OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Increase EU Fund Absorption, Eliminate Gold-plating and Provide Result-oriented Investments in the 2021-2027 Period

Project overview (output 6)

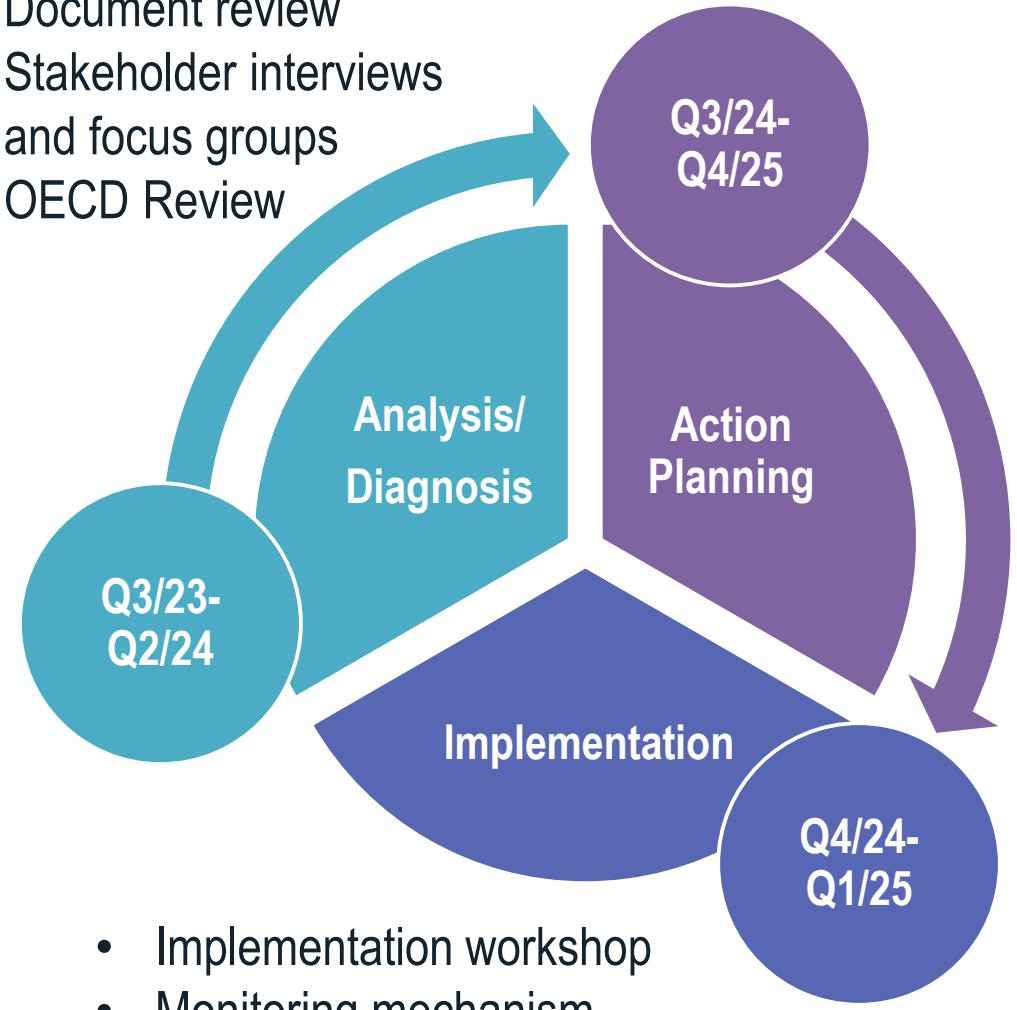
5 August 2025

Project aims and methodological approach

Project Goals

- ID opportunities to reduce admin burden
- Support design and implementation of new MCS and white paper recommendations
- Strengthen administrative capacity
- Increasing absorption and results-oriented investment in this programming period and beyond

- Document review
- Stakeholder interviews and focus groups
- OECD Review



- Recommendations and action plan
- Joint Working Commission
- Working groups

- Implementation workshop
- Monitoring mechanism
- Seminars

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Key findings of the Review (output 2)

Key findings of the OECD Review (output 2)

The OECD Review included an analysis of the Management and Control System processes and structures. This was done through data collection and stakeholder interviews with the MA, IBs and representatives of Beneficiaries.

Programming, call design and project selection

- A long-term vision/strategy for investment is not yet in place, and the lack of an integrated, place-based approach to Programme design (prioritisation) and implementation
- Coordination among MA, IB, regional partners exists, but does not effectively serve the purpose of generating integrated and place-based investment
- Fragmentation of calls and room for better anchoring calls to the investment priorities of the Programme
- Limited focus on project content and quality in project selection.

Project preparation and beneficiary relations

- Room to take a more strategic approach to beneficiary capacity building
- Limited evidence and assessment of beneficiary capacity
- Room for more coordinated and streamlined beneficiary capacity building measures and information provided to beneficiaries
- A sanction-oriented culture rather than a “beneficiary-oriented” culture
- Weak project preparation capacity among beneficiaries, especially at the subnational level

Human Resources

- Transition to Programme Slovakia will have an impact on organisations, functions, staff and their workload.
- New skills will likely be needed and in new places, as a result of these changes and in order to implement new (better) projects (e.g. ITIs).
- This suggests a need to map changes, design change management plans, and align learning and development initiatives.

Public Procurement

- Establishing a more effective control system to streamline processes but needs adequate resources and coordination to succeed.
- Risk-based approach heavily depends on the effectiveness of its methodology to accurately detect irregularities and optimise processes within public procurement.
- Helping beneficiaries navigate Slovakia's complex procurement procedures requires clear support, communication, and capacity-building efforts for effective implementation.

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Key findings of the OECD Review in human resources and capacity development

Identified issues:

> Changes being implemented will have an impact on organisations, functions, staff and their workload.

> New skills will likely be needed and in new places, as a result of these changes AND in order to implement new (better) projects (e.g. ITIs).

> So far these does not seem to be a detailed assessment/mapping of these changes, nor a plan to implement them.

> This suggests an urgent need to map changes, design change management plans, and align learning and development initiatives.

Opportunities for impact:

> There do appear to be plans to conduct capacity analysis and design methodologies to assess workforce needs.

> There is also a recognised need for capacity building initiative – and to revise the training plan to take these into consideration.

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Key findings of the OECD Review in programming, call design and project selection

Identified issues:

- A long-term vision/strategy for investment is not yet in place, and the lack of an integrated, place-based approach to Programme design (prioritisation) and implementation
  - Coordination among MA, IB, regional partners exists, but does not effectively serve the purpose of generating integrated and place-based investment
- Fragmentation of calls and room for better anchoring calls to the investment priorities of the Programme
- Limited focus on project content and quality in project selection.

Opportunities for impact:

- The national investment strategy is being developed, which can guide the next programming exercise
- Many existing coordination mechanisms could be used to particularly foster integrated investment
- Using ITI to engage subnational actors in defining investment priorities and projects

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Key findings of the OECD Review in project preparation and beneficiary relations

Identified issues:

- Room to take a more strategic approach to beneficiary capacity building
  - Limited evidence and assessment of beneficiary capacity across different beneficiary groups
  - Room for more coordinated and streamlined beneficiary capacity building measures and information provided to beneficiaries
  - A sanction-oriented culture rather than a “beneficiary-oriented” culture in the Management and Control System
- Weak project preparation capacity among beneficiaries, especially at the subnational level

Opportunities for impact:

- Using measures to understand beneficiary needs (e.g., surveys; beneficiary/project database)
- Using regional centres as one-stop-shops for beneficiaries
- Sharing more standardised information with beneficiaries

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Key findings of the OECD Review in public procurement

Identified issues:

> Establishing a more effective control system for EU funds, as the previous one was complex and caused delays. The new centralised control aims to streamline processes but needs adequate resources and coordination to succeed.

> The efficacy of Slovakia's recently adopted risk-based approach to EU fund controls heavily depends on the effectiveness its methodology to accurately detect irregularities and optimise processes within public procurement.

> Helping beneficiaries navigate Slovakia's complex procurement procedures for EU-funded projects is a major challenge, requiring clear support, communication, and capacity-building efforts for effective implementation.

Opportunities for impact:

> The control of public procurement contracts is carried out by one intermediary body – PPO (taking over both ex ante and ex post controls) is an opportunity to avoid duplicative controls and overlaps

> Creation of a coordination committee established by PPO to facilitate communication and collaboration among the entities involved in public procurement

> Identification of risk factors carried out, based on historical data

> Development of a ‘’Single Guide for Beneficiaries on the Process and Control for Public Procurement’’

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Recommendations and Action plan

Recommendations and focus of working groups

Based on the Review (output 2), three working groups were established, overseen by a Joint Working Commission (JWC) made up of key leaders from across the MCS and representative of Beneficiaries. The OECD conducted workshops and analysis with each working group to develop an action plan in their respective areas, in order to implement the following recommendations:

Strategic Programming, project preparation and beneficiary relations

1. Develop a multi-criteria prioritisation framework to help assess investment priorities.
2. Develop a roadmap for enhancing project preparation and beneficiary support.
3. Launch a pilot call for Integrated Territorial Investment.
4. Develop a practical guideline for the MA and IBs to improve their stakeholder engagement practices.

Human Resource Management

1. Design a methodology for allocating personnel in Intermediate Bodies.
2. Create a strategy for the coordination of workforce management between the Managing Authority and Intermediate Bodies.
3. Build an effective learning and development ecosystem.

Public Procurement

1. Design a robust training and capacity-building program tailored to the needs of IBs and beneficiaries.
2. Validating and refining the risk-based methodology to address procurement challenges.

**NB: Following consultation among the Slovak Republic, the European Commission and the OECD, on 29 October 2024 it was decided to merge the Strategic Programme, Call Design and Project Selection Working Group and the Beneficiary Capacity Building Working Group into one Working Group, called "Strategic Programming, Project Preparation, and Beneficiary Relations" because of the strong links between the proposed actions for the two Working Groups.*

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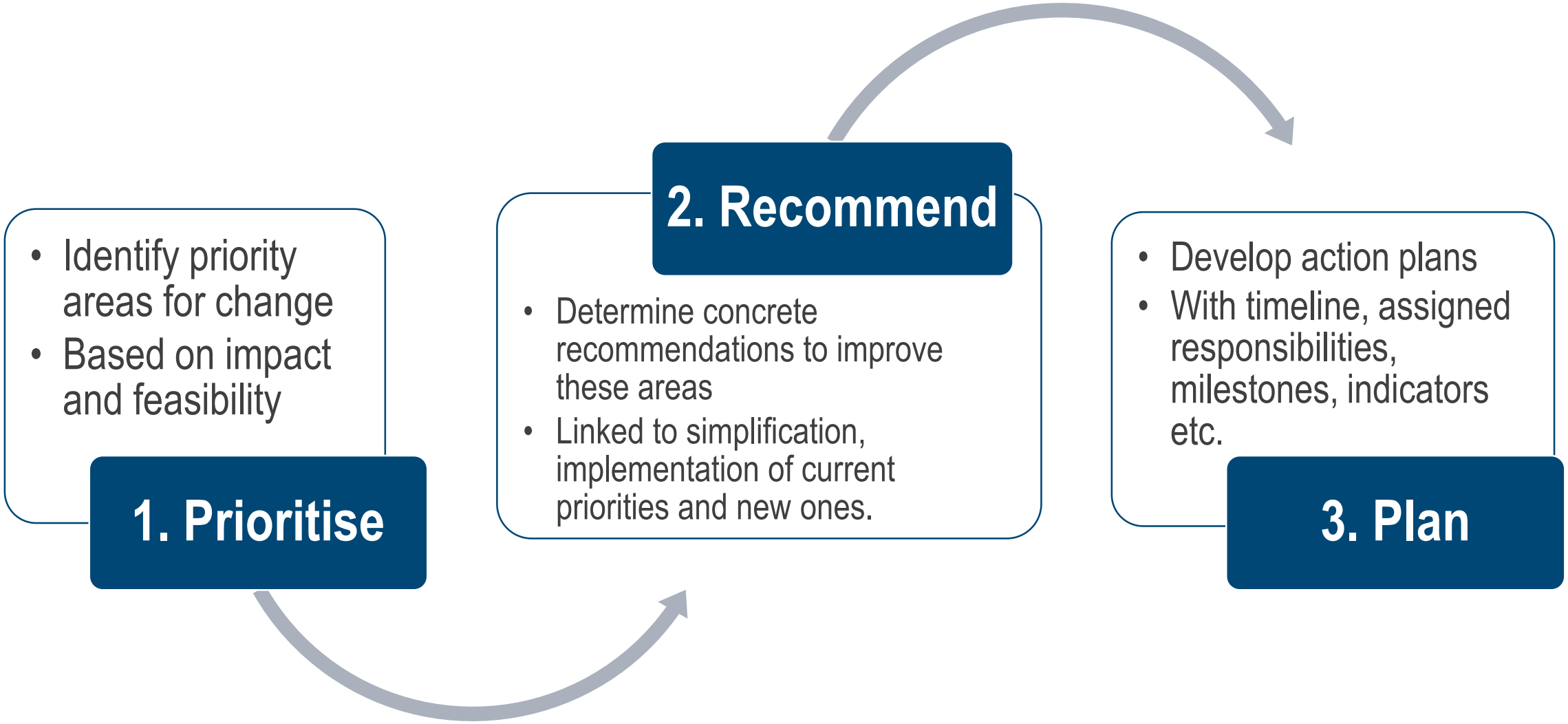
Methodology and activities of the Working Groups



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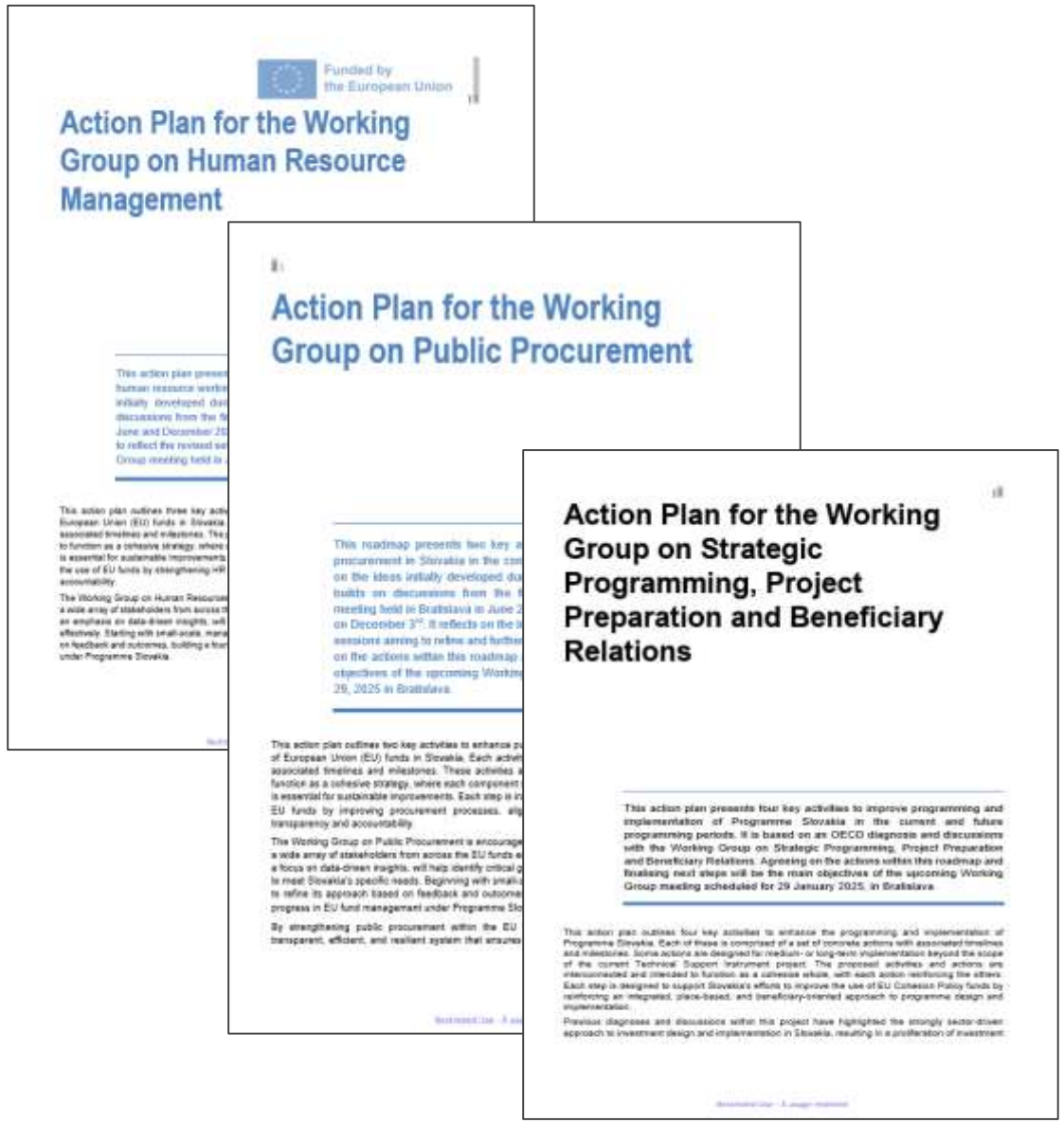
Actions plans (output 3)



> **Output 3: Comprehensive report summarising the recommendations from the conducted reviews and a proposed action plan for adoption of recommended measures**

- Based on the analysis conducted with the **Working Groups**
- Contains **recommendations** and **proposed action plan** validated with the working groups
- Targets **bodies,** specifies **results and timeline**
- Includes **international good practice** to guide implementation
- Highlights **complementarities and synergies**

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Example: Activity 2: Develop a Roadmap for enhancing project preparation and beneficiary support.

Activity 2	Milestones	Timeframe	Action owner	Other actors	Resources	Deliverables
2.1. Develop a roadmap for enhancing project preparation and beneficiary support based on broad stakeholder inputs.	Pre-final version of a Roadmap	March – May 2025	UPPVL	Local Experts, MF/ ÚHP ? MIRRI	Review, Interviews/ Focus Groups, Workshops	Draft roadmap
2.2. Launch and publish the roadmap and monitor its implementation	Roadmap Published and Launched	June/ July 2025	UPPVL	MIRRI	Seminar/ Meeting	Roadmap
2.3. (Long-term) Develop evidence-based analysis of the specific project preparation obstacles	Initial analysis for the roadmap	March – May 2025	UPPVL	Local Experts, MF/ ÚHP ? MIRRI	Review, Interviews/ Focus Groups, Workshops	Description of key obstacles

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Implementation phase

Methodology and activities for implementing the action plans

The OECD worked with each of the working groups and their Slovakian chairs to support the implementation of the Action Plans developed in output 4, through the following activities, further documented in the Implementation Report (output 4):

Implementation workshop

The OECD held a workshop focused on the implementation of the action plan, attended by the key members of the working groups and the JWC. The workshop focused on good practices for implementation and established the monitoring mechanism and ways of working for the implementation phase.

Monitoring mechanism

The OECD designed a monitoring mechanism that broke down each action of the plan against a timeline and enabled focused discussions on progress during the regular check-in meetings.

Regular check-ins

The OECD met with the working group chairs monthly to track progress, identify bottlenecks and risks, and provide advice and support as needed. These meeting were sometimes expanded to include the JWC or the full Advisory Group.

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Example: HR Working Group: Action Progress Tracker

	Action	Assigned to	Point of Contact	Timeframe	Status	Comments
Activity 1: Design a methodology for effective workforce planning	1.1. Map current state	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Simona Kubaská	March 2025	Started	
	1.2. Design methodology	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Simona Kubaská	June 2025	Not started	
Activity 2: Create a strategy for coordination	2.1. Define Coordination Tasks	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Zuzana Májeková	March 2025	Started	
	2.2. Prioritise key findings	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Zuzana Májeková	April 2025	On track	
	2.3. Enhancing Employee´s Mobility	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Zuzana Májeková	September 2025	On track	
	2.4. Create career paths	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Zuzana Májeková	December 2025	On track	
	2.5. Develop a draft document for the administrative capacities - Roadmap on administrative capacities building	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Zuzana Májeková	August 2026	Not started	
Activity 3: Build an effective learning and development ecosystem	3.1. Improve communication and coordination	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Vladimír Kotas	April 2025	Not started	
	3.2. Map the current learning and development environment	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Vladimír Kotas	March 2025	On track	
	3.3. Prioritise and better target training content	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Vladimír Kotas	Jun 2025	Not started	
	3.4. Pivot toward flexible, on-demand training	MIRDI, Administrative capacities department	Vladimír Kotas	December 2025	Not started	

Action Timeframe:

Near-term Long-term

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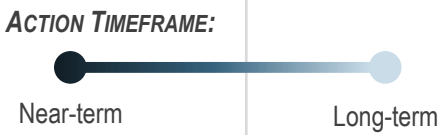
Example: HR Working Group: Detailed Action Timeline & Tracking

	Action	February	March	April	May	June	July	Beyond
Activity 3: Building an effective learning and development ecosystem	3.1. **Improve communication and coordination**							
	Establish working group and/or communities of practice							
	Determine key roles in coordinating learning and development, including agreement on what trainings should be centralised and how to divide efforts between the MA, IBs and Regional centres.							
	3.2. **Map the current learning and development environment**							
	Compile a list of the current learning and development providers / systems							
	Consider & Propose updates of Central training plan (target groups, activities, forms)							
	3.3. **Prioritise and better target training content**							
	Conduct a prioritisation workshops with Ibs, Regional centres and Representatives of Civil society to align on the key goals for learning and development.							
	Propose specialised training modules for target group of newcomers. Propose updates in training modules for advanced.							
	3.4. **Pivot toward flexible, on-demand training**							
	Develop specialised training modules for target group of newcomers. Update training modules for advanced.							



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Pivoting towards implementation (outputs 4 and 5)

Implementation report (output 4)

- **Purpose**: to provide an overview of the work completed, expected outcomes and potential impact vis-à-vis the efficient management of EU funds in Slovakia
- **Introduction**: discussed the project process and introduces the main themes explored (strategy, projects and beneficiaries; human resources; public procurement)
- **Summary of key outcomes and impacts**: provides an overview of what each of the Working Groups have accomplished. Spotlights outcomes and potential impact associated with each action plan activity of the three Working Groups.
- **Appendices:** offer a repository of all files/documents developed in the course of the implementation phase, in general and by each Working Group.

Seminars (output 5)

- **Working group on public procurement:** July 11th, 2025, 23 participants. The OECD presented some good practices on capacity-building and risk-based approaches in procurement, and PPO presented the progress of the implementation of the action plan, and future actions.
- **Working group on strategic programming, project preparation and beneficiary relations:**
  - Seminar on investment prioritisation on 28 April 2025 with 30 participants. UPPVL presented the methodology and progress of the investment prioritisation framework. The OECD presented international examples.
  - Seminar on project preparation roadmap development on 18 June 2025 with 50 participants. The OECD presented key findings and recommended actions for enhancing project preparation and international examples on roadmap development.
- **Working Group on Human Resource Management:** July 3. The OECD presentation contextualised the action plan in broader public sector transformations driven e.g. by new technologies and changing demographics. The OECD focused specifically on Mobility and the use of KPIs in people management.

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Results of the project

Lasting results for this programming period and beyond

Learning and skills

- A more flexible and effective learning and development eco-system aligned to career paths to ensure available skills and pipelines
- More accessible and practical materials (e.g. stakeholder engagement for call design, procurement Q&A repository)
- Increased capacity of IBs and beneficiaries with better targeted learning content (procurement training) and stronger digital skills (ITMS 21+ training)

Planning and programming

- Stronger, evidence-based investment prioritisation
- More targeted resource allocation to strategic projects for programming post 2027
- Call design and project development better reflecting stakeholder needs (incl. ITI)
- More effective workforce planning.

Optimising implementation

- More streamlined and efficient project preparation by beneficiaries
- Robust risk-based procurement methodology in place with enhanced ITMS functions
- More coordinated and flexible workforce to support implementation through, e.g. mobility mechanisms.

Partnerships and engagement

- Working with beneficiaries to enhance procurement methodology and guidelines
- Bottom-up, broad stakeholder consultation to develop project preparation roadmap and investment framework
- A whole-of-management and control system approach to address administrative capacity gaps

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