responsible for OPASs noted instances where staff at the “one-stop shop” encourage individuals to conduct online procedures even when those individuals do not wish to or are unable to do so on the online public service portal.

3.2. Factors Influencing OPAS Providers

In addition to the above factors affecting the provision of OPASs on PESPs, several challenges related to OPAS providers have been identified during field research. These challenges include issues related to infrastructure and technology; administrative procedures; measures supporting implementation; and human resources.

3.2.1. Infrastructure, Technical Aspects, and Technology

Feedback from civil servants in localities with inadequate infrastructure and technology indicates that both civil servants and citizens face significant difficulties when carrying out administrative procedures on the online public service portal due to a lack of computers and outdated IT equipment. Administrative procedures requiring individuals to submit photocopies (such as land dossiers) cannot be conducted on the online public service portal because photocopiers are unavailable. Additionally, software used by some sectors frequently malfunctions. Furthermore, internet connections are unstable in many areas, leading to delays in completing dossiers or necessitating re-entry; submitted dossiers may not be saved or may become stuck and subsequently returned. These factors contribute to an increased processing time for administrative procedures compared to those conducted online. Box 1 illustrates some difficulties faced by civil servants and citizens in remote, mountainous, and island areas.

The operation of PESPs and provision of OPASs in remote, mountainous, and island areas remain challenging due to numerous limitations regarding equipment availability, internet connectivity, geographic distance, access to electronic devices, and IT proficiency among both civil servants and citizens. According to a report by the MoIC, as of mid-2024 only 256 out of 1,077 no-internet (“dead zone”) villages (23.8 percent) have been covered by mobile networks.²⁷ Feedback from civil servants in localities with inadequate infrastructure indicates significant difficulties faced by both civil servants and citizens when carrying out administrative procedures on online public service portals due to a lack of computers and outdated IT equipment. Administrative procedures requiring individuals to submit photocopies (such as

²⁶ Van C. T. (2023). *Handling administrative procedures irrespective of administrative boundaries*. VietnamPlus <https://www.vietnamplus.vn/gi-ai-quyet-thu-tuc-hanh-chinh-khong-phu-thuoc-vao-dia-gioi-hanh-chinh-post916056.vnp>

²⁷ MOIC, *National Digital Transformation Report for the First Half of 2024, Session 9 of the National Committee on Digital Transformation*, Hanoi, July 2023.

application dossiers for land rights certificates) cannot be conducted on online public service portals because photocopiers are unavailable. Additionally, software used by some sectors frequently malfunctions. Furthermore, internet connections are unstable in many areas leading to delays in completing dossiers or necessitating re-entry; submitted dossiers may not be saved or may become stuck before being returned. These factors contribute to increased processing times for administrative procedures compared with those conducted online.

Box 1. OPASs in remote areas, isolated regions, and coastal islands are facing difficulties

In an island district where internet connectivity is unstable—especially during inclement weather—civil servants at "one-stop shop" departments have reported instances where procedures on online public service portals were nearly completed before connectivity was interrupted. This situation forces users to wait until connectivity is restored before they can re-enter their information from scratch.

In a mountainous commune located in North Central Vietnam within social policy fields where software frequently hangs without saving completed dossiers despite all required documents being prepared at commune level.

In most cases when residents require assistance commune officials guide them towards preparing complete dossiers so they can transact at district-level one-stop shops more quickly thereby avoiding delays. However, due to characteristics inherent within mountainous remote isolated areas people spend considerable amounts travelling—some over 60 km—to access services.

Currently many provinces have invested in desktop computers at commune-level People's Committees intended for assisting residents with information lookup alongside carrying out administrative processes via online public service portals however effective usage remains low primarily because many residents lack familiarity or confidence using computers. Additionally travel between villages towards commune People's Committees presents logistical challenges making it difficult if not impossible for residents seeking guidance directly from civil servants regarding procedural queries without incurring multiple trips.

3.2.2. Administrative Processes and Procedures

Through reviewing PESPs alongside analysing feedback gathered from users as well as opinions expressed by civil servants in surveyed localities it becomes evident that complex administrative processes constitute one root cause impeding effective provision concerning OPAS offerings via PESPs. The existing framework governing relevant legal documentation pertaining specifically towards these types remains fraught with complications including overlapping regulations insufficient timely updates excessive levels requiring multiple intermediaries throughout implementation stages leading ultimately towards convoluted practices wherein certain document requirements become redundant once transitioned into an electronic environment capable interfacing directly with population databases.

Notably there persists an entrenched mindset favouring traditional direct procedural designs rather than adapting accordingly towards modernised digital formats resulting occasionally even complicating matters further when attempting transition into an online context compared against conventional face-to-face interactions. Directive No. 16/CT-TTg issued May 20th, 2024 reflects acknowledgment surrounding such limitations present within ongoing efforts aimed reforming existing practices associated administering these types.²⁸ Moreover official reports indicate significant discrepancies exist amongst various internal administrative processes performed across differing locales ranging anywhere between fewer than ten upwards exceeding 200 distinct procedural requirements.²⁹ Consequently, implementing OPAS initiatives already challenged due technical barriers becomes increasingly burdensome given necessity adhering pre-existing regulations governing direct public services.

²⁸ Government e-Newspaper, Prime Minister instructs to continue accelerating the reduction and simplification of administrative procedures for citizens and businesses, May 20, 2024. Access at: <https://baohinhphu.vn/thu-tu-ong-chi-thi-tiep-tuc-day-manh-cat-giam-don-gian-hoa-thu-tuc-hanh-chinh-phuc-vu-nguoi-dan-doanh-nghiep-102240520231101108.htm>.

²⁹ Government Office, Enhancing the Effectiveness of Administrative Procedure Reform, Ensuring Substance, April 4, 2024. Access at: <https://vp-cp.chinhphu.vn/nang-cau-hieu-qua-cai-cach-thu-tuc-hanh-chinh-bao-dam-thuc-chat-115240404154711995.htm>

3.2.3. Human Resources for Providing Support in Handling OPASs

Overall, many civil servants providing OPASs have shown a sense of responsibility, dedication, and overcoming difficulties when they have to both reach the targets assigned by their superiors regarding the rate of providing OPASs and provide hands-on guidance for users. Most civil servants have had to process administrative procedures on applicants' behalf. Conversely, feedback received regarding performance reveals notable limitations exhibited by some civil servants, including returning submitted materials without adequate reasoning, failing to respond promptly inquiries posed citizens, displaying unfriendly demeanours, or lacking specificity guidance for users seeking clarification.

Additionally, heightened workloads coupled specialised demands placed upon civil servants engaged in delivering these services require strategic arrangements of personnel possessing requisite professional expertise alongside IT skills across all levels, particularly at the district level. However, local governments are facing challenges recruiting additional staff amidst ongoing workforce streamlining initiatives coupled with organisational restructuring efforts currently underway. Factors such as low salaries, absence of benefits, a lack of incentives combined with insufficient office equipment contribute diminishing motivation, adversely impacting overall quality of OPAS provision.

3.2.4. Measures to Support Citizens in Performing Administrative Procedures

In recent years, many ministries and provincial governments have received and processed administrative procedures regardless of administrative boundaries (as of December 2023, 8 ministries and 29 provinces reported implementing this method).³⁰ This approach help citizens save time, effort, and money when carrying out administrative procedures. However, in some provinces, the implementation process has not been effective: there are procedures that do not have applicants; or the district government does not accept application dossiers but ask citizens to submit by themselves online.³¹ Simultaneously, if any OPAS generates a large number of application dossiers, it creates a significant workload for civil servants at the district and commune levels where the working conditions remain difficult. Moreover, as a civil servant in a province reflected, delegating the receipt and return of criminal records results to the district level, irrespective of administrative boundaries, has encountered some problems in the process, fees, and motivation to work.

Fee and charge incentives are a measure to encourage individuals and businesses to use OPASs. Specifically, the Ministry of Finance issued Circular No. 63/2023/TT-BTC with fee and charge reductions ranging from 10 to 50 percent for eight fee items when organisations and individuals perform OPASs. At the local level, as of July 2024, all 63 provincial People's Councils have issued resolutions on exemptions and reductions of fees and charges for providing OPASs. Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Khanh Hoa, and Thai Binh, in particular, apply a zero-fee rate for administrative procedures within their jurisdictions. Fifteen out of 63 provinces have implemented policies to reduce processing times to encourage people to use OPASs.³² However, survey opinions suggest that the level of exemption and reduction for most procedures remains low ("at only a few thousand dong") and is insufficient to encourage online procedure completion, including for those facing economic difficulties. For those without economic hardships, the policy of exempting and reducing fees and charges is not a significant incentive for increased OPAS utilisation.

The Village Digital Support Teams, which are established across the country to support citizens with processing OPASs, have not been effective, as they have primarily focused on calling for and mobilising citizens to enrol for chip-embedded ID cards and electronic identification codes. Members of these village-level support teams have not been trained to provide support users. Also, although the core team members are often individuals with prestige in the community, their skills in using technology devices remain poor.

³⁰ Van C. T. (2023). *Handling administrative procedures irrespective of administrative boundaries*. VietnamPlus. <https://www.vietnamplus.vn/gi-ai-quyet-thu-tuc-hanh-chinh-khong-phu-thuoc-vao-dia-gioi-hanh-chinh-post916056.vnp>.

³¹ Report from the People's Committee of Phu Quy District, Binh Thuan; Xuyen Moc and Con Dao Districts, Ba Ria – Vung Tau Province, April 2024.

³² MOIC, *National Digital Transformation Report for the First Half of 2024, Session 9 of the National Committee on Digital Transformation*, Hanoi, July 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Innovation from mindset to action

Embracing a Digital-First Approach with a User-Centered Focus

The development and implementation of policies regarding OPASs must embrace a **"digital governance" mindset**

The development and implementation of policies for public administrative services, including public service delivery, must begin with and adhere to the principle of **"user-centered design," using user satisfaction as the primary metric.**

Improving the Delivery of Online Public Administrative Services



Self-reviewing OPASs platforms to maintain "user-centered services":

Provinces should conduct self-reviews of their OPAS platforms



Enhancing the effectiveness of OPASs:

- Supplement and improve features and tools that enable users
- Evolve from merely digitizing administrative procedure documents to fully digitizing the entire process of performing administrative procedures
- Create smartphone-friendly OPASs
- Simplify the administrative processes and procedures



Ensuring publicity and transparency of OPAS providers:

- Provide comprehensive information for all agencies and units responsible for delivering services
- Disclose responses and evaluations of OPAS.
- Make the administrative procedure workflow transparent to users.



Enhancing the quality of OPASs to attract users

Prioritize essential OPASs that frequently used and have a high transaction volume, and delegate appropriate targets to government agencies.

Finalizing the national policy framework and promoting the innovation of OPASs

- ✓ **Finalizing legal documents related to OPASs**
 - ▶ Implement policies from the 2023 Electronic Transactions Law.
 - ▶ Revise regulations to enable the execution of administrative procedures in digital environments.
 - ▶ Streamline or eliminate unnecessary procedures in the digital space.
- ✓ **Exempting or reducing fees for citizens using OPASs**
- ✓ **Increasing public awareness of PEPSS:** Increase understanding of the availability and convenience of OPAS for citizens.
- ✓ **Performing non-terrestrial administrative procedures**
- ✓ **Diversifying financial resources for OPAS delivery.** Use annual state budgets and resources from National Target Programs. Mobilize social resources from businesses to enhance OPAS.
- ✓ **Enhancing the OPAS capacity of public officials:** Enhance the capacity of public officials and citizens to effectively use OPAS.
- ✓ **Establishing a single National E-Service Portal toward 2030:** Aim to create a unified national platform for all online public services by 2030.

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the review, the research team contends that the development and implementation of policies for providing OPASs should centre on the principle of a ‘user-centric approach’, with user satisfaction serving as the primary measure of success. To operationalise this principle, the report proposes several recommendations, ranging from policy to practice, aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of PESPs and the delivery of OPASs from the user's perspective.

4.1. Improving the Provision of OPASs on PESPs

The 2023 review report, which examined 63 PESPs by IPS and UNDP, presented a set of recommendations intended to enhance the provision of OPASs on PESPs.³³ However, the findings of the 2024 review indicate that, despite some improvements, the 63 PESPs continue to exhibit issues and limitations previously identified. Therefore, the 2024 review report reaffirms the importance of most recommendations made in the 2023 report. Furthermore, the research team has included additional supplementary recommendations.

4.1.1. Addressing Errors According to Groups of Criteria

First and foremost, provincial authorities should consult the four criteria groups outlined in this report to address the errors identified by the research team within the PESPs. Notably, most of these issues can be rectified with relatively minimal effort, time, and manpower. While some features and tools may necessitate greater investment, they remain within the capabilities of local provincial governments. Such initiatives include designing PESPs that are compatible with both computer and smartphone interfaces; implementing advanced virtual assistant/chatbot features for user guidance; utilising automatic form-filling capabilities following the input of users' identification numbers; and enhancing online payment functionalities, among others.

Provincial authorities should prioritise improvements to functions and tools that meet the following criteria: those that significantly impact the rights and needs of a substantial number of users (for example, increasing speed, convenience, and efficiency in procedure execution); those that are feasible in terms of technical and financial resources and within the competencies of local governments (for instance, streamlining internal processes within and between government agencies); and those that encounter minimal legal and regulatory barriers (such as enhancing full-service functionality for procedures already regulated to deliver results online). Box 2 presents best practices for improving the PESP of Thua Thien Hue province.

³³ IPS & UNDP, *First Review of Accessibility and User-friendliness of 63 Provincial E-Service Portals in 2023*, p.58-61 available at: <https://ips.org.vn/en/library/first-review-of-accessibility-and-userfriendliness-of-63-provincial-eservice-portals-in-2023-ct270.html>

³⁴ UNDP, *Applying Innovation in Digital Government Transformation: Incubation Programme Report*, 2022.

Box 2. Example of self-review to transform on the PESP of Thua Thien Hue Province

With technical support from UNDP, Thua Thien Hue province has enhanced its PESP in terms of interface and process accessibility, as well as improving convenience and user-friendliness for visually impaired individuals and ethnic minorities. Additionally, the process has streamlined internal procedures among agencies for reviewing applications, accepting submissions, and issuing results. This serves as an illustrative example of the modifications made to the PESP through self-review and evaluation based on the identified criteria.

The interface of the Thua Thien Hue PESP, following these changes, features simplified information, a more user-friendly layout, and a use of distinct colours to differentiate functions. Services are categorised appropriately for both citizens and businesses, and a voice search tool has been introduced.

The process of accessing and managing administrative procedures on the Thua Thien Hue PESP has also been refined. The number of steps has been reduced by four compared to the previous iteration, and the steps are now arranged logically, thus preventing situations where users, having progressed partway through, must return to the homepage.

4.1.2. Improving Quality of OPAS Provision

To enhance the performance and quality of OPASs provided on PESP, several key aspects need to be addressed: (1) satisfying users' needs; (2) enhancing synchronization; (3) ensuring publicity and transparency; (4) improving specialization; and, (5) enhancing effectiveness.

a. Satisfying users' needs

The implementation of OPASs on PESP should be grounded in the needs of the populace, with particular attention given to groups facing challenges, such as persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the elderly. Specifically:

- ▶ The principle of a "user-centric approach" must be upheld throughout the process of developing and delivering OPASs on PESP, encompassing phases such as survey, design, testing or pilot operation, acceptance, handover, deployment, and implementation monitoring. User participation is particularly essential during the testing or pilot operation phase.
- ▶ Attention should be devoted to enhancing aspects that align with user expectations for convenience, speed, ease of access, and the ability to complete procedures without frequent visits to government offices or "one-stop shop" units. Priority should be given to integrating features and tools that enable users to complete applications and receive results online through PESP.
- ▶ Essential OPASs with high usage rates should have their processes and procedures simplified to reduce processing time prior to publication on the PESP. Concurrently, a combination of direct and online public service provision should be employed to ensure convenient access to services for all citizens. OPASs should be encouraged, rather than mandated, for less frequently used administrative procedures.
- ▶ Government agencies responsible for PESP should regularly (monthly or quarterly) utilise automated error-checking tools (such as WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools³⁵ and Accessibility Insights³⁶) to review, detect, and enhance accessibility for users with disabilities who employ screen readers, as well as for similar groups, including the elderly and ethnic minorities. Moreover, user groups should be invited to participate in evaluating their experiences with PESP to facilitate appropriate adjustments.³⁷

³⁵ WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools. (n.d.). <https://wave.webaim.org/>.

³⁶ Accessibility Insights. (n.d.). <https://accessibilityinsights.io/>.

³⁷ For more detailed information, please refer to the 2023 evaluation report by IPS & UNDP.

b. Ensuring synchronization

Government agencies responsible for PESPs should reference the results of the review in this study to rectify inconsistencies in the portals' interface, structure, technical aspects, and processes. Furthermore, alignment with current standards, particularly the regulations outlined in Circular No. 21/2023/TT-BTTTT, is essential to ensure consistency across all PESPs.

c. Ensuring publicity and transparency

PESPs must provide comprehensive contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers, for all agencies and units responsible for delivering digital services. This ensures that citizens can reach out with queries or concerns regarding these services. Search functions and tools should be user-friendly, particularly for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with limited proficiency in Vietnamese. It is also imperative to publicly disclose responses from government agencies to feedback and suggestions, as well as the results of evaluations of online public services.

Tools similar to those used in delivery and ride-hailing applications should be adopted on PESPs to allow users to track the detailed journey of their applications, including the acceptance of applications, the progress of the procedure, which unit is handling them, reasons for any delays, and the expected delivery time in the event of delays. Information about the individual responsible for monitoring and updating the results of digital services should be publicly accessible, and there should be automatic notification mechanisms for results via email or messaging applications like Zalo.

As of July 2024, all 63 provinces and cities directly under the Central Government have an information system for handling administrative procedures (including PESPs) fully connected to the EMC System, enabling automated online monitoring and measurement of digital services. Information derived from these evaluations should be publicly shared in a timely manner to allow all parties to monitor and oversee the progress of administrative procedures, thereby enhancing transparency.

d. Improving specification

Government agencies responsible for the PESPs should consider investing in technical enhancements for certain functions and tools to increase their utility. Specifically:

- ▶ Examine and upgrade the functions, tools, and processes to fully support the implementation of administrative procedures in a comprehensive digital format. This involves advancing current digital services from turning documents into electronic files to full cycle digitization, and simplifying online application processes.
- ▶ Upgrade chatbots to ensure they are functional and capable of answering fundamental questions about completing various administrative procedures that generate multiple documents. The chatbots should be designed to handle real-world contexts and provide immediate support during the provision of digital services. For portals with currently non-functional chatbots, either activate them or temporarily suspend their operation until they are fully operational to avoid wasting technical, human, and financial resources.

Moreover, priority should be given to delivering high-quality essential OPASs rather than merely focusing on the quantity of administrative procedures uploaded to the PESPs. Public services that have not facilitated online transactions for an extended period should be reviewed for potential adjustment or removal. OPASs should only be implemented for procedures that have demonstrated the superiority of online processing over in-person transactions. For other procedures, online transactions should be encouraged or implemented with an extended timeframe. The implementation of OPASs should be tailored to the specific economic, social, and contextual conditions of each province. Consequently, appropriate targets should be assigned to each level of government, agency, and unit, thereby avoiding pressure to compete for quantity not quality, which can lead to inaccurate reporting.

(5) Increasing the effectiveness of OPAS provision

Government agencies responsible for PESPs should enhance and improve features and tools to assist users in completing applications independently. This includes providing easy-to-understand and visually appealing guidance documents that incorporate the languages of ethnic minority groups. The PESP system should also display specific error messages when users input incorrect information and offer guidance during the data entry process. Additionally, PESPs' loading speed of should be optimised for both computers and smartphones.

PESPs that currently lack online payment features should integrate this functionality. For those that already possess online payment systems, upgrades are necessary to simplify the payment process, expand the range of intermediary banks and payment methods, and provide prompt support to agencies encountering electronic payment errors on the NESP. Users should only be required to make payments after successfully submitting their applications on the PESPs.

Furthermore, it is essential to leverage and utilise existing information and data to reduce the number of steps, paperwork, and procedures involved in conducting online transactions on PESPs. The provision of OPASs requires improved connectivity and information sharing from national databases, such as the National Population Database and the Household Registration Database; linking the criminal record database with those of civil enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Defence, the Supreme People's Court, and the Supreme People's Procuracy; as well as connecting with the VBDLIS land data portal and the nationwide land information management software (see Box 3).

Box 3. Connecting and utilizing data in providing OPASs

Hai Phong has integrated its administrative procedure management system with the Land Information System (VBDLIS) to provide OPASs in the land sector. In the first six months of 2023, this platform facilitated a transformation in land-related public services, helping to process 88,800 dossiers applying for land use rights certificates.³⁸

Da Nang City is the first locality to build and deploy an electronic data repository for individuals and organizations on the Digital Citizen Platform (congdan.so.danang.gov.vn). Citizens can upload their digitized documents, such as national ID cards, passports, driver's licenses, birth certificates, and other administrative procedures, to the electronic data repository. When using OPASs, citizens do not need to re-enter or submit additional documents that are already stored in the repository.³⁹

PESPs can integrate applications and channels, such as Zalo, to provide more effective OPASs. As of July 2024, ten provinces have utilised Zalo at minimal cost, enabling government services to reach millions of users. Notably, Tay Ninh was the first province to launch the Tay Ninh Smart application integrated with Zalo in March 2023. Within just 1.5 months of its launch, the integrated application attracted over 81,000 users, equivalent to 60% of the total users of the Tay Ninh Smart application over the preceding two years.

4.2. Improving and Implementing National Policies on OPASs

In conjunction with enhancing the operation of PESPs, it is necessary to review and complete the legal and policy framework for OPASs, encompassing the following aspects:

³⁸ Hoang Minh Cuong, *Policies on fee exemptions, reductions, shortened processing times, and designated days of the week for prioritizing online submissions, Specialized Session of the National Committee on Digital Transformation*, June 5, 2023.

³⁹ MOIC, *National Digital Transformation Report (8th Session of the National Committee on Digital Transformation)*, Hanoi, April 24, 2024.

- ▶ **1.** The development and implementation of OPAS policies, covering procedures, formalities, delivery methods, and tools, should be driven by a "digital governance" mindset. The application of digital technologies, the interconnection of digital data, and the provision of services on digital platforms necessitate the removal of administrative barriers that hinder many procedures. Many previous requirements regarding procedures and formalities are no longer suitable in a digitally connected environment. A "digital governance" mindset also highlights the importance of data, data sharing, and interconnection between government agencies and between these agencies and the organisations and individuals using OPASs. Data is a prerequisite for providing OPASs, and this mindset necessitates interaction between government and citizens on digital platforms, gradually reducing direct person-to-person interaction in the provision and use of public services.
- ▶ **2.** Relevant agencies involved in the provision of OPASs need to review and select essential administrative procedures for restructuring their electronic processes. This entails simplifying and streamlining procedures, eliminating unnecessary requirements for users (e.g., providing information already available in databases, requiring in-person submission of documents, and in-person receipt of results); reducing the processing time for administrative procedures; minimising manual or direct processing steps by agencies; streamlining the sequence of steps in receiving, transferring, and processing administrative procedures electronically; improving forms; and upgrading partial OPASs to full online services when conditions permit. At the local level, the scope of restructuring will depend on whether the administrative procedure falls under the partial or full online public service group and the availability of data and technology.
- ▶ **3.** Based on the evaluation of existing standards, regulations, and technical guidelines for providing OPASs, the MOIC and the Government Office need to review and improve the functions and technical features of the information systems utilised to provide OPASs, including the systems of ESPs being provided by ministries, sectors, and provinces. Concurrently, they need to consider researching, developing, and applying a framework of standards for the NESP. User feedback and experience are critical metrics in designing, operating, and evaluating these portals.
- ▶ **4.** It is essential to develop and refine criteria for evaluating the quality of service, as well as the satisfaction levels of citizens and businesses in the implementation of OPASs. These criteria must ensure that services are substantive, effective, useful, user-friendly, and transparent. Based on national standards and criteria, provinces and cities can monitor and evaluate the provision of OPASs at various levels of local government, identifying limitations and shortcomings in terms of procedures, personnel, and technological infrastructure, and accordingly making appropriate adjustments to suit local conditions.
- ▶ **5.** The national policy framework must guarantee that OPASs are accessible to all, particularly the elderly, persons with disabilities, those who are not proficient in Vietnamese, the poor, the socially isolated, and individuals in remote, rural, and island areas. Specifically, the accessibility criteria for these target groups must be applied to information technology products and services in public procurement. According to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0, government service portals must achieve at least Level A conformance. Accessibility standards should be a mandatory requirement in government contracts with digital transformation solution providers, akin to mandatory requirements for information security. Additionally, policies should promote the development of language support tools, such as automatic translation into minority languages, integration of videos in minority languages within user guides, and screen readers for the visually impaired.
- ▶ **6.** It is necessary to determine appropriate fee exemptions and reductions to encourage greater public use of OPASs without significantly impacting state budget revenue. As

demonstrated by the case of Ha Noi, the revenue generated from online fees and charges is relatively modest: in 2022, total revenue from fees and charges in Hanoi amounted to VND 9,720 billion, yet only over VND 36.5 billion was collected through online channels; other provinces collected even less. Consequently, the levels of exemptions and reductions could be increased, and the scope of administrative procedures eligible for exemptions and reductions when conducted online could be expanded without significantly affecting revenue from online fees and charges. Currently, provinces have implemented policies to exempt or reduce fees for all organisations and individuals utilising OPASs. While this approach was initially suitable for attracting a broader range of users, it may be more appropriate in the long term to limit exemptions and reductions to specific vulnerable groups, such as the poor, near-poor, ethnic minorities, and individuals in disadvantaged areas.

- ▶ **7.** The criminal record issuance service should be fully integrated into the end-to-end OPAS, as indicated on PESPs. Several provinces have successfully piloted this comprehensive process for criminal records. Since late April 2024, Ha Noi and Thua Thien Hue have successfully piloted the issuance of criminal records via VNeID, yielding significant results. After completing a few simple steps, digital criminal records are automatically returned to citizens' accounts on VNeID, the NESP, and Ha Noi's PESP, with the same legal validity as paper-based certificates. As a result, the number of citizens visiting the Department of Justice to obtain criminal records has significantly decreased. Following the successful pilot in these two provinces, the Ministry of Justice has proposed expanding the pilot nationwide, which has received widespread support from provinces and cities. These practical results demonstrate the effectiveness of end-to-end OPASs for issuing criminal records and provide a solid foundation for more specific and comprehensive regulations on this matter.

- ▶ **8.** To implement administrative procedures exclusively through VNeID accounts from 1 July 2024, measures must be taken to prevent the recurrence of technical errors encountered in the past. This will ensure that procedures are carried out smoothly, efficiently, and promptly. As with any system, a backup plan is necessary to address potential disruptions in the provision of OPASs via VNeID. Additionally, the solution proposed by the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee (and other provinces), which eliminates the requirement for digital signatures when submitting electronic documents via VNeID, should be considered. Given the comprehensive and legally valid information about applicants in the national population database, digital signatures may become redundant. This solution can reduce costs for citizens using digital signature services and simplify the process of accessing OPASs.

- ▶ **9.** In the long-term vision, possibly towards 2030, it is essential to establish a national focal point for providing OPASs on a single unified government service portal, similar to practices adopted by leading e-government countries such as South Korea, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The structure of this unified portal should encompass six components: (1) searching for public services; (2) providing public services; (3) disseminating information; (4) submitting feedback and suggestions; (5) consulting the public on administrative procedures; and (6) ensuring data transparency in the public sector. To transition towards providing public services through a single national portal, it is necessary to review, assess, and improve various factors, including regulations, processes, and procedures; the technological infrastructure capacity; the level of connectivity, interconnection, and data sharing among sectors and levels; the operational capacity of the government agency responsible for managing and operating the unified portal; the capability of civil servants to provide OPASs; and the ability of citizens and organisations to utilise OPASs.

4.3. Recommendations on General Policies Related to OPASs

Alongside direct policies regarding OPASs, there are recommendations for national policies related to OPASs, outlined as follows:

- ▶ **1.** It is essential to concretise and fully implement the policies of the 2023 Law on Electronic Transactions as they pertain to OPASs. This Law includes provisions that establish a foundation for digital transformation, such as the legal validity of electronic transactions, data messages, and end-to-end electronic transactions. Notably, electronic certificates have been introduced into the Law to represent all types of licenses, diplomas, and certificates, thereby addressing the principal challenge in end-to-end OPASs: the electronic processing of administrative procedures. This initiative aims to reduce the number of documents required for each process and procedure on the NESP and PESPs.
- ▶ **2.** Regulations that currently prohibit the implementation of administrative procedures via electronic means need to be reviewed and amended. For instance, the Civil Registration Law and Decree No. 87/2020/ND-CP stipulate that "the requester must be physically present at the civil registration agency when applying for and receiving the results of the administrative procedures." According to the 2023 Law on Electronic Transactions, if a law stipulates that a transaction cannot be conducted electronically (such as the Civil Registration Law), the administrative procedure must be performed in accordance with that law. It is necessary to amend such regulations to narrow their scope or to eliminate entirely those administrative procedures requiring citizens' physical presence, thus enabling online transactions.
- ▶ **3.** The provision of OPASs should align with the overarching aim of simplifying administrative procedures, particularly in the domains of justice, civil registration, land, social policy, and credit. Simultaneously, there is a need to review, streamline, and simplify internal administrative processes within and between government agencies when handling citizens' dossiers, thereby reducing time and compliance costs. Utilising existing databases and the results of digital administrative procedure processing can minimise redundant data entry steps and eliminate unnecessary procedures already performed or provided by government agencies.
- ▶ **4.** Administrative procedures that are not constrained by jurisdictional boundaries should be applied in areas where individuals are required to travel long distances, such as mountainous and island regions, and for temporary residents in large cities. These procedures should accommodate cases involving substantial documentation, such as criminal records, driver's licences, and certain judicial and civil registration procedures that can be processed at the commune level with minimal documentation. This would enable civil servants at district and commune-level Public Service Centres and One-Stop Shops to receive and digitise all incoming documents for further processing. Incentives should be provided to encourage civil servants at these levels to accept, process, and return results for dossiers online. It is crucial to address any inconsistencies in authority, processes, and procedures among different levels of government in implementing this policy.
- ▶ **5.** Diversifying funding sources for the provision of OPASs is necessary. Under the Law on Electronic Transactions, government agencies can utilise annual state budgets (operational funding) to hire consultants for building, managing, operating, and ensuring the security of IT systems for OPASs. Furthermore, resources from the three National Target Programs can be leveraged, alongside contributions from enterprises to enhance IT equipment and improve public service access in rural areas, ethnic minority regions, mountainous areas, remote and isolated areas, islands, and other disadvantaged locations. Specifically, for communes with large areas and challenging transport logistics, such as mountainous

regions, rather than installing additional computers at People's Committee headquarters for public use, internet-connected computers should be placed in village locations, supported by community digital technology groups. This approach can facilitate online administrative procedures, allow residents to access information in their own locality, reduce the workload for commune officials, and save time and effort for citizens.

- ▶ **6.** Enhancing the digital literacy and skills of public servants is a crucial policy to ensure the quality and efficiency of OPASs. Specifically, the Ministry of Home Affairs, in collaboration with the MOIC, is developing a digital competency framework for public servants, particularly at the commune level. Digital skills will be integrated into training programmes to equip public servants with the necessary competencies. Key training topics will include skills in using software, OPASs, and document processing; skills in guiding and supporting citizens in administrative procedures; and skills in ensuring information security, especially when using social media for communication.
- ▶ **7.** For Community Digital Technology groups, it is necessary to adjust the organisational structure, operational principles, and personnel; specifically, individuals with a strong understanding of technology, such as youth and educators, should be appointed as members. Local authorities can consider allocating a portion of their budget to provide equipment for core members of the group, drawing from budgets for digital transformation, national target programmes, or through resources mobilised from enterprises and organisations. Local agencies and departments must offer in-depth guidance and training for community digital technology groups on regulations and documents related to OPASs; skills in using equipment; performing OPASs; skills in supporting citizens; and information security skills.
- ▶ **8.** Efforts should be focused on enhancing public understanding of the NESP and OPASs. This can be accomplished by leveraging community digital technology groups, youth organisations, and community gatherings to ensure that at least one person in each household is knowledgeable about these platforms. To further boost awareness, innovative communication strategies, such as hackathons, can be implemented to encourage young people to develop creative solutions for improving public administrative services.

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**United Nations
Development Programme**

304 Kim Ma, Ha Noi, Viet Nam
Tel: (84 024) 38 500 100
Fax: (84 024) 37 265 520
Email: registry.vn@undp.org
www.undp.org/vietnam



**Institute for Policy Studies
and Media Development**

18th Floor, VTC Online Building,
18 Tam Trinh, Hai Ba Trung, Hanoi
Tel: (84) 969 520 220
Email: contact@ips.org.vn
ips.org.vn