Measures to reinforce the innovative capabilities and competitiveness of Greek SMEs

Deliverable 4: Transition Plan

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DIH	Digital Innovation Hubs
DYPA	Public Employment Service
EC	European Commission
EDP	Entrepreneurial Discovery Processes
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIF	European Investment Fund
EIS	European Innovation Scoreboard
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDEK	National Vocational Training Management System
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESF+	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EVEA	Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry
EYSEKT	Hellenic ESF Coordination Service
FORTH	Foundation for Research & Technology – Hellas
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSEVEE	General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Merchants in Greece
GSI	General Secretariat for Industry
GSPI	General Secretariat for Public Investments
GSRI	General Secretariat for Research and Innovation
HDB	Hellenic Development Bank
HDBI	Hellenic Development Bank of Investments
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IOBE	Institute for Economic and Industrial Research
IP	Intellectual property
JTP	Just Transition Programme
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MA	Management Authority
MDI	Ministry of Development and Investments
MERAS	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and Sports

Acronym	Definition
MNEF	Ministry of National Economy and Finance
MON-ESEE	Planning, Coordination and Monitoring Unit of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy
MVP	Minimum viable product
NDP	National Development Programme
NRI	National Research Infrastructure
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
PA	Partnership Agreement
PSEKs	Regional Research & Innovation Councils
PSF	Horizon Europe Policy Support Facility
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
ROP	Regional Operational Programmes
RRF	Recovery and Resilience Facility
RRP	Recovery and Resilience Plan
SEV	Hellenic Federation of Enterprises
SMEs	Small Medium Enterprises
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
STEP	Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform
TTOs	Technology Transfer Offices
VC	Venture Capital
VET	Vocational Education and Training System

1. Executive Summary

This Transition Plan sets out a comprehensive, evidence-based roadmap to strengthen the innovative capabilities and competitiveness of Greek small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) over the period 2025–2035. It operationalises the analytical and strategic conclusions of the previous three deliverables by defining a coherent policy framework, governance reforms, and an integrated portfolio of 11 measures designed to make Greece's SME ecosystem more knowledge-intensive, productive, and internationally competitive. The report provides a timely contribution not only to the possible adjustments to be made during the current programming period but also as a basis for developing a future 2028–2034 National–Regional Partnership Plan (NRRP).

A Coordinated Transition Towards 2035

The plan provides the practical bridge between Greece's current SME and innovation system and the 2035 vision defined in Deliverable 3: to double the number and value-added of knowledge-intensive SMEs and align national innovation performance with Mediterranean peers. It translates that vision into a phased, financeable set of actions with intermediate milestones for 2030.

The framework integrates governance, policy instruments, and funding sources within a single architecture so that national and regional interventions act as a cohesive whole. Measures are grouped in five strategic priorities and include built-in experimentation to enable adaptive learning and policy refinement.

Reforming Research & Innovation Governance

Greece has made significant progress in developing R&I policy in recent years, yet responsibilities remain fragmented across ministries and 'agencies'. This results in overlapping mandates, inconsistent programme design, and insufficient accountability. The transition plan proposes consolidating policy competence under the existing Ministry of Development & Investment (MDI), rather than creating new ministerial structures. More specifically the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) under the MDI will be reaffirmed the national authority responsible for R&I policy and strategy and oversight of R&I policy implementation.

Complementing this reform, the plan proposes the creation of a Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) – a unified, semi-autonomous body merging functions currently spread across OBI, Enterprise Greece, and Elevate Greece. The agency would act as the operational interface between policy and delivery, providing a single-entry point for businesses and researchers. Its mission: to deliver competitive innovation funding, coordinate EU and national resources, attract private co-investment, and professionalise client-oriented support services. Models such as Enterprise Estonia demonstrate how such an agency can combine autonomy, efficiency, and accountability.

Towards a High-Performance Policy Mix

The Plan identifies 11 interlinked measures aligned with the strategic objectives and recommendations of Deliverable 3. Each measure includes a clear objective, lead body,

implementation partners, funding sources, and indicative timeline. Approximately one-third incorporate explicit experimental components to test new approaches and inform future scaling. Together they constitute a balanced mix of strategic (S), flagship (F), and experimental (E) actions. The key measures proposed are:

1. Enhanced S3 Governance and Monitoring Framework – modernising smart-specialisation coordination and piloting a national digital dashboard.

2. Institutional Capacity-Building and Reform of the National Innovation System – introducing performance-based management contracts between GSRI and the new innovation agency.

3. Innovation-Friendly Regulation and SME Test Implementation – piloting regulatory sandboxes in priority sectors.

4. National Thematic R&I Partnerships for Industrial Transformation – large-scale collaborative R&D partnerships aligning national and regional funds.

5. Research Commercialisation, Spin-offs and Deep-Tech Acceleration Programme – proof-of-concept and accelerator pilots to strengthen academic entrepreneurship.

6. Innovation Support Framework and SME Access Simplification Initiative – creating a prototype single-entry portal for innovation services.

7. Green Transition and Sustainable Value-Chain Programme – pilot circular-economy and green-supply-chain projects.

8. National Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Internationalisation – developing AI-driven B2B matchmaking and international cooperation.

9. Smart Finance and Innovation Fund (II) – blended-finance pilots combining grants, venture capital, and business-angel support.

10. Defence and Critical-Technology Innovation Initiative – dual-use R&D pilots connecting civil and defence innovation.

11. National Skills for Industrial Transition and STEP Programme – STEP-linked pilot training and AI-based personalised learning.

Implementation and Learning Architecture

The Transition Plan introduces an adaptive “governance-to-learning” loop in which early-stage pilots (2025–2028) generate evidence for scaling and mainstreaming (2029–2035). This experimental logic embeds policy learning within implementation, reducing risk and improving effectiveness over time. A national S3 digital dashboard and performance indicators for the HIA will support continuous monitoring.

Funding and Financial Alignment

While detailed financial envelopes are not defined, all measures are designed to align existing and upcoming Cohesion Policy, including Just Transition Funding, resources with national instruments such as the Public Investment Programme. The plan also outlines pathways to mobilise private investment through a Smart Finance and Innovation Fund and to crowd-in venture and angel capital, creating a sustainable post-RRF financing ecosystem.

Operational implementation

The Transition Plan proposes a coherent governance and delivery framework designed to overcome long-standing fragmentation in Greece's research and innovation (R&I) system. MDI-GSRI assumes **policy leadership**, setting national innovation policy directions in alignment with European level priorities. Given the function of the Ministry of National Economy and Finance (MNEF) in managing funding to R&I policy, the Planning, Coordination and Monitoring Unit of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy (MON-ESEE) plays a key **coordination** function in a 'whole-of-government approach' framework. In consultation with the national S3 Council and regional stakeholders, MON-ESEE ensures coordination of the smart specialisation strategy (S3) including annual monitoring and policy learning cycles. A The proposed Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) would act as the **operational** interface for business-facing services, competitive schemes, shared digital tools, and regional pilot implementation.

The plan proposes, over the coming 2-3 years, to further adjust and reinforce the R&I policy and governance system by introduce common operating standards, decision points, and a predictable implementation cadence, addressing historical discontinuities between funding periods and improving accountability across ministries, regions, and delivery partners. In particular, measures 1 and 2 of the transition plan provide a framework for the transition from the current governance and operational model to the revised framework.

A phased implementation roadmap sets out how the Transition Plan moves from system stabilisation in 2025–2027 to full activation and pilot deployment through 2035. Early actions include governance agreements, legal and funding alignments, and a coordinated 30/60/90-day launch plan for key pilots such as the portal, regulatory sandboxes, fund-of-funds (FoF) II, dual-use calls, and STEP skills pilots. The accompanying risk analysis highlights the critical importance of these governance reforms: without a designated R&I ministry and a dedicated innovation agency, risks such as fragmented decision-making, low stakeholder engagement, uneven regional implementation, and delays in reform would significantly undermine the Plan's impact. The proposed governance model and implementation schedule therefore provide the necessary foundations to ensure continuity, scale successful pilots, and embed a more cohesive, performance-driven R&I system for the decade ahead.

2. Introduction

This is the fourth, and final, deliverable (D4) of the experts' assignment funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO) in coordination with the Planning, Coordination and Monitoring Unit of the National Smart Specialisation Strategy (MON-ESEE) of the MNEF as the national counterpart.

A plan that builds on the first three deliverables

Deliverable 1 (inception report) defined the project's scope, objectives, and methodology, establishing the analytical framework for the entire assignment. Deliverable 2 offered a comprehensive analysis of the situation, focusing on barriers, enablers, and regional/national strategies affecting innovation and competitiveness in Greek SMEs. Deliverable 3 set out the desired future state, providing a gap analysis between the current system and desirable future objectives, and formulating recommendations to drive transformation while addressing persistent weaknesses in R&I, skills, scaling, and collaboration.

Structure and Approach

This transition plan (D4) proposes the steps required to meet the 2035 targets for reinforcing the innovativeness and competitiveness of Greek knowledge intensive SMEs in S3 priority areas. The framework and proposed measures directly reference the policy directions, governance improvements, and capacity-building needs highlighted in D2 and D3. The conclusions and next steps from D3 provide the foundation for the prioritisation and design of these measures, ensuring that the plan is both targeted to address Greece's specific innovation and competitiveness gaps and adaptable for final validation and feedback through national-regional S3 mechanisms.

In line with the terms of reference, the plan includes the following core sections:

- An overall transition plan framework that includes two main dimensions:
    - an analysis of and proposals to improve governance and coordination of the R&I policy system
    - A policy mix proposal embedded in a clear intervention logic linked to the vision and strategic objectives of deliverable 3 – identifying actions of strategic importance, flagship and experimental nature.
- An implementation roadmap
- Operational conclusions to support the coordination and management of the initial phase of further development and early implementation of the plan, including a risk analysis of governance and coordination challenges
- Detailed measure fiches, each aligned to recommendations from deliverable 3, specifying objectives, actions, responsible bodies, support coalitions, indicative funding sources, and implementation timelines.

3. Transition Plan Framework

By converting national and regional priorities into a **coordinated, time-bound portfolio of measures,** the transition plan framework **provides a structured policy architecture** that systematically support SMEs, particularly knowledge-intensive ones, to shift toward greater innovation, productivity, and international competitiveness in a 2030-2035 timeframe. By integrating tools, governance, and (indicative) funding sources into a single framework, the aim is that **policies function as a cohesive unit rather than as stand-alone initiatives.**

Figure 1: Key elements of the framework and the policy-mix (in a nutshell)

Policy mix: A specific portfolio of critical measures to be implemented by 2030

Measures: Each measure is presented, adopting an agreed template, that includes the objective linked to D3 recommendations, description of the actions to be implemented, responsible body, core stakeholders – support coalitions, prerequisites for implementation, and an indicative timeline.

Classification of Measures: each measure is labelled as being of strategic importance (S), a flagship measure (F) or an experimental (E) action.

Goal orientation: based on the D3 vision and 2030-2035 targets, the plan seeks to address limited number of goals that serve as the foundation for all proposed measures and available budgets.

The evidence base, conclusions, challenges, and recommendations from the first three deliverables of the assignment are **incorporated into a suggested policy mix for Greek knowledge intensive SMEs in this transition plan (D4)**. In order to realise the vision, this policy mix is aligned with the directionality, goals, cross-cutting enablers, demand side mobilisation, and stakeholder involvement of the national industrial policy as well as the Greek S3 governance partners and structures.

Main components of the framework and the policy mix are:

- **Measures aligned with the 2035 Vision**.

  The plan integrates the original 2021-2027 S3 priorities with the EU competitiveness/STEP trajectories and the National Industrial Strategy by grouping them into a limited set of measures via back casting from the 2035 innovation/competitiveness vision (and targets) with intermediate 2030 milestones. The plan is also aligned with the European Commission's proposed priorities for the 2028–2034 National–Regional Partnership Plans, particularly the shift towards more flexible, performance-based and results-driven cohesion funding.

- **Evidence-to-measures consequence**

  Starting with the national S3 and industrial strategy, the "as-is" system mapping and gap analysis (D2/D3), and the functions of the national S3 Council and MON-ESEE. These outline the coordination procedures and policy boundaries for a workable combination.

- **Territorial fit & national level coalitions.**

In order to account for territorial S3 specialisations and facilitate cross-region co-investment, implementation should be co-designed with Regional Research & Innovation Councils (PSEKs) and measure-level 'coalitions' (ministries/agency, regions, clusters, HEIs/RCs, financial actors, SMEs, and civil society).

- **Risk analysis including governance and coordination issues**

  A risk analysis complements the proposed measures by identifying issues that may arise in S3 governance or coordination of the Transition Plan implementation and proposing mitigation measures.

The proposed measures do not set out detailed financial elements, but they are aligned Cohesion/RRF/JTF flows with RRF and post-RRF fund-of-funds pathway and with the objective to crowd-in private capital (VC/angels).

This methodology for the Transition Plan Framework and the required Policy Mix ensures the measures are directional, demand-aware, territorially grounded, financeable, and reviewable – leveraging the analysis (D1–D3) to provide a basis for an operational execution and a well-structured 2025–2035 pathway.

The transition plan, including the set of 11 measures, is well aligned with the **European Commission's emerging framework for the 2028–2034 National–Regional Partnership Plans (NRRPS)**. First, the Commission's proposal to shift towards more flexible, performance-based cohesion funding is fully supported by the plan's experimental pilots, digital monitoring tools and performance-oriented governance reforms. Second, the move towards integrated and simplified national–regional plans is mirrored in the plan's holistic architecture, which brings together governance, innovation, green transition, skills, finance and internationalisation within a single coherent intervention framework. Third, the Commission's emphasis on strengthening European competitiveness and investing in strategic (STEP) technologies is directly reflected in the plan's defence and critical-technology innovation measures. Fourth, its strong focus on the green transition and sustainable industrial transformation fits squarely within the Commission's priority to channel cohesion funding towards decarbonisation and territorial resilience. Fifth, the plan's major investment in skills—particularly through the STEP-oriented industrial transition programme—is fully consistent with the Commission's requirement that Partnership Plans dedicate a significant share of resources to human capital and social inclusion. Sixth, the plan's upgraded governance, monitoring and coordination structures respond directly to the Commission's call for more robust multi-level partnership arrangements between national authorities, regions and stakeholders. Finally, the strengthened monitoring, evaluation and regulatory capacity foreseen in the plan supports the Commission's requirement for transparent accountability mechanisms, rule-of-law safeguards and evidence-based policy delivery.

4. A reformed R&I governance and policy delivery system

This section includes a set of proposed measures to reinforce the innovative capabilities and competitiveness of intensive-knowledge Greek SMEs - adopting a template including objective, content, responsible body, core stakeholders – support coalitions, funding sources, prerequisites for implementation, indicative timeline.

As part of the development of the section, the experts decided to include, in an introductory and very concise manner, the basic framework and the key critical points regarding national responsibilities in the field of research, technological development, and innovation (during the current multiannual financial and programming period (2021-2027).

4.1. Current governance system: fragmentation of responsibilities and funding

A first core issue is that **Greece lacks a long-term strategy,** which, according to the observations of the European Commission (European Semester 2025[1]), **stems from the fragmentation of research and innovation (R&I) policy across many ministries that do not always have direct and regular cooperation and coordination.** In 2019, the responsibilities for research, technological development and innovation (RTDI) were transferred from the Ministry of Education (MERAS) to the Ministry of Development and Investments (MDI), as was the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI). However, aside from the core R&I policy framework managed by the GSRI, R&I measures are implemented via the Ministries of Development, Education, Digital Governance, Environment and Energy, Rural Development and most recently the Ministry of National Defence, via the Hellenic Centre for Defence Innovation (ELKAK). Moreover, the ministries have a multitude of General Secretariats (GSEC, GGB, GGYP, etc.) and, until recently (Autumn 2025), unconnected supervised bodies, such as, for example, the Industrial Property Organisation (OBI), the National Documentation Centre, Elevate Greece, the Centre for Renewable Energy Sources, ELGO DIMITRA, etc., which do not operate under a unified vision and strategy for the critical R&I sector.

The Ministry of National Economy and Finance (MNEF) plays a decisive role in the parallel actions of all these ministries, as it manages the resources of the PA, the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the National Development Programme (NDP), the Regular Budget for the operation of the bodies, and loans from the EIB. In practice, the MNEF gives the final approval for all types of funding. Specifically, within the framework of the PA, the MNEF manages and coordinates (via MON-ESEE) the national smart specialisation strategy (S3), which concerns applied R&I projects co-financed (up to 80%) from European Structural and Investment (ESIF) funds and 20% from national funds. Additionally, the MNEF is the National Contact Point for the European Strategy for Strategic Technologies (STEP), aiming to 'align' significant centrally managed European resources (e.g. Horizon Europe, Innovation Fund, Digital Europe, European Defence Fund, EU4Health etc.) with co-financed resources (i.e. via the PA), with the ultimate goal of maximising the synergies of European resources.

Hence, while Greece has developed some building blocks for an effective R&I system, there remains a lack of a clearly defined centre of gravity. Responsibilities remain scattered across

[1] *See: https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2025-european-semester-country-reports_en*

multiple ministries, leading to policy overlap, administrative complexity, and limited accountability. Strengthening governance therefore requires a single line ministry with a clear, stable mandate to steer and coordinate national R&I policy across government (adopting a whole of government approach[2] to ensure strategic alignment with other national ministries, co-development of R&I and transformation agendas with regional governments, coordinating R&I foresight, strategic intelligence and monitoring and evaluation).

4.2. Recent policy reforms and major R&I measures

The most significant interventions implemented or initiated during the current period (which have been extensively analysed in the previous deliverables of this assignment) included the introduction of a new, comprehensive law aimed at establishing and developing spin-offs; the funding of technology transfer offices (TTOs), competence centres, national research infrastructures (NRIs) and new innovation clusters; as well as the creation of the National Startup Registry, which later evolved into Elevate Greece SA[3]. These initiatives were carried out, essentially, by the MDI (via the GSRI) in parallel and in collaboration with the MNEF, for example via the introduction of tax exemptions for businesses engaged in research and development (R&D).

The GSRI also oversees a range of planned actions and measures ranging from more fundamental, such as calls from the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI-ELIDEK, established in 2018), to the "Ereyno-Kainotomo" (Research – Innovate) programme which funds applied research and seeks to connect R&I with entrepreneurship and strengthen the competitiveness, productivity and internationalisation of Greek enterprises. HFRI-ELIDEK funds fundamental (basic/blue sky) research, with funding from the national Public Investment Programme (PIP) and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB), without thematic or geographical restrictions, whereas the funding under the Partnership Agreement (PA) for the use of EU Funds for 2021-2027, places an emphasis on R&D and innovation for competitiveness and regional development.

Notwithstanding the progress achieved and the ongoing implementation of various measures, certain inconsistencies persist within the Greek R&I funding landscape. An example is the “Trust Your Stars” programme, implemented by the Ministry of Education (MERAS) with RRF resources, a measure that has not proven successful and is disconnected from other R&I policy measures. Hence, the need to avoid ‘policy competition’ and promote a coordinated and structured framework for R&I policy with the support of all relevant stakeholders.

4.3. National resources for research and innovation

At the national level, all the, aforementioned, instruments are financed under the Public Investment Programme (PIP) managed by the MNEF, whose budget has been increasing annually. Most PIP funding consists of resources from the ESIF and the Recovery and

[2] *See: Breaking down walls and building new bridges – The whole of government approach in research & innovation – Mutual learning exercise on the whole of government approach in research & innovation policy – Final report, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/24409*

[3] *See: https://elevategreece.gov.gr/*

Resilience Facility (RRF), underlining the crucial role of European financing in supporting Greece's development priorities.

In the field of R&I, the national budget provides annual allocations to cover part of the fixed and operational needs of higher education institutions, research centres, and related organisations. However, these allocations are insufficient on their own. Complementary resources from the PA and Horizon Europe programmes therefore play a critical role in sustaining and expanding the research and innovation activities of universities and public research institutions.

Applied research, which bridges the gap between basic research and marketable innovation, is supported through ESIF resources and the PIP, notably via direct tax incentives for business R&D. In more advanced EU economies, both basic and industrial research—along with experimental development—receive substantial public support through a mix of direct grants and indirect tax incentives.

In Greece, investment in basic research accounts for 0.545% of GDP, comparable to the share in several peer countries. However, Greece lags significantly in applied research and experimental development: overall R&D investment represents only 1.49% of GDP, compared to the EU target of 3%. To close this gap, business sector investment would need to rise substantially, contributing around 60% of total R&D expenditure—equivalent to 1.8% of GDP.

To close this gap, Greece needs not only a more coordinated funding framework but also a dedicated institutional mechanism capable of identifying, mobilising and supporting firms with innovation potential. The proposed Hellenic Innovation Agency should play this central role — acting as the national gateway for business innovation and applied research. Working in close coordination with the GSRI and other ecosystem actors — including NRIs, competence centres, TTOs, clusters, digital innovation hubs (DIH), and specialised private consultants — the agency would provide a comprehensive suite of innovation support services. These should range from advisory and capacity-building services for SMEs, to R&D grants and vouchers, scale-up financing, and support for technology transfer, commercialisation, and internationalisation. By targeting firms with the capability and ambition to invest, develop and scale new products and services, the agency would stimulate demand-driven innovation and strengthen linkages between public research and business. This approach would help transform Greece's innovation system from a fragmented, funding-dependent model into a coordinated, performance-oriented ecosystem capable of generating sustained value creation and competitiveness.

4.4. Key reforms for enhancing R&I governance and policy effectiveness

As argued above, coherent and performance-driven governance system is essential for Greece to progress towards an innovation-led growth model. Two complementary governance reform directions are proposed.

1. A national "Ministry of Research & Innovation"

Research, innovation, and internationalisation are essential drivers for transforming Greece's production model and enhancing the competitiveness of its enterprises. To anchor these functions within a coherent governance structure, Greece should **consolidate** the authority

of the Ministry of Development and Investment (MDI) and specifically the GSRI as the competent line ministry responsible for national R&I policy.

This does not entail the creation of a new ministry but rather is done by strengthening and formalising the MDI's mandate and strategic authority across the R&I system. In this role, the Ministry — through the GSRI — acts as the central policy hub, ensuring that R&I, industrial transition and digital transformation policies are fully aligned and mutually reinforcing.

The GSRI would be responsible for developing and steering the National Research and Innovation Strategy and ensuring consistency between national priorities and European initiatives such as Horizon Europe and STEP. This would provide Greece with a clear institutional centre for strategy formulation, monitoring, and inter-ministerial coordination — while enabling effective engagement with the European Commission and international partners.

In close cooperation with the MERAS, which would continue to oversee higher and basic research funding, and with the MNEF, which manages public and European financing instruments (PA, RRF, PIP), the MDI would be responsibility for applied research, innovation, and commercialisation policies. It would also supervise and coordinate the various organisations active in this field, including research centres, technology transfer offices, clusters, competence centres, Elevate Greece, ELIDEK, OBI, and other related entities.

By evolving into the de facto line ministry for all R&I matters, the Ministry of Development (and the GSRI) would provide Greece with the institutional backbone needed to implement a consistent innovation policy — supported, as we suggest below, by a professional innovation agency responsible for delivery.

2. A national innovation agency

Greece already has a set of specialised bodies active in R&I policy. The GSRI serves as the core government entity for strategy and coordination, while funding and implementation functions are partly carried out by bodies such as the HFRI/ELIDEK and the ESIF Managing Authorities (notably under the Competitiveness Operational Programme). Recent legislation and development bills (2024–2025) demonstrate renewed reform momentum in innovation, tax incentives, and investment support — creating a credible window of opportunity to introduce a new institutional vehicle.

An embryonic "innovation agency" has been established within OBI, but we consider that it does not correspond to the institutional model or operational capacity of effective national innovation agencies found in other EU Member States. Greece's innovation support system remains fragmented across multiple bodies — GSRI, OBI, Enterprise Greece, Elevate Greece, ELIDEK, and various regional or thematic initiatives. While each performs useful functions, they operate largely in isolation: IP protection (OBI), enterprise and FDI promotion (Enterprise Greece), start-up support (Elevate Greece), and basic research funding (ELIDEK). The absence of a single operational entity leads to duplication, weak policy coordination, limited critical mass, and insufficient linkage between research, innovation, and internationalisation efforts.

The Greek Government should consider merging OBI, Enterprise Greece, and Elevate Greece into a unified Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA), placed under the supervision of a single ministry – most logically the MDI.

Goal for the new agency

A single, high-performing **Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA)** that:

- Delivers competitive, mission-oriented funding and scale-up support;
- Bridges policy (GSRI) and execution with operational independence and managerial capacity;
- Attracts private finance, coordinates EU funds, and builds a one-stop offer for firms, startups and universities.

Core design principles

1. **Clear legal personality & operational autonomy** — independent legal entity (public law or public limited company with public majority) so it can hire skilled managers, sign contracts, and run programmes swiftly.
2. **Strategic alignment, not duplication** — GSRI keeps strategy & EU representation; HIA executes and manages programmes under a multi-year strategy/contract.
3. **Stable multi-year funding envelope** — blended public + EU + leverage of private/co-investment to ensure continuity.
4. **Performance & accountability** — transparent KPIs, independent evaluation, and parliamentary reporting.
5. **Mission orientation & delivery focus** — support across R&D grants, innovation vouchers, procurement-led innovation, scale-up instruments and investor co-funding.

Example : Enterprise Estonia (EAS) is a semi-autonomous public foundation that implements R&I and SME programmes on behalf of Estonia's Managing Authorities under formal delegation agreements, acting as an intermediate body for ESIF. Its structure—combining autonomy, professional management, and accountability to ministries—enables efficient delivery of EU and national innovation funds. Greece could replicate this model through a Hellenic Innovation Agency, delegated by GSRI and the ESIF Managing Authority to manage competitive innovation schemes with clear performance contracts.

4.5. A consolidated R&I policy mix

This section presents the policy mix of the transition plan and outlines the policy logic underpinning the proposed measures to support the development of Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs. The accompanying theory of change diagram illustrates how the plan's five priorities and 11 consolidated measures directly contribute to the 2035 vision, strategic objectives, and the six performance targets defined in Deliverable 3.

The design of the policy mix follows the following core principles:

- Five strategic policy priorities, providing a comprehensive yet focused framework for intervention: I. Governance & Regulation (innovation system foundations); II. Innovation System Delivery; III. Industrial & Technological Transformation; IV. Internationalisation & Finance; V. Human Capital & Skills
- A consolidated package of 11 measures, each grouping a coherent set of interventions and sub-actions to maximise critical mass, visibility, and implementation efficiency.
- Systematic integration of experimentation, with roughly one-third of measures incorporating structured pilot components to test new approaches, reduce uncertainty, and generate actionable policy learning before broader roll-out.
- Distributed experimentation across the innovation policy system, ensuring learning takes place in all priority areas: governance (measures 1–3), delivery (measures 5–6), industrial transformation (Measures 7 and 10), and skills development (Measure 11).
- A staged roadmap based on iterative learning, in which early pilots (2025–2028) feed into a continuous feedback loop, shaping the scaling and mainstreaming of interventions during 2029–2035.

To provide more detail, the intervention logic in Figure 3 summarises the strategic architecture of the transition plan. It links each policy priority — from system governance to human capital — with its purpose, measures, and experimental mechanisms, showing how they jointly drive Greece's innovation and industrial transformation.

Figure 2: Theory of change for the transition plan contribution to the 2035 vision

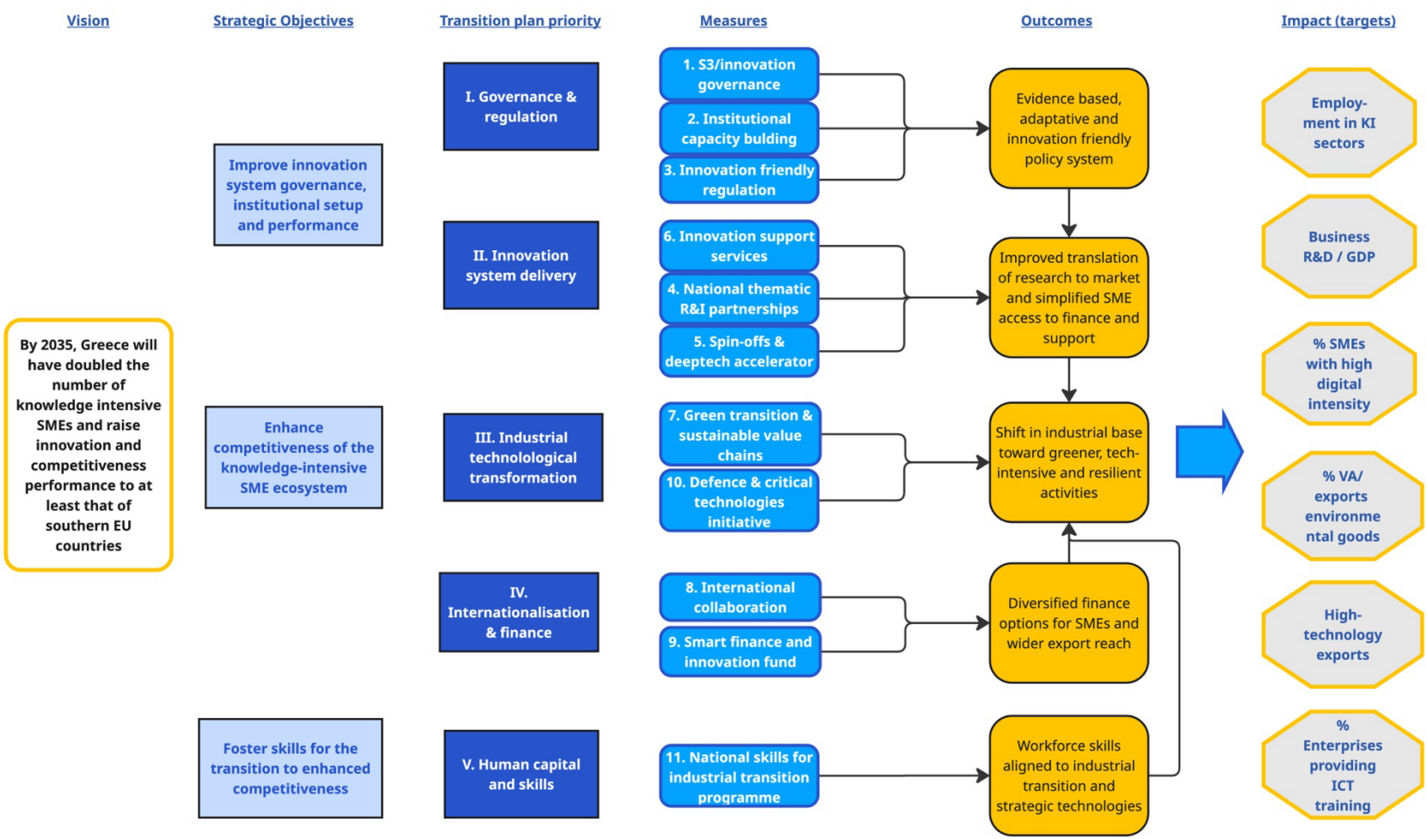


Figure 3: Intervention Logic

Priority ***Addressing strategic objective (SO)***	**Purpose**	**Measures**	**Learning & Experimentation Function**	**Expected Outcomes by 2035**	**Contribution to Targets – Figure 2 (D3)**	**Contribution to Gap Analysis – Figure 3 (D3)**
I. Governance & Regulation (innovation system foundations) ***SO 3.1-3.3***	Build an adaptive, performance-based and innovation-friendly policy system. Build the system's steering, capacity and regulatory base.	**1–3**	Pilots for S3 monitoring, agency performance contracts, and regulatory sandboxes generate lessons for adaptive policy.	Coordinated, transparent governance; predictable regulatory environment.	**Cross-cutting** Establish/empower a single client-management entry point (OBI-plus or new entity) with a regional advisor network	**Policy ecosystem and coordination –** Reduce overlap, gaps, and underutilisation of support instruments.
II. Innovation System Delivery **SO 1.1. & 3.3**	Establish effective research-to-market mechanisms and simplify SME access.	**4–6**	Proof-of-concept, portal prototypes, and joint funding pilots test collaborative and digitalised delivery models.	Efficient innovation pipeline and SME integration into R&I networks.	**Innovation –** By 2035 increase to 1.3% Business R&D Expenditure (BERD)/GDP	**Industrial Transformation -** Weak alignment with STEP priorities; low participation in industrial alliances and strategic ecosystems **Innovation Activity –** Innovation rates ~10–15 points below EU average; low R&D collaboration

Priority ***Addressing strategic objective (SO)***	**Purpose**	**Measures**	**Learning & Experimentation Function**	**Expected Outcomes by 2035**	**Contribution to Targets – Figure 2 (D3)**	**Contribution to Gap Analysis – Figure 3 (D3)**
III. Industrial & Technological Transformation **SO 1.3 & 1.4**	Drive green, digital, and strategic-technology transitions.	**7 & 10**	Pilot green value chains and dual-use technology projects to inform future industrial and sectoral actions. Derive policy lessons for scaling eco-innovation and dual-use R&D	Greener, resilient industrial base; increased technology sovereignty.	**Digital Transformation -** Increase the share of SMEs with high digital intensity to 22% in 2030 **Industrial transformation -** Align with EU27 2024 rate (5.1%) of employment in knowledge-intensive sectors / Double the number of high-tech manufacturing firms **Green transition of SMEs -** Share of production, value added, and exports in the environmental goods and services sector (15.25% by 2030)	**Digital Transformation -** Greece ranks among the lowest in SME Digital Maturity; limited use of digital tools **Green Transition of SMEs –** Low uptake of green practices and technologies; underuse of circular economy opportunities.
IV. Internationalisation & Finance **SO 1.2 & 1.5**	Mobilise national and attract international Expand international market reach of KI Greek SMEs	**8 & 9**	Experimentation with AI-driven B2B tools and blended-finance vehicles informs scale-up strategy.	Broader international reach and diversified finance ecosystem.	**Internationalisation -** Increase share of high-tech products in total exports to >15% Export share of medium-high tech goods and Knowledge-intensive	**Internationalisation –** Export activity 8–10% below EU average; low participation in cross-border innovation **Access to Finance –** Innovation financing below EU levels; few

Priority ***Addressing strategic objective (SO)***	**Purpose**	**Measures**	**Learning & Experimentation Function**	**Expected Outcomes by 2035**	**Contribution to Targets – Figure 2 (D3)**	**Contribution to Gap Analysis – Figure 3 (D3)**
	Strengthen position in EU R&I and industrial value chains.				Services (KIS) converges toward EU average	innovation-oriented financial intermediaries
V. Human Capital & Skills **SO 2.1-2.4**	Equip entrepreneurs and employees with the skills required for an industrial transition.	**11**	Plot STEP and AI-based learning platforms, generate and feed evidence for skills policy design.	Skilled workforce aligned with digital and green transition needs.	**Skills & Human Capital** - Ensure ≥20% of SMEs engage in continuous training /upskilling of staff in ICT	**Skills & Human Capital** - Persistent gaps in advanced digital and innovation-related skills

The table below summarises the 11 measures identifying the recommendation they address, the suggested lead and supporting bodies, the type (S, F, E) and specific experimental actions. For the lead bodies, we propose indicate leads (or co-leads) for the existing ministries, general secretariats and other public bodies. If a decision is taken to create a consolidated Hellenic Innovation Agency (incorporating OBI, Elevate Greece, Enterprise Greece etc.) this would need to be reflected in a revision of the roles below.

Figure 4:Measure architecture (11 measures with integrated experimental actions)

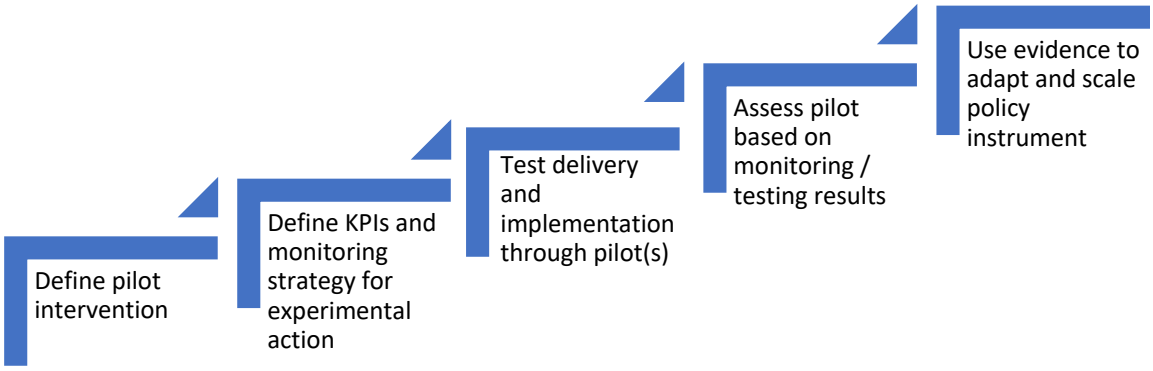
#	Title	Linked Recommendations	Lead organisation(s)	Type	Experimental Elements
1	**Enhanced S3 Governance and Monitoring Framework**	8.2	Ministry of Economy & Finance / MON-ESEE	**Strategic (S)**	Pilot **S3 Digital Dashboard** in selected regions before scaling nationally (2026–27).
2	**Institutional Capacity-Building and Reform of the National Innovation System**	8.3.1 + 8.3.2	MDI / GSRI	**Strategic (S)**	Pilot **performance-based management contracts** between GSRI and HIA.
3	**Innovation-Friendly Regulation and SME Test Implementation**	8.1.1 + 8.1.2	Ministry of Economy & Finance, Ministry of the Interior,	**Experimental (E)**	Regulatory **sandboxes** (energy, health, digital) and **SME Test pilots** in ministries.
4	**National Thematic R&I Partnerships for Industrial Transformation**	6.1 (overall)	MDI / GSRI / Innovation Agency (OBI)	**Flagship (F)**	Potential **joint regional–national funding pilots** for R&I partnerships.
5	**Research Commercialisation, Spin-offs and Deep-Tech Acceleration Programme**	6.1.2 + 6.1.4 + 6.3.1 + 8.3.3	MDI / GSRI / Innovation Agency (OBI, Elevate Greece)	**Experimental (E) → Flagship (F)**	**Proof-of-concept and deep-tech accelerator pilots** testing new investment and incubation models.
6	**Innovation Support Framework and SME Access Simplification Initiative**	6.1.3 + 6.1.5	MDI / GSRI / Innovation Agency (OBI)	**Strategic (S)**	**Prototype single-entry portal** for innovation services in two sectors.

#	Title	Linked Recommendations	Lead organisation(s)	Type	Experimental Elements
7	**Green Transition and Sustainable Value-Chain Programme**	6.3.2 + 6.3.3	Ministry of Environment & Energy, MDI / GSI	**Flagship (F)**	**Pilot green supply-chain projects** and circular-economy demonstrators.
8	**National Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Internationalisation**	6.2.1–6.2.5	Enterprise Greece, MFA, GSRI	**Strategic (S)**	**AI-driven B2B marketplace pilot** for international SME matchmaking.
9	**Smart Finance and Innovation Fund (Fund-of-Funds II)**	6.4.1–7	Ministry of Economy & Finance, GSRI, HDBI, EIF, Elevate Greece	**Flagship (F)**	**Blended finance pilots** combining venture, angel, and grant support.
10	**Defence and Critical-Technology Innovation Initiative**	6.4.8 + 6.4.9 + 6.2.2	Ministry of Economy & Finance, Ministry of Defence, GSRI	**Strategic (S)**	**Dual-use innovation pilots** co-funded by civil and defence R&D budgets.
11	**National Skills for Industrial Transition and STEP Programme**	7.1.1–5 + 7.2.1–4	Ministries of Education and Labour & Social Security, DYPA, EOPPEP, GSRI.	**Experimental (E) → Flagship (F)**	**STEP-linked pilot training programmes** and **AI-based personalised learning platform**.

The measures are structured to create a progressive governance-to-learning loop, ensuring that policy design, implementation, and adaptation reinforce one another. Each stage combines core policy functions with embedded experimental elements, allowing real-time feedback from pilots and innovation actions to inform successive reforms. This cyclical approach turns implementation into a continuous learning process, strengthening the evidence base for future policy and investment decisions.

Figure 5 illustrates how experimental actions operate as a structured policy-learning mechanism, adapted from international innovation-policy practice.

Figure 5: Experimental actions as a policy learning mechanism



Source: based on https://www.innovationgrowthlab.org/blog/how-experimental-learning-takes-place-2

Cross-cutting learning and adaptive policymaking are embedded within the design of the transition plan. Measures 1–3 develop a permanent monitoring, foresight, and evaluation infrastructure to capture insights from experimental actions, inform annual policy reviews, and support dynamic adjustment of programmes. This ensures that Greece's SME innovation support system becomes progressively more evidence-based, responsive, and aligned with evolving technological, industrial, and geopolitical developments.

The implementation roadmap (in Figure 6) translates the policy mix and intervention logic into a sequenced, time-bound plan. It outlines how the proposed measures will unfold across five overlapping phases, from governance reforms to twin transitions, finance, and skills development. Each phase combines core policy actions with targeted experimental pilots, allowing Greece to test and refine new instruments before full-scale deployment. The roadmap thus establishes a dynamic, evidence-based pathway for achieving the transition plan's objectives by 2035.

Figure 6: Indicative Implementation Roadmap (2025–2035)

Phase	Time scale	Main Focus	Core Measures	Key Experimental Actions	Expected Outputs
Phase I – System Foundations: Governance, Institutions & Regulation	**2026–2027** Study and preparation for creation of HIA, pilot regulatory innovation tools **2028-2035** Full scale operation of HIA, mainstreaming of successful regulatory tools	Reform/ reinforce S3 coordination, restructure innovation support institutional capacities, and test regulatory innovation tools.	**Measures 1–3**	• Test GSRI–HIA performance contract • Launch SME Test and first regulatory sandboxes	Consolidated governance system operational; first adaptive-governance feedback cycles, fully functioning innovation agency.

Phase	Time scale	Main Focus	Core Measures	Key Experimental Actions	Expected Outputs
Phase II – Activation of the Innovation System	**2026–2027** Piloting new measures **2028-2025** Scaling of piloted measures	Build thematic R&I partnerships, spin-off and deep-tech support, and SME access simplification.	**Measures 4–6**	• Proof-of-concept & deep-tech accelerator pilots • Prototype single-entry portal • Pilot regional–national cluster co-funding	Innovation partnerships active; validated digital and collaborative delivery tools.
Phase III – Twin Transitions & Strategic Technologies	**2026-2027** Scoping and preparatory studies and pilots **2027–2033** Full scale deployment of new models	Scale green, digital and critical-tech initiatives.	**Measures 7 & 10**	• Green value-chain pilot projects • Dual-use innovation calls	New industrial models tested and ready for scaling.
Phase IV – Finance, Internationalisation & Skills Expansion	**2026-2027** Scoping and preparatory studies **2028–2035** Piloting and scaling funding and internationalisation instruments	Strengthen finance, globalisation and skills.	**Measures 8, 9, 11**	• AI-based B2B platform pilots • Blended-finance tests • STEP pilot training with AI learning tools	Increased private investment, international market linkages and skilled workforce.
Phase V – Consolidation, Learning & Policy Adjustment	**2026-2027** Pilots for upgraded monitoring system **2028–2035** Full deployment of evidence, forecasting and evaluation tools	Integrate evaluation and adaptive policy cycles; scale proven models.	**All measures (re-looped)**	• Review of experimental pilots • Mainstream of successful models into policy	Fully operational learning system and sustainable innovation governance.

5. Operational conclusions

This section translates the transition plan into a practical operational framework. It outlines how decisions should be prepared, authorised, and implemented across ministries, agencies, regions, and delivery partners, clarifying institutional roles and setting out the core processes needed to ensure efficient, coordinated, and accountable implementation. It covers:

- An overview of the proposed distribution of roles and responsibilities and decision-making, approval, monitoring/evaluation and updating of the plan cycles.
- Timelines and milestones for 2025–2035, including a 30/60/90-day starter plan following Government endorsement.
- Risk analysis and mitigation measures
- A change-control mechanism allowing this framework to be updated following each Annual Learning Report.

The scope covers all the Transition Plan measures and the proposed pilots for 2026–2028, with indicative guidance through to 2035. The aim is to introduce common operating standards—such as a single-entry client portal, a regulatory innovation lab, and shared monitoring dashboards—along with decision gates and a consistent implementation cadence. This is particularly important given the recurring issue in the Greek R&I system of interruptions in funding between programming periods and calls.

5.1. Transition plan governance and decision-making processes

The operational governance of the Transition Plan is structured around a clear division of strategic, coordinating, and delivery roles. MON-ESEE, supported by the wider S3 network, provides overall strategic steering, approves roadmap updates and major reallocations, and oversees the annual learning cycle. It also leads coordination by defining evidence needs, consolidating progress inputs, and proposing any necessary retargeting or rescheduling. GSRI holds responsibility for innovation policy leadership, setting overall policy directions and KPIs and contracting the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA), which functions as the central operational interface. HIA should manage the common tools of the system—including the portal, regulatory innovation lab (RIL) and monitoring dashboards—and implement competitive schemes. Regional authorities and PSEKs ensure territorial connection by co-designing and co-funding pilots and supplying inputs to monitoring processes.

Figure 7: Overview of governance roles

Organisation	Specific Role	Decision Rights	Core Deliverables
Ministry of Development and Investment **GSRI – R&I policy department**	Consolidated R&I portfolio – R&I policy leadership	Set R&I policy directions and KPIs, supervises HIA formed by merging several existing agencies.	Performance contract with HIA
MON-ESEE with national S3 council	Strategic steering	Approve S3 roadmap updates, cross-ministerial	Decisions on S3 adjustments

Organisation	Specific Role	Decision Rights	Core Deliverables
		actions, retargeting or rescheduling.	
MON-ESEE	S3 coordination, monitoring and learning.	Define evidence needs, consolidate annual progress inputs, propose retargeting or rescheduling	Annual S3 monitoring and learning report
HIA	Operational interface	Operate common tools (portal, RIL, dashboards); run competitive funding schemes	Portal MVP Calls & grants specifications
Regional authorities & PSEKs	Regional S3 strategies, monitoring	Inputs to co-design and co-fund pilots and to monitor their implementation	Inputs to monitoring and learning reports via dashboards

The RACI matrix clarifies decision rights and interdependencies for the key activities of 2026–2028. It identifies which organisation is responsible for delivery, which is accountable for final decisions, and which actors need to be consulted or informed. This ensures transparency and avoids overlap across a diverse set of tasks, from GSRI–HIA performance contracting and regulatory sandboxes to the launch of pilot calls such as FoF II, dual-use programmes (HIA in partnership with ELKAK), the AI B2B marketplace, and STEP-related skills pilots.

Figure 8: RACI Table (2026–2028)

Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
GSRI - HIA performance contract	GSRI	MDI	MON-ESEE	Regions' PSEKs
Regulatory sandboxes & SME Test	MNEF	MNEF + MDI	GSRI, HIA/RIL	Business associations, chambers
Portal MVP (M6)	HIA	GSRI	MAs, DIHs, OBI	Chambers, clusters
AI B2B marketplace (M8)	Enterprise Greece	MFA	GSRI, OBI, HIA	EEN, sector consortia
FoF II pilots (M9)	HDBI	MNEF	EIF, ERDF MA, HDB	Financial intermediaries
Dual-use calls (M10)	HIA + ELKAK	GSRI + MoD	HDBI/EIF, NRIs, DIHs	Prime contractors, Regions

Activity	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
STEP pilots (M11)	Ministries of Education & Labour	Joint Skills Steering	DYPA, EOPPEP, GSRI, HIA	Regions, industry, social partners

RACI:

R — Responsible: does the work and delivers the output

A — Accountable: owns the result and makes the final call

C — Consulted: gives input before/during the work, two-way communication.

I — Informed: kept up to date after decisions/actions, one-way communication.

Finally, the decision-making steps below set out the phased implementation pathway. Beginning with an early-2026 check-up and S3 network discussion, the process moves through policy sign-off by the Ministry of National Economy and Finance, the signing of inter-ministerial agreements and performance contracts, and the alignment of funding streams across ERDF/ESF+, JTP and the PIP. From late 2026 onward, delivery actors prepare and launch pilots, after which MON-ESEE introduces an annual learning cycle to assess outcomes, inform adjustments and guide scaling decisions. Taken together, these governance arrangements provide a coherent and accountable framework for implementing the Transition Plan.

Figure 9: decision-making steps

Phase	Time	Lead	Proposed Key Actions	Suggested Outputs
1. Transition Plan check-up & S3 network discussion	Jan – Feb 2026	MON-ESEE	Convene S3 coordination network; present the suggested measures and the Transition Plan logic recording network comments	S3 Network Report
2. Policy sign-off	Q1 2026	MNEF	Endorses core content of the suggested roadmap, learning loop (and in addition the initial pilots from 2026 to 2028)	-
3. Agreements and MoUs	Q2 2026	GSRI + co-lead ministries	GSRI-HIA performance agreement and inter-ministerial MoUs	Agreements and MoUs documents
4. Funding alignment	Q2–Q3 2026	Managing Authorities / MNEF	Align ERDF/ESF+, JTP, PIP; HDBI/EIF prepare FoF II mandates	Calls/programme planning decisions or reprogramming documents; FoF II investment strategy

Phase	Time	Lead	Proposed Key Actions	Suggested Outputs
5. Preparation of Pilot launch	From Q3 2026	HIA and other stakeholders	Start sandboxes/SME Test, PoC & deep-tech accelerators, portal MVP, dual-use calls, AI B2B MVP, STEP pilots, FoF II windows	Signed agreements
6. Annual learning cycle	2027 onward	MON-ESEE	Aggregate dashboards & evaluations, decide scale/stop/retarget	Annual progress report

5.2. Delivery schedule and indicative launch plan

The phased delivery schedule guides the activation and scaling of the Transition Plan from 2025 through 2035. Five sequential phases structure the roll-out, each aligned with specific pillars, criteria, and expected outputs. The first phase (2026–2027) focuses on establishing the core governance foundations, including government endorsement of the Transition Plan, the GSRI–HIA performance contract, approvals for the regulatory sandbox and SME Test, and the initial deployment of monitoring dashboards. Once these foundational mandates are in place, the system moves into a broader activation phase (2027–2033), marked by the launch of PoC and accelerator calls, the deployment of the portal MVP, and coordinated national–regional calls to initiate early pilot activity. The subsequent phases progressively widen the scope to address green and dual-use technologies, expand financial instruments and internationalisation support, and integrate skills and STEP pilots. The learning from 2026-202By 2030–2035, the system enters a consolidation stage, using accumulated evidence to scale successful models, recycle returns, and embed the strengthened approach for 2030+ programming.

Figure 10: Delivery schedule & decision points

Phase	Years	Decision point	Decision criteria	Indicative Primary Outputs
I Core Governance foundations	2026–2027	Q2 2026	Government endorsement, GSRI–HIA contract, sandbox/SME Test approvals, dashboard pilots	Mandates in force
II System activation	2027–2033	Q4 2026	PoC/accelerator calls (M5), Portal MVP (M6), national–regional calls (M4)	Awarded projects

Phase	Years	Decision point	Decision criteria	Indicative Primary Outputs
III Twin transitions & strategic tech	2027–2033	Mid-2027 onward	Green demonstrators (M7), dual-use calls (M10)	Operational pilots, procurement pathways
IV Finance, internationalisation & skills	2028–2035	Q4 2027	FoF II windows, AI B2B MVP→ pilot, STEP pilots (M11)	Investments made, talent pipelines
V Consolidation & policy adjustment	2029–2035	Annually from Q4 2029	Evidence of impact, return recycling, mainstreaming	Scaled models, OP/PA 2030+ integration

To enable rapid mobilisation at the start of 2026, an indicative 30/60/90-day launch plan sets out the immediate priorities for Q1. Within the first 30 days, key steering groups for major measures are constituted, the outline of the GSRI–HIA contract is drafted, and the RIL statute is approved to authorise sandboxes and the SME Test. The following 60 days concentrate on issuing the necessary terms of reference and preparatory work for early pilots: the FoF II ex-ante assessment, development of the portal MVP, design requirements for the AI B2B marketplace, templates for the STEP skills pilots, and MoUs for dual-use testbeds. By day 90, the first pilots should be ready for publication, including PoC and accelerator calls and regulatory sandboxes, alongside finalisation of the FoF II Investment Committee, approval of marketplace and IP-voucher pilots, and selection of pilot participants. This structured launch rhythm ensures that delivery begins quickly and coherently, setting a predictable pace for the wider multi-year rollout.

Figure 11: Indicative 30/60/90 Launch Plan (Q1 2026)

Timebox	Priority Actions
+30 days	Constitute measure steering groups (M6, M8, M9, M10, M11) Draft GSRI–HIA contract outline Approve RIL statute for sandboxes/SME Test.
+60 days	ToRs/calls launched: FoF II ex-ante assessment Portal MVP build AI B2B requirements STEP pilot templates Dual-use testbed MoUs.
+90 days	Publish a pilot call (PoC/accelerators; regulatory sandboxes)

	Confirm FoF II Investment Committee Approve marketplace/IP-voucher pilot Select pilots for the National STEP skills programme (Measure 11), including Work-Integrated Degrees (WID) and SME Training Networks (SME-TN).

5.3. Risk analysis and mitigation measures for the transition plan

This section assesses key risks that could affect the successful implementation and outcomes of the plan and the proposed measures. It focuses on governance and coordination issues, which are critical in complex multi-level innovation systems. This analysis identifies potential obstacles, assesses their likelihood and potential impact, and outlines targeted mitigation measures to ensure proactive management and minimise negative effects.

Figure 12: Risk analysis and mitigation measures

Risk Description (Type)	**Likelihood**	**Impact**	**Overall Risk**	**Mitigation Measures**	**Implications if not addressed**
Fragmented governance (unclear roles/responsibilities) (Governance)	Medium	High	High	Clarify mandate of MDI-GSRI, reinforce inter-ministerial coordination, use of formal MoUs between ministries or implementing bodies.	Continued fragmentation, duplicated initiatives, slow decision-making, and weak accountability Transition Plan becomes difficult to coordinate, especially without a designated R&I ministry.
Weak stakeholder engagement (Coordination)	High	Medium	High	Formalise participatory structures, regular regional/national stakeholder meetings	Low regional ownership and poor uptake of pilots; Inconsistent demand signals; Diminished impact. Risk amplified without HIA acting as central interface.
Low digital/data capacity for monitoring in public sector bodies (Technical)	Medium	High	High	Invest in upskilling, mobilise digital experts, pilot/test digital tools early	Inability to track progress, delays in learning cycles, and reduced transparency. Weak feedback loops

Risk Description (Type)	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Mitigation Measures	Implications if not addressed
					undermine performance-based implementation.
Delays in legal/institutional reforms **(Regulatory)**	High	Medium	High	Phased reform plan, interim legal arrangements, continuous political support	Critical reforms (including HIA establishment) stall; Pilots cannot launch on time; prolonged uncertainty reduces stakeholder trust and slows delivery.
Insufficient funding or co-financing **(Financial)**	Medium	High	High	Secure multi-year funding commitments, blend public/private/EU sources	Interrupted delivery cycles, inability to scale successful pilots, and lost opportunities due to breaks between programming periods.
Inconsistent implementation across regions or types of organisations **(Operational)**	Medium	Medium	Medium	Standardised procedures, peer-learning exchanges, strong monitoring/adaptation	Uneven pilot quality

*Low/Medium/High

The risks identified in this section become significantly more acute if the proposed governance reforms are not implemented. Without consolidating responsibility under a designated line ministry (the MDI-GSRI) for R&I policy, coordination failures and policy fragmentation are likely to persist, resulting in overlapping initiatives, inefficient use of resources, and reduced accountability. Similarly, without the establishment of the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) as the operational interface for all business-facing innovation support, Greece would lack a coherent mechanism for delivering applied research, supporting SMEs, and ensuring consistent implementation standards across regions and programmes. In both cases, the implications extend beyond administrative inefficiency: the Transition Plan would struggle to maintain momentum, scale successful pilots, or deliver measurable impact, especially in a system already prone to breaks in funding between programming periods.

6. Annex – measure templates

6.1. Measure 1 - Enhanced S3 Governance and Monitoring Framework

Title: Enhanced S3 Governance and Monitoring Framework	***Objective:*** To modernise, coordinate, and digitalise the governance of Greece's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) at national and regional levels, ensuring evidence-based decision-making, real-time monitoring, and more effective stakeholder engagement in line with EU best practice.
Addressing recommendation : Recommendation 8.2: Strengthen S3 governance, coordination, and performance monitoring, integrating continuous learning and digital tools.	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Strategic (S) – with an embedded experimental pilot: the S3 Digital Dashboard to be tested in selected regions before national rollout (2026–2027).[1]	
Content: The measure will: • Establish a unified and enhanced governance mechanism for the S3 strategy, clarifying the roles of MON-ESEE, GSRI, regional authorities, and PSEKs. • Develop and pilot a Digital S3 Monitoring Dashboard integrating KPIs, financial data, project outcomes, entrepreneurial discovery process (EDP) feedback, and international benchmarking—initially in 2–3 regions, then scaling nationally. • Institutionalise participatory governance structures for all S3 priority areas at national and regional levels, with broad stakeholder representation, including business, academia, and civil society. • Mandate structured policy learning and foresight cycles, combining data analytics from the S3 dashboard with stakeholder dialogues and policy labs. • Enhance interoperability between national and regional strategies and funding streams (ESIF, RRF), and systematically embed monitoring/learning as a basis for annual programming and mid-course correction.	
Responsible body: Ministry of Economy and Finance - MON-ESEE	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) • S3 Council (national and regional levels) • Regional authorities and PSEKs • Industry and SME associations • Higher education institutions and research centres • Chambers, clusters, and civil society organisations • Digital/data governance experts
Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**	***Indicative timeline***

- Upgrade existing digital infrastructure for monitoring and reporting, underpinned by legal provisions for open data, transparency, and GDPR compliance
- Plan and launch the S3 Digital Dashboard pilot by 2026, with PA/ERDF, RRF, and national digital transformation funds as main sources
- Formalise multi-level S3 governance structures via legal acts/MoUs
- Build analytic and foresight capacity through upskilling and external expertise, in line with European Commission and other regional best practice guidance.

Phase	Period	Key Actions
Preparatory Phase	2025–2026	Governance framework and digital dashboard design; legal/institutional alignment
Pilot Implementation	2026–2027	Pilot S3 monitoring dashboard in 2–3 regions; first annual participatory S3 review
Scaling and National Roll-Out	2028–2030	Upgrade dashboard for national S3 monitoring; integrate learning cycles in S3 planning; extend to all regions; publish open data portal
Consolidation	2031–2035	Mainstream evidence-based S3 steering, stakeholder processes, and continuous learning as permanent features.

Expected outcomes by 2035:

- Nationally harmonised, real-time S3 strategy monitoring and reporting
- Fully functional S3 Digital Dashboard used by all relevant ministries, regions, and stakeholders
- Continuous feedback and learning cycles integrated into S3 decision-making
- Measurable increase in S3 funding effectiveness, project impact, and stakeholder satisfaction
- Greece's S3 governance and monitoring framework benchmarks among the leading EU peer group

This measure is foundational for all S3-related innovation and competitiveness initiatives, enabling adaptive governance and transparent, responsive public administration aligned with both national and EU objectives.

6.2. Measure 2 - Institutional Capacity-Building and Reform of the National Innovation System

Title: Institutional Capacity-Building and Reform of the National Innovation System	***Objective:*** To build a modern, coordinated, and high-performing national innovation system for Greece by strengthening the leadership, managerial autonomy, and delivery capacity of key public innovation actors. This is achieved through clear mandates, performance-based management, and governance reforms in line with European best practice and the integration of currently separate agencies/bodies into a consolidated Hellenic Innovation Agency.
Addressing recommendation : 8.3.1: Strengthen innovation governance and clarify institutional roles 8.3.2: Upgrade capacity and operational models for public innovation agencies.	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Strategic (S) — with experimental pilots for management contracts between General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) and the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA).	
Content: This measure delivers a sequenced institutional reform, focused on: • Introducing performance-based management contracts between GSRI and HIA (or OBI in the interim), based on multi-year objectives, clear KPIs, and independent evaluation. • Upgrading operational capacity in GSRI, OBI, and affiliated bodies for programme management, digital interoperability, and EU funding. • Streamlining and gradually consolidating fragmented innovation support agencies into the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA), with clear structures for legal, HR, digital, and financial autonomy while maintaining GSRI as strategic lead. • Implementing standards for good governance, transparent reporting, agile recruitment, and digital service delivery. • Piloting a national innovation policy academy to train directors and core management of all innovation bodies, supported by international peer-learning exchanges. • Setting up a monitoring system for regular learning, adapting from pilot results, and benchmarking against best-performing EU agencies.	
Responsible body: **Ministry of Development and Investments (MDI)** - General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI) — lead	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • Ministry of Economy and Finance • Hellenic Innovation Agency : OBI, Elevate Greece SA, Enterprise Greece • TTOs, Competence Centres, NRIS - public research centres, universities • Regional Innovation Councils (PSEKs) • European level agencies : EISMEA/EIC, EIT, EIB/EIF

Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources):**

- Legal basis for management contracting and agency autonomy
- Formal coalition and transition plan among GSRI, OBI, Elevate Greece, Enterprise Greece, and other innovation agencies
- Alignment of funding lines (PIP, PA, RRF) for institutional strengthening and staff upskilling
- Pilot performance contract design (2025–2026) with international advisory support
- Digital infrastructure investment for interoperability and transparent reporting

Indicative timeline

Phase	Period	Key Actions
Preparation	2025–2026	Draft management contracts, realign agency mandates, pilot "innovation policy academy"
Pilot & Early Rollout	2027–2028	First performance contract cycle, digital/governance upgrades, launch agency capacity-building pilots
Mainstreaming	2029–2032	Full implementation of HIA model, mainstream contracts and standards across system
Consolidation	2033–2035	Legal/administrative integration, continuous monitoring, and updates based on EU benchmarked learning

Expected outcomes by 2035:

- Hellenic Innovation Agency fully operational, with international-standard autonomy and management
- All major programmes operating under output/outcome-linked management contracts
- Regular and transparent performance reporting to parliament and stakeholders
- Significant increase in agency delivery capacity and satisfaction in SME/public R&I user surveys
- Greece benchmarks in the upper half of the EU27 in the European Innovation Scoreboard.

This measure forms the institutional backbone for all downstream innovation policies and pilots, enabling Greece to close gaps in implementation, improve policy learning, and unlock higher levels of private and public R&I investment.

6.3. Measure 3 - Innovation-Friendly Regulation and SME Test Implementation

Title: Innovation-Friendly Regulation and SME Test Implementation	***Objective:*** To design and institutionalise an innovation-friendly regulatory framework across ministries and agencies through the structured use of regulatory sandboxes, SME tests, and innovation impact assessments in legislative and policy processes. The goal is to make regulation supportive of experimentation, reduce administrative barriers for SMEs, and strengthen evidence-based policy learning for innovation governance***.***
Addressing recommendation : Recommendations 8.1.1 and 8.1.2: Improve the regulatory and institutional environment for innovation and introduce a permanent innovation impact assessment and SME Test mechanism in policymaking	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Experimental (E) measure — piloting innovation-friendly regulation instruments (2026–2028) before institutionalisation across all ministries.	
Content*:* The measure introduces a new regulatory governance mechanism that integrates innovation-supportive tools into policy design and administration. It builds capacity for ministries to test and adapt rules that encourage innovation rather than constrain it. Core components include: • Development of a National Framework for Innovation-Friendly Regulation coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MNEF) and the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI). • Creation of regulatory sandboxes in selected sectors — digital services, energy, and healthcare — to allow start-ups and SMEs to experiment under controlled conditions before regulations are fully enacted. • Implementation of the SME Test, assessing the regulatory burden and innovation impact of new legislation across all ministries. • Development of innovation impact indicators and guidance aligned with OECD and EU better regulation principles. • A Regulatory Innovation Lab (RIL) hosted by the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA), providing methodological support, evaluation templates, and cross-ministry learning. • Launch of an open evaluation platform (2027) for stakeholder feedback, linked to MON-ESEE and national S3 coordination systems to ensure continuous learning loops.[1] This measure will shift Greek regulatory culture toward agile, risk-tolerant frameworks, improving the overall business environment and supporting the scaling of innovative SMEs.	
Responsible body: Ministry of National Economy and Finance (MNEF) — Lead In cooperation with: Ministry of Development and Investments (MDI) and GSRI.	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) and General Secretariat for Public Investments (GSPI) • Ministry of Digital Governance (MDG) • Regulatory authorities (energy, telecoms, pharmaceuticals) • Business associations (SEV, GSEVEE, EVEA) • Regional Research and Innovation Councils (PSEKs)

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>• Academic and policy research institutes (IOBE, universities).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Prerequisites for implementation (including funding sources):
• Formal adoption of a national legislative amendment enabling regulatory sandboxes and SME Tests within the national better-regulation framework.
• Establishment of the Regulatory Innovation Lab (RIL) within HIA by 2026.
• Dedicated funding line under the PA 2021–2027 and RRF for pilot sandboxes and digital governance tools.
• Coordination with OECD-Greece Better Regulation agenda and the European Observatory on Testing Experimental Policy Approaches (ESTEP).
• Capacity-building for civil servants and regulators through targeted training and peer-learning exchanges with EU counterparts.</td><td>Indicative timeline:
<table>
<tr><th>Phase</th><th>Period</th><th>Key Actions</th></tr>
<tr><td>Design and Capacity Phase</td><td>2025–2026</td><td>Design national framework, establish RIL, train ministry units, identify pilot sectors</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pilot Implementation</td><td>2026–2028</td><td>Launch 3–5 regulatory sandboxes and SME Test pilots</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evaluation and Scaling</td><td>2028–2030</td><td>Evaluate pilots, refine methodologies, introduce the SME Test and Innovation Impact Assessment as mandatory in all ministries</td></tr>
<tr><td>Institutionalisation</td><td>2030–2035</td><td>Mainstream tools under the national regulatory system; integrate with GSRI policy evaluation framework [1]</td></tr>
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Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- 100% of new regulatory proposals include an SME Test or innovation impact analysis.
- 10–15 regulatory sandboxes tested in critical sectors.
- Reduction of compliance time and costs for innovative SMEs (KPI baseline to be set).
- Institutionalisation of the Regulatory Innovation Lab as a permanent advisory and monitoring unit within the HIA.
- Improved global ranking for Greece in regulatory quality and ease of business innovation.

6.4. Measure 4 - National Thematic R&I Partnerships for Industrial Transformation

Title: National Thematic R&I Partnerships for Industrial Transformation	***Objective:*** To establish a coordinated network of national and regional research and innovation (R&I) partnerships focused on industrial transformation, accelerating Greece's twin transition (green and digital) and strategic technology priorities. The measure will strengthen research–industry collaboration, align public–private investments in strategic value chains, and enhance the innovation capacity of knowledge-intensive SMEs and research centres across key industrial sectors by 2030–2035.
Addressing recommendation : Recommendation 6.1 — Strengthen thematic R&I collaboration linking national and regional ecosystems with industrial priorities and smart specialisation areas	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Flagship (F) measure, with embedded experimental components (joint regional–national R&I partnership pilots 2026–2028).	
Content: The measure introduces structured "National Thematic R&I Partnerships" that integrate universities, research centres, enterprises, clusters, and regional innovation councils under shared industrial transformation agendas. Each partnership will target a strategic thematic area aligned with Greece's S3 priorities and STEP trajectories, e.g. green and circular manufacturing, advanced materials, digital production, agri-tech, and health bio-innovation. Actions include: • Establishing governance frameworks and partnership consortia for 5–7 thematic areas. • Piloting joint funding schemes co-financed by national (PA, RRF) and regional programmes with private-sector matching. • Launching competitive calls for collaborative R&I projects, open to consortia led by SMEs in partnership with research organisations. • Introducing shared infrastructure nodes (Partnership Platforms) connecting National Research Infrastructures and Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs). • Testing co-investment mechanisms and monitoring systems for measuring industrial R&I collaboration impact on productivity, exports, and SME innovation rates.	
Responsible body: Ministry of Development & Investments - General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GSRI)	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • Regional Research and Innovation Councils (PSEKs) • Newly established Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) and OBI Innovation Directorate • Regional Managing Authorities (Competitiveness and ROPs) • Clusters & Chambers of Commerce (e.g. SEV, EVEA) • Universities, Research Centres (e.g. FORTH, CERTH)

	• Hellenic Development Bank of Investments (HDBI), EIB, and private investors • Industry associations and lead enterprises from target value chains.

Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**

- Operational coordination between GSRI, Managing Authorities, & regional governments on call design and project selection.
- Establishment of co-funded budget lines under PA (ERDF axis on competitive enterprises), RRF complementary calls, and national co-financing through Public Investment Programme (PIP).
- Legal provisions for partnership consortia and funding rules (to be harmonised under HIA).
- Pilot call preparations (2025–2026) under the guidance of MON-ESEE and national S3 Council.
- Engagement of EU financial instruments (EIB innovation window) and STEP resources for industrial tech priorities.

Indicative timeline

Phase	Period	Key Actions
Preparatory Phase	2025–2026	Design governance framework, identify thematic areas, define co-financing schemes
Pilot Implementation	2026–2028	Launch and evaluate 2–3 thematic partnership pilots (mixed national–regional funding)
Scaling and Integration	2029–2032	Expand partnerships to all priority sectors; integrate lessons into Cohesion/RRF programming
Consolidation	2033–2035	Mainstream successful models across new industrial policy & S3 governance cycle

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- 8–10 active national thematic R&I partnerships linked to industrial value chains.
- Increase in SME participation in R&I collaborations (baseline to be set).
- Increase in R&I co-investment between public and private actors (baseline to be set).
- Improved industrial productivity and export capacity in targeted sectors.
- National recognition of partnerships as permanent policy instruments integrated into next R&I policy cycle.

Measure 4 is the backbone initiative for translating Greece's smart specialisation and industrial transformation strategies into actionable multi-stakeholder R&I platforms.

6.5. Measure 5 - Research Commercialisation, Spin-offs and Deep-Tech Acceleration Programme

Title: Research Commercialisation, Spin-offs and Deep-Tech Acceleration Programme	***Objective:*** To boost the transformation of public research into market-ready innovations by systematically supporting university and research institute spin-offs and deep-tech ventures and creating a robust pipeline from proof-of-concept to scale-up. The programme will ensure integration with Elevate Greece, synergies with the EIC Accelerator, and alignment with the European Start-up and Scale-up Strategy.
Addressing recommendation : *6.1.2: Support commercialisation of research results and technology transfer* *6.1.4: Develop spin-off/entrepreneurship support programmes* *6.3.1: Accelerate breakthrough (deep tech) innovation* *8.3.3: Professionalise innovation intermediary and TTO performance.[1]*	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Flagship (F) and Experimental (E) — Deep-tech accelerator pilots, proof-of-concept funding, and spin-off incubators.	
Content: This measure introduces a flexible, national support scheme for academic entrepreneurship and deep-tech spin-offs by adapting the German EXIST programme architecture to the Greek context. It will feature strong links to Elevate Greece and the national start-up registry. Core elements include: • National call for proof-of-concept grants for research teams and PhD students (modelled on EXIST-Gründerstipendium and EXIST Forschungstransfer) • Comprehensive incubation services (legal/IP, business development, mentoring) for spin-offs via accredited TTOs and a national network of deep-tech incubators • National and regional “spin-off innovation hubs” in key S3 areas, co-located with universities, research centres, and Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) • Joint accelerator programmes for deep-tech and science-based ventures, with EIC/EU network partners and private investors • “Soft landing” services and vouchers for participation in EIC Accelerator/EIC Pathfinder, cross-border scale-up missions, and EU-wide networking opportunities • Skills bootcamps in technology entrepreneurship, international IP management, and investment readiness, coordinated jointly with Elevate Greece.	
Responsible body: Ministry of Development and Investments (MDI) - GSRI with programme delivery by the Hellenic Innovation Agency	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • Universities, public research centres, and TTO networks • Elevate Greece SA • Accredited deep-tech incubators and selected regional innovation hubs/clusters

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- IP protection (OBI)
- Corporate (industrial partners)
- Key VC and angel investors (Greece and EU)
- European level: EIC, EIB/EIF

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Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**

- Harmonisation of public research commercialisation and spin-off regulations
- National call launched via PA (2021–27) with dedicated Horizon Europe synergies
- Legal, HR, and training updates in TTOs to ensure professional standards (aligned with recommendation 8.3.3)
- Entry and graduation criteria for spin-offs/admissions/exit
- Bilateral agreements with EU accelerator/VC partners and integration with EIC participation channels

Dedicated public funding (2025–2035), leveraged with at least 1:1 private and EU co-investment.

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Indicative timeline

Phase	Period	Key Actions
Design & Preparation	2025–2026	Programme design, capacity-building workshops for TTOs; MoUs with Elevate Greece/EIC; pilot PoC and spin-off calls
Pilot Rollout	2026–2028	Launch of deep-tech accelerators, first proof-of-concept and pre-seed spin-off grants; onboarding of innovation hubs
Full Operation & Integration	2029–2032	Scaling national network of spin-off incubators/accelerators, integration with EIC and EU networks
Consolidation	2033–2035	Mainstreaming successful models and pathways; monitoring impact, continuous learning

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Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- Increase in number of research-based spin-offs established, baseline 2024 levels
- Survival and scale-up rates of Greek spin-offs in line with leading EU peers
- National deep-tech accelerator network fully interoperable with EIC platforms
- Increase of Greek SME/EIC Accelerator participation and success rate
- Enhanced private and international investment flows in deep-tech ventures.

This measure seeks to position Greece as a serious player in deep-tech and research-based entrepreneurship in Europe and exploits both national and EU-level leverage and learning, using best practice models to transition research excellence into innovation-driven growth.

6.6. Measure 6 - Innovation Support Framework and SME Access Simplification Initiative

Title: Innovation Support Framework and SME Access Simplification Initiative	***Objective:*** Establish a national digital portal, single-entry structure that expedites and streamlines SMEs' access to innovative financing and services across regions and ministries. To help knowledge-intensive SMEs navigate, apply, and obtain support with less expense and time to decision, the measure standardises processes, implements client-management with regional advisers, and uses appropriate, fast-track tools (such innovation vouchers).

Addressing recommendation :

6.1.3 : national single-entry point for innovation services

6.1.5 : innovation vouchers/simplified access)

The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action

Strategic (S) with an initial experimental component: prototype single-entry portal and simplified processes

Content:

A. One-stop Digital Portal (integrated with gov.gr / Single Digital Gateway):

- Design and launch a national innovation services portal that provides a unified SME profile ("Innovation ID"), reuses official data ("once-only" principle), and offers an eligibility wizard, application pre-check, status tracking and a feedback loop.
- API-level (Application Programming Interface) interoperability with gov.gr and the Single Digital Gateway; single sign-on (eIDAS: electronic Identification, Authentication and trust Services), secure data sharing and standardised forms/templates.
- Service catalogue covering grants, vouchers, national research infrastructures (NRI) access, Digital Innovation Hubs (DIH), Competence centres, IP services (OBI), finance (HDBI/EIF), and internationalisation (Enterprise Greece/EEN).

B. Client-Management & Regional Advisor Network:

- Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) to operate a 'no-wrong-door' client-management model with accredited regional advisors ("innovation brokers").
- Service-Level Agreements (SLAs) for response times, case ownership, and referral protocols to DIHs/NRIs/TTOs/clusters.

C. Simplified Access Package for SMEs:

- Appropriate procedures: short-form applications for vouchers (for example ≤ €50k), pre-qualification lists, sample-based audits, and standard grant/IP templates.
- Innovation Vouchers suite: (i) Access-to-Labs/DIHs (research, testing and prototyping facilities that SMEs can use to develop or validate products without buying expensive equipment); (ii) IP & Standards (patents, designs, certifications); (iii) Prototyping & Testing; (iv) Innovation Management.
- Embedded 'SME Test' checklists (link to Measure 3) that need to be integrated (link to Measure 3) to continually eliminate needless burden.

D. Data & Learning:

- KPI dashboard integrated with the S3 monitoring system: time-to-decision, first-time SME access, geographic reach, female-/youth-led participation, progression to larger instruments and more.
- Continuous testing of forms and guidance; annual policy review with MON-ESEE/S3 network.

Responsible body:	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions***
Ministry of Development & Investments – GSRI (policy lead) In cooperation with: Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) (operator/portal owner, client-management & advisors); Ministry of Digital Governance (gov.gr integration, interoperability, trust services); Innovation Agency.	• Regions & PSEKs • Sectoral clusters/chambers (SEV, GSEVEE), EEN Greece nodes • DIHs, Competence Centres, NRIs, universities & TTOs • OBI (IP) • Enterprise Greece (internationalisation), • HDB/HDBI/EIF (finance) • National Documentation Centre (EKT) for evidence & analytics • AADE/identity providers (data re-use), • Ministry of National Economy & Finance (harmonisation with funding rules).
Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)** Strategic coherence: • alignment with the National Programme for Administrative Simplification (EPAD), the EU Single Digital Gateway and gov.gr • consistency with D4 governance reforms and S3 monitoring. Legal/data foundations: • HIA mandate for client-management • inter-ministerial MoUs • DPIA/GDPR compliance • eIDAS-based SSO • data-sharing rules and APIs • standard templates and SLAs Delivery capacity: • hire/train regional advisors • procure portal components • curate national service catalogue • set up helpdesk & portal testing. Funding sources (indicative): • PA 2021–27 (ERDF for portal/vouchers • ESF+ for advisory/training) & for digital infrastructure • Public Investment Programme	***Indicative timeline*** Design & Setup (Q1 - Q2 2026): Including Service catalogue, architecture & procurement, MoUs, simplification rulebook, diagnostics & more. Pilot (Q3 2026 – Q4 2027): Launch portal indicatively in two sectors (agri-food, ICT) and two pilot regions (targeting at least 500 SMEs and 500 vouchers) Scale (2028 – 2030): National rollout to all regions/sectors, full gov.gr/SDG interoperability, integration with EEN/Elevate Greece data Consolidate (2031 – 2035): Embed in legislation, continuous ongoing improvements, mainstream proportionate procedures.

• EIB/EIF advisory • synergies with EquiFund II for downstream scale-up finance	

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- ≥ 30% reduction in median time-to-decision vs. 2024 baselines
- ≥ 40% reduction in application time for vouchers
- ≥ 15,000 SMEs cumulatively supported by 2035
- ≥ 35% first-time applicants
- ≥ 20% of supported SMEs are knowledge-intensive

6.7. Measure 7 - Green Transition and Sustainable Value-Chain Programme

Title: Green Transition and Sustainable Value-Chain Programme	***Objective:*** To drive the green transition of Greek SMEs and industries by scaling adoption of sustainable, circular, and low-carbon business models and technologies across priority value chains. The programme mobilises innovation for resource efficiency, energy decarbonisation, eco-design, and circularity, enabling Greece to achieve climate targets and create new green market opportunities by 2035.
Addressing recommendation : 6.3.2: Facilitate SME green transition and sustainable practices adoption 6.3.3: Support industry-led green value chains and demonstration projects.	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Flagship (F) — With embedded experimental pilot projects for green supply-chains and circular economy demonstrators.	
Content: This measure launches a coordinated, cross-sectoral programme to accelerate SME and industry uptake of eco-innovation, circular economy, and green technologies. Core components include: • National and regional calls for green value-chain pilot projects in agri-food, construction, tourism, manufacturing, and logistics • Development and scaling of circular economy demonstrators (reuse, recycling, industrial symbiosis) • Funding for collaborative R&I on green materials, carbon footprint reduction, resource efficiency, waste valorisation, and green digital solutions • SME support for certification, green patents, eco-design, and export compliance (EU Taxonomy, CBAM) • Creation of local and sectoral “Green Transition Hubs” (within clusters, chambers, DIHs) offering technical advice, training, and financing brokerage • Alignment and complementarity with JTP (Just Transition Programme), Horizon Europe “Green Deal” missions, and European Innovation Fund • Monitoring and learning loops for greening outcomes (CO2 reduction, input savings, green jobs).	
Responsible body: Ministry of Environment & Energy (lead)	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions*** • Ministry of Development – GSRI / GSI • Industrial/commercial chambers and sectoral clusters (SEV, food, construction, tourism, manufacturing) • Green finance entities (HDBI, EIB/EIF, banks, equity/VC investors) • Universities, research centres, and competence centres for eco-innovation • National Circular Economy and Just Transition Platforms.

Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**

- Strategic alignment with National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP), Circular Economy Action Plan, and ESIF/PA green funding priorities
- Formal partnership agreements (MoUs) between ministries, industry associations, and regions
- Dedicated funding lines under PA (ERDF, ESF+) and JTP (with private co-investment)
- Pilot selection/design: priorities set in consultation with MON-ESEE, S3 network, and climate/industrial experts
- Skills development for green transition advisors, cluster managers, and demonstration project leaders
- Digital and data management infrastructure for green performance monitoring.

Indicative timeline

Phase	Period	Key Actions
Preparatory Phase	2025-2026	Develop criteria, governance, and funding calls; identify value chain priorities and lead demonstration regions/sectors
Pilot & Demonstrator Rollout	2027-2029	Launch first tranche of supply-chain pilots, circular demonstrators, and regional "Green Transition Hubs"
Scale and Integrate	2030-2032	Mainstream best-performing green value-chain models and digital support systems
Consolidate	2033-2035	Fully integrate green transition support into all SME and innovation policy frameworks

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- Increase of Greek SMEs adopting advanced green and circular practices (baseline to be set)
- Increase in the number of sectoral green value chains with EU-compliant sustainability certification
- Measurable reduction in resource use and CO2 output across project sectors
- Tripling of green product exports and participation in EU Green Deal value chains
- Widely established Green Transition Hubs and a permanent learning/monitoring network

This measure ensures Greece plays a leading role in the European industrial Green Deal, boosting SME competitiveness and sustainability while catalysing decarbonisation and circularity in national value chains.

6.8. Measure 8 - National Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Internationalisation

Title: **National Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Internationalisation**	***Objective:*** Establish a coherent national framework that facilitates international market access and cross-firm cooperation for Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs. This framework will be operationalised through a **initial** trial of an AI-powered B2B marketplace for international SME matchmaking.
The Measure is of strategic importance, a flagship or an experimental action Strategic importance measure with an initial experimental pilot component for the AI-driven B2B marketplace.	
Content: Policy & Governance Framework (Rec. 6.2.1): • Adopt a national framework embedding collaboration/internationalisation criteria across SME/innovation programmes. • Simplify processes for small business alliances, joint ventures, and mergers; connect cooperation objectives to export regulations. Sector Focus (Rec. 6.2.2): • Prioritise agri-food, pharmaceuticals, ICT (manufacture of computers & peripherals, programming, telecommunications, AI etc.), and defence mostly for early actions. • Build sectoral consortia and targeted support instruments to accelerate international readiness. International Cooperation Plan (Rec. 6.2.3): • Launch a national strategy to integrate Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs into EU value chains and partnerships (via trade offices and EEN). • Integrate cooperation and networking criteria into export policies per country. AI-Driven B2B Marketplace Pilot (Rec. 6.2.4): • Build a national digital marketplace that onboards verified Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs and uses AI to match buyers/suppliers based on product profiles, standards/compliance, and past performance. • Publish Request for Quotes (RFQs) and relevant tenders; interoperate with EEN and other active and successful European platforms; provide multi-language search; Integrate data governance, safety, and trust by design. International IP Protection Plan (Rec. 6.2.5): • IP 2030: Modernisation of the IP framework & fast-track for knowledge-intensive SMEs. • Modernise IP rules in line with EU practice (New Unified Code of Intellectual Property Rights) • Launch vouchers for international IP (patents, trademarks, industrial designs); clarify ownership/exploitation rules for public research; scale OBI Academy support. Alignment: The measure is consistent with D4's intervention logic (IV. Internationalisation & Finance) and responds to D2 findings on weak clusters, complex business environment, and under-exporting.	
Responsible body:	*Core stakeholders – support coalitions*

Co-leads: • Enterprise Greece / internationalisation operations & platform operator. • GSRI / policy, standards, data/IP governance. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA): mobilisation of diplomatic-trade network.	National: • OBI (IP), Elevate Greece, HDBI/EIF (finance linkages), EEN Greece core nodes, national chambers (SEV/GSEVEE), sectoral clusters, DIHs/Competence Centres/NRIs, regions (S3). EU/International: • EEN, EIT KICs (Knowledge and Innovation Communities), EU industrial alliances, standardisation bodies, partner trade promotion agencies (for mirror-marketplace pilots).
Prerequisites for implementation Strategic Coherence: • Embed collaboration/ internationalisation criteria in national calls; connect with D4 logical framework and KPIs for internationalisation and high-tech export growth. Governance & Law: • Decision designating Enterprise Greece/GSRI co-lead (Steering committee including MFA/OBI). • Data governance & ethics policy for AI matching. • IP policy alignment (incl. public research IP rules). Delivery Capacity: • Project teams (AI/Machine learning, data engineers, trust & safety etc.); sector partnership managers; export advisors embedded in MFA network. Funding (indicative): • PA 2021–27 (ERDF/ESPA) for platform & IP vouchers; Horizon Europe/EEN for interoperability pilots; co-funding via industry or other associations.	*Indicative timeline* Near-term (January – May 2026): • Framework adoption; governance set-up; initial requirements & architecture; sector pilots scoped (agri-food & ICT). Build & Integrate (June - December 2026): • Launch the AI B2B marketplace, connect it to EEN, set up SME verification, and draft the IP voucher scheme. Pilot Launch (December 2026 - 2027): • onboard (indicatively) first 500 SMEs; run 2–3 international missions via MFA/Enterprise Greece network. Scale (2028): • Expand to all priority sectors; 8–10 international missions; roll out international IP voucher scheme. Scale-up & Consolidate (2028–2035): • Full interoperability with targeted EU platforms; performance-based expansion; mainstream into export/innovation policy.

Expected outcomes by 2035:

- A comprehensive national framework for SME collaboration and internationalisation, completely integrated into key SME and innovation support programs, featuring well-defined eligibility and monitoring criteria.
- The AI-driven B2B marketplace established as the main national infrastructure for SME international matchmaking, with ≥ 5,000 Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs onboarded and ≥ 10,000 qualified cross-border matches generated.

- A substantial increase in export-active knowledge-intensive SMEs (at least +50% vs 2024 levels) and strengthened participation in EU and global value chains (≥ 250 SME participations in EU/industrial partnerships).
- At least 2,000 international IP titles (patents, trademarks, designs) supported for knowledge-intensive SMEs and ≥ 70% of surveyed SMEs confirming that public support and the marketplace made cross-border collaboration and exports easier.

6.9. Measure 9 - Smart Finance and Innovation Fund (Fund-of-Funds II)

Title: Smart Finance and Innovation Fund (Fund-of-Funds II)	***Objective:*** Establish a permanent, national "smart finance" framework that de-risks green and innovative initiatives, mobilises private co-investment through a fund-of-funds with different products, and delivers fit-for-purpose capital from proof-of-concept to scale. Core target groups are considered: Knowledge-intensive SMEs and scale-ups, ESCOs & municipal SPVs for green projects, various financial intermediaries.

Addressing recommendation : 6.4.1–7 (smart finance architecture, de-risking, EPC/green performance finance, equity/guarantee mix)

The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action

Flagship (F): It is a system-level, not a limited pilot, national fund-of-funds architecture with several product windows and long-term recycling. The overall classification is Flagship, with a built-in national scale-up, while it does contain certain experimental components (pilot transactions in Just Transition regions to demonstrate additionality).

Content:

Greek SMEs deal with fragmented access to financing, limited collateral for intangible investments, and thin risk-capital markets. A permanent architecture is required after RRF in order to crowd in private funding, standardise delivery across regions, and de-risk innovation and green upgrades.

Beneficiaries and core scope of the measure are Knowledge-intensive SMEs and cross-sector scale-ups, with a focus on clean and deep technology, Performance-based contracts for example for district heating and cooling, building retrofits, and industrial decarbonisation projects. Financial intermediaries (including banks, leasing and factoring firms and venture capital and private equity funds).

<u>Architecture & measure governance model</u>

Manager & oversight: Hellenic Development Bank of Investments (HDBI) manages the fund-of-funds. Some operations can be co-mandated with the European Investment Fund. An independent Investment Committee makes decisions, with clear conflict-of-interest and “additionality” rules.

What it offers (the 5 product windows)

1. Very early-stage capital: Small tickets (€50k–€250k) for proof-of-concept and tech transfer, co-investing with universities, research institutes and accelerators.
2. Venture & growth capital: €1–10m for all sectors and thematic funds (e.g., deep tech, clean tech), with private co-investment.
3. Innovation loan guarantees: Public guarantee covers 60–80% of bank loans for firms rich in intangibles (can include working capital tied to innovation projects).
4. Green performance & energy efficiency finance: Financing for energy-performance contracts (building retrofits, district heating/cooling), including buying receivables from energy service companies and sharing risk; securitisation/factoring options to scale.
5. Quasi-equity / mezzanine: Revenue-based finance and subordinated loans for fast-growing firms with limited collateral.

<u>Advice & preparation</u>

Model contract templates, standard term sheets, measurement/reporting guidelines, and aggregation vehicles for municipalities and energy service providers are some of the tools that help make projects "bankable" through an advisory operation (with the EIB/EIF and HDBI), strong ties to EEN, Elevate Greece, research centres, and clusters for digital innovation. referrals from the national one-stop gateway.

Prioritisation

Industrial decarbonisation initiatives, scale-ups, and knowledge-intensive SMEs. Budgets that are ring-fenced for Just Transition areas (and also for businesses in particular sectors that are managed by women and young people). Intermediary requests should be straightforward and unambiguous, and manager compensation should be determined by performance in relation to policy objectives.

Complementarity with other measures

1. Single-entry portal for enterprises (Measure 6): fast referrals and visibility of instruments.
2. Skills & advisory measures (Stage 2/3): enhance investment readiness and innovation management.
3. Regional/Just Transition programmes: ring-fenced allocations and local partners for delivery

Responsible body:

- Policy owner: Ministry of National Economy & Finance.
- Fund manager: HDBI with selected EIF co-mandates.

Other core partners:

- ERDF Managing Authority, European Investment Fund/European Investment Bank (co-mandates and co-investment), and the Hellenic Development Bank for guarantee operations.

Core stakeholders – support coalitions

- Financial intermediaries (VCs, banks, leasing/factoring), ESCOs, municipal utilities and SPVs;
- NRIs/Universities/TTOs, DIHs & competence centres;
- Enterprise Greece/EEN, chambers and clusters;
- Regions / Just Transition mechanisms;
- Supervisory authorities (state-aid, financial supervision).

Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**

- Approve fund-of-funds mandate and investment strategy; constitute Investment Committee.
- Agree InvestEU MS Compartment participation; map state-aid notifications where needed.
- Publish calls for intermediaries; align reporting and ESG safeguards; launch advisory window.
- Set up live KPI dashboard and recycling rules to sustain financing beyond 2030.

Funding (indicative):

- ERDF 2021–27 (and post-2027), InvestEU Member State Compartment, Public Investment Programme, co-investment from EIF/EIB and private LPs. Indicative leverage

Indicative timeline

Design & structuring (Q1 2026 – Q2 2026):

- Ex-ante assessment, mandate, state-aid/taxonomy alignment, InvestEU setup, draft calls for intermediaries.

Pilot launch (Q3 2026 – Q4 2027):

- First closings in selected windows; pilot EPC/green-performance portfolios and early guarantee transactions; test portal referrals.

Scale-up (2028-2030):

- National rollout across all windows; securitisation pilots of EPC receivables; increased private co-investment.

Recycle & consolidate (2031-2035):

target ≥3x public money over the programme horizon.	• Reinvest returns; mainstream proven products; continuous impact evaluation.

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- Indicative leverage target ≥3x public money over the programme horizon.
- ≥ €2.5bn total mobilised investment
- ≥ 12,000 SMEs financed (equity/guarantees/quasi-equity); ≥35% first-time recipients; balanced regional uptake.
- Building/district decarbonisation: ≥4 TWh cumulative energy savings financed via EPC/green performance window; robust MRV.
- Increased private VC activity (≥10 new funds with FoF participation); sustained market capacity after 2030 through recycling.

6.10. Measure 10 - Defence and Critical-Technology Innovation Initiative

Title: Defence and Critical-Technology Innovation Initiative	***Objective:*** Promote the expedited development, testing, and certification of dual-use and critical technologies by Greek SMEs and mid-caps. These technologies ought to integrate the value chains of military, security, and civil engineering. The program aims to expedite knowledge-intensive enterprises' progression to TRL 6–9 and facilitate their integration into EU programs and supply chains by 2030–2035 through the establishment of international alliances, targeted financing and procurement strategies, and secure testing environments.

Addressing recommendation :

6.2.2: focus on specific high-potential knowledge intensive sectors

6.4.8: reinforce the financial incentives for small midcaps

6.4.9: prioritise the Greek Defence programme funding

The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action

Strategic (S) with embedded experimental actions (defence/security sandboxes and certification pilots) consistent with D4's "governance-to-learning" logic.

Content:

Content:

A national programme to move dual-use technologies (civil + defence) from lab to market with security built in from the start. It's co-led by the Ministry of National Defence and GSRI, with the Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) running day-to-day.

What it does:

- Prototype grants provide access to approved labs and testing facilities and expedite the process of transforming innovative concepts into near-market prototypes.
- Test and certify: Make use of defence-grade testbeds and receive assistance in order to satisfy international and European standards that are pertinent to NATO.
- Buy to try: To verify solutions in practical application, defence and civil security authorities make small pilot purchases.
- Finance & scale: Suggested Measure 9 is directly linked to venture/quasi-equity and guarantees, and projects with a defence component can benefit from targeted de-risking.

How it's delivered: A safe operating environment (Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs), clearances, export/data regulations), conformity to EU programs, collaborations with universities, innovation centres, and clusters, and memorandums of understanding for access to test sites.

How success is tracked: A KPI dashboard (tech progress, certifications, participation in EU consortia, pilot purchases, private capital raised) and an annual review to speed up certification and scale what works.

A. Security in every step

Secure framework: Work under clear rules for confidentiality (NDAs), security clearances, export controls, and data classification. Use standard IP templates tailored to dual-use projects.

B. National coordination

Create a national coordination hub aligned with key EU defence/innovation programmes and ensure full compliance with state-aid rules.

C. Stage-specific support tracks - each with its own tools, rules, and budget.

1. Dual-Use Proof-of-Concept & Prototyping Grants

To take concepts from mid-stage prototypes to near-market (from TRL ~4-6 up to TRL ~6-7), fast calls (rolling cut-offs) are used. Includes having access to defence test ranges, digital innovation hubs, and approved research labs.

2. Testbeds & Certification

Access to defence-grade test and certification facilities for: cyber, autonomous systems/UAS, advanced materials, energy storage and power electronics. Help to meet European/international standards and NATO requirements, plus interoperability and conformity checks.

3. Innovation-Friendly Public Purchasing

Use pre-commercial procurement and public procurement of innovation with the defence ministry and civil-security authorities. Run small pilot purchases ("test lots") to validate solutions in real settings.

4. Finance & Scale-up

Direct links to Measure 9 (Smart Finance & Innovation Fund) for venture capital, quasi-equity and guarantees. Add targeted risk-sharing for defence-adjacent projects and supply-chain tooling.

D. Pipeline & Partnerships

- Deal-flow: Source projects through sector clusters (aerospace/space, cyber, advanced manufacturing), Elevate Greece, and university tech-transfer offices. Broker participation in EU consortia and connections to prime contractors.
- Access & mentoring: Sign MoUs for test-site access with research infrastructures and innovation hubs; provide mentoring on security accreditation and export readiness.

E. Data, Impact & Learning

- Dashboard: Track technology progress, certifications achieved, SME participation in EU consortia, pilot procurements, and private capital mobilised—built with privacy by design.
- Annual review: Hold a yearly review with the responsible economic and defence authorities to refine rules, speed up certification pathways, and scale what works.

Responsible body:	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions***
• Ministry of National Defence (policy co-lead, procurement pilots) • Ministry of Development & Investments – GSRI (policy co-lead) • Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA) + ELKAK (programme operator) • Ministry of Digital Governance (cyber/security standards & trusted services).	• Defence & security directorates, regulators; prime contractors & Tier-1s; SME/industry clusters. • NRIs, universities, competence centres & DIHs (testbeds/certification). • HDB/HDBI, EIF/EIB (finance); Enterprise Greece (internationalisation). • Regions/PSEKs and Just Transition mechanisms for territorial pilots

Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)**	***Indicative timeline***
Strategic/Legal: national framework for security clearances/ Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) tiers; export-control guidance; state-aid mapping for dual-use; MoUs with NRIs/DIHs and key industrial partners; model PCP/PPI documentation. Operational: designation of secure test sites; procurement of certification services; broker network for EU consortia; training on defence procurement rules. Funding (indicative): PA 2021–27 (ERDF/ESF+), EDF (EU consortia), InvestEU, national PIP; synergies with Fund-of-Funds II (Measure 9) for equity/guarantees.	• Design (Q1 2026 – Q2 2026): governance, legal templates, testbed mapping, first call designs. • Pilot (Q3 2026 – Q4 2027): launch pilots, 10–15 PoC/prototype awards; 3–5 PCP/PPI pilots; initial certifications. • Scale (2028 – 2030): expand windows, integrate with EU consortia, link to FoF II instruments for scale-up. • Consolidate (2031 – 2035): institutionalise testbeds & procurement pathway, continuous learning and export acceleration.

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- ≥ 30% reduction in median time-to-decision vs. 2024 baselines
- ≥ 150 SMEs supported; ≥30% first-time defence/critical-tech participants.
- ≥ 60 certifications/interoperability validations (cyber/UAS/materials/energy).
- ≥ 40 Greek SME participations in EU consortia and ≥15 national pilot procurements.
- ≥ €600m mobilised (public + private); measurable TRL uplift and dual-use export growth.

6.11. Measure 11 - National Skills for Industrial Transition and STEP Programme

Title: National Skills for Industrial Transition and STEP Programme	***Objective:*** Set up a national skills architecture based on demand that supports Greece's industrial shift by connecting green, digital, and STEP skills to real-world projects, measurable productivity gains, and lowering carbon emissions. Foresight, standards, work-integrated learning, SME training networks, professional doctorates, finance, and AI-enabled learning are all part of the program. It focusses on regions that are just transitioning and on helping people aged 25 to 45 who are out of work. Target outcomes include higher SME digital intensity, spill-in of R&D to firms, faster adoption of clean production, and export-ready skills. *For clarity, the 30/60/90-day launch plan in Section 5 refers to pilots under this measure, specifically the Work-Integrated Degrees (WID) and SME Training Networks (SME-TN) pillars.*
Addressing recommendations : 7.1.1–7.1.5 and 7.2.1–7.2.4	
The measure is of strategic importance / a flagship or /an experimental action Flagship with Experimental Tracks tests new ways of delivering services across the country (micro-credentials, AI-enabled learning, outcome-based funding) and connects them to real business projects before going national. There are clear KPIs, external evaluations, and a learning loop that leads to policy changes for each trial track.	
Content: The programme is organised into six, mutually reinforcing pillars that cover the full journey from anticipating skills needs to delivering results inside firms. They are modular (starting where readiness is highest) and coordinated through common standards, shared services, and simple financing. Pilots come first, then scale-up, with a single pipeline for learners and SMEs and one dashboard for results. Each pillar below lists concise action lines that, together, turn strategy into measurable outcomes. Pillar A — STEP Skills Foresight & Standards Creates a permanent skills observatory and a common competence framework so education, training, and employers speak the same language. Introduces micro-credentials and a portable “skills wallet” so workers can carry verified achievements between jobs, regions, and sectors. A1. STEP Skills Observatory & Foresight Taskforce A2. National Competence Framework & Micro-credentials (green/digital/STEP) A3. Portable Skills Wallet & Digital Logbook (EUROPASS-ready)	

Pillar B — Work-Integrated Degrees & Paid Placements (WID) Builds structured work experience into university programmes so students spend meaningful time in real workplaces. A national placement exchange and mentor certification ensure quality, while mobility grants open doors for people in less-served regions. B1. Embed ≥24 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation SystemWork)-Integrated Learning in target degrees B2. National Placement Exchange & Mentor Certification B3. Mobility Grants & Inclusion Cohorts (incl. Just Transition regions) Pillar C — SME Training Networks (SME-TN) Organises SMEs into sectoral and regional training groups that share facilities, trainers, and roving labs. Offers training vouchers, release-time support, and on-the-job project grants tied to measurable results like quality gains, energy savings, or faster delivery. C1. Sectoral/Regional SME Training Networks (S3-aligned) C2. Roving Labs & Shared Training Facilities C3. Training Vouchers & Release-Time Subsidies C4. On-the-Job Project Grants (pay-for-results) Pillar D — Professional Doctorates in Industry (PDI) Funds advanced, industry-embedded doctorates where candidates solve concrete problems inside firms—accelerating the adoption of new processes, materials, and digital tools. Bridging bootcamps help mid-career people and the unemployed step into these roles, with clear rules for intellectual property and results. D1. National PDI Fund with Regional Windows D2. Bridging Bootcamps for unemployed 25–45 (STEM/industry basics) D3. Standard IP & Results Framework for firm-embedded research Pillar E — Finance & Enablers for Skills Projects Makes it easier for companies—especially SMEs—to fund training linked to real investments. A finance navigator, transaction-support vouchers, and links to the national fund-of-funds provide working capital, guarantees, and simple milestone-based payments. E1. SME Finance Navigator for Skills & Retrofit Projects E2. Transaction Support Vouchers (feasibility, audits, modelling) E3. Link to Fund-of-Funds II (Measure 9) for working capital/guarantees Pillar F — STEP Learning Technologies (Experimental) Deploys modern learning tools, including artificial intelligence (AI) for personalised learning paths and analytics. Partnerships with national AI centres provide an “AI concierge” for SMEs, with privacy-by-design and continuous improvement baked in. F1. AI-Personalised Learning Platform & analytics F2. AI Centre partnerships & “AI Concierge” services for SMEs	
Responsible body:	***Core stakeholders – support coalitions***

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour & Social Security	• Ministries & Agencies: Ministries of Education, Labour & Social Security; Ministry of Development & Investments; DYPA; EOPPEP; GSRI; HIA (operator); HAHE (Quality Assurance). • Education & Training Providers: Universities/HEIs, UAS, IEKs, Lifelong learning centres, accredited private providers. • Regional Coalitions: Regional Authorities & S3 platforms (starting with Western Macedonia), Competence Centres/Clusters, Chambers, Municipalities, JTF bodies. • Industry & Social Partners: SEV, SME confederations, sector associations (energy, agri-food, manufacturing), trade unions, anchor firms and mid-caps. • Finance & Enablers: HDBI/EIF intermediaries (Measure 9), banks, ESCOs, technology vendors for labs/AI, certification bodies. • Inclusion Partners: NGOs and community organisations for outreach to unemployed 25–45, women, and under-represented groups; disability support services. • International Knowledge Partners: CEDEFOP, ETF, universities and RTOs for curriculum and testbeds; EU digital/AI competence centres.
Prerequisites for implementation **(including funding sources)** • Standards & micro-credentials; mentor certification standards. • Call templates for SME-Thematic Networks (SME TN)/PDI; evaluation criteria and KPIs. • Live KPI dashboard; links to Measure 9 finance and the one-stop portal. Funding • ESF+ (training, inclusion, mentors) • ERDF (labs, roving labs) • JTF (coal regions) • Private co-funding and financing complements via Fund-of-Funds II	***Indicative timeline*** • Design pilots (2026): WID (Widening Participation & Spreading Excellence) pilots, 5 SME-TN, first PDI cohort, Minimum Viable Product (MVP) of AI-personalised learning. • National rollout (2026 - 2027): Scale all pillars, mid-term evaluation and retargeting • Consolidation (2031 – 2035): Embed models in HEI funding and regional skills compacts.

Expected Outcomes by 2035:

- Scale of paid placements and SME-TN coverage; regional balance and inclusion.
- Professional Doctorate completions and firm-adopted innovations.
- Verified skill gains and firm KPIs (quality, Overall Equipment Effectiveness, energy intensity).
- STEP-aligned certifications and usage of AI-learning tools.