



# Greece Report

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## Sustainable Governance Indicators 2022

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## Executive Summary

Greece's political and economic environment improved during the period under review, despite the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2018, Greece had exited the third Economic Adjustment Program (2015–2018), and by 2019 a new, more predictable and more reform-oriented government had come to power. In 2020–2021, domestic political tensions became less palpable and foreign investors renewed their interest.

In the July 2019 elections, New Democracy won 39% of the total vote, capturing an absolute majority of parliamentary seats. Compared to the past, the incoming New Democracy administration was bolder in reforming various policy sectors. It improved government coordination, lowered taxes, made labor relations more flexible, promoted digitalization of the public sector, replaced the old auxiliary pay-as-you-go pensions system with a new individual retirement account, expanded family allowances to counter population decline, built new reception and identification camps for migrants and refugees, and inaugurated performance reviews in elementary and high schools, and granted further management autonomy to state universities.

Overall, the New Democracy government created an institutional and policy environment that was friendly to private investment, which – owing to high levels of taxation and very rigid employment regulations – had been sluggish until 2019.

In the period under review, democracy in Greece operated well, as the government refrained from influencing the justice system and the state media, as its predecessors in power had done, and rarely, if ever, quelled social protests, despite the associated risk of mass rallies further spreading COVID-19. On the other hand, the government's selective distribution of subsidies to private media, via an awareness campaign against COVID-19, was met with justifiable criticism.

In 2020, the government imposed a strict lockdown at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased support to the public healthcare system (new ICUs, and additional medical and nursing personnel). As a result, Greece performed relatively well in the first waves of the pandemic.

In 2021, the government relaxed restrictions related to COVID-19 in order to support economic growth, which had been hit by restrictions on economic activity. People resumed their economic and social activities, while tourism also picked up in a country that relies heavily on tourist revenue to sustain economic growth. As a result and since less than 70% of adult population was vaccinated, the number of COVID-19 cases and associated deaths rose abruptly in late 2021.

Despite the political cost of managing the negative economic and social effects of the pandemic, the New Democracy governing party was always ahead of the second-largest party (Syriza) in the polls throughout 2020–2021. This trend was probably owed to the political stability of the post-2019 period, as well as to the subsidies to small businesses, and housing and social allowances for low-income groups, which were distributed during the periods of lockdown.

Because of the political stability and government intervention, the economy grew by 6.7% in 2021 (after a contraction of almost 9% in 2020) and unemployment decreased further. The government was eager to facilitate private investors, but took time to overcome the legal difficulties and bureaucratic impediments typical of large-scale investment projects. Eventually, investments by foreign companies were rolled out and new national highway and railway infrastructure projects began.

Meanwhile, Greece has faced multiple risks. These have included several waves of migration, as migrants and refugees continue to arrive in Greece, albeit in declining numbers; environmental destruction, as the government has mismanaged wildfires, particularly in 2021, which destroyed large swathes of land, properties and businesses in rural areas and on the outskirts of Athens; and rising tensions with Greece's neighboring country, Turkey. The government has partly reorganized public services, and increased spending on security and defense in order to manage these risks.

However, unemployment rates and extensive relative poverty remain serious challenges. The Greek economy is still rather frail. In the future, once the pandemic subsides, the government will need to maintain a delicate balance between reviving the economy, and meeting security and defense challenges. Much will depend on the government's willingness to continue reforms, as well as on its ability to maximize the use of resources from the European Union's Resilience and Recovery Fund.

## Key Challenges

The European Union's post-bailout economic surveillance of Greece is scheduled to end in 2022. However, the government will need to address a double fiscal and current account deficit, incurred in 2021, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the cost of energy and inflation increased in late 2021, eroding incomes and raising the prospect of further declines in public finances in 2022. These challenges cannot be met through public spending in an already over-indebted country.

The government, in power since July 2019, faces the challenge of further boosting real private investment, which has not taken place as rapidly as hoped. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed economic recovery, while new security challenges (mainly worsening relations with Turkey) in 2021 further complicated the situation.

The government has already reduced tax levels with the aim of stimulating economic growth. However, the Greek bureaucracy, despite significant progress toward digitalization, remains a serious impediment to resource management and faster growth. Moreover, the continuing brain drain expresses Greece's persistent failure to reconcile economic development with labor market and education trends.

Another challenge faced by the government is the unpredictability of refugee and migration inflows. In early 2020, large, organized groups of migrants coming from Turkey tried unsuccessfully to push through the Greek-Turkish land border. Although the volume of inflows declined in 2020–2021, Greece will struggle to manage any new flows on its own if they become uncontrollable.

The banking and pension systems also face pressing challenges. Banks have off-loaded a large proportion of non-performing loans onto private funds, but are still not able to stimulate the economy. Despite reforms to auxiliary pensions, the main pension system is still unsustainable, as the Greek population is rapidly aging and unemployment does not decline further.

The judicial system continues to function in a slow manner, provoking long delays in the dispensing of justice. Government revenue streams are undermined by widespread tax evasion and a narrow tax base. These are both major challenges that need to be tackled if the country's economic growth is to

become sustainable. Meanwhile, compared to international standards, the quality of secondary education in state schools remains low and the high school system is in dire need of reform.

The natural environment is under threat. Particularly during summers, temperatures are rising much higher than in previous years, while large fires are causing unprecedented destruction. The government needs to implement a comprehensive policy to prevent the destruction of the Greek countryside and the degradation of quality of life in the cities. The training of civil protection personnel and the wider public, and acquisition of new resources to prevent and fight fires have become urgent priorities.

Elections are expected to take place in 2023, although in Greece the government can call elections anytime. Early elections risk undermining government stability and economic recovery, and will further delay reforms. It seems that New Democracy is on course for re-election, but forming a new government will be tricky because of the abolition of the 50-seat bonus rule, making a snap poll likely soon afterward.

## Party Polarization

Owing to Greece's peculiar electoral system of reinforced proportional representation, the winner of elections obtains a disproportionate share of parliamentary seats. In addition to the parliamentary seats allocated to it through proportional representation, the party first-past-the-post obtains a bonus of 50 seats. The outcome of the distribution of the 300 parliamentary seats usually leads to the formation of single-party governments (with the exception of the economic crisis between 2012 and 2018 when coalition governments were formed).

Governments have the freedom to control public administration, state-owned enterprises and state-owned media. Few, if any, other institutions can counterbalance the government's competences and freedom to allocate resources (i.e., funds, personnel and infrastructure). There is no tangible system of checks and balances in the Greek variety of parliamentary democracy. Consequently, the prize for the election winner is exceptionally valuable. Political party competition is thus extremely contentious.

Polarization is also fueled by long-standing divisions between the left and the right, dating back to the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), which continue to permeate Greece's highly acrimonious political atmosphere. Although the

country's high degree of party polarization hinders successful compromises and cross-party agreements, as well as policy continuity, the electoral system has negated obstacles to policymaking at the institutional level.

The elections of July 2019 reproduced this pattern of acute party polarization, as the leading party, New Democracy, obtained close to 40% of the total vote, while the previously governing Syriza party obtained almost 32%. The third party, KINAL (a conglomeration of the former PASOK party and several smaller center-left parties), with only 8% of the vote, lagged far behind the two large parties. Only three other small parties of the radical and communist left (MERA25 and KKE) and the far right (the new Greek Solution party), managed to pass the threshold of 3% of the total vote needed to win entry into parliament. The rivalry between New Democracy and Syriza intensified during Syriza's term in power (2015–2019), and continued thereafter. Opinion polls in 2020–2021 showed that the two parties continued to attract the largest share of voting preferences, even though the governing party (New Democracy) was far ahead of the opposition party (Syriza) throughout that two year period. (Score: 5)

# Sustainable Policies

## I. Economic Policies

### Economy

Economic Policy  
Score: 4

Compared to previous periods, Greek economic policy during the period under review was not restrained by externally imposed conditionalities. However, it was highly constrained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which reversed the moderate recovery that the Greek economy had achieved in 2019 (real GDP growth 1.9%).

The optimism due to the election of a pro-investment government was short-lived with the first lockdown in the spring of 2020 and with the second one in the winter of 2020–2021. Economic activity was curtailed, while small and medium businesses, as well as affected households relied on cash transfers from the Greek government. As a result, real GDP growth in 2020 fell to -9.0% (EU-27 -5.9%).

The government ran a primary deficit in 2020 and 2021 to counter the negative economic impact of the pandemic. Thus, the country's public debt, already the highest in the European Union, climbed from 191% of GDP in the second quarter of 2020 to 207% in the corresponding second quarter of 2021 (EU average: 90%). Greece's debt is primarily owed by official European creditors.

Despite the government's efforts, the most important macroeconomic indicators paint a bleak picture for Greece, reflecting long-term structural imbalances. For example, the current account deficit increased to 6.7% of GDP in 2020, its worst level since the peak of Greece's economic crisis (-8.8% in 2011). Gross capital formation remained among the lowest in the OECD.

Promising trends were visible in tourism. Despite a decline in 2020, the number of tourists visiting Greece in July and August 2021 reached 86% of

the corresponding (high) level in 2019, which provided much hope for an economic recovery.

Besides tourism, the business climate has substantially improved. For instance, some multinationals (e.g., Microsoft) have announced large investments in the country.

More importantly, in June 2021, the European Commission endorsed Greece's recovery and resilience plan. This was an important step toward the disbursement of €17.8 billion in grants and €12.7 billion in loans under the European Union's new Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) over the period 2021–2026.

Substantial challenges remain, however. Due to the pandemic-induced negative economic growth rate, public debt remains high. It is currently serviced, but is unsustainable in the long run. Greece's creditors need to devise a plan for large-scale debt restructuring that may entail substantial losses for them. Although EU authorities still refuse to discuss such a prospect, it is an issue that will probably surface again if Greece's creditors want to see the country attain much higher growth rates. Finally, the rise of energy prices in late 2021 pose another challenge for the Greek economy, which relies very heavily on imports of natural gas and oil.

Citation:

Data on Gross Fixed Capital Formation and potential output are drawn on IMF's world economic outlook for 2020 and is available on this SGI platform. GDP growth, unemployment and public debt are available from Eurostat.

On GDP: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tec00115&lang=en>

On public debt: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/teina230>

On current account deficit: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/current-account-to-gdp>

On inflation: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/inflation-cpi>

Data on tourism is drawn on the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), available at <https://news.gtp.gr/2021/10/11/wttc-commends-greece-for-safe-positive-tourism-opening/>

Data on FDI is drawn on Bank of Greece, as officially reported in <https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/en/greece-today/why-greece/foreign-direct-investment>

On increasing business confidence: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/business-confidence>

## Labor Markets

Labor Market  
Policy  
Score: 5

Greece's unemployment rate, a major source of concern during the economic crisis of the previous decade, is slowly falling. It reached 16.3% in 2020 (down from 19.3% in 2018) and had fallen at 13.3% by September 2021 (EU average: 6.7%). Though the total unemployment rate remains the highest in the European Union, Greece has made substantial progress, given that it stood at 28% in 2013 and at 25% in 2015.



The recorded progress in tackling total unemployment is owed to several factors, including a rise in part-time jobs, growth in the tourism sector (where jobs are available over the long Greek summer, which lasts from April to October) and an increase in emigration (among both skilled and unskilled workers).

The progress made in fighting unemployment is significant, but the authorities have been largely unable to combat undeclared work. Moreover, Greece is among the OECD countries with the highest long-term unemployment and youth unemployment rates. The youth unemployment rate is twice as high as total employment (33% in October 2021). The largest share of total unemployment is long-term (9.6% in July 2021, down from 12% in the corresponding month of 2019). Although long-term unemployment is improving, most long-term unemployed persons are unemployable. They have outdated skills, are middle aged and are likely to only find jobs in non-tradeable sectors of the economy (e.g., in the declining retail sector, covering domestic demand for food or clothing).

In general, the number of unemployed is probably inflated, since many employees in the tourism industry do not seek employment in the winter months. Unemployment allowances are capped at one year over an entire working lifetime and – what is worse – the take-up of unemployment allowance has consistently been very low (between 10% and 20%). For several years, the Greek government, with the agreement of the European Union, has used money from the European Social Fund (ESF) to offer short-term employment opportunities to unemployed people in municipal and other state-owned organizations. Many unemployed people, who receive no unemployment allowance, depend on support from kin or rely on the guaranteed minimum income (GMI) of €400 per month for a family of four and a rent subsidy of €175 per month for a four-member household.

Long-term diverging trends between the education system and labor market are root causes of the aforementioned labor market problems. The country clearly needs, among others, more technicians, sales assistants, skilled and semi-skilled tourism workers, and computer scientists. Yet, the university system annually produces a very large number of graduates in the humanities, including hundreds of theologians and philologists, as well as unemployable professionals every year.

To give a topical example, related to the ongoing pandemic, in Greece there are large numbers of physicians who cannot find employment in Greek hospitals nor can they find the financial resources to start their own medical practices. The total number of doctors in Greece (specialized and general

practitioners) is approximately 69,000. Among OECD member countries, Greece has the highest ratio of doctors to population (Greece has 6.3 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, while the OECD average is 3.3 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants). As a result, hundreds of Greek physicians, who have been trained for free in respectable Greek state medical schools, emigrate to northern and western European countries, where they practice medicine.

Thus, the pre-crisis division of insiders and outsiders in the labor market has remained acute. Public sector employees, most of whom enjoy job security, have more or less successfully adapted to lower living standards. In contrast, private sector employees are faced with the recurring problem of unemployment. Moreover, as in the previous period under review, there has been a rise in part-time and short-term labor contracts, including a rise in precarious teleworking as a consequence of movement restrictions during the period of the pandemic.

In 2021, the government introduced a new labor law, which increases the flexibility of the eight-hour workday by allowing employees to work up to 10 hours on one day and fewer on another or take time off, and gives workers the right to disconnect outside of office hours (e.g., refuse any work on off-days or to check emails). Further, it introduced a “digital work card” to monitor employees working hours in real time as well as increase legal overtime to 150 hours a year.

In summary, the visible improvement in the overall unemployment rate in the period under review is a sign of progress. This progress, however, is endangered by a combination of rise in precarious work, continued brain drain and degradation among the long-term unemployed.

Still, broad-based recovery in the labor market may be achieved over the medium to long run. The so-called tradeable sector, which brings revenues to Greece from abroad, as well as tourism, industry, professional, and information and communication services may record substantial job gains after the pandemic is over.

Citation:

Information on unemployment is drawn on Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/11563355/3-03112021-AP-EN.pdf/8841353c-11f6-7fab-efef-0e768ab13bfd>

On long-term unemployment: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/long-term-unemployment-rate#:~:text=Long%20Term%20Unemployment%20Rate%20in%20Greece%20averaged%209.14%20percent%20from,the%20second%20quarter%20of%202008.>

On youth unemployment: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/youth-unemployment-rate>

Information on brain drain is based on Bank of Greece estimations, reported in <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-central-bank-reports-brain-drain-of-427000-young-educated-greeks-since-2008/a-19373527>

On GMI and rent subsidies: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1112&langId=en&intPageId=4569>

## Taxes

Tax Policy  
Score: 4

Greece's taxation policy only partially achieves its objectives, though there has been some progress in recent years. Since January 2017, the Independent Public Revenue Authority has become organizationally and functionally independent vis-à-vis the Ministry of Finance. In addition, Greek authorities have repeatedly passed primary and secondary legislation to combat tax evasion. As a consequence, the tax-to-GDP ratio in Greece increased from 36.6% in 2015 to 38.8% in 2021 (OECD average: 33.5%).

The redistribution effect achieved through taxation is reasonably good and the share of total taxes in GDP is comparable to that of other EU member states: 39.5% of GDP in Greece as compared to EU average of 40.5% in 2019. However, the structure of Greece's tax revenues is different from the OECD average and remains problematic. The country receives a lower-than-average revenue share from personal-income tax, capital gains and profits, and corporate gains and profits.

The top marginal tax rate on personal income is 44% (down from 45% in 2019) and the corresponding tax rate for business income is 24% (down from 28% under the previous government, which lost power in 2019), while that of sales tax is also 24%. The new government has reduced employees' and employers' social security contributions by 14 and 23%, respectively, and reduced the property tax (ENFIA) rate by 22%. It also pledged further reductions for the following years. During the pandemic, it has abolished the "solidarity tax" for the private sector for one year.

Although personal income and business taxes are relatively high, owing to widespread tax evasion and the narrow tax base in the country, direct taxes in 2019 amounted to only 9.9% of the total revenue (EU average in 2018 and 2019: 13.2–13.3%). Notably, the tax-free threshold for income tax is set at 60% of the average pay, nearly three times the EU average. VAT deficit is estimated at 34% due to tax evasion, tax avoidance and ineffectiveness in the tax collection mechanism.

Measures to increase taxes are easier to announce than implement. During the tourist season, income earned by small and very small businesses remains largely undeclared, while throughout the year, an unknown share of income in the liberal professions also evades tax authorities' eyes. Thus, engineers, lawyers, medical doctors and dentists, as well as craftsmen, plumbers, electricians and computer technicians typically declare an amount of personal

income below the threshold at which personal-income tax would be imposed. For income earned in 2019 (and taxed in 2020), personal and business annual income up to €10,000 was taxed at 9% (and most self-employed persons, and small and very small businesses made sure to declare less than that amount to the tax authorities).

Regulations on income and property taxes are altered almost every year. As long as tax regulations are constantly under revision, private investment will not be forthcoming, and the business environment will remain unstable; nor will progress will be achieved in improving horizontal and vertical equity.

Greece's revenues from environment-related taxes are high in cross-EU comparison. Environmental taxes accounted for 3.97% of GDP in 2017 (EU-28 average 2.4%) and energy taxes for 3.18% of GDP (EU average 1.84%). However, there are implementation gaps. For example, although the landfill tax has been in place since January 2014, it has not been implemented as of the end of the review period.

To sum up, the Greek tax system continues to be characterized by relatively high tax rates, which do not result in the anticipated revenue. Greek taxation policy has improved over time and has become more business friendly, but is still subject to unpredictable shifts.

Citation:

Comments on tax system complexity and the redistribution effects of Greek taxes are based on the comparative data on OECD countries, available on this SGI platform.

Data on the ratio of taxes to GDP and the structure of tax revenue is drawn on OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/tax/revenue-statistics-greece.pdf>

On personal income tax: <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/personal-income-tax-rate#:~:text=Personal%20Income%20Tax%20Rate%20in%20Greece%20is%20expected%20to%20reach,acording%20to%20our%20econometric%20models>.

On tax main aggregates and direct taxes: [https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/taxation-1/economic-analysis-taxation/data-taxation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation-1/economic-analysis-taxation/data-taxation_en)

## Budgets

Budgetary Policy  
Score: 5

Greece made progress in the area of fiscal sustainability before the onset of the pandemic, reporting budget surpluses every year between 2016 and 2019. However, in 2020 and 2021, the government was obliged to effect budget deficits to counter the negative economic and social impact of the pandemic. All in all, the government's support measures turned the surplus into a deficit. Eurostat data that shows that the budgetary impact of the measures was 6.4% of GDP in 2021. It is expected that this impact will be phased out in 2022, if the pandemic subsides.

In 2020, the budget deficit was -10.1% of GDP (EU average: -6.9%), while in 2021 the deficit was -7.6%. In the meantime, the public debt surged from 180.7% of GDP in 2019 to 206.3% in 2020 (the highest in the European Union).

Besides the fiscal cost of measures to counter the pandemic's impact, the government also bore the burden of mitigating unforeseen risks on three different fronts.

First, facing periodic military threats from Turkey, Greece must dedicate a large proportion of the budget to defense expenditure. In 2019, this constituted 2.0% of Greece's GDP (the highest in the European Union along with Estonia's defense spending, EU average: 1.2%). In 2020 and 2021, rising tensions with Turkey made it necessary to increase defense spending. Greece agreed with France to purchase French fighter planes (Rafale fighter jets) and combat ships (the Belhara frigades).

Second, wildfires in the summer of 2021 devastated agricultural production and households across a very large area of Euboea, Greece's second-largest island, as well as in other areas of the country. The government stepped in to provide financial support to victims of the wildfires.

And third, the government responded to a spike in energy prices toward the end of 2021 by subsidizing electricity costs for low-voltage consumers and increasing the heating benefit for low-income households.

Despite all, according to the European Commission, a primary surplus of 1.2% in 2022 appears to be attainable. However, if the pandemic continues, the government may need to implement additional measures to support businesses and households, as it did in 2020 and 2021.

Citation:

Eurostat information on the Greek state budget and public debt is available at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_finance\\_statistics#General\\_government\\_surplus.2Fdeficit](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_finance_statistics#General_government_surplus.2Fdeficit) and at the European Commission's "Enhanced Surveillance Report on Greece," 12th round, November 2021, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/economy-finance/ip164\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/economy-finance/ip164_en.pdf)

Eurostat data on defense spending is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210827-1>

## Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy  
Score: 5

Greece continues to rank below the EU average for public and private expenditure on research and innovation. In 2020, it devoted 1.49% of GDP to research and development, compared to an EU-27 average of 2.36% (Eurostat

data). As usual, the main funding came from public money. However, Greece has made visible progress over time.

According to the latest European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS), published in 2021, Greece still belongs to the group of countries labeled “moderate innovators,” but also to the five EU member states that improved the most (more than 25%) compared to the previous year. Improvements in Greece concerned innovation by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), linkages and cooperation, and employment opportunities. Generally, over the 2011–2020 period, Greece exhibited an upward trend with regard to innovation.

A lingering problem is a serious brain drain, depleting Greece’s human resources for research and innovation. In 2008–2015, about 427,000 skilled employees or professionals holding at least one university degree left the country to seek employment abroad, mostly in northern and western Europe or the United States. The outflow of younger researchers (PhDs and post-doctoral researchers) continues today, as job opportunities and salaries offered abroad are attractive, compared to those offered in Greece.

Nonetheless and despite the outflow, the number of Greek researchers remains disproportionately high, compared to the levels of public and private expenditure on research. Greek research teams very often participate in international research consortia. For instance, the National Technical University of Athens actively participates in international projects, as does the Heraklion-based Institute for Technology and Research.

The Greek government has sought since 2016 to counter this outflow of skilled labor. For example, it has provided government funds for research through the newly established Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (in Greek, ELIDEK).

Meanwhile, Greece continues to lack large corporate R&D investors. Links between academia and the private sector are weak, reflecting institutional weaknesses and cultural resistance to public-private collaboration. Most private sector companies are active in non-tradeable goods and services, are oriented toward the domestic market, and have little interest in R&D and innovation. The corresponding supply from universities and public research institutions is small.

Nevertheless, in 2021, the national association of Greek industrialists (SEV) started a campaign to attract digital innovation from foreign and domestic investors, based on the progress which Greece had accomplished in 2017–2020 with regard to digitalization. The SEV’s campaign matched a

government policy shift. In 2020, the Ministry of Digital Governance devised a holistic digital strategy, and the Ministry of Development and Investments a corresponding strategy for the digitalization of Greek industry (the Greek Industry 4.0 strategy).

Moreover, despite economic adversity, there are clear “islands” of excellence at universities and SMEs in areas such as biology, IT and computer science, economics, engineering, archaeology, and history. Moreover, a number of private startup companies are using private capital to concentrate on the production of software and technological innovations.

Citation:

Data on expenditure on research is drawn on Eurostat, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tsc00001/default/table?lang=en>

Information on Greece’s brain drain in English is found in <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-central-bank-reports-brain-drain-of-427000-young-educated-greeks-since-2008/a-19373527>

Information in English on the Greek research and innovation policy and particularly on brain drain is available from the EU, <https://rio.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/country-analysis/Greece/country-report>

Information on Greece’s performance, as assessed by the European Innovation Scoreboard, is available at <https://www.ekt.gr/en/news/26308>

Information on the new innovation strategies of the SEV and the Greek government is available at [https://www.sev.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Destination-Greece\\_Attracting-Digital-Innovation-Investment\\_LowRes.pdf](https://www.sev.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Destination-Greece_Attracting-Digital-Innovation-Investment_LowRes.pdf)

## Global Financial System

Stabilizing  
Global Financial  
System  
Score: 4

During the period under review, Greece, an EU member state, participated in the appropriate EU forums where issues of regulation and supervision of financial markets were discussed. In such forums, Greece normally supports ideas in favor of a more regulated international system for financial markets. However, Greece is a rather small European economy and cannot realistically take initiatives to influence the global economic environment.

## II. Social Policies

### Education

Education Policy  
Score: 5

In Greece, the education system is extremely top-heavy, with the Ministry of Education exercising a “hands-on” type of management over all levels of education and schools, including the distribution of public resources to schools

and universities. Pre-primary education in Greece has become compulsory for all four-year-old children since 2018, while enrollment in schools is compulsory for all children in the 5–15 age group.

The Greek state spends less on education than other EU member states, 4% of GDP in Greece compared to an EU-27 average of 4.7% (Eurostat data for 2019). However, public funds are misspent. For example, the allocation of teachers in public schools and professors in university departments is often uneven, university libraries are under-resourced, and housing for students is far from adequate. The distribution of infrastructure among university departments is generally unequal, and academic and administrative staff are underpaid.

Despite the above problems with universities, higher education is more generously supported than other levels of education. While public spending is lower than the EU average in primary and secondary education, it is slightly higher than the EU average in tertiary education.

This discrepancy is explained by the very high demand for university education. Greece performs relatively well with regard to tertiary attainment: one-third of Greeks in the age group 25–64 have a university degree. This is the result of many factors, including the Greek population's fascination with obtaining a university-level degree, often regardless of department or school. Traditionally, the symbolic value and social status accompanying a university degree are high, while success in passing the competitive entrance examinations to universities is considered a major achievement. University entrance examinations are written, very competitive and traditionally require memorization rather than critical-thinking. They are conducted every June on a nationwide scale through a centralized examination mechanism. As a result, teaching and learning in high schools is oriented toward the requirements of exam preparation. Pupils enroll in the country's fee-supported private cramming schools, where they are taught more systematically than in high schools.

Greece is a laggard with regard to upper-secondary attainment and its PISA results. In other words, while primary schools and universities may not show an outstanding performance, they function somewhat better than Greek high schools. Greece's PISA test performance did not show any significant improvement in the last decade. In fact, Greek children performed worse in all three categories in the 2019 PISA compared to the previous survey in 2015.

Tertiary institutions are nominally autonomous, but the Ministry of Education is responsible for their funding, as well as for the allocation of teaching posts



per university and the distribution of students across undergraduate programs. Since the mid-1990s, governments have promoted a policy of enlarging university access, primarily through establishing new universities and departments.

Obtaining a high school diploma (rather than a vocational-school qualification) is an aim sought by almost all pupils who tend to avoid vocational high schools and prefer general education high schools as graduating from the latter provides easier access to tertiary education. However, such access is not equitable, as students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds are more likely to pass the national entrance examinations. Moreover, to the extent their parents can afford it, Greek high school pupils receive extensive private tutoring in the cramming schools noted above. This reflects a cultural contradiction. While tertiary education is an entirely public sector activity (i.e., university students do not pay tuition fees or textbook costs, and private universities are officially banned), success in entering universities largely depends on private tutoring.

The quality of education in primary and secondary schools is very uneven, as private schools are better resourced and staffed than state schools. In the latter, until the change of government in 2019, the curricula of taught subjects were outdated, teachers completely rejected performance review and access to digital resources was limited. While in 2020–2021 there was progress on these fronts, state schools still suffer from understaffing and a lack of material resources (e.g., laboratories and libraries). Distance-learning became necessary in 2020–2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the closure of schools and impacted negatively on the quality of education. Meanwhile, the quality of vocational training (in technical and professional high schools) is very low – a trend has persisted for decades.

Similarly, the quality of education across Greek universities is very uneven. However, most former polytechnics, which were given university status by a law passed in 2018, without any prior performance review, are at a considerably lower level.

In 2021, arguing that Greek universities have long been plagued by violence, the new government passed a bill that aims to create a special police force to guard university campuses. It seems that public opinion supported the reform. However, the new law proved controversial, provoking mass student demonstrations.

In summary, Greece's education system is one of the most centralized among OECD countries, with shifting education policies depending on the

government in power or even the minister in office. The pandemic crisis of 2020–2021 has further exacerbated problems in the quality of education. However, after the change in government in 2019, there were positive developments, such as the subsidized distribution of laptops or tablets to pupils, the drafting of new curricula for all subjects taught in primary and secondary education, and, belatedly, the start of performance evaluation of school units and teaching personnel.

Citation:

Information on the performance of Greece's educational system is based on data provided on this SGI platform.

Data on public expenditure on education is drawn on Eurostat, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/9/95/Total\\_general\\_government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_education%2C\\_2019%2C\\_%25\\_of\\_GDP.png](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/9/95/Total_general_government_expenditure_on_education%2C_2019%2C_%25_of_GDP.png)

Data on the school performance of pupils is drawn on PISA / OECD 2015 Results <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

## Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion  
Policy  
Score: 5

Though Greece is not ranked among the worst-performing EU members states with regard to income inequality or poverty, the size of social exclusion and the extent of child poverty are rather unusual for an EU member state. In 2020, social exclusion affected 27.5% of Greeks (EU-27 average: 22%). The proportion of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2021 was close to 27%, compared to an EU average of 21% (Eurostat data for 2021). Life satisfaction is among the worst in the OECD, too.

Poverty and social exclusion mostly result from unemployment, which remains an acute problem in Greece. The unemployment rate dropped from 26.5% in 2014 to 17.6% in 2020, but is still the highest in the EU-27 (7.1% in 2020). Youth unemployment is at 29.3% and also figures as the highest in the European Union (EU-27 12.5% in 2020).

Besides these negative outcomes from the economic crisis of the previous decade, a deeper challenge is the long-term exclusion of young people from the labor market, to which they remain outsiders. The share of people aged 20 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) stands at 19.5% and is among the worst in the EU-28.

Meanwhile, typical government measures include the distribution of ad hoc social assistance benefits to old-age pensioners (above all other categories of the population), low-income groups and the unemployed, a practice sustained during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020–2021. The government usually hires poor and unemployed people in the public sector on temporary, five-month

contracts. They are preferred over other candidates for such temporary public sector jobs.

Most long-term unemployed people lose their skills and are unable to find new jobs. They are thus driven into poverty and social exclusion, or leave the country. Young people were hit particularly hard by the economic crisis of the previous decade and the COVID-19 crisis.

In the period under review, the implementation of the guaranteed minimum income (GMI) scheme was a positive development. It undoubtedly represents a major improvement over all previous programs. The GMI scheme consists of the following three interconnected pillars: (a) income support amounting to €200/month for a single member household with an additional €100 for each additional adult and €50 per child; (b) complementary social services, for instance, food pantries and discounted utility rates; and (c) services to help support recipients find employment. However, this third pillar was launched only in April 2021. Moreover, complementary measures to fight unemployment (a major cause of rising poverty), such as participation in vocational education and training (VET), remain modest.

There were some recent improvements in social inclusion policy. In March 2021, the government launched the Child Guarantee program, in association with UNICEF. It is a pilot program that aims to guarantee access to quality social services for children in need. And in June 2021, the government launched a deinstitutionalization strategy for people with disabilities. It is aimed at supporting children with disabilities, adults with disabilities and older people with support needs.

To sum up, as in the recent past, welfare measures in the period under review were focused more strongly on old-age pensioners than on the unemployed or the socially excluded. Despite improvements in social policy in 2020–2021, the poor and socially excluded count on kin or family networks to fill in the gaps of a still inchoate social policy. Better-targeted benefits could make growth more inclusive.

Citation:

Data on the GNI coefficient and NEET share in the age group 20-24 is provided by the SGI dataset on this platform.

Eurostat data on risk of poverty or social exclusion: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20211015-](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20211015-1#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20there%20were%2096.5,data%20published%20by%20Eurostat%20today.)

1#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20there%20were%2096.5,data%20published%20by%20Eurostat%20today.

Eurostat data on unemployment: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00203/default/table?lang=en>

Eurostat data on youth

unemployment:[https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth\\_empl\\_100&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_100&lang=en)

Eurostat data on child poverty and social exclusion:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20211028-1>

The GMI scheme of Greece is presented in a brief World Bank paper available at <https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/how-active-labor-market-programs-can-support-guaranteed-minimum-income-recipients>

The new strategy for the disabled is summarized at: <https://easpd.eu/press-releases-detail/greece-launches-new-strategy-for-deinstitutionalisation/>

## Health

Health Policy  
Score: 4

Since the onset of the pandemic crisis in Greece, spending on public healthcare has increased. In 2019, Greece spent \$2,238 per capita on healthcare – more than one-third less than the OECD average. Also in 2019, healthcare expenditure amounted to 7.8% of GDP (EU-27 average: 9.9%). Greece trailed behind other EU member states on healthcare spending as a result of massive cuts during the economic crisis of 2010–2018. Moreover, only 59% of health spending was publicly funded. Private spending, meaning out-of-pocket expenses (which were rarely taxed), stood at 35% and was more than double the EU average.

Public spending on healthcare is often above targeted expenditure because of mismanagement of the public procurement of medical equipment and supplies by public hospitals, and pressure exerted by pharmaceutical companies and private healthcare providers on healthcare practitioners and public hospitals. In order to counter this trend during the economic crisis, the government introduced a “claw back” requirement. The government collected from healthcare providers all funds spent over the legislated ceiling for public spending on pharmaceuticals and other healthcare services. This practice was continued in 2020–2021, despite arrears from previous years.

Private spending is fueled by the supply of healthcare practitioners and the availability of private diagnostic centers. In 2019, Greece had 6.1 practicing physicians per 1,000 people, the highest such ratio in OECD. However, there were only 3.3 practicing nurses per 1,000 people – around 40% of the OECD average of 8.8. These outcomes result from the country’s haphazard medical school system. There were eight state medical schools in the country, producing hundreds of doctors every year. At the same time, Greece faced a chronic lack of nurses (a low-status, low-paid job) and a similar lack of medical personnel in rural or remote areas, as most doctors prefer to work in the hospitals of the two largest cities, Athens and Thessaloniki. Moreover, Greece had one of the EU-27’s highest shares of MRI units and medical scanners per one million people.

In addition, in the period under review as in the past, the distribution of the 131 public hospitals across Greece remained highly uneven, resulting from a patronage-based selection process that determines where hospitals should be built.

Seeking to balance the oversupply of private medical services and the uneven structure of the public hospital system, in 2017, the government legislated a system of local public healthcare units (TOMY). The new system should have marked a major improvement over the past, moving in the right direction by requiring that practicing doctors become family doctors (i.e., general practitioners responsible for a few thousand insured citizens each). Implementation of the new system started slowly in 2018–2019, but was halted thereafter due to the change of government and the limited interest of doctors. Specialized doctors (of whom Greece has an oversupply) had no incentive to provide primary healthcare under the newly established terms of the program and were reluctant to enroll in a system that would tie them to predetermined levels of compensation. Meanwhile, patients continued to trust their own usual private practice doctors, to whom they pay out-of-pocket fees. In 2020 and 2021, the government increased the primary healthcare workforce, but newly hired doctors and nurses were largely channeled toward public hospitals, which in the period under review faced the challenge of treating COVID-19 patients. In order to meet the demands presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece doubled its intensive care unit bed capacity and occupancy rates never exceeded full capacity.

In 2020, the government imposed two strict lockdowns to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the population and started a nationwide program of vaccination. By the end of 2021, the proportion of fully vaccinated people reached a ceiling of 66% of the population, while only 35% had received a booster (third dose). A total of over 21,000 COVID-19-related deaths occurred in 2020–2021 – close to the EU average.

In general, the country performed relatively well during first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, but underperformed in 2021. Meanwhile, while clientelistic structures in the provision of healthcare remained intact, there was a high volume of unrecorded and untaxed transactions between patients and doctors as well as a differential in healthcare access based on the purchasing power of households.

Citation:

Eurostat data on public healthcare spending for 2020 is available at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Healthcare\\_expenditure\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Healthcare_expenditure_statistics)

European Commission / OECD, State of Health in the EU: Greece Country Health Profile 2021 available at

[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/greece-country-health-profile-2021\\_4ab8ea73-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/greece-country-health-profile-2021_4ab8ea73-en)

Data on out-of-pocket expenses on health and on the number of doctors is available on this SGI platform.

The law establishing the local healthcare units (known as TOMY, see Law 4486/2017) was passed in August 2017.

EU comparative data on Covid-19-related cases and deaths is available at <https://gap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html#global-overview-tab>

Comparative data on vaccinations is available at <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations?country=GRC>

Comparative OECD data: OECD, Health at a Glance: Europe 2020 available at [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-europe-2020\\_82129230-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-europe-2020_82129230-en)

## Families

Family Policy  
Score: 5

Greece has one of the strongest traditions of family ties in Europe. In both urban and rural areas, grandparents often look after preschool children if both parents work, families care for their elderly or disabled at home, parents help around the house and feed the younger generation, sometimes long after children become adults.

Traditionally, the burden of caring for the very old and the very young within households, falls on the shoulders of women. In the context of that tradition, female labor force participation in Greece is among the lowest in the OECD. Thus, women who stay at home taking care of family members may not contribute to the family incomes. If a family is poor, this condition negatively affects child poverty levels, which remains a serious challenge for Greece.

Instead of focusing on the poor and children, the bulk of social attention is focused on pensioners, often regardless of their income level. However, since 2017, the government has distributed a guaranteed minimum income (GMI) to the poorest Greek families. It also established a child allowance, which is distributed to families with an annual income up to €15,000.

After the change in government in 2019, the new government combined the GMI and the child allowance with a housing benefit and an additional allowance of €2,000 per each new born child, which was distributed in 2020 and 2021. These policy measures are implemented through the state agency OPEKA. Moreover, in the same period, the government increased tax breaks for all families with children regardless of family income and tax breaks targeted at families with three or more children. The government's aim was to support poor families, but also to help curb the demographic decline of the Greek population. In 2020, the government amended the relevant legislation to include permanent residents among the family allowance beneficiaries.

While family support has improved over time, for a poor family, the best option would be for the mother to enter the labor force and, in particular, to become a public sector worker. Notably, a young mother employed in the public sector receives much better support than a mother who is self-employed or is employed in the private sector. Female public sector workers are guaranteed their jobs following maternity leave. They are also granted maternity leave without fear that, on returning to work, they may be allocated to a subordinate job or suffer a wage cut, as is sometimes the case for women employed in the private sector.

Although the Greek state has made family support more comprehensive over time, it still depends on EU funding for the provision of nursery services offered by the local government. Many low-income families benefit from European Social Fund (ESF) projects, which finance Greece's municipal nurseries.

In summary, in the period under review, the Greek state started streamlining a policy to reconcile work and family life, but still depends on the traditional behavior and structure of the Greek family, as well as on funding from the European Union.

Data on child poverty, enrollment in preschool services for children up to five years old, fertility rate and female participation rate is provided by the SGI database on this platform.

The relevant legislation are Laws 4512/2018 and 4659/2020.

The latest information on the new child allowance, distributed by the government, through the OPEKA organization, is available (in Greek) at [Translation-Verification@britishcouncil.gr](mailto:Translation-Verification@britishcouncil.gr)

## Pensions

Pension Policy  
Score: 4

Greece has one of the worst age dependency ratios among OECD countries, but – even though it does not have a well-resourced welfare state – it has managed to keep most senior citizens out of poverty. And that despite the fact that a minority of older citizens are employed, while early retirement was practiced for a long time. This paradoxical situation is the result of the long-term preference of successive governments to prioritize pensions over other fields of social protection (e.g., to protect against health, family, poverty, housing and unemployment risks).

The pension age is currently at 67 for both men and women with at least 4,500 days of contributions (equivalent to 15 years). Insured persons with a contribution record of 12,000 working days (40 years) can retire with a full pension benefit at the age of 62. Pension benefits are subject to general taxation rules. Pensioners also pay 6% contributions on their pension for healthcare.

In 2019, just after exiting the last Economic Adjustment Program, which was meant to consolidate public finances, Greece spent 16% of GDP on pensions – the highest percentage share in the European Union, on a par with Italy (EU-27 average: 12.7%). Pensions have become a major policy issue, because Greece – along with Italy and Germany – has the largest share of the total population over 65 in the whole of the European Union (21.8% of the total population).

Yet, Greece’s pay-as-you-go system, according to which the working population contributes to pension funds so that old-age pensioners can obtain their pensions, is unsustainable with regard to both main and auxiliary pensions.

The Greek pension system, which comprises a main plus one or more auxiliary pensions for every beneficiary, was based on a multitude of occupational pension funds until 2017. Thereafter, a nationwide integrated social insurance agency (the EFKA) supplanted the occupational funds, but did not become operational until the end of the previous decade. It still suffers from administrative inefficiencies, evident in the long backlogs in issuing pension awards.

In 2016, a major pension reform law instituted the EFKA, established a system of defined-benefit pension plans and introduced a basic pension financed by general tax revenue. According to the law, the main pension is now made up of a national basic pension, financed by the state budget, and a “redistributive” pension calculated on the basis of the average reference wage over a whole working life, the length of contributions and the replacement rate. After the change in government in 2019, the new government kept the same system of main pensions (with some amendments), but sought to reform the chaotic system of auxiliary pensions, which had been struggling financially for a very long time, even before the economic crisis.

In 2021, the government introduced a major change to auxiliary pensions. For all those who join the labor market from 2022 onward, a new system based on individual accounts has been established. Those who are under 35 years old may voluntarily join the new system, while older workers will remain with the old system. The new one is a fully funded defined contributions system. Individual contributions will be made to the newly established, state-run Hellenic Auxiliary Pensions Defined Contribution Fund (TEKA). Contributors to the new fund may choose among low, medium and high-risk-rated investment funds. It is too early to assess the TEKA system.



However, recent IMF research points out that, despite improvements in 2017–2020, Greece’s pension system falls short of convincing beneficiaries to build long contribution histories. In other words, to stop evading social security contributions, it has not helped improve the fiscal policy mix and foster higher economic growth, and it has not made burden-sharing across generations more equitable and fair.

Indeed, pension policy does not meet intergenerational equity requirements. Existing arrangements primarily serve the interests of middle- and old-age groups at the expense of younger generations of workers. This is a constant pattern running parallel to the periodic trimming of pensions.

The pension system is periodically challenged not only by fiscal constraints, but also by rear battles of vested interest groups, which in the pre-reform period used to enjoy higher than average pensions. For instance, the country’s supreme administrative court has struck down several aspects of the reform pertaining to low replacement rates and to pension cuts. The government periodically has to reimburse occupational groups, which have won such legal battles. All in all, Greece’s pension system remains unsustainable.

Citation:

Data on share of old people who work, old-age dependency ratio and senior citizen poverty is drawn on the SGI data set, available on this platform.

Data on pension expenditure is drawn on Eurostat, available at <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tps00103&lang=en>

The pension reform law was Law 4387/2016. It has been amended many times since 2016. The new law on auxiliary pensions is Law 4826/2021.

IMF research on the Greek pension system: Alvar Kangur, Niki Kalavrezou, and Daehaeng Kim (2021), “Reforming the Greek Pension System,” IMF Working Paper, WP/21/188, July 2021.

OECD, Pensions at a Glance 2021 – Country Profiles 2021

## Integration

Integration Policy  
Score: 5

The number of refugees and migrants arriving on the Greek Aegean Islands in 2020 and 2021 has reached its lowest level since the start of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015/6. According to the UNHCR, 4,109 people crossed from Turkey to the Greek islands in 2021. This compares to 9,714 in 2020 and just under 60,000 in 2019. After the change of government in 2019, there was a government policy shift. The shift amounted to preventing illegal immigration, particularly in the northeast of the country, where Greece shares a land border with Turkey. Human rights organizations have repeatedly criticized the Greek coast guard of illegally pushing migrants back to Turkey. The Greek government, however, has denied these claims.

The Migration and Social Integration Code, adopted in 2014 and amended in 2021, is currently the basic law regulating integration in Greece, regulating residence permits and access to the labor market. Two national strategies for the integration of third-country nationals had been launched in 2013 and 2018, respectively, before being replaced by the current national strategy, adopted in July 2019, after the change in government.

While the numbers of migrants and refugees have dramatically fallen, Greece has remained unable to properly manage the inflows of people fleeing war-torn and poverty-stricken regions of the Middle East and Africa. Many stayed for long periods of time at reception and identification centers (RICs) on the Greek islands facing Turkey, such as Lesbos, Chios and Samos.

Arriving migrants and refugees continue to find themselves stranded on the islands for a long time before their asylum applications are processed. Migrants and refugees used to live under squalid conditions in “hot spots,” such as at the Moria camp on Lesbos, which used to house 13,000 people. After a destructive fire in September 2020, that camp was closed. Then, the New Democracy government built new, better equipped camps on the same island and on Samos island. The government also gradually moved many asylum-seekers away from the islands.

In the period under review, migrants and refugees, who were not temporarily hosted in the RICs, were housed in camps on mainland Greece, in private hotels and apartments rented on their behalf by the Greek state. There were two government housing programs, the ESTIA (Emergency Support for Integration and Accommodation) and the HELIOS (Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection). However, in 2020–2021, mainland camps were in remote places, with grossly inadequate public transportation. Movement restrictions, imposed to avoid the spread of COVID-19 within the population, worsened the social isolation of migrants and refugees.

Meanwhile, EU authorities and NGOs have continued to provide significant support, as the situation has overwhelmed local Greek authorities. However, this valuable support to desperate people arriving on Greece’s shores in small boats does not extend to their educational and social integration. The integration of migrants into the education system has been functional to a certain extent at the primary and secondary level. It is also obvious that the vast majority of children who live in reception and identification centers (RICs) do not receive proper schooling.

The integration of migrants and refugees into the labor market remains problematic. Migrants and refugees mostly work in the shadow economy, for example, in the agricultural and construction sectors where they find low-paid and uninsured temporary jobs. A law passed after the change in government in 2019 requires a six-month waiting period for asylum-seekers before they apply for work permits. Other difficulties migrants and refugees encounter are obtaining tax registration numbers, enrolling in the social security system (the EFKA agency) and opening a bank account. In all these instances, they often come across language barriers, delays and the uncooperative stance of public sector workers.

Briefly, social integration has never been a strong focus of Greek migration policy. With the exception of Albanians, who probably constitute more than half of all migrants in Greece and first came to the country in the early 1990s, the country's migrants – including migrants from Asia and Africa – face significant barriers to integrating into Greek society. With regard to cultural integration, it is telling that an official mosque for Muslims in Athens was finally opened only in June 2019.

In summary, significant challenges in terms of policy efficiency remain and policy setbacks are now obvious. Greece must reduce human suffering inside refugee camps. By now this has grown to become a problem that obviously cannot be managed individually by the Greek state. The problem will remain unresolved as long as a more comprehensive and better resourced integration policy is formulated by national and EU authorities, as inflows of migrants and refugees into the European Union will not cease in the foreseeable future.

Citation:

Legislation on migrants and refugees has been codified by law 4251/2014 and amended by Law 4825/2021.

Information on social integration of migrants and refugees in Greece is available at: N. Leivaditi, A. Ilias, E. Papatzani and E. Petracou (2020), "Integration Policies, Practices and Experiences. Country Report: Greece," EU's Horizon program 2020 "RESPOND – Multilevel Governance of Migration and Beyond," University of the Aegean, June 2020.

UNCHR data on migration flows into Greece is available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>

Greece's national strategy on the social integration of migrants and refugees is available (in Greek) at <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%CE%926-%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-2019.pdf>

The reorganization of the Directorate of Social Integration at the Ministry of Migration and Asylum was effected through Presidential Decree 106/2020. The Directorate's website is available at <https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/integration/i-ypiresia/>

Internal Security  
Policy  
Score: 6

### Safe Living

In Greece, there was an overall increase in crimes between 2013 and 2019, with over 2,000 crimes per 1,000 population per year (data of the Hellenic Statistical Authority). Partly owing to movement restrictions, imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, criminality declined in 2020–2021. Moreover, according to the Minister of Public Order, compared to 2018–2019, criminality declined by 30% in the last trimester of 2021.

The decline in crime may be attributed to several converging factors. First, family ties remain strong in Greece, and were further strengthened during the economic and pandemic crisis. Thus, the unemployed and poor relied on family members for social protection. Second, with the exception of a few regions (e.g., the island of Crete), the circulation of firearms is very small and restricted. Third, compared to previous years, in 2020–2021, police were very visible in city centers, patrolling the streets.

The decrease may also be partially explained by the relatively high levels of government expenditure on public order and safety (constituting over 2% of GDP, among the highest such levels in the EU-27. EU-27 average: 1.7%). Expenditure was primarily channeled to sustain a large police force.

Feelings of personal insecurity may be attributed to the fact that trust in the police is comparatively low. In many encounters, protesters have been hostile to the police. Active anarchist groups regularly attack policemen during demonstrations and police stations, too. Police also respond violently, sometimes exceeding the limits prescribed by law.

The police have not offered sufficient protection to refugees and migrants against attacks by racist groups. The trial and imprisonment of the leadership of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn in October 2020 led to the demise of that anti-migrant party. In the past, Golden Dawn had put the safety of refugees and migrants at risk. Moreover, compared to the period up to 2019, in the period under review, violent riots in central Athens and Thessaloniki were less frequent.

In summary, in the period under review, safety increased. Compared to the pre-2019 period, public order was gradually restored. Nevertheless, there was broad public uneasiness regarding security in Greek city centers. Crimes against private property were frequent, while there was sporadic violent activity by uncontrolled left-wing radical political groups.

## Citation:

Data on the ratio of crimes per 1,000 population is drawn on the official data base of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT): <https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SJU03/> (data on criminal justice)

Data on trust toward police, is drawn on the SGI statistical data available on this platform.

Data on government expenditure on public order and safety is available from Eurostat,

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_public\\_order\\_and\\_safety#:~:text=At%20the%20level%20of%20the,stood%20at%201.7%20%25%20of%20GDP.&text=Around%200.3%20%25%20of%20GDP%20was,operations\)%20and%20'prisons'](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_public_order_and_safety#:~:text=At%20the%20level%20of%20the,stood%20at%201.7%20%25%20of%20GDP.&text=Around%200.3%20%25%20of%20GDP%20was,operations)%20and%20'prisons').

At the level of the, stood at 1.7% of GDP. Around 0.3% of GDP was operations and prisons'.

### Global Inequalities

Global Social  
Policy  
Score: 5

Until the onset of the economic crisis, Greece was active in assisting less developed countries. Since the crisis began, the country has focused on managing its own domestic problems. Cuts in public sector expenditure significantly impacted on Greece's official development assistance (ODA). The refugee crisis also affected the distribution of resources. In 2019 and 2020, Greece's ODA as a share of GNI stood at 0.13%, which was the lowest among OECD countries (along with the Czech Republic). While Greece continued to meet its multilateral commitments, including to European institutions (mainly the European Development Fund), bilateral ODA was limited to expenditure on in-country refugee costs. In general, the Greek government has shown very little interest in engaging in international efforts to help developing countries, and has not demonstrated any initiative, assumed responsibility or acted as an agenda-setter within the international framework. However, it has supported all relevant EU and UN initiatives.

## Citation:

Data on Official Development Assistance is provided by Tables available by OECD/DAC at <https://w3.unece.org/SDG/en/Indicator?id=72DAC>

## III. Environmental Policies

### Environment

Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 4

In comparison to many other countries, Greece performs rather well on environmental policy. In the Yale University's Environmental Policy Index 2020, Greece ranked 25th out of 180 countries (down from 22nd two years earlier) for overall environmental performance, with a score of 69.1. Greece is

among the top world performers in terms of access to water and sanitation, but compared to residents of other developed countries, Greeks overuse water sources and create a lot of waste.

Industrial production and greenhouse-gas emissions in Greece declined after 2010, as a consequence of the economic crisis. Recycling has increased only modestly over the past 15 years and waste management is not systematically practiced.

Many observers as well as an OECD review in 2020 have underlined traditional problems with environmental protection. In Greece, transport and electricity power stations using lignite heavily pollute the air; tourist and construction businesses, as well as Greek and foreign tourists cause coastal zones to degrade; and unregulated activities related to agriculture, transport, tourism and fisheries create multiple risks for biodiversity.

Several causes lie at the root of Greece's environmental challenges: a lack of state mechanisms capable of controlling sources of pollution, unchecked urban development, large infrastructure projects and negligent consumer behavior. Environmental and forest management is haphazard and subject to the vicissitudes of changing political leaderships and interests. This pattern is evident in the spread of the wildfires that threatened the northwestern suburbs of Athens in the summer of 2021.

Compared to the past, when environmental policymaking was rather fragmented across different ministries and state agencies, today policy formulation and implementation are better served by the Ministry of Environment and Energy. In 2021, the Greek government revamped its environmental legislation. The new regulations set clearer rules for environmental protection and are expected to facilitate environmental investments. More specifically, the new law changes regulations on land use, environmental licensing and the management of protected areas. However, the country is still not ready to address the challenges of climate change. Unprecedented wildfires in August 2021 and heavy flooding in October 2021 hit various areas.

Nevertheless, if there is one priority area in which tangible results have become increasingly obvious, it is the promotion of renewable energy. Here, the country has significant natural capital in the form of solar, wind and tidal resources.

In sum, as the latest EU Environmental Implementation Review notes, there has been some progress on waste-management issues, ecosystem protection

and the implementation of the European Union’s Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. However, complex administrative structures and procedures continue to cause significant delays and bottlenecks. Paired with local political hurdles and “not in my backyard” movements, these are the main obstacles to the implementation of environmental legislation.

Nevertheless, central and local authorities, as well as state and private companies have become increasingly sensitive in implementing environmental legislation. While, owing to better crisis management, floods and wildfires in the period under review did not cause civilian deaths (as was the case prior to 2019), Greece has a very long way to go to successfully transition to a resource-efficient economy and preserve the country’s natural asset base.

Citation:

Data on Greece’s performance regarding renewable energy sources, water management and recycling is drawn from the SGI database available on this platform.

Data from the Environmental Performance Index for 2020 is available at <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2020/country/grc>

European Commission, The Environmental Implementation Review 2019 ([https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report\\_el\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/report_el_en.pdf))

OECD’s Environmental Performance Review for Greece, 2020, is available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/132fd602-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/132fd602-en>

## Global Environmental Protection

Global  
Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 4

Greece participated in the negotiations and signed the Paris Climate Agreement of December 2015. Since November 2021, Greece has also followed the COP26 guidelines in preparing to shift to a sustainable environmental regime. Owing to its relatively recent economic problems, Greece could not accumulate adequate international clout to help shape the newly envisaged international environmental regime. Yet, the Greek government has committed to implementing that regime, which includes gradually shifting away from polluting operations. In April 2021, the Greek government announced that the last coal plant will close by 2025.

Citation:

Information on Greece’s efforts to “turn green” in accordance with COP26: <https://www.economia.gr/en/cop26-greece-is-doing-its-part-and-turns-green/>

Information on Greece’s plan of phasing-out lignite extraction and use: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/news/greece-confirms-last-coal-plant-will-be-shut-in-2025/>

# Robust Democracy

## Electoral Processes

Candidacy  
Procedures  
Score: 10

The last national parliamentary elections took place in July 2019, after the regional and municipal elections of May 2019. There was a smooth government turnover in July 2019 with the formation of a single-party majority government.

In Greece, there is no discrimination in registration procedures nor are potential candidates or parties prevented from participating in elections. Exceptions include active military officers, who cannot run for office. Prison convicts who serve life sentences are disqualified, otherwise the matter is left to the discretion of the sentencing court.

Before elections, parties and candidates are required to submit a petition to the highest civil and criminal court (Areios Pagos) which monitors formalities such as checking that no other parties have the same name.

The legality or fairness of elections is not challenged by parties nor candidates. Despite the acute political conflict with respect to the causes and management of the long economic crisis of the 2010s, the conduct of electoral procedures in Greece has remained reliable throughout the crisis.

### Citation:

Regulations for registering a candidate are listed in article 55 of the constitution, while incompatibilities are listed in articles 56, 57 and 58. For the relevant provisions of the constitution, translated into English, see <http://www.venice.coe.int/VOTA/en/s tart.html> [accessed on 11.05.2013].

Media Access  
Score: 9

Incumbent political parties represented either in the national parliament or the European Parliament have equal opportunities for media access. Until 2019, the country's national public broadcaster (ERT) primarily, if not exclusively, communicated the views of the government, but the news content was much less biased in 2020–2021 than ever before.

Private media are also selective in their reporting and many are sensationalist. Private media owners often change sides, first favoring the government and then the opposition, while selectively highlighting certain issues depending on



Voting and  
Registration  
Rights  
Score: 10

their business strategies. However, the range of media outlets, from the extreme left to the extreme right, is very wide. Media pluralism is fully developed, even though the quality of information is very debatable. Importantly, during electoral campaigns, candidates and parties enjoy relatively equal opportunities to access the media.

Voting in Greece is mandatory by law. However, it is rarely enforced. There is neither discrimination in the exercise of the right to vote nor any disincentive for voting. Upon being born, Greeks are registered in the municipality where their family resides. These records serve as lists of citizens eligible to vote. There is, however, a need to clean these records to remove persons who are deceased or have permanently migrated to other countries. Thus, the records include names of persons who will never turn out to vote. The result is that election turnout rates are calculated based on an aggregate that is much higher than the actual number of eligible voters.

Since 2016, the minimum voting age has been lowered to 17 years. A new, additional electoral registration process was rolled out in 2021. In the period under review, the Greek government started a campaign to implement a law, passed in December 2019, that facilitates participation in elections for Greek voters residing abroad. Owing to multiple waves of emigration from Greece in the previous century and to the “brain drain” in the wake of the recent economic crisis, a very large number of registered voters still reside abroad and until recently had to come back to Greece to exercise their right to vote.

The law of December 2019 provided for the creation of special electoral registers for such Greek voters in their countries of residence. Anyone who had lived in Greece for a total of two years in the span of the last 35 years and who had filed a tax declaration in Greece in the current or previous tax year was eligible to be included in the special electoral registers.

Citation:

The law facilitating the registration of voters living abroad was L. 4648/2019.

Party Financing  
Score: 6

Party financing for national elections is regulated by law 3023/2003, as amended by law 4304/2014. Legislation formally adheres to guidelines established by the Council of Europe, but is not fully implemented.

Legislation constrained the size of budget outlays to parties, increased transparency regarding donations to parties and barred the practice of parties obtaining bank loans against future revenue, which the parties would expect to receive from the state. Every year, the interior minister issues a ministerial ordinance which distributes funds to parties that received at least 1.5% of the total vote in the most recent election.

In the past, state-owned and private banks lent millions of euros to Greek political parties. However, the banks proved unable to force the parties to repay their loans, as successive governments protected over-indebted parties. Even today the largest parties struggle to service the debts they accumulated over the past two decades.

Under pressure from the Council of Europe and other international organizations, Greece improved national legislation on party financing in 2017 (laws 4472/2017 and 4509/2017). However, the legislation has been amended several times in the years that followed in a back-and-forth manner.

There have also been improvements in the way party financing is monitored. The competent authority is a parliamentary committee, the Committee for the Investigation of Declaration of Assets (CIDA). As noted in the European Commission's latest report on rule of law in Greece (2021), the CIDA regularly receives financial statements from parties which contain information about the amount and sources of political party income and expenses, as well as financial obligations and debts. The committee has performed audits, and – despite long backlogs – has already found financial breaches in 11 cases and imposed appropriate financial sanctions.

Despite improvements, there remains an implementation gap regarding rules for party financing; Greece's record on this front remains mixed. For the most part, monitoring remains ineffective and the real sources of party financing are not fully known. This inefficiency is attributable to both the governing and opposition parties.

Council of Europe (2020), "Second Compliance Report Greece," GRECO, 16.11.2020, available at <https://rm.coe.int/fourth-evaluation-round-corruption-prevention-in-respect-of-members-of/1680a06121>

European Commission (2021), "2021 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Greece," available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021\\_rplr\\_country\\_chapter\\_greece\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/2021_rplr_country_chapter_greece_en.pdf)

On the non-implementation of regulations of party financing, Sotiropoulos, Dimitri A. (2020), "Corruption and Anti-corruption in Today's Greece," ELIAMEP working paper, December 2020, available at <https://www.eliamep.gr/en/publication/%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%B8%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%AC-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%AD%CE%BC%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%B8%CE%BF/>

Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (iDEA), Greece (<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/139/55>)

Popular Decision-Making  
Score: 2

No effective opportunity to vote on important issues was available to Greeks in the last few years. While referendums are provided for in the constitution, the government's surprise decision in July 2015 to launch a referendum on an

austerity package, which was being negotiated with the European Union, destabilized the economy and negatively affected relations between Greece and its euro area partners.

In 2018, the then government provided local government authorities and citizens with the legal framework to launch local referendums, even on issues which were outside the remit of local authorities (Law 4555/2018). This legislation could have broadened opportunities for citizens to vote on issues of importance. However, given the over-politicized nature of local government elections in Greece and the deep cleavages within many municipal councils along national political party lines, it could also have destabilized political stability and policy implementation at the municipal level. The government that came to power in 2019 passed legislation to postpone the implementation of the clauses on local referendums.

The unfortunate, if not awkward, handling of the referendum of 2015 and the equally debatable attempt to promote referendums at the local level (even on non-local issues) have diminished the prospect of citizens being able to vote on issues of importance to them at least in the near future.

Citation:

The conduct of referendums in Greece is regulated by article 44 of the constitution and Law 4023/2011.

### Access to Information

Media Freedom  
Score: 6

In 2020 and 2021, owing to the COVID-19 public health crisis, there was a further decline in the circulation of printed media, while a reduction in advertising has strained Greece's media sector. These developments have made media outlets more susceptible to government influence.

After the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020, the Greek government disbursed €20 million to print and electronic media to carry public health messages, such as the "Stay at Home" campaign during the first lockdown of that year. The government was accused of allocating the aforementioned amount in a discriminatory fashion and withholding information on the list of funding recipients. It made the relevant information public with a few months delay in July 2020. After that disclosure, it turned out that in some cases (mainly news websites) the allocation of funds had relied on political or unclear criteria, although opposition outlets had received funds. Nevertheless, most private mass media held a generally responsible stance on the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting vaccination.

Journalists were sometimes subject to mistreatment, particularly while attempting to cover protests or report on migration issues. For example,

German and Italian media teams were temporarily detained by police on the islands of Lesbos and Samos. The European Commission flagged concerns about attacks and threats against journalists in Greece in its July 2021 Rule of Law Report, in particular the killing of Greek investigative journalist Giorgos Karaivaz.

In late 2021, the Greek parliament approved an amendment to the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, which extended the previous definition of “false information” and reinforced the relevant penalties. The new regulations, which include the possibility of prison sentences for offenders, provoked much criticism.

The public broadcaster’s performance improved after the government turnover of July 2019, even though the journalist appointed as head of the broadcaster in August 2019 was a close associate of the new prime minister (the leader of New Democracy, Kyriakos Mitsotakis). To sum up, in 2020–2021, the government largely respected media autonomy, although it made occasional efforts to influence them.

Citation:

European Commission, Rule of Law Report, July 2021 ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2021-rule-law-report/2021-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/rule-law/rule-law-mechanism/2021-rule-law-report/2021-rule-law-report-communication-and-country-chapters_en))

Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2021, Greece (<https://freedomhouse.org/country/greece/freedom-world/2021>)

Reporters without Borders, “New Greek law against disinformation endangers press freedom,” December 1, 2021 (<https://rsf.org/en/news/new-greek-law-against-disinformation-endangers-press-freedom>)

Media Pluralism  
Score: 5

There are a large number of electronic and print media organizations, but the structure of ownership has become increasingly oligopolistic with strong cross-ownership across media formats.

In a country of 11 million inhabitants, there are more than 112 analog private TV stations with a national, regional or local license. There are also approximately 1,000 regional/local radio stations, approximately 1,500 news websites, and at least 10 daily and Sunday newspapers of national circulation.

While there are several pro-government Athens-based daily newspapers, there are some which are very critical of the government. The same holds for news websites with the majority of them being pro-government. However, there are some which are clearly and consistently influenced by the opposition.

However, this multitude of media sources conceals a much less pluralistic structure. Today in Greece, there are eight large press groups, which own the

most popular and influential print and digital media. More concretely, the Greek media landscape is shaped by media groups controlled by business magnates, ship owners and large contractors. However, the exact ownership structure of media outlets is concealed by holding companies and little-known entities listed in official records; no exact ownership information is available.

Extensive cross-media ownership is common and this has negatively affected media independence. Wealthy businessmen control the largest private television, radio and social media channels. For example, the tycoon who owns Greece's richest soccer team (Olympiacos), and has business interests in shipping and other sectors also owns two of the oldest Athenian newspapers ("To Vima" and "Ta Nea"), which enjoy large national circulation, and two TV channels ("One" and "Mega").

The TV landscape is dominated by three private television channels (Antenna, Star and Skai), which offer popular shows and infotainment, and attract the majority of viewers.

Electronic media is also flourishing in the form of websites and blogs. There are an unknown number of anti-establishment electronic media, which – in the period under review – were followed by supporters of the anti-vaccination movement.

While Greece lacks an effective anti-monopoly policy for the media industry, media outlets do report a wide range of opinions. In fact, the media reports a wider range of opinions than in the previous decade. The government voices its opinions through the state-owned television broadcaster (ERT), and friendly newspapers and radio stations. The ERT also regularly broadcasts the views of the opposition, not only in news programs but also in shows of analysis and political debates. The opposition has a voice in the private media too, as political party leaders often participate in state and private television and radio programs. Small circulation newspapers attract readers by printing unsubstantiated accusations regarding politicians and businessmen. Regardless of their political profile, some marginal newspapers do not refrain from publishing news which, at times, borders on smear campaigns against political opponents. The tendency to print or broadcast unsubstantiated information was probably accentuated in 2020 and 2021, when sensationalist media adopted an anti-vaccination stance.

Citation:

On the oligopolistic structure of Greek Media and data on websites and blogs, see Papathanassopoulos S. et al (2021), "Greece: Media concentration and independent journalism between austerity and digital disruption," available at <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1559286/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Access to  
Government  
Information  
Score: 8

Citizens' free and easy access to official information has been regulated since 1986. Several laws passed since then were codified in 2015 and streamlined along the European Union's regulation GDPR of 2016, while new national legislation passed in 2019 was also adapted to the GDPR. Overall, government information is accessible, without violating sensitive personal data. However, new legislation passed in August 2019 (Law 4624/2019) expanded the range of restrictions to access official information beyond the restrictions already provided by the GDPR. In case of conflict between the principles of access to government information and personal data protection, an independent authority, the Hellenic Data Protection Authority (the APDPX), intervenes.

Owing to a law passed in 2010 (the "Clarity" law), all public documents are uploaded on a designated official platform. This requirement pertains to all administrative acts, laws, decrees, ministerial decisions and circulars. Otherwise, they are legally not valid. Public officials are required to make declarations of their assets and income public. There are a few reasonable access restrictions pertaining to matters of national security and defense.

There are effective mechanisms of appeal and oversight enabling citizens to access information, in addition to the aforementioned independent authority. First, there are administrative courts, including the Supreme Administrative Court (StE, Symvoulío tis Epikrateias). Second, there is the ombuds office, established in 1997. Unfortunately, owing to work overload, administrative courts can take a long time to decide on a case, but the ombuds office represents a well-managed mechanism of appeal and oversight. The ombuds office can demand that any public service responds to a citizen's right to information, even though ministries themselves tend to be quite unresponsive to citizen requests.

Citation:

On the Data Protection Authority, see <https://www.dpa.gr/en>

The "Clarity" law is Law 3861/2010, passed in 2010. Presidential Decree 28/2015 issued in 2015, codified all previous legislation on access to information.

Today, access to information is regulated by European Union's regulation GDPR, as complemented by Greece's Law 4624/2019. Articles 33, 34 and 35 of the law go beyond GDPR provisions and expand restrictions to the citizens' right of access to information. See L. Mitrou (2020), Greece: The New Data Protection Framework," *European Data Protection Law Review*, 1/2020, pp. 107-113.

On the Data Protection Authority, see <https://www.dpa.gr/en>

### Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights  
Score: 6

Civil rights are protected by and included in the constitution (passed in 1975, and amended in 1986, 2001, 2008 and 2019) and the criminal code. Individuals are free to express their personal views on political or other

sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution. Judges are tenured and cannot be removed nor transferred by incoming governments. Courts guarantee the protection of life, freedom and property and protect all individuals against illegitimate arrest, exile, terror, torture or unjustifiable intervention into personal life. Greek citizens enjoy equal access to the law and are treated equally by the law. Restrictions imposed on the movement of persons and activities of businesses in the period under review were deemed constitutional by the courts, as was the compulsory vaccination of hospital staff and the staff of disaster management units.

Notably, despite intense political conflict throughout the previous decade, Greek democracy has continued to function and the courts have administered justice, albeit with very significant delays. Judges are unable to handle the constant overflow of cases, which have piled up for several years.

There are rare cases of officials failing to uphold the law as far as protecting human rights is concerned. Independent control mechanisms, such as free media, NGOs and social movements, are very sensitive to human rights violations. Such cases, which have occurred in reception camps for migrants and in prisons, have acquired wide publicity, but have taken a long time to be processed by the courts system. Despite delays, courts eventually sanction violations of human rights. For instance, the conviction and imprisonment of the leaders of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, in October 2020, for the assassination of a left-wing rap singer in 2013, marked an improvement in the administration of justice.

In the meantime, the living conditions of migrants and asylum-seekers, stranded in reception centers (camps) on Greek islands, improved to some extent. After a deadly fire in 2019 in the Moria refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, the government passed new legislation to reorganize the camps, and began actively relocating refugees and migrants to better and smaller camps around mainland Greece. In 2021, the government also built new camps on large Greek islands (Lesbos and Samos) that face the coast of Turkey, the usual departure point of refugees and migrants.

In summary, the state protects civil rights, but organizational and bureaucratic obstacles in practice stand in the way of the comprehensive protection of these rights, particularly with regard to migrants and refugees.

The Council of the State (Greece's highest administrative court) decided in November 2021 that the compulsory vaccination of medical doctors and nurses, as well as the staff of emergency units of disaster management (the EMAK units), was constitutional.

The new law on reorganization of refugee camps is L. 4636/2019.

Information in English on the Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors is available at <https://migration.gov.gr/en/grammateies/eidiki-grammateia-prostasias-asynodeyton-anilikon/>

Political Liberties  
Score: 9

The constitution extends strong protections to political liberties, including the right to vote, to think and speak freely, to assemble and demonstrate, to organize in collectives such as unions and associations and to submit petitions requiring a timely response by the competent authorities. Political liberties in 2020 and 2021 were well protected, as reported by international observers (e.g., Freedom House).

In 2020 and 2021, despite the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, mass protests organized by trade unions, by opposition parties and by the anti-vaccination movement were regularly held and were not suppressed by police forces. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021, an amendment to the Penal Code made the spread of fake news on public health matters punishable and tightened penalties for disseminating fake news. The amendment was passed by the government majority in parliament, against the votes of the opposition and disagreement expressed by a few NGOs.

In the period under review, small anarchist groups in large cities sporadically attacked government buildings and the property of private companies, with whom they politically disagreed. As was the case in the past, small radical leftist groups infrequently closed down university or high school buildings by occupying them in protest against government measures they opposed.

In this context, the government regarded the issues of safety and security as taking a high priority. In the period under review, the police evacuated privately owned buildings and rooms in state university buildings, which had been used by the aforementioned groups in Athens and other cities. However, the government's intention to establish a special police force to patrol university campuses was delayed. Greece's largest recognized minority population, the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, has full political rights; four members of the community won seats in the last parliamentary elections (2019). However, based on international treaties which recognize only religious minorities in Greece (the Treaty of Lausanne, 1923), the authorities have rejected some ethnic minorities' attempts to register associations with names referring to their ethnic identity. Since 2010, documented immigrants who reside in Greece have been allowed, under certain conditions, to vote in municipal elections.

The constitution guarantees religion freedom, but prohibits proselytization. However, the restriction is rarely enforced. For years, successive governments were reluctant to allow the establishment of places of Muslim worship. Finally, in 2019, the Muslim community of Athens started using a state-funded and state-run mosque.



Non-  
discrimination  
Score: 7

Citation:

Freedom House Greece Profile 2021 <https://freedomhouse.org/country/greece/freedom-world/2021>

Stricter penalties on disseminating fake news, a crime sanctioned in Greece's Penal Code (article 191), were provided in 2021, through Law 4855/2021 (article 36)

Protection against discrimination on the basis of race has been regulated since 1979, while protection against gender discrimination is regulated by the family law passed in 1983. The European Union's legislative acts also provide protection from gender discrimination. However, legislation against discrimination has rarely been implemented effectively. Women in particular, though theoretically enjoying equality before the law, continue to face workplace discrimination in practice. The Romany minority (numbering probably more than 200,000) is also subject to discrimination despite legal protections.

In the years since 2015, the outcry against racism and the rise to power of a left-wing party, Syriza, contributed to a decline in discrimination. Greece has seen significant improvements in the protection of LGBTQ+ rights in recent years. New legislation, passed between 2015 and 2017, grants extensive rights to same-sex couples and recognizes self-proclaimed gender identities for people experiencing gender dysphoria.

In 2020 and 2021, the influx of migrants and refugees slowed down. The coastal communities on the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea did not have to manage the large waves of immigration encountered before to 2019 under the permissive policies of the previous government. Migration policy became much stricter after the change of government in 2019. However, in early 2020, very large, organized groups of immigrants suddenly tried to push through Greece's land border with Turkey and enter the country. Greek security forces held them back and massive inflows were prevented. In view of the above, a general climate of unfriendliness, if not outright hostility, toward refugees and migrants has become the norm in communities scattered around Greece.

Citation:

Family relations are regulated through law 1329/1982, while anti-discrimination legislation is found in law 927/1079 (amended in 2001 to facilitate the intervention of prosecuting authorities against trespassers). European Union law, naturally also applicable in Greece, regulates gender discrimination. See, for instance, the Gender Directive, officially known as Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004.

Information on protection of LGBTI rights is available from <https://www.ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/greece-gender-recognition-law-oct2017>

### Rule of Law

Legal Certainty  
Score: 7

The state administration operates on the basis of a legal framework that is extensive, complex, fragmented and sometimes contradictory. Formalism dominates legislation. Legal regulations are often not consistently applied. Acts passed by parliament often have seemingly extraneous items added, which only confuses things further.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020, the government has repeatedly passed new legislation to adapt to changing circumstances, particularly public health risks and the pandemic's negative economic impact. In the period under review, the government resorted to governing by decree to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

Regardless of the pandemic, a law passed in July 2019 helped reorganize the top echelons of the government and monitor all central public services with the intention of bolstering the rule of law across public administration. For example, in contrast with the pre-2020 period, ministries are now obliged to schedule the drafting of any new legislation in advance and publish every December their legislative plans for the year to come. The law established a Westminster-style, centralized body (the General Secretariat of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs) to be the "gatekeeper" for quality regulatory, parliamentary and legislative drafts, as well as two intra-governmental committees, the Committee of Scrutiny of Legislative Process (tasked with ensuring the regulatory quality of new bills) and the Committee for Codification (tasked with scrutinizing existing legislation).

Nevertheless, the practice of frequently amending recently passed legislation has continued. Given the overproduction of regulations, the legal framework in major policy sectors, such as regulations governing taxation and pensions, still suffer from loopholes and contradictions that negatively impact on legal certainty.

Citation:

The law passed in July 2019 to reorganize the central public administration and the planning and implementation of laws is L. 4622/2019

International Association for Legislation, Innovative Drafting Strategy and Manuals in Greece, 15 May 2020 (<https://ial-online.org/innovative-drafting-strategy-and-manuals-in-greece/>)

Judicial Review  
Score: 8

Courts are independent of the government and the legislature. Members of the judiciary are promoted through the internal hierarchy of the judiciary. An exception to this is the appointment of the most senior judges and prosecutors. The body of judges and a higher organ of the parliament are consulted on the

appointment of the most senior judges and prosecutors, although eventually the government decides. Successive governments have not resisted the temptation to handpick their favored candidates for the president posts of the highest courts. Nevertheless, according to the Greek constitution, judges at all levels serve until retirement age and cannot be removed arbitrarily.

Judges are recruited through independent entrance examinations and then trained in a post-graduate level educational institution. The court system is self-managed. However, there is a dire need to restructure the courts, which are spread all over the country, meaning that resources are thinly distributed. Moreover, to this day, there is no code of conduct for judges. In a formal sense, courts in Greece are able to monitor whether government and administration act in conformity with the law.

Whether courts do so efficiently is another matter, because they cannot ensure legal compliance. They act with delays and pass contradictory judgments, owing to the plethora of laws and opaque character of regulations. Periodically, there is a tug-of-war between the government and the justice system, rendering judicial review a sensitive and unpredictable process. For instance, it is not uncommon for courts to overturn clauses of pension legislation, judging them to be unconstitutional and thus upsetting the government's drive to contain public pension costs.

Overall, in 2020–2021, the capacity of courts to control whether the government and administration acted in conformity with the law was strengthened. The appointment of senior judges and prosecutors was less biased than in previous periods. There was also some progress made in making courts more efficient, as a new law on the management of the clerical staff of courts was passed in 2021, while there were some improvements in the electronic coding of cases in criminal proceedings and the electronic filing of cases in administrative courts.

Citation:

Articles 87-91 of the Greek constitution provide for the independence of judges and articles 93-100 for the independent organization of courts.

Information on the extent and quality of judicial review is available at the European Commission's latest (2021) report on Rule of Law in Greece, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0709>

Appointment of  
Justices  
Score: 7

Before the onset of the crisis, the appointment of justices was almost exclusively managed by the government. Today, candidates for the presidency of the highest civil and criminal law court (Areios Pagos), administrative law court (Symvoulío tis Epikrateias), the audit office, as well as senior prosecutors are nominated by justices themselves. Then the lists of candidates

are submitted to a higher-ranking organ of the parliament, the Conference of the Presidents of the Greek parliament. This is an all-party institution which submits an opinion to the Cabinet of Ministers, the institution which appoints senior justices (listed above). This arrangement has been criticized by international observers (the European Commission and the Council of Europe) for allowing the government to limit the judiciary's independence.

In the past, the government used to apply the seniority principle, rather than political criteria, in selecting justices to serve at the highest echelons of the justice system. However, in 2015–2019, the appointment of judges became more politicized, provoking tensions among judges. After that period, although the government retained the competence to appoint the most senior judges and prosecutors, calmness was more or less restored, as the justices selected for the highest posts were overall respected by their colleagues.

Citation:

Law 2841/2010 stipulates that the appointment of presidents and vice-presidents of the highest courts requires the non-binding opinion of the high-ranking parliamentary committee titled Conference of the Presidents of the Greek parliament.

The European Commission's view is available in the latest Rule of Law report for Greece(2021), available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0709>

Corruption  
Prevention  
Score: 6

In 2020, Greece ranked 59th among countries surveyed by Transparency International and scored 50 out of 100 on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). In terms of perceptions of corruption, progress has been made since the beginning of the economic crisis commensurate to legal and organizational improvements in anti-corruption.

Above all, amendments to the constitution in 2019, which entered into force in 2020, substantially reduced the leniency of anti-corruption provisions for high-level corruption. The statutory limit for criminal investigations into members of parliament and government ministers was extended, reducing their immunity.

While improvements have been made to the functioning of integrity mechanisms over time, organizational instability has plagued such mechanisms. Particularly during 2012–2018, new integrity mechanisms were periodically established and abolished. Between 2015 and 2018, these mechanisms became extremely politicized, as anti-corruption policies were exclusively aimed against opposition politicians.

Thereafter, the organizational landscape of integrity mechanisms was stabilized with the establishment of the National Transparency Authority in 2019, and the merger of the Office of the Economic Crime Prosecutor and the

Anti-Corruption Prosecutors in 2020. The National Anti-Corruption Plan was updated in 2020 and a new one for 2022–2025 is being prepared. Numerous integrity mechanisms, such as corps of inspectors, were subsumed under the National Transparency Authority.

While the National Transparency Authority grew in 2020–2021 in terms of available personnel and resources, in other integrity mechanisms (e.g., offices of prosecutors), there was a lack of administrative staff, skilled staff to monitor cases of sophisticated financial crimes, appropriate digital tools and a system of case management.

Generally, in the period under review, some progress was made in strengthening the regulatory framework and preserving integrity. Constitutional impediments to tackling high-level corruption were lifted. Greece's integrity mechanisms were better organized than in the past, but still lacked sufficient resources to accomplish their tasks.

Citation:

For the ranking of Greece by Transparency International in 2020, see <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/grc>

Article 86 of the constitution of Greece was amended in 2019 to improve on integrity mechanisms.

For the European Commission's assessment of anti-corruption policies, see the latest (2021) EC report on Rule of Law in Greece, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021SC0709>

# Good Governance

## I. Executive Capacity

### Strategic Capacity

Strategic  
Planning  
Score: 6

Strategic planning has long proved difficult for the central government in Athens thanks in large part to the archipelago-like character of governance involving conflicting political interests, clientelism and a highly formalistic administrative culture that fosters segmentation. Weak horizontal coordination within and among ministries, government agencies and state-owned companies used to make matters worse.

Strategic planning took precedence after the change of government in 2019. The new government passed a new law aiming to reorganize the government and the upper echelons of the central public administration. The law strengthened the core of the government by reorganizing the Prime Minister's Office, which became the Presidency of Government. The reorganized prime minister's office included strategic planning and programming units. It also assumed new tasks such as coordination of government policy across ministries and annual legislative planning. That office works side by side with two government ministers without portfolio, which assist the prime minister with supervising the daily functioning of government and long-term policy cycles. Compared to the past, in 2020–2021, strategic planning has vastly improved.

Citation:

The new law on strategic planning was 4622/2019.

The website of the Greek prime minister is <https://primeminister.gr/en/home>

Expert Advice  
Score: 7

Following the change in government in 2019 and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, non-governmental expertise was upgraded in the early stages of decision-making. For instance, in 2020, a committee of economists under the Greek-Cypriot Nobel prize winner in economics C. Pissarides devised the Plan for the Development of the Greek Economy, which included

economic policy recommendations. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government convened two expert committees, the Committee of Epidemiologists and the National Committee on Vaccinations, and continuously consulted with them in the period under review. This development was a vast improvement over past practices.

In the past, most of the ad hoc committees, staffed by academic experts, were formed by ministers for their own sake, not by the prime minister. Qualified academics often served as experts within ministries, where they also acted as administrative elites in Greece's highly politicized civil service.

Moreover, in the period under review, the New Democracy government attracted a comparatively large number of qualified experts in a variety of policymaking sectors. Some of these individuals had acquired their expertise and job experience in the private sector, while others had worked in Greek and foreign universities. Previous connections to New Democracy proved largely irrelevant to the hiring decisions. This was an improvement over the past, when experts had often been recruited primarily on the grounds of their loyalty to the governing party.

Citation:

The "Pissarides Plan" is available in Greek at: <https://government.gov.gr/schedio-anaptixis-gia-tin-elliniki-ikonomia/>

### Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise  
Score: 7

The center of government has traditionally struggled to coordinate and evaluate government legislation. However, following the change in government in July 2019, there has been a visible improvement. New Democracy, which won the national elections, rose to power with a concrete plan of reorganizing decision-making and passing legislation in a less haphazard manner than was the case with preceding governments. Government priorities were clearly laid out in 2020–2021 and interministerial coordination processes were streamlined. Through legislation adopted immediately after the elections, the Prime Minister's Office was upgraded to the Presidency of the Government, and started playing a vital, overarching role in monitoring targets and evaluating the effectiveness of ministries.

In 2020–2021, the cabinet met regularly to discuss and decide on draft bills, the content of which had previously been evaluated by the Presidency of the Government in conjunction with the competent ministry. Despite all these changes, government ministers occasionally submitted last-minute amendments to laws as they moved through parliament. Overall, however,

compared to the pre-2019 period, there has been a visible improvement in the evaluation of policy content according to the government's priorities.

Citation:

Law 4622/2019, adopted in July 2019, promoted interministerial coordination.

#### Line Ministries

Score: 8

Since the onset of the crisis in 2010, the Prime Minister's Office has gradually acquired more power and resources to supervise line ministries, the policies of which were streamlined in the previous decade to fit the fiscal consolidation effort of Greece. After the change in government in July 2019, ties between line ministries and the Prime Minister's Office (the Presidency of Government) were further strengthened, as the latter was reorganized and staffed with highly skilled policy experts. In addition, legislation adopted in the same month provided for the installation of a new directorate of coordination in each ministry, responsible for liaising with the Presidency of the Government and other ministries. In brief, in the period under review, the inter-related capacities of the center of government and line ministries vastly improved.

Citation:

Kevin Featherstone and Dimitris Papadimitriou (2013), "The Emperor Has No Clothes! Power and Resources within the Greek Core Executive," *Governance*, Vol. 26, Issue 3, pp. 523-545.

The law establishing the new "Directorates of Coordination" in each Ministry is Law 4622/2019.

#### Cabinet

##### Committees

Score: 6

There are cabinet committees tasked with overseeing specific policy sectors. However, before 2019, with few exceptions, cabinet committees did not engage in systematic coordination over cabinet proposals. Since the change in government in July 2019, there has been a rejuvenation in cabinet committees and visible progress has been achieved in this field.

There are two permanent such councils, the Government Council on National Security (KYSEA) and the Government Council on Economic Policy (KYSOIP). The law provides also for the formation of ad hoc interministerial committees. Proposals of strategic or political importance are first reviewed in such committees, before then being submitted to the cabinet for government approval.

The law reorganizing government committees is Law 4622/2019.

#### Ministerial

##### Bureaucracy

Score: 6

Greek bureaucracy is politicized and under-resourced, as political party cadres rather than civil servants coordinate policy proposals. Civil servants in line ministries often lack modern scientific and management skills. Policy proposals are usually assigned to ministerial advisers, who are short-term political appointees and can be non-academic experts, academics and



governing party cadres. Top civil servants contribute to policy proposals by suggesting what is legally permissible and technically feasible, although even on those issues ministers often tend to trust their own legal and technical advisers. The remaining civil servants at lower levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy rarely, if ever, know of, let alone contribute to policy proposals.

However, in the period under review, there were serious steps toward depoliticizing the civil service. The meritocratic selection of senior civil servants in particular was finally improved after the change in government in July 2019. The new government proceeded to fill the director general posts by following regulations provided by law regarding the selection of better educated and more experienced (civil servant) candidates. Political influences over selection procedures were not completely absent, but compared to the past there was much less politicization.

The government also passed legislation depoliticizing high-ranking ministerial positions. It created in every ministry the post of service secretary, which is reserved for senior civil servants, who are selected by a non-politicized committee of the Higher Council for the Selection of Civil Service Personnel (the ASEP). The post of service secretary was established to isolate the management of routine ministry work and the management of human resources of ministries from government interference. The new post was placed on the side of the post of general secretary, which is normally occupied by a political appointee, responsible for seeing through the implementation of government policy. In 2021, new legislation reorganized some of the procedures of the ASEP and streamlined the recruitment of new public sector employees.

The new law on higher civil service is Law 4622/2019 while the new law regulating recruitment of new public employees is Law 4765/2021.

Informal  
Coordination  
Score: 9

After the change in government in 2019, coordination mechanisms were formalized much more than in the past. The center of the government (i.e., the Presidency of Government and the directorates of coordination, established in each government ministry in 2019) left little space for informal coordination among ministries. Nevertheless, particularly in periods of crisis (e.g., the pandemic of 2020–2021 and the wildfires of 2021), informal coordination has been undertaken by the deputy prime minister, one additional minister and one junior minister without portfolio, who were appointed to serve directly under the prime minister and tasked with steering the government mechanism.

Digitalization for  
Interministerial  
Coordination  
Score: 7

Since the change in government in 2019, there has been a vast improvement in the use of digital technologies in government. The Prime Minister's Office in Greece (the Presidency of Government) started using modern information and communication technologies to monitor government mechanisms much more

than in the past. The Special Secretariat of Integrated Information Systems was established within that office, and is tasked with digitizing the coordination and evaluation of government work.

The Presidency of Government was aided by the new Ministry of Digital Governance, also established after the change in government. The new ministry spread the use of digital technologies across the government. The ministry aims to achieve interoperability between state records systems, enabling different agencies to “talk” to each other and share information. The lockdown and movement restriction measures taken in 2020–2021 vastly limited face-to-face interactions among civil servants from different ministries. In brief, the management of the COVID-19 pandemic gave further impetus to digital interministerial coordination.

Moreover, there is policy coordination with regard to the implementation of a few transversal policies, such as public procurement. The latter is now managed by a national system of public procurement (EAADHSY). This system functions through an appropriately developed digital platform for tenders, and applications from suppliers of goods and services interested in serving the public sector.

Citation:

The new “Special Secretariat of Integrated Information Systems” was established by Law 4622/2019. Its place in the government is shown at official website <https://primeminister.gr/primeminister/proedria-tis-kivernisis>

The digital platform for public procurement, covering all ministries and agencies of the public sector, is available at <http://www.eaadhsy.gr/>

The website of the Ministry of Digital Governance is available at <https://mindigital.gr/>

### Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application  
Score: 7

In 2019, the new government passed legislation (Law 4622/2019) on RIAs, which had been formally introduced as a routine in 2006 but never actually implemented. The same law established a new unit, the Better Regulation Office, subsumed under the Prime Minister’s Office (the Presidency of the Government), tasked with overseeing the RIA process. Since October 2020, no bill of law is to be submitted to parliament, unless accompanied by an RIA.

In the past, all legislative drafts submitted to the parliament were accompanied by a document that outlined the rationale for the bill. Today, the RIA for each legislative draft is conducted on a basis of common methodology following international standards. RIAs are not limited to legal issues (e.g., legal conflicts), but also include social and economic aspects of the new legislation

under preparation. The General Accounting Office estimates the cost of the bill of law for the state budget, if the competent minister provides the office with adequate data (which may not be always possible).

In brief, as recognized by the OECD, in 2020–2021, RIA processes in Greece were vastly improved. In the future, RIAs could be improved through insisting on better societal engagement in assessing the impact of legislation. In addition, RIAs could be applied to secondary legislation or at least to the most critical presidential decrees prepared and issued by the competent minister preparing the decree.

Citation:

OECD, Regulatory Policy Outlook 2021 (<https://www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-regulatory-policy-outlook-2021-38b0fdb1-en.htm>)

Quality of RIA  
Process  
Score: 5

RIAs were not implemented in Greece before the change of government in 2019 and the adoption of new legislation.

Since October 2020, all bills of law submitted to parliament must be accompanied by an RIA. Before a bill of law is submitted to parliament, it is uploaded on the competent ministry's website to enable stakeholders to submit comments and criticisms. It is then revised by the ministry's staff, taking into account – to a variable degree – suggestions for amendments. After that stage, the bill of law is submitted to parliament to be debated in the competent parliamentary committee, before the parliament's plenum is convened to vote on the bill of law. The RIA documents accompanying the bill of law are available to members of parliament and to the public (although the public's interest in details of legislative work is very limited).

This process, which was followed in the period under review, represents a vast improvement over the complete neglect of RIAs in the past, even though the quality of RIAs could be improved.

Citation:

Law 4622/2019 organized the RIA framework.

Sustainability  
Check  
Score: 4

The new legislation on RIAs, passed in 2019, requires that the RIA for every bill submitted to parliament includes statistical, economic, environmental and town planning data. It is expected that the law's impact is checked against such data. However, the law does not specifically mention 17 SDGs nor does it require that RIAs are aligned with the SDGs.

Citation:

Law 4622/2019 article 62 para. 3 requires that the RIA includes detailed data.

Quality of Ex  
Post Evaluation  
Score: 4

Ex post evaluation is a brand-new concept in Greece's regulatory process. It was only legislated as late as 2019, after the change in government in 2019. It is now a requirement that laws are evaluated five years after their adoption. It is too early for ex post evaluation to be implemented, but the new legal provision represents a vast improvement in policymaking compared to the past.

Citation:

Law 4622/2019 art. 56 introduced ex post evaluation of regulations.

### Societal Consultation

Public  
Consultation  
Score: 4

There is some consultation with societal actors, but – during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic – consultation has been limited. Interested citizens can and do participate in the process of open electronic public consultation on new government measures, which each ministry must announce and manage before drafting a bill. Representatives of interest groups and scientific associations are regularly invited to express their views in sessions of parliamentary committees in which bills of law are debated. Moreover, there is a strong tradition of organized interest groups (e.g., public sector unions, associations and liberal professions) voicing opinions on policy matters through social protest (street protests, strikes). To a smaller degree, citizens also rely on NGOs and local social movements for information and for making claims on policy issues.

In the period under review, government decisions on economic and healthcare policy relied less on societal consultation and more on consultation with economic and health experts. The latter formulated measures to prevent the spread of the disease, and alleviate the economic hardship of citizens and businesses that saw their revenues plummet owing to movement restrictions and the closing of economic activities.

### Policy Communication

Coherent  
Communication  
Score: 5

After the change in government in 2019, the prime minister, the government's spokesperson and the minister of finance, along with other ministers, regularly conveyed messages which were in line with the government's strategy in different policy sectors. Compared to the past, strategic communication and planning improved in 2020–2021.

Instances of government ministers communicating contradictory messages were rare. Furthermore, the government made use of the Presidency of the Government (i.e., the reorganized Prime Minister's Office). Established in

July 2019, the Presidency of the Government includes, among other units, the General Secretariat for Communication and Information.

There are designated government officials to communicate the government's strategy. The government's spokesperson regularly meets with and informs the press. The general secretary of government coordination periodically makes public announcements, clarifying the position of the government. Moreover, during critical moments, the prime minister addresses the Greek people via live TV broadcasts. For example, the prime minister delivered such an address when the government imposed a lockdown in March 2020 to prevent COVID-19 from spreading through the country.

Following the turbulent 2015–2019 period, in which political communication was as polarized and unpredictable as the political scene itself, government communication has become much more coherent. A central theme of the post-2019 communication strategy has been “normality,” with the New Democracy government implying that it was time for Greece to become a typical, normal EU-like market economy and parliamentary democracy. This has evidently been a successful strategy, as New Democracy's popularity has remained high since it won the parliamentary elections of 2019. In 2020–2021, New Democracy's approval ratings were consistently higher than the approval ratings of its main competitor, Syriza.

### Implementation

Government  
Effectiveness  
Score: 6

Significant structural reforms were legislated by successive Greek governments in the decade to 2021, but their mix and implementation were and continue to be uneven. Policy implementation efforts have been problematic because of bureaucratic and legal wranglings. For instance, long-awaited reforms in higher education and the pension system were legislated, but not really implemented.

Nevertheless, in 2020–2021, progress was made. The World Bank Government Effectiveness indicator – which measures, among other things, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies – recorded a rise from 0.29 in 2018 to 0.44 in 2020.

Some flagship investment projects, such as the Hellinikon project, moved forward. The government was successful in striking a deal with private investors for the development of the decommissioned Hellinikon airport, on the coast just outside Athens. After long delays in the pre-2019 period, the €8 billion project started at the end of 2021. It will combine public parks,

beachfront residences, and high-end shopping and office spaces in a vast area. If successful, the project could create as many as 75,000 jobs and increase the country's GDP by four percentage points. The beginning of implementation of Greece's biggest development project is an indication of improved government effectiveness in the period under review.

Citation:

World Bank, Government Effectiveness available at [https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h580f9aa5?country=GRC&indicator=388&viz=line\\_chart&years=1996,2020](https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h580f9aa5?country=GRC&indicator=388&viz=line_chart&years=1996,2020)

Information on the Hellinikon project is available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-05-09/athens-hellinikon-project-hinges-on-buyers-from-abroad> and also at the official site of the project: <https://thehellinikon.com.gr/en/about/>

Ministerial  
Compliance  
Score: 7

After the change in government in July 2019, the New Democracy government introduced strong mechanisms to encourage ministers to implement the government's program. This included appointing two ministers without portfolio to assist the prime minister; establishing the well-resourced Presidency of Government, which includes units responsible for overseeing policy implementation in ministries; equipping the Presidency of Government with the digital infrastructure to monitor government work through integrated information systems; and scheduling regular cabinet meetings. In 2020–2021, a handful of mechanisms made sure that the implementation gap would not be as wide as it used to be during the period of economic crisis or in earlier periods.

Monitoring  
Ministries  
Score: 8

The lax monitoring of line ministries by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), a characteristic of previous review periods, has largely been addressed. On the one hand, throughout the economic crisis, the PMO monitored the implementation of most line ministries' activities to avoid any further deterioration in public finances, owing to uncontrolled government expenditure. On the other hand, after the change in government in 2019, the center of government, now titled the Presidency of Government, tightened procedures for monitoring line ministries' implementation activities, introducing a "new governance model." The model was crystallized in the legal stipulations adopted in July 2019, which enhanced the mechanisms supporting the prime minister by establishing new units and procedures at the Presidency of Government. The model entails close coordination of policy measures prepared in ministries, and follow-up of the cabinet's and the prime minister's decisions.

Citation:

The law establishing the new governance model is Law 4622/2019.

Monitoring  
Agencies,  
Bureaucracies  
Score: 8

In Greece, most ministries supervise dozens of executive agencies. For instance, the Ministry of Transport supervises the state-owned public transport companies in Athens and Thessaloniki, the Ministry of Health supervises all public hospitals, and the Ministry of Finance supervises numerous state-owned enterprises. During the period under review, the government continued to closely monitor the executive agencies. There were adequate reasons for such close monitoring. Memories of state agencies contributing to the deterioration in public finances in previous periods remain fresh. Moreover, the monitoring of public health, public employment and social welfare agencies was critical in 2020–2021, as COVID-19 spread through the country, and agencies had to toe the government line in order to manage the corresponding public health and social crisis.

Task Funding  
Score: 3

Traditionally, in Greece, subnational governments raise limited funding independently and remain under the tutelage of the central government as far as funding is concerned. The revenue of subnational governments primarily comes from the state budget. In the past, the central government would sometimes deliberately shift unfunded mandates to subnational governments, but this practice was curtailed during the economic crisis of 2010–2018. Since the change in government in 2019, the New Democracy government has prioritized stimulating economic growth primarily through incentives to private investors rather than through subnational governments or other state entities. A policy shift to recalibrate the distribution of funding between the central and subnational governments is not in sight.

Constitutional  
Discretion  
Score: 2

Subnational authorities have limited scope of discretion in Greece. While the autonomy of subnational self-governments is nominally guaranteed by the constitution – which requires that the government provides them with all legislative, regulatory and financial means to accomplish their tasks – in practice, subnational self-governments have few financial means at their disposal. Between the economic crisis of the previous decade and the period under review, successive governments have narrowed the scope of fiscal discretion available to subnational self-governments, because – given the large size of Greece’s public debt – state finances are at risk of collapsing.

Citation:

Article 102 of the constitution provides for the autonomy of subnational governments.

OECD, Regional Policy for Greece Post-2020 (especially Ch. 4) available at [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/regional-policy-for-greece-post-2020\\_cedf09a5-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/regional-policy-for-greece-post-2020_cedf09a5-en)

National  
Standards  
Score: 4

In the period under review, there was some improvement in the implementation of national standards. It was realized that failing to implement such standards risks another fiscal derailment, similar to that which led to the 2010–2018 economic crisis. Today, the government ensures more than it did during the crisis period that subnational self-governments realize national

Effective  
Regulatory  
Enforcement  
Score: 4

standards. Such self-governments are heavily dependent on the central government for their funding, and thus they are under the surveillance of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance.

In Greece, it is difficult to argue that enforcement of regulations is effective. In the past, Greek governments used to employ pro-government individuals rather than skilled managers to head government agencies. This pattern dampened efficient and unbiased enforcement. Since the change in government in 2019, skilled professionals or experts rather than political party officials have been appointed to government agencies. In important cases, such as the state-run Public Power Corporation (DEI), the appointment of skilled managers has led to better results following a period of tremendous financial losses.

On the other hand, in various sectors (e.g., commercial shipping, mass media and construction), there have always been resourceful interest groups and influential businessmen. Governments have been and remain unwilling or unable to deal with them. The establishment of the National Transparency Authority (the EAD) in 2019 was a step forward in the enforcement of regulations. However, generally in government agencies, there are long backlogs of cases, as with EFKA, the social security agency responsible for awarding public pensions.

### Adaptability

Domestic  
Adaptability  
Score: 6

After Greece exited the third Economic Adjustment Program (2015–2018) in August 2018, it remained under an enhanced European Commission surveillance system. Surveillance reports on Greece are issued every three months, with the latest one issued in November 2021. During the period under review, the government adapted its domestic structures to international and supranational developments.

Following the change in government in 2019, the Prime Minister's Office was renamed the Presidency of Government. It acquired more authority to steer government and public administration in a post-crisis path toward economic development. New administrative units and additional skilled staff were assigned to the Presidency of Government.

After the COVID-19 crisis hit, the government put together two expert committees, consisting of epidemiologists and medical school professors, one on monitoring the evolution of the pandemic and the other on vaccinations. The government consulted with the committees before announcing public health measures.



On the other hand, there was inertia on the part of the government with regard to international trends, such as attaining the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). After the Prime Minister's Office had issued the first National Voluntary Report for Greece on the SDGs in 2018, there was no structural adaptation in any government unit to follow-up on sustainable development in 2020–2021.

To sum up, in the period under review, government structures have adapted to manage issues from previous crises (the euro zone crisis) or new crises (the COVID-19 pandemic), while there was structural inertia regarding longer-term targets (sustainable development).

Citation:

Greece first "National Voluntary Report" on the 17 SDGs is available at [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19378Greece\\_VNR\\_Greece\\_2018\\_pdf\\_FINAL\\_140618.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19378Greece_VNR_Greece_2018_pdf_FINAL_140618.pdf)

International  
Coordination  
Score: 5

As a euro area member, and participant in EU summits and ministerial meetings, Greece has engaged in international efforts to foster the provision of public goods.

For instance, Greece has actively participated in international forums on environmental and cultural issues; it has also been vocal at the European level in pressuring for a coordinated response to migration challenges, emphasizing that migration from the developing world into Europe is not solely a Greek problem arising from its geographical position between Europe and Asia.

Moreover, in contrast to the pre-2019 period, Greece has been more active in EU forums. For instance, in January 2021, the Greek government officially submitted a proposal to EU authorities to establish a EU-wide vaccination certificate for people vaccinated against COVID-19.

In May 2021, Greece submitted a candidacy for non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2025-6).

Over time, however, Greece has been unable to develop institutional capacities for fostering the provision of global public goods beyond its role as an EU member state.

Citation:

Greece's official proposal for a EU-wide vaccination certificate is available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2021/01/12/25597>

### Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring  
Score: 8

During the period under review, the monitoring of institutional governance arrangements was improved. In the past, monitoring was inefficient as it was often delegated to governing party officials with little administrative experience. After the change in government in 2019, the new government reorganized governance structures and appointed highly skilled experts with job experience in the private sector to various management posts across the public sector. All governance monitoring was executed from the top, namely by the Prime Minister's Office (recently renamed, the Presidency of the Government). In 2020–2021, the prime minister was aided by the skilled staff of that office and by two government ministers without a portfolio, as well as technocrats responsible for monitoring institutional arrangements.

Institutional  
Reform  
Score: 7

After the elections of July 2019, the new government devised plans to reform central-government institutions in a variety of policy sectors. Emphasizing the need to improve the long-term planning, programming and monitoring of public policies, the new government passed and implemented legislation that reorganized the Prime Minister's Office (the PMO). The new PMO was renamed as the Presidency of the Government in a new law adopted in 2019. Thereafter, the Presidency of the Government designed procedures to strengthen the state's strategic capacity, which were quickly rolled out across different policy sectors. These included, for example, a long-term strategy for the digitalization of public services traditionally provided in person and on-site. The government also developed a long-term strategy designed to promote economic development, after the European Union launched the Recovery and Resilience Fund. The government devised the Recovery and Resilience Plan, which the European Commission approved in 2021. It also developed a strategy to manage migration inflows and to facilitate the transfer of migrants from overcrowded islands in the Aegean Sea to the Greek mainland. Finally, the government established the new National Security Council and the new National Authority on Transparency. Overall, strategic capacity that draws on scientific knowledge and long-term planning has vastly improved.

Citation:

The law reorganizing the Prime Minister's Office was Law 4622/2019

## II. Executive Accountability

### Citizens' Participatory Competence

Political  
Knowledge  
Score: 5

Citizens do not really obtain enough information on government policymaking, as the media is strongly partisan or leans toward infotainment, while individual members of parliament rarely discuss substantive policy issues with voters in the electoral districts which they represent. Moreover, the quality of information disseminated through social media has also been tarnished by extreme polarization. The cleavage between supporters and opponents of reforms during the economic crisis of the 2010s was coupled by the cleavage between Greece's pro-vaccination majority and anti-vaccination minority in 2020–2021. Such overlapping cleavages have reduced trust in information sources, including government ones. Thus, there was an inability for citizens to participate in meaningful ways in policy debates on the basis of trusted and shared data.

Citizens are not interested so much in government policymaking per se, as in relations of exchange with the state. While citizens' identification with political parties has declined over time, there is still a tradition of turning to government ministers or members of parliament to obtain favors on an individual basis. However, old-fashioned political clientelism may have been curbed. Fiscal consolidation, which was implemented in 2010–2020 to prevent Greece defaulting on sovereign debt, has reduced the propensity among successive governments to increase public employment or to make social transfers based on clientelistic and politicized criteria.

Most citizens are not well-informed about government policies. In this context, political participation in decision-making has not improved.

Citation:

The open-government consultation site is available at [www.opengov.gr](http://www.opengov.gr).

Open  
Government  
Score: 7

Before the onset of the Greek economic crisis, there was a problem with reporting statistical and other data regarding government revenue and expenses as well as regarding personnel in the Greek public sector.

The situation has exceptionally improved since then. Barring data on defense and security, which are considered classified, all data produced by the revamped official statistical authority of Greece (Helstat) is accessible. This

data is compiled and published according to Eurostat's requirements. Reliable data is also available on public employment, including type of work contract and other information, via a separate website maintained by the Ministry of Administrative Reconstruction (Apografi). Moreover, since 2010, thanks to a law on the issue of transparency, all administrative acts issued by the central, regional and local authorities and other public bodies (the so-called Diavgeia system) have been available online. Though this system is not very user-friendly, accessing the data is possible.

The government that took power in July 2019 established the Ministry of Digital Governance and also founded the new Independent Authority on Transparency (the EAD). In 2020–2021, the new ministry proceeded to digitalize many services offered to citizens and businesses on internet platforms. Particularly during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of data made available to the public through digital sources increased. Furthermore, before any bill of law is submitted to parliament, there is a two-week period during which the text of the bill is uploaded onto the website of the competent ministry for citizens to comment on it. That requirement was not always fulfilled before 2019. However, the same government passed new legislation in August 2019 (Law 4624/2019) that expanded the range of restrictions to access official information beyond the restrictions already provided by the European Union's relevant regulation (the GDPR). Nevertheless, overall, all the above measures have over time increased the capacity of citizens to hold the government to account. For instance, nowadays, it is possible for citizens to find out the names of anyone newly appointed to a government or administrative body, as well as details on appointments and on any item of government expenditure.

Citation:

The three platforms, cited in the above response, through which one can access data and information are the following:

<http://www.statistics.gr/en/home/>

<http://apografi.gov.gr/> and

<https://diavgeia.gov.gr/>

### Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary  
Resources  
Score: 7

Members of the Greek parliament are granted full access to the well-resourced library of the parliament. They are also entitled to hire up to two research advisers who are paid out of the parliament's budget, and three other assistants who may be transferred from any ministry or state agency to the parliament. However, many members of parliament hire family members or friends who in effect do administrative and secretarial work rather than conducting research. This practice was continued in the period under review. Nevertheless, each

party represented in parliament has its own research support group that is funded by the state budget.

Nowadays, updated academic advice is available also through three other institutions. The first is the Office of the Budget, a policy-oriented committee of university professors with economic expertise who work independently of the government. They have published policy reports on the prospects of the Greek economy which diverge from official government predictions. The second is the Scientific Council of the Parliament, essentially a body of constitutional and administrative law experts. The parliament's speaker may refer a bill of law to the scientific council and consult the council on constitutional matters. The council's opinions, however, are not binding. There is also the more academically oriented Foundation of the Parliament, which focuses on historical issues and constitutional matters.

Parliamentary committees are also quite active in organizing hearings and in discussing a variety of issues. However, the parliament lacks a research unit (e.g., the U.S. Library of Congress's Congressional Research Service or the UK House of Commons Library's Research Service) that could provide members of parliament with expert opinions on non-legal issues.

Citation:

The competences of the "Scientific Council of the Parliament" are cited in the official site of the parliament: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Dioikitiki-Organosi/Ypiresies/Epistimoniki-Ypiresia/Epistimoniko-Symvoulia>

Obtaining  
Documents  
Score: 10

Members of parliament may request the supply of government documents and frequently exercise this right. Documents are normally delivered in full, within one month, from the competent ministry to the parliament. Restrictions apply to documents containing sensitive information on diplomatic, military or national security issues, but even in such cases a competent committee can inspect some classified documents in closed-door sessions. Overall, members of parliament are usually very demanding regarding information and they press authorities to obtain it, and government ministers do not refrain from supplying such information.

Citation:

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

Summoning  
Ministers  
Score: 9

Ministers are regularly summoned to committees but they are obliged to appear in front of a committee only if two-fifths of the committee members require them to do so. There are a few restrictions with regard to information given to the committees by the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The former may restrict his or her comments only to

armaments supplies, while the latter is not obliged to give information on any ongoing negotiations or talks in which Greece still participates.

Owing to tensions with neighboring countries, ministers are frequently summoned to parliament and engage in intense debates with the opposition. As might be expected in a polarized party system, debates sometimes create a spectacle rather than providing a setting for the exchange rational arguments (especially when they are televised). Sometimes ministers send alternate ministers or deputy ministers to attend parliamentary committee meetings in their place.

Citation:

The summoning of ministers is regulated by article 41A of the Standing Orders of the Greek parliament.

Summoning  
Experts  
Score: 10

Regular committees summon experts from ministries, universities, NGOs and professional associations. Examples include high-ranking EC officials who have briefed the European Affairs Committee and university professors who have briefed the Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs on university reforms.

Typically, government and the opposition tend to disagree on everything, even if there is consensus among experts that policy choices are very limited (e.g., the consensus on the obvious unsustainability of the pension system and on the destructive impact of party-led politicization on Greek universities). Political parties may tend to summon experts who in turn support the view of the party that has invited them. Recurrent disagreement in parliamentary committees reflects the long-term polarization in the Greek party system, as well as the broader mistrust and relatively low social capital that characterizes Greek society. In the period under review, parliamentary committees summoned many different experts, including technocrats and academics. In fact, over time there has been increasing interaction between parliamentary committees and experts from many different academic fields and professions.

Citation:

Summoning experts to regular committees is regulated by article 38 of the Standing Orders of the Greek parliament.

Task Area  
Congruence  
Score: 6

After the change in government in July 2019, the number of ministries remained 19 (the same as in the pre-2019 period). The number of parliamentary committees also remained the same, with six standing committees. This discrepancy (19 ministries versus six committees) created a task mismatch, but parliamentary scrutiny was jointly carried out in selected committees.

For instance, there is the Standing Committee on Cultural and Educational Affairs, and the Standing Committee on National Defense and Foreign Affairs. However, there are also four special standing committees (e.g., on European affairs) and eight special permanent committees (e.g., on armament programs and contracts) with more specific agendas, as well as several subcommittees.

The task of monitoring ministries is undermined by the sometimes decorative participation of members of parliament in committee meetings. Even though competences have been transferred from the plenary of the Greek parliament to the regular committees (which examine new legislation), this has not considerably improved the quality of legislation or of parliamentary control.

Citation:

Information on the number, competences and tasks of regular committees of the Greek parliament in English is available at <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr>

Information on Committees of the Greek parliament is available here: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Koinovouleftikes-Epitropes/Katigories>

## Media

Media Reporting  
Score: 5

While Greece ranks among the middle tier of OECD countries for newspaper circulation and quality newspapers, this outcome is linked more to long-term partisanship in the media landscape rather than to authoritarian government interventions in mass media, which is not observed in the country.

State media used to be openly pro-government in the previous decade, but state TV and radio channels adopted a more measured, if not balanced, tone in 2020 and 2021. In other words, compared to the past, the performance of state media has improved.

Private media is free, but large political parties periodically come to an understanding with private media owners so that selected party views or versions of events are broadcasted in a biased manner.

Nevertheless, there are at least four large Athens-based newspapers which regularly analyze public policies and their impact from different political standpoints (i.e., the center-right “He Kathimerini,” center-left “To Vima” and “Ta Nea,” and radical-left “Efimerida ton Syntakton”). Compared to the previous decade, when political polarization negatively impacted on the quality of printed media, the media landscape has consolidated, while – depending on newspaper contributors – the quality of analysis may be good.

The quality of information and analysis of private TV news programs is not as high, however. Most of privately owned TV and radio channels have

popularized infotainment, while marginalizing professional and in-depth reporting.

To sum up, political debates in the electronic media tend to be rather general, along partisan lines, while in-depth analysis is available, but rare. The presentation of issues is more sentimental and partisan (pro- or anti-government) than objective. Most people inform themselves through television programs or various news websites. Particularly younger citizens increasingly rely on unreliable sources of social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) for news and opinions. Indeed, in 2020 and 2021, despite the positive role of print and electronic mass media in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, there was widespread misinformation, diffused through social media, which has negatively impacted on the behavior of citizens during lockdowns and has held the rate of COVID-19 vaccinations back.

### Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party  
Decision-Making  
Score: 6

All major political parties (i.e., New Democracy, Syriza and Pasok, which enjoy the largest representation in parliament) continue to suffer (to varying degrees) from intense factionalism, but – compared to the past – have become more open with regard to policy discussions and democratic participation.

The center-right New Democracy, now in government under its leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis, has made some effort to encourage supporters to participate in defining the party's agenda. The last national congress of the party took place in December 2019, while the next one is scheduled for 2022. The radical-left Syriza's party organs are regularly convened by the party leader (Alexis Tsipras) to discuss the party's line, but the party's rank-and-file are rarely consulted. Syriza's last national congress took place in October 2016, with a subsequent congress continuously postponed. In Syriza, there are open and public debates among party factions. The third largest party, the socialist Pasok (leading a center-left coalition named Kinal) conducted a party congress in late 2019 and also conducted nationwide elections to select the party's new leader in late 2021, in which all members of the party were eligible to vote. It is too early to tell how the newly elected leader (Nikos Androulakis) will manage the party.

Very heavy-handed leadership is more pronounced among small parties, including in the traditional Communist Party of Greece (the KKE) and the party of Yanis Varoufakis (Mera25). In these parties, a very small circle around the party leader, if not the leader himself, has the final word on all decisions. To sum up, intra-party life is more developed in larger than in smaller parties. Meanwhile, in larger parties over time, there have been



improvements on the openness of issue agendas, and the exchange of views and public deliberation among party officials.

Citation:

On preparations of New Democracy's national party congress: <https://synedrio.nd.gr/>

On preparations of Syriza's national party congress: <https://www.syriza.gr/page/synedria.html#>

Association  
Competence  
(Employers &  
Unions)  
Score: 7

Interest associations often make relevant policy proposals in a few policy areas, such as macroeconomic policy, incomes and pensions, and labor relations.

Probably the most efficient interest association in this respect is the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV). SEV's think tank is the Institute of Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE). The General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) counts on its think tank, the Labor Institute (INE), for information and advice on policy matters. The remainder of the large interest associations, such as the national association of merchants (ESEE) and the association of artisans, craftsmen and owners of small enterprises (GSEVE), have relatively less well-resourced and smaller think tanks. The same holds for the General Confederation of Civil Servants (ADEDY), which has revived its own think tank (ADEDY Polykentro)

As in the past, in the period under review, the government only periodically consulted with economic interest associations. Limited consultation was the result of the COVID-19 crisis. Naturally, government ministers appeared at all major events staged by economic interest associations (e.g., annual conventions and specific conferences) and submitted drafts of government policy to the scrutiny of interest associations, including the government plan for the development of national economy (the Pissarides Plan).

Citation:

The opinions expressed by INE, a GSEE think tank supporting labor unions, are available at <https://www.inegsee.gr/> (in Greek only).

The website of the think tank of ADEDY is available at <https://kpolykentro.gr/>

For opinions mostly reflecting the views of Greek industrialists, see the website of the IOBE think tank at [http://iobe.gr/default\\_en.asp](http://iobe.gr/default_en.asp) (English version of the website).

Association  
Competence  
(Others)  
Score: 5

Greek civil society is relatively underdeveloped. Civil society associations can press the government on government policy choices, but rarely do they contribute to policymaking in a proactive manner. Most non-economic interest associations do not have the resources to become involved in policy formulation. There are, however, exceptions regarding religious and migration matters.

The Greek Orthodox Church plays a preponderant role in formulating ecclesiastical matters and (to some extent) matters of education. For instance, religion is a compulsory subject in all grades of primary school and high school. Greece's constitution grants the Greek Orthodox Church a privileged position among all churches and dogmas, and the Greek Orthodox Church enjoys a tailor-made taxation regime which allows it to sustain a large amount of landed property. This pattern of heavy church influence on policy formulation has been preserved, regardless of the political profile (right-wing, centrist or left-wing) of the governing party or parties in power.

Finally, there is a vast array of small and medium-sized NGOs which are active in providing social protection and legal assistance to refugees and migrants in the field. NGOs are located in major cities and on the Greek islands of the Aegean where refugees and migrants continue to land. In the period under review, the role of NGOs probably declined, as the Greek state was preoccupied with the management of COVID-19. The state also took it upon itself to manage reception and identification centers (RICs) on several islands and the mainland of Greece, rather than leaving the task to NGOs.

Citation:

The provisions of the constitution of Greece on the Greek Orthodox Church can be found in article 3 of the constitution.

### Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office  
Score: 7

The Audit Office (Court of Audit) is an institution formally independent of the government and parliament. It is both a court that intervenes to resolve disputes related to the implementation of administrative law (e.g., civil service pensions) and a high-ranking administrative institution supervising expenses incurred by ministries and public entities.

The staff of the Audit Office is composed of judges who enjoy the same tenure and follow a comparable career path to that of other judges. As in the case of selecting high-ranking judges, the government selects and appoints the Audit Office's president and vice-presidents. Nonetheless, the Audit Office has detached itself from government control.

The Audit Office submits an annual financial statement and the state's balance sheet to the parliament. In the past, there were delays in rolling out the financial statements of the Audit Office. Over time, the submission of financial statements has improved, as the financial statement for 2019 is

available and the corresponding statement for 2020 is under preparation. Meanwhile, the Audit Office was very active in the period under review regarding “focused audits.” In 2021, it published eight “focused” audits concerning certain agencies or categories of expenses, including topical audits, such as public procurement processes related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Citation:

Information on the Greek audit office in English is available at [www.elsyn.gr](http://www.elsyn.gr)

Information on targeted controls of the Audit Office is available at <https://www.elsyn.gr/el/node/877> (in Greek)

For more information on Court of Audit competences and activities in English see <https://www.elsyn.gr/en/index>.

Ombuds Office  
Score: 9

The Ombuds Office is one of the most well-organized public services in the country. The Greek ombudsperson is appointed by a group of high-ranking parliamentarians and obliged to report to the parliament by submitting an annual report.

The ombudsperson receives and processes complaints from citizens who are frequently caught in the web of the sprawling Greek bureaucracy. Depending on the complaint at hand, the Ombuds Office can intervene with the central, regional and local bureaucracy. The staff of the Ombuds Office can pressure the government to change existing legislation and also inform the prosecutor’s office of any uncovered criminal offenses committed by administrative employees and officials. The Ombuds Office remains popular with Greek citizens, who turn to it in the frequent instances in which they are treated unfairly or improperly by public services.

Citation:

Information in English on the Greek “ombuds office” is available at <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=stp.en>

The Greek Ombuds Office is included in articles 101a and 103 para.9 of the Greek Constitution.

Data Protection  
Authority  
Score: 9

The Hellenic Data Protection Authority (HDPa) is Greece’s independent data protection office. The HDPa, established in 1997, enjoys constitutional guarantees. The HDPa grants individuals certain rights and imposes certain responsibilities on entities that process and store personal data. The president of HDPa (a high-ranking judge) and members of the authority are selected by the parliament for a four-year term. Generally, it is not a government-controlled authority. The HDPa implements EU and Greek law on personal data protection and has been very active in carrying out its tasks.

Information on the Hellenic Data Protection Authority in English is available at [http://www.dpa.gr/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,40911&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://www.dpa.gr/portal/page?_pageid=33,40911&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

The law establishing the HDPa is Law 2472/1997.

The HDPa is included in article 9A of the Constitution of Greece.

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