



OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability

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Developing an organisational learning and development plan to build skills in the Managing Authority of the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme in Greece

This Learning and Development plan was developed by the OECD in collaboration with the Managing Authority of the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme in Greece (MA). Supported by the European Commission (DG Regio), the OECD worked with the MA in 2018 and 2019 to diagnose administrative bottlenecks to greater absorption of European Structural and Investment Funding (ESIF). One of the outcomes of that project was a Roadmap of actions prioritised for further support. The OECD supported the MA to develop and run an employee engagement survey and run a competency gap analysis to identify areas for targeted reform. This learning and development plan summarises the process and can be used by other administrations wishing to improve competency levels.

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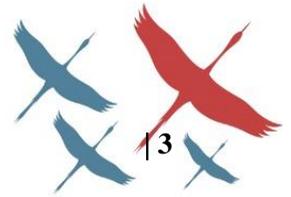
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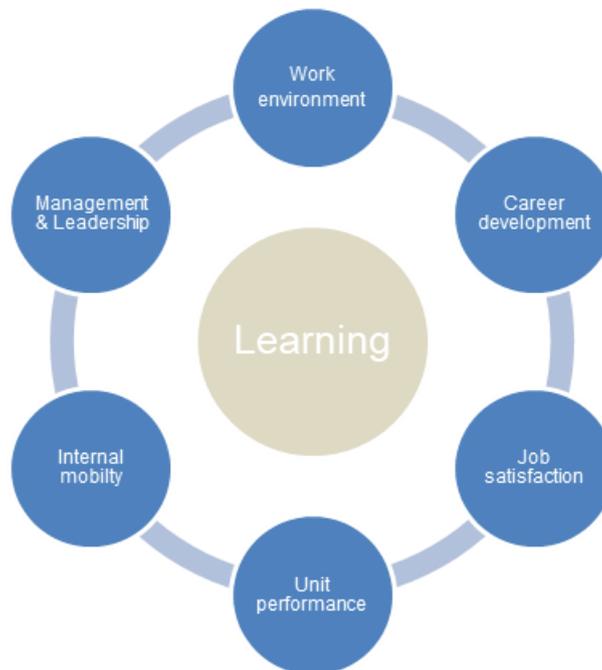
Background

Beginning in summer 2020, the OECD facilitated a process to support the Managing Authority of the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme in Greece (MA) to develop an organisational learning and development plan. This process consisted of a competency gap analysis series conducted over four workshops from June to October 2020 with MA staff, and an action planning series conducted over three workshops in January and February 2021 with MA leadership. An employee engagement survey conducted in autumn 2020 also informed the learning and development action plan developed by the OECD in coordination with MA staff and leadership.

The competency gap analysis built on the European Commission Competency Framework and online Self-Assessment Tool – two comprehensive instruments for MAs wishing to initiate conversations about competency gaps across specific organisations, functions and hierarchical levels. The instruments – [available here](#) – provide structured guidance to MAs. The Competency Framework provided input for the OECD workshops and helped generate a bottom-up discussion on key competences and learning objectives.

The context for this learning and development plan comes as the MA prepares for the next programming period. Staff comments during the employee engagement survey referred to a desire to achieve greater impact with beneficiaries and to improve the criteria for access to learning opportunities. As indicated in Figure 1, below, learning is at the heart of many of the core areas of employee engagement:

Figure 1. Learning at the heart of an engaged and motivated MA



Source: OECD Secretariat

This action plan contains three sections:

- Findings from the competency gap analysis and action planning workshops
- 2021 learning and development action plan

- Recommendations for monitoring progress and long-term implementation

This document contains actions focusing on learning and development for the MA to implement and integrate into everyday work in 2021 and beyond. The OECD will be available to support MA implementation of the learning and development plan throughout 2021, while potentially also connecting the MA to other managing authorities to share experiences and provide a peer perspective on MA learning and development.

Findings: Competency gap analysis and action planning workshops

Through a gap analysis, which concluded in October 2020, the MA prioritised management and professional competencies to be incorporated into an MA-wide learning and development plan. The competences below represent the final ten competences prioritised by a group of MA staff, ranked in order of priority (four management competencies and six professional competencies). Many of the competences overlap: that is normal and reflects the complex operating environment of the MA. Many of the competences below rely on a combination of substantive knowledge combined with the application of emotional intelligence.

| Competencies | | | | Description |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----|--------|---|
| Management competencies | | | | |
| Human resource implementation | strategy | and | | Many managers in the MA are engineers by training and have little formal education in Human Resource Management. In addition to their role as hierarchical supervisors, there is a desire among staff for managers to act as ‘coaches’ and provide guidance on career development. Learning goals for this competence may include technical modules on the principles of strategic human resource management, but practical ways for learners to discuss the application of these principles in practice. |
| Developing management | others | and | people | Career development in the context of the Greek MA is particularly important, in part because of the limited opportunities for formal promotion over the past ten years. In this context, staff are eager for their managers to play a more active role in helping them identify ways to broaden their skill set. But managers often don’t have the tools or resources to be able to carry this out in a way that meets individual expectations as well as organizational objectives. |
| Management communication | facilitation | and | | The results of the employee engagement survey indicate that managers scored below the section average for generating motivation among staff. Building competence in communication is a strategic investment in the long-term health of the MA: it underpins engagement with beneficiaries, can help structure work and projects efficiently and avoid conflicts. Communication and facilitation is a |



particularly apt choice of management competence because it can generate dialogue on MA objectives in a context where, frequently, there is considerable time pressure to implement projects.

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| Leadership | ‘Leadership’ can be seen in this context as a collection of attributes and behaviours. Time pressure is one of the most significant factors in MA work, which tends to be deadline-driven. |
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Professional competencies

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| Problem solving | Successful absorption of EU funds depends not just on knowing the relevant legislation and rules, but also on being able to interpret them and finding solutions to unforeseen problems. There are a range of methodologies (e.g. ‘design thinking’ that professional staff could be trained on and encourage to apply in their everyday work. |
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| Strategic management of goals and initiatives | Given the deadline-driven environment of the MA, competences related to the strategic management of goals could help with planning and prioritizing resources. Ultimately, learning opportunities here are about helping staff put in place processes and methods so that they can focus their attention on the most high-value practices. |
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| Analytical skills | The goal of building analytical competences is to increase staff motivation (empowerment and ability to solve challenges as they arise) and increase absorption/implementation of funds through finding solutions quicker. Learning modules here could focus on how to apply judgement and in increasing emotional resilience to deal with challenging situations. |
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| Professional communication | Professional communication can have a substantial impact on MA objectives. Learning and development in this area could involve MA staff reflecting on a variety of scenarios – such as engaging with beneficiaries – and understanding when and where to apply different communication strategies to achieve better outcomes. |
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| Decision-making and delegation | The science of decision-making is fascinating – many of the judgements that we make each day are subject to more bias and preconceptions than we realise. By understanding how decisions are made, MA staff can use their judgement better and understand the point of view of diverse stakeholders. And while ‘delegation’ is not a competence in its own right, effective |
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| | delegation depends on sound judgement and decision-making. |
| Flexibility and adaptability to change | EU funds is a rules-driven environment where it can sometimes appear as if there is little room for deviation from ‘how things have been done’. Building competences for increased flexibility and adaptability is a core part of building overall MA capacity given the considerable uncertainties ahead over the coming years. |

Prioritisation

Following the competency gap analysis, the ten competencies were presented to MA leadership with the goal of further prioritising the competencies to build into a learning and development plan in 2021. In January and February 2021, the OECD consulted with the Management Organisation Unit (MOU), conducted research on effective learning and development practices, and facilitated additional workshops with MA management to accomplish the following goals:

| Goals | Results |
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| Build momentum for learning and development plan | Many organizational training plans fail because they do not meet participant expectations or do not take into account the needs of participants. To make sure that the MA learning action plan was as relevant as possible, the OECD and MA team devoted significant time to building a common understanding of learning needs and objectives through the workshop series at management and professional level. |
| Review existing training content and infrastructure | Significant existing training infrastructure is available from the MOU, which can be leveraged as part of the learning and development plan for the MA, particularly online learning resources. In particular, the MOU has experience designing learning ‘journeys’ and breaking learning into accessible modules. |
| Understand participant needs and set expectations | Management outlined their priorities for learning and development both for themselves and staff within the MA. Emphasis was placed upon the need to be efficient with time, to tailor learning opportunities to particular team needs, and to determine a system to track the effectiveness of learning and development implementation to continue to adapt in the future. This is in the context of a busy work environment where many managers may not have experience overseeing learning objectives and integrating learning into everyday work. |
| Establish learning goals | Management prioritized MA focus on one management competency and three professional competencies for staff: management facilitation |



and communication (management), analytical skills (professional), flexibility and adaptability to change (professional), and problem solving (professional). The OECD drafted learning goals for each. These are detailed in the next section of the action plan.

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| Determine delivery methods | Management feedback emphasized the importance of utilizing interactive learning methods containing experiential elements, the ability to connect with others and learn in small teams, and the need to create time and space for learning that allow participants to apply practical skills to their work in a safe space. |
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2021 Learning and Development Action Plan

Based on the cumulative results of the competency gap analysis and learning and development workshops conducted with the MA from summer 2020 through February 2021, the OECD drafted a learning and development action plan to be implemented by the MA in Q2 - Q4 2021. This plan contains a list of prioritised competencies for development, with associated priority audiences, focus skills, learning methods, delivery partners, timelines, and specific learning outcomes.

This plan is designed for the MA to own and implement, with support as needed from the MOU and the OECD. For a learning and development plan to be sustainable, it is critical that it is implemented by the MA itself to ensure that management and staff are bought in and dedicate appropriate time and resource to ensuring the plan’s success.

Role of the MA

This learning plan is *by* and *for* the MA. From March onwards, the role of the MA project team will be to liaise with the MOU on finalising the timing and content of the learning and development modules for the competences prioritised below. While it is difficult (and counterproductive) to ‘force’ people to take training, the MA project team can help launch the learning and development plan by communicating more widely to the MA as a whole on the background of this project and on expectations.

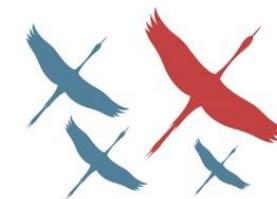
Role of the MOU

The MOU is the main training provider for this project. Its main role will be to identify existing course offerings that could be adapted to suit the learning journeys that the MA management group and professional staff will undertake. The MOU has considerable experience providing training and adapting content and format to suit new needs, especially during the Covid pandemic. The clear message from the final two workshops was that staff react best to immersive, experiential learning opportunities that is broken down into small ‘chunks’ that they can align with their work.

Role of the OECD

With the learning and development plan complete, the immediate goal is for the MA to implement the plan in conjunction with the MOU. The OECD is available for consultation as needed in the coming months, but its main role is foreseen in September when it could host a workshop focussed on initial lessons learned. At this point, it could be useful to

facilitate an exchange with the Croatian MA that is also in the process of designing a learning and development action plan.



| Organisational Learning and Development Plan for 2021 | | | | Greece Managing Authority of the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme | | |
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| Date created or last reviewed: | | March 11, 2021 | Person(s) responsible for monitoring progress: | | | |
| Competence | Audience | Focus skill | Learning methods | Delivery partner | Timeline | Outcome |
| Management facilitation and communication | Management | Communicating expectations | Online course | MOU | Q2 2021 | Managers will be able to use a variety of communications strategies to clearly and consistently state objectives for their teams. |
| | | | Small-group facilitated practice and discussion | MA led by members of management team | Q3 2021 | |
| Management facilitation and communication | Management | Team management and feedback | Instructor-led small group course delivered in repeated sessions over the quarter | MOU | Q4 2021 | Managers will be able to define clear feedback loops for their teams and provide regular feedback on how well they are achieving team objectives. |
| Analytical skills | Staff | Strategic decision-making | Online course | MOU | Q2 2021 | Staff will be able to apply decision-making and prioritization models to their own work context. |
| | | | Group discussion of models in practice | MA led by member of staff or management | Q2 2021 | |
| Flexibility and adaptability to change | Staff | Identifying and adapting to changing conditions | Online course | MOU | Q3 2021 | Staff will be able to identify changing conditions and modify plans and behaviours to meet those changing conditions. |
| | | | Peer discussion with other MAs (inside and outside of Greece) | MA led (and facilitated by OECD if needed for outside Greece) | Q3 2021 | |
| Problem solving | Staff | Maximizing work as a team | Instructor-led small group course delivered in repeated sessions over the quarter | MOU | Q4 2021 | Staff will be able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses within their teams and test at least one new way of working as a team. |



In this plan, MA management and staff will have access to learning and development opportunities throughout 2021. This action plan also focuses on piloting new and interactive methods of learning, including online courses, communities of practice and group discussion, and peer-led learning emphasizing the implementation of behaviour changes in practice. By staggering learning opportunities throughout the year and by taking advantage of a mix of learning modalities, the MA should be able to test out different learning methods while spacing out learning opportunities to ensure that management and staff continue to be able to meet their daily obligations while building new habits based on their learning.

Moving forward, the OECD will present this plan to MA management and staff to determine appropriate next steps in partnership with the MOU and begin implementation.

Monitoring Progress and Long-term Plans

In addition to implementing the learning and development plan focused on learning outcomes, monitoring progress and ensuring that learning is integrated into long-term plans is an important next step. Monitoring implementation in 2021 should focus on two key elements:

- Capturing data from training such as platform analytics (LinkedIn learning data, for example), pre-post self-assessed knowledge, user feedback, and trainer evaluation; and
- Integrating training with performance management in order to link competency development with the work of the MA.

The first element could be captured through simple forms and surveys before and after learning sessions or at the beginning and end of each quarter, to ensure that learners are progressing toward desired outcomes and to provide feedback on how to adjust the learning program. The second element could potentially be implemented using the European Commission Competency Framework and Self-Assessment tool beginning in 2022.

Overall using feedback to monitor learning progress is a long-term item for MA management to determine how to ensure that learning and development is a component of performance management. Throughout 2021, the MA should pilot these monitoring methods with the support of the MOU and the OECD to ensure the MA can track progress toward learning and development goals leading to long-term behaviour change across the MA.

Other recommended action steps for the MA could include:

| COMPLETED - Short term (Q1 2021, with OECD support) | Medium- to long-term (later, MA) |
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| Compare existing learning modules to competencies above | Work with MOU to develop learning journeys/paths to break down learning into accessible modules |
| Gather data on training use (access, hours, evaluation) | Broaden range of learning and development channels, especially immersive and hybrid trainings. |



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| Prioritise modules for ‘core’ and ‘optional’ learning | Establish a greater link between learning and development and performance management, e.g. by supporting managers to be learning ‘coaches’ and integrate learning into workforce planning. |
| Consult internally on learning and development needs | Identify ways to monitor and evaluate learning impact. |
| Complete learning and development plan template | Develop learning and development strategy and monitoring system to be implemented on an annual basis |

Finally, the process used to complete the competency gap analysis and learning and development plan can serve as a model for the MA to repeat annually in the future. The figure below, which guides the OECD’s own learning plan, outlines steps to help determine learning modalities and priorities, which can be repeated and integrated into the MA’s strategy. Through our work together, the OECD guided the MA through a process of to complete steps 1-4: determining learner needs, identifying core concepts and resources, setting learning objectives, and determining delivery methods.

Box 1. Which learning modality to use and when/where?

During the final workshop, the OECD Secretariat shared advice on various factors to take into consideration when designing learning and development plans. These factors could help structure exchanges between the MA and MOU in implementing the action plan:

- **Differentiate learning experiences:** *Who* is going to be doing the learning? Not everyone learns the same way or with the same objectives, so learning and development programmes need to reflect this. Staff in the MA have some similar backgrounds (many are qualified engineers), but they also have different experience of learning and expectations.
- **Reviewing core concepts to be covered:** Primarily led by the Greek MOU, this stage involves identifying existing course content and potentially developing or re-shaping modules to suit the learning objectives.
- **Setting objectives and practical outcomes:** This stage focuses on what staff should be able to achieve through participating in learning and development. Not all MA staff have been involved in the project to date, so managers of teams in the different sectors could be responsible for collecting feedback and preferences from their team members on what they wish to accomplish through training.
- **Reviewing possible delivery choices:** The final two workshops indicated that staff in the MA preferred learning and development in an interactive setting rather than ‘classroom-based’ learning modules. Assuming that most of the MA will continue remote working over the coming months, this stage could also include discussion on how best to adapt learning journeys to a virtual environment.
- **Training assessment and feedback:** Does training work? How do we know? These are two of the questions that the MA can hope to answer by putting in place mechanisms to get training feedback from participants.



- **Continuous monitoring:** The engagement of staff (or particular groups of staff) with particular learning modules or formats can provide valuable information to the MOU in widening or adjusting the learning offering.

Next steps

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| March 2021 | MA consults with MOU on learning plan |
| April 2021 | MOU designs learning journey for each competence/group |
| May 2021 - onwards | Implementation of learning modules |
| September 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OECD-MA check-in: progress and course correction• Workshop with Croatian MA (optional) to share experiences |
| December 2021 | Concluding OECD-MA-European Commission workshop reflecting on lessons learned |
