U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICE
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U.S. Country Commercial Guides

Greece 2019

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Doing Business in Greece

Market Overview

Greece continues to present a challenging economic climate as it seeks to emerge from the deepest recession in post-World War II history. Previous governments have made progress in carrying out widespread economic reforms in exchange for the disbursement of financing assistance to enable meeting their obligations. Many of these reforms aim to simplify the investment framework and attract foreign investment to drive the country's long-term economic recovery. A leftist government took office in January 2015 parliamentary elections and won a renewed mandate in September 2015 elections for a four-year term. The SYRIZA-ANEL government, although highly critical of the existing reform plans, signed a new memorandum in August 2015 and agreed on a new reform program, the third since the start of the crisis. In May and June 2017, the government agreed with its creditors to implement pending and additional reforms in exchange for an additional tranche of bailout funds that will help it meet its fiscal obligations through 2019.

After six years of recession, Greece returned to positive growth rates (+0.4%) in 2014. However, this trend was interrupted in 2015 and the economy ended the year with a recession of -0.2% following Greece's near default in summer 2015. The protracted economic crisis led to a contraction in bank lending, project development, and investment. Business confidence dropped sharply during the crisis. In 2016 the economy contracted the first two quarters but ended flat (0% growth). Although, the economic sentiment improved slightly in May 2017 as a result of the preliminary agreement between the government and its creditors, economic activity remains low, as well as the investor and consumer confidence. Capital controls – though eased since June 2015 (when originally imposed) - are still in place and remain one of the main barriers to investment. If the new program is implemented in full, growth is expected to return in 2017.

Greece scores poorly on a number of widely used business and investment climate scorecards, reflecting a commercial environment that is burdensome for business, creates barriers to entry for new firms, permits oligopolistic incumbents to earn high profits, and allows for arbitrary decisions and corruption on the part of some public servants. For 2017, Greece was listed at the 61th position (out of 190 countries surveyed) in the World Bank's "Doing Business" report, from the 60st place in 2016 (the big jump was recorded in 2014, when the country was placed in the 65th position from the 100th position in 2014, as a result of the implementation of reforms between 2012 and 2014).

In May 2010, due to its exclusion from international capital markets and facing an enormous deficit and public debt load, Greece requested financial assistance from the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - the so-called "Institutions" (formerly known as the "Troika"). An initial multi-annual financing package for Greece of €110 billion was announced, payable in installments through 2012. In exchange, Greece agreed to implement tough fiscal austerity measures and structural reforms. In October 2011, the EU agreed to a second multi-annual financing package for Greece that was approved on February 21, 2012. The second package included €130 billion in official loans and incorporated a voluntary write-down of over 50% of the nominal value of privately-held Greek government debt (€103 billion in absolute terms), which occurred in March 2012. This debt restructuring was followed by a buyback program in December 2012 that erased a further €20 billion from Greece's debt stock.

After it took office in July 2012, the country's prior coalition government made rapid progress in reducing Greece's enormous national fiscal imbalances. The fiscal deficit rapidly declined from 10.3% of GDP in 2011 to 3.7% of GDP in 2014. However, public debt as a percentage of GDP increased to 179.7 % in 2014, largely the result of the addition to the debt of Greece's bailout loans and the country's sharply contracted GDP. At the end of 2014, the general government deficit was 3.7 % of GDP. When the cost of debt servicing is excluded from this figure, Greece generated a primary budget surplus of 0.3 % of GDP. Consistent with the requirements of Greece's EU/IMF bailout program, the government had sought to liberalize the labor market, open closed product markets, sell state-owned assets and enterprises to generate revenue and enhance competitiveness, cut public payrolls, reform the tax code, strengthen tax enforcement, and streamline investment procedures. The government restructured its one-stop-shop investment promotion agency, Enterprise Greece, to assist interested foreign investors. The then government agreed with the EU/IMF to adopt and implement the majority of 329 recommendations the OECD made in November 2013 on improving economic competitiveness.

Shortly after its January 2015 election, the newly elected Greek government agreed in February 2015 to a four-month extension of the second bailout program, through June 2015, as it sought to negotiate new, more favorable terms with the country's EU and IMF lenders. However, the SYRIZA-ANEL government's stated positions on labor market liberalization, pension reform, enhancing competition, and privatization differed from the measures traditionally considered by these institutions as best practices. The negotiations collapsed in summer 2015 and Greece appeared likely to default on its sovereign obligations. On June 29, 2015, the government and Bank of Greece instituted a two-week bank holiday, shuttering local financial institutions temporarily, and imposed capital controls to restrict capital flight. The economic uncertainty of the summer 2015 negotiations and the imposition of capital controls to prevent economic collapse drove the economy back into a recession. In August 2015, the government and its Eurozone lenders – acting through the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) – reached agreement on a third €86 billion bailout program set to run through 2018. The IMF chose not to participate in the initial August 2015 ESM agreement, as its own program remained in force through March 2016.

In the fall of 2015, following new elections, the Tsipras government returned to office with a mandate to implement the August agreement. In November, under the European Central Bank's supervision, Greece's major banks were successfully recapitalized, largely by foreign investors. The government passed several legislative packages to raise taxes and implement some of the August 2015 bailout agreement. In January 2016, the creditors, acting through the European Commission, European Central Bank, and the IMF, collectively known as the "Institutions," launched the first of several periodic reviews of Greece's compliance with the terms of the program in order to justify further disbursement of program funds to Athens. The talks proved difficult, but on May 2 Greece reached a preliminary deal with its creditors to conclude the second review of the current bailout program. The agreement includes pension cuts, a reduction in the tax-free threshold, and the elimination of myriad tax breaks. The government has subsequently engaged in the second review of the obligations under its current bailout agreement, which concluded in June 2017. Greece is expected to receive new funds from its European creditors prior to debt obligations in July 2017, which could remove some market instability through the remainder of 2017. However, Greece's creditors remain at loggerheads over the question of whether and how much debt relief is needed to ensure that Greece's debt obligations are sustainable over the long term.
In spite of the serious challenges in the Greek market, areas of opportunity remain for U.S. companies. The keys to doing business successfully in Greece include finding an effective local partner and sourcing financing for either commercial transactions or project implementation. As indicated above, the contraction in bank lending has drained capital from the domestic market. Otherwise, U.S. products are viewed favorably in Greece for their innovation and quality and are popular in this market despite stiff competition from EU and Asian suppliers.

- Population: 10,761,523 (July 2018 est.)
- Demographics:
  0-14 years – 13.72%

15-64 years – 65.14%
65 and over – 21.14%

- GDP: €219.8 (2017) €175.9 (2016), €175.7 billion (2015), €177.9 billion (2014)
  Real Growth Rate: 1.4% (2017 est.)
  Per Capita: $18,880 (2016)
- Unemployment Rate: 21.5% (2017 est.)
- Greece is an import-dependent economy
- No significant non-tariff barriers to U.S. exports
- Exports to the U.S.: $1,200 (2016)
- Exports from the U.S.: $636,0 (2016)

The United States and the European Union (EU) enjoy a mature economic relationship that is characterized by nearly $4 trillion in two-way investment as well as a massive merchandise trade of approximately $700 billion in 2014 – almost double the level from 2000.[1] U.S. exports of goods and services to the EU-28 in 2015 reached approximately $272 billion and imports from the EU, $426 billion.[2] It is estimated that transatlantic commerce generates more than 15 million jobs.

Recognizing that the U.S.-EU economic relationship is already the world's largest, accounting for one-third of total trade in goods and services and nearly half of global economic output, President Obama, in his State of the Union address on February 12, 2013, announced the Administration's plans to begin negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) with the EU. The negotiations were officially launched at the G8 Summit on June 17, 2013. Since that time, fifteen negotiating rounds have taken place on both sides of the Atlantic.

T-TIP is an ambitious and comprehensive trade and investment agreement that will promote transatlantic international competitiveness, jobs and growth. T-TIP aims to address non-tariff barriers that impede trade in goods and services and seeks to promote greater compatibility, transparency and cooperation in the regulatory and standards arenas. According to non-U.S. government estimates, transatlantic zero-tariffs could boost U.S. and EU exports each by 17%.[3] A 25% reduction in non-tariff barriers could increase the combined EU and U.S. GDP by $106 billion.[4] For up-to-date information on T-TIP, please visit the website of the USTR.

Market Challenges

- Lack of market liquidity reduces consumption, necessitates supplier flexibility on payment terms, and seller-financing solutions. The situation worsened with the imposition of capital controls in June 2015 and has slowly improved since then.
- Stiff competition from Greece's traditional EU trading partners -- Italy, Germany, France, the U.K., and the Netherlands.
- EU suppliers have duty-free status and proximity to the Greek market (lower transportation costs and faster service).
- Competition in many industry sectors in Greece can be characterized as oligopolistic, making it difficult for new entrants to penetrate the market.
- Eurostat ranks Greece low on its Payment Index, meaning that the risk of non- or delayed payment is high, especially for public sector contracts.
- According to the OECD, Greece has one of the more restrictive business environments as it pertains to inward investment. Business is heavily regulated.

[1] The Transatlantic Economy 2015, Annual Survey of Jobs, Trade and Investment between the U.S. and Europe; Daniel Hamilton and Joseph Quinlan
[2] US Dept of Commerce, Office of the EU
[3] The Transatlantic Economy 2014, Annual Survey of Jobs, Trade and Investment between the U.S. and Europe; Daniel Hamilton and Joseph Quinlan
[4] ibid

- The public sector share of GDP exceeds 40%. Public procurement is consequently an important feature of the commercial landscape. The Government of Greece prefers, and often requires, foreign bidders to partner with Greek companies.
- Businesses face frequent changes to the tax and regulatory environment.

Greece is a signatory to the OECD Anti-bribery Convention. On Transparency International's respected Annual Perception of Corruption Index for 2017, Greece ranked 59 out of 180 countries surveyed.
Historically, U.S. exporters and investors have faced relatively low barriers to doing business in the EU. Nonetheless, issues exist, as would be expected, given the breadth and depth of the commercial relationship.
While the EU continues to move in the direction of a Single Market, the reality today is that U.S. exporters in some sectors continue to face some barriers to entry and other challenges. In several industries such as pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, legal services, and government procurement, some of these barriers are pronounced in some member states.
EU legislation generally takes two forms. "Regulations" have mandatory language and are directly applicable in member states when implemented. "Directives" provide a general framework and must be "transposed" into national legislation at the member state level. Differences in how directives are transposed in Greece and other member states complicate compliance for U.S. companies doing business in the EU. Industry has periodically raised concerns over perceived onerous regulations and high compliance costs.

Market Opportunities

Best Prospect Sectors include:

- Marine Technology
- Information and Communications Technologies
- Defense and Aerospace
- Renewable Energy
- Tree Nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachios), Whisky (and other distilled spirits), Crustaceans (shrimps, lobsters, and crabs), Mollusks, and Squid, Hardwood Lumber and Veneers, Pulses, Dried Plums and Cranberries

Reasons U.S. companies should consider exporting to Greece:

- Long-term tourism trends and potential: Greece's tourist trade continues to grow, and the country will need continued investment to upgrade tourist facilities and infrastructure.
- Shipping: Greece's shipping sector is among the world's strongest and is buffered to a degree from economic uncertainty in the country.
- Geographic location: Greece's geographic location in the Mediterranean and Southeastern Europe is an advantage for companies seeking to serve regional customers.
- Hydrocarbons exploration expanding: After several decades of intermittent and uncommitted efforts, the Greek government now seeks to advance domestic hydrocarbons exploration and development processes. Geological surveys indicate Greece may have oil and gas deposits of possible interest to mid-sized firms, and U.S. firms may consider participating in tenders as exploration participants or as service or equipment providers.

Market Entry Strategy

U.S. firms doing business in Europe should be aware that there are several organizations in Brussels focused on representing U.S. business interests and engaging with EU institutions including the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council.

The European Union market is a differentiated one, as supply and demand needs vary from member state to member state. While a pan-European business strategy is critical, individual market entry plans must be developed on a country-by-country and industry-by-industry basis.
In order to learn more about product's potential in a given market, the market's business practices and best prospects for success please visit the Export.Gov – Market Intelligence website

The U.S. Commercial Service office in Athens can assist U.S. companies on an individualized basis to develop a market entry strategy and customized business solutions for Greece and the European region. Contact us at Office.Athens@trade.gov or visit our website.

Political and Economic Environment

Political and Economic Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of Greece, please click on the link to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

Selling US Products & Services

Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services

The key to success in the Greek market is engaging the services of an experienced agent/distributor or joint venture partner with suitable business experience and access to the appropriate sales networks. The agent can also help identify possible political and micro-political angles to business decisions. A commitment to offering full after-sales support to the end-user, along with carrying spare parts, is also crucial.

Historically, the government of Greece (GoG) accounted for most major purchases, a practice that kept the market moving. Whether the end user is the GoG or the private sector, it is essential that local agents or joint venture partners have the knowledge and experience of operating in Greece's business environment. Knowledge, experience and good connections have always been vital to successfully participate in government tenders and develop private sales on behalf of U.S. suppliers. Low price has been a main factor in government purchases along with strict adherence to specifications. Private sector purchasers are more likely to weigh price over quality, and credit terms have become a key factor in procurement decisions.

Companies wishing to use distribution, franchising and agency arrangements need to ensure that the agreements they put into place are in accordance with EU and member state national laws. See the European Union Country Commercial Guide for more information.

Establishing an Office

In order to establish any type of business office in Greece, a certified, original copy of the company's articles and relevant agreements needs to be filed with the Court of Misdemeanors. The next step is to register with EFKA, which is the uniform social insurance organization that replaced OAEE and certain other social insurance funds. Once this is done, the local Chamber of Commerce can issue the license number needed for a company to operate in Greece. These tasks are usually assigned to lawyers.

The traditional types of business organizations exist in Greece, i.e., Corporation, Limited Liability Company, General or Common Partnership, Limited Partnership, Sole Proprietorship or Individual Enterprise, Cooperative, and Joint Venture or Consortium.

Under Greek law, joint ventures and consortia are not recognized as different forms of legal entities. The law governing joint ventures has been developed through court decisions and directives issued by the Ministry of Finance. In general, each participant in a joint venture is liable for his share of the total debt, plus for taxes. Current tax laws recognize the existence and special nature of joint ventures and provides specific rules as to the maintenance of the joint venture's accounting records.

Foreign enterprises may establish operations in Greece. In the case of industrial projects, the foreign investor is generally required to organize a Greek corporation. The following laws are intended to support foreign investment, foster development and reduce obstacles created by bureaucracy:

Law 4146/2013 "Creation of a Business-Friendly Environment for Strategic and Private Investments" is the Greece's main investment incentives law. Law 3908/2011, which provides incentives in the form of tax relief, grants and allowances on investments in all key economic sectors.

- Law 3894/2010, which provides for fast track licensing procedures for qualifying investments in the sectors of industry, energy, tourism, technology, telecommunications, health services, waste management and transportation.
- Law 3389/2005, which regulates public private partnerships (PPP).

The Investment Incentives Law L.4399/2016 consists a statutory framework for the establishment of Private Investments Aid Schemes for the regional and economic development of the country.

Franchising

Though franchising is a popular form of business, there is no specific law governing franchising in Greece. Franchising is governed by Greece's Commercial Code. The Franchise Association of Greece has voluntary Code of Ethics, based on the European Franchise Federation's code, which is sometimes wrongly understood as law. Rental fees for retail space may have decreased significantly in Greece, but some business people characterize rent for prime locations as too high. Additionally, due to growing concerns by property owners that any new store or business may not succeed, landlords may ask for large down payments sometimes in the form of "key-money" (an under the counter lump-sum payment at the time the lease contract is signed) to alleviate risk of losses from what could occur in the future.

More information on broader EU legislation can be found on the website of the European Franchise Federation

Direct Marketing

The economic recession in Greece has impacted direct-mail advertising as well as advertising in general. Many companies tend to reach their consumers through off-peak hour TV ads, which invite consumers to dial-in and order items on a cash-on-delivery basis. New TV licensing procedures expected to come into effect could impact this selling option. . Personal checks are not used. Credit, debit and prepaid cards are used, but many businesses choose to task couriers to deliver cash-on-delivery terms.

Employee health insurance and income tax laws and regulations are less flexible in allowing direct sales companies to legitimately develop sales forces as they can in other EU countries. A new law which came into effect in 2016 has set direct selling at further disadvantage because it requires that the people practicing direct selling pay social security contributions not based on their actual sales or earnings, but as if they were fully-employed with the basic salary in effect. CS/Athens has been advocating for the Greek Government to find a more sustainable framework for this category of business activity.

Delivering direct mail purchases to people's homes remains impractical as there is usually no-one to collect during work hours. Thus direct sales companies tend to engage local low-cost courier companies. Due to increase in criminality, Greeks are less likely to open their front door to strangers. Thus door-to-door selling exists on a limited scale. Although door-to-door delivery is limited, door-to-door pamphlet advertising still takes place.

Print Media Advertising

Greek media has suffered some severe setbacks in the past year due to the GoG and banks tightening what used to be loose financing rules. The concept of no-cost publications had picked up remarkably well in Athens and a few other cities, with a host of free daily and weekly publications to match a range of interest groups. The continuing crisis, however, is affecting these publications ability to stay in operation and keep staff.

There is a wide-range of EU legislation that impacts the direct marketing sector. Compliance requirements are stiffest for marketing and sales to private consumers. Companies need to focus, in particular, on the clarity and completeness of the information they provide to consumers prior to purchase and on their approaches to collecting and using customer data. Consult the European Union Country Commercial Guide for more information on EU-wide rules on distance-selling and on-line commerce.

Joint Ventures/Licensing

Licensing agreements have to be filed with the Industrial Property Organization and Greek tax authorities. All procedures for payment and transfer of royalties to EU and non-EU residents are handled by commercial banks operating in Greece.

U.S. firms should be aware that royalties are subject to a 20% withholding tax until the Greek company submits IRS tax forms obtained by the U.S. company showing residency in the U.S.

For more information, please link to the [IRS Application for United State Residency Certification]

Public tenders may have a stipulation that foreign bidders must submit their offers in a venture with a local company. In major projects, the utilization of local resources, (engineering services, manpower supplies, manufacturing, or assembly), is an important factor in bid evaluations. Foreign, as well as local bidders must quote and accept payment in Euro, unless otherwise specified in the tender documents.

Selling to the Government

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to "Project *Financing"* Section in *"Trade and Project Financing"* for more information.

Public Procurement

As of June 2016, the legal framework for public procurement is determined by law 4281/2014. This law incorporated European Directives 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC into the Greek legal systems harmonizing the mandatory procedures for the scheduling overseeing and awarding public procurement contracts, supplies, services and works contracts also providing specific regulation for e-procurement, i.e. the award of public contracts via an independent electronic platform named "Promitheus," controlled by the Greek State and accessible world-wide. This law is likely to the be further amended, but the core of its provisions regarding public procurement awards remain un-influenced by the new European Union legal framework and will remain as is. The new legislative framework includes the European Regulations EC 2015/2342, 2015/2341, 2015/2340.
According to the current resolution issued by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport and the Ministry of Finance, law 4281/2014 came into effect regarding the award of (a) public works and (b) design contracts on public works and related engineering services.

Law 2286/1995 and relevant bylaws provide tender guidelines and procedures to be adhered to by the supplier and one or more of the following entities.

- i) the State,
- ii) local Government organizations,
- iii) legal entities of public law,
- iv) public enterprises,
- v) banks owned by the State,
- vi) state owned legal entities of private law,
- vii) enterprises associated with legal entities of private law. and
- viii) associations formed by one or several of such bodies.

In brief, Law 2286/1995 states the procurement of purchasing (goods), leasing, and the provision of services must be awarded through an announced public tender. The details of the procedures are prescribed in the Regulation of Public Procurement (Presidential Decree 394/1996).
The Greek government has attempted to establish one central procurement agency to offer the country economies of scale, and optimal control and application of common technical specifications. The General Directorate of State Procurement plans, modifies and implements Greece's Unified Government Supply Program. Procurement actions follow three stages: stage one is the identification of the needs of all agencies and the drafting of the procurement program; stage two is publicizing the tender, selecting the best offer and awarding the contract to the winner; and stage three is the implementation of the contract. The armed forces, municipalities, public hospitals, and the Public Power Corporation carry out procurement independently,

pursuant to special procurement rules and regulations. In certain instances, the General Secretariat of Commerce involvement is limited to the first phase of the tender.

U.S. company sworn affidavits can be submitted in place of documents normally issued in the United States, but not produced by U.S. federal government authorities.

Defense procurement and military construction projects are governed by Law 3433/06, effective February 1, 2007, as well as other ministerial decrees, clarifications and decisions. This law regulates procurement issues such as Domestic Added Value, Industrial Participation, Defense Materials Specifications, and the Offsets Programs. The newly enacted Law 3883/2010 regulates the transitional arrangements for Offset Contracts that have been signed between the Ministry of Defense and various defense equipment suppliers. The law impacts contracts that have expired without having been fulfilled, thus resulting in penalties by the Ministry of Defense. These contracts may be re-established within six months from the date of issuance and the Ministry of Defense must provide a written declaration accompanying the re-established contract. Additional information on this new law is available from CS Athens.

Greek Law on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are contractual agreements, usually long-term, between a public entity and a private counterpart, with the objective of implementing a project and/or providing a service. Greek Law (Law 3389/2005) introduced regulation on Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Greece opening the market to this type of public procurement.

In a PPP scheme, the private partner bears, in whole or in part, the implementation cost of the project, as well as a substantial part of the risks related with its construction and operation. The public partner, on the other hand, lays out a set of output specifications on the design, technical, and operational characteristics of the project and determines the private partner's payment mechanism, either through partial (e.g. annual) payments, or through direct payments by the end-users via fees.

Greek law intends to create a market-friendly legal framework, to abolish the approval of all concession agreements by Parliament (a current requirement) and to set a standardized procedure for the tendering of concession agreements.

The law mainly attempts to set a comprehensive procedure regarding the planning, approval, award and implementation phases of the whole range of PPPs by clearly defining the scope and minimum requirements of such projects. Its ultimate aim is to ensure the attainment of the most efficient outcome by supporting the positive aspects of the whole scheme on the one hand, and by minimizing the possibilities for the occurrence of potential risks on the other. Detailed information on the PPP law is available at the website of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Shipping & Tourism.

European Union Directives and Public Procurement Restrictions

Policies governing the public procurement market in the EU have recently been revised and a new legislation on concession has also been adopted. Consequently, currently there are four relevant legislations:

- Directive 2014/24/EU (replacing Directive 2004/18/EC) on the coordination of procedures for the award of public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts applies to the general sector;
- Directive 2014/25/EU (replacing Directive 2004/17/EC) coordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors;

- Directive 2009/81/EC on defense and sensitive security procurement. This Directive sets Community rules for the procurement of arms, munitions and war material (plus related works and services) for defense purposes, but also for the procurement of sensitive supplies, works and services for non-military security purposes;
- Directive 2014/23/EU on the award of concession contracts. A concession contract (either for the delivery of works or services) is conducted between a public authority and a private enterprise that gives the right to the company to build infrastructure and operate businesses that would normally fall within the jurisdiction of the public authority (e.g. highways).

For more information on EU public procurement Directives and restrictions, please consult the European Union Country Commercial Guide.

U.S. Commercial Service Liaison Offices at the Multilateral Development Banks (World Bank)

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars in developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help American businesses learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders. Learn more by contacting the Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank.

Web Resources

Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank

Distribution & Sales Channels

Traditionally, sales agents and distributors have handled a large amount of Greece's import trade. With Greek banks no longer able or willing to provide financing to Greek companies, and foreign suppliers demanding payment before releasing goods, an increasing number of these Greek firms caught in a "deadlock situation" are closing.

There is no requirement for Agency agreements and they can be signed for any period of time. Distributorship agreements, however, usually guarantee exclusive sales rights for certain districts, or the entire country. Distributors operate on a wholesale, and in some cases, a retail basis. Importers usually maintain offices in Athens, Piraeus, or Thessaloniki with branch offices, subagents, and traveling sales staff covering the rest of the country. In certain cases, small importers may join together to form cooperatives, but this does not suffice for them to keep up with the competition from the foreign distribution companies, which are not effected by lack of financing or capital controls.

Greek retail and wholesale trade had been characterized by small, family-owned and operated businesses, each dealing with a narrow range of goods. Because liquidity is very tight, many businesses find it difficult to finance purchases.

A handful of American-style shopping malls operate in Greece; however in most case, their parking fees act as disincentive to shoppers spending much time shopping. Retail stores rarely open on Sundays. Certain large stores and smaller stores in areas with tourists are more free to open on Sundays.

Express Delivery

There are few express delivery firms in Greece. Overall, Greeks use them to ensure the quick and sure transport of their mail and/or parcel within Greece and worldwide. Controlling the market are the semi-government ELTA courier, foreign firms FedEx, DHL, UPS, and Greek firms SpeedEx, and ACS courier. The standard delivery time to and from Greece to the United States is two days. The weight of the parcel and the CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) value are factored into pricing. The fee may also increase due to the value and description type of the shipped item (dangerous, valuable, perishable) as well as by storage fees, which vary according to type. Finally, export shipments that require customs release are subject to an additional fee.

Selling Factors & Techniques

Selling factors and techniques applicable to Greece are generally the same as those in other western European countries and the United States. The use of credit and credit cards was severely reduced during the recent financial crisis but this practice is changing for domestic consumers as access to credit slowly resumes. Credit card purchases are widely accepted.

eCommerce

Overview

Electronic Commerce (eCommerce) in Greece has exhibited considerable growth during the last three years, and this upward trend is expected to continue in 2018. Today, in Greece, there are more than 3.5 million online shoppers and eCommerce sales reached about $6.15 billion in 2017, growing 25% over $4.9 billion sales in 2016. Despite that growth, eCommerce in Greece is less advanced than in other EU member States. The main reason, in addition to the prolonged economic crisis, is that Greece has not captured the benefits of ICT adoption and falls below the EU average in many ICT indicators defined by the European Digital Agenda. Based on the EU's 2018 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) published by the European Commission, Greece ranked second lowest among the EU28 countries for its performance in the digital economy and society. Furthermore, even though internet usage has improved compared to previous years, still Greece has one of the lowest levels in the EU, 67% compared to the EU average of 81%. Improvement in these areas, especially internet penetration, would lead to stronger growth in eCommerce.

Current Market Trends

According to the latest annual survey of ELTRUN, the E-Business Research Center of the Athens University School of Economics and Business (AUEB), eCommerce continued to see increased demand in 2017, despite the financial crisis. This is mainly attributed to income reduction that made consumers more price sensitive, the creation of many new local high-quality e-shops in all categories of products and services, and the continuation of capital controls.

Greeks have become highly price-driven, realizing that online retailing could offer them the advantage of comparing a wide range of products in a short time, as well as the attraction of online offers and discounts. Even though Greece has started to show signs of recovery from the economic crisis the past instability continues to impact on Greek consumers' purchasing patterns and trends. Bargain hunting will continue to be the most important factor driving internet retailing in Greece. Forecasts for 2018 remain positive, where 38% of online consumers are expected to increase their online purchases and 42% will continue at current levels, while only 20% is expected to decrease spending.

Domestic eCommerce (B2C)

Business-to-consumer (B2C) electronic commerce in 2017 has improved compared to 2016.
Although the average value and the number of online purchases did not change in 2017 compared to 2016, the increase comes from three factors. First, new buyers were added, with 2 out of 10 starting their online shopping in 2017, which is related to the relative upward trend that began with capital

controls and the large range of Greek online stores with high quality integrated services. Secondly, the percentage of mature online buyers has risen since more than 31% make one in two purchases online compared to 29% in 2016 and to 25% in 2015. Third, 7 out of 10 online consumers make over 80% of their online purchases in Greek online stores from around 7000 businesses with a digital sales channel, from 6 out of 10 in 2016 and 5 out of 10 in 2015.

There are no changes in the ranking of the top 10 online shopping categories (percentages show the percentages of participants who made at least one online purchase from this category in the 2017 period) compared to 2016 and are: travel services (83%), accommodation (66%), clothing and footwear (61%), ready-made food (59%), books (49%), electronic appliances (47%), personal care products (45%) and vitamins / food supplements (41%).

The three categories where most money was spent are: travel services, accommodation and tickets. The categories where most orders were made are: tickets, ready meals and travel services. The categories with the largest online shopping rise are: ready meals, tickets and vitamins / nutritional supplements.

Online shopping behavior is mainly driven by online market research, price comparison, and by the significant increase of online banking mainly due to capital controls. Greek online buyers make 50% of their total physical purchases after they first search online in search engines and / or price comparison services. This justifies the significant amounts spent by brands on digital promotion to attract them to their physical network. At the same time, Greek online consumers make 20% of their online purchases after having visited the physical store first. This show-rooming is particularly worrying and justifies the emergence in 2017 of large-scale initiatives to upgrade the consumer experience in stores through digital technologies and mobile applications.

Price sensitivity is the major factor for online purchases (75%), followed by direct product comparison - mainly price and features (52%) and ease of finding new offers (41%). This, of course, results in low loyalty, as 65% of online buyers declare that 50% of their purchases were made in an e-shop that they visited only once a year. The second reason concerns the product range and the availability of products not found in physical stores (47%), the greater variety of products (38%) and the convenience of finding products from abroad (37%).

The main factors influencing an online consumer to choose an online store is confidence, including a secure way of paying through a well-known carrier (46%), low prices and offers (42%), speed and ease of navigation (37%), clear terms of use (35%), good reviews on blogs / forums, etc. (32%), site usability (29%) and good service (27%). Popular e-shops include among many others Amazon, eBay, Amazon third parties, e-shop, Plaisio, Public, and Skroutz.

Cross-Border eCommerce

Cross-border commerce in Greece accounts for 25% of total online purchases down 5% from last year, mainly due to the increased number of companies in Greece offering their products for purchases online. Estimates show that around 7,000 companies in Greece, both local and foreign, offer their products online. Greek customers prefer to buy from US, UK, Chinese, and German sellers.

Despite the rapid growth of eCommerce, most businesses in Greece do not yet make the most out of the cross-border eCommerce potential. Currently, only 24% of Greek businesses offer their goods abroad via ecommerce, and ship products mostly to the US, the UK, France, Germany, and Italy. Nevertheless, the cross-border trade is constantly growing as an increasing number of Greek traders are selling abroad and expand their business at international level.

Online Payment

For the first time in 2017 there is a change in the preferred payment method, since debit cards are now the most popular means of payment as 64% of online buyers use it, followed by Cash on Delivery 57% and credit cards 42%. This is related to measures and Tax incentives to promote the use of plastic money. For the first time, the digital wallet also appears with 17% (due to the more related products from banks and electronic payment institutions) and PayPal with 9%.

Mobile eCommerce

The use of the mobile devices for digital transactions is rapidly increasing among Greeks. 98% of online consumers have daily access to the Internet via their mobile phones. Online buyers use the mobile as a basic device for their commercial digital transactions, such as the use of search applications (93%), price searches while in the physical store (65%), use corporate applications (34%) and electronic banking (21%).

eCommerce Legal Framework

Entrepreneurial activity in the retail B2C eCommerce is governed by the general consumer protection law (Law 2251/1994) and the legislation regulating electronic commerce (PD 131/2003, which incorporated the Directive 2000/31/EC on electronic commerce; and the Joint Ministerial Decision Z1-891/13-06-2013, which incorporated Directive 2011/83/EU on consumer rights). These laws provide for the free and unlicensed provision of e-commerce services as well as the ability to produce valid contracts by electronic means (3 and 8 § 1 of PD 131/2003). As regards the privacy of the end-user, the data protection law (Law 2472/1997 and 3471/2006), which incorporated Directives 95/46/EC and 2002/58/EC, applies.

The e-Commerce Directive 2000/31/EC has created the basic legal framework for online services, including electronic commerce in the Internal Market. The purpose of the Directive is to remove obstacles to cross-border online services in the European Union and provide legal certainty to business and citizens in cross-border online transactions. The Electronic Commerce Directive (e-Commerce Directive 2000/31/EC), adopted in 2000, sets up an Internal Market framework for electronic commerce, which provides legal certainty for business and consumers alike.

The Directive establishes harmonized rules on issues such as the transparency and information requirements for online service providers, commercial communications, electronic contracts and limitations of liability of intermediary service providers. It also enhances administrative cooperation between the Member States and the role of self-regulation.

Web Resources

Greek e-Commerce Association (GRECA)
Hellenic Data Protection Authority (HDPA)
The Hellenic Confederation of Commerce and Entrepreneurship (ESEE)
Hellenic Bank Association (HBA)
The Hellenic Management Association (EEDE)
Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media
Ministry of Economy
Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)

Greek Industry Association of Communications and Technology
European Commission
A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe
EUROSTAT
A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe
Summaries of European Union (EU) legislation eCommerce
eCommerce Directive - European Union
Directive 2000/31/EC – electronic commerce in the EU
European eCommerce Association

Commercial Specialist: nikos.papachrys@trade.gov

Pricing

Greece has no price controls, except for pharmaceutical and food items. When pricing their products, firms should consider payment and credit terms. Orders are usually small, and Greek importers will request special consideration if a U.S. supplier requires large orders.
The Greek government regulates the price of pharmaceuticals, and its methodology has been a source of debate for years. Pharmaceuticals prices are among the lowest in the EU, but the Greek government has established a pattern of falling behind on payments for as much as over a year to pharmaceutical suppliers.

Certain food prices, particularly on fresh products like fruit and vegetables, are subject to monitoring by the Ministry of Economy, Development & Tourism. Greek fruit and vegetable importers generally expect a C.I.F. quotation, except when the purchasing company does a large amount of direct buying and provides its own insurance. American firms should be prepared to quote prices on whatever basis is preferred by the prospective buyer.

Sales Service/Customer Support

Greek Sales Service/Customer Support standards are consistent with American and Western European standards.
Conscious of the discrepancies among member states in product labeling, language use, legal guarantee and liability, the redress of which inevitably frustrates consumers in cross-border shopping, the EU institutions have launched a number of initiatives aimed at harmonizing national legislation. Suppliers within and outside the EU should be aware of existing and upcoming legislation affecting sales, service and customer support.
Consult the European Union Country Commercial Guide for more information on product liability, product safety, legal warranties, and after-sales service.

Protecting Intellectual Property

A Greek law enacted in June 2011 (Law 3982/2011), provide the police ex officio authority to confiscate and destroy counterfeit goods, has been effective in some areas, but much progress remains to be done due to continued budget cuts, high turnover in the public administration. A 2013 law to protect trademarks , Law 4155/2013, shifted the burden of the cost of storage and destruction of counterfeit goods to the holder and beneficiary rights. Companies have requested Greek authorities to only require storage of a sample of the seized goods in official government facilities in order to reduce their burden of having to pay for storage for long periods of time. This remains an issue of contention for relevant parties. According to the government,

counterfeit products in Greece are mainly luxury purses, wallets, sports footwear, clothing, watches, cigarettes, spirits, cell phone batteries and accessories, sunglasses, toys, and spare car parts.
Trademark violations, especially in the apparel and footwear sectors, are still widespread. Given these ongoing significant issues, Greece was placed back on the U.S. Special 301 Watch List in 2008, where it remains.

For additional information about treaty obligations and points of contact at local IP offices, please see WIPO's country profiles. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request.
In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background on these principles please link to our article on Protecting Intellectual Property and also Corruption.

USTR's Special 301 Report Lists Greece on its Annual Watch List. To read the 2019 Special 301 Report, click here.

IP Attaché Contact For Greece

Name: Susan F. Wilson
Address: U.S. Mission to the European Union
Unit 7600, Box 6100
United States
Telephone: +32 2-811-5308
E-mail: susan.wilson@trade.gov

Due Diligence

Greek banks adhere to OECD and EU Due Diligence rules and regulations, especially as to money laundering. In Greece, Law 3424/05 prohibits money laundering.
U.S. firms should consider taking advantage of the U.S. Commercial Service's International Company Profile (ICP) service before signing an agency agreement with a local concern, choosing a local partner to bid jointly on a major project, or doing business for the first time with a local company. ICPs are prepared at the request of U.S. firms and provide financial and background data on Greek companies. Please contact Office.Athens@trade.gov regarding the ICP due diligence service.

Local Professional Services

For more information, kindly refer to the following websites:

Bar Association of Athens
Bar Association of Volos
Bar Association of Piraeus
Medical Association in Athens
Medical Association in Thessaloniki
Institute of Certified Public Accountants
Hellenic Bank Association

Local service providers focusing on EU law, consulting, and business development can be viewed on the website maintained by the Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union

Principle Business Associations

American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce – E-mail: president@amcham.gr

The American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) is open to all businesses and individuals regardless of country. Its main purposes are to boost Greek-American relations and trade, create business partnerships between those countries, and provide assistance in imports and exports. The AMCHAM represents the American Business community in meetings with the Government serving as an advisory body.

The Propeller Club of the United States – E-mail: propclub@otenet.gr

The Propeller Club has no restrictions related to membership, except for an annual or a life time fee. The Propeller Club has limited to no influence to political decisions, while it mainly serves as a social and business hub for people involved but not limited to the Shipping sector.

Association of Pharmaceutical Companies of Greece (SFEE) - E-mail: sfee@sfee.gr

Current members include both Greek and foreign multinational subsidiaries. SFEE serves as an advisory body to the Greek Government aiming to promote the interests of pharmaceutical companies.

Athens Association of Commercial Agents & Brokers (Only in Greek) – E-mail: aaca@otenet.gr

In order to become a member, one just needs to have the necessary permit of becoming an Import-Export Commercial Agent, which is obtainable after a request to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Association's objective is to promote the interests of its members, make information available, settle disputes etc. The Association has limited to no influence over political decisions.

Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry – E-mail: president@acci.gr

Membership is open to anyone running a business in the Attica area. This association represents, supports, and promotes entrepreneurship and advises the government in formulating policies.

Federation of Greek Food Industries (SEVT) – E-mail: sevt@sevt.gr

SEVT membership is made up of Greece's food and beverage companies, but also includes sectoral associations. SEVT's mission is to facilitate the development of an environment where food and beverage companies, regardless of size, can meet consumer and society needs, and at the same time compete effectively for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. SEVT represents the Greek Food & Beverage sector in the national, European, and Non-European International arena. Foreign companies can become members of SVET if they own a branch in the Greek market.

Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) – E-mail: info@sev.org.gr

Members of SEV are companies that are active in Greece. Serving as the voice of Employers and Enterprises, SEV seeks to create the needed conditions to encourage entrepreneurship improve the competitiveness of the Greek companies. Its committees serve a powerful instrument for policy and strategy making.

Hellenic Central Union of Chambers of Commerce & Industry (website not working) - E-mail: keeuhcci@uhc.gr

The Union that represents all chambers of commerce (more than 56) throughout Greece. It is the main advisory body, representing the views of all the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Greece, which influences the economic policy and decisions of the Greek Government.

Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhARMA) - E-mail: epapatax@its.jnj.com

Membership is limited to U.S. pharmaceutical companies. PhRMA and its member companies encourage the GoG to recognize and protect innovation in the pharmaceutical sector by ensuring efficient and timely government pricing and Social Security Funds reimbursement procedures for medicines as well as protect the interests of U.S. industry.

Piraeus Chamber of Commerce and Industry - E-mail: evep@pcci.gr and secretariat@pcci.gr
Membership is open to anyone that has a business in the Piraeus area. The association represents, supports, and promotes entrepreneurship and it advises the government in formulating policies.

Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE) – E-mail: gramproedrou@central.tee.gr and president@central.tee.gr
Non-Greek individuals can become members of "TEE" if they possess an engineering degree and pass an examination. "TEE" acts as an advisory body to the Greek state about issues within its scope and only upon request.

Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce and Industry - E-mail: sec@ebeth.gr
Membership is open to anyone that has a running business in the area of Thessaloniki. This association represents, supports, and promotes entrepreneurship and it advises the government in formulating policies.

Union of Greek Shipowners - E-mail: ugs@ath.forthnet.gr
Membership is open to Greek Ship-owners. Major ship-owners have the ability to influence the Greek government.

Web Resources

Greek websites:
Freelancers' Insurance Organization
Ministry of Finance, Infrastructure, Shipping and Tourism
Export.gov for Greece
General Secretariat of Commerce and Consumer's Protection
Special Secretariat for Public - Private Partnerships (PPPs)
Greek Pharmaceutical Association
Athens Bar Association
Volos Bar Association
Piraeus Bar Association
Athens Medical Association
Thessaloniki Medical Association
Greek Institute of Certified Accountants
Hellenic Bank Association
International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
Enterprise Greece
Hellenic Copyright Organization
Industrial Property Organization
Hellenic Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property

EU websites:
Please refer to the European Union Country Commercial Guide for EU websites.

Leading Sectors for US Exports & Investments

Renewable Energy

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

Table: Share of energy from renewable sources
(in % of gross final energy consumption)

	2004	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU	8.5	15.2	16.1	16.7	17	17.4
Greece	6.9	15.0	15.3	15.4	15.2	15.5

Source: Renewable Energy in Europe 2018

	2018	
RES Generation-Facilities	**Units**	**MW Capacity**
Hydro	120	3,382
Biomass & Biogas	85	83.8
Wind	295	2,828.5
PV	14,417	2,445
Total	**14,865**	**8,738.5**

Source: CS Athens and market sources

EU Member States have agreed on a new EU renewable energy target of at least 27% by 2030. Greece nearly doubled its share from renewable energy sources, from 6.9% of gross final energy consumption in 2004, to 15.5% in 2017. Eurostat expects Greece to reach the 18% goal set for 2020 (Eurostat, 2018). The government's target is to exceed the EU renewable energy goal of 2030 of 27%. These targets are legally binding, due to EU regulations and Kyoto Protocol agreement.

The submitted Special Spatial Planning for RES, which incorporated the latest European guidelines, so as to solve chronic problems, ranked 3rd among other EU countries. It included a good description of policies and measures, providing information on the expected impact of planned policies, but was weak on the ambition dimension of the EU assessment.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

Wind Energy

The wind resources in Greece are among the most attractive for energy production in Europe, with a profile of more than 8 meters/second and/or 2,500 wind hours in many parts of the country. Capacity increased by an average of 30% annually between 1990 and 2003, and almost 30% of total capacity was installed in the period of 2003 - 2004. According to the Hellenic Wind Association wind energy in Greece grew significantly in 2018. More specifically, last year 103 new wind turbines were connected to the grid with a total capacity of 191.6 MW, which corresponds to an annual growth rate of 7.2% compared to the end of 2017. During the same period, 15.43 MW of older wind turbines were uninstalled, and they are already replaced by new ones (repowering). Thus, the total of wind capacity at the end of 2018 either in commercial or test operation stood at 2,828.5 MW. This capacity is installed mostly in the interconnected system (2,518.5 MW) and non-connected islands (310 MW of which 15.43 MW in repowering). Furthermore, at the end of 2018 over 500 MW of new wind farms were under construction and are expected to operate within the next 18 months.

Geothermal Energy

Greece lies in a geographic position that is favorable to geothermal resources, both high temperature and low temperature. High temperature resources, suitable for power generation coupled with heating and cooling, are found at depths of 1-2 kilometers on the Aegean Islands of Milos, Santorini, and Nisyros. Other locations that are promising at depths of 2 -3 kilometers are on the Islands of Lesvos, Chios, and Samothraki as well as the basins of Central-Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Low temperature geothermal resources are found on the plains of Macedonia -Thrace and in the vicinity of the 56 hot springs around Greece. These areas include Loutra -Samothrakis, Lesvos, Chios, Alexandroupolis, Serres, Thermopyles and Chalkidiki.

In April 2017, the Minister of Environment and Energy, signed a Ministerial Decision granting permit to the Municipality of Alexandroupolis to distribute thermal energy from the geothermal field of Antia-Aristina, with a thermal output of 9.8 MWth. The station will be installed in the municipal section of Aristos, Municipality of Alexandroupolis and is intended for the service of consumers within the geographical area of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis, for space heating or hot water.

Biomass & Biofuels

Greece is committed to increasing its share of biofuels to 10% of the final energy consumption under Law 3851/2010, which sets the national target for renewable energy sources in compliance with the EU Renewable Energy Directive. From 17 plants in 2010, to April 2019 with 20 biomass and 45 biomass units. Biodiesel has been used to provide at most 7% of the blend volume since 2009. The binding commitments of the Greek government to replace 10% of current transport fuels with biofuels by 2020 (currently mixing 7% biodiesel with diesel and 1% of biogas with gasoline) translate into measurable opportunities within the next decade.

Although Greece is not developing its biogas production rapidly, its use of substrate is essentially focused on waste valorization: landfill and sewage plants are massive in the country, and exclusively based on waste. The 20 small agricultural plants use mainly agricultural residues (92% of total substrate use), and only 2% of dedicates energy crops.

Biomass and biofuels are strong markets with high growth potential. In Greece, the agricultural sector accounts for more than 5% of GDP, more than three times the EU average of 1.8%. Companies involved in biomass and biofuels will therefore find abundant sources of raw materials.

Opportunities

Wind Energy

- Superb wind resources – among the best in Europe
- Priority dispatch by the system operator
- Modern business oriented auctioning system
- 20-year PPA (power purchase agreement)
- Favorable, long term legislative framework, ensuring investment reliability

Geothermal

- A wealth of geothermal resources
- Emerging market substantial entry-stage opportunities
- High feed in tariffs
- Wide variety of synergistic applications

Biomass and Biofuels

- Abundant raw materials
- Agricultural sector equals 5.2% of GDP vs 1.8% EU average
- High feed in tariffs
- Binding national commitments in biofuel use
- Favorable, long term legislative framework, ensuring investment reliability

Theoretical biomass potential in Greece

Main Categories	UNITS	CAPACITY (MW)	Organic Wastes (T/Y)	FUEL CAPACITY (M/Y)
Cattle	25,530	726,013 cattle	13,601,970	233
Sows	2,560	147,920 sows	2,277,072	36
Systematic Poultry	1,972	33,875,054	813,001	86
Dairy Establishment	696	1,175,319	822,723	14
TOTAL	30,758		17,514,766	369

Source: CRES/Biomass Dept.

The first step towards the establishment and operation of a biomass plant was the agreement between the Municipality of Larisa (central Greece), and the Center for Renewable Sources and Energy Saving (CRES) to conduct the respective study. Within 2018, more municipalities throughout Greece have contracted CRES for the development of similar studies. US firms engaged in the biomass sector can be part of the studies through submitting their offer/solution for biomass plants in Greece, resulting in a better chance to participate/be awarded the tender which will follow the completion of the studies.

Web Resources

Eurostat News release
Operator of Electricity Market (LAGIE)
Regulatory Authority for Energy (RAE)
ADMIE
World Energy News
Greece Energy Situation
Factbook for Greece from CIA
Energy Press
NECP National Scorecard - Greece
BioEnergy News

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Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.
Overview

After negative performances in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and stabilization signs in 2017 the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) market in Greece is showing signs of recovery.
In 2017, the ICT sector remained stable at 2016 levels, showing zero growth, amounting to $6,739 billion. For 2018, the Greek ICT market is expected to show a marginal growth of 0.35% reaching a value of $6,763 billion.
Based on the European IT Observatory (EITO) 2017 sales figures, the information technology sector accounts for 31% of the ICT market total, while telecommunications accounts for the remaining 69%.
Greece has a large concentration of U.S., Greek and international ICT companies. Many companies use Greece as a hub for operations in Southeast Europe because of the size of the market and connections to other markets.

Information Technology (IT)

The IT sector consists of IT hardware equipment, IT services, and business software. IT services remains the leading category, exhibiting a slow but steady growth over the last three years, with business software also showing signs of recovery the last two years. Hardware sales continued its decline in 2017 at a much slower rate 1.5% compared to 2016 14.9% and is expected to show signs of recovery in 2018 at a positive rate of 1.9%. Overall, in 2017, the industry gained a 1.2% from 2016 and stood at $2,089 billion. It should be noted that in 2015, as in 2016, the IT market in Greece moved negatively at an average rate of 4.75%.

IT Hardware
The value of the IT hardware market is approximately $617 million, suffering a 1.5% reduction in 2017, while a growth of 1.9% is expected in 2018. The significant slowdown in the reduction rates from 2015 and 2016 are contributed mainly to the recovery in the sales of the PC subsector. The PC market is expected to increase by 7.5% in 2018, resulting in a market value of $290 million. This is a substantial recovery after a 3% decline in the market in 2017 and significant losses of 12.5% and 24.2% during 2015 and 2016, respectively. More specifically, the sales growth of Laptop and Desktop Personal Computers for both personal and professional use will continue in 2018, as was the case in 2017. The Tablets market in Greece is expected to return to a positive sign in 2018, with an increase of 8.4%, recovering from a negative 10.7% in 2017. In the rest of the categories of the Hardware Market, the Servers market is estimated to increase by 8.8% to $66 million recovering from a 12.8% reduction in 2017. Storage Systems, are expected to be negative in 2018 by 3.7%, even though the sector experienced a significant increase by 17.4% in 2017, with a market value of $27 million this year compared to $28 million last year.

IT Services
The IT Services sector grew by 2.5% in 2017 and is expected to continue to grow in 2018, reaching a market value of $1,187 million in 2018, a 3.6% increase from the previous year. IT services are comprised of IT and business consulting, system integration, network consulting and integration services, custom application development, and business process outsourcing (BPO) and all are expected to contribute positively to the growth of the sector.

Business Software

The business software market consists of application software (64%) and system infrastructure software (36%).
The market has shown signs of recovery in 2017 with a 2% increase and a market value of $326 million and is expected to maintain its momentum in 2018 with a 2.3% increase and value of $333 million. The increase is mainly driven by Applications Software.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications services, the leading category in the telecom sector, accounts for 84% of the market, with equipment accounting for the remaining 16%. In 2017, the telecommunications sector in Greece experienced a marginal decline compared to 2016 by 0.5% to $4,650 billion, with an expected reduction in 2018 of 0.8%.

Telecommunications equipment
The 4 % increase in equipment sales in 2017 is not likely to be sustained in 2018. The market is expected to decline in 2018 by a marginal 0.6 % from to $733 million in 2017 to $729 in 2018. The domestic telecom equipment market is boosted by Telecom provider investments to upgrade and expand existing 4G networks, especially in large urban areas, and infrastructure investments in fiber optic networks.
The Mobile Devices subsector in 2017 increased by 5.1% to $492 million. In 2018, the market value is expected to decline by 2.1% to $482 million.
In this category, the smartphone market increased by 5.5% in 2017 and is expected to decline by a marginal 0.5% in 2018.

Services
The Telecom Services market value decreased by 1.3% in 2017 to $3,916 billion, with a marginal decrease of 0.8% to $3,884 billion expected in 2018. From the specific subsectors of the market, Fixed Telephony Services will continue to decline by 7.8% in 2018, as it did in 2017 by 7.9%. The value of this category will fall to € 1,080 billion, from $1,170 billion in 2017. Mobile Telephony Services declined as well in 2017 by 3.6% reaching a market value of $1,092 billion and this trend will continue in 2018 by 2.4% with a market value expected to be around $1,066 billion. On the contrary, in 2018, the Mobile Data services subsector will maintain the positive trend of 2017 that has led to an increase by 9.3% with sales value of $749 million. In 2018 is expected to grow by 7.8% to $808 million.

Leading Sub-Sectors

Current environment
Greece has not captured the benefits of ICT adoption and falls below the EU average in many ICT indicators based on the European Digital Agenda. Based on the European Union's 2018 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) published by the European Commission, Greece has not made much progress relative to other member states and has progressed slightly slower than the EU average over the last year. As a result, Greece again this year, ranked second lowest among the EU28 countries for its performance in the digital economy and society. The index measures a variety of factors, including connectivity, digital skills, use of the internet by citizens, integration of digital technology by businesses, and digital public services.
All these challenges are defined and addressed by the Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media formed in November 2016, in the National Digital Strategy (2016-2021), as well as in the

National Strategy for Administrative Reform (2017-2019), including guidelines for eGovernment and the development of digital skills for all.
Even though Greece possesses a highly-educated workforce, the country continues to suffer from a brain drain, of ICT specialists that could be crucial for supporting the digital transformation of the economy. According to estimations, the use of ICT is needed in more than 90 % of workplaces. The low percentage of people with at least basic digital skills can slow down the country's economic development.

Government strategic targets

ICT companies in Greece are focusing on government projects that are in progress, delayed, or need to be initiated and are vital to improve the competitiveness of the Greek economy. Policy makers are facing a challenge in supporting the European digital economy strategy to enhance the use of e-Government services. The Greek Government views broadband penetration, internet use, electronic transactions, cloud-computing services, and integrated Government ERP as increasingly important.

Syzefxis II: Greek national network for the public sector:

The Government aims to upgrade the voice and data infrastructure of the public sector in Greece. Under the Syzefxis II project, the Government seeks to expand network and telephony services in approximately 34,000 buildings nationwide and implement wireless access through 55,000 government smartphones. The goal of this project is to deploy more fiber connections to include all 34,000 Greek stakeholders, with the most important state agencies operating at 100/1,000 Mbps.

The EU will provide $191 million to build the infrastructure. The three-year operational costs of $164 million per annum will be covered by national funding with an estimated budget of $684 million.

Public Sector ERP

Digital projects in Greece, both ongoing and expected to begin in the near future, include the implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Human Resources Management (HRMS), and public e-procurement systems to support the Government's fiscal reform project.

Tax evasion and contraband detection systems

The new Independent Authority for Public Revenue in Greece has reactivated tenders focusing on the implementation of systems founded on the latest technologies and applications systems, which can support the Greek government in its efforts to collect revenue. These systems would enable customs, border, security, and tax collection agencies to increase tax revenue collection by deterring the contraband smuggling and VAT fraud. Automated inspection and verification of trucks, rail, and cargo containers as well as fuel-marking programs and control systems that process online real time information promise to significantly improve revenue collection.

Next Generation Access NGA)

This project aims to the deploy fast and super-fast broadband technologies in rural areas with support from EU funds. The first phase was started in 2014, with the rural broadband project, which is now in the implementation phase. The Greek rural Project is a public-private partnership More than 80 % of the project has already been implemented. The project provides remote and sparsely populated areas with broadband coverage, gradually increasing to 30 Mbps, and a future-proof infrastructure for greater speeds. So far, it has provided more than half a million people with connectivity. The total cost of the project is EUR 199.7 million (of which EUR 143.8 million from EU Structural funds). The project aims to close the 'broadband gap' between remote, disadvantaged, traditionally 'white rural areas' and the rest of the country, by providing good, affordable connectivity services.

Transition to a digital economy
Support the European Digital economy strategy by implementing digital projects to enhance e-skills, digital transactions between public administration and citizens/businesses, development of open data and creation of new opportunities for innovative SME's and start-ups.

IT consulting
ICT consulting is a key growth area for vendors as markets mature and end-users become more knowledgeable about IT needs, risks, and technologies. Consulting firms can help the government evaluate and make decisions on systems management, infrastructure needs and solutions, as well as IT security.

Data Center Outsourcing & Integration Services
Optimization of ICT costs are realized through main or disaster recovery centers of large private- and public-sector organizations as well as service providers in Greece. It's possible that Greece could eventually be a data center outsourcing hub in Southeast Europe.

Cyber Security
Security solutions to support projects compose a significant portion of the market, with security software, services, and infrastructure being deployed in organizations of all types and sizes. The demand for security comes mainly from three major segments that comprise the Greek market: the government, corporations, and small- to medium-sized businesses. The financial industry is leading the private sector in demand for cyber security products and services. Banks are demanding more cyber security solutions as they face increasing number of cyber-attacks.

Opportunities

Digital services can be an important force economic development in Greece. Increased digital innovation creates added value and new services for businesses and the government. ICT adoption and usage by businesses, citizens, and the public sector will contribute to financial savings, increasing government revenues, and ultimately create the conditions for new business development and job creation. The continuing development of fast internet in Greece will contribute to the increased demand for digital services that will enhance the competitiveness of the country and support employment.

Greece possesses a highly-educated workforce, combining first-class technical knowledge with global experience and entrepreneurial talent. Large international software firms represented in Greece have well-established policies and methodologies to deliver projects and serve customers with strong and well-established solutions. Multinational software companies disseminate state of the art expertise in both ERP applications and specialized solutions in government, retail, logistics, utilities, and other sectors. The need to comply with international regulations and treaties, such as the International Accounting Standards, the Basel III agreement, and corporate governance rules, is anticipated to increase the demand for specialized applications software and services.

The 2014-2020 National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) programming for the absorption of European Union Funds is expected to be a major driver for economic and ICT market growth in Greece.

The new NSRF 2014-2020 constitutes the primary strategic plan for the development of the country with the help of significant resources from the European Structural and Investment Funds. The implementation of the new NSRF seeks to address the structural weaknesses of the country that contributed to the emergence of the economic crisis. The NSRF 2014-2020 consists of 20 projects, of which 7 are sectoral and 13 regional, with $28 billion in funds to be allocated. Though there is not a distinct program in the new NSRF for ICT, as in the NSRF 2006-2013 (Digital Convergence), the effective implementation of the programs and NSRF funding is expected to positively impact ICT demand. The operational programs are Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development, Competitiveness Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Human Resources Development - Education and Lifelong Learning, Public Sector Reform, Technical support, Agricultural Development, and Fisheries and Maritime.

Web Resources

Ministry of Digital Policy, Telecommunications and Media
Ministry of Economy
Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR)
European Commission
Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)
Greek Industry Association of Communications and Technology
Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research
National Strategic Reference Framework
National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
Society of Information S.A.
Information Society
General Secretary for Research and Technology
International Data Corporation
European IT Observatory
ICAP

Commercial Specialist: nikos.papachrys@trade.gov

Greek Shipping and Marine Services (PRT)

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

Posidonia 2018 opened with global shipping in a much less dire situation than at the time of the last Posidonia in 2016. The Baltic Dry Index (DBI), the shipping sector's leading index, has been slowly recovering from its 2016 historic low of 290 points and give signs of settling around 1,300 which is still only just above a tenth it's all-time-high in 2008. A recent increase in the number of new tankers delivered is triggering consolidations among tanker players similar to what has been seen in the container market.

Greek shipowners continue to possess the largest merchant marine fleet in the world with the Greek-owned fleet accounting for 7.6 percent of the world's fleet in terms of ship numbers. This corresponds with 13.8 percent in terms of GT and 16.4 percent in terms of DWT. Industry "hot topics" include new environmental regulations and technology issues such as cyber security and the move towards greater levels of autonomy and digitization.

March 2018 year on year data showed that the Greek controlled fleet increased in terms of number of vessels, DWT and GT. According to the data, Greek interests controlled 4,148 vessels of various categories, of 341,925,357 total DWT and 199,286,013 total GT. Compared with the previous year's data, this represents an increase of 63 vessels, 13,161,590 DWT and 6,855,494 GT. The figures include 200 vessels of various categories on order from shipyards, a total of 23,953,312 DWT and 14,205,765 GT.

Date		Ships	DWT	GT
February	2007	3699	218,229,552	129,765,470
February	2008	4,173	260,929,221	154,599,274
February	2009	4, 161	263,560,741	156,214,619
February	2010	3,996	258,121,898	152,616,046
March	2011	3,848	261,675,981	153,128,919
March	2012	3,760	264,054,167	155,904,976
March	2013	3,677	265,336,520	155,988,384
March	2014	3,901	290,847,132	170,984,684
March	2015	4,057	314,456,451	184,063,875
February	2016	4,092	320,597,574	188,904,194
March	2017	4,085	328,763,767	192,430,519
March	2018	4,148	341,925,357	199,286,013

Source: Greek Shipping Co-operation Committee based on data from the Lloyd's Register- March 2018

The Greek-controlled fleet is registered under 41 different flags. A "flag analysis' of Greek owned shipping by parent companies, indicates the Greek flag remaining the largest in terms of DWT with 21.8% of the total DWT of the Greek owned fleet. Malta's flag comes next with 694 ships totaling 63,893,903 DWT, Panama's flag with 355 ships totaling 24,169,452 DWT, Cyprus' flag with 274 ships totaling 20,378,898 DWT and the Bahamas' flag with 247 ships totaling 18,269,328 DWT.

The average age of the Greek controlled fleet increased slightly compared to the previous year, but, nevertheless, continues to be 2.8 years below the average age of the world fleet -- 10.6 years for Greek ships compared with a world average of 13.4 years. Many Greek shipowners have been successful in modernizing their fleets while maintaining sufficient financial strength to be able to react quickly when they sense opportunities to re-invest in larger, more modern and efficient vessels.

British and Dutch commercial interests are strong in Greece but U.S. marine equipment and service providers continue to be well represented and well received. U.S. businesses should be aware that Greek shipowners become personally involved in most decisions and when it comes to choosing technologies Greek shipowners tend to be part of the decision, rarely leaving matters exclusively to technical managers. This applies also to the Greek shipowners who live and operate outside of the country because they often process their decision through their offices and "trusted staff" in Greece. The term "trusted" refers to Greek shipowners' inner circle where blood relatives and/or people from his/her native part of Greece hold key company positions.

As shipping in Greece is a predominantly family business, it is sometimes hard to know who exactly are the largest industry players. This may occur because the assets of the ship owners may suddenly become separated or merged, rearranging the picture. It is also worth noting that it is the family name of the ship-owner which is usually known around the shipping business communities and not so much the name of companies managing the fleets. Greece continues to top lists of worldwide shipping in 2018. Twelve Greeks are among the 100 most important in the industry according to "Lloyd's List Top 100 2018 which ranks the Shipping industry's most influential people.

Market Entry

The U.S. Commercial Service in Athens believes U.S. firms can find significant opportunities in the Greek shipping market. Due to the nature of the shipping sector and some of the complexities of the Greek market, we believe that the best way for American companies to be successful in this market is to partner with local Greek firms. The U.S. Commercial Service stands ready to introduce American companies to potential Greek partners.

Trade shows are also an excellent way of gaining exposure within the established Greek shipping market. Posidonia International Shipping Exhibition, held every two years in Athens, Greece is one of the world's premier shipping exhibitions and a recognized showcase for the international maritime and shipping industries.

Best Prospects

Best prospects for U.S. firms in the Greek marine and shipping sectors include:

Communication aids, computer and software applications, navigation aids, radar, safety equipment, coatings and paints, cutting-edge navigation, maritime anti-piracy solutions and technology, maritime financial and insurance services, ship repair, and conversion products and services. Greek ship-owners are currently keenly interested in technologies for LNG and LPG carriers, for offshore supply vessels, drilling rigs and container ships. There have been and continue to be a number of port privatizations in Greece. Offshore energy exploration, underwater pipelines and planned offshore LNG facilities provide additional opportunities.

Posidonia Trade Show

For the 16th consecutive time, the U.S. Commercial Service in Athens organized a U.S. Pavilion at the 25th edition of Posidonia June 4-8, 2018. The event was a U.S. Department of Commerce Certified

Trade Fair. Posidonia provided direct access to Greek shipping and the owners of the largest fleet under the control of any one national group, dominating the new builds order book. In addition to the main event, there are numerous seminars and gatherings where companies can obtain exposure to Greece's shipping decision makers.
Participation in the U.S. Pavilion offers un-matched worldwide business expansion opportunities for the U.S. shipping industry and related U.S. service and supply sectors.

Posidonia is a biennial event. The next edition of Posidonia will be in June 2020.

Trade Events
Posidonia International Shipping Exhibition
June 2020 (biennial)
Metropolitan Expo, Athens International Airport
Athens, Greece

Web Resources

Posidonia Exhibitions SA
Hellenic Chamber of Shipping
Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy

Resources & Contacts
Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy
Akti Vasiliadi
185 10 Piraeus
Tel: +30 210 4191700 & 4064700
Fax: +30 210 4191561, 4191562 - 210 419156
Email: info@yen.gr

Thessaloniki Port Authority S.A
Inside the Port
54 110, Thessaloniki, Greece
Tel: +30 2310 593121
Fax: +30 2310 510500
Email: secretariat@thpa.gr

Piraeus Port Authority (OLP)
10 Akti Miaouli Street
185 38 Piraeus, Greece
Tel: +30 210 4550229
Fax: +30 210 4550310
Email: olp@olp.gr

Union of Greek Shipowners
85 Miaouli Street
185 38 Piraeus, Greece
Tel: +30 210 4291159 through 65

Fax: +30 210 429 1166
Email: ugs@ath.forthnet.gr

Commercial Specialist: George.Bonanos@trade.gov

Agricultural Sector

This is a best prospect industry sector for this country. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

The agricultural sector in Greece remains an important sector of economic activity and employment for Greece, with exports of agricultural products accounting for one third of total exports in Greece. Agriculture contributes 4.1 percent of GDP and is characterized by small farms and low capital investment. Greece's utilized agricultural area is close to 5 million hectares, of which 57 percent is in the plains and 43 percent is in mountainous or semi-mountainous areas. There are about 150 million olive trees in the country, either in systematic orchards or scattered across the country. Lower agricultural productivity in Greece, compared to other EU Member States, is correlated to the smaller average-size of holdings. The economies of scale offered by modern farming practices have limited impact on the small plots of land typically used in Greece.

Greece's financial crisis is affecting all areas of the economy, including agriculture. Agricultural output has steadily declined from 17 percent of GDP in the early 1990's to 4.1 percent today. Greece's main competitors are other European Union countries. The leading agri-food suppliers to the Greek market are the Netherlands ($1.1B), Germany ($943M), Italy ($751M), Bulgaria ($688M), and France ($643M). The leading markets for Greece's goods are Italy ($1.3B), Germany ($926M), the United Kingdom ($447M), the United States ($409M) and Bulgaria ($346M). Greece's top agri-food imports include cheese ($430M), beef ($281M), pork ($259M), and food preparations ($198M), whereas olive oil ($636M), cheese ($521M), and olives($514M) dominate Greece's agricultural exports, followed by cotton ($397M), sea bream ($292M), and canned peaches ($264M). In 2018, U.S. agri-food exports to Greece were valued at approximately $103 million, while imports from Greece reached $451.9 million. Tree nuts ($32M), soybeans ($18.7M), forest products ($7.1M), distilled spirits ($5.7M), and seafood products ($4.8M), were the top U.S. exports to Greece in value terms, whereas processed fruits and vegetables ($224M), seafood products ($51.9M), vegetable oils ($50.6M), and cheese ($31.6M), were the leading U.S. imports from Greece.

Greece imports significantly more food and beverages than it exports. Products with good sales potential include cheese, meat, alcoholic beverages, organic foods, dairy products, some exotic fruits, off season fruits and non-GMO ingredients for the domestic food processing and confectionary/ice cream sectors.

Bilateral Ag Trade 2018

U.S. Ag Exports to Greece $103M	U.S. Ag Imports from Greece $451.9M
Tree Nuts: $32M	Processed Fruits & Vegetables: $224M
Soybeans: $18.7M	Seafood Products: $51.9M
Forest Products: $7.M	Vegetable Oils: $50.6M
Distilled Spirits: $5.7M	Cheese: $31.6M
Seafood Products: $4.8M	Wine & Beer: $16M

- Greece is a net agricultural importer.
- The United States exports mostly consumer oriented and intermediate commodities to Greece and mainly imports their consumer-oriented products.

Leading Sub-Sectors

A. U.S. products in the Greek market that have good sales potential:
Tree Nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachios)
Whisky (and other distilled spirits)
Crustaceans (shrimps, lobsters, and crabs), Mollusks, and Squid
Hardwood Lumber and Veneers
Pulses
Dried Plums and Cranberries

B. Products not present in significant quantities but which have good sales potential:
Mink Furskins (and other hides & skins)
Soybean Meal
Planting Seeds
Beans

C. Products not present because they face significant trade barriers:
Beef, other than that sold thru the High Quality Beef Quota
Poultry, use of chlorine as a post-slaughter pathogen reduction treatment is not accepted by EU
Processed food products containing biotech ingredients

Opportunities

In spite of the institutional challenges and ongoing economic downturn, areas of opportunity remain in the Greek market for U.S. companies. Greece is a potential market for seafood; U.S. seafood exports to Greece in 2018 increased 4.8percent and are forecast to further increase in 2019 favored by record tourism arrivals. U.S. pulses exports (mostly lentils) are expected to recover in 2019, after a 41 percent reduction last year, and pulses market is expected to continue to grow over the next five years because of increased demand for inexpensive and healthier meal choices.

Web Resources

Embassy of the United States in Athens, Greece
United States Mission to the European Union
Global Trade Atlas, trade statistics
Global Agricultural Information Network
European Commission Agriculture Website
Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute
USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council

Customs, Regulations & Standards

Trade Barriers

Greece maintains nationality restrictions on a number of professional and business services, including legal advice. These restrictions do not apply to EU citizens, and U.S. companies avoid these barriers when partnering with Greek or EU businesses. Through Law 3693/2008, Greece harmonized its regulation of auditing services with European Directive 2006/43/EC. Audits can now be performed by any company/auditor, regardless of nationality, with the appropriate license. Licenses can be obtained without taking exams. Law 3919/2011 further liberalized some of the remaining restrictions on the auditing profession, specifically the minimum fees imposed by Presidential Decree 341/1997. Auditors are now free to set fees with the interested party.

A special tax (percentage on admission tickets) that applied to motion pictures (12% in Athens and Thessaloniki and 8% of the ticket price in other cities) was abolished with the law 4336/2015. Revenue from this tax were used to provide grants to Greek film companies to support and develop the industry.

The general position towards GE (Genetically Engineered) crops in Greece remains unfavorable. Greece does not have a coexistence policy and maintains a de facto ban on both the cultivation and importation of GE products. In Greece, there are no GE plants or crops under development. Greece does not commercially cultivate any GE crops, even for GE seed production. Greece has maintained a de facto ban on GE products since April 2005, when it implemented a "safeguard clause" prohibiting the field release of MON 810, a GE corn developed by Monsanto and approved by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In July 2008, EFSA determined that Greece's ban lacked a scientific basis. In November 2011, Greece extended the ban for another two years and expanded the measure to include both importation and cultivation. EFSA again rejected this argument in September 2012. Greece still enforces the cultivation ban despite the EU Court of Justice stating that it has no grounds for relying on the safeguard clause.

In March 2015, Directive (EU) 2015/412 allowed Member States (MS) to restrict or ban the cultivation of genetically engineered (GE) plants in their territory. In August 2015, Greece informed the Commission that it intended to officially opt-out of growing MON 810 corn anywhere in its territory. A similar European Commission proposal to enable Member States to restrict or prohibit the sale and use of EU-approved GE food or feed was rejected by the European Parliament in October 2015, as Member States were concerned the law might prove unworkable or would lead to the reintroduction of border checks between pro-GE and anti-GE countries. However, in December 2015, the Environment Committee passed a resolution calling on the Commission to table a new proposal and withhold any new approvals until the process has been revised.

On March 21, 2015, the Greek Parliament passed a new law (4321: "Provisions to Restart the Economy" to prevent triangular trade transactions with third countries that have lower taxes than Greece (i.e. Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Ireland). According to Article 21 of the new law, a company which imports goods into Greece from another country with a lower tax rate must prepay the 26% withholding tax. In order to secure a refund, the entity has three months to demonstrate the transaction was made on market terms and is not triangular (not an exchange between corporate partners exploiting the tax rate differential between the countries).

The Greek Federation of Enterprises believes this potentially bureaucratic process is likely to adversely affect the agricultural sector, particularly small and medium sized enterprises as well as transportation and logistical service providers.

Many products that are freely available and sold "over-the-counter" in the United States, such as protein-based meal replacement products, can only be sold in pharmacies and specialized stores, limiting the ability of U.S. companies to sell their products through direct sales.

For information on existing trade barriers, please see the National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, published by USTR and available through the following website: USTR

Information on agricultural trade barriers can be found at the following website: USDA-EU

To report existing or new trade barriers and get assistance in removing them, contact either the Trade Compliance Center at TCC or the U.S. Mission to the European Union.

For more information and help with trade barriers please contact:

- International Trade Administration - Enforcement and Compliance
  (202) 482-0063
  ECCommunications@trade.gov

Import Tariff

Greek websites:
Freelancers' Insurance Organization
Ministry of Finance
Export.gov for Greece
General Secretariat of Commerce and Consumer's Protection
Special Secretariat for Public - Private Partnerships (PPPs)
Greek Pharmaceutical Association
Athens Bar Association
Volos Bar Association
Piraeus Bar Association
Athens Medical Association
Thessalonikis Medical Association
Greek Institute of Certified Accountants
Greek Banks Association
International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
Enterprise Greece
Hellenic Copyright Organization
Industrial Property Organization
Hellenic Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property

EU websites:
Please refer to the European Union Country Commercial Guide for EU websites.

Import Requirements & Documentation

The TARIC (Tarif Intégré de la Communauté), described above, is available to help determine if a license is required for a particular product. Moreover, the European Commission maintains an export helpdesk with information on import restrictions of various products. Trade HelpDesk

In addition, please consult the European Union Country Commercial Guide for more information on import requirements and documentation in the EU.

Food and Agriculture Import Requirements

To the extent that European Union food laws have been harmonized, Greece's food laws and regulations follow European Union rules.

In Greece, food safety is the primary responsibility of the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food in cooperation with the General Chemical State Laboratory of Greece and the Ministry of Citizen Protection. Occasionally, the Greek Ministry for Development and Commerce may play a role. The Greek Food Safety Authority (EFET) is responsible for enforcing the regulations and collecting samples from selling points to check compliance with food legislation, both to ensure food safety and protect consumer health in accordance with EU Directive 89/397.

Please see FAS Greece GAIN Report IT1586 Greece Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards for a complete overview of Greek and EU requirements and GAIN Report IT1553 Greece Exporter Guide written for U.S. companies interested in doing business in Greece.

Labeling/Marking Requirements

Manufacturers should be mindful that, in addition to the EU's mandatory and voluntary systems, national voluntary labeling schemes might still apply. These systems may be highly appreciated by consumers, and thus become unavoidable for marketing purposes.

Manufacturers are advised to take note that all labels require metric units although dual labeling is also acceptable. The use of language on labels has been the subject of a Commission Communication, which encourages multilingual information, while preserving the right of member states to require the use of the language of the country of consumption.

An overview of EU mandatory and voluntary labeling and marking requirements has been compiled in a market research report that is available at EU Marking/Labeling Requirements.

The EU has mandated that certain products be sold in standardized quantities. Council Directive 2007/45/EC harmonizes packaging of wine and spirits throughout the EU. Existing national sizes will be abolished with a few exceptions for domestic producers.

Key Link: EC Europa-EU – Pack Sizes

The Eco-label

The European Eco-label enables European consumers, including public and private purchasers, to easily identify officially approved green products across the European Union, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.
For more information, please refer to EU Marking/Labeling Requirements.
Key Link: EC Europa-EU - Ecolabel

U.S. Export Controls

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), which regulate the export and re-export of some commercial items, including "production" and "development" technology.

The items that BIS regulates are often referred to as "dual use" since they have both commercial and military applications. Further information on export controls is available at BIS - CCL. BIS also discovers possible violations of the EAR. To learn more, visit BIS Enforcement.

If there is reason to believe a violation is taking place or has occurred, report it to the Department of Commerce by calling the 24-hour hotline at 1(800) 424-2980, or via the confidential lead page BIS Reporting Violations

The EAR does not control all goods, services, and technologies. Other U.S. government agencies regulate more specialized exports. For example, the U.S. Department of State has authority over defense articles and services. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the BIS web.

It is important to note that in August 2009, the President directed a broad-based interagency review of the U.S. export control system, with the goal of strengthening national security and the competitiveness of key U.S. manufacturing and technology sectors by focusing on current threats, as well as adapting to the changing economic and technological landscape. As a result, the Administration launched the Export Control Reform Initiative (ECR Initiative), which is designed to enhance U.S. national security and strengthen the United States' ability to counter threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Administration is implementing the reform in three phases. Phases I and II reconcile various definitions, regulations, and policies for export controls, all the while building toward Phase III, which will create a single control list, single licensing agency, unified information technology system, and enforcement coordination center.

For additional information on ECR see Export.gov

BIS provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one to two day seminars and focus on the basics of exporting as well as more advanced topics. A list of upcoming seminars can be found at BIS Current Seminar Schedule.

A list that consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State and the Treasury into a single search as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of potential parties to regulated transactions is available at Consolidated Screening List.

For further details about the Bureau of Industry and Security and its programs, please visit the BIS website

Temporary Entry

There are specific regulations governing temporary entry of goods in Greece. Regarding goods please see EC-Europa-EU – Temporary Admission.

Prohibited & Restricted Imports

The TARIC is designed to show various rules applying to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU or, in some cases, when exported from it. To determine if a product is prohibited or subject to restriction, check the TARIC for the following codes:
CITES Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species
PROHI Import Suspension
RSTR Import Restriction

For information on how to access the TARIC, see the Import Requirements and Documentation Section above.
Key Link: EC-Europa-EU – TARIC

Customs Regulations

The following provides information on the major regulatory efforts of the EC Taxation and Customs Union Directorate:

The Union Customs Code (UCC) was adopted in 2013 and its substantive provisions apply from 1 May 2016. It replaces the Community Customs Code (CCC). In addition to the UCC, the European Commission has published delegated and implementing regulations on the actual procedural changes. These are included in Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2446, Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/341 and the Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/2447.

There are a number of changes in the revised customs policy which also require an integrated IT system from the customs authorities. In April 2016 The European Commission published an implementing decision (number: 2016/578) on the work program relating to the development and deployment of the Electronic Systems of the UCC.

Homepage of Customs and Taxation Union Directorate (TAXUD) Website

Customs Valuation – Most customs duties and value added tax (VAT) are expressed as a percentage of the value of goods being declared for importation. Thus, it is necessary to dispose of a standard set of rules for establishing the goods' value, which will then serve for calculating the customs duty.

Given the magnitude of EU imports every year, it is important that the value of such commerce is accurately measured for the purposes of: economic and commercial policy analysis; application of commercial policy measures; proper collection of import duties and taxes; and import and export statistics.
These objectives are met using a single instrument - the rules on customs value. The EU applies an internationally accepted concept of "customs value".

The value of imported goods is one of the three 'elements of taxation' that provides the basis for assessment of the customs debt, which is the technical term for the amount of duty that has to be paid, the other ones being the origin of the goods and the customs tariff.

Key Link: EC-Europa-EU – Customs Value

Standards for Trade

Overview

Products tested and certified in the United States to American standards are likely to have to be retested and re-certified to EU requirements as a result of the EU's different approach to the protection of the health and safety of consumers and the environment. Where products are not regulated by specific EU technical legislation, they are always subject to the EU's General Product Safety Directive as well as to possible additional national requirements.

European Union legislation and standards are under the responsibility of the European Standardization Organizations (CEN, CENELEC, ETSI) and can be used to support EU legislation and policies. The Commission pays special attention to standardization because standards can influence most areas of public concern such as the competitiveness of industry, the functioning of the Single

Market, the protection of the environment and of human health, not to forget the enhancement of innovation.
For more information about what the European Commission does with regards to Industry, Single Market and Innovation, please follow the below links:

Industry
Single Market
Innovation

While harmonization of EU legislation can facilitate access to the EU Single Market, manufacturers should be aware that regulations (mandatory) and technical standards (voluntary) might also function as barriers to trade if U.S. standards are different from those of the European Union. For more information about the New Legislative Framework (NLF), go to EC-Europa-EU – NLF

Standards

Agricultural Standards
The establishment of harmonized EU rules and standards in the food sector has been ongoing for several decades, but it took until January 2002 for the publication of a general food law establishing the general principles of EU food law. This Regulation introduced mandatory traceability throughout the feed and food chain as of Jan 1, 2005. For specific information on agricultural standards, please refer to the Foreign Agricultural Service's website.

There are also export guides to import regulations and standards available on the Foreign Agricultural Service's website.

Standards Organizations
NIST Notify U.S. Service
Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. Notify U.S. is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL: NIST-NotifyUS

EU Standards
EU standards setting is a process based on consensus initiated by industry or mandated by the European Commission and carried out by independent standards bodies, acting at the national, European or international level. There is strong encouragement for non-governmental organizations, such as environmental and consumer groups, to actively participate in European standardization.

Many standards in the EU are adopted from international standards bodies such as the International Standards Organization (ISO). The drafting of specific EU standards is handled by three European standards organizations:
CENELEC, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
ETSI, European Telecommunications Standards Institute
CEN, European Committee for Standardization, handling all other standards.
For more information on standards, refer to the CS European Union website.

Testing, inspection and certification

The main national testing organizations are:

General Chemical State Laboratory
16 An. Tsoha Street,
115 21 Athens, Greece
Tel: +30 210 6479211
Fax: +30 210 6466811
Contact: Mr. Nikolaos Vlachos
Email: gen.dir@gcsl.gr

Test, Research & Standards Center of PPC (KDEP)
9 Leontariou Street,
Kantza, 153 51 Palini, Greece
Tel: +30 210 6601768
Fax: +30 210 6659396
Contact: Mr. Anastasios Papadopoulos
E-mail: kdep@dei.com.gr

The Greek accreditation body, which is member of the international laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), is:

Hellenic Accreditation System S.A. (E.SY.D.)
7 Thiseos Street
176 76 Kallithea, Athens. Greece
Tel.: +30 210 7204600, +30 210 7204603
Fax: +30 210 7204555
Contact: Ms. Maria Papatzikou
Email: esyd@esyd.gr

Independent test and certification laboratories, known as notified bodies, have been officially accredited by competent national authorities to test and certify to EU requirements. For a catalogue of accredited bodies and laboratories please refer to E.SY.D.

"European Accreditation" is an organization representing nationally recognized accreditation bodies. Membership is open to nationally recognized accreditation bodies in countries in the European geographical area that can demonstrate that they operate an accreditation system compatible to appropriate EN and ISO/IEC standards.

To sell products in the EU market of 28 member states as well as in Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, U.S. exporters are required to apply CE marking whenever their product is covered by specific product legislation. CE marking product legislation offers manufacturers a number of choices and requires decisions to determine which safety/health concerns need to be addressed, which conformity assessment module is best suited to the manufacturing process, and whether or not to use EU-wide harmonized standards.

For more information, refer to CS European Union website.

Greece, being an EU member, complies with EU rules and regulations. Thus, costs related to certification requirements burden either U.S. exporters or importers, depending on type of product i.e., food, or other. Test certificates from U.S. laboratories are accepted, provided that subject laboratories are accredited by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). Currently, there are no US testing laboratories operating in Greece.

Publication of technical regulations

The Official Journal is the official publication of the European Union. It is published daily on the internet and consists of two series covering adopted legislation as well as case law, studies by committees, and more EUR-Lex. It also lists the standards reference numbers (Harmonised Standards) linked to legislation EC-Europa-EU – Harmonised Standards

National technical Regulations are published on the Commission's website EC-Europa-EU to allow other countries and interested parties to comment.

Also see the NIST Notify service under "Standards Organizations" above.

National Institute of Standards & Technology
Dr. Walter G. Copan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology & NIST Director
Standards Coordination Office
100 Bureau Dr. Mail Stop 1070
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899
Tel: (301) 975-5627

CEN – European Committee for Standardization
Avenue Marnix 17
B – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.550.08.11
Fax: +32.2.550.08.19

CENELEC – European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
Avenue Marnix 17
B – 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.519.68.71
Fax: +32.2.519.69.19

ETSI - European Telecommunications Standards Institute
Route des Lucioles 650
F – 06921 Sophia Antipolis Cedex, France
Tel: +33.4.92.94.42.00
Fax: +33.4.93.65.47.16

SBS – Small Business Standards
4, Rue Jacques de Lalaing

B-1040 Brussels
Tel: +32.2.285.07.27
Fax : +32-2/230.78.61

ANEC - European Association for the Co-ordination of Consumer Representation in Standardization
Avenue de Tervuren 32, Box 27
B – 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.743.24.70
Fax: +32.2.706.54.30

EOTA – European Organization for Technical Assessment (for construction products)
Avenue des Arts 40 Kunstlaan
B – 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32.2.502.69.00
Fax: +32.2.502.38.14

Trade Agreements

For a list of trade agreements with the EU and its member states, as well as concise explanations, please see TCC – Trade Agreements

Licensing Requirements for Professional Services

Greece has a protective attitude against non-EU citizens offering professional services in Greece. U.S. law firms cannot operate in Greece. Greek law requires lawyers join a local bar association. Requirements include an undergraduate law degree from a fully recognized institution, an eighteen-month apprenticeship, and the passing of the bar examination. Candidates from non-EU citizen can only join a local bar association when they fulfill certain special criteria outlined here (in Greek language only): DSA

The profession of Accounting and/or Business Consultant in Greece is largely controlled by the Economic Chamber of Greece. The website of the Economic Chamber states that graduates of Greece's state Universities are required to join this chamber. Graduates of foreign universities also apply for recognition of their degrees and then to join the chamber because otherwise they can encounter obstacles. Companies hire local professionals who meet these criteria.

Information on how accompany can join the Hellenic Association of Management Consulting Firms can be obtained at SESMA .
Certified Public Accountants should not be confused with the accountants and/or tax assistor service providers who assist "on-line filing" of tax return statements. In order to become a CPA, the Institute of Certified Public Accountants directs interested parties to review Article 10 of Presidential Decree 226/92, which is available in the Greek language. See articles 3 to 10, 12 and 40 of law 3693/2008, as well as the relevant ELTE regulatory acts.

In accordance with article 6, paragraph 1 of Law 3693/2008, it is required that, in addition to a high school diploma, the applicant needs to successfully complete the Panhellenic examinations for entry into a Higher Education Institution in Greece or abroad.

The individual wishing to follow the profession of Certified Public Accountant may become a Trainee Certified Public Accountant if he/she meets the following requirements:
- Has Greek citizenship or is ethnic Greek formerly resident abroad, or a citizen of a member state of the European Union who is a permanent resident of Greece.
- There is a legal obstacle in accordance with annex 1 of Presidential Decree 226/92, with regards to the provisions on the employment of formerly non-resident ethnic Greeks in the first part of the present paragraph or of foreigners who have the right to reside in Greece.

For licensing requirements within the EU, please see the CS European Union website.

Legal Services

A list of bilingual attorneys specializing in commercial, corporate and tax law is available upon request from:

The U.S. Embassy

Tel: +30/210/ 720-4817

Contact: Ms. Maria Georgousi

E-mail: Maria.Georgousi@trade.gov

Certified Public Tax Accountant

Greece has a "Certified Public Tax Accountant" certification. Becoming a Certified Public Tax Accountant requires passing the Certified Public Tax Accountant examination or being already registered as a Certified Public Accountant. To practice, a Certified Public Tax Accountant must also be either a Greek and/or EU citizen with a permanent residency in Greece.

Consulting

There are no special qualifications required to become a business, management or human resources consultant in Greece. Some consultants are often accredited as Certified Public or Tax Accountants.

Web Resources

EU websites:
Online customs tariff database (TARIC)
The Modernized Community Customs Code (MCCC)
ECHA
Taxation and Customs Union
Security and Safety Amendment to the Customs Code - Regulation (EC) 648/2005:
Electronic Customs Initiative: Decision N° 70/2008/EC
Modernized Community Customs Code Regulation (EC) 450/2008
Legislation related to the Electronic Customs Initiative
Trade Helpdesk
Greek Certified Tax Accountants Body

International Level:
What is Customs Valuation?
Customs and Security Amendment
Establishing the Community Customs Code: Regulation (EC) n° 648/2005 of 13 April 2005

Pre Arrival/Pre Departure Declarations
Authorized Economic Operator (AEO)
Contact Information at National Customs Authorities
EU economy, trade, and resources for businesses including networking and funding opportunities
CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization)
European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI)

European Committee for Standardization (CEN), handling all other standards
EC-European- EU - Standardisation – Mandates
ETSI – Portal – E-Standardisation
CEN – Sectors
CEN - Standard Search
Nando (New Approach Notified and Designated Organizations) Information System
Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)
https://european-accreditation.org/
Eur-Lex – Access to European Union Law
Harmonised Standards
EC-Europa-EU News - What's New
National Technical Regulations
NIST - Notify U.S.
Metrology, Pre-Packaging – Pack Size
European Union Eco-label
EU Battery Directive

U.S. websites:
National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers
U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS)
BIS Enforcement
Agricultural Trade Barriers
Trade Compliance Center
U.S. Mission to the European Union
REACH
WEEE and RoHS in the EU
CE Marking:
Overview of EU Certificates (FAS)
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
EU Marking, Labeling and Packaging – An Overview
The European Union Eco-Label
Trade Agreements

Investment Climate Statement

Executive Summary

In August 2018, after eight years of austerity measures and reforms under three economic adjustment programs, Greece exited its final, third international bailout program agreement, taking a significant step back to economic normalcy. Growth reached an estimated 2.1% in 2018, up from 1.4% in 2017. The government exceeded its 2018 primary fiscal balance target of 3.5% of GDP, and Greek authorities successfully drew on international capital markets for the first time since 2014. Major challenges remain, however. At the end of 2018, Greece's public debt was €348.94 billion, or more than 183% of GDP, the highest debt-to-GDP ratio in the EU by a considerable margin, and the state is required to maintain high primary budget surplus for many years. Unemployment remains the highest in the EU at 18.5% in January 2019, with nearly 40% youth unemployment.

In August 2018, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) released a final €15 billion loan tranche to Greece under the framework of its third bailout program. Of this, Greece earmarked €3.3 billion to prepay expensive IMF debt from its earlier bailout programs. The government allocated the balance of the disbursement, along with additional state resources, to create a liquidity buffer for Greece while it returns to full market access. The total buffer, estimated at €26 billion, should be sufficient to cover the country's financing needs until at least the end of 2020. Greece remains subject to enhanced supervision by Eurozone creditors, and the government has committed to meet annual primary budget surplus of 3.5% of GDP through 2022 and 2.2% afterwards.

Capital controls, which the Greek finance ministry introduced in June 2015, have been gradually eased following a recovery in private deposits. The finance ministry lifted nearly all capital controls on cash withdrawals and the movement of capital in October 2018. The ministry also raised the ceiling of capital withdrawals from banks abroad to €5,000 per month, as well as the amount allowed to be transferred from Greece to other countries from €3,000 to €10,000.

In November 2015, as part of the implementation of the August 2015 ESM agreement, Greece recapitalized its four major banks for the third time in five years. This recapitalization included the participation of large U.S. and foreign hedge funds. Greece's banking system remains saddled with the largest ratio of non-performing loans in the EU, which constrains the domestic financial sector's ability to finance the national economy. As a result, businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises, still struggle to obtain domestic financing to support operations due to inflated risk premiums in the sector. In an effort to tackle the issue, and as a requirement of the agreement with the ESM, Greece has established a secondary market for its non-performing loans (NPLs). According to the Bank of Greece, Greek banks managed to bring down the total volume of NPLs from a peak of €107.2 billion in 2016 to €84.7 billion at the end of 2018. In 2018, Greek banks closed eight sales totaling a book value of €13.9 billion. In addition to sales, the banks have exploited other ways to manage bad loans. For example, Alpha Bank, National Bank of Greece, Eurobank, and Piraeus entered into a servicing agreement with Italian servicer for the management of common non-performing exposures (NPE) of more than 300 Greek SMEs totaling €1.8 billion. Greece's secondary market for NPL servicers now includes 15 companies including: : Sepal (an Alpha Bank-Aktua joint venture), FPS (a Eurobank subsidiary), Pillarstone, Independent Portfolio Management, B2Kapital, UCI Hellas, Resolute Asset Management, Thea Artemis, PQH, Qquant Master Servicer, and DV01 Asset Management. At least ten more licensees are pending approval by the Bank of Greece. A handful of other companies have submitted applications and are awaiting approval.

In previous years, concerns over economic and political stability within Greece essentially froze most new investment and caused some existing investors to scale down or withdraw entirely from the Greek market.

The success in the privatization of Greece's 14 regional airports, investment in the tourism sector, and the construction of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) demonstrated the opportunities that have existed in Greece even during the height of the economic crisis. Greece's return to economic growth in 2017 and 2018 has generated new investor interest in the country. In January 2019, Greece successfully raised €2.5 billion in a five-year bond sale at a yield of 3.6%. Officials are expecting another bond sale seeking to raise €5-7 billion euros.

Table 1

Measure	Year	Index/Rank	Website Address
TI Corruption Perceptions Index	2018	67 of 180	https://www.transparency.org/country/GRC
World Bank's Doing Business Report	2019	72 of 190	http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/greece
Global Innovation Index	2018	42 of 126	https://www.globalinnovationindex.org/analysis-indicator
U.S. FDI in partner country ($M USD, stock positions)	2017	$1.2 billion	http://www.bea.gov/international/factsheet/
World Bank GNI per capita	2017	$18,090	http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD

Openness To, and Restrictions Upon, Foreign Investment

Policies Towards Foreign Direct Investment

The Greek government continues to state its desire to increase foreign investment, though the country remains a challenging climate for investment, both foreign and domestic. Despite the most recent €86 billion bailout agreement signed in August 2015 between the Greek government and its international creditors, under the auspices of the ESM, economic uncertainty remains widespread, though sentiment has been broadly improving since 2017.

Numerous additional structural reforms, undertaken as part of the country's 2015-2018 international bailout program, aim to welcome and facilitate foreign investment, and the government has publicly messaged its dedication to attracting foreign investment. The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is one example of the government's commitment in this area. In November 2015, the Greek government and TAP investors agreed on measures and began construction on the largest investment project since the start of the financial crisis, with the pipeline set to begin operations in 2020. Nevertheless, many structural reforms have created greater challenges to investors and established businesses in Greece. The country has undergone one of the most significant fiscal consolidations in modern history, with broad and deep cuts to public expenditures and significant increases in labor and social security tax rates, which have offset improved labor market competitiveness achieved through significant wage devaluation. Moreover, corruption and burdensome bureaucracy continue to create barriers to market entry for new firms, permitting incumbents to maintain oligopolies in different sectors, and creating scope for arbitrary decisions and rent seeking by public servants.

Limits on Foreign Control and Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

As a member of the EU and the European Monetary Union (the "Eurozone"), Greece is required to meet EU and Eurozone investment regulations. Foreign and domestic private entities have the legal right to establish and own businesses in Greece; however, the country places restrictions on foreign equity ownership higher than those imposed on average in the other 17 high-income OECD economies. The government has undertaken EU-mandated reforms in its energy sector, opening much of it up to foreign equity ownership. Restrictions exist on land purchases in border regions and on certain islands because of national security considerations. Foreign investors can buy or sell shares on the Athens Stock Exchange on the same basis as local investor

Other Investment Policy Reviews

The government has not undergone an investment policy review by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), or United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), or cooperated with any other international institution to produce a public report on the general investment climate. However, in March 2018, the OECD published an economic survey describing the state of the economy and addressing foreign direct investment concerns. The government has sought the OECD's counsel and technical assistance to carry out select reforms from the recommendations and develop additional reforms in line with the government's emphasis on the social welfare state.

Business Facilitation

Greece's business registration entity GEMI (General Commercial Register) has the basic responsibility for digitizing and automating the registration and monitoring procedures of commercial enterprises. More information about GEMI can be found at its website. The online business registration process is relatively clear, and although foreign companies can use it, the registration steps are currently available only in Greek. In general, a company must register with the business chamber, tax registry, social security, and local municipality. Business creation without a notary can be done for specific cases (small/personal businesses, etc.). For the establishment of larger companies, a notary is mandatory.

The country has investment promotion agencies to facilitate foreign investments. "Enterprise Greece" is the official agency of the Greek state. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Development, it is responsible for promoting investment in Greece, exports from Greece, and with making Greece more attractive as an international business partner. Enterprise Greece provides the full spectrum of services related to international business relationships and domestic business development for the international market. Enterprise Greece offers an Investor Ombudsman program for investment projects exceeding €2 million. The Ombudsman is available to assist with specific bureaucratic obstacles, delays, disputes or other difficulties that impede an investment project. In reality, Enterprise Greece, even with its ombudsman service for investments, is not very effective at moving investments projects forward.

The General Secretariat for Strategic and Private Investments streamlines the licensing procedure for strategic investments, aiming to make the process easier and more attractive to investors.

Greece has adopted the following EU definition regarding micro, small, and medium size enterprises:

- Micro Enterprises: Fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet below €2 million.Small Enterprises: Fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet below €10 million.

- Medium-Sized Enterprises: Fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover below €50 million or balance sheet below €43 million.

Micro Enterprises: Fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet below €2 million.
Small Enterprises: Fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet below €10 million.
Medium-Sized Enterprises: Fewer than 250 employees and annual turnover below €50 million or balance sheet below €43 million.

Outward Investment

The Greek government does not have any known outward investment incentive programs. Ongoing capital controls, though partially lifted, still impose restrictions or additional procedures for any entity seeking to remove pre-existing large sums of cash from Greek financial institutions.
Enterprise Greece supports the international expansion of Greek companies. While no incentives are offered, Enterprise Greece has been supportive of Greek companies attending the U.S. Government's Annual SelectUSA Investment Summit, which promotes inbound investment to the United States, and similar industry trade events internationally.

Bilateral Investment Agreements and Taxation Treaties

Greece and the United States signed the 1954 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation, which provides certain investment protection, such as acquisition and protection of property and impairment of legally acquired rights or interests.

Greece has Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) with:

1	Albania
2	Algeria
3	Argentina*

4	Armenia
5	Azerbaijan
6	Bosnia and Herzegovina
7	Bulgaria
8	Chile
9	China
10	Congo*
11	Croatia
12	Cuba
13	Cyprus
14	Czech Republic
15	Egypt
16	Estonia
17	Georgia
18	Germany
19	Hungary
20	Iran
21	Jordan
22	Kazakhstan*
23	Korea
24	Kuwait*
25	Latvia
26	Lebanon
27	Lithuania
28	Mexico
29	Moldova

30	Montenegro
31	Morocco
32	Poland
33	Romania
34	Russian Federation
35	Serbia
36	Slovakia
37	Slovenia
38	South Africa
39	Syrian
40	Tunisia
41	Turkey
42	Ukraine
43	United Arab Emirates
44	Uzbekistan
45	Viet Nam

*Signed, but not in force

B. Bilateral Taxation Treaties:

Greece and the United States signed a Treaty for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income in 1950. As an EU member state, Greece does not have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States but is a party to all U.S.-EU agreements. Greece reached an agreement in substance on November 30, 2014 on the terms of an intergovernmental agreement with the United States to implement the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), which was signed January 2017.

Legal Regime

Transparency of the Regulatory System

As an EU member, Greece is required to have transparent policies and laws for fostering competition. Foreign companies consider the complexity of government regulations and procedures and their inconsistent implementation to be a significant impediment to investing and operating in Greece. Occasionally, foreign companies report cases where there are multiple laws governing the same issue, resulting in confusion over which law is applicable. Under its bailout programs, the Greek government committed to widespread reforms to simplify the legal framework for investment, including eliminating bureaucratic obstacles, redundancies, and undue regulations. The fast track law, passed in December 2010, aimed to simplify the licensing and approval process for "strategic" investments, i.e. large-scale investments that will have a significant impact on the national economy (see paragraph 1.3, Laws/Regulations of FDI). In 2013, Greece's parliament passed Investment Law 4146/2013 to simplify the regulatory system and stimulate investment. This law provides additional incentives, beyond those in the fast track law, available to domestic and foreign investors, dependent on the sector and the location of the investment.

Greece's tax regime has lacked stability during the economic crisis, presenting additional obstacles to investment, both foreign and domestic. Foreign firms are not subject to discrimination in taxation. Numerous changes to tax laws and regulations since the beginning of the economic crisis injected uncertainty into Greece's tax regime. As part of Greece's August 2015 bailout agreement, the government converted the Ministry of Finance's Directorate-General for Public Revenue into a fully independent tax agency effective January 2017, with a broad mandate to increase collection and develop further reforms to the tax code aimed at reducing evasion and increasing the coverage of the Greek tax regime.

Foreign investment is not legally prohibited or otherwise restricted. Proposed laws and regulations are published in draft form for public comment before Parliament takes up consideration of the legislation. The laws in force are accessible on a unified website managed by the government and printed in an official gazette. Greece introduced International Financial Reporting Standards for listed companies in 2005 in accordance with EU directives. These rules improved the transparency and accountability of publicly traded companies.

Greece is not one of the 29 countries listed on the Business Facilitation Program.

International Regulatory Considerations

Citizens of other EU member state countries may work freely in Greece. Citizens of non-EU countries may work in Greece after receiving residence and work permits. There are no discriminatory or preferential export/import policies affecting foreign investors, as EU regulations govern import and export policy, and increasingly, many other aspects of investment policy in Greece.

Greece has been a World Trade Organization (WTO) member since January 1, 1995, and a member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) since March 1, 1950. Greece complies with WTO Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMs) requirements. There are no performance requirements for establishing, maintaining, or expanding an investment. Performance requirements may come into play, however, when an investor wants to take advantage of certain investment incentives offered by the government. Greece has not enacted measures that are inconsistent with TRIMs requirements, and the Embassy is not aware of any measures alleged to violate Greece's WTO TRIMs obligations. Trade policy falls within the competence and jurisdiction of the European Commission Directorate General for Trade and is generally not subject to regulation by member state national authorities.

Legal System and Judicial Independence

Although Greece has an independent judiciary, the court system is an extremely time-consuming and unwieldy means for enforcing property and contractual rights. According to the "Enforcing Contracts Indicator" of the OECD's 'Doing Business 2019" survey, Greece ranks 132nd among 190 countries in terms of the speed of delivery of justice, requiring 1,580 days (more than four years) on average to resolve a dispute, compared to the OECD high-income countries' average of 582.4 days. The government committed, as part of its three bailout packages, to reforms intended to expedite the processing of commercial cases through the court system. In July 2015, the government adopted significant reforms to the code of civil procedure (law 4335/2015). These reforms aimed to accelerate judicial proceedings in support of contract enforcement and investment climate stability and entered into force in January 2016. Foreign companies report, however, that Greek courts do not consistently provide fast and effective recourse. Problems with judicial corruption reportedly still exist. Commercial and contractual laws accord with international norms.

Laws and Regulations on Foreign Direct Investment

In August 2017, the Greek government passed Law 4487, which aims to create the legal framework for enhancing film production (movies, TV shows, and gaming software) through investment incentives. In particular, a film production company can receive (in the form of state subsidy) 25% (fixed) of their expenses. The expenses can include salaries, copyright payments, renting a studio, equipment, transportation etc. The subsidy is tax free and the investment (film production) should be budgeted over €100,000. Beneficiaries are either companies based in Greece or foreign companies that have an affiliated company in the country.

Investments in Greece operate under two main laws: the new Investment Law (4399/2016) that addresses small-scale investments and Law 4146/2013 that addresses strategic investments. In particular;

- Law 4399/2016, entitled "Statutory framework to the establishment of Private Investments Aid Schemes for the regional and economic development of the country" was passed in June 2016. Its key objectives include the creation of new jobs, the increase of extroversion, the reindustrialization of the country, and the attraction of FDI. The law provides aids (as incentives) for companies that invest from €50,000 (Social Cooperative Companies) up to €500,000 (large sized companies) as well as tax breaks. The Greek government provides funds to cover part of the eligible expenses of the investment plan; the amount of the subsidy is determined based on the region and the business size. Qualified companies are exempt from paying income tax on their pre-tax profits for all their activities. There is a fixed corporate income tax rate and fast licensing procedures. Eligible economic activities are manufacturing, shipbuilding, transportation/infrastructure, tourism, and energy.

- Law 4146/2013, entitled the "Creation of a Business-Friendly Environment for Strategic and Private Investments" is the other primary investment incentive law currently in force. The law aims to modernize and improve the institutional framework for private investments, raise liquidity, accelerate investment procedures, and increase transparency. It seeks to provide an efficient institutional framework for all investors and speed the approval processes for pending and approved investment projects. The law created a general directorate for private investments within the Ministry of Economy (formerly the Ministry of Development) and reduced the value of investments needed to be considered strategic. The law also provides tax exemptions and incentives to investors and allows foreign nationals from non-EU countries who buy property in Greece worth over €250,000 ($285,000) to obtain five-year renewable residence permits for themselves and their families. In March 2019, the Greek government brought a bill to parliament to expand eligibility criteria of the existing program, which would grant non-EU nationals a 5 year residency permit provided that they invest at least €400,000 in Greek companies of buy and hold Greek bonds through a Greek bank entity The law created a central licensing authority aimed at establishing a one-stop-shop service to accelerate implementation of major investments. More about this law can be found online at Enterprise Greece – Doing Business

- Law 3908/2011 is gradually being phased out by law 4146 (above).

- Law 3919/2011 aims to liberalize more than 150 currently regulated or closed-shop professions. The implementation of this law continued in 2013 and 2014.

- Law 3982/2011 reduced the complexity of the licensing system for manufacturing activities and technical professions and modernized certain qualification and certification requirements to lower barriers to entry.

- Law 4014/2011 simplified the environmental licensing process.

- Law 3894/2010 (also known as fast track) allows Enterprise Greece to expedite licensing procedures for qualifying investments in the following sectors: industry, energy, tourism, transportation, telecommunications, health services, waste management, or high-end technology/innovation. To qualify, investments must meet one of the following conditions:

- exceed €100 million;
- exceed €15 million in the industrial sector, operating in industrial zones;
- exceed €40 million and concurrently create at least 120 new jobs; or
- create 150 new jobs, regardless of the monetary value of the investment.

More about fast track licensing of strategic investments can be found online

Other investment laws include:

- Law 3389/2005 introduced the use of public-private partnerships (PPP). This law aimed to facilitate PPPs in the service and construction sectors by creating a market-friendly regulatory environment.

- Law 3426/2005 completed Greece's harmonization with EU Directive 2003/54/EC and provided for the gradual deregulation of the electricity market. Law 3175/2003 harmonized Greek legislation with the requirements of EU Directive 2003/54/EC on common rules for the internal electricity market. Law 2773/99 initially opened up 34% of the Greek energy market, in compliance with EU Directive 96/92 concerning regulation of the internal electricity market.

- Law 3427/2005, which amended Law 89/67, provides special tax treatment for offshore operations of foreign companies established in Greece. Special tax treatment is offered only to operations in countries that comply with OECD tax standards. The most up-to-date list of countries in compliance can be found at OECD.

- Law 2364/95 and supporting amendments governs investment in the natural gas market in Greece.

- Law 2289/95, which amended Law 468/76, allows private (both foreign and domestic) participation in oil exploration and development.

- Law 2246/94 and supporting amendments opened Greece's telecommunications market to foreign investment.

- Legislative Decree 2687 of 1953, in conjunction with Article 112 of the Constitution, gives approved foreign "productive investments" (primarily manufacturing and tourism enterprises) property rights, preferential tax treatment, and work permits for foreign managerial and technical staff. The Decree also provides a constitutional guarantee against unilateral changes in the terms of a foreign investor's agreement with the government, but the guarantee does not cover changes in the tax regime.

Competition and Anti-Trust Laws

Under Articles 101-109 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, the European Commission (EC), together with member state national competition authorities, directly enforces EU competition rules. The European Commission Directorate-General for Competition carries out this mandate in member states, including Greece. Greece's competition policy authority rests with the Hellenic Competition Commission, in consultation with the Ministry of Economy. The Hellenic Competition Commission protects the proper functioning of the market and ensures the enforcement of the rules on competition. It acts as an independent authority and has administrative and financial autonomy.

Expropriation and Compensation

Private property may be expropriated for public purposes, but the law requires this be done in a nondiscriminatory manner and with prompt, adequate, and effective compensation. Due process and transparency are mandatory, and investors and lenders receive compensation in accordance with international norms. There have been no expropriation actions involving the real property of foreign investors in recent history, although legal proceedings over expropriation claims initiated, in one instance, over a decade ago, continue to work through the judicial system.

Dispute Settlement

ICSID Convention and New York Convention

Greece is a member of both the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (1958 New York convention).

Investor-State Dispute Settlement

The Embassy is aware of a few ongoing investment disputes dating from more than ten years ago. Greece accepts binding international arbitration of investment disputes between foreign investors and the Greek government, and foreign firms have found satisfaction through arbitration. International arbitration and European Court of Justice Judgments supersede local court decisions. The judicial system provides for civil court arbitration proceedings for investment and trade disputes. Although an investment agreement could be made subject to a foreign legal jurisdiction, this is not common, particularly if one of the contracting parties is the Greek government. Foreign court judgments are accepted and enforced, albeit slowly, by the local courts.

In an effort to create a more investor-friendly environment, the government established in 2017 an Investor's Ombudsman service. The Ombudsman is authorized to mediate disputes that arise between investors and the government during the licensing procedure. Investors can employ the Ombudsman, housed within Enterprise Greece, with projects exceeding €2 million in value. More info on the Ombudsman service can be found at Enterprise Greece – Investor.

International Commercial Arbitration and Foreign Courts

As noted above, Greece's independent judiciary is both time-consuming and unwieldy as a means for enforcing property and contractual rights. The government has committed to implementing significant reforms to the judicial system, aimed at speeding up adjudications and improving dispute resolution for investors.

Bankruptcy Regulations

Bankruptcy laws in Greece meet international norms. Under Greek bankruptcy law 3588/2007, private creditors receive compensation after claims from the government and insurance funds have been satisfied. Monetary judgments are usually made in euros unless explicitly stipulated otherwise. Greece has a reliable system of recording security interests in property. According to the World Bank's 2019 Doing Business report, resolving insolvency in Greece takes 3.5 years on average and costs 9% of the debtor's estate, with the most likely outcome that the company will be sold piecemeal. Recovery rate is 33.2 cents on the dollar. Greece ranks 62 of 190 economies surveyed for ease of resolving insolvency in the Doing Business report (from 57 in 2018).

Industrial Policies

Investment Incentives

Investment incentives are available on an equal basis for both foreign and domestic investors in productive enterprises. The investment laws in Greece aim to increase liquidity, accelerate investment processes, and ensure transparency. They provide an efficient institutional framework for all investors and speed the approval process for pending investment projects. The basic investment incentives law 4146/2013, "Creation of a Development Friendly Environment for Strategic and Private Investments," aims to modernize and improve the institutional and legal framework to attract private investment. Separately, Law 3908/2011 (which replaced Law 3299/2004) provides incentives in the form of tax relief, cash grants, leasing subsidies, and soft loans on qualifying investments in all economic sectors with some exceptions.

In evaluating applications for tax and other financial incentives for investment, Greek authorities consider several criteria, including the viability of the planned investment; the expected impact on the economy and regional development (job creation, export orientation, local content use, energy conservation, environmental protection); the use of innovative technology; and the creditworthiness and capacity of the investor. Progress assessments are conducted on projects receiving incentives, and companies that fail to implement projects as planned may be forced to give up incentives initially granted to them. All information transmitted to the government for the approval process is to be treated confidentially by law.

Investment categories are:

General Entrepreneurship
Regional Cohesion
Technological development
Youth Entrepreneurship (18-40 years old)
Large Investment Plans (above €50 million)
Integrated, Multi-Annual Business Plans
Partnership & Networking

The entire application and evaluation process shall not exceed six months (more information can be found at Ependyseis.

Research and Development

Offset agreements, co-production, and technology transfers are commonplace in Greece's procurement of defense items. Although the most recent Greek defense procurement law eliminated offset requirements, there are some remaining ongoing active offset contracts, as well as expired offset contracts with U.S. firms that are potentially subject to non-performance penalties. Defense procurements are still subject to economic development requirements, which are, in effect, similar to offsets. In 2014, the government committed to resolving offset contract disputes in a way that would satisfy both parties and avoid the imposition of penalties or fines.

In general, U.S. and other foreign firms may participate in government-financed and/or subsidized research and development programs. Foreign investors do not face discriminatory or other formal inhibiting requirements. However, many potential and actual foreign investors assert the complexity of Greek regulations, the need to deal with many layers of bureaucracy and the involvement of multiple government agencies all discourage investment.

Foreign Trade Zones/Free Ports/Trade Facilitation

Greece has three free-trade zones, located at the Piraeus, Thessaloniki, and Heraklion port areas. Greek and foreign-owned firms enjoy the same advantages in these zones. Goods of foreign origin may be brought into these zones without payment of customs duties or other taxes and may remain free of all duties and taxes if subsequently transshipped or re-exported. Similarly, documents pertaining to the receipt, storage, or transfer of goods within the zones are free from stamp taxes. Handling operations are carried out according to EU regulations 2504/1988 and 2562/1990. Transit goods may be held in the zones free of bond. These zones also may be used for repackaging, sorting, and re-labeling operations. Assembly and manufacture of goods are carried out on a small scale in the Thessaloniki Free Zone. Storage time is unlimited, as long as warehouse rents are paid every six months.

Performance and Data Localization Requirements

The Greek government does not follow a policy of forced localization, designed to require foreign investors to use domestic content in goods or technology, with the exception of economic development requirements in many defense contracts (see Research and Development, above). Some foreign investors partner with local companies or to hire local staff/experts, however, as a way to facilitate their entry into the market. In 2019, the government enacted a new amendment to the Greek tourism legislation, which obligates tour operators from third countries who do not own a travel agency in Greece to collaborate with a local travel agency established in the country to be able to conduct its business locally. The government is not taking steps to force foreign investors to keep a specific amount of the data they collect and store within Greek national borders.

Protection of Property Rights

Real Property

Greek laws extend the protection of property rights to both foreign and Greek nationals, and the legal system protects and facilitates acquisition and disposition of all property rights.

Multiple layers of authority in Greece are involved in the issuance or approval of land use and zoning permits, creating disincentives to real property investment. Secured interests in property are movable and real, recognized and enforced. The concept of mortgage does exist in the market and can be recorded through the banks. The government is working to create a comprehensive land registry -- scheduled to be completed by 2020 -- which is expected to increase the transparency of real estate management. Greece ranks 153 out of 190 countries for Ease of Registering Property in the World Bank's Doing Business 2019 Report, down from 141 last year. Greece made registering property more burdensome by requiring a property tax certificate for registering a property transfer.

Foreign nationals can acquire real estate property in Greece, though they first need to be issued a tax authentication number. However, for the border areas, foreign nationals first require a license from the Greek state (Law 3978/2011). In another effort to boost investment, the government passed law 4146/2013, which allows foreign nationals who buy property in Greece worth over €250,000 ($285,000) to obtain a five-year residence permit for themselves and their families. The "Golden Visa" program has been extended to buyers of various types of Greek securities, including stocks, bonds, and bank accounts, with a value of at least €400,000. The permit can be extended for an additional five years and allows travel to other EU and Schengen countries without a visa.

Intellectual Property Rights

Greece is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, the European Patent Convention, the Washington Patent Cooperation Treaty, and the Bern Copyright Convention. As a member of the EU, Greece has harmonized its IP legislation with EU rules and regulations. The WTO-TRIPS agreement was incorporated into Greek legislation on February 28, 1995 (Law 2290/1995). The Greek government also signed and ratified the WIPO internet treaties, and incorporated them into Greek legislation (Laws 3183 and 3184/2003) in 2003. Greece's legal framework for copyright protection is found in Law 2121 of 1993 on copyrights and Law 2328 of 1995 on the media.

Greece has been on the U.S. Trade Representative Special 301 Watch List since 2008. Although Greece harmonized its IP legislation with the EU rules and regulations, overall enforcement of IPR laws has been inadequate and ineffective, and rights holders continue to experience problems in Greece. Recently, the government improved IPR enforcement by establishing special Committee to address online piracy and updated its Code of Civil Procedure, which improved the efficiency of civil infringement procedures. However, other outstanding IP challenges remain unresolved, including the government use of unlicensed software, inadequate enforcement against counterfeiting and piracy and ineffective criminal justice system. IP related criminal investigations, prosecutions, and sentences as well as customs seizures were insufficient.

A law enacted in June 2011 (Law 3982/2011), which provides police ex officio authority to confiscate and destroy counterfeit goods, has been effective in some areas, but much remains to be done. Due to continued budget cuts because of Greece's fiscal commitments, IPR enforcement efforts, including seizures of counterfeit goods, investigations, operational programs, and fine collections remain lackluster. Private sector companies have asked Greek authorities to require only storage of a sample of the seized goods in official government facilities to reduce the burden of having to pay for storage for long periods. This remains an issue of contention. Trademark violations, especially in the apparel and footwear sectors, are still widespread. According to the government, counterfeit products in Greece are mainly luxury bags, wallets, footwear, clothing, accessories, watches, cigarettes, spirits, cell phone batteries and accessories, sunglasses, toys, and spare car parts.

Greece is not listed on 2017 out-of- Cycle Notorious Markets report.

For additional information about treaty obligations and points of contact at local IP offices, please see WIPO's country profiles .

Resources for Rights Holders

Embassy Point of Contact:
U.S. Embassy Athens
Economic Section
91 Vas. Sophias Avenue, Athens, Greece 10160
Phone: +30-210-720-2490
Office.Athens@trade.gov

A list of local attorneys is available at US Embassy Athens Webpage

American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce
109-111 Messoghion Avenue, Politia Business Center
Athens, Greece 11526
Phone: +30-210-699-3559, Fax: +30-210-698-5686

Email: info@amcham.gr
Web Site: www.amcham.gr

Financial Sector

Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

Following EU regulations, Greece is open to foreign portfolio investment. Law 3371/2005 sets an effective legal framework to encourage and facilitate portfolio investment. Law 3283/2004 incorporates the European Council's Directive 2001/107, setting the legal framework for the operation of mutual funds. Until June 2015, although liquidity in the markets was tight, sizeable positions could enter and exit. With the imposition of capital controls on June 29, 2015, for a period of six months (July 2015 – December 2015), domestic investors could only acquire shares with the injection of "fresh money" and could not use existing funds. Short selling of banking shares was not allowed. As a result, FTSE downgraded the Athens Stock Exchange from "advanced" to "advanced emerging markets" in March 2016. The Bank of Greece complies with its IMF Article VIII obligations and does not generally impose restrictions on payments. Transfers for current international transactions are allowed, but are subject to specific conditions for approval. The lack of liquidity in the market along with the challenging economic environment have made the allocation of credit very tight, but is accessible to foreign investors on the local market, who also have access to a variety of credit instruments.

Money and Banking System

The implementation of a broad-based bank recapitalization program in 2012 and 2013, and a rapid consolidation of institutions in the sector, largely stabilized the banking sector by early 2014. However, following the election of the current government in January 2015, bank deposit flight accelerated. By June 2015, total deposits in the Greek banking system had fallen to €134 billion, down from €164 billion in October 2014. Uncertainty caused by the controversial negotiations with Greece's creditors led to the June 2015 imposition of capital controls and a complete closure of the banks for two weeks, which, though necessary to prevent the banking sector's collapse, weakened the banks' capital positions.

In November 2015, following an Asset Quality Review and Stress Test conducted by the ECB as a requirement of the new ESM agreement, a third recapitalization of Greece's four systemic banks (National Bank of Greece, Piraeus Bank, Alpha Bank, and Eurobank) took place. The recapitalization concluded by the end of November with the banks remaining in private hands, after raising €6.5 billion from foreign investors, mostly hedge funds. The ratio of non-performing exposures (NPEs) reached 43.1% at the end of December 2017, down 10% compared to December 2016. More broadly, NPEs declined to €95.7 billion from €108.4. Compared to March 2016, when the stock of NPEs reached the peak, the reduction is 12% (€13 billion). Similarly, non-performing loans (NPLs) – loans that have not been serviced or paid on for more than 90 days – dropped to below €50 billion at the end of December 2018. Banks estimate that about 20% of these NPEs are owned by so-called "strategic defaulters" – borrowers who refrain from paying their debts to lenders to take advantage of the laws enacted during the financial crisis to protect borrowers from foreclosure or creditors collection even though they are able to pay their obligations.

Developing an effective NPL management strategy is among the most difficult components of the government's negotiations with its creditors. Under the terms of the ESM agreement, Greece must create an NPL market through which the loans could, over time, be sold or transferred for servicing purposes to foreign investors. Much of this work has now been completed, and the Bank of Greece has licensed more than ten servicers. The sale and securitization environment for non-performing loans continues to mature, with all of Greece's systemic banks having conducted portfolio sales of secured and unsecured loan tranches since mid-2017. The potential sale and/or transfer of Greek NPLs continues to receive interest by a large number of Greek and foreign companies and funds, signaling a viable market. After several regulatory and political delays in 2017, the Greek state's electronic auction platform for collateral and foreclosed assets is functioning, and auction expanded to more than 20,000 per year by the end of 2018. The bulk of auctions still conclude with the selling bank as the purchaser of the assets. The government seeks to exclude loans linked with mortgages for primary residencies (at least through the end of 2018 under existing law) and preventing aggressive collection on business as part of the NPL secondary market activity.

Poor asset quality inhibits banks' ability to provide systemic financing. Deposits stood at €132.2 billion as of February 2019, up from €124.9 billion a year earlier. In the eight -year period from September 2009 (when deposits reached their highest level of €237 billion) to September 2017, overall deposits shrunk by a total of €114.5 billion. According to the latest data, Greece's systemic banks hold the following assets for 2018: Piraeus Bank, €60.4 billion National Bank of Greece, €59.2 billion Alpha Bank, €55.2 billion and Eurobank, €50.2 billion.

Few U.S. financial institutions have a presence in Greece. In September 2014, Alpha Bank acquired the retail operations of Citibank, including Diners Club. Bank of America serves only companies and some special classes of pensioners.

There are a limited number of cross-shareholding arrangements among Greek businesses. To date, the objective of such arrangements has not been to restrict foreign investment. The same applies to hostile takeovers, a practice which has been recently introduced in the Greek market. The government actively encourages foreign portfolio investment.

Greece has a reasonably efficient capital market that offers the private sector a wide variety of credit instruments. Credit is allocated on market terms prevailing in the Eurozone and credit is equally accessible by Greek and foreign investors. An independent regulatory body, the Hellenic Capital Market Commission, supervises brokerage firms, investment firms, mutual fund management companies, portfolio investment companies, real estate investment trusts, financial intermediation firms, clearing houses and their administrators (e.g. the Athens Stock Exchange), and investor indemnity and transaction security schemes (e.g. the Common Guarantee Fund and the Supplementary Fund), and also encourages and facilitates portfolio investments.

Owner-registered bonds and shares are traded on the Athens Stock Exchange (ASE). It is mandatory in Greece for the shares of banking, insurance, and public utility companies to be registered. Greek corporations listed on the ASE that are also state contractors are required to have all their shares registered. In September 2015, during the annual country classification review, FTSE announced that the Greek exchange would be downgraded from "advanced" to "advanced emerging markets." The decision took effect as of March 2016. In June 2013, equity index provider MSCI downgraded Greece to advanced emerging-market status, a first in the index's history, citing the ASE's loss of 90% of its value since the start of the financial crisis in October 2007 and after Greece failed to meet criteria regarding securities borrowing and lending facilities, short selling, and transferability.

Greece has not explored or announced that it intends to implement or allow the implementation of blockchain technologies in its banking transactions.

Foreign Exchange and Remittances

Foreign Exchange Policies

Greece's foreign exchange market adheres to EU rules on the free movement of capital. Until June 2015, receipts from productive investments could be repatriated freely at market exchange rates, and there were no restrictions on, or difficulties with, converting, repatriating, or transferring funds associated with an investment. In late June 2015, the government declared a bank holiday, during which banks were closed for two weeks, and imposed capital controls. Capital controls placed a limit on weekly cash withdrawal amounts and restricted the transfer of capital abroad. Although the government has continued to ease capital controls in 2016 and abolished all capital controls on stock transactions in December 2015, several restrictions still apply. A five-member "Banking Transaction Approval Committee" was established by the Ministry of Finance and is the competent authority to approve transactions abroad, in coordination with the Bank of Greece. Currently, the daily limit for commercial payments abroad stands at €250,000 (with some exceptions).

Remittance Policies

Remittance of investment returns is also subject to capital controls. Greece is not engaged in currency manipulation for the purpose of gaining a competitive advantage. The country is a member of the Eurozone, which employs a freely floating exchange rate.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), in its latest report on Greece (October 2011), recognized that the country had made significant progress in addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2007 Mutual Evaluation Report. All Core and all Key Recommendations are at a level essentially equivalent to compliant (C) or largely compliant (LC) under FATF definitions. In 2011, the FATF removed Greece from its regular follow-up process in recognition of this progress. The fourth round of mutual evaluation of Greece began in October 2018, with the Plenary discussion scheduled for June 2019.

Sovereign Wealth Funds

There are no sovereign wealth funds in Greece. Public pension funds may invest up to 20% of their reserves in state or corporate bonds.

State-Owned Enterprises

Greek state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are active in utilities, transportation, energy, media, health, and the defense industry. A private website maintains an online list of SOEs, though it is not affiliated with official governmental sources. The uniform legal definition of an SOE is a company/organization that belongs to or is controlled and managed by the state. Most Greek SOEs are structured under the auspices of the Hellenic Corporation for Assets and Participations (HCAP), an independent holding company for state assets mandated by Greece's most recent bailout and formally launched in 2016. HCAP's supervisory board is independent from the Greek state and is appointed in part by Greece's creditor institutions. Some SOEs are still supervised by the Finance Ministry's Special Secretariat for Public Enterprises and Organizations, established by Law 3429/2005. Private companies previously were not allowed to enter the market in sectors where the SOE functioned as a monopoly, for example, water, sewage, or urban transportation. However, several of these SOEs are planned for privatization as a requirement of the country's bailout programs, intended to liberalize markets and raise revenues for the state.

Official government statements on privatization since 2015 have sometimes led to confusion among investors. Some senior officials have declared their opposition to previously approved privatization projects, while other officials have maintained the stance that the government remains committed to the sale of SOEs. Under the bailout agreement, Greece has moved forward with the deregulation of the electricity market. In sectors opened to private investment, such as the telecommunications market, private enterprises compete with public enterprises under the same nominal terms and conditions with respect to access to markets, credit, and other business operations, such as licenses and supplies. Some private sector competitors to SOEs report the government has provided preferential treatment to SOEs in obtaining licenses and leases. The government actively seeks to end many of these state monopolies and introduce private competition as part of its overall reform of the Greek economy. Greece – as a member of the EU – participates in the Government Procurement Agreement within the framework of the WTO. SOEs purchase goods and services from private sector and foreign firms through public tenders. SOEs are subject to budget constraints, with salary cuts imposed in the past few years on public sector jobs.

Privatization Program

The Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF, or TAIPED, as it is known in Greek), an independent non-governmental privatization fund, was established in 2011 under Greece's bailout program to manage the sale or concession of major government assets, to raise substantial state revenue, and to bring in new technology and expertise for the commercial development of these assets. These include listed and unlisted state-owned companies, infrastructure, and commercially valuable buildings and land. Foreign and domestic investor participation in the privatization program has generally not been subject to restrictions, although the economic environment during the crisis has challenged the domestic private sector's ability to raise funds to purchase firms slated for privatization.

The August 2015 ESM bailout agreement required Greece to consolidate the HRADF, the Hellenic Financial Stability Fund (HFSF), the Public Properties Company (ETAD) and a new entity that will manage other state-owned enterprises (SOEs) into the Hellenic Corporation of Assets and Participations (or HCAP), was formed by Law 4389/2016. In March 2017, HCAP received short- and long-term guidelines from the Minister of Finance, and in September 2017, it received strategic guidelines from the Greek state (HCAP's sole shareholder).

Privatizations are subject to a public bidding process, which is easy to understand, non-discriminatory, and transparent. Notable privatizations completed in 2018 include the transfer of the 66% of Greece's gas transmission system operator DESFA to Senfluga Energy Infrastructure Holdings, sale of 67% of the shares of Thessaloniki Port Authority (OLTh), the sale of the remaining 5% of the largest telecommunications provider (OTE) shares to Deutsche Telecom, and rolling stock maintenance and railroad availability services company Rosco. In February 2019, the government concluded the 20-year extension of the concession agreement of the Athens International Airport (AIA), worth 1.4 billion euros, and is planning to sell remaining 30% share in AIA in the upcoming months. The government plans to privatize 10 regional ports and several marinas across Greece, including Heraklion, Elefsina, and Alexandroupolis. In addition, the Hellenic Gaming commission announced a tender for a casino licenses slated to run at Hellenikon, an 8 billion euro project to develop Athens former airport into a multi-purpose complex. Currently, the privatization of Public Power Corporation's (PPC) two lignite powered units in Melitis and Megalopoli, natural gas company DEPA and the Egnatia motorway in northern Greece (Greece's biggest highway) are ongoing.

Responsible Business Conduct

Awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) including environmental, social, and governance issues, has been growing over the last decade among both producers and consumers in Greece. Several enterprises, particularly large ones, in many fields of production and services, have accepted and now promote CSR principles. A number of non-profit business associations have emerged in the last few years (Hellenic Network for Corporate Social Responsibility, Global Sustain, etc.) to disseminate CSR values and to promote them in the business world and society more broadly. These groups' members have incorporated programs that contribute to the sustainable economic development of the communities in which they operate; minimize the impacts of their activities on the environment and natural resources; create healthy and safe working conditions for their employees; provide equal opportunities for employment and professional development; and provide shareholders with satisfactory returns through responsible social and environmental management. Firms that pursue CSR in Greece enhance the public acceptance and respect that they enjoy. In 2014, the government drafted a National Action Plan for Corporate Social Responsibility for the 2014-2020 period. The main goal of the plan is to increase the number of companies that recognize and use CSR to formulate their strategies.

Corruption

Resources to Report Corruption

Based on a research by Ernst & Young for calendar year 2018, Greece ranks third out of 41 polled countries on the corruption perception index with 81 percent of employees in Greek businesses consider that corruption is widespread in the country. Only 22 percent said they knew their business had a special hotline for denouncing corruption cases. Only two percent of Greek business employees have resigned from their post on the grounds of "unethical behavior." Greece was the EU member state which saw the biggest decrease in annual rankings measuring perceptions of corruption, as it fell eight places on 2018 Transparency International's Corruption perception index, from 59 in 2017 to 67. By contrast, the country improved since 2012, partly due to mandatory structural reforms. Despite these structural improvements, burdensome bureaucracy is reportedly slowing the progress. Transparency International issued a report in 2018 criticizing the government for improper public procurement actions involving Greek government ministers and the recent appointment of the close advisor to the country's prime minister to be the head of the Hellenic Competition Commission, which oversees the enforcement of anti-trust legislation.

Bribery is a criminal act and the law provides severe penalties for infractions, although diligent implementation and haphazard or uneven enforcement of the law remains an issue. Historically, the problem has been most acute in the area of government procurement, as political influence and other considerations are widely believed to play a significant role in the evaluation of bids. Corruption related to the health care system and political party funding are areas of concern, as is the "fragmented" anti-corruption apparatus. NGOs and other observers have expressed concern over perceived high levels of official corruption. Permanent and ad hoc government entities charged with combating corruption are understaffed and underfinanced. Various polls have indicated public confidence in the government and in politician is low. There is a widespread perception that there are high levels of corruption in the public sector and tax evasion in the private sector, and many Greeks view corruption as the main obstacle to the economic recovery.

The Ministry of Justice prosecutes cases of bribery and corruption. In cases where politicians are involved, the Greek parliament can conduct investigations and/or lift parliamentary immunity to allow a special court action to proceed against the politician. A December 2014 law does not allow high ranking officials, including the prime minister, ministers, alternate, and deputy ministers, parliament deputies, European Parliament deputies, general and special secretaries, regional governors and vice governors, and mayors and deputy mayors to benefit from more lenient sentences in cases involving official bribes. In 2019, the parliament passed a new amendment to Article 62 of the constitution, which limits parliamentary immunity to acts carried out in the course of parliamentary duties. Under current constitution, parliamentary immunity applies to all acts conducted while in the office, irrespective if act is connected to the parliamentary duties. In addition, the parliament amended Article 86 of the constitution, abolishing the statute of limitations for crimes committed by ministers and to disallow postponements for trials of ministers.

On March 19, 2015, the government passed Law 4320, which provides for the establishment of a General Secretariat for Combatting Corruption under the authority of a new Minister of State. Under Article 12 of the Law, this entity drafts a national anti-corruption strategy, with an emphasis on coordination between anti-corruption bodies within various ministries and agencies, including the Economic Police, the Financial and Economic Crime Unit (SDOE), the Ministries' Internal Control Units, and the Health and Welfare Services Inspection Body. Based on Law 4320, two major anti-corruption bodies, the Inspectors-Controllers Body for Public Administration (SEEDD) and the Inspectors-Controllers Body for Public Works (SEDE), were moved under the jurisdiction of the General Secretariat for Combatting Corruption. A Minister of State for combatting corruption was appointed to the cabinet following the January 2015 elections and given oversight of government efforts to combat corruption and economic crimes. The minister drafted coordinated plans of action and monitored their implementation, and was given operational control of the Economic Crime division of the Hellenic Police, the SDOE, ministries' internal control units, and the Health and Welfare Services' inspection body. Following the September 2015 national elections, the cabinet post of Minister of State for combatting corruption was abolished, and those duties were assigned to a new alternate minister for combatting corruption in the Ministry of Justice, Transparency, and Human Rights.

Legislation passed on May 11, 2015 provides a wider range of disciplinary sanctions against state employees accused of misconduct or breach of duty, while eliminating the immediate suspension of an accused employee prior to the completion of legal proceedings. If found guilty, offenders could be deprived of wages for up to 12 months and forced to relinquish their right to regain a senior post for a period of one to five years. Certain offenders could also be fined from €3,000 to €100,000. The law requires income and asset disclosure by appointed and elected officials, including nonpublic sector employees, such as journalists and heads of state-funded NGOs. Several different agencies are mandated to monitor and verify disclosures, including the General Inspectorate for Public Administration, the police internal affairs bureau, the Piraeus appeals prosecutor, and an independent permanent parliamentary committee. Declarations are made publicly available. The law provides for administrative and criminal sanctions for noncompliance. Penalties range from two to ten years' imprisonment and fines from €10,000 to €1 million.

UN Anticorruption Convention, OECD Convention on Combatting Bribery

Greece is a signatory to the UN Anticorruption Convention, which it signed on December 10, 2003, and ratified September 17, 2008. As a signatory of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Government Officials and all relevant EU-mandated anti-corruption agreements, the Greek government is committed in principle to penalizing those who commit bribery in Greece or abroad. The OECD Convention has been in effect since 1999. Greek accession to other relevant conventions or treaties:

- Council of Europe Civil Law Convention on Corruption: Signed June 8, 2000. Ratified February 21, 2002. Entry into force: November 1, 2003.
- Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption: Signed January 27, 1999. Ratified July 10, 2007. Entry into force: November 1, 2007.
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: Signed on December 13, 2000. Ratified January 11, 2011.

- Resources to Report Corruption

Government Agency
Organization: The Inspectors-Controllers Body for Public Administration
Address: 60 Sygrou Avenue, 11742, Athens
Telephone number: +30-213-215-8800
Email address: seedd@seedd.gr

Watchdog Organization
Organization: Transparency International Greece

Address: 4 Thetidos Street, 115 28, Athens
Telephone number: +30-210-722-4940
Email address: tihellas@otenet.gr

Political and Security Environment

There have been no major terrorist incidents in Greece in recent years; however, domestic groups conduct intermittent small-scale attacks such as targeted package bombs, improvised explosive devices, and unsophisticated incendiary devices (Molotov cocktails) typically targeting properties of political figures, party offices, privately-owned vehicles, ministries, police stations, and businesses,. In addition, domestic anarchist groups, such as "Rubicon", carry out small-scale attacks targeting government buildings and foreign missions. Bilateral counterterrorism cooperation with the Greek government remained strong and Greece has enhanced tools and information exchange to vet undocumented migrants who continue to arrive in significant numbers. Support from the Greek security services with respect to the protection of American interests is excellent. While Demonstrations and protests are commonplace in large cities in Greece. While most of these demonstrations and strikes were peaceful and small-scale, they often caused temporary disruption to essential services and traffic, and anarchist groups are known in some cases to attach themselves to other demonstrations to create mayhem.

The masterminds of Greece's most notorious terrorist groups, including November 17 and Revolutionary Popular Struggle, active between the 1970s and 1990s and responsible for hundreds of attacks and murders, including of four Americans, are currently behind bars. Greek authorities largely eliminated these groups in advance of the 2004 Olympic Games. Following the Olympics, a new wave of organizations emerged, including Revolutionary Struggle (RS), Conspiracy of Fire Nuclei (CFN), Sect of Revolutionaries (SR), though authorities again rounded up these groups in a wave of arrests between 2009 and 2011, and in 2014.

Current, active domestic terrorist groups include "OLA," also known as the Group of Popular Fighters or Popular Fighters Group, , which claimed responsibility for the December 2018 bomb outside a private television station, and the December 2017 bomb outside an Athens courthouse. OLA also claimed responsibility for the November 2015 bomb attack at the offices of the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, which caused extensive damage to the offices and surrounding buildings, the December 2014 attack on the Israeli embassy in Athens, which resulted in no injuries and minor damage to the building, and the attack on the German Ambassador's residence in Athens December 2013. OLA also claimed responsibility for an indirect fire attack on a Mercedes-Benz building on January 12, 2014, and an attack in January 2013 against the headquarters of the then-governing New Democracy party in Athens.

Labor Policies and Practices

There is an adequate supply of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor in Greece, although some highly technical skills may be lacking. Illegal immigrants predominate in the unskilled labor sector in many urban areas, and in rural areas predominately in agriculture. Greece provides residency permits to migrants for a variety of reasons, including work. In December 2017, there were 525,519 holders of residence permits per the Ministry of Migration Policy. In July 2015, Parliament adopted a new law regulating the status of non-EU foreign nationals recruited to work in the country as seasonal workers. The law also reduced the minimum consecutive residency period in the country required for undocumented migrants to be eligible to apply for a residency permit from ten to seven years, such applications being judged on the applicant's strong ties to the country. The same law outlined the requirements for setting work contracts, required proof of adequate shelter for workers and imposes a €1,500 ($1,650) fine for employers found not to provide this, required prepayment of at least one month's worth of social security for each employee, provides basic labor rights to each worker, and prohibits employers from recruiting workers if found to have previously recruited workers through fraudulent means. The law also stipulated that daily wages for non-EU foreign seasonal workers cannot be less than that of an unqualified worker. The law granted seasonal non-EU foreign workers the same rights as citizens with respect to minimum age of employment, labor conditions, the right to association, unionism, collective bargaining, education and vocational training, employment consultation services and the right to certain goods, services and benefits under conditions. The same law also provided that non-EU nationals who are victims of abusive conditions or labor accidents could be eligible to apply for a residency permit on humanitarian grounds.

Asylum-seekers are eligible to apply for a work permit once they complete their first asylum interview; however, the procedures for obtaining this permit were not widely understood by asylum-seekers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or government officials. According to the Greek Asylum Service there were over 38,000 pending asylum applications at the beginning of March 2018, plus 19,183 recognized refugees who arrived since 2015. Recognized refugees are entitled to the same labor rights as Greek nationals. NGOs and government officials working in migrant sites reported that some asylum-seekers perform undeclared seasonal agricultural labor in rural areas.

Greece has ratified International Labor Organization (ILO) Core Conventions. Specific legislation provides for the right of association and the rights to strike, organize, and bargain collectively. Greek labor laws set a minimum age (15) and wage for employment, determine acceptable work conditions and minimum occupational health and safety standards, define working hours, limit overtime, and apply certain rules for the dismissal of personnel. There is a difference between national minimum wage in the private sector for unspecialized workers aged 25 or older and workers below 25 years of age. The latter receive 84 percent of the salary of those over 25. A May 2015 law amended the laws prohibiting strikes during national emergencies. The new law explicitly prohibits the issuance of civil mobilization orders as a means of countering strike actions before or after their proclamation.

On September 13, 2017, Greece's parliament passed new legislation providing for the temporary closure of businesses in cases where employers repeatedly violate the law concerning undeclared work or safety. Under the same law, employers are obliged to declare in advance their employees' overtime work or changes in their work schedules. The legislation also provided for social and welfare benefits to be granted to surrogate mothers, including protection from dismissal during pregnancy and after childbirth. Courts are required to examine complaints filed by employees against their employers for delayed payment within two months after their filing, and issue decisions within 30 days after the hearing.
The government sets restrictions on mass dismissals in private and public companies employing more than 20 workers. Dismissals exceeding in number the limits set by law require consultations through the Supreme Labor Council (with worker, employer, and government representatives participating), and government authorization. Based on a ministerial decision in February 2014, the competency for approving dismissals passed from the Minister of Labor to the Ministry's Secretary General.

Greek law provides for the right of workers to form and join independent unions, conduct their activities without interference, and strike. The establishment of trade unions in enterprises with fewer than 20 workers is prohibited. In July 2016, Parliament passed a law allowing armed forces personnel to form unions, while explicitly prohibiting strikes and work stoppages by those unions. Police also have the right to organize and demonstrate but not to strike. Greek law also generally protects the right to bargain collectively but restricts the right to bargain collectively on wages for persons under the age of 25. Antiunion discrimination is prohibited, and workers fired for union activity are required to be reinstated. Company-level agreements take precedence over sectoral-level collective agreements in the private sector. Civil servants negotiate and conclude collective agreements with the government on all matters except salaries. Private companies allow some freedom to negotiate in-house labor agreements with employees and legislation passed between 2010 and 2013 granted companies greater freedoms to suspend and dismiss employees. Implementation of legislation aimed at opening several “closed” professions – industries where regulation effectively creates quotas – including pharmacists, lawyers, notaries, and engineers remains uneven, with several professions effectively remaining closed.

The number of inspectors authorized to conduct labor inspections reportedly exceeded 1,000, including labor inspectorate personnel and staff of the Ministry of Labor, Social Security, and Social Solidarity, the Social Insurance Fund, the Economic Crimes Division of the police, and the Independent Authority for Public Revenue. Despite government efforts to increase inspections for undeclared, under-declared, and unpaid work, trade unions and the media alleged that, due to insufficient inspectorate staffing, enforcement of labor standards was inadequate in the shipping, tourism, and agricultural sectors. Enforcement was also lacking among small enterprises (employing 10 or fewer persons). According to the Union of Labor Health Inspectors, authorities conducted approximately 45,000 inspections related to issues of health and safety at work, and ordered fines amounting to 7 million euros ($8.4 million) between 2015 and 2016.

Wage laws are not always enforced. Unions and media allege that some private businesses forced their employees to return part of their wages and mandatory seasonal bonuses, in cash, after being deposited in the bank. Several employees were reportedly registered as part-time workers but in essence worked additional hours without being paid. In other cases, employees were paid after months of delays and oftentimes with coupons and not in cash. Cases of employment for up to 30 consecutive days of work without weekends off were also reported. Such violations were mostly noted in the tourism, agriculture, and housekeeping services sectors.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

Full Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) insurance coverage for U.S. investment in Greece is currently available on an exceptional basis. OPIC considers Greece a high-income country, and is authorized to operate business in Greece if there are strong foreign policy reasons to proceed. OPIC and the Greek Export Credit Insurance Organization signed an agreement in April 1994 to exchange information relating to private investment, particularly in the Balkans. Other insurance programs offering coverage for investments in Greece include the German investment guarantee program HERMES, the French agency COFACE, the Swedish Export Credits Guarantee Board (EKN), the British Export Credits Guarantee Facility (ECGF), and the Austrian Kontrollbank (OKB). Greece became a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) in 1989.

For the purposes of OPIC currency inconvertibility insurance, currency inconvertibility is not an issue as Greece has been part of the Eurozone since 2001.

Foreign Direct Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investment Statistics

- *Table 2: Key Macroeconomic Data, U.S. FDI in Host Country/Economy*

	Host Country Statistical source*		**USG or international statistical source**		**USG or International Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat;**

					UNCTAD, Other
Economic Data	**Year**	**Amount**	**Year**	**Amount**	
Host Country Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ($M USD)	2017	$215.6bn	2016	$192.6bn	http://www.statistics.gr/en/the-greek-economy https://data.worldbank.org/country/greece
Foreign Direct Investment	**Host Country Statistical source***		**USG or international statistical source**		**USG or international Source of data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other**
U.S. FDI in partner country ($M USD, stock positions)	2017	$917m	2018	$95	https://www.bankofgreece.gr/Pages/en/other/AdvSearch.aspx?k=foreign%20direct%20investment https://www.bea.gov/international/di1usdbal.htm _multinational_companies_comprehensive_data.htm
Host country's FDI in the United States ($M USD,	2016	$2.9bn	2018	$0 Greece is not on the FDI list for 2018mn	https://www.bankofgreece.gr/BogDocumentEn/FDI%20_WEB1_ABROAD_

stock positions)					[BYCOUNTRY.xls] https://bea.gov/international/di1fdibal.htm
Total inbound stock of FDI as % host GDP	2017	$37.7bn	2017	16.8% of GDP	https://data.oecd.org/fdi/fdi-stocks.htm

- *Table 3: Sources and Destination of FDI*

Direct Investment from/in Counterpart Economy Data					
From Top Five Sources/To Top Five Destinations *(US Dollars, Millions)*					
Inward Direct Investment			**Outward Direct Investment**		
Total Inward	32,536	100%	Total Outward	19.354	100%
Germany	7,175	21.9%	Cyprus	5.056	26.12%
Luxembourg	6,870	21.1%	United States	2,541	13.1%
Netherlands	6.101	18.7.6%	Netherlands	2.359	12.1%
Switzerland	3,381	10.3%	China: Hong Kong	2.316	11.9%
France	1.782	5.4%	Romania	1.880	9.7%
"0" reflects amounts rounded to +/- USD 500,000.					

- *Table 4: Sources of Portfolio Investment*

Portfolio Investment Assets
Top Five Partners (Millions, US Dollars)

Total			Equity Securities			Total Debt Securities		
All Countries	118.893	100%	All Countries	10.587	100%	All Countries	108.306	100%
Luxembourg	42.186	35.4%	Luxembourg	7.171	67.73%	Luxembourg	35.015	32.3%
United Kingdom	10.535	8.8%	Ireland	1.447	13.6%	United Kingdom	10.407	9.6%
Italy	8.566	7.2%	France	463	4.3%	Italy	8.558	7.9%
Spain	7.753	6.5%	United States	413	3.9%	Spain	7.739	7.1%
France	3.792	3.1%	Netherlands	182	1.7%	France	3.330	3.07%

Contact for More Information on the Investment Climate Statement

Economic Counselor
U.S. Embassy Athens, Greece
+30 210-720-2304
ATHENS-econ@state.gov

Trade & Project Financing

Methods of Payment

Banks represent the main source of financing in Greece. Time and sight deposits constitute the largest item on the liability side of Greek commercial bank balance sheets.
Before the 2009 Eurozone debt crisis, checks – especially post-dated - were used predominately for commercial transactions and large ticket item purchases and 30 to 90 days payments were common. Since the current debt/financial crisis began in 2009, more and more companies/suppliers (including foreign companies) have sought to avoid accepting post-dated checks. Additionally, banks do not easily issue checks to new customers and have implemented strict rules regarding check renewals of existing customers.

Credit card penetration is extensive for retail transactions, although not near U.S. levels. The credit card market increased by almost 20% annually from 2003-2008 and approached EU parity. However, due to the economic slowdown, both the numbers of credit cards and in the volume of transactions decreased annually from 2008-13 according to data from European Central Bank. However, the imposition of capital controls in June 2015 changed this practice significantly. The total number of active payment cards (both credit and debit cards) in the market in 2016 were 14.6 million, close to the 1.5 card/citizen European average. Of those, 81% are debit cards. Over the 2014 to 2016 period, transactions via POS terminals increased by 136%, while debit card use rose by 391%. According to banking data, the total turnover of payment cards in 2016 reached €17 billion (from €14 billion in 2015), while estimates for 2017 turnover are €22 billion. Household debt (mortgages and consumers loans) in Greece totaled €94.8 billion in June 2016 (compared to €97.1 billion at the end of 2014). However, almost 45% of those loans are non-performing.

The bond market in Greece is fully deregulated; however, it is still dominated by the issuance and trading of government bonds. Interest on corporate bonds is exempt from tax if earned by a non-resident.

The Athens Stock Exchange (ASE) has been widely used as a source of capital financing. Demand and volume have been decreasing on the ASE, however, and 2011 was the second worst year (after 2008) in the past 20 years of ASE's history, both because of continued decreases in share prices (due to the Greek sovereign debt crisis), and also due to a large shift in capital flows from developed to emerging stock markets. In 2012 the ASE index lost 1.8% of its value, declining at a considerably lower pace compared to steep losses of 51% in 2011 and 35.6% in 2010.

S&P Dow Jones reclassified Greece from a developed to an emerging market in September 2014, becoming the latest market index to make the change. The Russell index previously reclassified Greece as an emerging market as of July 2013, while the MSCI index made the change effective November 2013. The reclassifications triggered a transfer of holdings of Greek equities from institutional investors in developed markets to those willing to invest in higher markets, and also drew several billion euros of new capital into the Greek market.
With the imposition of capital controls on June 29, 2015, for a period of six months (July 2015 – December 2015) domestic investors could only acquire shares with the injection of "fresh money" and could not use existing funds. Short-selling of banking shares was not allowed. As a result, FTSE downgraded the Athens Stock Exchange from "advanced" to "advanced emerging markets"– effective March 2016.

In May 2017, the general index stood at 792 points. Capitalization increased to €77.07 billion in May 2017 from €31.1 billion in February 2016 (+147%). Participation of foreign investors in the total market capitalization reached 61.1% in March 2017 compared to 61.8% the previous month.

The Greek banking system has been substantially liberated from political patronage prevalent in the past, and now extends credit based on international best practices and credit risk scoring models. A large and profitable firm can secure financing at rates lower than those offered to a self-employed professional because of the problems assessing an individual's creditworthiness. Most banks, as the financial crisis deepened, tightened their credit risk scoring rules, making credit more difficult and more expensive to access for households and companies. A credit bureau has been set up by the Federation of Greek Banks, but it is still of limited use (Greek personal data protection laws limit its scope). Matters are made worse by widespread tax evasion (estimated to be 20% or more of GDP), with some individuals hiding income from the tax authorities, which leads to higher interest rates for members of the general public when they attempt to secure a loan. The national tax authority has made significant improvements, however, in tax administration and enforcement over the past 18 months.

Banking Systems

As of April 2017, the Greek banking system consists of a central bank (Bank of Greece, which is a Eurosystem-member central bank) and another 39 credit institutions. Eighteen credit institutions are based in Greece (eight commercial banks, 9 local cooperative banks, and one Loan & Consignment Fund), and 17 are branches of commercial banks based in other EU member states. Another four are branches of banks based outside the EU, one of which is Bank of America. Greek-owned banks command the lion's share of the market with about 80% of total asset value. Foreign-owned banks hold 12%, and the remaining 8% is shared between specialized institutions and local cooperative banks. The top four banks control 90% of both the loan market and deposits. Greek banks suffered large losses in the March and December 2012 Greek debt restructuring operations (Private Sector Involvement – PSI), but have been recapitalized. Other notable developments in early 2013 include the acquisition of the Greek branches of three Cypriot banks (Bank of Cyprus, Cyprus Popular Bank and Hellenic Bank) by Piraeus Bank. Piraeus has also signed an agreement to acquire Portuguese-owned Millennium Bank and in 2012 acquired the healthy assets of the public Agricultural Bank of Greece. Alpha Bank acquired Emporiki Bank, Eurobank acquired Hellenic Postbank and Proton Bank and NBG acquired FBB and Probank.

Following the implementation of a broad-based recapitalization program in 2012 and 2013 and a rapid sectoral consolidation, the banking sector largely stabilized in 2014. However, the economic uncertainty associated with the new government's policies and the stalemate in negotiations with the country's official sector creditors has led to a substantial drop in deposits and to heightened demand for Emergency Liquidity Assistance from the European Central Bank, on which Greece's principal banks were heavily dependent as of May 2015. In November 2015, as part of initial implementation of the August 2015 ESM bailout agreement, Greece recapitalized its four major banks for a third time in five years. Large U.S. and foreign hedge funds participated in recapitalization of the principal Greek banks. The banking system remains unable to finance the national economy as over 40% of all bank-held loans are non-performing. Efforts to create an NPL market to service these loans – a requirement under the ESM agreement – have been halting. As a result, businesses of all sizes struggle to obtain bank loans to support their operations. Due to this constraint, international financial institutions, such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, are now working to issue loans and bring additional liquidity to the Greek market. Deposits stood at €121.4 billion as of March l 2016, down slightly from €138.5 billion a year earlier. In the seven-year period since December 2009 (when deposits picked at €237.5 billion), overall deposits have shrunk by a total of €116.1 billion. As of December 2015, the Banking Association listed the four systemic banks assets as: Piraeus €83 billion; National Bank €77.1 billion; Alpha Bank €64.9 billion; Eurobank €64.1 billion.

As of January 1, 2001, Greece entered the European Monetary Union (Eurosystem) and implemented its single currency monetary policy in Greece through the central bank, the Bank of Greece. The Eurosystem is comprised of the European Central Bank and the national central banks of European Union states that have adopted the euro. The Bank of Greece is also the depository for government accounts. The Bank of Greece acts as regulatory agent for the European Central Bank's Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), which entered into force November 1, 2014. The SSM and the Bank of Greece, together regulate and supervise the commercial banking industry in Greece, as well as Greek banks operating outside of Greece, and approves the establishment of foreign banks in the country.

Foreign Exchange Controls

Greece's foreign exchange market conforms to EU rules on the free movement of capital. Controls only existed to facilitate the enforcement of money laundering and terrorist financing laws. As of January 1, 2001, Greece became part of the Eurozone and all transactions have been conducted in Euros since March 1, 2002. Until June 2015, receipts from productive investments could be repatriated freely at market exchange rates and there were no restrictions on, or difficulties with, converting, repatriating, or transferring funds associated with an investment. In late June 2015, the government declared a bank holiday, during which banks were closed for two weeks, and imposed capital controls which remain in force as of May 2017 . Capital controls placed a limit on weekly cash withdrawal amounts and restricted the transfer of capital abroad. Although capital controls have been partially lifted since the August ESM 2015 agreement which calmed fear of a national bankruptcy and financial system collapse, several restrictions still apply. A five-member "Banking Transaction Approval Committee" was established by the Finance Ministry and is the competent authority to approve transactions abroad, in coordination with the Bank of Greece. Currently, the daily limit for commercial payments abroad stands at €250,000. Additionally, capital controls imposed on stock exchange transactions were lifted in December 2015.

US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Bank of America operates in Greece, providing services only to companies. In September 2014, Alpha Bank announced the completion of the acquisition of Citibank's retail operations including Citi's wealth management unit.

Project Financing

EU financial assistance programs provide a wide array of grants, loans, loan guarantees and co-financing for feasibility studies and projects in a number of key sectors (e.g., environmental, transportation, energy, telecommunications, tourism, public health). A number of centralized financing programs are also generating procurement and other opportunities directly with EU institutions.

The EU supports economic development projects within its member states, as well as EU-wide "economic integration" projects that cross both internal and external EU borders. In addition, the EU provides assistance to candidate and neighbor countries.

The EU provides project financing through grants from the EU budget and loans from the European Investment Bank. Grants from the EU Structural and Investment Funds program are distributed through the member states' national and regional authorities. Projects in non-EU countries are managed through the Directorate-Generals Enlargement, Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid), Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO).

Please consult the European Union Country Commercial Guide for detailed information.

Multilateral Development Banks:

U.S. Commercial Service Liaison Offices at the Multilateral Development Banks (World Bank)

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars in developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help American businesses learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders. Learn more by contacting the Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank (http://export.gov/worldbank).

Web Resources

Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank: http://export.gov/worldbank

Financing Web Resources

Trade Finance Guide: A Quick Reference for U.S. Exporters, published by the International Trade Administration's Industry & Analysis team.

EU websites:
EU regional policies, EU Structural and Cohesion Funds
EU Grants and Loans index
EuropeAid Co-operation Office
EU Tenders Database
European Investment Bank
EIB-financed projects

U.S. websites:
Market Research section on the website of the U.S. Mission to the EU
Export-Import Bank of the United States
Trade and Development Agency
SBA's Office of International Trade

Business Travel

Business Customs

In Greece, business-related customs, etiquette and dress are similar to those in the United States and other Western European countries. A handshake is the customary business greeting for both men and women, and business cards are usually exchanged in the initial meeting. An exchange of gifts is not customary in Greece, unless you have already established a business relationship. During the Christmas and New Year's holidays, an exchange of greeting cards and/or gifts is common.

American business persons should note that personal contact is very important in Greece and a personal business presence in Greece is often essential. If one is doing business in rural areas or the islands, it is best to ask the advice of a business person familiar with the region.

Travel Advisory

Current travel advisory information is available on the Department of State's website.

Strikes and demonstrations are common throughout Greece. They are usually peaceful but can escalate quickly. U.S. travelers are cautioned to avoid these types of gatherings and to register with the U.S. Embassy before their arrival in Greece via the following
https://gr.usembassy.gov/demonstration-alert-u-s-embassy-athens-greece/

Visa Requirements

For U.S. citizens, a visa is required for stays in Greece over 90 days or if you are traveling on an official or diplomatic passport. Passport must be valid for at least three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen area.

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

- State Department Visa Website
- Consular Section – U.S. Embassy Athens, Greece

Currency

The unit of currency is the Euro (€). Banknotes come in € 5; € 10; € 20; € 50; € 100; € 200; and € 500. However, the Central European Bank announced the gradual removal from the market of the € 500 banknotes. The coins are in € 1 cent, € 2 cent, € 5 cent, € 10 cent, € 20 cent, € 50 cent, € 1, and € 2. The approximate exchange rate is USD $1.00 = Euro €0.90

Telecommunications/Electric

OTE is the primary service provider throughout Greece. Telecommunications to and from Athens are similar to those in any large U.S. city. Telephone calls to the U.S. may be charged to international telephone cards such as OTE's Tilekarta. The country code for Greece is 30. Public telephones use phone cards, which may be purchased at kiosks.

The cellular network throughout Greece is excellent. One needs a tri-band cell phone (GSM) to be able to make calls within Greece, from Greece to the United States and vice-versa. Many U.S. cell phones do not work in Greece, but GSM cell phones may be rented or purchased. There are three mobile operators - Cosmote, Vodafone, and WIND - that offer cellular services in Greece. In addition, facilities for video conferencing are available.

Internet use in Greece is steadily growing. In larger cities, high-speed Internet access is available and an increasing number of businesses have wireless Internet service. There are Internet Cafés in large cities, and several cafeterias offer wireless Internet service free of charge.

Business is not conducted over the Internet in Greece to the extent that it is conducted in other countries. Many SMEs do not have websites. Web-based publishing is in its infancy.

Transportation

Air: The Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport (AIA) is approximately 28 km outside of Athens and is modern and efficient. Over 75 airlines use AIA. Transportation to and from AIA is excellent. The airport is easily accessible by auto, taxi, and public transportation, (Metro and bus). Other ground transportation to AIA is available at major hotels. In regular traffic, it is about a 30-minute ride from AIA to central Athens by auto or taxi. For more information, please refer to information on access to public transportation.

Auto: There are many car rental agencies at the airport and throughout Athens. Driving in Athens can be difficult due to crowded streets and traffic. Parking can also be difficult to find. Road accident death rates in Greece are among the highest in the EU. Main streets and highways throughout Greece are paved, while secondary roads are generally not. Most roads are two-lane, except the Attiki Odos and parts of the Ethniki Odos, which have four lanes. The road network is good.

Taxis: Taxis are plentiful throughout Athens. Taxi drivers are required to use a meter and provide a printed receipt upon request.

Rail: The Hellenic Railway Organization (HRO) is reliable, but very slow compared to other forms of travel. Check information regarding passenger transportation services and for on-line booking.

Bus/Tram/Trolley: These are common and inexpensive means of transportation in larger cities in Greece. The network, especially in Athens, is extensive, a service is generally good. For more information please visit OASA's website. -

Athens Metro: The Athens Metro is a reliable, safe, and inexpensive transportation method to use within Athens or going to Athens Airport. Check information of fares and time schedules, and maps.

Ferries: Ferries are the most common means of transportation to the islands. Fares vary, and one may take a fast or slow ferry.

Ships: The largest ports are Piraeus (adjacent to Athens), Thessaloniki, Patras, Chania, and Volos. Cargo services from the United States are provided by Zim Lines, Maersk Lines, MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company), Hapag-Lloyd, and CMA CGM.

Language

Greek is the official language spoken. However, language is not a barrier to conducting business because a high percentage of Greek business people and government officials speak English.

Health

Medical facilities are adequate, and some, particularly the private clinics and hospitals in Athens and Thessaloniki, are quite good. Some private hospitals have affiliations with U.S. facilities, and generally their staff doctors have been trained in the United States or Europe.

Public medical clinics, especially on the islands, may lack resources. Care can be inadequate by U.S. standards, and often, little English is spoken. Many patients - Greeks and visitors alike - are transferred from the provinces and islands to Athens hospitals for more sophisticated care. Others may choose to transfer from a public to a private hospital within Athens or Thessaloniki. U.S. citizens choosing to do so would arrange for an ambulance belonging to the private hospital to transport them from the public hospital to the private one. The cost of the ambulance for this transfer, as well as all expenses in a private hospital, must be borne by the patient. Private hospitals will usually demand proof of adequate insurance or cash before admitting a patient.

Please ensure that you have an adequate supply of your prescription medications when travelling to Greece as you may not be able to find a local equivalent in the pharmacies

Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays

The time in Athens is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Greece is a member of the EU and observes Daylight Savings Time. Greek business hours vary and the following listing is an approximation of business hours in major urban areas:

Private sector office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (with a one-hour lunch).
Manufacturing establishments operate from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Banking hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Fridays. Several of the larger banks (mainly located at Syntagma Square), are open on Saturday mornings. Government hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Nevertheless, many businesses, especially small and medium-sized stores, keep more traditional Greek office hours and are generally open from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. from Monday through Saturday and again, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday to Friday. Many shops and supermarkets keep late shopping hours on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Holidays:
Greek holidays to take into account when planning a business itinerary:

2019

New Year's Day	January	1,	2019
Epiphany	January	6,	2019
Kathari Deftera	March	11,	2019
Independence Day	March	25,	2019
Good Friday	April	26,	2019
Holy Saturday	April	27,	2019
Easter Sunday	April	28,	2019
Easter Monday	April	29,	2019
May Day	May	1,	2019
*White Monday,	June	17,	2019

Assumption Day	August	15,	2019
OXI Day,	October	28,	2019
Christmas Eve	December	24,	2019 (half day holiday)
Christmas Day	December	25,	2019
Boxing Day	December	26,	2019
New Year's Eve	December	31,	2019 (half-day holiday)

<u>2020</u>

New Year's Day	January	1,	2020
Epiphany	January	6,	2020
Kathari Deftera	March	2,	2020
Independence Day	March	25,	2020
Good Friday	April	17,	2020
Holy Saturday	April	18,	2020
Easter Sunday	April	19,	2020
Easter Monday	April	20,	2020
May Day	May	1,	2020
*White Monday,	June	8,	2020
Assumption Day	August	15,	2020
OXI Day,	October	28,	2020
Christmas Eve	December	24,	2020 (half day holiday)
Christmas Day	December	25,	2020
Boxing Day	December	26,	2020
New Year's Eve	December	31,	2020 (half-day holiday)

* White Monday is not observed by all Greek businesses, but government offices, banks and some businesses will be closed.

The Greek business community traditionally observes a long, uninterrupted summer hiatus from mid-July through August. Gathering even basic business information and arranging appointments are difficult during this period. U.S. business visitors are advised to avoid Greece for business purposes during the summer, particularly during August.

Two other periods in which U.S. business visitors may have problems gathering basic business information or arranging appointments are the Christmas holidays from December 20 through January 6 and the Easter Holidays, starting with Holy Week and ending the week after Easter.

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

If you enter Greece by air and/or sea, items valued at euro €430 or less are duty-free. The monetary threshold for travelers of all other transport means has decreased to euro €300. The duty-free amount is reduced to euro €150 for travelers under 15 years of age, regardless of the mode of transportation they are using. The quantitative limits of tax-exempted tobacco products include as many as 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of smoking tobacco, or a proportional combination of these different products. The quantitative limits of tax-exempted alcoholic beverages include four liters of wine, 16 liters of beer, one liter of an alcoholic beverage exceeding 22 percent vol. (i.e., whisky, vodka, etc.), or two liters of an alcoholic beverage not exceeding 22 percent vol. (i.e., sparkling wines, liqueur wines, aperitifs, etc).

Medications for the personal needs of the traveler are also tax-exempt. One each of the following articles may also be brought in duty-free for the traveler's personal use, provided that the articles are re-exported upon departure: still and movie cameras, with suitable film; binoculars; portable radios; record players; typewriters; CD players; and, computer lap tops. Check for more information on temporary entry.

Travelers must obtain special permission from Greek police authorities before bringing firearms and ammunition into the country. Also travelers are prohibited from bringing flower bulbs, plants, and fresh fruit into Greece. Foreigners residing permanently in Greece may import used personal effects duty-free.

Foreign currency in any amount may be imported into Greece freely. However, in accordance to 1889/2005 (L 309/9/25.11.2005) any person entering or leaving the EU and carrying cash of a value equal to or greater than Euro 10,000€ must state this sum to the competent authorities of the Member States. So, travelers carrying bank notes or personal checks / travelers' checks exceeding the equivalent of euro €10,000 must make a declaration upon entry at the Greek customs office. Though the export of foreign exchange was liberalized in May 1994, Greek and foreign travelers must declare any amount exceeding the equivalent of euro €2,000 upon departure.

The EU Commission adopted a new legislative framework to balance the need for increased security with protection of fundamental rights and economic freedoms. As EU Commission's regulations and decisions are automatically binding thought the EU and must be incorporated into national law by EU countries, Greece adopted subject regulation by law 4537/2018. The legislative framework is part of a Commission action plan against terrorist financing, established in 2016 following a spate of terrorist attacks in Europe. For more information regarding fight against money laundering and terrorist financing please refer to Fight Against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing.

Travel Related Web Resources

Athens International Airport
Transport for Athens
Urban Rail Transport
Athens Metro & Tram maps
EU Rail
Train OSE
Customs Tax Relief and Facilities
Greek Customs office
European Commission Taxations and Customs Union

Council of the European Union:
Action Plan for Strengthening the Fight against Terrorism
Fight Against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing