

# 5 Way forward

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This chapter presents the main policy recommendations for Greece to manage digital government investments strategically. The recommendations presented include the governance perspective, the planning and funding of digital initiatives, project procurement and implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and public sector capabilities. The final section of the chapter presents a summary of the identified challenges and the dedicated recommendations, including a potential timeline for its implementation.

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## Policy recommendations for action

Strengthening the institutional capacities for the governance of digital investments is key for the Greek government and the MDG to achieve benefits realisation from ICT/digital projects. As identified in this report, despite significant advances at strategic level, including new governance and institutional models and the development of a comprehensive digital transformation strategy for the public sector, there are still several areas of improvement for the MDG and all its related stakeholders. This chapter presents relevant and actionable policy recommendations for Greece to strategically manage digital government investments.

### Governance

#### *Strengthen the governance for digital government in Greece*

The creation of MDG clearly represents an important development towards a coherent governance for digital government in Greece. Considering the challenges identified in this study and in line with the OECD Recommendations for Digital Government Strategies (OECD, 2014<sup>[11]</sup>), strengthening the institutional capacities of MDG to effectively implement and deliver the objectives set in the DTB is critical to achieve expected outcomes. Upgrading the institutional capacities of MDG implies revisiting its organisational structure, roles and functions, co-ordination mechanisms among relevant government entities and existing ICT/project development procedures.

Specifically, MDG could consider taking the following actions to establish a fit-for-purpose governance for ICT/digital projects:

- **Establish clear roles and mandates for all relevant stakeholders within MDG.** This includes policy setting and project management roles within MDG, the functions of departments/units involved in the development of ICT/digital projects as well as the role of Information Society S.A. as a strategic partner in the implementation process. Accordingly, these roles would need to be effectively communicated to all stakeholders involved in the development of ICT/digital projects within and outside the public sector.
- **Enhance existing co-ordination mechanisms.** With the DTB identifying the Steering Committee and the Implementation Network as part of the renewed governance set-up, both instances would require clarifying their specific roles in terms of advisory and decision-making responsibilities. Similarly, MDG could leverage the Committee and the Network to oversee the implementation of the strategy as well as new organisational structures to guide the implementation of ICT/digital projects (e.g. as per suggested with a dedicated project management office below).
- **Promote co-ordination between relevant authorities involved in the implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects.** As the implementation of ICT/digital projects implies funding allocation, procurement of solutions and the involvement of external actors, further alignment could be pursued between relevant digital government, public procurement and public budgeting authorities and actors, including Information Society. This includes looking at ways to align processes as well as concert ways to address issues regarding funding allocation and procurement mechanisms out of the MDG's mandate.

#### *Establish a Project Management Office to streamline and accelerate the execution of ICT/digital projects*

MDG needs to set a coherent and streamlined process for the efficient implementation of ICT/digital projects. Setting new institutional capacities for the implementation of the DTB within MDG involves aligning and integrating different phases of the project management life cycle, including prioritisation,

planning, funding, procurement, implementation and monitoring. Accordingly, a dedicated governance model and an organisational structure that oversees ICT/digital project implementation is needed at MDG.

Establishing a Project Management Office (PMO) would support the development of a more coherent, organic and structured way to manage ICT/digital projects. For this, MDG would need to revisit and integrate existing procedures for project approval, funding, procurement, implementation and monitoring with the purpose of addressing ICT/digital project development from an end-to-end perspective. There are multiple modalities to set up a PMO depending on its specific functions as well as considerations when addressing the institutional design. Further details about actions and considerations for setting the PMO are presented in Chapter 6.

## **Planning and funding**

### *Adopt an ICT portfolio management system for ICT/digital investments*

An ICT portfolio management approach allows the management of all digital investments, having a clear overview of projects, roles, priorities and timelines to secure and effective implementation. Considering the needed institutional redesign to establish a PMO, the adoption of an ICT portfolio management system can be a strategic way to support the responsibilities and tasks of the PMO regarding end-to-end project management while identifying and mitigating associated risks. This portfolio can bridge the project approval, implementation, procurement and monitoring facets of ICT/digital project management.

Specifically, MDG could consider taking the following actions to implement an ICT portfolio management system:

- **Leverage the project approval process to systematise information of all ICT/digital projects.** Considering the limited visibility that MDG has over the implementation process of relevant ICT/digital projects, the project approval mechanism could provide detailed information that empower MDG to track progress of initiatives as well as take corrective actions to ensure timely delivery.
- **Establish clear and transparent criteria to prioritise digital investments.** In order to support the role of the PMO, the ICT portfolio can help establish the priority projects under the scope of the MDG, Information Society S.A. and line ministries. Selecting who will be responsible for the implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects would reflect the extent to which a certain project has a larger cross-governmental impact or requires co-ordination between two or more entities. Similarly, budget allocation, funding sources and final implementation responsibility should be outlined following a well-defined, agreed and transparent criteria.
- **Integrate the ICT portfolio system into the new governance of digital government.** With the Steering Committee and the Execution Network overseeing the implementation of the DTB, the ICT portfolio management system can be a tool to support the functions of both governance bodies and to make sure line ministries and related stakeholders are aware of the priorities and challenges for sound digital investments in Greece.
- **Secure coherent funding management for digital projects.** Different funding sources challenge coherent project management creating disincentives for efficient resource allocation. Under an ICT portfolio management approach, MDG could allocate resources ensuring that investment decisions are independent of funding mechanisms. In particular, MDG could harmonise the management of all different digital government funding sources, including European funds and national budgets.

### *Redesign the ICT/digital project approval process*

Along with the suggested actions to improve the governance for ICT/digital projects, MDG would benefit from redesigning the project approval process, establishing a single and coherent procedure for all projects regardless of the funding source. Establishing a unified approach would help streamline the interactions

between MDG and line ministries, and act as a coherent information source to support strategic decision-making e.g., centralised procurement of ICT/digital goods, redefinition of priorities, and co-ordination between line ministries.

For this, MDG could consider taking the following actions:

- **Redesign the project approval process in a collaborative way.** This implies involving all relevant actors to establish a coherent and agreed approach to pitch, process, prioritise and approve ICT/digital projects, including Information Society S.A., relevant departments/units within MDG and line ministries. The Steering Committee and the Implementation Network could support this process to gather sufficient political backing and operational alignment for its future implementation.
- **Establish a comprehensive value proposition standard.** For the approval process to be effective and support decision-making, it could include the multidimensional factors that determine the eligibility, feasibility and final impact of relevant ICT/digital projects. This includes financial factors as well as other relevant priorities including user satisfaction, environmental impact, administrative efficiency, etc. that help determine the relevance and pertinence of a certain project regardless of the investment needed, funding source or final beneficiary. Similarly, it could consider the potential risks associated to the implementation of each project.
- **Leverage the project approval process to ensure the adoption of key ICT/digital standards.** Given the significant control that MDG has on budget for ICT/digital projects, the approval mechanism can be an effective way to enforce the adoption of relevant standards and principles set in the DTB. This includes specific agile project management practices, standards on usability and user-centricity, user satisfaction measurement, data governance and sharing frameworks, digital identity systems, etc. Considering the priority role the centralised service delivery platform gov.gr has in the DTB, enforcing standards adoption through the approval process can also support a coherent development by line ministries and other relevant actors.
- **Pilot the redesigned approval process.** Changes in MDG organisational practices and culture require fostering incentives and adoption from relevant stakeholders. MDG could implement the redesigned approval process following agile principles of user engagement, iteration, learning and improvement in order to secure a smooth transition. This may include a modular deployment with selected line ministries to secure a safe space for testing and improvement.

## ***Project procurement and implementation***

### *Promote the strategic use of public procurement*

MDG would benefit from promoting the strategic use of public procurement to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its digital procurements, in line with the OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement (OECD, 2015<sup>[21]</sup>). In particular, this entails taking a strategic approach to the preparatory phase of procurement of digital projects, i.e., placing a solid emphasis on the importance of needs assessment and early market engagement at the early stages. A sound preparation of the procurement limits risks of failure, as market capacity and user needs, are well understood. In addition, MDG could promote the use of advanced procurement practices suitable to digital projects, as detailed below. As outlined in the report, making a strategic use of public procurement does not require changes to the public procurement legal framework.

Specifically, MDG could incorporate the strategic use of public procurement through the following actions:

- **Strengthening early market engagement practices.** MDG could fully exploit the possibilities offered by the legal framework to engage with market actors in preparation of the procurement process, including through the creation of dedicated platforms that facilitate the exchange with digital technology suppliers.
- **Use quality criteria in the procurement evaluation.** Awarding procurement contracts based on quality is essential to deliver value for money in the procurement process. Namely, awarding a premium for quality ensures that high-quality providers are chosen and risks of poor execution at the contract stage are minimised.
- **Express user needs through functional specifications.** In the context of digital technology, it is important to allow flexibility and innovation when procuring a particular good or service. By expressing needs in functional requirements rather than detailing them through prescriptive technical specifications, the market can introduce innovative elements to its offer. With functional specifications, the focus of the procurement process lies in the performance of the solution, rather than fitting a precise description that runs the risk of being quickly outdated.
- **Advance procurement practices such as Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) and Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI).** Digital solution requires procurement processes that are adapted to this purpose. DPS represent a proven tool to enhance the purchasing of standardised ICT goods and services. Public procurement of innovation is an advanced practice that can be tailored to addressing specific needs for which solutions are not yet available on the market. These tools should be part of contracting authorities' toolkit for procuring digital transformation projects.

*Initiate the journey towards agile implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects*

Greater agility in the implementation of procurement processes has shown to be a strong mitigation measure for risks related to the failure of digital projects. This entails strengthening the involvement of end-users throughout the development process, diversifying the supplier group, allowing smaller suppliers to participate in the delivery of projects, as well as setting up the overall digital project in a modular way.

The change from a waterfall to an agile implementation is often a longstanding and complex process, requiring a shift in mind-set, as well as an enabling environment, which includes the availability of dedicated training, support structures and guidance. Nonetheless, MDG could initiate the first steps on the journey towards agile with a number of initial steps:

- **Develop practical guidance for agility in procurement:** As a starting point, it is important to provide contracting authorities with practical guidance (good practice examples, case studies, etc.). This effort could be led in co-operation with HSPPA.
- **Pilot agile procurement methodologies with Information Society S.A.:** With its longstanding experience in implementing digital projects, Information Society S.A. is best placed to pioneer agile methodology implementation in Greece. It could start doing so with a small pilot, and based on the experience gradually widen the application of agile towards most of its project portfolio, where most appropriate.
- **Consider the establishment of a competence centre for implementation of digital and agile procurement:** Over the medium-term, MDG in co-operation with a broad range of digital and procurement stakeholders, could reflect on the establishment of a dedicated competence centre for implementation of digital and agile procurement. This centre would service as advisory hub for digital project implementation, providing ad hoc support, expertise and guidance. The competence centre could be linked to or expand on the National Competence Centre on Innovation Procurement.

### *Facilitate access to a supplier base composed of start-ups and innovative SMEs*

The success of public procurement processes also depends on the quality and performance of its counterparts, i.e. economic operators. In addition to striving to be an attractive client by implementing clear and speedy procurement processes, MDG could consider fostering access to a supplier base key to deliver innovative digital transformation projects, i.e. GovTech communities, start-ups and innovative SMEs.

These groups of suppliers often lack awareness about public sector contracts, and may suffer from entry barriers. MDG could take the following action to facilitate access to a key supplier group:

- **Continuous engagement and awareness-raising:** In parallel to market engagement efforts, engagement could also be tailored at identifying the key group of suppliers that can drive innovation in digital transformation.
- **Remove hurdles for accessing procurement contracts:** Typical hurdles for SMEs and smaller suppliers consist in late payment, overly large contract size and requirements for technical capacity that are too strict.
- **Launching innovation challenge programmes:** The creation of programmes has been identified as a successful tool to engage a diverse group of suppliers in solving pressing challenges of the public administration.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

### *Setting sound monitoring systems*

Improving the management and procurement of ICT/digital projects in the Greek public sector requires tracking progress of relevant projects in a timely and effective way to mitigate risks and take corrective actions to maximise benefits realisation. As outlined previously, MDG does not have a comprehensive approach towards monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of ICT/digital projects. The suggested actions for the PMO, ICT portfolio management and project approval mechanisms can be leveraged to support a better monitoring of the DTB and other relevant digital projects.

To advance in this direction, MDG could take the following actions:

- **Define a comprehensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and assess the development of ICT/digital projects.** In line with the suggested actions to better establish the value proposition of ICT/digital projects, MDG could define a detailed set of indicators to support monitoring and assessment processes. Keeping in mind the roles and responsibilities of MDG, the PMO, Information Society S.A. and line ministries, the KPIs could be defined considering an adequate monitoring of progress in line with the expectations, the impact, as well as adherence to digital government standards. In order to secure the feasibility of this monitoring mechanism, MDG could consider the availability of existing data to construct the KPIs (e.g. the project approval process).
- **Establish open communication channels to disseminate ICT/digital project performance data with relevant stakeholders and the wider community.** Effective monitoring systems provide visibility to results and performance, creating incentives to foster accountability and compliance of relevant actors. In line with best practices for monitoring digital investments, MDG could make strategic use of data visualisations and dashboards to share relevant information on the performance of ICT/digital projects, including the availability of open government data (OGD) to support the transparency and accountability of digital investments in the public sector.

### *Measuring user experience*

In line with the need to adopt a user-driven approach in the development of ICT/digital projects in Greece, further attention could be given to assessing the experience of users. While not all ICT/digital projects involve end-users (e.g. digital infrastructure), user satisfaction should be measured for the projects intended to deliver direct benefits to citizens and business.

For this, MDG could take the following actions:

- **Establish a common and standardised methodology to measure user satisfaction.** Greece could strengthen user satisfaction measurement mechanisms to support the goals of the DTB, moving towards a systematic and unified evaluation system that assess the experience of end-users with digital solutions.
- **Set formal mechanisms for all involved stakeholders to assess user satisfaction when relevant.** This includes leveraging funding and project approval mechanisms to ensure that all beneficiaries endorse and adhere to the standards set for user satisfaction measurement in Greece.
- **Communicate and visualise user satisfaction data to foster incentives for improved ICT/digital project delivery.** This implies including user satisfaction data in the performance assessment dashboards for ICT/digital projects and making it available in open and reusable ways.

### **Public sector capabilities**

#### *Strengthen line ministries' capabilities*

A sustainable digital transformation in the public sector requires a collaborative and co-owned process for all public sector institutions to leverage digital tools and data for improved public governance. Currently, in Greece not all line ministries have the institutional capacities, digital talent and skills needed to have a leading role in the implementation of the DTB, in specific regarding the implementation and procurement of large-scale ICT/digital projects. This requires equipping Greece's public sector organisations with the tools and competencies to effectively implement digital transformation projects and to decentralise the implementation of the DTB. Under this model, MDG and the PMO can have the strategic role of managing cross-governmental complex and large-scale projects, while the long-tail of smaller projects can be implemented by line ministries following the guidelines and standards for digital government set by MDG.

In this line, MDG could take the following actions:

- **Leverage digital standards to support coherent and aligned implementation of ICT/digital projects.** Equipping public sector organisations with the tools and standards to implement digital transformation projects is essential for a sustainable digital transformation process. This includes guidelines and standards on agile project management, user research, usability, digital identity, notification systems, digital procurement, etc., that public sector organisations can leverage to guide the implementation and procurement of small-scale projects. Digital standards also include data access and sharing arrangements (legal, technical and organisational frameworks) fostering data reuse, advancing towards implementing the once-only principle within the public administration.
- **Promote a user-driven culture across the public sector.** MDG could strengthen public sector' capacities to understand user needs, fostering a cultural shift to place users (e.g. citizens, businesses, civil servants) at the core of digital transformation processes. This includes further training and capacity building in agile project management, user research and user satisfaction measurement to guide the implementation of digital transformation projects in Greece, including Information Society S.A. and regulatory authorities. Embracing a user-driven approach implies



assessing administrative and regulatory procedures on a continuous basis. Similarly, MDG could encourage agile and iterative approaches, the introduction of proof of concepts, and minimum viable products (MVPs) in developing digital solutions, with Information Society S.A. serving as safer testing space for cultural change and implementation of best practices.

- **Establish cross-governmental communities of practice.** Several line ministries may be facing similar issues when implementing and procuring ICT/digital projects in Greece. Creating safe spaces for exchange and learning can foster a culture of collaboration and co-operation within the Greek public sector as well as to identify and address similar issues learning from best practices within the government. This could include MDG and Information Society S.A. operational teams.
- **Strengthen project management capabilities in line ministries.** The limited institutional capacities and skills for project management and public procurement of ICT/digital projects is overloading MDG and Information Society S.A. with projects that can eventually be implemented by line ministries in a coherent and aligned way. This requires conducting capacity building activities on project management and public procurement at line ministries level.

#### *Build capacity to target advanced procurement practices and ICT skills*

Addressing several of the bottlenecks and challenges related to the implementation of digital projects relies on having the appropriate capacity in terms of digital and procurement skills. Specifically, MDG would benefit from increased procurement capacity to strengthen the strategic aspects of the procurement process, which are key to ensuring value for money and reducing the risk of digital projects' failure. As such, capacity-building can be considered as a pre-condition for the successful implementation of digital projects. Furthermore, MDG could explore the implementation of more advanced procurement practices.

Accordingly, MDG could take the following steps:

- **Assess capacity gaps with a particular view towards ICT competences.** To fill capacity gaps related to procurement and ICT competences, MDG requires full picture of the available competences within its own organisation and Information Society S.A. Available tools such as ProcurComp<sup>EU</sup> can support such an exercise.
- **Design a comprehensive and well-structured capacity-building programme for the procurement staff of MDG and Information Society S.A.** taking into account the different levels of advancement in procurement skills based on a careful assessment. At a minimum, capacity-building activities should cover market engagement, use of quality criteria, functional specifications. A more advanced programme should also include project management, negotiation, agile methodologies, modular contracting, innovation procurement, green public procurement, socially responsible public procurement.
- **Launch pilot projects to test specific practices, such as the use of DPS for recurring needs of digital solutions and innovation challenges to address specific public sector problems.** Procurement officials should receive adequate training to undertake these activities, e.g. through taking advantage of ongoing initiatives or establishing international co-operation.

#### *Examine the scope for centralisation of ICT public procurement to benefit from efficiency gains and greater specialisation*

Centralisation of procurement for standardised needs has long been identified as a solution of increasing the efficiency of the procurement process and deliver greater value for money. The benefits of centralisation derive from greater bargaining power of the contracting authority through aggregation of spending, as well as increased specialisation in expertise and competency. In turn, greater specialisation leads to better performance. Gains from centralisation can be reaped also in the field of ICT, where several OECD countries have introduced dedicated purchasing bodies, as discussed in Chapter 3. MDG together



with a broad group of stakeholders could examine the scope for such centralisation. Data on the types of procurement expenditure to be collected through a monitoring by the new PMO would provide valuable insights on the degree of harmonisation of needs and opportunities for aggregation.

## Summary of identified challenges and recommendations

In order to summarise both Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, Table 5.1 lists the main challenges for an adequate development of ICT/digital projects by MDG and relevant stakeholders with the respective recommended policy actions. The summary also gives an indication about a potential timeline for implementation of specific actions: short-term (within 6 months); medium term (between 6 months and 12 months) and long-term (over 12 months).

**Table 5.1. Identified challenges and recommendations**

Challenges identified	Recommendation	Timeline for implementation
Silo-based operations within the MDG and across the public sector	Strengthen the governance for digital government in Greece	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish clear roles and mandates for all relevant stakeholders within MDG</li> </ul>	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance existing co-ordination mechanisms</li> <li>Promote co-ordination between relevant authorities involved in the implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects</li> </ul>	Short-term Medium-term
Limited understanding of user needs	Strengthen line ministries capabilities	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote a user-driven culture across the public sector.</li> <li>Establish cross-governmental communities of practice.</li> </ul>	Medium-term Short-term
	Measuring user experience	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a common and standardised methodology to measure user satisfaction.</li> <li>Set formal mechanisms for all involved stakeholders to assess user satisfaction when relevant.</li> </ul>	Short-term Short-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate and visualise user satisfaction data to foster incentives for improved ICT/digital project delivery</li> </ul>	Medium-term
Need to set a coherent management approach for ICT/digital projects	Establish a PMO to streamline and accelerate the execution of digital transformation projects	Medium-term
	Adopt an ICT portfolio management system for ICT/digital investments:	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage the project approval process to systematise information of all ICT/digital projects.</li> </ul>	
	Redesign the ICT/digital project approval process	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign the project approval process in a collaborative way</li> <li>Establish a comprehensive value proposition standard</li> <li>Leverage the project approval process to ensure the adoption of key ICT/digital standards</li> </ul>	Short-term Medium-term Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot the redesigned approval process</li> </ul>	Short-term
Limited alignment of funding allocation processes	Adopt an ICT portfolio management system for ICT/digital investments	Medium-term
Leveraging project approval to secure coherence in digital investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt an ICT portfolio management system for ICT/digital investments</li> </ul>	Medium-term
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign the ICT/digital project approval process</li> </ul>	Short-term
Overly lengthy implementation cycle of digital projects	Establish a PMO to streamline and accelerate the execution of digital transformation projects	Medium-term

Challenges identified	Recommendation	Timeline for implementation
Sub-optimal execution of procurement procedures throughout the procurement cycle	Promote the use of strategic public procurement:	
	• Strengthening early market engagement practices	Short-term
	• Use quality criteria in the procurement evaluation	Short-term
	• Express user needs through functional specifications	Short-term
Large procurement contracts limit agility	• Advance procurement practices such as Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) and Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI).	Medium-term
	Promote the strategic use of public procurement	Short-term
	Initiate the journey towards agile procurement implementation:	
	• Develop practical guidance for agility in procurement	Short-term
Limited access to pool of innovative suppliers and SMEs	• Pilot agile procurement methodologies with Information Society S.A.	Medium-term
	• Consider the establishment of a competence centre for implementation of digital and agile procurement	Long-term
	Facilitate access to supplier base composed of start-ups and innovative SMEs:	
Opportunities for centralised procurement	• Continuous engagement and awareness-raising	Short-term
	• Remove hurdles for accessing procurement contracts	Medium-term
	• Launching innovation challenge programmes	Long-term
Promotion of digital talent and skills	Examine the scope for centralisation of ICT public procurement to benefit from efficiency gains and greater specialisation	Short-term
Lack of specific procurement/ICT competences	Initiate the journey towards agile implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects	
	• Consider the establishment of a competence centre for implementation of digital and agile procurement	Long-term
	Strengthen line ministries' capabilities:	
	• Promote a user-driven culture across the public sector	Medium-term
Limited monitoring and assessment of ICT/digital initiatives	• Establish cross-governmental communities of practice	Short-term
	Build capacity to target advanced procurement practices and ICT skills	
	• Assess capacity gaps with a particular view towards ICT competences.	Short-term
	• Design a comprehensive and well-structured capacity-building programme for the procurement staff of MDG and Information	Medium-term
	• Launch pilot projects to test specific practices, such as the use of DPS for recurring needs of digital solutions and innovation challenges to address specific public sector problems	Short-term
	Initiate the journey towards agile implementation and procurement of ICT/digital projects	
	• Develop practical guidance for agility in procurement	Short-term
	• Pilot agile procurement methodologies with Information Society S.A.	Medium-term
• Consider the establishment of a competence centre for implementation of digital and agile procurement	Long-term	
Setting sound monitoring systems:	• Define a comprehensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and assess the development of ICT/digital projects	Short-term
	• Establish open communication channels to disseminate ICT/digital project performance data with relevant stakeholders and the wider community	Short-term

Source: Own elaboration.

## References

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**From:**  
**Digital Transformation Projects in Greece's Public Sector**  
Governance, Procurement and Implementation

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/33792fae-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2022), "Way forward", in *Digital Transformation Projects in Greece's Public Sector: Governance, Procurement and Implementation*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/636bf3f0-en>

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