

Political, Economic, Educational & Cultural Environment: A short overview

Section

2

2.1 Introduction

Information regarding the Political, Economic, Educational and Cultural structure of the Greek society is presented in this section.

2.2 Political system

Greece is the birthplace of politics as an art and democracy as a form of government. The present Greek Constitution voted in 1975 and amended in 1986 and 2001, defines the country's political system as a *Parliamentary Democracy with a President as Head of State*. In general, popular sovereignty is the foundation of government and all powers derive from the people and exist for the people and the nation; they shall be exercised as specified by the Constitution. The Hellenic Parliament consists of 300 members elected directly by the people.

Furthermore, the Greek governmental structure has many similarities with other democratic countries in Europe, while it has been described as a compromise between the French and German models. The prime minister and cabinet council play the central role in the political process, while the president performs some governmental functions in addition to ceremonial duties. The prime minister is elected by the people every four years and has the right to be re-elected, while the president is elected by the parliament to a five-year term and can be re-elected just once.

The current Government of Greece came to office as a result of the 7th March 2004 elections and is based on the New Democracy party. Prime minister of the Hellenic Republic is Mr. Kostas Karamanlis and President is Mr Karolos Papoulias. *(Source: Hellenic Parliament)*

2.2.1 The Greek Constitution

In the spring of 2001 a new, more extensive revision of the Constitution was voted in a consensual climate. It is noteworthy that, despite the fact that a total of seventy-nine articles of the Constitution were amended, in the majority of the cases the amendments was accepted by four fifths of all the parliamentarians, so the term "consensual revision" reflects the political reality.

The revised Constitution introduced new individual rights (such as the protection of genetic identity or the protection of personal data from electronic processing), it introduced new rules of transparency in political life (regarding e.g. the financing of political parties, electoral expenditures, the relations of media owners with the State, etc.), it reorganised the operation of the Parliament and it reinforced decentralisation.

(Source: Hellenic Parliament)

Constitution of Greece

URL:

<http://www.parliament.gr/english/politeuma/syntagma.pdf>

2.3 Economic system

The Greek economy adopts the principles of free enterprise and is bound by the regulations of international organisations such as ECOFIN and WTO, of which it is a member. Additionally, Greece is a member of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and one of the very well performing economies in the Eurozone. Nowadays, the country has become the economic hub of Southeast Europe and offers a stable and healthy economic environment that is supportive to the needs of business and investors.

Table 2. 1 Selected Economic Indicators

Selected Economic Indicators (% of change)					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
GDP rate of growth	4.7%	4.2%	3.9%	4.0%	4.2%
Inflation	3.4%	2.9%	3.2%	3.0%	2.7%
Unit labour cost	0.8%	4.4%	3.0%	2.3%	2.2%
Labour productivity	3.3%	1.3%	2.3%	2.5%	2.6%
Public Investments	13.7%	4.9%	4.1%	5.6%	6.3%
Exports of goods & services	1.0%	10.0%	7.8%	8.0%	7.0%
Imports of goods & services	4.8%	8.2%	4.1%	4.5%	4.7%
General government balance (% GDP)	-5.2%	-6.1%	-3.5%	-2.8%	-2.2%
General government debt (% GDP)	109.3%	110.5%	108.0%	103.9%	99.9%

Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance.

2.3.1 Ministry of Economy and Finance

- Ministry of Economy and Finance

URL: www.ypetho.gr

- Ministry of Economy and Finance General Accounting Office

URL: www.mof-glk.gr

2.3.2 The 2003 update of the Hellenic stability and growth programme: 2002-2006

In 2003 the Greek economy continued to perform quite strongly, and the prospects for growth in the coming years are quite encouraging. The Private consumption remained buoyant and Investment spending remained linked to the financial flows from the E.U Structural Funds. The external sector deficit remained high as exports of tourist services stagnated due to weak foreign demand and geopolitical uncertainties. Inflation continued to be higher than the E.U average, while the unemployment rate fell to 8.9 per cent in

the second quarter of 2003 from 9.6 per cent a year ago. Further information regarding the recent developments and prospects of the Greek Economy, the economic policies for the period 2004-2006 and other economic figures could be found at the following web-address: http://www.commex.gr/english/Country_Economy/2003_2006.htm

2.4 Education system

The Greek education system includes preschool education, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. All Greek citizens have access to the Greek education system at all levels of public education, as do foreigners under certain conditions. Knowledge of Greek, written and spoken, is essential, while at the higher education levels proficiency in a second language is desirable and, in certain circumstances, required. The education system includes schools for emigrants, induction courses, and Greek language departments at private schools. In addition, the system includes intercultural education schools for children with cultural, religious and linguistic particularities. Foreign students seeking admission to tertiary level institutions in Greece must have a certificate of proficiency in the Greek language.

In terms of the tuition fees, public education in Greece is provided free of charge at all levels. Tuition fees must be paid only for study at the "Greek Open University", for certain postgraduate programmes, and for postsecondary vocational training. There are a restricted number of fee-paying private educational establishments at pre-school, primary and secondary education levels. Besides, a certain number of foreign private schools have a foreign curriculum and operate under the provisions of the Foreign Schools Act. (Information can be found at URL: www.ypepth.gr)

2.4.1 Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

The official website of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is URL: www.ypepth.gr

2.4.2 The Greek Education System

Education in Greece is compulsory for all children 6-15 years old; namely, it includes Primary (*Dimotiko*) and Lower Secondary (*Gymnasio*) Education. The school life of the students, however, can start from the age of 2.5 years (pre-school education) in institutions (private and public) called "*Vrefonipiakoi Paidikoi Stathmi*" (creches).

In some *Vrefonipiakoi Stathmoi* there are also *Nipiaka Tmimata* (nursery classes) which operate along with the *Nipiagogeia* (kindergartens).

Attendance at Primary Education (*Dimotiko*) lasts for six years, and children are admitted at the age of 6. Along with the regular kindergartens (*Nipiagogeia*) and the *Dimotika*, all day primary schools are in operation, with an extended timetable and an enriched Curriculum.

Post-compulsory Secondary Education, according to the reform of 1997, consists of two school types: *Eniaia Lykeia* (Unified Upper Secondary Schools) and the Technical Vocational Educational Schools (*TEE*). The duration of studies in *Eniaia Lykeia* (EL) is three years and two years (a' level) or three years (b' level) in the Technical Vocational Educational Schools (*TEE*). Mutual student transfer from one type of school to the other is possible.

Along with the mainstream schools of Primary and Secondary Education, Special *Nipagogeia* (kindergartens), *Dimotika*, *Gymnasia*, *Lykeia* and upper secondary classes are in operation, which admit students with special educational needs. Musical, Ecclesiastical

and Physical Education *Gymnasia* and *Lykeia* are also in operation.

Post-compulsory Secondary Education also includes the Vocational Training Institutes (*IEK*), which provide formal but unclassified level of education. These Institutes are not classified as an educational level, because they accept both *Gymnasio* (lower secondary school) and *Lykeio* (upper secondary school) graduates according to the relevant specializations they provide.

Public higher education is divided into Universities and Technological Education Institutes (*TEI*). Students are admitted to these Institutes according to their performance at national level examinations taking place at the second and third grade of *Lykeio*. Additionally, students are admitted to the Hellenic Open University upon the completion of the 22 year of age by drawing lots. (*Source: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs*)

The following table presents concisely the structure of the Greek education system, as it consists of institutions of the formal, classified or unclassified education.

Table 2. 2 Greek education system

Higher Education	
Postgraduate studies(Universities, TEI- Hellenic Open University) - Hellenic Open University	
Universities	
Conventional ----- Technological Education Institutes (TEI)	
Secondary Education	
Lykeia: - Musical - Ecclesiastical (self sufficient and autonomous) - Physical Education Schools B' grade - Special A' grade	TEE: B and A Level C and B Level
	IEK
GYMNASIO: (General, Musical, Ecclesiastical, Physical Education, Special) compulsory education	
Primary Education	
DIMOTIKO (mainstream, All-day, Special)	
NIPIAGOGEIO (mainstream, All-day, Special)	
NIPIAKA TMIMATA	
PAIDIKOI STATHMOI	

Source: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

A detailed description of the Greek Education System is available in a number of different languages by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs at the following web address:

http://europa.eu.int/ploteus/portal/renderers/generalinfo_renderer.jsp?DocId=34447&SecMode=1&Portal=false&Language=el_GR

2.4.3 List of Foreign Schools in Greece

For the researchers who come to Greece with their families, schools seem to be an important issue. The following web addresses provide information regarding where you

can find a school for your children, as well as details on how to register them to the schools.

- List of foreign schools with a Greek Curriculum is available at
URL: www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1545.htm
- List of foreign schools with a non-Greek Curriculum is available at
URL: www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1544.htm
- List of foreign schools with both non-Greek and Greek Curricula is available at
URL: www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1544.htm

2.4.4 Scholarships and Educational Exchanges

The *State Scholarships Foundation* (IKY) www.iky.gr and other public and private bodies provide scholarships both to Greek, EU and third-country students who wish to study at tertiary education institutions. Besides, scholarships are granted to graduates of *universities* and *technical education institutions* for post-graduate or post-doctoral studies in Greece and abroad. Finally, the IKY awards scholarships to pupils of secondary level *technical vocational schools*. Scholarships are also available for trainees attending the *Vocational Training Institutes* (IEKs) funded by the *Organisation for Vocational Education and Training* (OEEK) URL: www.oEEK.gr.

- Information about Scholarships Granted by the Greek government to Foreign Citizens is available at www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_category1127.htm
- Information about Greek Language Summer Course Scholarships in Ionian University is available at www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1128.htm

In terms of the Educational Exchanges, recent years have seen the successful introduction of educational exchanges and the twinning of primary and secondary schools in Greece with schools abroad.

URL: www.ypepth.gr/en_ec_page1533.htm

2.4.5 Learning Greek

Although you will probably work in an English speaking environment you will need to learn Greeks, as it appears to be essential in the every day life.

The Greek language, which belongs to the family of the Indo-European languages and constitutes a separate branch, originates from the language of Homer and the literature of Classical Greece, and it consists of 24 letters, 17 consonants and 7 vowels.

The body competent for supporting and promoting Greeks is the Greek Language based in Thessaloniki (www.greeklanguage.gr). Greek Language Centre is a private law body operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (www.greeklanguage.gr/eng/index.html), and provides supporting services for Greeks returned from abroad, Greeks abroad and foreigners. Among its activities are setting various levels of exams in the Greek language and certification of fluency levels in Greek. Additionally, a range of different Greek courses provided by universities, public and private schools, exists. Some of them might take a few weeks, while others will take a few years.

Universities

Athens University

URL: www.nglt.uoa.gr/index_en.html

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

URL: www.auth.gr/smg

University of Patra

URL: www.kedek.gr

University of Ioanina

URL: www.uoi.gr/oldsite/exchange.html

Democritus University of Thrace

URL: www.duth.gr

University of Crete

URL: www.ediamme.edc.uoc.gr/ediamme2/index.php?information

Ionian University

URL: www.uion.edu.gr

Table 2. 3 Greek alphabet in capital and small letters

Capital Letters	Small Letters	English Pronunciation
Α	α	[a] -father
Β	β	[v] -vase
Γ	γ	[g,y] -yes
Δ	δ	[th] -this
Ε	ε	[e] -met
Ζ	ζ	[z] -zone
Η	η	[e] - machine
Θ	η	[th] -theme
Ι	ι	[I] -machine
Κ	κ	[k] -pack
Λ	λ	[l] -lake
Μ	μ	[m] -man
Ν	ν	[n] -no
Ξ	ξ	[x,ks] -fox, excel
Ο	ο	[o] - pot
Π	π	[p] - pillow
Ρ	ρ	[r] - rocket
Σ	σ	[s] - song
Τ	τ	[t] - table
Υ	υ	[i,e] - machine
Φ	φ	[ph] - phone, fire
Χ	χ	[ch, h] - her, Bach
Ψ	ψ	[ps] - lips
Ω	ω	[o] - pot

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Other language Schools

- *The Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP)*

<http://www.ilsp.gr>, which offers a series of Greek lessons for beginners:

<http://www.xanthi.ilsp.gr/filog/>

- *The Centre's Greek Language program:*

<http://www.athenscentre.gr/index.html>

- *The Hellenic Culture Centre*

(<http://www.hcc.gr>) which organises in Athens the “Modern Greek language Courses”:

<http://www.hcc.gr/courses/athens>

Online Dictionaries

- Greek/English, Greek/French, Greek/Arabic Lexicon:

<http://www.xanthi.ilsp.gr/kemeslex/default.asp>

- Panorama of the European Words - Multilingual dictionary:

<http://users.otenet.gr/%7Evamvakos/multilingual.htm>

Download Greek Fonts at URL: www.in.gr/grfonts/arial.zip

2.5 Culture

Greece has a rich cultural heritage and, without doubt, there are many unique archaeological places and monuments such as the Acropolis of Athens, the Epidaurus Theatre etc. Country's cultural life is varied, offering a range of different museums, theatres and cinemas, live music, festivals etc. information is presented at the following paragraphs:



The Acropolis of Athens

2.5.1 Ministry of Culture

The official site of the *Hellenic Ministry of Culture*, which is the governmental body responsible for cultural heritage and the Arts in Greece, is www.culture.gr, for the *Hellenic Foundation for Culture* is www.hfc.gr/index_en.asp and for the *Hellenic Culture Organisation SA* is www.hch.culture.gr/index_en.html

2.5.2 Museums

Table 2. 4 List of Greek Museums according to the subject:

Category	Website
Archaeological Museums and Collections	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/arch_mus.html
Byzantine Museums and Collections	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/byz_mus.html
Historical and Folklore Museums	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/hist_mus.html
Museums of Greek Art (ancient, byzantine, modern)	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/gr_art_mus.html
Museums of Asian Art	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/asian_mus.html
Art Museums and Galleries	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/eik_mus.html
Theatrical Museums	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/the_mus.html
Cinema Museums	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/cin_mus.html
Music Museums	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/music_mus.html
Nautical Museums	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/navy_mus.html
Museums of Natural History	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/phys_mus.html
Museums of Science and Technology	www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/science_mus.html

- *Cultural Map of Hellas*, which provides information for proximately 1000 entries of Museums, Archaeological Sites or Monuments:
www.culture.gr/2/21/toc/cult_map.html

- *Online Guide for Museums* located in Greece is available at: www.greece-museums.com

2.5.3 Theater-Cinemas



Epidaurus Theater

Useful information for major organisations and cinema festivals is provided at:

www.culture.gr/4/41/cinema.html

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture, within the framework of its cultural activities, has designed and activated energetically a policy for the support and advancement of cinemas.

This policy concerns cinemas that the Municipal Authorities have already struggled to preserve to date or to re-activate by re-shaping radically their facilities and equipment.

Network of Municipal Cinema Theatres list: www.culture.gr/4/41/ddk.html

2.5.4 Recreation and Sports

Greece, the country where the Olympic Games were born, is ideal for the development of sports activities, as well as, holding sports events (sports tourism). During the past few decades, more and more big athletic events in many sports (Athens 2004-Olympic Games, world championships, European competitions, important international tournaments etc) have been successfully organised in the country. These sports events have considerably contributed to the construction of many modern bigger or smaller sports facilities, stadiums and training centres for a wide range of sports all over Greece, where both the local people and visitors of the area have the opportunity to practice their favourite sports: from athletics, soccer, volleyball and basketball to tennis, golf, sailing or windsurfing.

Moreover, many hotels provide special sports facilities for their customers (basketball, volleyball, tennis, golf, water sports etc). The people-in-charge of the hotels can provide analytical information.

2.5.5 Cultural events-festivals / Bank Holidays

You can obtain information on programmes and timetables of major cultural events and festivals visiting the following websites:

- The e-magazine culture-guide is a project operated by the scheme "Domain of Culture" of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. Culture-guide covers all cultural and artistic events and activities organized by all the organisations and institutions that are supervised, subsidized or contractually connected to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, local government bodies at municipal and prefecture level along with their cultural services, Greek artists in collaboration to the Ministry of Culture and the local authorities etc:
URL: www.cultureguide.gr/events/index.jsp
- The Hellenic Festival, which includes the Athens and Epidaurus Festivals: URL: www.hellenicfestival.gr/site/index_en.htm

Table 2. 5 Bank Holidays in Greece

DATE	HOLIDAY
1 January:	New Year's Day
6 January:	Epiphany
	Ash Monday
25 March:	National Holiday
	Easter
	Whit Monday (Holiday only for public sector)
15 August:	Dormition (Assumption) of The Virgin
28 October:	National Holiday
25 & 26 December:	Christmas

Note: Holidays in red are subject to change (Depends on Easter Date)

2.5.6 Tourism

Greece is a country with many faces. It is certain that more than one visit is necessary in order for someone to say that they know one of its faces well. That is why visitors coming to Greece for the first time usually come back in order to experience again what impressed them or to explore what they could not seek the previous times. Tourism and Greece are two concepts directly connected bringing to mind charming associations of pictures, sounds, feelings and people. The Mediterranean temperate climate of the country, the versatility of the environment, the monuments and its history, the clean seas and the proverbial hospitality of the Greek people have attracted a big number of tourists to the country for many years now.

The tourist infrastructure in Greece is fully developed. The visitor can find tourist agents in every part of the country ready to provide the necessary services and information and the organizational infrastructure for various forms of tourism. In recent years, special forms of tourism such as

- therapeutic–spa tourism (www.eot.gr/pages.php?pageID=410&langID=2),
- religious tourism (www.eot.gr/pages.php?pageID=408&langID=2),
- ecological tourism (www.eot.gr/pages.php?pageID=738&langID=2),
- agro-tourism (www.eot.gr/pages.php?pageID=826&langID=2)

etc, have been developed and organised more and more systematically in Greece. Thus, the country has become a popular tourist destination not only for holidays of the “classical type” but also for people interested in alternative holidays who, apart from relaxing and sightseeing, wish to enjoy the unique experience offered by the country’s nature and its “products”, its religious culture and the specialised infrastructure of the Greek tourist industry.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The Greek National Tourism Organisation (www.eot.gr) which is a public entity supervised by the Ministry of Tourism plays an important role in the development of tourism in Greece