

Greece Report

Sustainable Governance Indicators 2024

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Executive Summary

During the period under review, Greece's political and economic landscape showed notable improvement. As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic diminished, the economy experienced growth, largely driven by increased domestic consumption and a resurgence in tourism. This economic recovery was further bolstered by heightened private direct investment and substantial contributions from the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility. The government also implemented measures to mitigate the surge in energy and consumer goods prices following the onset of the war in Ukraine.

Despite this progress, inflation remained a pressing issue in 2023, particularly affecting salaried workers. Although the economy improved, Greece continued to face significant challenges, including the highest public debt in the European Union, necessitating a cautious approach to fiscal expansion. Moreover, Greece had the second-highest unemployment rate among EU Member States, and a large proportion of the population remained at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Political stability in Greece improved as domestic tensions, which had periodically flared during the previous decade's crisis, diminished. This stability was further consolidated following the parliamentary elections of May–June 2023, in which the New Democracy party, having governed alone from 2019 to 2023, was reelected and once again formed a single-party majority government.

The government continued its reform agenda from its previous term, focusing on creating a more investment-friendly institutional environment. It also introduced cash transfers and tax breaks to support vulnerable households and economic groups affected by the pandemic. Further modernization efforts were undertaken in education, pensions, social care, and digital governance, alongside the introduction of sustainable development policies. However, concerns persisted about the government's ability to sustain its commitment to such an extensive range of reforms.

Democratic institutions in Greece remained strong, with the government avoiding interference in the judiciary and state media. Media pluralism was maintained, civil and political liberties were upheld, and the rights to strike

and protest were frequently exercised by discontented groups. Nevertheless, the private media sector remained oligopolistic, and investigations revealed instances of surveillance of select journalists and politicians from both the ruling party and the opposition, which were unresolved during this period. Additionally, bureaucratic obstacles and chronic inefficiencies in the justice system raised concerns about Greece's capacity to swiftly address violations of the rule of law.

While the government successfully managed the economy and helped society recover from the pandemic's impact, it faced criticism for inefficiencies in other areas. The response to the wildfires and floods of 2022 and 2023 in central Greece and the Greek islands was rapid, yet the restoration of devastated nature and local economic activities proved insufficient. Furthermore, long-standing issues within the country's railway system were starkly exposed by a major fatal accident at the beginning of 2023.

During this period, Greece effectively addressed several challenges, including managing a reduced inflow of migrants and refugees. While there were still significant shortcomings in the social integration of these groups, the conditions of their reception and accommodation improved. Additionally, Greece successfully navigated tensions with Turkey to maintain peace.

Looking ahead, the government will need to maintain a delicate balance between promoting further economic recovery, resolving long-standing issues in public infrastructure, public administration, and the justice system, and safeguarding the living standards of social groups at risk of being left behind.

Key Challenges

Greece has resumed its economic recovery following the twin crises of the economy and the COVID-19 pandemic. This resurgence has been supported by rising tourism revenues, which constitute a significant portion of the country's GDP, the strategic use of the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility funds, directed toward infrastructure and regional development projects, and increasing domestic demand for goods and services.

However, sustaining this economic momentum while managing macroeconomic and fiscal vulnerabilities presents a considerable challenge. Greece faces substantial public debt, the highest in the EU, and although unemployment has declined, it remains among the highest in the Union.

Inflation, driven by international factors beyond the government's control, continues to affect energy and food prices. Additionally, the current account deficit has worsened over time, and while private investment is on the rise, it still lags behind other EU member states.

Addressing these vulnerabilities, particularly the public debt, remains crucial in the medium term. Greece has a window of opportunity to better manage its debt until 2032, when EU institutions will review the country's Gross Financing Needs. Simultaneously, policies aimed at boosting exports are necessary to reduce the current account deficit, which has been exacerbated by high domestic consumption of imported goods.

To meet these challenges, Greece must enhance its economic competitiveness, which hinges on addressing two chronic issues: low labor productivity and below-average investment compared to the EU. Upskilling the labor force and increasing private sector research and development are essential for boosting productivity. Although EU funds have helped narrow Greece's investment gap, attracting more foreign direct investment is crucial. To achieve this, the government must lift remaining restrictions on access to certain business sectors and overcome bureaucratic obstacles that are hampered by a slow-responding public administration.

In the short term, the government must also implement additional measures to mitigate the impact of soaring energy and food prices on the most vulnerable households. Long-standing regional inequalities require attention as well, particularly in the northwest and northeast, where some of the poorest regions in the EU are located.

These economic challenges are interlinked with the persistent issues of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality in Greece. A significant proportion of Greeks remain at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and unemployment among the youth is still high. Income disparities are also stark, particularly between salaried workers and business owners or professionals who evade taxes. No Greek government will be able to adequately fund social policies to combat poverty and economic inequality without first addressing the issue of untaxed income and wealth. The ongoing digitalization of economic transactions, which the government is actively promoting, is a step in the right direction.

To tackle low labor productivity, unemployment, and poverty, it is crucial to align employment needs with education and training trends. The Greek labor market demands unskilled workers for agriculture and construction, as well as skilled technicians for the industrial and IT sectors. However, educational

institutions primarily train students for traditional professions, such as civil service and the liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, civil engineers, and architects).

While Greece has made strides in environmental sustainability, significant challenges remain. Meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 will be difficult. Despite the economic and environmental costs, oil and natural gas continue to be widely used for transportation and heating. Nevertheless, Greece has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions compared to previous decades. Further progress requires a stronger shift toward renewable energy sources and the provision of affordable, green energy to the population.

Achieving these economic, fiscal, labor, social, and environmental goals will necessitate substantial improvements in Greece's public administration, which currently falls short in steering the economy and society. The recent digitalization of numerous public services has improved citizen-administration relations, but more needs to be done. Short-term priorities include further integrating IT into government work processes, upskilling and ensuring accountability among civil servants, conducting meaningful performance reviews, and providing incentives for productive employees while addressing inefficiencies, particularly in regional and local governments.

To address public administration challenges, the government must pursue reforms planned with EU assistance. These include the digital transformation of the public sector and the establishment of a comprehensive Human Resources Management system, both of which are underway but require close monitoring. The strategy to disseminate digital and modern management skills among civil servants must be intensified, and greater care must be taken to ensure the interoperability of digital systems within public administration.

Additionally, there is a misallocation of tasks among central, regional, and local public administrations, and an uneven use of evidence-based policymaking. These issues are still in the planning stage and require streamlining.

In the long term, challenges in the justice and education systems continue to hinder economic performance and public administration reforms. Although new judicial personnel have been hired and digital systems introduced, case processing remains slow, the rule of law is inconsistently applied, and anti-corruption measures are less effective than necessary. Improving the efficiency of the justice system and the transparency of government and public administration structures will require further training for court personnel and

expanded digitalization of court procedures. Education also needs urgent reform, as reflected in Greece's subpar performance in PISA assessments. Without structural changes in education, Greece's economic progress may be impeded.

A final significant long-term challenge is the need to diversify the economy and reduce its heavy reliance on tourism. Although plans are in place, their implementation has been slow and uncertain.

Despite these challenges, Greece enters the 2020s with two critical advantages that were absent in the previous decade: the country has overcome its most severe economic crisis of the last century, and political stability has been achieved. These factors provide a foundation for optimism that, in the short to medium term, Greece can successfully address its challenges.

Democratic Government

I. Vertical Accountability

Elections

Free and Fair
Political
Competition
Score: 9

In Greek national and local government elections, there are de jure and de facto no barriers to political party competition. The process for registering political parties is straightforward, as outlined by Presidential Decree 96/2007. Party registration requires a simple statement signed by the party leader and submitted to Greece's Supreme Court (Areios Pagos). The Supreme Court rarely excludes parties from participating in elections. The law establishes clear, objectively verifiable criteria for registration, including: a) avoiding the use of a party name already claimed by another party, b) refraining from using Greece's national symbols or emblems as party insignia, and c) collecting at least 200 signatures from citizens supporting the party.

Political parties that surpass the 3% electoral threshold in national parliamentary elections, or obtain at least 1.5% of the vote in European Parliament elections, are granted equal opportunities for media access. Media ownership may influence political alignments, with media owners occasionally shifting their support between the government and the opposition, depending on their business interests. However, during electoral campaigns, laws are enforced to ensure that candidates and parties have relatively equal access to the media.

Party financing is governed by a law first adopted in 2002 and subsequently amended, with all relevant regulations codified most recently in 2022. In practice, parties and candidates are required to maintain financial records, disclose the value of donations received, and regularly publish their accounts. However, the accuracy of these records is sometimes disputed, and some donations are made off the books, evading detection by the independent committee responsible for overseeing party financing (known as the "Control Committee").

The Control Committee is composed of 11 members – three members of parliament and eight senior judges and administrators. Despite its oversight role, the committee rarely imposes strict penalties for violations of party financing regulations. This leniency reflects the broader context of the Greek economy, where tax evasion and undeclared income are widespread.

Political competition in Greece is somewhat distorted by the access of parties and candidates to undeclared funding sources. However, it is not affected by gerrymandering, as the government does not arbitrarily redraw electoral districts. In terms of new media, political parties actively use campaign managers to exploit platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. Media pluralism in these domains allows for the verification and debunking of fake news circulated by any single source, as other sources work to confirm the authenticity of the information.

In summary, over the last half-century (1974–2024), despite the often intense polarization in Greece’s two-party system, elections have been conducted legally and fairly, without significant challenges being posed to the system by parties or candidates.

Free and Fair
Elections
Score: 10

In Greece, there are no significant legal or practical barriers that prevent citizens or specific societal groups from exercising their right to vote. Citizens face no discrimination or disincentives in this regard.

Until 2023, Greek citizens living abroad had to return to Greece to vote. However, a new law now allows these citizens to vote by mail, which will be tested for the first time in the European Parliament elections in May 2024 (Michalopoulos, 2023).

Since 2016, the minimum voting age in Greece has been lowered to 17 years. Voter registration is automatic and without barriers, as Greeks are registered at birth in the municipality where their family resides. Consequently, municipal records serve the dual purpose of containing demographic data for all Greek citizens and acting as the official list of eligible voters.

However, delays in updating these records – specifically in removing the names of deceased citizens or those who have permanently left Greece – result in over-inflated electoral registers. This inflation leads to a discrepancy between the number of registered voters and the actual number of eligible voters, thus affecting the calculation of electoral turnout. A new bill, expected to be adopted in early 2023, aims to address this issue by regulating the process of cleansing electoral registers.

Elections in Greece are conducted smoothly, thanks to an impartial and highly competent electoral management body composed of senior officials from the Ministry of Interior. These officials are supported by well-trained staff and receive the necessary financial resources to administer elections effectively. Trained civil servants and practicing lawyers from all electoral districts are summoned before election day, provided with instructions, and compensated for their work as polling station managers. Any issues that arise on election day are resolved by local first-instance courts.

Greece adheres to a regular four-year electoral cycle for multiparty elections. In the past, Greek governments occasionally exercised their right to dissolve parliament, leading to snap elections. However, since 2015, elections have followed a predictable four-year cycle.

Greece boasts a high number of polling stations – 21,199 across the country – with an average of 453 registered voters per station. Low-fare public transportation is available in mainland Greece, and polling stations are equipped with facilities for citizens with disabilities.

The ballot design is comprehensive and user-friendly, ensuring that the secrecy of the ballot is maintained without issues. There have been no reported incidents of voter harassment, violence, or intimidation, nor have there been cases of double voting or impersonation. In summary, the election process in Greece is conducted in an impartial and nondiscriminatory manner.

Quality of Parties and Candidates

Socially Rooted
Party System
Score: 8

In Greece, a 3% electoral threshold must be surpassed by a political party to gain parliamentary representation. While this threshold acts as a barrier, it ensures that the vast majority of societal interests are represented without fragmenting parliamentary representation excessively. Parties failing to meet this threshold do not elect MPs. There are no minority parties representing ethnic, regional, or other specific constituencies. Over the past 30 years, the Muslim minority of Western Thrace (in northwest Greece) has been represented by MPs who have aligned with major parties such as New Democracy, Pasok, and Syriza.

The largest political parties, including New Democracy, Pasok, and Syriza, maintain local branches across cities and towns nationwide without promoting localism or distinctly regional interests. Party manifestos once differed significantly during periods of intense polarization in the Greek party system,

such as in the 1980s (New Democracy vs. Pasok) and again during the recent economic crisis in the 2010s (New Democracy and Pasok vs. Syriza). Although ideological differences persist, particularly regarding state intervention in the economy and labor market, the major parties have converged on key policy areas such as foreign policy, EU-Greece relations, and macroeconomic and fiscal policies.

Moreover, all three major parties reject the revolutionary approach to state socialism advocated by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Despite this exception, the largest parties have reached consensus on significant policy issues.

Effective Cross-Party Cooperation
Score: 7

There is nothing in the institutional design of Greece's party system that prevents effective cross-party cooperation. However, in practice, the Greek party system has experienced significant political polarization. From 1974 to 2010, the two largest parties – the center-right New Democracy and the center-left Pasok – alternated in government and engaged in fierce electoral battles. Polarization continued during the Greek economic crisis in the 2010s, with New Democracy and the radical left Syriza competing for power (Andreadis and Stavrakakis 2020).

This polarization is not only a reflection of political party competition but also a legacy of the historical conflict between the Right and the Left, dating back to the Greek Civil War of the 1940s. The electoral system, which facilitates the formation of single-party majority governments, has also contributed to this polarization.

Particularly during pre-electoral periods, both major parties and the media, including nationally circulated newspapers, exacerbate polarization, further hindering cross-party cooperation (Exadactylos, 2020).

After 2015, as all parties converged on austerity measures and fiscal restraint, polarization became less pronounced. Recent research indicates that despite ongoing tensions, there was significant cross-party cooperation in parliament during 2019–2024 (VouliWatch, 2023). For instance, opposition parties such as Pasok and Syriza frequently voted alongside the ruling New Democracy party, with Pasok aligning on 69% of all parliamentary votes and Syriza on 45%.

Transparent
Government
Score: 6

Access to Official Information

The right to access information is constitutionally guaranteed in Greece (Article 5A of the Constitution). Legally, there are few barriers for citizens seeking access to official information. The Freedom of Information Act, first adopted in 1986 and amended several times (most recently in 2022), governs this right, with certain exemptions justified on the grounds of defense, security, and foreign policy.

However, in practice, public services may refuse to supply official information, often citing personal data protection concerns for civil servants and government officials. The response time to information requests varies significantly and can be lengthy, depending on the efficiency of the public service involved. As a result, the public administration often does not promptly respond to citizens' requests for information. Citizens can, however, resort to administrative courts and the Greek ombudsman to enforce their right to access information.

II. Diagonal Accountability

Media Freedom and Pluralism

Free Media
Score: 6

Media freedom in Greece is constitutionally guaranteed (Article 14). However, regulations governing public-owned media allow the government to appoint the Board of Directors and CEO of entities like the ERT television and radio company, including their regional branches. This appointment process grants the government considerable influence over media content. Despite this, opposition pressures and independent media reactions have led successive governments to gradually reduce their control over ERT.

In the 2010s, government control over ERT was particularly intense, highlighted by the abrupt closure of ERT in 2012 as part of economic austerity measures, followed by its reopening under full government control from 2015 to 2019. Currently, such control is less stringent.

Private media in Greece operate without censorship. The licensing and regulatory systems ensure their independence from government influence and political interference. However, during the COVID-19 crisis (2020–2022), the government faced accusations of attempting to influence the press by directing

budget funds to selected media outlets. This funding supported public awareness campaigns for anti-COVID measures, such as vaccination drives. While some opposition media also received funding, certain newspapers known for their personal attacks against government officials were excluded.

Journalists in Greece work in a relatively free environment but periodically face significant pressures. In the previous decade and after 2020, some government ministers sued journalists accused of slander. Unlike during the Greek economic crisis, when a few prominent pro-EU journalists faced threats or even physical violence from anti-austerity protesters and political party officials, physical harassment of journalists is now rare.

The unresolved murder of a well-known reporter investigating mafia crime in 2021 remains a troubling case. In 2022, it was revealed that the cell phones of several journalists reporting on immigration were wiretapped, with Greece's national intelligence service, the EYP, implicated in this surveillance case, which remains unresolved. During 2022–2023, the Greek justice system was slow to process these cases. Conversely, in the summer of 2022, some foreign journalists falsely reported the death of a young Syrian girl on the Greek-Turkish border, leading to accusations of government negligence, only for the story to later be debunked as a complete fabrication.

Overall, foreign correspondents have been less critical of the left-wing government in power from 2015 to 2019 compared to the center-right government since 2019. This shift has strained relations between the Greek government and the foreign press. As a result, Greece's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index dropped from 65th in 2020 to 107th in 2023. In 2024, concerns about media freedom were highlighted in a European Parliament resolution (Klosidis, 2024), which the Greek government dismissed as a partisan attempt to undermine its progress in this area.

Pluralism of
Opinions
Score: 8

There are no significant legal impediments preventing media outlets from representing the full spectrum of political perspectives in Greek society. Media outlets express views across the entire right-left political spectrum.

Currently, Greece has 21 newspapers with national circulation, along with dozens of regional and local newspapers. The left-wing opposition is supported by its party-controlled press and radio outlets, with at least three newspapers articulating the views of various left-wing opposition parties. Similarly, there are newspapers representing far-right political parties, often espousing traditionalist and chauvinistic views.

Approximately one-third of all national circulation newspapers can be classified as yellow press, frequently publishing unsubstantiated accusations against public figures such as celebrities, journalists, and government officials.

In addition to the three publicly owned TV channels (ERT 1, 2, and 3), seven private TV channels operate nationwide, supplemented by numerous private regional TV channels spread across Greece's 13 regions. This landscape ensures that there is, in practice, pluralism in the private media sector.

A few large media conglomerates dominate the private media landscape, owning both nationwide TV channels and newspapers. These conglomerates also have significant business interests in sectors such as construction and shipping, and they often own Greece's most competitive soccer and basketball teams. As a result, the largest private media outlets operate as part of an oligopoly with substantial economic influence (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021).

Media owners occasionally attempt to influence public policymaking. However, instances of policy capture are mitigated by fierce competition among business conglomerates, and Greek governments typically rely on strong single-party parliamentary majorities.

Civil Society

Free Civil
Society
Score: 9

The Greek constitution guarantees freedom of assembly (Article 11) and association, including the establishment of labor unions, athletic clubs, and other organizations (Articles 12, 23, and 16, para. 9). Political rallies are common, and numerous associations operate freely without unwarranted state intrusion or interference. The courts, rather than the government, evaluate requests for permits to associate or assemble, applying transparent and nondiscriminatory criteria. However, legal restrictions prohibit fascist or racist organizations from participating in parliamentary elections.

In 2022, Greece ranked 42nd out of 140 countries according to the World Justice Project, placing it above average (World Justice Project, 2022). Amnesty International reported in 2022 that, in some instances, police used excessive force against protesters, and security forces engaged in pushbacks against incoming migrants and refugees (Amnesty International, 2022).

In some cases, associations are restricted when foreign policy issues arise. For example, Greek courts, based on the Lausanne Treaty signed between Greece and Turkey in 2023, prohibit associations established by members of the

Muslim minority near the Greek-Turkish border in Northern Greece from using the term “Turkish” in their names. The courts argue that this term indicates a collective ethnic identity, while the treaty only recognizes a collective religious identity.

Few restrictions on assembly exist, except when high-ranking foreign dignitaries visit Greece’s capital. There is no intimidation, harassment, or threat of retaliation against citizens exercising their rights to legally assemble and associate.

Effective Civil
Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 6

Civil society organization (CSO) participation in Greek policymaking follows global trends, becoming less frequent and substantive. In Greece, CSO involvement is also episodic and highly partisan. While labor unions were once more involved in negotiating sectoral agreements, their role has diminished since the bailout era of the 2010s, under the guise of austerity measures. This trend continued under the radical left-right coalition led by SYRIZA and persists under the current conservative government. Although CSOs participate in parliamentary debates and have access to draft bills, their recent contributions have primarily been obstructive, often in the form of strikes to prevent policy adoption.

Legislation generally supports the development of CSOs defending capital and labor interests. The government provides public funding to major labor confederations, such as the GSEE (private sector unions) and ADEDY (civil service unions). However, business associations, including those representing industrialists (SEV), shipowners (EEE), and liberal professionals like lawyers, engineers, and doctors, do not receive government funding. In some associations, such as the strong bank employee unions, membership dues are compulsorily deducted from employees’ salaries.

The two aforementioned confederations have established associated think tanks, providing expertise for participation in the policymaking process. However, since the economic crisis of 2010, union input has been less influential in policy formulation.

Public participation in labor CSOs has also declined, with only a small proportion of the population expressing trust in labor unions (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2021). Despite this, unions frequently organize strikes, which have the capacity to disrupt policy implementation rather than policy formulation. Nonetheless, the government remains responsive to policy proposals from major CSOs. Representatives of capital and labor, along with other interest groups, are invited to parliamentary committee sessions to debate bills and participate in social partner negotiations to set minimum wages and salaries.

Effective Civil Society Organizations (Social Welfare) Score: 6

The Greek constitution enshrines the principle of the “Welfare State of Law” (Article 25), including rights to education, health, and social security. The constitution mandates that state authorities must not obstruct the exercise of these rights, and citizens are required to uphold social solidarity (Paragraph 4, Article 25).

However, few CSOs possess the organizational strength necessary to influence public policies. The responsibility for shaping welfare policies primarily lies with the government, public administration, and parliament. While many CSOs engage in social welfare activities, their role in policy formulation is limited.

Additionally, many CSOs in Greece rely on the state (e.g., the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, local municipalities) and, to some extent, on private donations for financial support and infrastructure, such as state-owned buildings.

Even the largest CSOs often lack the expertise required to contribute to public policymaking. When welfare policy bills are submitted to parliament, CSO representatives are invited to participate in parliamentary debates and testify before the parliament’s Permanent Committee on Social Affairs (Parliament, 2024).

In the past, CSOs faced public suspicion due to involvement in misappropriating public funds allocated by relevant ministries. For example, in December 2022, criminal investigations were launched against the child charity “Arc of the World,” headed by a well-known low-ranking Greek Orthodox priest, who, along with 10 others, was investigated on four felony charges (Keep Talking Greece, 2022). This case remained unresolved in 2023.

Effective Civil Society Organizations (Environment) Score: 5

The Greek constitution mandates state protection of the natural environment and citizens’ rights to enjoy it (Article 24).

However, most environmental CSOs lack the organizational strength to influence environmental policy, apart from a few local branches of international NGOs like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund.

Representatives of environmental CSOs are invited to present their views at sessions of the parliament’s “Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection.” These CSOs also participate in public deliberations on prospective environmental policies launched by the relevant ministry before submitting a bill to parliament.

Few CSOs have the financial and human resources needed to shape environmental public policies. This responsibility primarily falls to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Although attempts to organize collective action on sustainable development issues exist, they are often incipient and periodic (Hellenic Platform for Development, 2024).

As a result, while many CSOs are active in environmental protection, their activities are often localized, and they do not contribute significantly to the formulation of environmental policies. Given Greece's vulnerability to climate change, the relative weakness of environmental CSOs in this Mediterranean country is surprising (van Versendaal 2023).

III. Horizontal Accountability

Independent Supervisory Bodies

Effective Public
Auditing
Score: 8

Greece's Hellenic Court of Audit (EISyn 2024) is a highly respected and independent institution with nearly 200 years of history, having been established in 1833 and modeled on the French "Cour des Comptes." The Greek constitution guarantees its organization and operation (Article 98).

The Hellenic Court of Audit plays a crucial role in auditing public finances and acts as a high-level court for disputes related to public pensions and the financial responsibilities of public servants. Among its most significant tasks are controlling government expenditures and supervising public procurement, especially concerning high-cost public tenders.

The audit office has unrestricted access to information, documents, and premises during its audits. It is well-equipped with the financial and human resources necessary to fulfill its duties. The executive branch cannot interfere with the decisions made by the audit office, and these decisions carry the weight of court rulings, which the government and public administration are obliged to follow.

The audit office is held in high regard, on par with Greece's highest courts, such as the Supreme Criminal and Civil Court (Areios Pagos) and the Supreme Administrative Court (Symvoulío tis Epikrateias). Accordingly, the head (president) of the audit office is appointed in the same manner as the heads of these courts, as specified in the constitution (Article 90, paragraph 5). This

process involves the ranking of candidates by the supreme courts, followed by the cabinet selecting appointees from among the highest-ranking judges and submitting a list of candidates to a parliamentary committee composed of the speaker, vice presidents, and other heads of parliamentary committees (the “Conference of Parliamentary Chairmen”). This committee votes by reinforced majority on the new head, who is then officially appointed by the Minister of Justice.

While the appointment process allows for some political discretion, it generally ensures the independence of the audit office’s head.

The audit office publishes an annual report, which it submits to parliament. Although these reports are not frequently covered in the media or widely utilized by the legislature, they are an essential part of parliamentary debates.

Effective Data
Protection
Score: 9

Greece has a nationally recognized independent data protection authority, the Hellenic Data Protection Authority (DPA 2024), which is acknowledged by the constitution (Article 9A) and tasked with upholding citizens’ rights to personal data protection. Established in 1997 and updated in 2019, the DPA operates in line with corresponding EU Directives and European Council Regulations.

The DPA is empowered to issue decisions that the government and public administration must comply with. It has the necessary resources, organizational structure, and personnel to effectively advocate for data protection and privacy. The DPA independently determines which cases to audit and has the authority to request all necessary information and question officials.

The head of the DPA is selected through a process designed to guarantee independence, as provided by the constitution (Article 101A). The selection process is conducted by a parliamentary committee consisting of the speaker, vice presidents, and other heads of parliamentary committees (the “Conference of Parliamentary Chairmen”). This committee votes by a reinforced majority on the new head of the DPA.

Typically, the DPA is led by a retired high-ranking judge, and its decisions are binding on the government and public administration, although there may be delays in their implementation.

The DPA publishes an annual report, which it submits to parliament. While these findings are sometimes reported in the media and utilized in parliamentary debates, this occurs infrequently.

Effective Judicial
Oversight
Score: 8

Rule of Law

Greece's national courts can effectively review actions and norms implemented by the executive and legislative branches, with the independence of the judiciary guaranteed by the constitution (Article 26 on the separation and balance of powers and Articles 93–100 on the organization and jurisdiction of courts).

The judiciary in Greece operates with legal autonomy from the government and parliament. Although Greece does not have a Constitutional Court, it employs an independent, diffuse system of constitutional review, allowing even first-instance courts to declare government decisions (e.g., presidential decrees, ministerial circulars) unconstitutional, thus rendering them invalid. However, the Supreme Administrative Court (Symvoulío tis Epikrateias), modeled after the French Conseil d'État, has the final say on citizens' appeals against government decisions.

There is a cooperative procedure for appointing high-ranking judges to lead the supreme administrative court and the supreme civil and criminal court (the "Areios Pagos"). Both parliament and the cabinet participate in the selection process. Courts submit the names of candidates for the head positions of these supreme courts to the Minister of Justice, who then forwards the list of candidates to a designated parliamentary body. This body consists of the speaker, the vice presidents, and other heads of parliamentary committees (the so-called "Conference of Parliamentary Chairmen"). It serves in a consultative capacity, auditing candidates for the posts of heads of supreme courts and voting on them.

Eventually, based on the constitution (article 90 paragraph 5), the cabinet makes the decision on new heads of the supreme courts. This decision is effected by a presidential decree issued on the cabinet's proposal. The cabinet usually follows the suggestions of the other institutions involved in the process. The entire procedure is publicly transparent, and the media report on it. Thus, the independence of justices appointed to the top of the supreme courts is largely secured.

Challenging government actions in Greece is relatively accessible through the administrative courts of first instance. If a citizen is dissatisfied with the court's decision, they have the right to appeal to the administrative court of second instance, and ultimately, to the supreme administrative court, the Symvoulío tis Epikrateias. The cost of pursuing legal action is relatively low.

For cases in the first-instance administrative courts, the court fee is approximately €100 (Lawspot 2024), while legal representation by a lawyer typically starts at around €200. If the case is brought before the supreme administrative court, the total cost can exceed €1,500.

Court rulings, even those significant to the government, are respected and complied with. The government is obligated to adhere to these decisions. The only method by which the government can avoid compliance with a court ruling is by passing new legislation that amends the relevant regulations invalidated by the courts. However, such amendments would only apply to future cases and not retroactively. For instance, during the Greek economic crisis, the government complied with court decisions requiring the payment of higher pensions to individuals whose pensions had been reduced by austerity measures, which were lower than those stipulated by earlier legislation. Nonetheless, subsequent legislation passed by parliament set pensions at lower levels for future payments.

Universal Civil
Rights
Score: 7

The Greek constitution ensures equality before the law (Article 4) and guarantees personal liberty, the right to life and security, protection from torture and inhumane treatment, and the right to privacy (Articles 5–9).

Citizens in Greece generally do not face significant constraints on the realization of their civil rights. They have access to civil courts and can afford legal representation.

A public debate is ongoing in 2023–2024 regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage. The government is preparing a bill to legalize such marriages, though it will limit childbearing options for homosexual couples (e.g., prohibiting surrogacy). Opposition to the bill has been expressed by the Greek Orthodox Church, far-right parties, and some MPs from the ruling party, but the government remains committed to legislating on this issue (Associated Press, 2023).

Since mid-2022, allegations of privacy violations have emerged, particularly concerning the wiretapping of journalists covering immigration and politicians, including ruling party officials and an opposition leader. Greece's National Intelligence Service has been implicated, and the government denies responsibility, though investigations by prosecuting authorities are ongoing.

While civil rights are generally respected in Greece, there are chronic delays in the administration of justice, even in less sensitive civil law cases. International assessments reflect these issues, with Greece ranking 49th out of 140 countries in the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index (2022).

Effective
Corruption
Prevention
Score: 6

Amnesty International (2023) has also reported instances of excessive force used by police, particularly against Roma minority suspects.

Greece has implemented a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and sanction the abuse of public office. The constitution outlines procedures for holding government ministers accountable for criminal acts committed during their tenure (Article 86). Legislation adopted in 2003 details ministerial criminal liability, and the Criminal Code, amended in 2019, penalizes corrupt acts by public officials, including civil servants (Article 235). Additionally, laws passed in 2001 and 2014 enhanced protections for whistleblowers.

In 2019, Greece consolidated its anti-corruption efforts under a new independent public authority, the National Transparency Authority (EAD), responsible for formulating and monitoring the National Anti-Corruption Plan, such as the plan for 2022–2025 (National Transparency Authority, 2023).

New legislation in 2021 aligned with the European Directive of 2018 on anti-money laundering. In 2023, a law empowered public entities to identify and manage integrity risks and anticipated the operation of a central repository of corruption risks within the public administration. Another 2023 law established a common framework for recovering and managing frozen and confiscated assets derived from criminal activities.

Further, in 2022, Greece introduced a new code of conduct for public employees and codified past legislation on political party financing. In 2023, new laws streamlined asset declaration requirements for public officeholders and improved regulations on public procurement.

Despite these robust frameworks, implementation gaps persist, particularly delays in investigating and prosecuting public officeholders. These challenges stem from a complex regulatory environment, inadequate administrative personnel in courts, and sluggish procedures exacerbated by backlogs of other civil and criminal cases.

Nevertheless, barring the inefficiencies of the justice system, most integrity mechanisms are effective, providing significant disincentives for public officeholders to abuse their positions.

Legislature

Sufficient
Legislative
Resources
Score: 8

Members of the Greek parliament have access to a variety of resources to support their legislative duties.

One of their key resources is the parliament's library, established in 1846, making it one of the oldest and largest libraries in Greece. Located in three buildings in central Athens, the library is equipped with modern systems and is also accessible to researchers. Each member of parliament is entitled to employ two researchers and three additional assistants, with the cost covered by the state budget. In the past, some MPs were criticized for employing family members as assistants rather than qualified researchers.

Political parties represented in parliament have their own research support groups, and the largest parties also maintain affiliated research institutions. For instance, the Democracy Institute "K. Karamanlis" is affiliated with the New Democracy party, while the "N. Poulantzas" Institute is linked to the Syriza party.

Although the Greek legislature does not have a dedicated research unit like the US Congress or the UK House of Commons, it relies on several specialized research units covering different fields:

Hellenic Parliament Budget Office: This unit, composed of economics professors and experts, provides respected reports on Greece's economic and fiscal performance.

Scientific Service of the Parliament: A committee of public law professors and legal experts offers legal advice to MPs, particularly regarding submitted bills.

Foundation of the Parliament: This research unit focuses on historical studies and is staffed by history professors and other experts.

Effective
Legislative
Oversight
Score: 9

Greek parliamentary committees have the authority to obtain necessary documents from the government and summon ministers to committee meetings to hold them accountable. These powers are guaranteed by the standing orders of parliament and are regularly exercised.

When documents are requested, the relevant ministry must provide them within one month, except for sensitive information related to diplomacy, military matters, or national security. Even in these cases, committees can request to inspect such documents. Ministers typically comply with these

requests, as MPs are often demanding and can leverage the pressure from opposition media.

Ministers are also obliged to appear before committees if summoned by two-fifths of the committee members. While the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs may limit the information they provide depending on the issue, they must still present information and engage in debates with the opposition. These exchanges can range from rational argumentation to more performative displays, especially when covered by the media.

Effective
Legislative
Investigations
Score: 8

Historically, the ability to initiate legislative investigations depended heavily on the support of the parliamentary majority. However, a constitutional reform in 2019 changed this dynamic. The constitution now allows for the establishment of investigative committees by a two-fifths vote of all MPs (100 out of 300), enabling opposition parties to form such committees without the consent of the majority.

For example, in August 2022, the opposition initiated a parliamentary committee to investigate the wiretapping of journalists and politicians, and in November 2023, they launched another committee to investigate the causes of a major railway accident in February 2023. While the government majority did not support the first committee, it consented to the formation of the second.

These investigative committees can produce reports unfavorable to the government, although they cannot initiate criminal investigations against ministers. Such criminal investigations require a different type of committee, which must be established by an absolute majority of MPs (151 out of 300).

Legislative
Capacity for
Guiding Policy
Score: 7

Although there are more ministries than parliamentary committees, this mismatch does not hinder the committees’ oversight responsibilities.

During the government term from 2019 to 2023, there were 19 ministries, which increased to 20 after the June 2023 elections with the creation of the Ministry of Family and Social Cohesion. Despite these changes, the number of standing parliamentary committees has remained at six.

Parliamentary scrutiny is conducted through joint committees when necessary. For example, the Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs oversees both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, while the Standing Committee on National Defense and Foreign Affairs scrutinizes both the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, special parliamentary committees focus on narrower policy areas, such as armaments, and there are ten such “special permanent committees.” There are

also “special standing committees” that address cross-cutting policy areas, such as Social Insurance and Pensions or European Affairs.

Committee debates can be lively, although absenteeism is not uncommon, especially when MPs prefer to visit their electoral districts. It is rare for an opposition member of parliament to chair a parliamentary committee, as the parliamentary majority typically controls the chair to coordinate the passage of legislation. Nonetheless, there is room for amendments to draft legislation within committees. Both opposition MPs and government-supporting MPs can propose amendments, many of which are accepted by the government and the parliamentary majority. However, if too many amendments are made, the quality of the final legislation may suffer.

Governing with Foresight

I. Coordination

Quality of Horizontal Coordination

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms of
the GO/PMO
Score: 8

Horizontal, interministerial coordination processes have been streamlined since at least 2019 when a new law on government organization was adopted. This coordination is overseen by the Prime Minister's Office, which was upgraded and renamed the Presidency of the Government in 2019, functioning similarly to a Government Office or Prime Minister's Office in other countries. The Presidency of the Government is staffed with political appointees and experts in various fields, including law, economics, public administration, foreign relations, and communications. These experts evaluate policy proposals from line ministries and ensure alignment with the broader government priorities.

The cabinet meets regularly to discuss and decide on draft bills after the Presidency of the Government has consulted with the relevant ministry. Although ministers sometimes continue the practice of submitting last-minute amendments during parliamentary debates, they must coordinate with the Presidency of the Government for significant amendments.

After a law is adopted, further coordination between the involved ministries is necessary for its implementation. Often, this requires the issuance of joint ministerial ordinances (the "KYSA"), co-signed by two or more ministers. This process can sometimes lead to delays and implementation gaps, as it requires coordination among numerous officials to finalize the details of policy implementation.

Overall, however, established coordination mechanisms between the GO and line ministries are effective in enhancing policy coherence.

Effective
Coordination
Mechanisms
within the
Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 7

Coordination within the ministerial bureaucracy, which was somewhat inconsistent in the past, has been improved since the government reorganization in 2019. In each line ministry, a “Coordination Service” unit has been established, staffed by permanent civil servants. Their role is to ensure regular communication and interaction between the ministry and the Presidency of the Government. As a result, the Presidency of the Government receives regular updates from line ministries on policy matters. The Presidency itself is well-staffed, well-resourced, and utilizes modern management methods and digital technologies.

Horizontal coordination also takes place through interministerial committees, most of which are formed to address specific tasks, such as responding to crises caused by natural disasters. However, there are two permanent committees: the Government Council on National Security (KYSEA), which selects the heads of the armed forces and formulates defense and security policy, and the Government Council on Economic Policy (KYSOIP), which formulates and reviews key economic policies.

For minor policy implementation issues, civil servants frequently exchange information across ministerial boundaries. However, for more significant issues, they must escalate information and proposals through their ministry’s hierarchical structure before further collaboration with other ministries can occur. It is typically the top staff of each ministry (“General and Special Secretaries,” “Service Secretaries,” and “Directors General”) who identify synergies and opportunities for coordination.

Due to the strict control and streamlined coordination exercised by the Presidency of the Government, it is extremely rare for ministers to be surprised by initiatives taken by their colleagues in other ministries.

Complementary
Informal
Coordination
Score: 9

While horizontal coordination in Greece has traditionally been informal, it has become more formalized since the adoption of the 2019 law on government organization. The establishment of the Presidency of the Government and the creation of “Coordination Services” within each ministry have reduced the need for informal coordination, limiting the opportunities for individual ministers to pursue their own policy agendas.

However, during periods of crisis, such as the wildfires in the summer of 2022 and the floods in the summer of 2023, informal coordination did occur. This involved not only the Government Office but also ministers without portfolio who work closely with the prime minister. In 2023–2024, there were three such ministers and three deputy ministers who worked in close coordination with the prime minister and among themselves, taking on various supervisory

roles. This team was particularly cohesive, as its members had worked together during the previous term of the New Democracy party (2019–2023).

In summary, informal coordination mechanisms effectively complement formal ones.

Quality of Vertical Coordination

Effectively
Setting and
Monitoring
National
(Minimum)
Standards
Score: 5

In Greece, national standards primarily focus on the economic performance of national and subnational authorities and agencies. The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and the Audit Office (Elegktiko Synedrio), an independent authority, oversee regional governments and municipalities, with an emphasis on sound fiscal management. This focus emerged from the need for stricter fiscal oversight of Greek ministries and public agencies following the economic crisis of the previous decade.

In contrast, there are few national standards for decentralized public services in areas such as environmental services, education, social assistance, healthcare, land use, waste management, public transport, and housing. Greece’s current national reform program emphasizes priorities and numerical targets rather than comprehensive standards and performance indicators in these areas (Hellenic Republic 2023).

Greek authorities generally adhere to standards set by EU institutions and international forums in which the country participates. For example, the Paris Agreement (2015) and annual global climate change meetings (COP 26, COP 27, and COP 28) have established standards and indicators for environmental protection. Additionally, key performance indicators related to social assistance and healthcare, used by the European Commission and Eurostat, provide a basis for comparative evaluation among the 27 EU member states.

Effective
Multilevel
Cooperation
Score: 5

Greece’s governance structure includes 13 self-governed regions and 332 self-governed municipalities, regulated by codified legislation adopted in 2006. Regional governors and mayors, who serve five-year terms (increased from four years in 2023), often belong to political parties different from the ruling national party, exercising significant political discretion.

The central government effectively controls subnational authorities when they execute their administrative competences. Greece is divided into seven “Decentralized Administrations,” which are branches of the central government that oversee regional and local governments and carry out tasks not assigned to subnational authorities.

Compared to other OECD countries, Greece’s local authorities have a narrower scope of tasks and functions, indicating below-average “institutional depth.” Moreover, regional and local governments in Greece have limited fiscal and organizational autonomy (European Commission 2022: 25, 29, 33, 36, and 49). Their revenue primarily comes from the state budget.

Ongoing discussions between the central government, subnational authorities, and experts focus on recalibrating the distribution of tasks and funding between central and subnational governments. For example, an expert committee led by a constitutional law professor engaged with representatives from various levels of government during 2020–2021 to reassess task distribution, but no significant progress was made.

Although the autonomy of subnational self-governments is nominally guaranteed by the constitution, which requires the central government to provide them with the necessary legislative, regulatory, and financial resources to perform their tasks (Article 102), subnational governments have limited financial resources. Additionally, the central government frequently changes the number and nature of tasks assigned to subnational governments, regardless of the ruling party.

The instability in the mandate of subnational governments is rooted in the fiscal mismanagement of funds by municipalities before the economic crisis of the previous decade. As a result, while there is cooperation between national policymakers and subnational authorities, this cooperation rarely translates into effective public service delivery.

II. Consensus-Building

Recourse to Scientific Knowledge

Harnessing
Scientific
Knowledge
Effectively
Score: 5

In Greece, there is ample opportunity for the formulation and expression of scientific opinions, both in support of and against government initiatives. Universities and research centers in the country operate independently and are not subject to government control.

Historically, the interaction between the scientific community and the government was weak, but significant progress has been made. While evidence-informed policymaking has advanced, it remains somewhat

fragmented (Ladi et al., 2022). Various government bodies and non-governmental organizations provide expertise during the policy formulation stage.

For example, the “National Council for Research, Technology, and Innovation” (ESETEK) is a high-ranking expert committee loosely connected to the Ministry of Development, focusing on scientific research, technology, and innovation. In economic and fiscal policy, the Council of Economic Advisors (SOE) and the Hellenic Fiscal Council (EDS), both hosted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, serve as advisory bodies to the Minister of Finance.

Similar expert committees exist in other policy areas, though the presence of such committees varies widely across ministries. Some ministries have established mechanisms for integrating scientific evidence into policymaking, while others have not.

Even in the absence of a formal expert committee, the government often seeks guidance from the scientific community when challenges arise. A notable example is the government’s collaboration with scientists during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). The government relied on scientific advice and adopted recommendations on healthcare policy from the Committee of Epidemiologists and the National Committee on Vaccinations, both hosted by the Ministry of Health.

The members of the National Committee on Vaccinations did not always agree, and they were free to express their disagreements. The government, however, retained the responsibility for making final decisions on contested issues. Similarly, in late 2023, the government established a new scientific committee to advise on artificial intelligence, a rapidly emerging challenge for governments and public administrations (Presidency of the Government 2023).

While government officials and non-governmental experts engage with each other, this exchange is infrequent. However, the experts consulted represent a wide range of perspectives, ensuring diversity in the policy advice provided.

In education policy, for example, successive governments have faced strong criticism from academics who disagreed with the education ministers on reform efforts. During the recent economic crisis and its aftermath, academics and teachers, often allied with political parties and trade unions, mobilized students and civil servants against education reforms.

In labor market policy, Greek trade unions frequently consult experts affiliated with their organizations rather than the government. During consultations on new bills, non-governmental experts are invited and consulted both before the bills are submitted to parliament and during discussions in parliamentary committees.

Despite this engagement, the government does not always adopt expert opinions. In Greece's parliamentary system, characterized by single-party majority governments and infrequent coalition governments, the government may choose not to reconcile differing expert opinions. Instead, it may proceed with its policy agenda and pass legislation that has faced criticism from the scientific community.

Involvement of Civil Society in Policy Development

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Capital and
Labor)
Score: 7

Greece has established executive and legislative mechanisms that involve representatives of capital and labor in expert commissions and public hearings. Legislation adopted in 1990 and amended in 2021 requires that these representatives negotiate with the government on issues such as salaries, wages, and other aspects of labor relations. For example, the National General Collective Labor Agreement (EGSSE) was negotiated and signed by the national social partners in 2021 (Eurofound 2022), incorporating the European Social Partners Framework Agreement on Digitalization (2020). The social partners also established working groups to address digitalization issues, such as the right to disconnect and maintaining legal working hours for remote workers.

When draft legislation on labor issues is submitted to parliament, the "Permanent Committee on Social Affairs" is convened to debate the legislation. Representatives of employers and employees are invited to participate in these committee sessions.

In Greece, all members of the private sector and labor are involved in negotiations. These negotiations occur between associations representing employers – such as SEV (industrialists), ESEE (merchants), and GSEVEE (small firms) – and the General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE). Similar negotiations take place between the government and the Confederation of Civil Service Unions (ADEDY) regarding public employee salaries.

Although organizational density in Greece is relatively low (approximately 19%; OECD 2021), collective agreements are extended to cover non-organized employers and employees. These agreements are periodically

renegotiated, as they may last between one and three years. Additionally, sector-level negotiations between employers and employees are common.

In cases of labor disputes, the Mediation and Arbitration Agency (OMED), established in 1990, supports collective negotiations and intervenes between conflicting interests.

Since 2022, a new institutional mechanism, the “Council of Social Partners,” has involved representatives of capital and labor in consultations on employment policy. This council is attached to the national Public Employment Service (DYPAS) and can also be convened by the Minister of Labor.

During the economic crisis of the previous decade, the participation of social partners in policymaking was often nominal, with wages, salaries, and other labor-related issues being negotiated between the Greek government and representatives of Greece’s creditors (the “Troika”). However, participation is no longer merely tokenistic.

While the government can balance the interests of capital and labor, it is not obligated to act on the outcomes of consultation talks. The Ministry of Labor alone has the authority to decide on minimum wages and working hours, in line with relevant EU regulations and directives.

The involvement of prominent social welfare CSOs in the initial stages of policymaking on key issues is limited.

Greece maintains an official national registry of social welfare CSOs, managed by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA), a branch of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. However, the registry’s primary purpose is to accredit local social welfare CSOs authorized to carry out welfare tasks, such as childcare and elderly assistance, rather than to facilitate policy consultation. The board of trustees of EKKA includes a representative of the national confederation of persons with disabilities (EKKA 2024). Although government officials sometimes consult social welfare CSOs informally before drafting legislation, formal consultations are infrequent.

There is, however, a legislative mechanism for consultation in Greece. CSOs and interested citizens can participate in the electronic deliberation required before any ministry submits draft legislation to parliament. Ministries, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the newly established Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family (2023), are mandated to upload draft legislation to their official websites and invite public feedback before finalizing the bill for

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Social Welfare)
Score: 5

submission to parliament. Following this process, the “Permanent Committee on Social Affairs” is convened to debate the legislation, with representatives of CSOs and social welfare experts invited to participate. Despite these mechanisms, the involvement of leading social welfare CSOs in policy development remains less than desirable.

Effective
Involvement of
Civil Society
Organizations
(Environment)
Score: 5

Prominent environmental CSOs in Greece have minimal involvement in the early stages of policymaking on crucial environmental issues. Although numerous environmental CSOs exist, they often lack sufficient organizational strength and fail to form lasting alliances.

Criticism of government measures and the mobilization of environmental CSOs against successive governments’ environmental policies and industrial investment plans have occurred but are not systematic. These actions rarely gain nationwide traction and are often confined to local settings (Velegrakis and Frezouli 2016).

For example, in the fall of 2021, an alliance of environmental CSOs mobilized against draft legislation that bureaucratized the registration process for voluntary associations in Greece. Around 300 CSOs, including environmental groups, co-signed a petition and participated in protests (Hellenic Platform for Development 2024).

In the summer of 2022, environmental CSOs critically assessed the government’s “Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” before its submission to the UN. The CSOs also drafted their own review (Presidency of the Hellenic Republic 2022: 16). During this period, the Greek government engaged in systematic consultations with stakeholders, including environmental CSOs. The Ministry of Energy and Environment also held talks with 11 environmental CSOs that opposed the environmental policy measures under preparation.

As in other policy sectors, the relevant ministry is required to upload draft environmental legislation to its official website and solicit feedback from organizations and citizens before finalizing the bill for submission to parliament. Subsequently, there is a legislative mechanism for consulting environmental CSOs, with MPs consulting representatives of environmental CSOs and experts in environmental studies during parliamentary debates. The parliament has also established a “Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection” to monitor developments in Greece’s natural environment.

Overall, consistent consultation between environmental CSOs and government officials is lacking, and there is no comprehensive policy to involve these CSOs in policymaking.

The weakness of environmental organizations in Greece is also reflected in the minimal political influence of Green parties, which consistently fall short of the 3% electoral threshold required by electoral law to elect MPs in national elections. The reasons for the electoral failure of Green parties in Greece (van Versendaal 2023) are similar to the challenges faced by environmental CSOs: a lack of a political culture that prioritizes environmental issues, antagonistic political trends that polarize the political party system and society, and persistent internal conflicts within the environmental movement.

Openness of Government

Open
Government
Score: 7

The Greek government has developed a comprehensive data strategy as part of its broader “Digital Transformation Bible 2020–2025.” This strategy includes two key axes: one focused on developing data repositories to improve decision-making and administrative services, and the other on promoting open access, reuse, and maximization of public sector data. The strategy aims to “enhance participation, transparency, and public scrutiny, and promote entrepreneurship” (Ministry of Digital Governance 2024). The “Bible” is being implemented through various ongoing projects.

Compared to the previous decade, Greece has made significant progress in the availability, openness, and user-friendliness of public data. For example, the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) provides comparable data on Greece’s economic and social indicators. Additionally, detailed data on public employment in Greece is available through a dedicated website of the Ministry of Interior, which provides prompt updates. For instance, in early January 2024, detailed aggregate data for all categories of public service personnel for November 2023 was made available.

The government has actively encouraged data reuse, developed portals to facilitate interactive feedback and communication, and ensured the production of high-quality government information. As a result, Greece ranks among the OECD’s top ten countries for the openness, usefulness, and reusability of government data (OECD 2019).

III. Sensemaking

Preparedness

Capacity for
Strategic
Foresight and
Anticipatory
Innovation
Score: 6

Greece has established a dedicated central government unit for strategic foresight and anticipatory innovation. Established in 2022 by the Presidency of the Government, the Special Secretariat for Foresight is responsible for exploring ideas and scenarios, providing tools and guidance, and coordinating and monitoring relevant projects.

The Ministry of Digital Governance, established in 2019 as a successor to the Ministry of Digital Policy, Communications, and Information, also contributes to policy implementation in areas such as open government, knowledge management, and digital transformation.

The government allocates financial and human resources, such as grant funding and procurement, to establish test beds for new ideas through the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (ELIDEK). Since 2016, this state-funded institution, supervised by the Ministry of Development, has organized various rounds of calls for tender, funding research teams from across Greece and all scientific disciplines. These teams provide research results and policy recommendations to the scientific community and public administration.

Higher civil servants receive training at the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA), which covers strategic management methods, innovations in public administration, and digital skills.

However, most of the aforementioned government units are relatively new and have not yet matured enough to engage in policy experimentation through innovation labs, behavioral insights, or delivery teams using relevant techniques. As a result, it is too early to determine their impact on work practices and organizational culture within ministerial bureaucracies.

Analytical Competence

Effective
Regulatory
Impact
Assessment
Score: 6

Since 2019, it has been a legal requirement to conduct Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) for any new legislation. As of October 2020, no bill can be submitted to parliament without an accompanying RIA. The Office for Better Regulation, part of the General Secretariat for Legal and Parliamentary Issues in the Presidency of the Government, oversees the RIA process.

While government officials are not required to involve stakeholders when preparing regulatory changes, they must upload draft legislation to the competent ministry's website for public deliberation. This digital deliberation allows for the consideration of stakeholders' needs and likely responses. Each ministry is required to apply uniform standards in preparing RIAs using templates and indicators provided by the Office for Better Regulation. The RIA for each bill is made publicly available on the parliament's website.

Although there are no periodic quality evaluations of the RIA process and its results, the existing institutions and processes ensure that RIAs meet minimum standards. RIAs provide reliable information about the impacts of regulations on key socioeconomic indicators, as long as data on these indicators is available. However, the lack of data in specific policy areas can limit the full application of RIA. For example, while Greece has adequate epidemiological data, there is very little data on issues like sexual harassment, which can affect the corresponding regulations.

Effective
Sustainability
Checks
Score: 5

The Greek government has developed a sustainable development strategy based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This strategy has been translated into concrete National Action Plans to implement specific SDGs, though these plans do not yet cover all policy areas. For example, there are action plans in areas such as public health, mental health, protection of people with disabilities, social economy, energy conservation, green public procurement, and digital skills.

Sustainability checks are mandated by law to be integrated into RIAs. Civil servants responsible for drafting RIAs must complete a template provided by the Secretariat of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, which includes specific fields for sustainability checks, such as questions on the environmental impact of proposed legislation.

However, these checks are sometimes limited by a lack of empirical data or by time constraints during the preparation of draft legislation. External pressures

or the ambition of government ministers to demonstrate productivity may also lead to rushed RIA preparation.

Effective Ex Post
Evaluation
Score: 3

Article 56 of Law 4622/2019 mandates ex post evaluations of laws, requiring the involvement of social partners, universities, and research centers. However, Article 120 of the same law postponed the implementation of these regulations until 2020. Consequently, the three- to five-year evaluation period for laws adopted in 2020 or later will not begin until 2024 at the earliest.

The ex post evaluation process is initiated by the Presidency of the Government, which calls on its “Coordination Services” within each ministry to collaborate with the ministry’s services in producing the evaluations. The law stipulates that stakeholders, particularly those who can provide empirical information, should be involved in ex post evaluations. For instance, the law specifically mentions social partners (representatives of employers and employees), universities, and research centers as sources of useful empirical information for these evaluations.

Sustainable Policymaking

I. Economic Sustainability

Circular Economy

Circular
Economy Policy
Efforts and
Commitment
Score: 6

Since 2018, Greece has pursued a policy aimed at reducing the consumption of scarce resources, cutting emissions of climate-damaging substances, and minimizing waste production. In 2022, the government introduced the National Circular Economy Action Plan (National CEAP) for the 2021–2025 period to further these efforts.

Greece has identified key sectors for focused policy attention, including electronics, information and communications technology (ICT), batteries, vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction, buildings, food, and water and nutrients (European Environmental Agency 2022: 6 and 9). In 2023, the Life Integrated Project was launched to monitor the implementation of the National CEAP Plan (CircularGreece 2023).

The Ministry of Environment and Energy has adopted a circular economy model (YPEN 2024). However, the concept remains relatively new to the Greek public. While the material footprint of Greeks has decreased over time, it is still among the highest in the OECD (OECD 2019). A 2021 public survey revealed that administrative hurdles and consumer behavior are the most significant barriers to transitioning to a circular economy (European Environmental Agency 2022: 37).

Regarding green public procurement, Greece has implemented a Green Public Procurement Action Plan for 2021–2023, setting targets for 15 product and service categories, with goals ranging from 20% to 80% of public procurements depending on the category (European Environmental Agency 2022: 20).

Greece’s industrial production of durable goods is limited compared to larger EU economies, leading to reliance on imports. Although the government has not yet fostered a market for used and refurbished products, NGOs and private companies in various cities have begun to take initiatives.

Recycling, managed by municipalities, has shown uneven results, and Greece ranks among the worst performers in the EU for recycling rates of all waste except major mineral waste (Eurostat 2022). However, 15 Greek municipalities have installed marine litter collection stations that collect plastic waste from the seabed, sea, and coasts. The collected materials are then distributed to companies involved in upcycling, with the aim of producing new plastic products (European Environmental Agency 2022: 31).

Greece’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan includes measures for waste management reform, energy renovation of buildings, and support for e-mobility (Greek Government 2024).

Viable Critical Infrastructure

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to a Resilient
Critical
Infrastructure
Score: 7

Greece has established a clear strategy and roadmap for updating and protecting critical infrastructure, as outlined in the national reform program (Hellenic Republic 2023) and the “Greece 2.0” Recovery and Resilience Plan agreed upon with the EU (Greek Government 2023). The strategy is binding, reinforced by legislation from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, and adopted by the Greek parliament.

This strategy is detailed in sector-specific action plans, including the “National Action Plan of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport” (Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport 2022) and the “Green Transition” and “Digital Transformation” pillars of the “Greece 2.0” plan (Greek Government 2023).

Greece has prioritized enhancing points of entry to increase interconnections and export capabilities, aiming to attract private investment while dedicating public funds to upgrading Aegean Sea ports, national highways, and airports – often through public-private partnerships. However, rail infrastructure has been neglected, as highlighted by a fatal railway accident in February 2023. Railways’ share in inland passenger and freight transport remains minimal compared to buses and trucks (Eurostat 2021a and 2021b).

Regarding energy infrastructure, Greece plans to cease lignite plant operations by 2028, shifting toward renewable energy sources and increasing its capacity to import non-Russian natural gas, committing significant infrastructure investments (International Trade Administration 2023).

In digital infrastructure, the government's strategy, outlined in the National Reform and "Greece 2.0" plans, includes an annually updated action plan for digital transformation (Ministry of Digital Transformation 2023). Greece's cybersecurity measures for digital infrastructure are comparable to or exceed those of other EU Member States (International Telecommunication Union 2020: 114).

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport leads critical infrastructure projects like roads, ports, airports, and railways, while the Ministry of Digital Governance oversees digital infrastructure. Local executive agencies, such as port authorities, upgrade infrastructure under ministry supervision, and regional projects are managed by regional governments, with central government oversight to ensure effective implementation. Central units regularly monitor, update, and publish policy measures annually (e.g., Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport 2024).

Challenges in implementing these strategies include supply chain shortages, raw material availability, price increases, and limited labor (International Trade Administration 2023).

In summary, while Greece previously ranked poorly among OECD countries for infrastructure quality (World Economic Forum 2019), significant improvements have been made in national roads, ports, airports, and digital infrastructure. Greece has made substantial progress in internet coverage and speed; by mid-2021, 91.7% of Greek households had access to high-speed broadband services (European Commission 2022: 103).

Decarbonized Energy System

Policy Efforts
and Commitment
to Achieving a
Decarbonized
Energy System
by 2050
Score: 8

Greece has a clearly defined strategy and roadmap for transitioning to a fully decarbonized energy system by 2050. This strategy is outlined in the national reform program (Hellenic Republic 2023) and the "Greece 2.0" Recovery and Resilience Plan agreed upon with the EU (Greek Government 2023). The strategy is binding, supported by legislation from the Ministry of Energy and Environment, and adopted by the Greek parliament.

The strategy is implemented through sector-specific action plans, such as the "National Action Plan for Energy and Climate" (Ministry of Energy and Environment 2019) and the "Green Transition Pillar" of the "Greece 2.0" plan (Greek Government 2023). Notable policy measures include the government's goal to phase out coal-powered electricity by 2028, despite ongoing lignite

mining, and to reduce total greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 (International Trade Association 2023). These policies represent an aggressive shift away from fossil fuels to meet the EU’s 2050 decarbonization target.

Greece’s progress is supported by both public and private investments, with significant contributions from Greek and foreign firms in high and low-voltage grid operators and natural gas distribution. Greece leads the EU in electricity production capacity from wind power and is among the top performers in hydroelectric capacity relative to GDP (Eurostat 2023 and IMF 2023). Public procurement in the energy sector is regulated and monitored by the independent Hellenic Single Public Procurement Authority (EADHSY).

The Ministry of Energy and Environment leads these efforts, while regional governments manage regional projects under close central government oversight. Central units consistently monitor, update, and publish policy measures annually (e.g., Ministry of Energy and Environment 2023).

In summary, while Greece remains above the OECD average in primary energy consumption per capita (BP 2022) and CO2 emissions from fuel combustion per capita (IEA 2023), it has made significant strides in renewable energy adoption. In 2019, Greece ranked below the OECD average in terms of renewable energy share of total final energy consumption in the SDGs. Greece’s renewable energy consumption increased from 15% in 2013 to 23% in 2022, nearly reaching the EU average (Eurostat 2022).

Adaptive Labor Markets

Policies
Targeting an
Adaptive Labor
Market
Score: 4

In 2022, Greece’s unemployment rate fell to 7.5%, a significant improvement from 16.4% in 2013. Despite this progress, Greece still has the second-highest unemployment rate in the EU, after Spain. However, the country’s promising economic growth prospects provide hope for further reductions in unemployment.

There are, however, troubling aspects of the unemployment profile. Greece ranks the worst among OECD countries for long-term unemployment (OECD 2022). The highest unemployment rates are observed among women, young people aged 15 to 24, individuals in the Thessaly region, and those with only a few years of elementary education (Eures 2023).

Youth unemployment is particularly alarming, with 31% of individuals aged 15-24 out of work – the highest rate in the OECD (2022). The gender employment gap is also the worst in the OECD, with only 56% of women

aged 20-64 participating in the labor force, compared to the EU average of 69% (Eurostat 2023).

Greece’s overall employment rate is relatively low, with only 66% of the population participating in the labor market, compared to the EU average of 75% (Eurostat 2022a). Part-time work is rare and often involuntary, while temporary work is uncommon. Policies promoting short-term employment to help firms adapt to temporary shocks are underdeveloped and likely unpopular, given that around 11% of workers are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared to the EU average of 9% (Eurostat 2022b).

The largest occupational groups in Greece are professionals (22.4% of the workforce) and service providers and salespersons (20.9%) (Eures 2023). Despite high unemployment, there is a skills mismatch, with unskilled and low-skilled labor in industry and the service sector, as well as highly skilled workers in ICT, in high demand. The education system has yet to align with labor market needs, and only 12% of people participate in job-related non-formal education and training programs, far below the EU average of 38% (Eurostat 2016). As a result, policies do not sufficiently encourage skill development in response to changing labor market demands.

Policies
Targeting an
Inclusive Labor
Market
Score: 5

Policies in Greece do not effectively integrate out-of-work benefits with active labor market programs to protect workers and enhance job prospects. Labor market policies remain largely passive, with education and training inadequately aligned with labor market shifts.

However, there has been a policy shift in this area. In January 2024, the parliament passed a new law on vocational education and training. This law restructures the previously fragmented vocational education landscape. Post-secondary vocational training and education schools (IEK) will be more closely aligned with local and sectoral labor market needs. Within secondary education, vocational high schools and training centers are being integrated into new units called “Centers for Vocational Training and Education” (KEEK). These centers will be equipped with laboratories and career offices, and their curricula will better integrate practical work experience with firms. Additional state funding will also support vocational education and training.

There are relatively few disincentives for the unemployed to return to work. Although returning to work may result in higher taxes or lower benefits, these levels are below the OECD average (OECD 2021).

Greece has reformed its public employment service, DYPA, which was established in 2022 as the successor to the outdated OAED agency. DYPA is

better organized than its predecessor, providing services that facilitate worker mobility across firms and industries. However, it is still too early to fully assess its efficiency.

Greece has a higher-than-average percentage of youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) compared to other OECD countries (OECD 2023). This is largely due to the underdeveloped vocational education and training system, which is associated with lower earnings and social status, making it unpopular.

During the COVID-19 crisis, policies and regulations helped workers achieve a better work-life balance through remote work arrangements. However, after the pandemic subsided, work-life balance efficiency declined due to factors such as long commutes in major cities, frequent traffic congestion, and a culture of mistrust between employers and employees regarding commitment to work and actual working hours.

Policies
Targeting Labor
Market Risks
Score: 5

Labor market institutions in Greece are only somewhat aligned with the goal of protecting individuals against labor market risks.

The minimum unemployment benefit, provided for up to 12 months, is very low at just €479 per month. Due to various exemptions, only about 10% of the unemployed receive this benefit. However, the government plans to increase the benefit to up to €1,300 per month, depending on years of work, and extend its duration to 18 months (Georgakis 2024).

The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), representing private sector employees and workers, regularly advocates on behalf of the unemployed, ensuring their interests are represented.

Greece’s population, including the unemployed, is covered by a public social insurance agency (EFKA) and the National Health System (ESY), modeled after the UK’s NHS. Despite bureaucratic hurdles and inefficiencies in the ESY, social rights such as social insurance, health insurance, and pensions are portable. Access to public healthcare and basic social insurance for the unemployed has been guaranteed by law since 2016.

Sustainable Taxation

Policies
Targeting
Adequate Tax
Revenue
Score: 5

Ensuring adequate tax compliance in Greece has been challenging due to a long history of tax evasion. A 2012 study estimated that the shadow economy in Greece accounted for around 27% of GDP between 1999 and 2010, compared to an OECD average of 20% (IMF 2013: 11).

Several factors contribute to this lack of tax compliance, including the large proportion of self-employment (28% of total employment; OECD 2020: 9), the indirect tax burden (with VAT at 24%), the high unemployment rate (9.4% in November 2023, the second highest in the EU after Spain; Eurostat 2024), and low tax morale. The self-employed consistently underreport their revenues, and they are numerous and difficult to control. Additionally, tax morale is low, as citizens have long doubted the effective use of public funds, both before and after the economic crisis (Exadaktylos and Zahariadis 2014).

Compared to other OECD countries, Greece's tax administration capacity remains among the lowest (Tax Justice Network 2023). While the effective average tax rate for businesses is close to the OECD average (Mannheim Tax Index 2021), disincentives for prospective investors persist. Although Greece's average income tax rate is below the OECD average (OECD 2022), the social insurance wedge – relatively high contributions that businesses and employees pay to social security funds – acts as a significant deterrent.

Tax officials today have better access to bank accounts than before the economic crisis. The customs unit's mobile squads conduct random inspections of businesses, particularly during the long Greek summer. A special unit of the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (AADE 2024) investigates large businesses, smaller firms, the self-employed, and high-net-worth individuals (Petrakis 2019).

Policies
Targeting Tax
Equity
Score: 5

The Greek tax system is not well-aligned with the principle of horizontal equity (Tax Justice Network 2023). Despite improvements in tax system digitalization, new tax laws, and the operation of the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR), tax evasion remains prevalent among certain occupational groups.

Tax compliance among the self-employed and small enterprises, which form the backbone of the Greek economy, remains inconsistent. For example, in 2022, 67% of the self-employed declared an annual income below €10,000, despite significant increases in their turnover (European Commission 2023: 11). This suggests that some entrepreneurs and professionals report incomes lower than those of salaried workers earning the legally guaranteed minimum wage (€10,920 per year).

In December 2023, the government passed a new law targeting tax evasion, making it difficult for entrepreneurs and professionals (e.g., lawyers, engineers) who employ salaried workers to declare an annual income lower than that of their employees. The law also imposes heavy penalties on

transactions over €500 made in cash and promotes the use of credit cards and bank transfers to reduce cash transactions. These steps aim to enhance horizontal equity.

However, some degree of vertical equity is achieved in Greece. The tax system imposes higher taxes on individuals and companies with greater ability to pay. Since 2021, the top personal income tax rate has been 44%, the 15th highest among EU Member States (Tax Foundation 2023). Among OECD countries, Greece is one of the least complicit in allowing individuals to hide their finances from legal scrutiny (Financial Secrecy Index 2022). Additionally, Greece is far from being a corporate tax haven compared to other OECD countries (Corporate Tax Haven Index 2021).

Policies Aimed at
Minimizing
Compliance
Costs
Score: 6

Since the onset of the economic crisis, the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR) has made significant progress in digitalizing tax systems, and the government has introduced numerous new tax laws.

In Greece, a long-standing tradition of adopting numerous laws, presidential decrees, and ministerial circulars to regulate taxation has created a complex and often confusing system (Sotiropoulos and Hristopoulos 2017). This complexity reduces the transparency and clarity of tax rules, prompting many citizens and businesses to hire personal accountants to manage their tax declarations.

Recognizing these challenges, successive governments have focused on simplifying tax rules and reducing administrative costs. In 2019, the government passed a law to digitalize tax information on income and expenses. The IAPR subsequently developed the “myDATA” platform (AADE 2024), which, despite delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is now operational. This platform is designed to digitalize the tax and accounting records of companies and liberal professions through the use of electronic accounting books.

However, the administrative capacities needed to effectively collect taxes still require further enhancement, especially given the scale of tax evasion. While penalties for tax evasion are enforced, the IAPR has also implemented a dispute resolution system to address complaints promptly. Nevertheless, citizens and businesses can appeal these penalties in administrative courts, where the slow and inefficient justice system often hampers the prosecution of tax evasion.

Policies Aimed at
Internalizing
Negative and
Positive
Externalities
Score: 6

The Greek tax system is somewhat aligned with the goal of internalizing externalities, particularly through the imposition of environment-related taxes. Among OECD countries, Greece has the highest environmental taxes relative to total tax revenues (OECD 2020).

The Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (ELIDEK) provides grants for basic research across all scientific disciplines, with recent funding supported by Greece's National Recovery and Resilience Plan, part of the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (ELIDEK 2022). However, in terms of fund absorption, private businesses in Greece lag behind state universities and research institutions, which conduct the majority of basic research.

Sustainable Budgeting

Sustainable
Budgeting
Policies
Score: 6

Before the Greek crisis, the Greek budget frequently fell victim to unpredictable pressures from interest groups. Unwarranted government assistance in the form of cash transfers and tax breaks was often dispensed in an irrational, patronage-based manner. Additionally, the budget was influenced by the vicissitudes of Greece's relations with neighboring countries, given Greece's status as a significant defense spender. Greek defense expenditure is double the EU average (Eurostat 2021a). These issues culminated in the economic crisis of the 2010s.

After overcoming the economic crisis of the previous decade, the COVID-19 crisis, and managing challenges with neighboring countries, Greece is now able to establish budgetary rules that ensure fiscal resilience. The government implements budgetary procedures that ensure transparency and sets budgetary priorities reflecting future well-being.

Financial support and technical assistance from the EU have been instrumental in these three dimensions of sustainable budgeting. With the help of the European Commission, the government incorporates long-term planning and conducts systematic, forward-looking assessments of the budget's impact. The budgetary process and implementation are open, transparent, and regularly scrutinized by the parliament, the designated "Office of the State Budget in Parliament," and Greece's audit office, "Elegktiko Syndedrio."

Policymakers prevent a continuous increase in public debt. Greece's public debt (168% of GDP) remains the largest in the EU, but it has continuously fallen since 2020, when it stood at 212% of GDP (IMF World Economic Outlook 2023a).

The Greek state budget is now more consolidated and better processed than in the past. Under EU supervision – specifically the “European Semester” mechanism that applies to all EU Member States – there is systematic planning and programming of government revenue and expenses. Additionally, the level and servicing of the public debt are closely monitored.

Yet, risks still persist. Greece’s total government expenditure is higher than the EU average, accounting for 57% of GDP compared to the EU average of 51% (Eurostat 2021b). The general government primary balance, at 1.02% of GDP, is small but remains the highest in the EU (IMF World Economic Outlook 2023b). Due to the substantial loans provided by the country’s creditors during the crisis decade, gross interest payments by the general government are comparatively high (OECD 2023).

Greece continues to service its debt. The country’s economic growth in the post-Covid period (2.4% in 2023, European Commission 2023) suggests it will likely be able to maintain this. During economic expansion, the government accumulates financial reserves through the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (AADE).

Greece’s national budget explicitly addresses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and target values associated with expenditures for economic and social development through the country’s Recovery and Resilience Plan (“Greece 2.0,” Greek Government 2021). This plan “is structured around four key pillars inextricably linked to the core priorities and objectives of the SDGs: (i) green transition, (ii) digital transition, (iii) employment, skills and social cohesion, and (iv) private investment and economic and institutional transformation. It is worth pointing out that 37.5% of the national RRP will support climate-related objectives” (Presidency of the Hellenic Government 2022: 35).

Sustainability-oriented Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Score: 4

While Greece has a comparable number of researchers to other EU countries (researchers per 1,000 employed, Eurostat 2021a), public and private expenditure on research and innovation are far below the EU average (Eurostat 2021b).

There is a national strategy and a national plan to promote research and innovation (Ministry of Development 2023, Greek Government 2023). The strategy and the plan are formulated by the General Secretariat for Research and Innovation (GGEK) – a central unit of the Ministry of Development – and

an independent council of scientists and experts, the National Council for Research, Technology, and Innovation (ESETEK).

However, the government does not consult the ESETEK council on a systematic basis, and the implementation of the national strategy, which is centralized, is slow. Monitoring the progress of research and innovation outcomes occurs sporadically.

Compared to other OECD countries, Greece lags in high-tech exports, intellectual property licenses, and various types of patents (Eurostat 2021). This deficit is primarily due to the relatively small size and low internal differentiation of Greek firms, as well as the chronic underfunding of research and innovation.

There is a newly emerging sector of innovation-oriented startup companies, but it is too early to assess its evolution. Moreover, there are good prospects for enhancing research and innovation soon, as this policy area is included in the fourth pillar of the “Greece 2.0” plan, financially supported by the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility (Greek Government 2021).

Stable Global Financial System

Global Financial
Policies
Score: 5

Greece, a Eurozone member state, is bound by Eurozone regulations and decisions of the Eurogroup. Representatives of the Greek government participate in appropriate EU forums where regulation and supervision of financial markets are discussed. Given the relatively small size of the Greek economy and its past problems – the economic crisis of the 2010s – it is not possible for Greece to actively guide the effective regulation and supervision of the international financial architecture.

Over time, Greece has made progress. It has overcome the economic crisis, and financial supervisory authorities have become more effective while non-performing loans have vastly declined between 2008 and 2023 (CEIC data 2023).

Greece ranks low in the IMF’s financial soundness indicators. It scores average in financial secrecy but below-average in international transparency commitments and international judicial cooperation on money laundering and other criminal matters. Compared to other Eurozone members, the country still struggles with non-performing loans of government units. Generally, however, Greece supports a more regulated international system for financial markets.

II. Social Sustainability

Sustainable Education System

Policies
Targeting Quality
Education
Score: 5

The public education system is underfunded and understaffed due to the austerity policies adopted during the economic crisis. The education system has not recovered since then and continues to lack necessary financial and human resources. Greece's public expenditure on education, at 4.1% of GDP in 2021, is below the EU average (Eurostat 2023). There is no systematic monitoring of labor market demands, and education and training programs are not adapted to labor market shifts.

The share of the Greek population with tertiary attainment (ISCED 5 and above, age group 25 – 64 years) rapidly increased from 28% in 2014 to 35% in 2022. Still, Greece remains a laggard in terms of upper second and tertiary attainment (Eurostat 2022a, OECD 2020). Moreover, even though Greece has one of the best ratios of pupils to teachers (Eurostat 2021a) and the school drop-out rate in Greece is not high (Eurostat 2022b), the country ranks last among all EU nations regarding results in PISA tests (PISA 2022). Additionally, the share of people aged 16 to 74 who have at least basic digital skills is below the EU average (Eurostat 2021b).

Furthermore, the framework conditions of the education system do not facilitate the recruitment of highly skilled educators. There are many disincentives to embarking on a teaching career. Teachers and university professors generally earn meager incomes. Primary and secondary school teachers can be posted at schools in remote areas. The only incentives for a career in teaching are that teachers in public schools and universities have the status of permanent civil servants and enjoy long summer breaks, as the school period starts in mid-September and ends in late May.

Individuals, however, have access to lifelong learning opportunities at an affordable cost. Public universities also offer short- and long-term courses as part of training and continuing professional development.

Education for sustainable development is integrated into school curricula, primarily at the primary and junior high school levels, but the relevant subjects are considered a lesser priority compared to the classical subjects of language, history, religious studies, and mathematics. In Greek universities, there are relatively few departments of environmental studies, while sustainable

development topics are not part of the core curriculum of the other sciences and humanities.

Nevertheless, the government has rolled out plans to address the deficiencies noted above. The government's Greece 2.0 plan, funded by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, dedicates the bulk of funds earmarked for the third pillar, that is, the pillar for employment, skills, and social cohesion – to “education, vocational education and training, and skills” (Greek Government 2021). The Ministry of Education's action plan for 2023 provides for targeted measures to upgrade all three levels of education, plus vocational training and lifelong learning (Ministry of Education 2023).

Policies
Targeting
Equitable Access
to Education
Score: 5

The share of Greek children (ages 3 – 5) in early childhood education and care increased rapidly from 77% in 2015 to 81% in 2022. However, compared to other OECD countries, Greece remains a laggard in this regard (Eurostat 2022a).

However, the education system ensures equitable access to all levels of education, regardless of socioeconomic background, through tuition-free primary, secondary, and tertiary education. All Greek universities are public and do not charge any tuition for undergraduate or PhD programs.

The education system offers second-chance opportunities for individuals with low skill levels upon leaving formal education. For instance, there are “second chance” public schools for early school leavers who did not complete secondary education. Additionally, the Hellenic Open University – a public institution modeled after the Open University of the UK – provides university-level educational opportunities for high school graduates who entered the labor market directly rather than proceeding to tertiary education.

The educational opportunities and achievements of pupils vary according to their socioeconomic background. In the largest Greek cities, numerous private primary and secondary schools exist. Parents who can afford it often enroll their children in these private schools rather than the local public schools in their neighborhoods. The infrastructure and effective hours of schooling in private schools are almost always superior to those in public schools. Evidence shows the impact of socioeconomic status on educational achievement. In terms of PISA tests, Greece demonstrates one of the strongest associations between results in mathematics and economic, cultural, and social status (ESCS; PISA 2022) compared to other EU countries.

Success in the competitive entrance examinations to public universities, which 18-year-old students take, also depends on socioeconomic status. Public

schools do not adequately prepare students for these highly competitive exams. To increase their chances of success, students from middle- and upper-class families enroll in fee-supported private cramming schools, where they receive more systematic instruction than they do in public high schools.

To sum up, although education in Greece is provided free of charge at all levels, allowing even the poorest strata to receive an education, the current policy approach in the education system hinders rather than facilitates equitable access to high-quality education and training.

Sustainable Institutions Supporting Basic Human Needs

Policies
Targeting Equal
Access to
Essential Services
and Basic Income
Support
Score: 6

Greece has made progress over time in meeting basic human needs. Between 2015 and 2022, the relative poverty rate decreased from 21% to 19% of the population. However, poverty in Greece remains higher than the EU average of 16.5% (Eurostat 2022a).

Additionally, Greece is among the EU countries with a significant proportion of the population experiencing persistent poverty, where individuals have a disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold in the current year and at least two of the preceding three years (Eurostat 2022b). The share of Greeks who are neither in employment nor in education and training is also among the highest in the EU (Eurostat 2022c).

Despite these challenges, Greek institutions are proactive in informing eligible individuals about their rights to access essential services and basic income support. The National Agency for Social Insurance (EFKA) at the central government level, along with local municipalities through their social welfare services, are responsible for providing social assistance. Another central government agency, OPEKA, is tasked with informing individuals about welfare transfers, such as child benefits, and distributing allowances accordingly.

OPEKA also administers a means-tested minimum income guarantee, which is provided to approximately 200,000 households in Greece. This guarantee includes not only a cash benefit but also benefits-in-kind, access to social welfare services, and referrals to active labor policies aimed at social inclusion and reintegration into the labor market (OPEKA 2024). The eligibility criteria for this minimum income guarantee also determine access to essential services like water and energy (European Social Policy Network 2020: 126).

In summary, Greece has developed a national strategy for social inclusion and poverty alleviation (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs 2022), which is integrated with other national plans addressing housing, energy, and digital skills. For example, a set of measures is in place to support housing for young and vulnerable groups (Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family 2024).

These strategies and plans are coordinated by the General Secretariat of Government Coordination, under the Presidency of the Government. The Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family, along with its branch organizations such as the National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA), monitors the implementation of the strategy and provides emergency social care.

Policies
Targeting Quality
of Essential
Services and
Basic Income
Support
Score: 5

Greece is close to the OECD average in terms of the adequacy of Guaranteed Minimum Income benefits (OECD 2022). However, the country ranks at the bottom of the EU in terms of material and social deprivation and the inability of individuals to keep their homes adequately warm (Eurostat 2022a, 2022b), indicating that current policy measures are insufficient.

Although Greece ranks average among EU countries in reducing the risk of poverty through social transfers (Eurostat 2022c), it is not surprising that Greeks rank low in life satisfaction among OECD countries (World Happiness Report 2023). Greece also scores poorly in life satisfaction as measured by the OECD’s “Better Life” Index (OECD 2023). Additionally, Greece provides minimal financial support or benefits-in-kind for meeting basic human needs in areas such as digital infrastructure and financial services.

While various factors contribute to Greece’s low performance on these subjective indices, evidence suggests that the provision of basic income benefits, intended to meet essential human needs, is significantly lacking.

Sustainable Health System

Policies
Targeting Health
System
Resilience
Score: 6

During the Greek crisis of the previous decade and more recently, health policy has hindered the resilience of the health system. Although Greece’s healthy life expectancy (71 years) is above the OECD average (WHO 2019), the country is among the lowest spenders on healthcare as a percentage of GDP and on preventive health programs (OECD 2022).

The public healthcare system is underfunded and understaffed. However, the government has pledged to increase healthcare spending and hire 6,000 doctors and nurses for the country’s 130 public hospitals. These measures aim to improve the availability of health products and services and address rising costs due to an aging population and advancements in medical technology.

Despite these efforts, transparency in health services remains a concern. Chronic mismanagement of public hospitals and the high demand for private health services, including diagnostic tests, have led to Greece having the highest number of computed tomography scanners among OECD countries (OECD 2021).

The challenges of managing the COVID-19 pandemic and the government’s responsiveness to demands for better public healthcare have prompted policy shifts aimed at enhancing the resilience of the public health system.

The government’s priorities now include the digital transformation of the public healthcare system and early diagnosis (International Trade Association 2023). A national strategy for healthcare reform, led by the Ministry of Health, is outlined in the “National Action Plan for Public Health 2021–2025” (Ministry of Health 2021).

The digital transformation plan, financially supported by the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility, is part of the “Greece 2.0” plan and includes five specific programs: National Digital Patient Health Record, Cancer Treatment Digital Transformation Program, Improvement of Hospital Digital Readiness, Telemedicine, and National Insurance Fund Digital Transformation (Greek Government 2022).

In summary, despite lingering problems, health policies are largely aligned with the goal of achieving a resilient health system.

Policies
Targeting High-
Quality
Healthcare
Score: 5

The quality of healthcare in Greece is far from assured. Although Greece has 67,000 practicing doctors, the country has fewer doctors and significantly fewer hospital beds per 1,000 inhabitants compared to other OECD countries (OECD 2021). Greece also faces a chronic shortage of nurses – a low-status, low-paid job – and medical personnel in rural or remote areas, as most doctors prefer to work in Athens and Thessaloniki, the two largest cities. In these hospitals, there are long waiting lists for emergency ward admissions and surgeries, leading to delays in receiving timely care.

The quality of treatment in public hospitals varies significantly, depending on available infrastructure and the quality of medical personnel. Additionally, patients’ purchasing power influences the volume of unrecorded and untaxed transactions with doctors (under-the-table out-of-pocket payments).

Furthermore, health policy has not historically prioritized preventive care. Only recently has the government begun reorienting the health system toward

prevention, focusing on breast, cervical, and colon cancers, cardiovascular diseases, childhood obesity, and prevention programs for adolescents and older adults (Ministry of Health 2023).

Policies Targeting Equitable Access To Healthcare
Score: 5

Equitable healthcare provision in Greece remains suboptimal. The country ranks below the OECD average in infant mortality (World Bank 2021), and the perceived healthcare status of Greeks varies significantly by income group (Eurostat 2022a). Greece also ranks among the worst EU countries for self-reported unmet medical care needs (Eurostat 2022b), with only slight improvements over time.

Additionally, Greeks who can afford it often rely on the private healthcare system, which has expanded in urban areas. About 5% of all healthcare spending in Greece comes directly from patients through out-of-pocket payments (OECD 2022), making Greece one of the worst performers among OECD countries in this regard. The healthcare system is notably uneven, with most facilities and medical personnel concentrated in the largest cities, exacerbating regional disparities in healthcare access.

Gender Equality

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Gender Equality
Score: 6

The constitution of Greece enshrines gender equality as a fundamental principle and mandates that the state eliminate any barriers to its realization (Article 4 of the Constitution). Greece has a national action plan for gender equality, which is tied to specific goals such as reducing violence against women, increasing female labor participation, enhancing women’s roles in decision-making positions, and integrating gender equality into sectoral public policies (General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights 2021; formerly the General Secretariat for Gender Equality). These broad objectives are translated into concrete action plans within the strategy.

Existing policies reflect a society deeply rooted in traditional culture – a culture historically dominated by men and centered around the traditional family structure. However, this cultural landscape is evolving rapidly, as evidenced by the government’s decision to legalize same-sex marriage, an initiative introduced in early 2024. While this move has garnered widespread approval across Greek society, it has faced opposition from traditional institutions, such as the Greek Orthodox Church.

Despite these cultural shifts, Greece’s traditional, male-dominated culture continues to influence its performance on certain indicators. For instance, Greece ranks among the lowest countries for women’s participation in the

national parliament (World Bank 2022). Additionally, women in Greece are significantly more at risk than men of falling into poverty (Eurostat 2022a) or social exclusion (Eurostat 2022b).

On the positive side, Greece performs well in areas such as the gender pay gap (OECD 2022a), the pension pay gap (Eurostat 2022c), and women's participation in tertiary education (OECD 2022b). However, challenges remain, as women are more likely than men to drop out of school (Eurostat 2022d), and their medical needs are often less adequately met compared to those of men (Eurostat 2022e). In summary, while Greece has made progress in promoting gender equality, the results are still mixed.

The Greek state has shown signs of pursuing gender equality more systematically than in the past. The General Secretariat for Equality and Human Rights, the lead government unit promoting gender equality, uses numerous indicators from the “Beijing Platform for Action,” which are also employed by the EU and other international organizations, to monitor institutional compliance with gender equality (European Institute for Gender Equality 2021). This Secretariat operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family. Meanwhile, the General Secretariat for Government Coordination, part of the Presidency of the Government, facilitates interministerial policy coordination by consolidating the national action plans of all ministries and monitoring their implementation.

Strong Families

Family Policies
Score: 6

Greece's family support system includes maternity leave provisions that ensure job protection and adequate wage replacement, in line with international standards. In 2021–2022, new and improved legislation was adopted in this policy area. There are two types of maternity leave: “basic” leave, which lasts 17 weeks, and “special” leave, available nine months after the “basic” leave. Additionally, each parent is entitled to four months of parental leave per child. In 2022, the “special” leave, initially available only to public sector employees, was extended to private sector employees and increased from six to nine months (Hatzivarnava and Karamesini 2023).

Greece still relies on EU funding for nursery services provided by local governments. However, the country ranks below the EU average in terms of the percentage of very young children (aged 0-2) and young children (aged 3-5) enrolled in formal childcare or education (Eurostat 2022a).

This likely stems not only from the shortage of state-run nurseries but also from traditional Greek culture, where women are primarily responsible for

caring for the elderly and young children within households. Grandparents often care for preschool-aged children if both parents work, while women tend to elderly or disabled family members at home. In 2021, new legislation introduced the “nannies of the neighborhood” program, with a dedicated budget to compensate childcare workers who assist families with very young children (2 months to 2.5 years old).

Greece remains one of the worst-performing EU countries in terms of the share of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat 2022b). Relatively few resources are allocated to combating child poverty, as the Greek welfare system primarily focuses on pensioners.

However, there has been progress in family policy over time, primarily through cash outlays rather than benefits-in-kind. For example, poor families can receive a combination of a monthly Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI), a child allowance, and a housing benefit. During the COVID-19 crisis, additional allowances were provided to families in economic distress. Tax breaks are also available to all families with children, regardless of income.

Overall, the government aims to support poor families and encourage couples to have children to help curb the demographic decline of the Greek population. This focus was emphasized in 2023 with the establishment of the new Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family.

Greece ranks average among OECD countries in terms of work-life balance (OECD 2023). Despite improvements in childcare and cash transfers, gender equality and resources available to families are still shaped by the traditional household model prevalent in Greece. This model contributes to relatively low female labor force participation. In poorer families, the best option might be for the mother to enter the labor force, particularly in the public sector, but this depends on labor market conditions and traditional views on gender roles.

Sustainable Pension System

Policies Aimed at
Old-Age Poverty
Prevention
Score: 6

Greece ranks at the bottom of EU countries for employment among older people, particularly those aged 55–64 (Eurostat 2022a). However, the country is average among EU nations regarding the poverty rate of senior citizens (Eurostat 2022b) and their likelihood of experiencing social exclusion (Eurostat 2022c).

This relative stability is primarily due to Greece’s provision of a minimum pension to all pensioners, regardless of their employment history. This

minimum pension is supplemented by a pension linked to their lifetime insurance contributions, ensuring a basic level of income security. For some categories of pensioners, such as former civil servants and banking employees, pensions – including both main and supplementary pensions – can be quite substantial, depending on their past contributions.

Greece’s pension expenditure is 16% of GDP, the highest among OECD countries (OECD 2021). This raises concerns about the sustainability of the system, as the government may struggle to maintain pension programs at their current levels and scope in the long term.

Policies
Targeting
Intergenerational
Equity
Score: 4

Current pension arrangements in Greece primarily serve the interests of middle-aged and older groups, often at the expense of younger workers. Research by the IMF (Kangur et al. 2021) suggests that Greece’s pension system fails to incentivize individuals to build long contribution histories, leading to widespread evasion of social security contributions. This pattern has negatively affected Greece’s fiscal policy mix, and burden-sharing across generations is not as equitable as it should be.

The pension system also fails to provide sufficient incentives for individuals to either extend their working lives or retire early if their capacity is diminished. Meanwhile, the government faces challenges in funding a pension system that guarantees adequate old-age income in the future. In short, current pension policies do not adequately address intergenerational equity.

Sustainable Inclusion of Migrants

Integration Policy
Score: 5

Greece has faced repeated inflows of migrants and refugees arriving on the Aegean islands and crossing the Greek-Turkish border along the Evros River in Northeastern Greece. These inflows have been unpredictable and disproportionate to the country’s administrative capacity, economic resources, and the size of receiving communities, such as islands and border villages.

In the past, particularly during the 2015–2016 crisis, Greece struggled to manage immigration challenges, with substandard conditions for receiving and hosting migrants and refugees. However, there has been progress in infrastructure, procedures, and administrative capacity at reception points over time, and the numbers of migrants and refugees have dramatically decreased.

New reception centers were built on Greek islands between 2020 and 2023. In terms of material and social deprivation among migrants and refugees, Greece ranks average among EU countries (Eurostat 2022a). Public services and NGOs cater to the welfare needs of these populations.

Despite these improvements, Greece has not effectively managed the demands of asylum-seekers or integrated them into local communities. Migrants and refugees face limited access to the labor market, often receiving temporary residence and work permits that prevent them from pursuing long-term job opportunities. Consequently, many migrants and refugees work in the shadow economy as agricultural and construction workers, often in low-paid and uninsured temporary jobs. This is reflected in Greece's average ranking among EU countries for the unemployment rate of migrants and refugees (Eurostat 2022b).

To address labor shortages and streamline the situation, the government passed a law in December 2023. This law allows migrants and refugees who entered the country before 2021 and have lived and worked in Greece since then to obtain a three-year residency work permit, provided they present a job offer from a prospective employer (European Travel Information and Authorization System-ETIAS 2023).

However, there are no government-funded language courses, professional training, or mentoring programs for adult migrants and refugees. Children, on the other hand, can freely attend Greek primary and secondary public schools, where they learn the language and follow the same curriculum as Greek pupils. Despite the absence of language or administrative barriers in education, migrants and refugees struggle to progress in their studies. Greece ranks among the lowest-performing countries in upper secondary and tertiary attainment for migrants and refugees (Eurostat 2022c).

Greece follows EU policies on family reunification, although most migrants and refugees entering the country do not seek to reunite with family members in Greece. Instead, they aim to join family members already residing in Northern European countries.

Until recently, conditions for migrants and refugees to obtain nationality and participate in political life were unfavorable (Migration Integration Policy Index 2020). Today, the process of obtaining Greek citizenship has been streamlined and digitalized by the General Secretariat of Migration Policy, a unit of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, although it usually takes a long time. Migrants and refugees can now track the progress of their petitions, and political participation is available for second-generation migrants and refugees.

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum leads migration policy, with specific target values set to address migrants' needs and provide tailored support.

These targets are outlined in the national strategy for integration (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2019) and the annually updated plan for migration and asylum (Ministry of Migration and Asylum 2023).

Effective Capacity-Building for Global Poverty Reduction

Management of
Development
Cooperation by
Partner Country
Score: 5

In the previous decade, the economic crisis led to significant cuts in public sector spending, which adversely affected Greece’s ability to provide official development assistance (ODA). From 2019 to 2022, Greece’s ODA as a percentage of GNI was among the lowest in the OECD. However, Greece periodically allocates funds to receive and host refugees and migrants from developing regions.

The General Secretariat of International Economic Relations and Openness, a dedicated unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, manages development assistance. This Secretariat, led by a government appointee, oversees the “Hellenic Aid” directorate, staffed by experienced civil servants.

In 2022, the Secretariat published Greece’s development strategy and roadmap for fostering international economic relations, titled the “2022 National Strategic Openness Plan.” This document outlines planned development assistance to countries with bilateral ties to Greece, including nations in the Western Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Libya), and Latin America (Argentina). While the plan is gradually being implemented, it is not legally binding.

As a newcomer to international development assistance, Greece’s systems are not yet fully developed. The government monitors the spending of allocated funds but lacks the capacity to track progress in capacity-building in recipient countries. Additionally, Greece does not have binding standards for collaborative actions aimed at global poverty reduction or a specific plan to facilitate knowledge-sharing and foster innovation in developing countries.

In general, Greece has not played a leading role within the international development framework but has supported relevant EU initiatives in this area.

III. Environmental Sustainability

Effective Climate Action

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050
Score: 7

Compared to other OECD countries, Greece ranks average in projected GHG emissions by 2050 (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019a). Greece also ranks average in the adjusted emissions growth rate for carbon dioxide and methane (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019b and 2019c). However, Greece ranks near the bottom of OECD countries in greenhouse gas intensity growth rate during the 2010s (Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy 2019d) and the carbon dioxide emissions growth rate from land cover in the same decade (Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy 2019e).

To address these challenges, the Greek government has implemented a national strategy to achieve zero emissions by 2050, outlined in the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP, Ministry of Energy and Environment 2019). The “Greece 2.0” Recovery and Resilience Plan further supports this goal, dedicating 37.5% of grants and loans to green objectives (OECD 2023: 9, Government of Greece 2021).

The legal framework for these efforts includes Article 24 of the Greek constitution, which guarantees the right to a natural environment and mandates state action to protect it. Following EU environmental legislation, the Greek parliament adopted a national climate law in 2022 to transition to climate neutrality and adapt to climate change. The aforementioned NECP plan was adopted by a decision of the cabinet in 2019. In brief, Greece’s strategy on climate change is legally binding.

The NECP plan sets national environmental policy targets for the period 2021 – 2030, along with sector-specific targets for tourism, agriculture, and naval commerce, among other policy sectors (Figure 1 and section 3.7 of the NECP plan). A concrete example is the Greek government’s ban on the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity by 2028. Additional targets address greenhouse emissions, buildings, and transport. In other words, the policy is comprehensive.

The Greek government monitors policy implementation by measuring progress against quantitative targets specified in the NECP and Greece 2.0 plans. The Ministry of Environment and Energy leads policy formulation and

implementation, while public procurement in this and other areas is overseen by the independent Hellenic Single Public Procurement Authority (EADHSY).

Although Greece lacks an independent climate council, the Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection in parliament scrutinizes environmental policy, and the Council of State’s Department “E” reviews cases of environmental law violations that are modeled on the French Conseil d’État.

Finally, despite the Greek government’s commitment to achieving climate neutrality by 2050, policy implementation may be delegated to the public administrations of Greece’s 13 self-governed regions. However, the central government is entitled to – and frequently does – intervene at lower political levels if effective implementation is endangered.

Effective Environmental Health Protection

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Minimizing Environmental Health Risks
Score: 6

“Greece faces challenges in waste and water management, and air pollution remains a serious concern” (OECD 2020: 4). Compared to other OECD countries, Greece lags in areas such as PM2.5 exposure, household solid fuels, ozone exposure, lead exposure, unsafe sanitation, and mismanaged solid waste (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019). However, Greece performs well in ensuring the safety of drinking water.

The Greek government is committed to preventing environmental pollution and safeguarding public health. Various lead units, including the General Secretariat for Natural Environment and Water and the General Secretariat of Environmental Policy within the Ministry of Environment and Energy, are responsible for coordinating water management, monitoring air pollution, and ensuring soil security. An annually updated report on atmospheric quality is published every year (Ministry of Energy and Environment 2022). The same General Secretariat is also responsible for soil security.

In response to natural disasters in 2023, including record wildfires and floods, Greece’s National Public Health Organization (EODY) has informed the public about potential health risks (i.e., waterborne and vector-borne diseases) and conducted water quality testing. However, the scale and abruptness of these disasters have hindered the efficiency of government response.

In summary, while Greece has relevant policies in place to address environmental health risks, the country’s institutional capacity faces limitations that impact effective implementation. (Schismenos et al. 2022: 3).

Policy Efforts and Commitment to Preserving Ecosystems and Protecting Biodiversity
Score: 6

Effective Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation

During the 2010s, Greece lagged behind other OECD countries in reducing emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxides and performed poorly on species protection and biodiversity habitat indices (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019a, 2019b, 2019c and 2019d). Over the last decade, the country has also experienced significant loss of forests, grasslands, and wetlands (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019e, 2019f and 2019g). Many of Greece’s wetlands have been drained (Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy 2019g).

Despite these challenges, the Greek government is committed to preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. The national strategy for 2014–2029 aims to safeguard ecosystem vitality and prevent biodiversity loss, with 13 national goals and 39 specific targets (Convention on Biological Diversity 2023).

Despite bureaucratic hurdles, Greece has also established the Natura 2000 network, which includes 241 SCI-SACs and 202 SPAs, covering 27.2% of the land and 6.1% of territorial waters (Biodiversity Information System for Europe 2023).

The biodiversity strategy and the corresponding action plan have been put forward by the Ministry of Energy and Environment, which monitors their implementation (Ministry of Energy and Environment 2014). Policy implementation, however, may be delegated to the public administrations of Greece’s 13 self-governed regions. Nonetheless, the central government is entitled to – and frequently does – intervene at lower political levels if effective implementation is endangered.

Effective Contributions to Global Environmental Protection

Policy Efforts and Commitment to a Global Environmental Policy
Score: 6

Although Greece initially appears to be a laggard in contributing to the Green Climate Fund and participating in multilateral environmental agreements, Greece has become more active in global and regional environmental protection initiatives since recovering from its economic crisis.

In 2019, Greece launched the “Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Cultural and Natural Heritage” initiative at the UN Climate Action Summit, which gained support from over 100 UN member states by 2022. Greece also plays a significant role in the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the

Mediterranean coasts and sea, hosting the convention's Coordinating Unit/Secretariat in Athens (Presidency of the Hellenic Government 2022: 188).

Greece actively participates in implementing the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean coasts and sea. Greece hosts the convention's Coordinating Unit/Secretariat in Athens, and within the context of the convention, it chaired the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development from 2017 to 2019.

In the Eastern Mediterranean region, Greece has initiated or participated in several environmental protection initiatives. In 2023, Greece, Cyprus, and Israel ratified an implementation agreement on the subregional marine oil pollution contingency plan. Since 2020, the three countries have participated in a three-way partnership on renewable energy sources and the development of sustainable energy infrastructure. Since 2018, Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt have engaged in trilateral cooperation on sustainable development, which includes collaboration on electricity grids and environmental education. Moreover, since 2019, Greece, North Macedonia, Albania, and the European Union have signed and begun implementing an agreement on the protection and sustainable development of the Prespa Park area, which encompasses lakes spanning the three countries (Presidency of the Hellenic Government 2022: 184 – 186). Finally, regarding greenhouse gas emissions, Greece ranks above-average among OECD countries (OECD 2022).

In brief, Greece does not provide direct assistance to many other countries in promoting ecological sustainability but focuses its efforts on the Mediterranean region. Yet Greece actively contributes, within its capacity, to international efforts aimed at fostering and shaping environmental sustainability in other countries and on a regional and global scale.

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Effective Legislative Oversight

The supply of government documents to the parliament is regulated by article 133 of the Standing Orders of the Parliament.

Legislative oversight that requires the presence and responses of government ministers is regulated by articles 124-132 of the Standing Orders of the Parliament.

The Standing Orders of the Parliament are available at:

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For the KYSEA council, see <https://www.primeminister.gr/governance/collective-bodies>

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In 2015-2019 there were additional interministerial councils. They covered three policy areas: social policy, migration policy, and national communication policy. They were convened infrequently and remained largely inactive.

Complementary Informal Coordination

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The website of the Confederation of Civil Service Unions (ADEDY) is <https://adedy.gr/>

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The website of the school in which higher civil servants are trained, namely the EKDDA, is <https://www.ekdd.gr/>

The course curriculum of the EKDDA is available at https://www.ekdd.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/%CE%A0.%CE%A3.-%CE%9A.%CE%98_%CE%A0%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B1-1.pdf

Effective Regulatory Impact Assessment

The legal requirement to conduct RIAs is included in Law 4622/2019.

On the Office for Better Regulation, see the website of the General Secretariat for Legal and Parliamentary Issues https://gslegal.gov.gr/?page_id=2

The website of the parliament, on which bills of law and the accompanying RIAs are uploaded, is <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/>

Effective Sustainability Checks

Greece’s sustainable development strategy is presented in detail in the “National Voluntary Review 2022 on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”: <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Greece%20Report.pdf>

Regarding sustainability checks, Law 4622/2019 article 62 paragraph 3 requires that the RIA includes detailed data.

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