

2 Digital Government and the development of ICT/digital projects

This chapter analyses and assesses Greece's Digital Government maturity, focusing on developing digital and ICT projects in the public sector. The first section presents the context and rationale for this assessment, presenting the policy frameworks guiding the report, including the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework, the OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies and the OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement. The second section presents the current situation of digital government in Greece and the intersection between public procurement and digital, including recent measurements and national strategies.

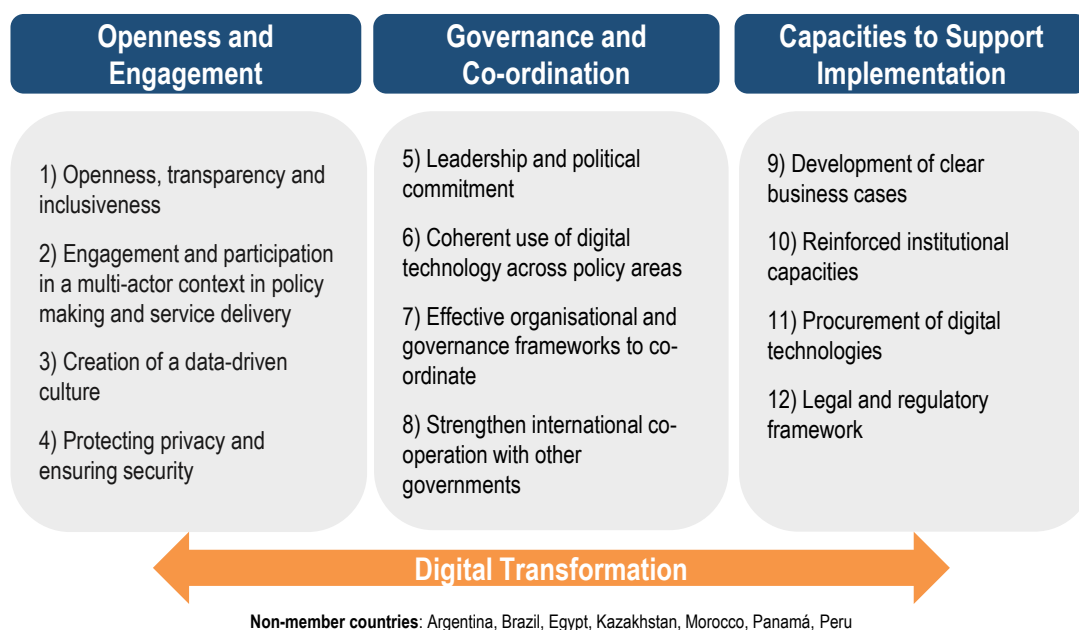
Context and rationale for the project

Towards digital government maturity: OECD Digital Government Policy Framework

Digital tools and data are transforming the way governments operate and deliver, offering new resources and policy options to address public sector challenges, boost internal procedures efficiency and reshape the interactions with citizens. In an early stage of adoption of digital technologies and ICT, governments began digitising analogue process and services without necessarily transforming the procedures that support them. Such an approach faces the limitations of not understanding and addressing the needs of citizens and rather adopting a government-centred and technology-led approach (*e-government*).

Fully realising the digital transformation in governments requires a paradigm shift from e-government to *digital government* (OECD, 2020^[1]), meaning digital tools and data as an integrated part of governments' modernisation strategies to create public value and to foster more people-centric, fair and sustainable governments. This paradigm shift is reflected in the OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies (see Figure 2.1) (OECD, 2014^[2]).

Figure 2.1. OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies



Source: OECD (2014^[2]).

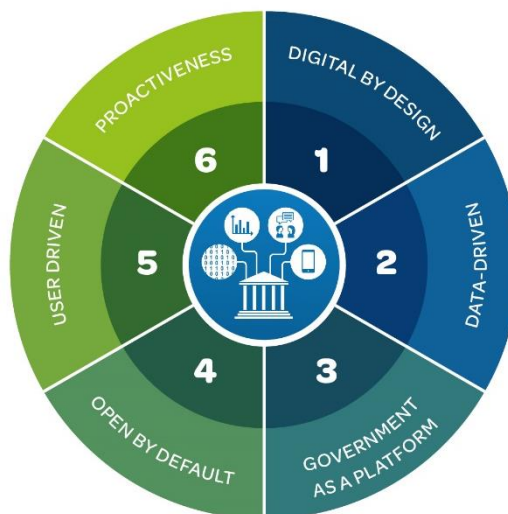
The Recommendation establishes the provisions needed to address transformative digital government strategies under the principles of horizontal integration and increased co-ordination within and outside the public sector. In specific, the Recommendation includes provisions that highlight the strategic relevance of securing leadership and political commitment to the strategy through a combination of efforts aimed at promoting inter-ministerial co-ordination and collaboration (provision 5), and establishing effective organisational and governance frameworks to co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government (provision 7). Regarding the strategic approach towards digital government investments, the Recommendation underlines the need to establish a “check and balance” system for governments' decisions on ICT/digital spending to increase the level of accountability and public trust, as well as to support decision-making and improve project management practices that minimise risks

of failures and delays. In addition, the Recommendation (OECD, 2014^[2]) stresses the need to reinforce institutional capacities to manage and monitor project implementation (provision 10).

The Recommendation also includes direct provisions on funding and procurement decisions for digital transformation projects. It recommends the use of clear business cases as a strategic tool to assess the value proposition of ICT/digital projects and support funding allocation (provision 9). Additionally, procurement decisions on digital technologies should consider critical components such as digital skills, job profiles, technologies, contracts, and inter-organisational agreements in order to increase efficiency, support innovation and secure benefits realisation (provision 11).

Building on the provisions of the Recommendation, the Secretariat developed the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (DGPF), a policy instrument to identify the drivers of effective design and implementation of digital transformation efforts in the public sector (see Figure 2.2). The DGPF constitutes the basis for the measurement work of the OECD on digital government and public sector data through the Digital Government Index.

Figure 2.2. OECD Digital Government Policy Framework



Source: (OECD, 2020^[1]).

Under the DGPF, mature digital governments are characterised by six dimensions:

- *Digital by Design* – refers to the capacity to govern and leverage digital technologies to rethink and re-engineer public processes, simplify procedures, and create new channels of communication and engagement with public stakeholders.
- *Data-Driven Public Sector* – refers to the capacity to value data as a strategic asset and establish the governance, access, sharing and re-use mechanisms for improved decision-making and service delivery.
- *Government as a Platform* – refers to the capacity to deploy a wide range of platforms, standards and services to help teams focus on user needs in public service design and delivery.
- *Open by Default* – refers to the capacity to make government data and policy-making processes (including algorithms) available to the public, within the limits of existing legislation and in balance with national and public interest.

- *User-Driven* – refers to the capacity to accord a central role to people’s needs and convenience in the shaping of processes, services and policies and to adopt inclusive mechanisms that enable this to happen.
- *Proactiveness* – refers to the capacity to anticipate people’s needs and respond to them rapidly, avoiding cumbersome data and service delivery processes.

Adopting a strategic approach for digital government investments

As stated in the **OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies**, governments aiming to be digital require adopting strategic approaches to plan, implement and monitor digital investments (see Box 2.1). With the increased relevance of digital tools and data to transform public sector operations and service design and delivery, governments need to address digital investments under the principles of integration, co-ordination and rationalisation, all with the purpose of maximising benefits realisation. This suggests rethinking and strengthening planning, prioritising, funding and monitoring procedures for digital investments in order to support better aligning between initiatives and address the immediate costs versus the long-term benefits digital projects imply.

Planning and prioritising government digital transformation projects requires sound mechanisms to assess their value proposition, identifying the multi-faceted costs, benefits and risks associated to the implementation and funding of such initiatives. The development of business cases, budget thresholds, portfolio management and project approval systems are examples of policy levers to better plan, prioritise and monitor digital government projects (OECD, 2021^[3]). Digital government investment plans require further alignment and co-ordination with broader policies on public budgeting and procurement. Securing improved co-ordination between digital government, public budgeting and public procurement authorities can help synergise efforts towards and effective, long-term and sustainable digital transformation of the public sector.

Box 2.1. OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies: Governance and co-ordination

1. Secure leadership and political commitment to the strategy, through a combination of efforts aimed to promote inter-ministerial co-ordination and collaboration, set priorities and facilitate engagement and co-ordination of relevant agencies across levels of government in pursuing the digital government agenda.
2. Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government
3. Establish effective organisational and governance frameworks to co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government, through:
 - a. identifying clear responsibilities to ensure overall co-ordination of the implementation of the digital government strategy;
 - b. establishing a system for “check and balances” of governments’ decisions on spending on technology to increase the level of accountability and public trust, and to improve decision-making and management to minimise risks of project failures and delays.
4. Strengthen international co-operation with other governments to better serve citizens and businesses across borders, and maximise the benefits that can emerge from early knowledge sharing and co-ordination of digital strategies internationally.

Source: (OECD, 2014^[2]).

Public procurement policy framework in the context of digital transformation

Public procurement is an essential tool for the digitalisation of public services, if it is used strategically and supported by a sound governance framework. In fact, the public procurement framework sets the enabling conditions for carrying out state-of-the-art ICT procurement. The 2015 **OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement** provides a comprehensive framework for countries to design their public procurement system in a way that fully supports such ICT procurement and national digitalisation efforts (OECD, 2015^[4]). The Recommendation contains 12 integrated principles that address the entire procurement cycle and promote a whole-of-government approach while integrating public procurement with other elements of strategic governance such as budgeting, financial management and additional forms of services delivery (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. The OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement



Source: (OECD, 2015^[4]).

The Recommendation is the overarching OECD guiding framework that promotes the strategic and holistic use of public procurement. The Recommendation supports a comprehensive and integrated approach to the procurement cycle and reflects the growing interest from governments in transforming public procurement into a strategic policy lever. By helping governments better meet their policy objectives, well governed public procurement contributes directly to greater public trust, enhanced well-being and more prosperous and inclusive societies. The Recommendation highlights the need for investing in governance and technology and the importance of continuous investment in people through capacity building and professionalisation. Dealing with a changing world and addressing new challenges, such as the digital transition, requires effective and efficient staff that possess analytical, regulatory, delivery, co-ordination, and management capacities. This includes having the capacity to develop and implement strategies, including selecting and making investments to achieve policy objectives; ensuring stakeholder engagement; measuring the impact on the basis of reliable data; and achieving results. The OECD has recently conducted workshops in the MDG for strengthening technical knowledge related to data collection, organisation and analytics. It has also provided the MDG with recommendations on how to procure and collect data for digitisation activities.

Digitalisation and ICT procurement are fast evolving, bringing about specific challenges for public procurement. New solutions and technological change require that public buyers be up-to-date with developments in the market. Furthermore, technological changes such as apps, cloud computing, the internet of things and artificial intelligence are introducing new uncertainties, thus requiring an approach to procurement that is fit-for-purpose. To this end, it is key to use public procurement as a strategic governance tool, together with an efficient governance framework and whole-of-government co-ordination (OECD, 2022^[5]). Instead, contracting authorities often operate with old paradigms when procuring digital projects, focusing on large technology suppliers and taking limited risks on more innovative solutions. For instance, they often rely on large contracts that can be fulfilled only by a small number of large players in the market. However, this approach may limit competition in the market and exclude smaller, more innovative SMEs. Similarly, in many instances, contracting authorities rely on complex requirements that can only be fulfilled by certain suppliers. Another common challenge in ICT procurement refers to “vendor lock-in”, meaning that users are bound to the same supplier and technology even past the initial procurement. Excessive customisation can also pose problems in maintaining an ICT system open and sustainable throughout time. These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that public buyers may not have the specific technical and IT skills and may not have effective systems in place to ensure that digital projects fit the needs of final users, i.e. either government entities or citizens (OECD, 2022^[5]).

The public procurement framework can support the effective implementation of ICT projects through several key areas. For instance, the policy framework could emphasise the strategic use of public procurement, thereby promoting greater attention to the planning and pre-tender stages. Indeed, market engagement and user-centred approaches in the early stages of the procurement process are key to fully understand user requirements and the market’s ability to respond to those requirements. As a result, placing emphasis on the early stage of the procurement process ensures value for money in the subsequent tendering phase.

Furthermore, strategic procurement calls for tender award based on quality, and avoiding overly prescriptive technical specifications to leave room for innovation. The policy and legal framework are thus important for putting in place the legal instruments, such as favouring best-price-quality ratio (BPQR) criteria as well as providing capacity-building for contracting authorities.

The state of digital government in Greece

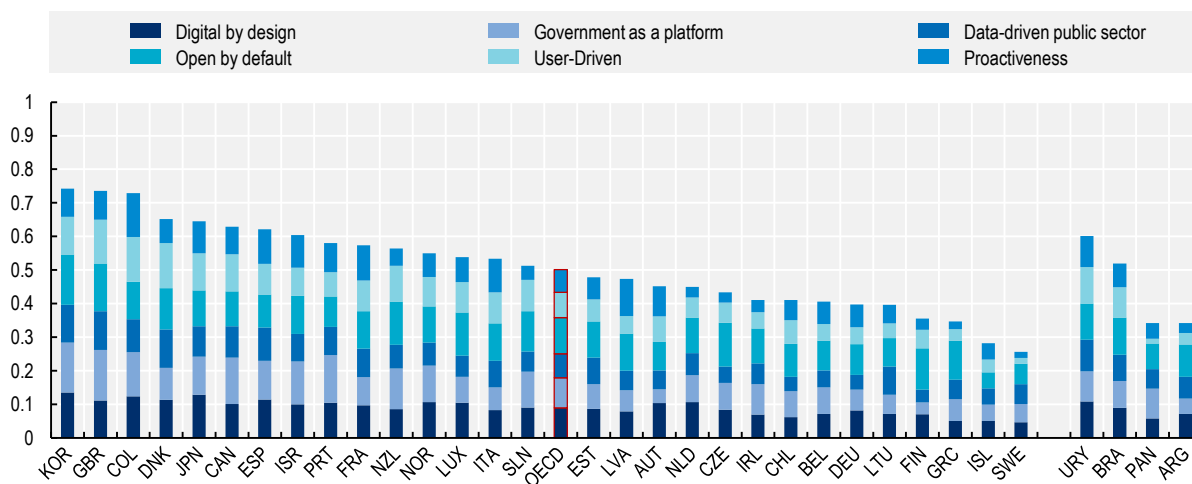
Digital government policies

During the last decade, Greece has undergone a series of institutional reforms that have successively transformed the structure of public administration. Due to the financial crisis in the late 2000s, the Greek government had to rationalise its governance structures to ensure the continuity of service delivery and the resilience of the public sector. Changes in the machinery of government also reached to the digital government functions, transferring the responsibilities and bodies related to digital governance, data and service design and delivery to the dedicated Ministry of Digital Governance in 2019. This institutional arrangement represents a step forward in terms of governance, leadership, and political commitment to the digital transformation of the public sector. Such a revitalised governance for digital government sees a concrete expression in the recently launched Bible of Digital Transformation 2020-25 (Ministry of Digital Governance, 2021^[6]), which provides a strategic roadmap for digital transformation efforts in Greece’s government, society and economy.

However, these recent developments have not fully enabled Greece to close the existing gap in terms of digital maturity compared to other OECD countries. The results of Greece in the OECD Digital Government Index (DGI) show that there are still several challenges to advance the development of sound digital government reforms that help achieve the digital imperative of more open, participatory, and innovative

public sectors, enabled and transformed by the strategic use of digital tools and data (OECD, 2020^[7]). DGI results show also that Greece still presents significant room to achieve digital government maturity. In the first pilot edition of the DGI, Greece ranks 29 out of the 33 OECD, with all dimensions below the OECD average except *open by default* (see Table 2.1). This includes the adoption of project planning, management, and monitoring standards to implement effectively digital transformation projects in the public sector that lead to improved public services and operations around the needs of citizens.

Figure 2.4. OECD Digital Government Index 2019 composite results



Note: Data are not available for Australia, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland, the Republic of Türkiye and the United States.
Source: (OECD, 2020^[7])

Table 2.1. Digital Government Index 2019: Greece and OECD average results

Dimension	OECD Average Score	Greece	
		Score	Rank
Digital by design	0.55	0.3	32
Data-driven public sector	0.44	0.35	26
Government as platform	0.54	0.39	25
Open by default	0.64	0.69	9
User-driven	0.47	0.21	30
Proactiveness	0.42	0.13	32
Composite score	0.501	0.347	29

Note: Data is not available for Australia, Hungary, Mexico, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland, the Republic of Türkiye and the United States.
Source: (OECD, 2020^[7]).

Harnessing the benefits of the digital transformation in the public sector requires governments that are *digital by design*, establishing sound governance frameworks, leadership and policy levers to secure a coherent implementation. Recent institutional developments in Greece represent a decisive step in this direction, such as the creation of the Hellenic Ministry of Digital Governance and the recent launch of the Digital Transformation Bible (national digital government strategy). Securing a ministerial level institution leading the digital transformation policy in the Greek public sector can facilitate the co-ordination and alignment of initiatives according to the priorities and strategic objectives set for digital government in the country. However, when looking at the DGI dimension results, the progress made on the governance of

digital government has still been insufficient to translate digital government policy goals into concrete actions that support the digital transformation of the Greek government.

The results also show that there is still significant room for improvement regarding the development and use of policy levers to enable system-wide transformation, such as standards and guidelines to deploy an effective implementation of the digital transformation projects (e.g., the priorities stated in the Digital Transformation Bible). Embracing a *government as a platform* and *digital by design* approach implies setting guidelines, tools, standards and common digital components to support an effective and coherent implementation. This also comprises sound mechanisms to plan, prioritise and co-ordinate digital transformation projects within the public sector, establishing the value proposition of projects and their subsequent prioritisation and financing. This gap is especially relevant when it comes to assessing and selecting key digital projects and investments. According to the DGI, Greece lacked concerted models for business cases that lead to identify the value proposition of digital transformation projects, as well as dedicated standards and guidelines to support the management and procurement of ICT/digital projects (OECD, 2020^[7]).

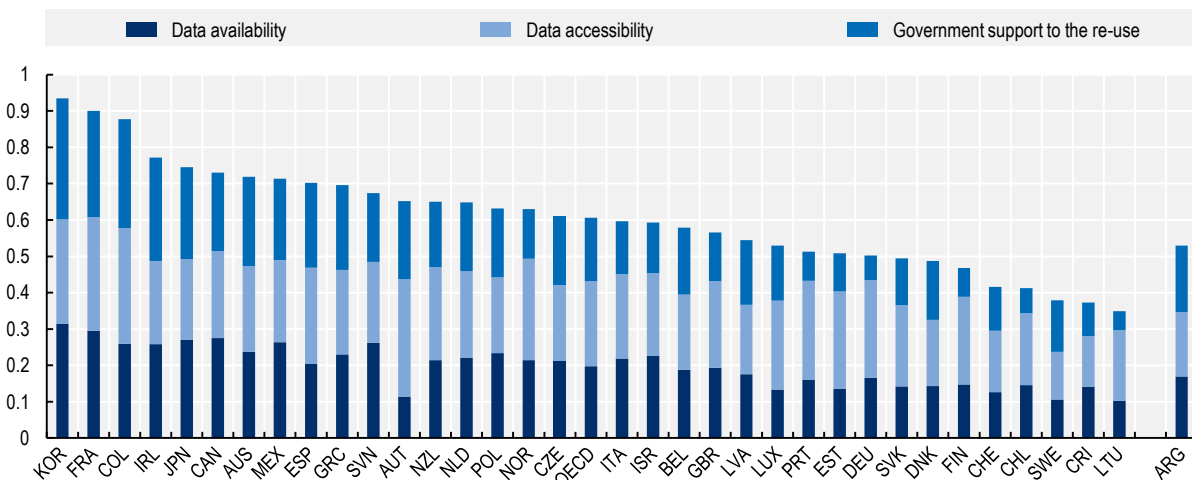
Similar challenges are observed in Greece when looking at the fundamentals of *data-driven public sector*, such as national data policies, leading roles and mandate to steer these policies and implementation mechanisms to foster access, sharing and re-use of data (beyond open government data efforts). In this context, Greece has an opportunity to improve the strategic governance and use of data for improved policy making and monitoring of the digital government strategy, for example by developing key performance indicators across the ICT/digital project life-cycle and monitoring mechanisms that foster accountability and compliance across public sector organisations.

All in all, improved public sector capacities are needed for digital tools and data to enable a coherent digital transformation and lead to the benefits realisation. The recently published Digital Transformation Bible sets the right ground in terms of priorities, expected standards and shared tools, and its effective implementation requires strengthened capabilities to manage and develop such transformative initiatives.

Open government data policies

The results of Greece in the DGI contrasts with the advancements and higher maturity observed in open government data as indicated by the Open, Useful and Re-usable Data (OURdata) Index (OECD, 2020^[8]). According to its last edition, Greece presents solid policy foundations for opening up public datasets while requires strengthening efforts to leverage these resources as transformative tools through increased co-operation and collaboration with stakeholders within the data ecosystem. In the 2019 results of the OURdata Index, Greece scored an overall 0.7, ranking 9 out of 32 countries included in the survey. This represents an overall improvement of 0.16 points when comparing with the 2017 edition composite score, reflected in higher results across the three pillars (Lafortune and Ubaldi, 2018^[9]).

Across the three pillars of the OURdata Index, Greece has obtained solid results on data availability and accessibility. This includes the national open government data portal as well as the strategic steps taken in the National Strategy for Administrative Reform 2017-2019 with dedicated formal requirements to make these data available in open and online formats. Similarly, the Greek government has promoted further capacity building for availability and reuse of government data through initiatives such as the National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs.

Figure 2.5. Open-Useful-Reusable Government Data Index (OURdata), 2019

Note: Data is not available for Hungary, Iceland, the Republic of Türkiye and the United States. Data for Costa Rica was collected from the IDB-OECD Open Government Data Survey 2018. Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.
Source: (OECD, 2020^[8]).

National digital government strategies

National Digital Strategy 2016-2021

Relevant and sustained efforts have been devoted to advance digital government in Greece in the past years. This has been reflected in the development of two successive digital strategies. First, the National Digital Strategy (NDS) 2016-2021 developed by the former Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information (Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Information, 2016^[10]). The NDS 2016-2021 covered several priority areas to address the challenges of digitalisation in the Greek public sector, economy and society. In a context of stressed public finances after fiscal and economic crises that hit the Greek economy, the strategy leverages ICT and digital tools to achieve a more efficient and effective public administration as well as improved service delivery. Accordingly, the strategy highlighted the need to transform the design and procurement of ICT projects in the public sector as a strategic goal to support reform of public administration in Greece.

Similarly, the NDS provided an overview of the pressing issues faced by the Greek public sector when developing and managing ICT projects. According to the strategy, difficulties to address the procurement of ICT and digital projects and the absence of central planning for ICT projects are key challenges for ICT project development, fostering duplication of efforts and siloed-based progress. The NDS acknowledged the need to shift towards new design and implementation methodologies for ICT/digital projects, promoting flexible implementation methods and the adoption of system-wide standards for higher coherence and horizontal integration. In this context, the NDS specified concrete actions, such as unifying the design and implementation of digital projects; promoting the use of cloud and shared infrastructure, developing common building blocks to support omni-channel service design and delivery,¹ interoperability and public registries (including open government data). All in all, the strategy promoted the development of shared tools and platforms to address horizontal and common problems in the Greek public sector.

Digital Transformation Bible 2021-2025

In 2019, changes in Greece's machinery of government led to the creation of the Ministry of Digital Governance, with the purpose of strengthening the governance for digital government. This included the development of the Digital Transformation Bible (DTB) 2020-2025 (Ministry of Digital Governance, 2021^[6]),

a strategic roadmap for digital transformation of Greece's economy, society, and public sector, which serves as a continuation to the efforts stated in the NDS 2016-2021. This document currently serves as the national digital strategy, providing guiding principles and specific actions across a wide range of areas, including cross-governmental projects and dedicated initiatives to transform service design and delivery in policy areas such as health, education, justice, economy, and environment, among others.

The DTB includes a special focus on the implementation phase and specific provisions on the governance framework, with the Ministry of Digital Governance as the leading actor responsible for its implementation. The DTB considers the creation of high-level bodies such as the Digital Transformation Steering Committee, bringing together all general secretariats in government, and its executive arm, the Digital Transformation Executive Network. This institutional arrangement aims to foster collaboration with relevant public sector institutions to secure the timely development of all activities comprised in the strategy. The five-year digital strategy will be updated on an annual basis to adapt its actions to emerging challenges and opportunities, providing the required flexibility for a successful implementation. The DTB builds on the digital government provisions established in the EU Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment (EU, 2017^[11]), EU Government Action Plan 2016-2020 (EU, 2016^[12]), and the EU Berlin Declaration (EU, 2020^[13]), identifying 15 principles framing the overall strategy and its successful implementation.

Box 2.2. Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government

In December 2020, the EU member countries signed the Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government. The Declaration follows up on the success of the Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment, which endorsed the key principles for digital public services in the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020. The Berlin Declaration takes the user-centricity principles formulated in the Tallinn Declaration a step further by strengthening the pioneering role of public administrations in driving a value-based digital transformation of European societies

The Declaration acknowledges the public sector as an essential element for the European Single Market and a driving force for new and innovative technological solutions for public services and societal challenges. It emphasises that public authorities at all levels must lead by example to strengthen the tenets of the European Union.

To do so, it sets out 7 key principles with related policy action lines and national and EU level:

5. Validity and respect of fundamental rights and democratic values in the digital sphere;
6. Social participation and digital inclusion to shape the digital world;
7. Empowerment and digital literacy, allowing all citizens to participate in the digital sphere;
8. Trust and security in digital government interactions, allowing everyone to navigate the digital world safely, authenticate and be digitally recognised within the EU conveniently;
9. Digital sovereignty and interoperability, as a key in ensuring the ability of citizens and public administrations to make decisions and act self-determined in the digital world;
10. Human-centred systems and innovative technologies in the public sector, strengthening its pioneering role in the research on secure and trustworthy technology design;
11. A resilient and sustainable digital society, preserving our natural foundations of life in line with the Green Deal and using digital technologies to enhance the sustainability of our health systems.

Source: (EU, 2020^[13]).

The Digital Transformation Bible identifies eight crosscutting enablers to facilitate the development and use of digitally-enabled public services. These common building blocks lowering costs of implementation across public sector institutions and providing users with common platforms for different services provided by government:

- The **digital service delivery platform GOV.GR**, providing a single access point for all digitally-enabled public services in Greece. The development of this centralised service delivery portal comprises the development of other common public digital goods such as digital identity and digital notification systems. Both functions are designed to serve as common means of delivery and communication between users and public services, providing a single point of contact for all public services. Over 1 350 services are provided through this platform and several new services including interoperability with smartphone apps is envisaged.
- The adoption of a data-driven public sector approach, which includes **the development of base registries as well as interoperability systems** to secure integrity and availability of data on citizens and legal entities. This builds on the development of a national data strategy in order to establish a data governance framework, further promote data value-creation and the security and personal data protection in accordance with the GDPR and relevant regulations. Under this component, Greece expects to create the Interoperability Centre,² an entity responsible for securing the implementation and management of the interoperability framework and its associated infrastructure.
- Further **promotion of open government data**. Building on the progress achieved through the NDS 2016-2021, the DTB presents a scalable approach to open up public data based on potential value-added and policy priorities. The DTB sets specific goals and objectives in terms of the strengthening of the open data portal, the development of a thematic data repository and fostering open science in Greece. These approaches intend to leverage value creation through collaboration and reuse of data, for example using APIs.

Based on these enablers, the DTB presents a series of actions, initiatives, and projects around six strategic axes, including connectivity, digital abilities and competencies, digital business transformation, digital services, digital innovation, and the use of emerging technologies, as well as objectives and specific projects around seventeen different policy areas such as education, health, labour and social affairs, justice, culture, sports, environment and energy, finance, transport and energy, tourism, immigration, among others.

Greek public procurement framework and the digitalisation of the procurement function

Procurement of digital projects, as implemented by the Ministry of Digital Governance, is embedded in a wider public procurement framework, defined by an overall structure of rules and regulations, institutions, as well as systems and practices. As such, it is important to lay out the contextual factors, in which procurement of digital project occurs.

Accounting for an estimated 11.4% of GDP in Greece in 2020 (OECD, 2021^[14]), public procurement represents a significant share of the Greek economy as well as a pillar of public service delivery. The legal framework for public procurement is regulated by the Law on Public Works, Supply and Service Contracts (L.4412/2016 as amended and in force), which transposes the EU Directives on public procurement. Public procurement is also being increasingly digitalised, i.e. the use of the e-procurement system is expanded to procedures below those mandated by European procurement directives.

Namely, in March 2021, the public procurement law was amended to broadly reform the procurement system.³ The overarching objectives of this reform are to enhance digitalisation, simplification, and acceleration of procurement procedures, contributing to a comprehensive and unified system that limits exceptions and derogations. In particular, the reform expands the use of e-procurement to a lower

threshold of EUR 30 000 (from previously EUR 60 000), thus increasing transparency and reducing administrative burden.

With respect to digitalisation of public procurement, Greece relies on an e-procurement architecture composed of two main platforms, i.e. KIMDIS (Central Electronic Registry for Public Procurements) and ESIDIS (Electronic System for Public Procurements). While the platforms cover the main functionalities associated to e-procurement, several functionalities, such as contract management are not concluded electronically. Furthermore, the existence of two platforms provides for a fragmented environment. ., Importantly, the quality of procurement information available through the e-procurement system is sub-optimal particularly as interoperability among KIMDIS and ESIDIS is lacking, and procurement data is not available in open and structured formats (e.g. open government data), thus limiting opportunities for further analysis.

Recent amendments of the legal framework foresee simplifications and exemptions from the procurement framework regarding projects related to digital services and ICT projects. Namely, the threshold for direct awards in this category has been raised to EUR 60 000 from previously EUR 30 000 for all types of contracts, provided that they relate to the implementation of ICT projects having as their subject matter the interoperability of digital services or the modernisation of the digital instruments of the Central Administration.⁴

Over the past decade, public procurement has been at the heart of several reforms initiated in the context of Greece's bailout programme in 2010. This included the creation of the Hellenic Single Public Procurement Authority (HSPPA), i.e. the primary body for public procurement policy, tasked with developing and promoting a national strategy on public procurement, as well as ensuring transparency, efficiency and coherence of the system. Further reforms streamlined the legislative framework into one single piece of legislation, and reformed the pre-judicial and judicial system by creating of the Public Procurement Review Authority (AEPP). Since 2022, the institutional framework for public procurement experienced further changes with the merger of HSPPA and AEPP. Overall, the introduction of a review body has led to improvements in the efficiency of the appeals process. In 2018, the average time for issuing a decision from the day the application was filed was 40 days for requests for review and 8 days for requests for interim measures.

While significant progress has been achieved with successive reforms over the past decade, the Greek public procurement system stills shows important potential for improvements. Procurement practices indicate weaknesses regarding their efficiency and effectiveness, including irregularities and lack of compliance with procurement rules, lengthy procedures, as well as high prevalence of lowest price criterion and single bids. Challenges affecting contracting authorities with procurement of traditional goods and services already are likely to be exacerbated when procuring digital or innovative solutions, which involves additional complexities. For instance, contracting authorities throughout the country have limited awareness of the importance of procurement planning and market engagement (European Commission, 2020^[15]). Competition in procurement markets also shows room for improvement, with single bids accounting for 40% of tenders above EU thresholds in 2019 (European Commission, n.d.^[16]). Procurement procedure also tend to be very long, accounting for on average 218 days between the receipt of bids and the contract award, compared to 120 days on average in the EU (European Commission, n.d.^[16]). Lengthy procurement procedures is a particular challenge in the context of ICT and digital projects, as there is a higher risk of not keeping the pace with technological change.

Integrity is another area, in which the Greek procurement system faces challenges and would benefit from further action, such as strengthening internal control mechanisms of public procurement, as well as continued efforts to enhance the anti-corruption framework (MAPS, forthcoming).

Notes

¹ Includes: unified portal, interoperability infrastructure, authentication, payments, archive of public administration websites and public sector network.

² See: <https://www.gsis.gr/dimosia-dioikisi/ked>.

³ L. 4782/2011.

⁴ Article 188 para 6.

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