



Greece

## ESF projects concerned with actions to optimize the flow of court proceedings, digital infrastructure of court proceedings and integrated management system for court procedures

### Key facts

#### NAME OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

Operational Programme 'Reform of the Public Sector 2014-2020', TO11

#### Projects

- 1) Actions to optimize the flow of civil, criminal and administrative court proceedings (02/06/2015-15/05/2019)
- 2) Infrastructure for digital recording, storage and disposal of minutes of court proceedings (21/12/2015-21/07/2021)
- 3) Integrated management system of judicial cases for civil and criminal procedures- A (21/07/2014-31/12/2019)
- 4) Integrated management system of judicial cases for civil and criminal procedures- B (02/12/2019-01/06/2023)

#### TARGET GROUPS



- 1) Ministry of Justice and potential users of insolvency electronic register under construction
- 2) 617 court rooms in the country's 168 court houses
- 3) 41 civil and criminal courts and prosecuting authorities, as well as Supreme Court (Areios Pagos)
- 4) 321 civil and criminal courts and prosecuting authorities

#### BUDGET (COMBINED FOR 4 PROJECTS)

**EUR 29,049,399.8**

ESF contribution

**EUR 10,328,788.8**

National budget of the  
Republic of Greece  
contribution



#### BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION

Greek Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

#### COORDINATOR

Ioannis Kokkaras, Head of the NSRF Executive Agency in the Ministry of Justice; and Dimitris Katras, Head of Unit B of the same agency

#### PROJECT/ORGANISATION WEBSITE

 <https://justedespa.gr/>

 [ikokkaras@mou.gr](mailto:ikokkaras@mou.gr)

 [dkatras@mou.gr](mailto:dkatras@mou.gr)

#### PARTNERS

N/A

### Activities implemented

#### PROJECTS IN NUMBERS



Number of  
courts with  
digital court  
proceedings



Computer  
stations in  
courts



Number of judges  
and prosecutors  
trained



Number of  
employees  
trained

#### MAIN PROJECTS' TASKS



Achieve much greater transparency in the functioning of the judicial system, reduce operating costs, improve the organisation of the judicial system and increase productivity in the private sector by rapidly resolving legal disputes.

## Project journey: from conception to delivery

### INITIAL STAGE

#### CONTEXT OF THE PROJECTS

During the 2014-2020 programming period, the Greek Ministry of Justice (MoJ) introduced a reform seeking the **computerisation and digitalisation of services of the Greek justice system**. **Four inter-linked ESF projects** were designed with the aim of upgrading the quality of the outward-looking services of justice to citizens. Facilitating the smooth functioning of the market and financial system are two aspects of the vision behind the projects and set the direction for the MoJ and the Greek court system to follow.

#### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECTS

The four projects are to first study impediments in the flow of court proceedings and then establish new digital infrastructure. A new integrated management system, created in two phases, aims to increase the efficiency of Greece's court proceedings by: 1) **improving the organisation** and operation of the judicial system; and 2) improving the **skills** of judges, prosecutors and staff employed in the courts. The four projects contribute to e-justice reform initiatives taken under the successive 'Economic Adjustment Programmes for Greece', implanted in 2010-2019 in the wake of the Greek crisis.

### PROJECT PHASE

#### MAIN CHALLENGES FACED, AND DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The coordinator of projects, Ioannis Kokkaras, and his deputy, Dimitris Katras, organized the NSRF Executive Agency at the MoJ. In the beginning, in April 2017, they did not have enough personnel at their disposal, while reform implementation was **behind schedule**. By early 2019 they had created a team of 13 civil servants in the MoJ and had solicited the **cooperation** of higher judges and prosecutors in Athens, Pireaus, Thessaloniki and Chalkdia. The main difficulties were the need to establish **new digital infrastructure** in the courts and to overcome the lack of preparation and **resistance** of judges and administrative personnel.

#### KEY DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The four combined ESF projects involved **new digital infrastructure** for recording, storage and disposal of minutes of court proceedings and an Integrated Judicial Case Management System for Civil and Criminal Procedure in two phases. By mid-2019, there was in targeted courts: a) an **electronic registry** for incoming documents and a registry of judges and civil servants serving in the courts; b) an **information system** for statistical and administrative data; c) a system for the **electronic search** of court cases; and d) **inter-operability** with other digital services (e.g., of the Ministry of Finance).

#### KEY RESULTS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

The main achievement of the four projects has been the **gradual transition** from a manual to a new electronic case management system. This was more successful in administrative court proceedings than in civil and criminal court proceedings. The project team has noted that all those concerned have realized that the future lies in the full digitalisation of court proceedings. Gradually, judges, prosecutors and MoJ employees are adapting to the new system.

### RESULTS, IMPACTS

#### (EXPECTED) IMPACT ON BUSINESS, CITIZENS AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The four combined projects are expected to result in **the provision of better-quality services to citizens, reduction of the time needed to enforce a contract in Greece and to resolve court cases, creating a better business environment**. These changes are necessary for the country's economic recovery after the crisis.

### REFLECTIONS

#### LESSONS LEARNT: THE ROLE OF ESF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The four ESF-supported projects have contributed to enhancing the digitalization of court proceedings in Greece. The MoJ team has learnt that synchronization among the involved Ministries and judicial and prosecutorial authorities is needed; a better balance is necessary between the legal controls over the processes of implementing ESF processes and the achievement of tangible results in the foreseeable future; and more time and effort will be necessary to have all involved personnel prepared and willing to actually use the new systems.

## Personal experiences



'The digital communication of lawyers with administrative courts is already far advanced with the result that the time needed to resolve an administrative court case has been shortened; but this does not hold for civil and criminal courts where there are many issues remaining.'

**Dimitris Spyropoulos**, practicing lawyer, Athens bar of Lawyers

'The possibility to electronically submit documents to a court for a case is a big step forward. While the new system is a big improvement over the previous manual record-keeping, transfer of file and assignment of cases, there are outstanding issues. During case hearings, minutes are still kept in the traditional way, while documents submitted and inspected during the hearings are not always available in electronic format.'

**Panagiotis Lyberopoulos**, judge, second instance court of Athens

The study "Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration" (PAPA) aims to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity building initiatives. The contractor prepared 30 case studies and factsheets on ESF supported projects funded in 17 beneficiary countries of Thematic Objective 11 during the programming period 2014-2020.

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Find out more about the project by following the link <http://bit.ly/PAPA-PPMI> or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera.

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