

# Measures to **Reinforce** the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs ...

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
**DG Regional Policy**



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
Υπουργείο Εθνικής Οικονομίας  
και Οικονομικών

**Athens,  
Greece**





EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DG Regional Policy



DG Regio gave the order to prepare this study in **July 2024**,  
after assigning **four** phases & key deliverables ...

**Kostas  
Karamarkos**

URBAN & REGIONAL  
STRATEGIC PLANNER

*limits above the sky*



We will **briefly** walk you through Phases & Deliverables 1, 2 and 3.

and finally concentrate on the Deliverable 4 – **the  
Transition Plan & the Measures  
proposed ...**



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**“WHAT’S  
IT ALL  
ABOUT?”**

## **Main content ...**

- Framework
- **4 Phases**
- Core content of the deliverables
- **Logical Framework – Measures Architecture**



## Measures to Reinforce the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs

Key findings and proposed measures ...

### Background & Aim

Greek SMEs facing productivity, digital and green transition challenges.

**The study identifies how targeted measures can boost innovation capacity and long-term competitiveness.**

It supports evidence-based policy design at national and regional level.



## Measures to Reinforce the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs

Key findings and proposed measures ...

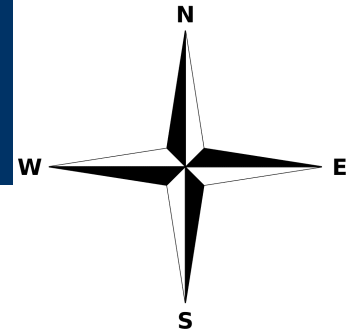
### Study Approach

- **Extensive desk research** (studies, EU good practices)
- **Mapping** of all funding programmes in progress
- **Quantitative analysis** of SME performance, innovation activity and regional disparities and
- **Stakeholder consultations** with ministries, regions, chambers, clusters, intermediaries and SMEs



## Measures to Reinforce the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs

Key findings and proposed measures ...



### Strategic Directions

- **Strengthen** regional innovation ecosystems and sectoral clusters
- **Accelerate** digital and green transformation in SMEs, especially in traditional sectors
- **Improve** access to finance for innovative and fast-growing SMEs
- **Build skills and management capabilities** for innovation, export readiness and scale-up
- **Promote collaboration** between SMEs, research organisations and large firms in value chains





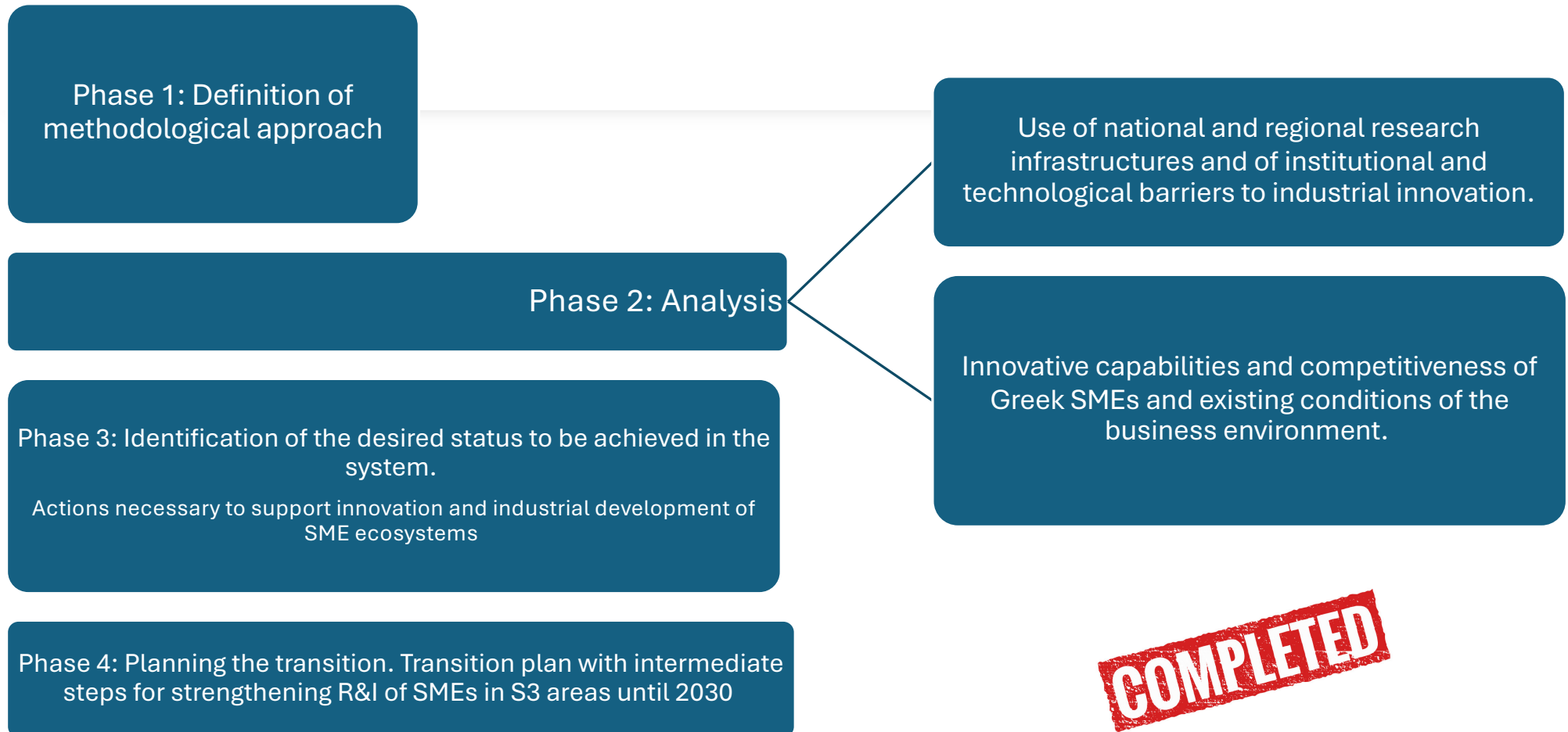
## Measures to Reinforce the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs

Key findings and proposed measures ...

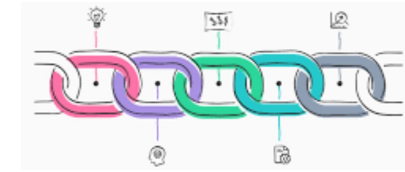
### Expected Impact

- **Higher share** of innovative SMEs introducing new products, services and business models.
- **Improved** productivity, quality and resilience across Greek SME sectors.
- **Increased** private investment in innovation and technology upgrade.
- **More and better** jobs in knowledge-intensive and export-oriented activities.

# Phases of the assignment



# Assignment & Logical Framework



The project was organised as a **clear logical chain** from **analysis to implementation ...**

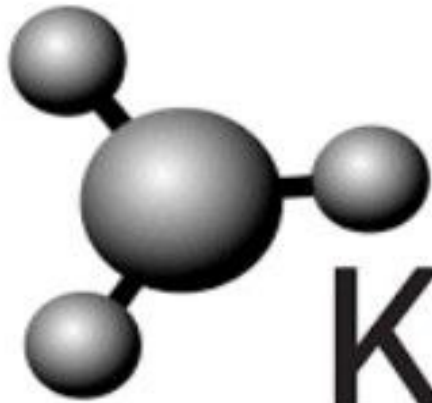
- D1 set the scope and the methodology. **D1**
- D2 described the 'As-Is' situation: **where** **D2**  
**Greek SMEs and the innovation system stand today.**
- D3 defines the '**Desired State**' and proposes strategic objectives and recommendations **D3**

# Assignment & Logical Framework


- D4, translated all findings into **a concrete Transition Plan and a portfolio of measures.**







# Key Elements

A dark, textured desk surface. In the upper right, a silver laptop is partially visible, showing its keyboard. Next to it lies a black smartphone and a silver pen.

# Desk research

## The what, why and how

a **wide evidence base** –  
European and national  
strategies, statistics, studies and  
programme documents.

# Key Stakeholders

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MON-ESEE & national authorities,  
ROP managing authorities and  
regions, NRIs, GSRI, OBI, Technology  
Transfer Offices,  
Digital Innovation Hubs, various  
business representatives ...



## Methodological Approach ...

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**combines** quantitative indicators, qualitative inputs and structured tools like SWOT and gap analysis, so that the proposals in D3 are **firmly grounded in reality ...**



REALITY





**Measures to Reinforce  
the Innovative Capabilities  
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Greek SMEs**

**D1**

## DELIVERABLE 1 - Purpose & Scope

‘**Inception**’ of the project (S3, Greece 2.0, the National Development Plan and industrial strategy)

to support the Ministry  
in planning the transition  
Towards ...



## **DELIVERABLE 1 - Methodological Approach & Tools**

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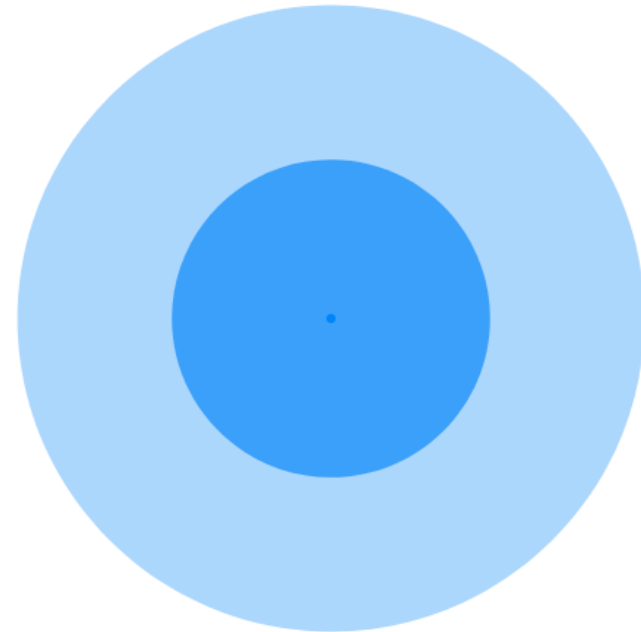
- industrial trends, skills, research and innovation, and support instruments.
- understand not only what exists, **but how it works for SMEs in practice.**



## DELIVERABLE 1 - Activities & Stakeholders

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meetings with national coordination bodies and regions, **to validate** the analytical focus and **capture early signals from the ground.**





## **DELIVERABLE 1 – Early Conclusion ...**



**Greece has strong assets,  
but they are fragmented  
and not yet organised as a coherent  
innovation policy framework**



**Measures to Reinforce  
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and Competitiveness of  
Greek SMEs**



## DELIVERABLE 2 - Objective & Structure (1)

D2 answers a simple question: **where do we stand today?**

**2025**

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## DELIVERABLE 2 - Objective & Structure (2)

Summarises the **current use** of research and innovation infrastructures by firms, the **innovative** capabilities and competitiveness of SMEs, and the **main** institutional and technological **barriers ...**

## DELIVERABLE 2 - Objective & Structure (3)

**key conclusions** that feed directly into the design of the desired state by 2035 ...

**Conclusions**

## DELIVERABLE 2 - Key Findings (1)

KEY  
FINDINGS

the picture that emerges is mixed:

**There is a strong research base and pockets of excellence,  
but most SMEs are small, low-tech and not R&D-active  
...**

## DELIVERABLE 2 - Key Findings (2)

KEY  
FINDINGS

business R&D and the commercialisation of research remain limited, and SME engagement with various supporting is uneven and concentrated in a few regions ...



R&D

## DELIVERABLE 2 - Key Findings (3)

### KEY FINDINGS

- **important systemic constraints:** skills gaps, especially for the twin transition, and **under-developed** knowledge transfer structures
- on governance, support instruments are fragmented, **sometimes overlapping, and not always easy for SMEs to navigate**
- **Coordination** between national and regional levels can be improved





## Measures to Reinforce the Innovative Capabilities and Competitiveness of Greek SMEs



## DELIVERABLE 3

is about the **‘Desired State’** and the strategic framework to get there.

**translates** this into **three strategic objectives** and **a set of thematic recommendations ..**

## DELIVERABLE 3 - Key Challenges

- low business R&D and commercialisation,
- fragmented support,
- slow digital and green uptake,
- limited access to finance,
- skills mismatches.



## DELIVERABLE 3 - Vision to 2035 ...

to significantly **increase** the number and value-added of knowledge-intensive innovative SMEs

and **bring Greece**

**closer** to its Mediterranean peers in innovation performance ...



## DELIVERABLE 3 – Mission ...

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**to enable SMEs  
to innovate, digitalise, green  
and scale internationally,  
  
supported by strong research-  
business links,  
smart finance,  
skills and  
streamlined regulation.**



# DELIVERABLE 3 - Gap Analysis ...

we derived 3 strategic objectives:

1. Enhance SME innovation and competitiveness
2. Foster skills for the transition
3. Improve S3 governance and institutions

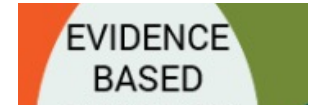


Slow Strategy Driven by Change



Change Driven by Fast Strategy

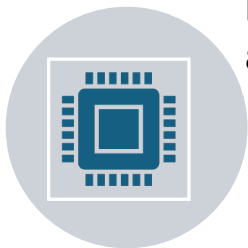
# DELIVERABLE 3 – Priority Sectors ...



food and beverage



pharmaceutical industry



manufacture of computers and  
peripheral equipment, Computer  
programming, consulting and related  
activities



defence industry

# Conclusions



**Key Recommendations  
Results & KPIs**



**KNOWLEDGE  
INTENSIVE COMPANIES**



## Towards Transition Plan & Measures ...

- **P1** set the scope and method,
- **P2** provided the diagnosis and
- **P3** proposed a coherent strategic framework and specific recommendations
- **P4** turned this into an **operational transition plan** and a **portfolio of measures** ...

# D4

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## TRANSITION PLAN



## **D4** a **Transition Plan** for Greek innovation and competitiveness **to 2035**

The plan provides the **practical bridge** between Greece's current SME and innovation system and the 2035 vision :

**to double the number and value-added of knowledge-intensive SMEs and align national innovation performance with Mediterranean peers.**

## **D4** a **Transition Plan** for Greek innovation and competitiveness **to 2035**

- **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.

## **D4** a **Transition Plan** for Greek innovation and competitiveness **to 2035**

- **Two foundational governance reforms are proposed** to consolidate the Greek research & innovation policy system.
- **11 policy measures are grouped in five strategic priorities** and include built-in experimentation to enable adaptive learning and policy refinement.

# Why a R&I governance reform is needed

- **Fragmented responsibilities**
- **No single centre of gravity:** strategy, funding and delivery split between GSRI, Ministry of Development, MERAS, MNEF, Digital Governance, Defence, etc.
- **Inefficient policy delivery**
- **Missed opportunities:** applied research, innovation support and SME competitiveness hampered by fragmentation.

**Greece needs a  
coherent,  
performance-driven  
R&I governance  
system to deliver  
innovation-led  
growth ...**

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need

# **Governance Reform 1: A National Ministry of Research & Innovation**

- **Consolidate responsibility of Ministry of Development and Investment for R&I policy**
- **Aligns and integrate policies**
- **Clear strategic leadership**
- **Preserves roles of MERAS & MNEF:** MERAS maintains oversight of basic research; MNEF manages financing instruments (PA, RRF, PIP).
- **Unified ecosystem coordination:** Ministry/GSRI supervises research centres, TTOs, clusters, Elevate Greece, ELIDEK, OBI, etc.



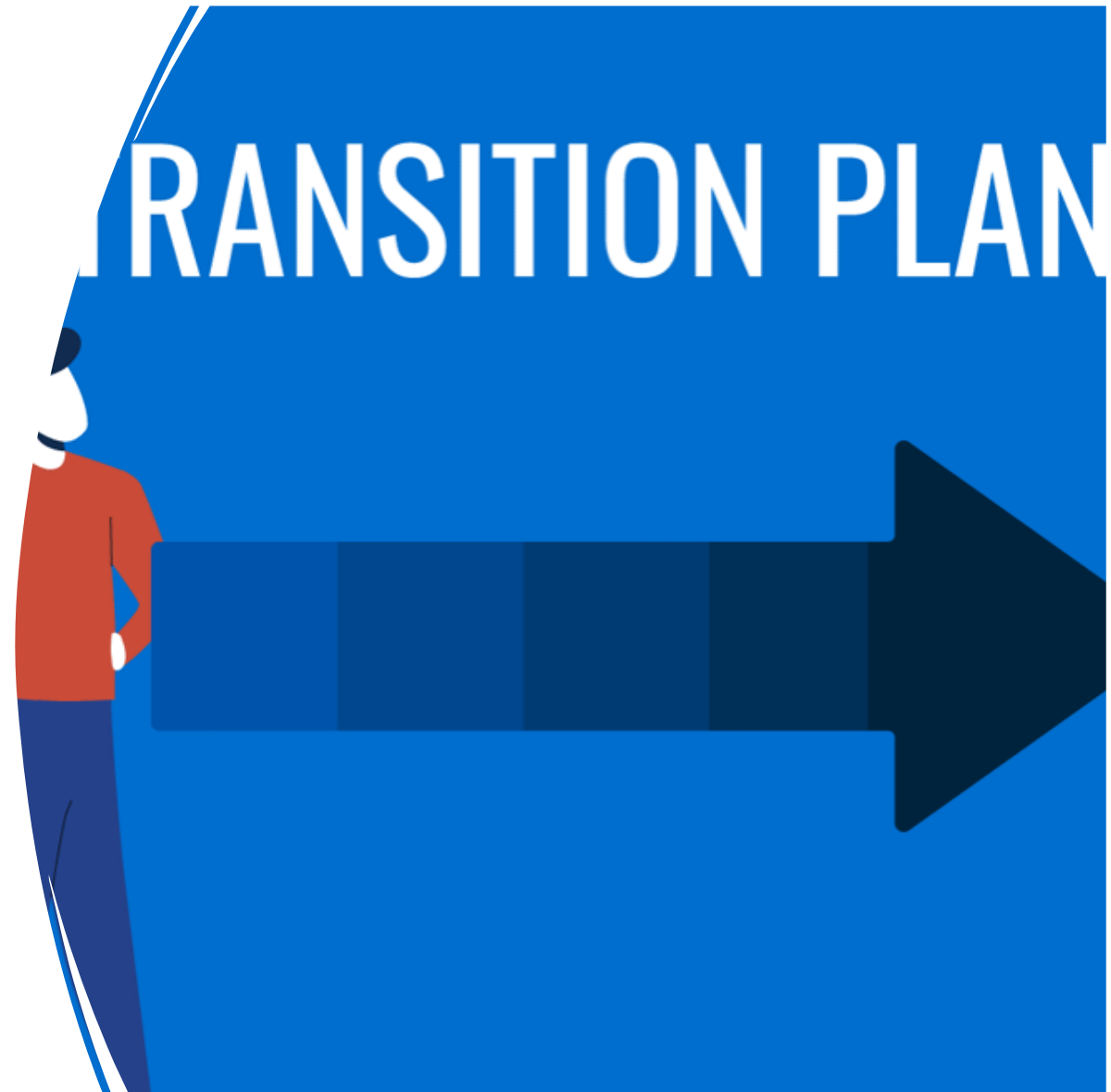
## **Governance Reform 2: A National Hellenic Innovation Agency (HIA)**

- **One operational delivery body:** merge OBI, Enterprise Greece and Elevate Greece into a single high-capacity innovation agency under the Ministry of Development.
- **Strong operational autonomy**
- **Strategy–execution split:** GSRI sets policy; HIA delivers programmes, manages competitive funding and coordinates EU/national innovation instruments.
- **Complete innovation support offer**

## **D4: a Transition Plan** for Greek innovation and competitiveness **to 2035**

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It provides a structured policy architecture to systematically support Greek (knowledge-intensive) SMEs to shift toward greater innovation, productivity, and international competitiveness in a 2030-2035 timeframe.



## **D4: a Transition Plan** for Greek innovation and competitiveness **to 2035**

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

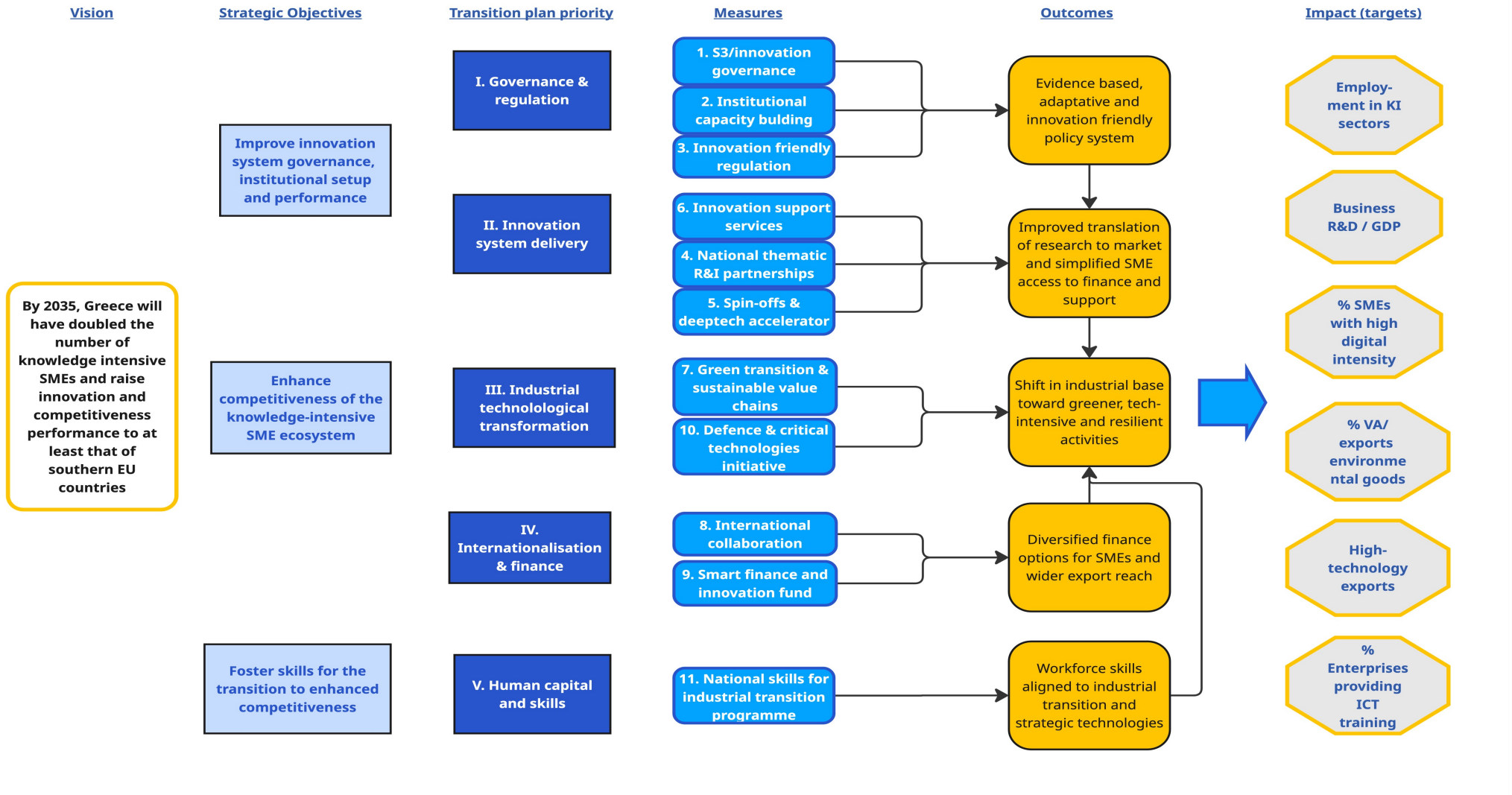
**11 measures** labelled as being of strategic importance (S), a flagship measure (F) or an experimental (E) action.

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

# Strong **Alignment** with the EU's 2028–2034 NRRPs proposals

- **Performance-driven & integrated:** The plan matches the Commission's shift to flexible, results-based cohesion policy and unified national–regional planning.
- **Strategic & future-oriented:** Measures reinforce EU priorities on STEP technologies, green and digital transition, competitiveness and skills.
- **Modern governance & accountability:** Upgraded coordination, monitoring and regulatory capacity align with the Commission's requirements for robust, transparent multi-level governance.

## D4 - Translating a vision into impact



# Policy Mix – **Core** Design Principles

- **Five strategic priorities**
- **11 consolidated measures**
- **Built-in experimentation**, with ~1/3 of measures designed as structured pilots
- **System-wide learning**, with pilots distributed across governance, delivery, industrial transformation and skills.
- **Staged roadmap (2025–2035)** where early pilots generate feedback that guides scaling and mainstreaming of interventions.



## Governance & System Foundations (Measures 1–3)

STRATEGIC

## M1 - Enhanced S3 Governance & Monitoring

To modernise, coordinate, and digitalise the governance of Greece's 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.



## **Governance & System Foundations (Measures 1–3)**

The word 'STRATEGIC' is written in large, bold, blue capital letters with a distressed, weathered texture. It is set against a background of white bricks with grey mortar.

## **M2 - Institutional Capacity-Building and Reform of the National Innovation System**

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.





## Governance & System Foundations (Measures 1–3)

**STRATEGIC**

### M3 - Innovation-Friendly Regulation and SME Test Implementation

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.



## Innovation Delivery & Industrial Transformation (Measures 4–7)

# flagship

### M4 - National Thematic R&I Partnerships for Industrial Transformation

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.



## Innovation Delivery & Industrial Transformation (Measures 4–7)

flagship



Experimental

## M5 - Research Commercialisation, Spin-offs and Deep-Tech Acceleration Programme

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.



## Innovation Delivery & Industrial Transformation (Measures 4–7)

**STRATEGIC**



**Experimental**

## M6 - Innovation Support Framework and SME Access Simplification Initiative

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).



## Innovation Delivery & Industrial Transformation (Measures 4–7)

# flagship

## M7 - Green Transition and Sustainable Value-Chain Programme

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.



## M8 - National Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Internationalisation

### Internationalisation, Finance & Skills (Measures 8–11)

Establish a coherent national framework that facilitates international market access and cross-firm cooperation for Greek knowledge-intensive SMEs.

**STRATEGIC**

This framework will be operationalised through an initial trial of an AI-powered B2B marketplace for international SME matchmaking.





## **Internationalisation, Finance & Skills (Measures 8–11)**

# flagship

## **M9 - Smart Finance and Innovation Fund (Fund- of-Funds II)**

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.



## Internationalisation, Finance & Skills (Measures 8–11)

**STRATEGIC**

## M10 - Defence and Critical-Technology Innovation Initiative

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 programme aims to expedite knowledge-intensive enterprises' progression to TRL 6–9 and facilitate their integration into EU programmes and supply chains by 2030–2035 through the establishment of international alliances, targeted financing and procurement strategies, and secure testing environments.





## **Internationalisation, Finance & Skills (Measures 8–11)**

# flagship

## **M11 - National Skills for Industrial Transition and STEP Programme**

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 programme. It focusses on regions that are just transitioning and on helping people aged 25 to 45 who are out of work.



# TRANSITION PLAN

## Roadmap overview (2025– 2035) (1)

### **Phase I – System Foundations ('26–'27 → '35)**

- Governance reform, HIA setup, regulatory sandboxes → Modern, coordinated R&I system.

### **Phase II – Innovation System Activation ('26–'27 → '35)**

- R&I partnerships, spin-off and deep-tech support, SME access tools → Stronger pipelines from research to market.

# Roadmap overview (2025–2035) (2)

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## **Phase III – Twin Transitions & Strategic Technologies ('26–'35)**

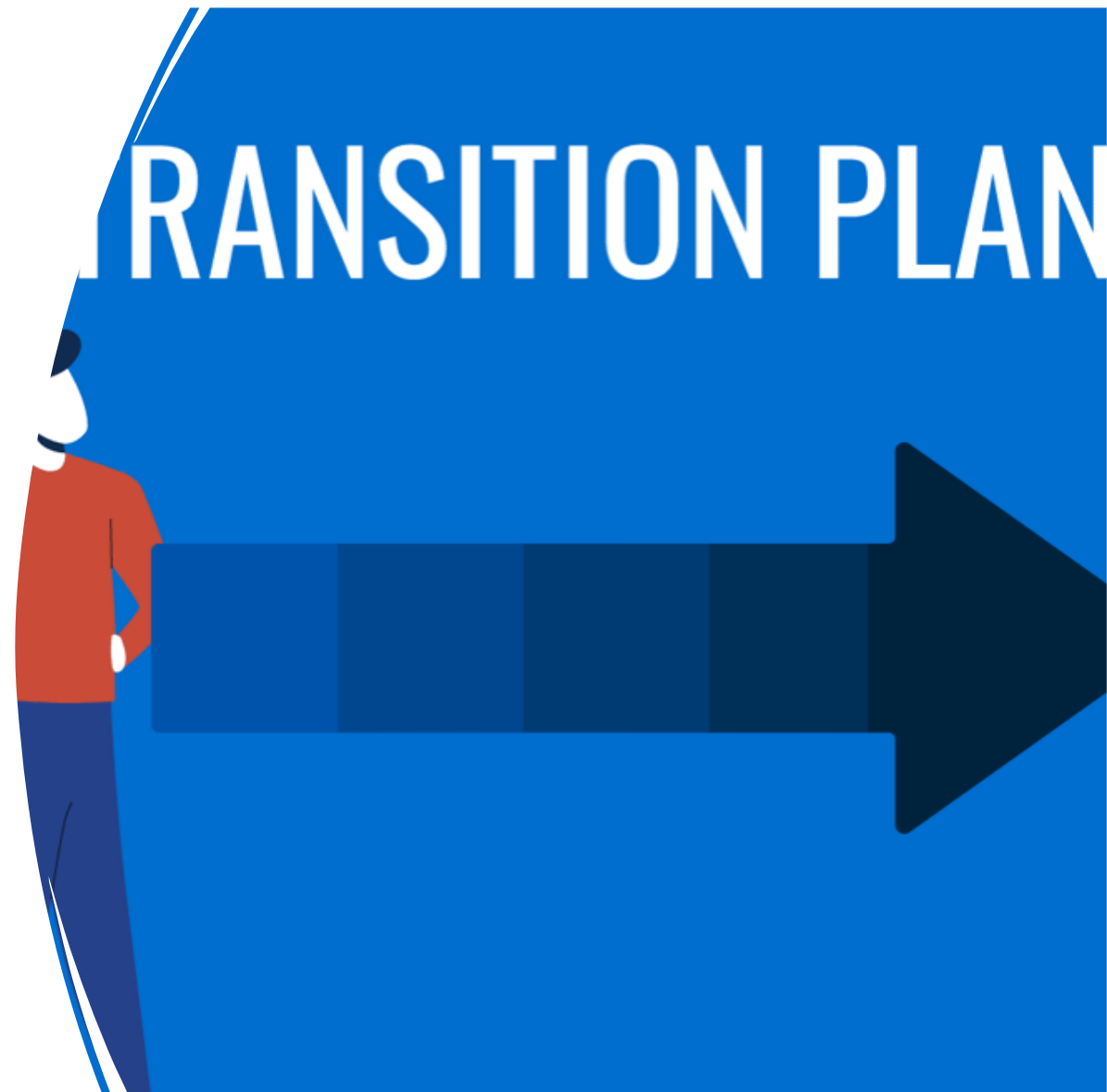
- Green, digital and dual-use innovation pilots → New industrial and technology models.

## **Phase IV – Finance, Internationalisation & Skills ('26–'35)**

- Blended finance, globalisation tools, STEP skills pilots → Investment, global reach & skilled workforce.

## **Phase V – Consolidation & Learning ('26–'35)**

- Evaluation, forecasting, adaptive governance → Policy learning system and sustainable innovation policy model.



## The transition plan includes a set of **operational conclusions:**

- 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.



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