

## **Benefits of completed PA7 projects**

Based on the assessment of the contribution of completed projects, where the impacts could be relevant at the time of the evaluation, the following benefits were noted:

- **Increasing the coverage of broadband internet/NGN**

The implemented projects contributed to better access of residents and visitors to cities and municipalities to broadband Internet in public spaces, but only in areas with an already built regional network based on optical cables, or other equivalent technology. At the time of the evaluation, access points from the resources of the operational programme were built in 235 municipalities and cities in Slovakia. The impacts were recorded at the local level and contributed to an increase in the number of residents and visitors to the participating municipalities and cities using mobile broadband Internet access, as well as the number of residents and visitors to the municipalities using mobile broadband Internet regularly.

Deploying technological innovations in access networks and building regional and access networks based on optical cables, or of equivalent technology capable of ensuring the required speed of at least 30 Mbit/s was provided exclusively by telecommunications operators in the 2014-2020 programming period. The construction of access networks and deployment of technological innovations was implemented as a priority in areas that are economically interesting for telecommunications operators. Measures to ensure broadband Internet coverage of remote and geographically difficult areas, which are not economically interesting for operators, should be addressed in the new programming period, or from other sources. For this purpose, MIRD SR prepared the National Broadband Plan for drawing funds in the new programming period 2021-2027.

- **Improving the availability of data in public administration**

The effects of the interventions were recorded in the area of data availability in public administration. One of the basic components of eGovernment are registers that are centralized and collect the necessary data (data on citizens, legal entities, entrepreneurs, real estate, territories, etc.) at the central level of the state.

Interventions of OPPII priority axis 7 (following the interventions of the Operational Programme Informatisation of Society of the previous programming period) enabled the construction and use of the Register of Bankrupts and the Register of Spatial Information. Through the consolidation of the registers of public authorities, organizations, farms and foreign trade, the process of updating data in the Register of Legal Entities, Entrepreneurs and Public Authorities and other related registers was significantly streamlined. The construction and consolidation of basic registers ensured the integrity of the data of these registers – public administration institutions obtain automated access to current and accurate information in the field of liquidity of legal entities and natural persons, to spatial information and to information about legal entities, public authorities, organizations, farms through the platform of basic registers and foreign trade.

As a follow-up to the interventions, registers connected to the registers of the EU member states could be built: Register of bankrupts to the insolvency registers of the EU states (interconnection was financed by the CEF Telecom 2017 call); The Spatial Information Register provides metadata about georesources for the INSPIRE Geoportal of the European Commission through the national search service, which makes georesources available for EU countries.

The creation of registers and their integration into the platform of basic state registers had an impact (in addition to public administration institutions) also on the target group of entrepreneurs and citizens. Interventions in the field of building and consolidating registers ensured access of entrepreneurs and citizens to comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date spatial information (geodata), to data related to insolvency of natural and legal persons, restructuring and bankruptcies, as well as to registration data of natural persons, various legal entities and organizations and public authorities.

- **Increasing the quality, standard and availability of eGovernment services for entrepreneurs and citizens**

As a result of the interventions of the programme (following the interventions of the Operational Programme Informatisation of Society of the previous programming period), there was an increase in the availability of electronic public administration services for entrepreneurs and citizens, namely in the following areas:

- insolvency proceedings, restructuring and bankruptcy proceedings,
- debt relief and personal bankruptcy,

- access to spatial information and services,
- access to archival records of the state archives of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic,
- access to information about obligations, administrative offenses and fines of entrepreneurs and citizens and the administration of these obligations, administrative offenses and fines,
- when solving life situations associated with threats to life, health and property,
- access of pupils and students to the digital curriculum and to selected services of the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic.

In connection with the established electronic services, there was a reduction in the administrative burden of entrepreneurs and citizens and a reduction in the time needed to resolve life situations with the public administration; the obligation to submit data already available to the public administration was eliminated. As a result of the interventions, the level of assistance and protection of Slovakia's residents in crisis situations associated with threats to life, health or property has increased (by streamlining the integrated rescue system).

Better access to data and information and more effective solutions to life situations through available electronic services generally increases the satisfaction of entrepreneurs and citizens with eGovernment in Slovakia. However, since the impacts were recorded in partial areas due to the small number of completed projects, it was not possible to relevantly examine the overall satisfaction of the target group of citizens and entrepreneurs as a result of the interventions of the operational program.

#### • Streamlining processes and activities of public administration institutions

With the introduction of modern ICT solutions in the interaction of public administration institutions with citizens and entrepreneurs, as well as in the area of ensuring internal support activities and processes of these institutions, impacts on the streamlining of processes and activities in the following sections of public administration were recorded within the implemented operations:

- Ministry of Justice (streamlining the activities of judges in the processing of court files, streamlining the agenda related to insolvency and bankruptcy),
- Ministry of Interior (in the area of misdemeanors, state archives, police, rescue and intervention units of the state),
- Ministry of Environment (in the field of spatial information),
- Ministry of Education (in the field of education - by digitizing the curriculum for pupils and students),
- Ministry of Economy (in the area of selected services for entrepreneurs and citizens).

The optimization of processes and performed activities in the mentioned sections increased the efficiency of the spent resources of public administration institutions and reduced the costs of these resources. It was not possible to quantify data on cost reductions as a result of the interventions, as these data are not monitored by the recipients, or are not reported after the end of the project.

#### • Streamlining the operation of information systems using the eGovernment cloud

In the programming period 2014 – 2020, the government cloud of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic was built and launched, which creates prerequisites for changing the way the ICT infrastructure operates in Slovakia. Government cloud provides various forms of cloud services – infrastructure, platform and software (based on service catalogue). Achieving the expected effects of the government cloud on public administration institutions can be ensured by the successful migration of information systems of public administration institutions to the government cloud, which is currently underway and is supported by priority axis 7 of the OPII. The Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic was the first public institution to migrate its data and system to the government cloud. Other public administration systems and registers are also being prepared for migration within OPII, but the projects have not yet been completed and in some cases run into capacity limits and the need to ensure data security in accordance with the relevant legislation.

As a result of interventions in the field of information society, in the 2014-2020 programming period, access to ICT and its use and quality improved, namely in the sections of public administration mentioned above. The overall fulfilment of thematic objective 2 through priorities can only be achieved in the case of the implementation of contracted operations contributing to the achievement of the set results at the level of individual specific objectives.

## **Summarizing the findings and recommendations from the evaluation**

### **Monitoring results/impacts**

**Finding:** Results for individual specific objectives are defined too generally at the programme level (they are not specific enough). In addition, the planned results are only to a small extent reflected in the specified specific result indicators at the level of specific goals. The general setting of the results does not make it possible to clearly evaluate the benefits of interventions for achieving specific goals.

The target values of specific measurable indicators did not sufficiently take into account other external factors that influence it (for example, market development trends). In some cases, the target value of specific output indicators was reached even without any intervention, in the very first years of the programming period.

**Recommendation:** In the programming period 2021 – 2027, set up the monitoring system in such a way that it enables the acquisition of relevant interim results and impacts of individual projects, on the basis of which it will be possible to regularly evaluate the contribution of the projects to the fulfilment of the specific objectives of the program.

Establish concrete results that will be directly and unambiguously related to operations/projects and specific objectives.

Establish a system of regular impact assessment, including in connection with monitoring data provided by recipients.

Add information about the recorded impacts of the project to the monitoring report form.

### **Monitoring the material and financial performance of the project**

**Finding:** The explanatory power of the monitoring reports is not sufficient. The monitoring report form does not include information on progress in the implementation of individual project activities, only information on the fulfilment of the relevant measurable output indicator.

The frequency of submitting annual monitoring reports once a year is not sufficient in the case of risky projects that require crisis management by the intermediary body.

**Risk:** On the basis of the data reported in the monitoring report and additional monitoring data, it is not possible to sufficiently evaluate the state of performance of the main activities of the project and predict the financial performance, or risks for the successful completion of the project.

**Recommendation:** In the 2021-2027 programming period, add data on the status of substantive implementation of individual main project activities to the monitoring form (status expressed in percentages, verbal description).

### **Material and financial performance**

**Finding:** The implemented schedule of announcing calls for the submission of applications for NFC for demand-oriented projects and publication of calls for the submission of applications for NFC for national projects did not create sufficient prerequisites for the smooth material and financial implementation of projects at the level of priority axis 7.

**Recommendation:** In the programming period 2021 – 2027, ensure timely announcement of calls, publication of calls and contracting of projects, which will allow smooth substantive and financial implementation of the programme and sufficient time for project implementation.

**Finding:** Despite the fact that the level of contracting (after the reduction of the allocation in the forthcoming version 16.0 OPII) exceeds the allocated funds, the level of risk of unsuccessful material and financial fulfilment of the projects and achievement of the set results is significant at the end of the programming period.

The reason is a very small number of successfully completed projects (apart from the Wifi for You challenge projects, mostly phased projects from the previous period were properly completed). The number of exceptionally completed projects was significant, which negatively affected the absorption capacity of priority axis 7 and caused the need for further contracting of projects or gradually reducing the financial allocation of PA7.

At the end of the programming period, in the last year of programme implementation, the number of projects under implementation is enormous. The successful completion of these projects conditions the achievement of results and the fulfilment of specific goals and the thematic goal of the program.

**Recommendation:** Due to the implementation phase of the program, there is only minimal space in the 2014-2020 programming period for announcing further calls and challenges and contracting new projects. Efforts should be focused mainly on creating prerequisites for the successful completion of already contracted projects.

**Proposed measures:** identification of risky projects, introduction of effective risk management and crisis management of projects by the intermediary body, intensification of communication with beneficiaries and increase of flexibility in responding to requests of beneficiaries regarding the approval of project changes and the like, strengthening of capacities for project and financial management of projects at the end of the programming periods. These measures were implemented in practice in 2021, but due to the end of the programming period and the large number of unfinished projects, it is necessary to make their application more efficient and to strengthen the personnel capacities for their implementation.

### **IT projects**

**Finding:** The ESIF management system and the conditions of the NFC provision contract do not sufficiently reflect the specifics of IT projects. Information technologies are dynamically developing, which affects the technical and technological solutions presented in the project, as well as the development of the prices of these technologies during the implementation of the projects. However, the flexibility of the conditions for implementing changes in projects is limited, especially in relation to public procurement, and does not sufficiently take into account the dynamics of the IT sector. The dynamic development of technologies and the associated rapid obsolescence of some components (HW, processors, etc.) is also reflected in the period of sustainability.

**Recommendation:** Taking into account the specifics of IT projects in terms of providing support and requirements for the implementation and sustainability of projects (with regard to the dynamic development of IT technologies) and the introduction of an agile approach in the preparation and implementation of projects. A conceptual solution for the replacement of obsolete components of developed systems during the period of sustainability, as well as after its end.

### **Integration of systems (outputs)**

**Finding:** The impossibility of achieving the project's goals, as the related systems and platforms of public administration, implemented as part of other projects, are not sufficiently prepared and do not allow system integration or data migration to these systems.

**Recommendation:** Create conditions for the successful completion of projects (see measures for material and financial fulfilment above). In the 2021-2027 programming period, place greater emphasis on the gradual ongoing implementation of activities throughout the entire period and thereby minimize the risk of an enormous rush in the last year of programme implementation.

### **Data quality**

**Finding:** The quality of the source data entering the various registers is often not sufficient, which affects the quality of the data in the basic registers of the state.

**Recommendation:** Adopt conceptual measures to streamline the collection of source data and increase the quality of data entering public administration registers.

### **Data collection**

**Finding:** Currently, a comprehensive overview of data is not available, which public administration institution collects and has access to which data. This can lead to duplicate collection of the same data in public administration.

**Recommendation:** Create a unified catalogue of systems and data collected by the public administration (also with regard to implemented operational programme projects), which would enable an overview of the data that public administration institutions already have and that could be provided for further processing.