



'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback'

Case study of a Slovakian ESF project under the study 'Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration' (PAPA)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Directorate F — Investment
Unit F1: ESF and FEAD Policy and Legislation

*Contact: DG EMPL F1
E-mail: EMPL-F1-UNIT@ec.europa.eu*

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

Implemented by PPMI

PPMI Group
Gedimino av. 50
LT-01110 Vilnius, Lithuania
www.ppmi.lt

Contact:
Dr Vitalis Nakrošis, thematic expert (Programme Manager at PPMI)
vitalis@ppmi.lt

Case study written by country expert Dr Juraj Nemec

Specific contract No VC/2018/0771 under the Multiple Framework Contract No VC/2017/0376 for the provision of services related to the implementation of Better Regulation Guidelines

'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback'

Case study of a Slovakian ESF project under the study 'Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration' (PAPA)

***Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.***

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission; however, it reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

More information on the European Union is available on the Internet (<http://www.europa.eu>).

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020.

© European Union, 2020

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

CONTENTS

Project background.....	7
Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback	8
Introduction: the context of the project.....	8
Design and execution of the project.....	11
Previous experience of the team.....	11
Purpose of the ESF-supported project	12
Implementation of the ESF project: main developments.....	13
Conclusion: results, lessons learnt and the role of ESF financial support	15
Main results.....	15
Lessons learnt and success factors	16
Role of ESF support	17
References	19

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The building of the OSS in Bratislava and its interior	9
--	---

Project background

Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback

Operational Programme	Effective Public Administration ('Efektívna verejná správa') The project is supported under the OP Priority Axis 1 'Strengthened institutional capacity and effectiveness of PA', the Specific objective 1.1 'Improved systems and optimised processes of PA'
Beneficiary organisation	Ministry of the Interior
Target groups	Citizen and businesses, public administration employees
Project duration	01/04/2015 – 31/12/2020
Budget	ESF funding EUR 8,140,036.21, no direct contribution from the state budget
Project manager (email address)	Matúš Šesták, director Analytical and methodical unit for public administration at the Ministry of Interior ('Analyticko-metodická jednotka verejnej správy') Matus.Sestak@minv.sk
Partners	Association of heads of municipal officers ('Asociácia prednostov úradov miestnej samosprávy SR')
Project/ organisation website	https://www.minv.sk/?meranie-efektivnosti-sluzieb-verejnej-spravy-rozvoj-KC

This case study was produced during the project 'Progress Assessment of the ESF Support to Public Administration' project that was contracted by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. The purpose of this project was to present specific cases of ESF-funded public administration reform and capacity-building initiatives, as well as to show the role of ESF financial support to public administration, for the purposes of accountability. This report recounts the story of the project '**Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback**'. This account discusses the context and purpose of the project; the characteristics of the team implementing it; the main challenges faced and difficulties encountered during its implementation; key developments during the implementation process; the results and impacts achieved; as well as lessons learnt and the contribution of the ESF.

Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback

Introduction: the context of the project

The project 'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback' seeks to guarantee the continuum and progress of the development of 'one-stop-shops' (OSS) network in Slovakia, which started in 2014. The project implementation is trusted upon an experienced and highly competent team, led by Dr Matus Šesták, Director at the Analytical and Methodical Unit for Public Administration at the Ministry of Interior. The meeting with Dr Matus Šesták and his team for writing this case study has been a second time when the national expert met with the team. The first meeting took place one year before, back in 2018, when preparing a report for EUPACK project¹. Their continuous role in mobilising ESF funds to improve public services has brought some of them to the meeting on the project discussed in this case study. This indicates that the team of qualified and enthusiastic people continues their work, with the aim to achieve and deliver.

The 'one-stop-shop' (OSS) is a popular tool for government service delivery. An OSS is a place – physical, virtual, or both – where the public can obtain multiple products and services in one place². OSSs are not a recent invention, and not an invention of the public sector. Within the public sector context, the concept entered into widespread use from the 1990s onwards, and has gained increasing popularity with governments over recent years³. One-stop-shops have been implemented worldwide – at the beginning of this decade (2011), most developed countries and also many developing countries (Uganda or Vietnam are good examples of developing countries where the concept was introduced more than ten years ago), were regularly using the concept of OSS to simplify the life of citizen and businesses. Meanwhile, in Slovakia, the 'customer friendly' and E-government based administration was still just in the heads of most progressive reformers and academics.

Slovakia is for sure the late follower from the point of implementing the concept of OSS. Less than ten years ago, the reform programme Efficient, Reliable and Open State Administration (ESO) , which was approved by the Slovak government in April 2012, has put forward the idea of establishing OSS in Slovakia. ESO reform (continuing also today) focuses on simplifying the provision of services offered by the state to its citizens, following the idea that government should be simple, well-structured and accessible to citizens and business entities, and that it should work sustainably, transparently and spend finances efficiently. ESO reforms include three main areas: integrating specialised local state administration into a single state office; establishing client centres ('one-stop shops') to provide citizens with access to integrated local government; and optimising administrative processes and structures, with focus on the development of e-government (planned for 2014 -2020).

The ideas put forward by the ESO reform are really important for Slovakia. Slovakia, at the time of launching the reform, performed rather poorly in comparison to other countries, specifically

¹ The task of the third phase of the EUPACK (European Public Administration Country Knowledge) project (<https://www.hertie-school.org/en/eupack/>) was to map the impact of the ESF 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 allocations on the progress of the public administration reform in EU countries.

² Reid and Wettenhall, 2015.

³ Howard, 2017.

in terms of such indicators like 'e-government users', 'on-line service completion', 'services to businesses'⁴. The state tasks on the subnational level were delivered by a large number of specialised offices. Moreover, the registries of these offices were not interlinked, requiring to provide the same information or documents repeatedly.

The ESO programme's most visible improvement – and one directly connected to this case study – has been the gradual establishment of a decentralised network of one-stop shops providing citizens with access to state administrative functions. One-stop shops operate within the organisational structure of district offices, and provide a range of services. The first OSS was established in Nitra in 2013 and (as example) manages seven agendas (business, cadastre, transport and communications, transport inspectorate, general administration, land and forests, environment) and serves as the first contact for all agendas of the district office. By April 2015, before this project started, first 43 OSS were already in operation, due to the investments realised during the ESO reform programme.

Existing OSSs are open from 08:00 Monday to Friday. Closing times vary depending on the day, with the longest opening hours being on Wednesday, when OSSs operate until 17:00). The interior design of every OSS aims to simplify the life of the client, and prevent corruption. An electronic appointment system is used (but without the option of online application). Each OSS has an appointed supervisor, who is responsible for coordinating and supervising workflow and advising clients. All OSSs are accessible to disabled clients. Figure 1 shows an OSS located in Bratislava, opened on 1 February, 2016.

Figure 1. The building of the OSS in Bratislava and its interior



Source: Ministry of Interior (pictures were provided by the project team).

The progress of OSSs building in Slovakia was evaluated by the specific report of the Slovak Supreme Audit Office (SAO) in December 2017, dealing with the ESO reform as the whole⁵. To prepare its report, SAO conducted a client-satisfaction survey of OSSs' clients (4,499 respondents), which was carried out with the help of students from Trnava University. The results from this survey indicate that 91.8% of respondents saw the establishment of OSSs as a positive development and 91.2% of respondents had positive experiences with the OSS

⁴ Thijs, Hammerschmid and Palaric, 2017.

⁵ See: <https://www.nku.gov.sk/documents/10157/80042346-0086-42dd-9a19-33df01dc7cea>.

services and staff. Moreover, 83.9% of respondents were able to satisfy all their needs in one place and 90.4% of respondents felt they had achieved important time savings thanks to the OSS. The final SAI statement (p. 15) is representative: 'The SAI conclusion is that the ESO programme represents an important step forward in improving the situation of citizens in relation to the delivery of state administrative services.'

The main idea of the OSS project (as the whole) is very appreciated across the political spectrum in Slovakia, because of its clear benefits. Martin Klus, top representative of the main opposition political party SAS responded: 'The OSS project represents really effective solution; it is the idea deserving broad support. However, as also the Slovak SAO stated, there is some doubt if the used public money have been spend in fully efficient way'.

Alongside establishing OSSs, the Slovak government has been also concerned with measuring performance in the public sector in order to make public services of better-quality and more accessible to citizens and business entities. The idea that organisations should measure and actively manage their performance, and that public resources can be allocated objectively via performance-based schemes, is a core element of the public sector reforms carried out in many countries over the last two decades. However, measuring performance in the public sector conditions represents a typical 'wicked problem' - problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for example because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements. Andrews, Boyne and Walker (2006) identified a number of complicating factors, like the need to measure social and non-financial costs and benefits, lack of reliable data, drawn many times from a number of sources, the need to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as objective and subjective measures. Despite these difficulties, measuring performance (including client satisfaction) remains an important aspect of public sector reforms – and one which can ultimately result in the improved efficiency of the public sector.

Attempts to measure the performance of state administration bodies in Slovakia are not new, and pre-date the current ESF programming period. The first initiatives are connected with public administration reforms funded by the Phare pre-accession programme (Public Administration Reform project). From 1998 onwards Slovakia implemented in the conditions of the regional state administration office Banska Bystrica an experiment to measure the performance of state administration offices. The pilot project expected that the performance will be measured in four dimensions: the professional quality of administrative actions; client satisfaction; employee satisfaction; and economy (costs). Because of lack of data to measure the professional quality, only the last three objectives were met.

From 2000 the project started in full scale and covered all regional and district offices of public administration. Client satisfaction and employee satisfaction were measured by questionnaires. To measure full costs and to compare economy between offices, all offices were equipped with special software IBEU and 36 costs centres were created within each office. The project found large costs differences between administrative offices – for example the costs to deliver social benefits to disabled person varied from 163 to 457 Slovak crowns. However, because of strong opposition from the side of administrative offices the project was discontinued in 2003⁶ and its results were never re-used in the Slovak public sector in systematic way, till 2015, when the project discussed in this case study (and also some other ESF 2014-2020 projects) started.

The fact that the public sector performance should be measured (to be able to improve its performance and the motivation of public employees) has come back to the agenda of public

⁶ Nemeč et al., 2005.

sector reformers after more than ten years from above mentioned first attempts, when preparing the implementation documents for the ESF programme 'Efficient public administration'. Thanks to this, efforts to conduct performance measurement and client satisfaction have been renewed with the help of the ESF-funded project **'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback'**.

To reflect the above indicated challenges, this ESF-funded project, which was launched on April 2015, is expected to play an instrumental role in expanding the OSSs network in Slovakia, from 43 to 79 OSSs, provide them with the necessary support and training of staff and to help to start the 'new era' of regular performance monitoring and measurement in the Slovak public sector. The project team, led by Matúš Šesták, is expected to play an instrumental role in ensuring that these planned – and really important tasks – will be achieved.

Design and execution of the project

Previous experience of the team

As already discussed, attempts to increase the efficiency of public administration in Slovakia are not new. The current project forms part of a continuum that began with the ESO reform initiatives, and aims to finalise the network of OSSs and to monitor and measure their performance (including client satisfaction). The start of this project is also directly related to the previous ESF-funded initiatives during the 2007-2013 programming period. For example, Dr. Šesták (today the director of the Analytical and Methodical Unit for Public Administration at the Ministry of Interior) was the team leader for the ESF 2007-2013 project 'Building capacities and improved efficiency of public administration' ('Budovanie kapacít a zlepšenie efektivity verejnej správy'), financed within the Operational programme Employment and Social Inclusion ('Zamestnanosť a sociálna inklúzia') and funded under the priority axis 'Building Capacities and Improving the Quality of Public Administration' ('Budovanie kapacít a zvýšenie kvality verejnej správy').

The project⁷, implemented by the Ministry of Interior from 1 January 2014 to 30 November 2015 aimed to strengthen the analytical and methodical capacities of the Ministry to support the preparation of the strategy and concept of PA reform in Slovakia. The project also sought to prepare all necessary background materials to apply for funding of the proposed future (2014-2020) ESF-funded Operational Programme 'Effective Public Administration' ('Efektívna verejná správa'). The idea to allocate future ESF resources to finance for 'soft' elements (for details, see later text) of the establishment of OSSs in Slovakia was born during this project.

Thus, the activities of this project laid the basis and served as precondition for the current ESF-funded project 'Measuring efficiency of public administration services, institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and integration of customers' feedback'. Also, the fact that the previous ESF-project and the current one have been implemented by partially the same team, guarantees continuity in terms of skills, knowledge and will.

⁷ For details see: <https://www.minv.sk/?tlacove-spravy&sprava=narodny-projekt-budovanie-kapacit-a-zlepsenie-efektivny-verejnej-spravy>.

Purpose of the ESF-supported project

The purpose of the project 'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback' is to increase the efficiency of public administration services through institutional capacity building and by integrating feedback from clients. To achieve this, the project has five core goals. The first of these is to support the finalisation of Slovakia's OSS network. By the end of the project, 79 OSSs should be operational. 'Hard' infrastructure costs are to be met from the state budget, while the present ESF-funded project covers the 'soft' costs involved in establishing new OSSs and improving existing ones. The second goal is to improve co-ordination between the administrative services provided by local self-governments (particularly those within their delegated competences), and the services delivered by OSSs. The final three goals of the project are the regular monitoring of the performance of OSSs; regular measurement of client satisfaction with the services delivered by OSSs; and the development of human resources capacities, needed for effective functioning of OSSs.

All these goals are directly connected by core principles of governance. These principles are defined – for example, by the United Nations document Principles-of-Effective-Governance, approved in 2019⁸ – as efficiency, accountability and inclusiveness. To support good governance, the project includes a number of core elements: performance management, results-based management, financial management and control, monitoring and evaluation systems, collaboration, coordination, integration and dialogue across levels of government and functional areas, high level of public service delivery.

The project is not the single source to support the extension of the OSSs network and the improvement of OSSs functioning. Infrastructural (capital) investments for OSSs are financed especially from the state budget, within the framework of continued ESO reform. On ESF 2014-2020 level, the project is complemented by another ESF-financed project – 'Support of the transformation process of district offices to deliver pro-client oriented services of OSSs' ('Podpora transformačného procesu okresných úradov pri poskytovaní proklientsky orientovaných služieb klientských pracovísk'), carried out during the period January 2014 and December 2020. The goal of this project (ESF allocation slightly over 38 million EUR) is the stable transformation of local (decentralised) state administration towards a client-oriented approach, by increasing the capacities of OSSs. The target group for this project is those government employees who have been transferred to OSSs.

The goal of the main project presented in this case study, and of the enthusiastic group of people realising it, is to simplify the lives of citizens and businesses by improving the quality of administrative services through the better co-ordination of services provided by local self-government and decentralised state administration, and by provide clients with the opportunity for give feedback on the quality of services delivered by the public administration in general and by OSSs in particular. The project is a response to growing concerns that public administrative service delivery is excessively fragmented, leading to duplication and therefore inefficiency, and to poor outcomes for vulnerable service users. It is also the result of an increasing tendency towards regarding government service users as 'customers' who should not be inconvenienced by having to deal with multiple, dispersed and disconnected service providers.

⁸ For more see: <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Intergovernmental-Support/CEPA/Principles-of-Effective-Governance>.

The project is carried out under Operational Programme Priority Axis 1: Strengthened institutional capacity and effectiveness of PA. Priority axis 1 aims to promote the effective management, integration and optimisation of processes; and to promote the quality and competences of PA staff. This priority axis invests in the development of PA organisations – that is, in the promotion of good governance, including the creation and implementation of public policies, and improvements to the quality of services. The project is expected to contribute to Specific objective 1.1: Improved systems and optimised processes of PA, under the financing priority 'Improved quality of public services and of management of human resources in the public sector, limiting the impact of the political cycle on personal decision, optimisation of internal processes and reallocation of resources to core activities'.

The project team is led by Matúš Šesták, Director of the Analytical and Methodical Unit for Public Administration at the Ministry of Interior. Although Matúš Šesták is the leader of the project, during the interview he several times stressed that it is the team and not one individual 'hero' coming up with new, interesting ideas and proposals on how to improve administrative services to citizen and businesses. All main activities of the project 'Measuring efficiency of public administration services, institutional development of 'one stop shops' and integration of customers' feedback' are realised by the internal staff at the Ministry of Interior. Daniela Lamancová (financial manager of the project) and Lucia Bartošová (Director of the Section for Implementation of Public Administration Projects at the Ministry of Interior) were present at the interview for the case study, and more than ten other staff members are involved in this project on part-time basis.

Implementation of the ESF project: main developments

At the time of writing the case study, the project 'Measuring the efficiency of public administration services, the institutional development of 'one-stop shops' and the integration of customer feedback' has almost reached its final phase – most of its activities have been carried out, as the project is scheduled to end in December 2020. The project is divided in five core activities – creating synergies between existing OSSs and the services delivered by local self-governments, creating a system of management and coordination for the OSS network, enlargement of the network of OSS and monitoring of their activities, human resources development for OSSs and measuring customer satisfaction with administrative services. The five activities did not start at the same time, but were implemented chronologically, step by step. Since the project activities consist of several sub-phases, they are active throughout the timeframe of the project implementation. The project activities have started in two phases: activity 2 and 3, directly connected with OSS functioning immediately after the start of the project in April 2015 and the remaining three activities from January 2017. All activities are expected to be finished at the same time (December 2020).

The first activity is named in the project fiche as 'increasing efficiency in public administration'. The focus of this activity has been on creating synergies between existing OSSs and the services delivered by local self-governments. Fifteen partner municipalities have been selected to participate in the project, in co-operation with the Association of Heads of Municipal Offices ('Asociácia prednostov úradov miestnej samosprávy v SR' - <https://www.apums.sk/>)⁹. The project team already managed to deliver most of planned tasks for this activity.

⁹ Municipalities Tlmače, Hurbanovo, Skalité, Trenčín, Kežmarok, Chorvátsky Grob, Zvolen, Sereď, BA Nové Mesto, KE Vyšné Opátske, Svidník, Púchov, Žarnovica, Podbrezová, Skalica.

The project team faced some challenges with this activity – the need to achieve an effective co-operation with municipalities (over-burdened with the large set of own and delegated competences). Municipal elections held in November 2018 presented extra problem from this point of view, due to changes in elected and appointed positions on the municipal level. To manage this challenge, the project staff decided not to work directly with mayors/lord-mayors, but to involve as the main project partner the Association of Heads of Municipal Offices. The decision to co-operate directly with municipal managers – with whom working relationship already existed – has been really effective solution. Thanks to it, as Dr. Šesták stated, the cooperation has worked relatively well, with all 15 selected municipalities co-operating and delivering the planned outputs.

With the support of the project realisation staff, the selected municipalities drafted action plans to improve the quality of services delivered, as well as designed systems to measure quality and performance and drafting quality management strategies. In some locations (like Šahy, Želiezovce, Žilina), certain local administrative services, which were either delivered by municipalities or state administration, were brought together with the local OSS under one roof. Examples of good practice were collected and published. At the time of writing this report, the activity has been implemented to a large extent.

The second activity has been concerned with the 'complex analysis and improved efficiency of OSSs'. With this activity, the project has sought to create a system of management and coordination for the OSS network. In the first phase ten already existing OSS have been mapped (revenues and expenditures, human resources, interior, external and internal factors determining their performance, etc.) with the aim to prepare inputs for planned regular benchmarking of functioning of Slovak OSSs and to draft necessary guidelines for their operation. The particular task has been improving the capacities of coordinators and those tasked with determining the methodology for the analysis via specialised training. This activity has also been finished to a large extent, the only remaining core task is to start regular benchmarking of OSSs performance.

The project team, with implementing the third activity, 'enlargement of the network of OSS and monitoring of their activities', seeks to create and monitor a network of OSSs operating in all 79 administrative districts of Slovakia. As indicated, in achieving this, the project does not deal with infrastructure and equipment costs (which are covered by the state budget); its core focus is on 'soft' inputs – final design, the training of staff and supervisors, and monitoring the performance of OSSs. This activity is on-going, yet it might be slowed down by external factors.

At the time of writing, the intended total of 79 OSSs appears achievable, yet may involve a short delay. The project team is ready to apply for project extension, if necessary, as the main factor slowing down the process has been the difficulty of finding suitable buildings to serve as OSSs. This problem is determined by external factors and cannot be directly influenced by the project team. While providing infrastructure is not the responsibility of the project, it is still an enabling factor – and the complex nature of procurement processes have introduced delays into the roll-out of the OSS network.

The 'standard' obstacle – and one that is common to many projects in Slovakia – concerns difficulties in dealing with public procurement. Slovak procurement legislation is overly complex and focuses on processes rather than results (Grega et al, 2019). The project team discussed that any purchase needed for the project was and is connected with excessive bureaucracy, slowing down all of the project's activities. The legal aspects of procurement during the project are systematically controlled by several bodies (like the Implementation Unit, Public Procurement Office, and Supreme Audit Office). They ensure the compliance of procedures with

procurement rules. Moreover, the procurement legislation changes frequently – the guidelines how to procure within the framework of the OP Effective Public Administration, issued by the Ministry of Interior, have now been revised for the seventh time (in less than two years).

The third activity (likewise other project activities) has also posed another core challenge for the project team in relation to human resources. Because it focuses on 'soft' aspects of OSS operations, labour costs represent the dominant part of the budget – and a significant portion of these costs is expected to be spent on external staff. In reality, as Dr. Šesták explains, it has been very difficult to find highly qualified external experts to fill the planned positions – it is already certain that there will be a significant underspend in the project's planned labour costs.

The fourth activity, 'human resources development', includes two sub-activities aimed at developing the necessary human resources: training to develop soft skills of the staff who directly provide services at OSSs, and specialised seminars for the supervisors of OSSs. This activity is on-going. The training events are realised according to the expected schedule (more than 70 % of planned trainees already finished their training)¹⁰. The implementation of training has went rather smoothly and was not associated with any critical challenges. The staff trained were civil servants connected to the Ministry of Interior.

The fifth and last project activity is concerned with 'measuring customer satisfaction with administrative services'. With this activity, the project team seeks to carry out regular six-monthly surveys of client satisfaction (by standard questionnaires, developed by the project) in each of Slovakia's 79 administrative areas. The first measurements have already been carried out (but their results are not public, yet). The technique of colour word associations (CWA/CWAT) is used to deliver surveys. This combined projective technique uses calibrated sets of words and a palette of eight colours, which differ in their accurately measurable wave spreads. Numerical identifier of each colour it makes it easier for a computer to record specific responses. Similarly to the fourth activity, the project team has not faced any specific challenges, as OSS customers usually agree to respond and express their views. The only issue to be mentioned is an excessive length of final reports (more than 100 pages) and the fact that reports shall be approved by the managing authority – causing delays in open publishing of results.

Conclusion: results, lessons learnt and the role of ESF financial support

Main results

The project step by step achieves its planned outputs. Before the project start, 43 OSSs already operated in Slovakia, by May 2019 this number has increased to 56. The project is also progressing well on some other of its performance indicators¹¹. The core direct recipient of the project services is the staff of existing or future OSSs. Almost six thousand employees from current district offices, traffic inspectorates, police and other state administration bodies are expected to finish their specific training with the aim to learn, how to deliver administrative services under one roof and in direct contact with the customer. By April 2019, more than 70 % of planned trainees already finished their training. The project has also helped to improve co-

¹⁰ By April 2019, the number of OSSs (related) staff involved in training reached 5,131 (planned: 7,077) and the number of staff trained (staff that successfully finished training) reached 4,625 (planned: 5,677).

¹¹ In an interview on 19 May 2019, Dr. Cenker fully accepted that the project's performance targets/indicators are at least partly artificial and cumbersome, but stated that they could not now be changed, as the core set of indicators is defined by the OP documentation. According to Dr. Cenker, the most important are KPIs aimed at measuring the real value added by the project. This focus on KPIs is connected with the need to change the thinking of the actors involved – from concentrating on outputs to measuring real results.

ordination between the administrative services provided by local self-governments (particularly within their delegated competences), and the services delivered by OSSs (as indicated above in some cases 'state' and 'municipalities' deliver administrative services under one roof, also thanks to this project). In addition, client satisfaction surveys have already been carried out and will be repeated at regular six-month intervals. As yet, the results of the first surveys have not yet been published, as the resulting 100-page reports are still under review by the project monitoring bodies, and will be made available in full only after the project is completed.

Although the project implementation has not been finished at the time of writing this report, the Managing Authority has evaluated this project in a positive light. Dr. Cenker, director of the Department for Project Implementation of the Ministry of Interior agrees with the project's managers that the progress has been positive, and that the planned performance indicators – particularly the KPIs – should be achieved.

From the point of outcomes and results, it starts to be really visible that the project helps (as the part of the complex process of developing OSS' services) to change the life of citizen and business by changing the ways of state administrative services. The extension of the existing network of OSSs and their better functioning help to save the time and other costs for all stakeholders.

The project has also changed practices at a municipal level – the participation in the project has brought valuable experience for the municipalities. For instance, city manager from one of participating municipalities explained that consultations between the city office and the project team have helped to develop their strategy: 'The focus now is on two defined priorities – optimisation of the processes within our OSS and improvement of the communication of the city with all stakeholders. Trainings delivered by the project to the city office employees received very positive evaluation and will help us to improve our functioning'.

The final 'outcome in progress' is the fact that the project is starting new era in relation to public performance management in Slovakia. In past, measuring performance of public sector and public bodies in Slovakia has been regarded as important only verbally, and in reality it did not exist in any more coherent form¹². It is hoped that with a few years' experience in regular benchmarking processes and results at all levels of public administration, such measurement of performance will become standard practice, and that benchmarking reports will be made available to general public – also serving as a core input into strategic planning and budgeting processes.

Lessons learnt and success factors

The fact that the project represents a continuation of previous activities in the area of OSS development and that it deals only with selected aspects of this process makes many aspects of the team's life easier (especially because of already existing experience), but also complicates the life of main actors in specific dimensions. 'Complications' are connected especially with co-ordination, and the actors had to learn how to manage it. To deal with the core project challenge (indicated above), the project team especially had to learn how to work effectively with

¹² For details see for example the national EUPACK report Public administration characteristics in Slovakia, prepared by Juraj Nemec in 2017.

municipalities, which are almost totally independent from the 'state' in Slovakia¹³. The choice was to work not with mayors, who are the highest body of Slovak municipalities, but with the executive – municipal managers (heads of municipal offices). Municipal managers are almost in daily contact with the Ministry of Interior, also because of the fact that all municipalities in Slovakia are responsible for the comprehensive set of delegated responsibilities delivered on behalf of the Ministry (especially registry).

The project team and the project participants are also learning how to measure performance in the public sector. In this case the specific focus is on measuring customer satisfaction, but also on monitoring the OSS performance by other indicators and on benchmarking – processes which are still significantly underdeveloped in Slovakia.

An important catalyst behind the changes is the Ministry of Interior, responsible for ESO reforms as the whole, which has given its full support to the project from the level of beneficiary. The positive impact of the attitudes of the Ministry and the existence of political consensus on the OSS topic (everybody accepts that OSSs are a crucial step forward in improving the quality of the state's administrative services) have been mentioned as core success factors also by Dr. Cenker. The Managing Authorities' representative indicated that many ESF 2014-2020 projects begin with good intentions but deliver fewer real impacts than expected due to a lack of political support for their implementation (such circumstances have been particularly visible during the current period, one year before the parliamentary elections in Slovakia, when the internal co-operation within the country's the ruling coalition has become more and more limited).

The critical factor behind the project's success is its motivated team of implementation staff, many of whom have worked together on other projects before the start of the current programming period. Moreover, Dr. Šesták has appreciated that the team members are striving to achieve good results. According to him, the positive project's preliminary results are also motivating the team to work. 'The fact that clients are satisfied – as shown by the results from satisfaction surveys, and also by media reactions to the progress – confirms to all stakeholders, and also to the project team, that the project is useful and has capacity to deliver importance results,' explained Dr. Šesták. In such a situation, the project team's motivation increases, and the support of both direct actors and those within the broader project environment becomes a catalyst for change.

Role of ESF support

As already indicated, the project under consideration does not cover all aspects of the extension of the network of OSSs and the improvement of the quality of their services. The most costly aspects of this extension – in particular, infrastructure – are covered by state budget resources.

However, ESF funding is critical for the OSS network and services development. The state budget resources are limited and ESF funding of 'soft changes' represents an important enabling factor – 'having' buildings and IT systems without properly trained and prepared staff would not help much to citizens and businesses, using state administrative services. This project helps to train the staff, helps to develop OSS performance monitoring and also helps to improve the cooperation between the 'state' and municipalities in the delivery of state administrative

¹³ For more see the Council of Europe report Local and regional democracy in the Slovak Republic, approved in 2016.

services. The comprehensive training of decentralised state administrative staff, transferred from back-office positions in traditional offices to the role of supervisors or front-office positions in OSSs, is financed via the synergistic project 'Support of the transformation process of district offices to deliver pro-client oriented services of OSSs' ('Podpora transformačného procesu okresných úradov pri poskytovaní proklientsky orientovaných služieb klientských pracovísk'), to be completed with a budget of EUR 38,063,966.43 and within the timeframe January 2014 - December 2020.

References

- Grega, M., Orviska, M., Nemec, J., and Lawson, C. (2019), Factors Determining the Efficiency of Slovak Public Procurement. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 12(1), 43-68.
- Howard, C. (2017), Putting one-stop shops into practice: A systematic review of the drivers of government service integration. *Evidence Base*, 2017(2), 1-14.
- Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic (2017), *Implementácia Programu ESO*. Available at: <https://www.nku.gov.sk/documents/10157/80042346-0086-42dd-9a19-33df01dc7cea> (accessed 19 May 2019)
- Nemec, J., Medved, J., and Sumpikova, M. (2005), Performance measurement in public administration: Selected theory and experience from Slovakia. *Politická Ekonomie*, 53(1).
- Nemec, J. (2017a), Public administration characteristics in Slovakia. Unpublished report of the EUPACK project.
- Nemec, J. (2017b), Report on Public Administration Reform Trends and Reform Dynamics in Slovakia. Unpublished report of the EUPACK project.
- Nemec, J. (2018), Role and effect of external support to public administration in Slovakia. Unpublished report of the EUPACK project.
- Nemec, J. (2019), Public administration reforms in Slovakia during the period 2016-2018. Unpublished report of the EUPACK project.
- Reid, R., and Wettenhall, R. (2015), Shared Services: Is It Not Time for Some Clarity? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Administration*. 37(2), 102-114.
- Thijs, N., Hammerschmid, G. and Palaric, E. (2017), *Characteristics of EU Public Administrations: Synthesis report*. Brussels: EU Commission.

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*). The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union (http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm).



■ Publications Office