

# Greece



In the first half of 2013 Greece continued to be a very unhappy country. Neither the economy nor the political system could be described as functioning well. In fact, they could barely be described as functioning at all. In the manner of a recurring bad dream, in mid-2013 many euro-zone member countries were once again casting nervous glances at Greece's precarious economic situation. Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Dutch finance minister and president of the group of countries using the euro, the so-called 'euro-zone', baldly stated in May 2013 that Greece would need further assistance when, in 2014, it reached the end of its second aid programme. Mr Dijsselbloem's remarks followed similar statements by the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, and even Chancellor Merkel, that a third rescue programme would be inevitable. Any further rescue would come on top of the €200 billion (US\$267

billion) already doled out by the EU and the IMF.

## Riding to the rescue...?

None of the German or Dutch ministers went as far as discussing the size of a possible third rescue programme for Greece. In the case of the German ministers the remarks had to be seen in the context of the country's forthcoming elections, due to be held in late September 2013. German politicians sought, if possible, to hold off any 'euro-decisions' until after the elections. In Athens, Germany was already seen by many Greeks as the villain of the piece, the country responsible for imposing harsh austerity measures on an already failing Greek economy. In 2013, however, it was clear that the painful chemotherapy prescribed by the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – the Troika – was simply not working. Prime Minister Antonis Samaras had undertaken

## KEY FACTS

**Official name:** I Elliniki Dimokratia (The Hellenic Republic)

**Head of State:** President Karolos Papoulias (since 2005; re-elected Feb 2010)

**Head of government:** Prime Minister Antonis Samaras (ND) (from 20 Jun 2012)

**Ruling party:** Coalition led by Néa Dimokratía (ND) (New Democracy), with Panellino Sosialistiko Kinima (Pasok) (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) and Dimokratiki Aristera (Dimar) (Democratic Left) (from 20 Jun 2012)

**Area:** 131,957 square km

**Population:** 11.30 million (2012)\* (10,787,690; 2011; census figure)

**Capital:** Athens

**Official language:** Greek

**Currency:** Euro (€) = 100 cents (from 1 Jan 2002; previous currency drachma, locked at Dr340.75 per euro)

**Exchange rate:** €0.75 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

**GDP per capita:** US\$22,055 (2012)\*

**GDP real growth:** -6.38% (2012)\*

**GDP:** US\$249.20 billion (2012)\*

**Labour force:** 4.97 million (2012)\*

**Unemployment:** 24.24% (2012)\*

**Inflation:** 1.04% (2012)\*

**Balance of trade:** -US\$25.28 billion (2012)\*

\* estimated figure

to cut public sector salaries and reduce the public payroll, at a stroke, by 15,000. This in itself was inevitable – the Greek civil service was neither civil nor did it serve the population satisfactorily. Reducing the payroll would address the issue of the bloated administration, but eliminating inefficiency would be a much longer and more expensive, haul. The core issues – the public deficit, uncontrolled debt levels and an unemployment rate nudging 27 per cent (and a youth unemployment rate of over 40 per cent) – remained unsolved. Earlier attempts to make a start on this challenge in June 2012 had brought the electorate to the streets and very nearly fragmented the Samaras coalition. In Brussels there was a growing conviction that in the Greek case it would eventually be necessary to ‘forgive’ (i.e. not seek repayment for) a significant proportion of Greece’s massive debt.

### ... or avoiding collapse?

Were Greece to be allowed to collapse, or even to be expelled from the euro-zone – and have to make alternative currency arrangements – there would be a challenge both to the credibility and the stability of the euro. This would risk a domino effect among those countries which, to a greater or lesser degree, faced similar problems: Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Spain could all find themselves forced to adopt a new, devalued, currency. Additionally, the collapse of Greece would trigger substantial losses within the European financial industry, particularly in France and

Germany, but also in Italy. Financial entities in all three countries hold substantial amounts of Greek debt, already classified as in ‘selective bankruptcy’, one step away from bankruptcy pure and simple.

A third rescue, however, would impose even more sacrifices on the long-suffering Greek electorate – which was why Prime Minister Samaras rejected the poisoned chalice of a further aid package, bravely claiming that Greece was in a position to fulfil its obligations and overcome its economic problems. Samaras’ own position was less than secure following an internal coalition disagreement over the dramatic closure and the restructuring of the national television network. Faced with granting further loans to Greece, there was a real risk that the Troika would become a duet; the IMF had already expressed its reluctance to participate in further loans to Greece, considering that the prescribed austerity measures alone would not turn the economy around and that greater emphasis needed to be given to growth measures. The IMF had threatened to turn off any aid to Greece if, by the end of July 2013, the euro-zone failed to cover the black hole that had been revealed in Greece’s public finances. Since the first Greek aid package, the IMF had come to the conclusion that the austerity programme had severely damaged not just the Greek economy *per se*, but more worryingly damaged – or even destroyed – its capacity to recover. The IMF stance over Greece left the euro-zone countries with little option but to revise the aid

programme and authorise a further disbursement at the end of July 2013.

The EU’s head of economic affairs was quoted as saying that he had been ‘dreaming of a summer without a Greek crisis.’ The Dutch finance minister, who (see above) had already expressed his reservations about the Greek economic recovery, was quoted as saying ‘Do all you can so that we can complete the revision of the aid programme at the beginning of July and approve the extra payments so that the overall programme is on the right path.’

Were Mr Samaras to find himself forced to accept a third rescue, it would be more than likely that his government would collapse. Mr Samaras is known to be an ambitious politician, whose Harvard education none the less conceals a populist streak. As the leader of the *Néa Dimokratía* (ND) (New Democracy) party in opposition, he had refused to support the efforts of Socialist Prime Minister George Papandreou over the first EU-IMF bailout. This destroyed any hopes of securing a consensus agreement on the austerity measures the €110 billion (US\$138 billion) loan package involved. The London based *Guardian* newspaper noted that Mr Samaras – who has been prime minister since the June 2012 elections – was described in German media as the ‘fly in the ointment’. However, once in power and as the prospect of national bankruptcy loomed, he rapidly agreed to support the follow-up €130 billion (US\$173 billion) bailout.

Mr Samaras’ prevarication over the bailouts has been all the more galling for Greece’s partners because his party has been widely accused of creating the country’s debt crisis in the first place. The concern among Greece’s neighbours has been that a possible collapse of the ND-lead coalition would lead to wider political instability. This, in turn, could suggest that the problems confronting Greece are very much the same as those faced by other euro-zone countries. The lingering debate on the future of the euro would re-ignite, centring once again on the existence of a common currency that lacked mechanisms and protocols needed to resolve its difficulties. When the reality of what needed to be done became clear, calls for ‘more Europe’ fell on largely deaf ears.

### Grexit?

Quite the opposite in fact. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* by Matthew Dalton looked at the IMF’s end 2012 report on the Greek economy, in which the Washington organisation took a look at how far

## KEY INDICATORS

## Greece

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	11.14	11.16	11.18	10.79	*11.30
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	351.90	330.80	305.40	303.10	*249.20
GDP per capita	US\$	31,602	29,635	27,302	27,073	*22,055
GDP real growth	%	-0.1	-3.3	-4.5	-6.9	*-6.4
Inflation	%	4.2	1.4	4.7	3.1	1.0
Unemployment	%	7.7	9.5	12.5	17.5	*24.2
Coal output	mtoe	8.3	8.1	8.8	7.4	7.9
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	29,163.0	21,361.0	22,628.0	27,954.0	*27,954.0
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	94,209.0	64,187.0	60,165.0	65,838.0	*53,369.0
Balance of trade	US\$m	-65,046.0	-42,826.0	-37,537.0	-37,884.0	*-25,281.0
Current account	US\$m	-51,216.0	-37,043.0	-32,335.0	-29,353.0	*-7,182.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	343.8	1,554.8	1,309.5	1,388.4	*1,269.6
Foreign exchange	US\$m	158.7	198.8	108.2	65.5	*48.8
Exchange rate	per US\$	0.68	0.78	0.76	0.75	*0.77
* estimated figure						

euro-zone economic output would fall if Greece were to leave the euro. The IMF's cagy conclusion was inconclusive. But even an optimistic scenario, according to Mr Dalton, looked pretty bad. In the first instance, any resurrection of the drachma would leave many of Greece's public and private-sector debts to foreign creditors denominated in euros. Since the whole purpose of a 'Grexit' would be to improve competitiveness, it would be more difficult to repay Greece's foreign debts and obligations. None the less, according to the IMF, the direct costs of Greece exiting the euro-zone would be small. Mr Dalton noted that 'private-sector exposure in the rest of the euro-zone to Greece had been falling for some time, as Greek government debt held by the private sector has been restructured and imports purchased by Greece's pancaked economy have plunged; the IMF says Greece's liabilities to the private sector in the rest of the currency area have fallen to less than 1 per cent of the euro-zone's gross domestic product.'

Although Greek exposure within the euro-zone's public sector has risen, reflecting the huge sums lent to the country – bailout loans and cash for banks – this exposure is relatively small, only about 2 per cent of the rest of the euro-zone's gross domestic product (GDP), leading, in the view of the IMF, to 'relatively modest' increases in government debt. In effect, virtually all the damage to government debt levels resulting from outstanding bailout loans to Greece had already been done. The European Financial Stability Fund was expected to lend €144.7 billion (US\$192.9 billion) to Greece up to 2014, while the member states had already lent Greece €52.9 billion (US\$70.53 billion) in bilateral loans in the period up to December 2011.

The real risk, according to the IMF was contagion. A Grexit could spark a run on countries across the southern euro-zone. Depositors might withdraw their deposits from banks in Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Italy. Foreign banks would refuse to extend credit to companies in these countries; foreign companies could refuse to trade with them. In short, the risk remained of an economic catastrophe that could result in a break-up of the euro-zone. Mr Dalton concluded that 'even the IMF's best-case analysis of a Greek exit sees the euro-zone probably being dragged back into recession – if, that is, it has managed to emerge from its current recession.'

The highly respected chief economist of the Citi banking group, Willem Buiter,

reflected the lukewarm optimism felt in banking circles over prospects for the Greek economy, saying 'we are no longer including Grexit at the start of 2014 in our base case. We still believe that there is a fairly high risk of Grexit in coming years, but no longer put it in our base case at any particular date. This partly reflects a lower general risk of Grexit, but also a sense that, with creditor nations taking a more relaxed line on fiscal targets and Greece's coalition government holding together, triggers for Grexit as early as 2014 have receded markedly. The chosen date was always somewhat arbitrary, but to construct a consistent forecast we pencilled in sizeable Grexit-related uncertainties and financial strains around that date, hitting the 2014 growth outlook. That intensified headwind is now absent in our forecast.'

### Political weaknesses

However, neither Citi nor the IMF appeared to focus their attention on the strains and tensions existing between the coalition leader, ND, and the second largest party and opposition leader Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Syriza) (Coalition of the Radical Left). Previously Greece's fifth largest party, this loose grouping of left-wing parties found itself exercising increased influence as Greece endeavoured to introduce and complete often painful economic reforms. Led by the 38 year old Alexis Tsipras, Syriza was opposed to the international bailout and, tapping into popular outrage had promised to freeze payments to creditors and renegotiate measures included in Greece's €130 billion (US\$173 billion) rescue package.

Syriza has said that it wants to keep Greece in the euro-zone, but also says that it cannot accept what it describes as 'German sado-austerity'. Syriza had, either by luck or good management, anticipated the IMF's change of heart when it announced a policy that would either see the EU backtracking on its draconian cuts programme or risk losing a euro-zone member. Threatening a Grexit had become a powerful bargaining chip. Syriza did not appear to have any particular enthusiasm for the euro and if elected to power would certainly be prepared to risk abandoning the common currency. Ironically, the more Syriza is attacked by the Athens – and Brussels – establishments (not to mention that of Berlin) the more popular it appears to become. Quoted in the London *Spectator*, a Greek factory worker said: 'We survived 5,000 years with the drachma but in ten years with the

euro we have problems, like we're going to die.'

### Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Poor
Regional stability	Fair

### COUNTRY PROFILE

#### Historical profile

1454 After the fall of Constantinople to Suleiman the Magnificent, Greece and most of the eastern Mediterranean were occupied by the Ottoman Empire.

1829 Following a war against the Ottomans lasting eight years, Greece declared its independence as a monarchy.

1913 The London Conference reduced the amount of ethnic Albanian-dominated territory of the former Ottoman Empire and Cameria (Chamouria) was granted to Greece.

1917 Greece entered the First World War on the side of the Allies and made territorial gains.

1923 Greece signed the Lausanne Peace Treaty with Turkey. The Treaty outlined the territory of each country and provided Greece with a number of islands in the Aegean Sea.

1939 Greece rejected Italy's ultimatum seeking free passage for its troops in the Second World War and repelled its attack, but was occupied by Germany. The government and the King went into exile. Mass armed resistance grew out of various political groupings.

1944 Liberation from the Nazis. The returned National Unity government under George Papandreu fought a civil war against the Communists.

1949 Constitutional monarchy was re-established. There were territorial gains from the war, the last of which was the Dodecanese islands in the south-eastern Aegean Sea.

1967–72 A military coup led by right-wing army officers deposed King Konstantinos II. An attempted counter-coup by the King failed, and he went into exile. Colonel Georgios

Papadopoulos appointed himself prime minister. The regime was brutal and repressive with all political activity banned.

1973 Greece was declared a republic with Papadopoulos as president. General Demetrios Ioannides led a bloodless coup; Papadopoulos was overthrown. Partial civilian rule was allowed. General Phaidon Gizikis was appointed president.

1974 Civil war in Cyprus and the Turkish invasion of the island brought Greece close to war with Turkey and caused the downfall of the military junta. Elections resulted in a decisive victory for Nea Dimokratia (ND) (New Democracy). A

referendum rejected proposals for a return to constitutional monarchy.

1975 A republican constitution providing for a parliamentary democracy was promulgated and Konstantinos Tsatsos was elected president.

1977 The ND was re-elected with a reduced majority.

1980 In May, Constantine Karamanlis was elected president. Greece joined the EU.

1981 The Panellino Socialistiko Kinima (Pasok) (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) gained an absolute majority in parliament in the elections. The Pasok government, led by Andreas Papandreou, was the first socialist government in Greek history.

1985 President Karamanlis resigned and Christos Sartzetakis became president. Pasok was returned to power and implemented proposed constitutional changes. The government's programme of economic austerity became very unpopular and resulted in widespread industrial unrest.

1986 Constitutional amendments limited the powers of the president.

1989 ND won the largest proportion of votes in the elections.

1993 The ND government was forced to resign after losing its one seat parliamentary majority. Pasok regained power.

1995 Costis Stephanopoulos was elected president.

1996 Prime Minister Papandreou resigned due to ill health and Costas Simitis became prime minister. Andreas Papandreou died, ending an era of authoritarian control over Pasok, which won the parliamentary elections.

2000 Incumbent president, Stephanopoulos, was re-elected. Pasok was re-elected, becoming the first party to win three successive elections. Greece's application to join the Economic and Monetary Union (Emu) was accepted.

2001 Greece officially joined the Emu.

2002 The euro currency replaced the drachma.

2004 The ND, led by Costas Karamanlis, won the parliamentary elections.

2005 Karolos Papoulias was elected president. Newly introduced labour laws ended 'jobs for life'.

2007 A series of forest fires swept through areas in southern Greece and killed over 60 people and destroyed over 4,500 homes. The prime minister called an early election and the ruling ND won but with a reduced majority. Karamanlis remained prime minister.

2008 Greece blocked the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's (FYROM) membership of NATO, due to the unresolved issue of FYROM using Macedonia in its name. Eight days of rioting in Athens resulted in the death of a youth during

protests about the growing unemployment rate.

2009 GDP growth fell to 1 per cent; unemployment reached 9.4 per cent. Tourism, which typically employed 20 per cent of the working population, suffered due in most part to a strong euro and a drop in the number of visitors by 15–20 per cent. The former state-owned Olympic Airlines was privatised following an agreement with the EU to write-off US\$3.87 billion (€2.6 billion) in accumulated debt; it was re-launched as Olympic Air. In snap parliamentary elections the ruling ND lost to Pasok and Georgios Papandreou became prime minister. The credit rating agency Fitch reduced Greece's sovereign debt rating to BBB+.

2010 Parliament re-elected Karolos Papoulias as president. The government made further cuts in public spending. The domestic economic crisis grew into a eurozone problem when the government informed the European Central Bank (ECB) that its deficit was unsustainable and it was in danger of defaulting on its public debts. Several international rating agencies downgraded Greece's sovereign ratings to 'junk bond' status. The euro came under international pressure. Greece only just avoided insolvency when a US\$147 billion three-year loan was arranged with the ECB and IMF, under a newly created European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF). The government implemented stringent austerity measures, including cuts in pensions and salaries of government workers, which resulted in widespread strikes and street protests. Greek truckers went on strike, protesting against the government's move to liberalise road transport. The strike ended after a week when the government threatened to revoke their licences; armed forces were ordered to deliver fuel to petrol stations.

2011 Rioting broke out in Athens in June as the prime minister announced the next phase in an economic austerity plan, required before further aid would be available. Over two days, parliament voted to approve the five-year austerity plan, which would qualify Greece for €110 billion (US\$80.3 billion) in external financial aid from the ECB and IMF, or risk defaulting on its debts. A 48-hour general strike was held at the same time to protest at measures that included raised taxes and salary cuts for public employees at a time when unemployment was over 16 per cent. The ECB restructuring plan was implemented but by July money markets and investors were still concerned about Greece's ability to fund the debt. Germany appeared unsympathetic to Greece's continued financial needs. In August the planned merger of Greece's second and third

largest banks, Eurobank EFG and Alpha Bank, was announced. The merger created the biggest bank in south-east Europe, with assets of US\$212 billion and around 1,300 branches. Prime Minister Papandreou caused consternation in November when he declared that any agreement for further fiscal austerity measures, concluded with European Monetary Union (EMU) leaders to allow the next instalment of the bailout (US\$11 billion), would be put to a referendum. In parliament both his supporters and the opposition attacked his handling of the crisis and in November he only narrowly won a vote of confidence (153 to 145). Parliament agreed to pass austerity legislation on the proviso that Papandreou stepped-down as prime minister after the formation of a government of unity. The proposed referendum was abandoned. Parliament selected Lucas Papademos as prime minister following days of wrangling between the ruling the Pasok and opposition ND to find an acceptable candidate to replace Georgios Papandreou; he took office on 11 November. Mr Papademos was a technocrat and a vice president of the European Central Bank (ECB). He secured bailout-funds and implemented budget cuts to avert economic collapse.

2012 After months of volatility and a series of austerity budgets parliamentary elections were held on 6 May, which brought to prominence the conservative ND with 18.9 per cent of the vote (108 seats out of 300). Pasok lost 119 seats when it polled just 13.2 per cent (41) and was beaten into third place by Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Syriza) (Coalition of the Radical Left) with 16.8 per cent (52). Antonio Samaras (ND) was given three days to form a coalition government, but failed. He was followed by Alexis Tsipras (Syriza) who likewise could not gather enough support for his far-left bloc. EU partners warned all political parties attempting to form a government that Greece must keep to the tough terms of the international financial bailout. On 10 May, Pasok's leader attempted to form a coalition government. On 17 May, a new caretaker government of technocrats, led by Panagiotis Pikramenos, was sworn into office, after the top three political parties in the last election failed to form a coalition; general elections were set for 17 June. A second general election was held on 17 June, following the political impasse when no government could be formed after the 6 May elections. The outcome of this election is considered to hold the key to Greece's membership of the EMU and not only Greece but the remainder of the euro-zone if Greece were forced to leave. ND won extra seats in this election, 129 seats out of 300 (with 29.7

per cent of the vote) and began coalition talks immediately. On 20 June a new government was sworn into office with Antonis Samaras as the new prime minister. He reiterated his undertaking to uphold the austerity commitments that Greece had previously accepted. On 31 October, the government submitted its budget for 2013, which proposed public spending cuts of up to €13.5 billion (US\$17.4 billion). A two-day general strike by public and private workers began on 6 November. Parliament agreed to the latest austerity package to save €13.5 billion (US\$17 billion) by 2016.

2013 An anti-austerity strike was staged by trade unions on 1 May. On 11 June the government shut Ellinikí Radiophonía Tileórássi (ERT) (Hellenic Radio and Television), the state-owned, public broadcaster. The move, part of government austerity measures, included the external service, Voice of Greece. All 2,700 workers were made redundant, although they were told they could apply for work when the corporation relaunches as a smaller, independent public broadcaster. On 13 June a 24-hour strike took place, called by trade unions and all media unions. On 17 June the Council of State (Greece's top administrative court) ordered that the signal be restored so that ERT could start broadcasting again. However, the court also upheld Prime Minister Samaras's plan to replace ERT with a new broadcaster later in the year. On 17 July parliament narrowly (by 153–140) approved a public sector reform bill that will mean thousands of people losing their jobs. The bill is tied to a further €6.8 billion (US\$5.2 billion) of bailout loans, needed to keep the country afloat. Thousands of protesters rallied outside the parliament during the debate. In its fourth review of Greece published at the end of July the IMF backed the latest tranche of €1.7 billion (US\$2.3 billion). It also reported that Greece needs to deliver 'rapidly on structural reforms to unlock growth and create jobs'. Greece's economy showed a slight improvement in the three months to the end of June with GDP growth at -4.6 per cent, compared to -5.6 per in the first quarter. On 25 August the Greek finance minister was reported as saying that the country may need another €10 billion (US\$13.4 billion); he also said that the Greece could not accept any further austerity measures. Anti-racist musician, Pavlos Fyssas, was stabbed to death by a man claiming to be a member of the far right Golden Dawn party on 18 September. On 28 September Nikolaos Michaloliakos, leader of Golden Dawn, was charged with belonging to a criminal organisation. Nineteen other party members, including four members of

parliament, were also charged. Parliament voted on 22 October to suspend state funds to the Golden Dawn party.

## Political structure

### Constitution

The constitution of 1975 has been revised on several occasions in line with contemporary circumstances. It sets out the rights and responsibilities of the parliament, judiciary, people and church. The constitution is enshrined in law.

In March 1986, parliament ratified changes to the 1975 constitution, limiting the president's power in relation to parliament.

### Independence date

1921, declared independence

### Form of state

Parliamentary democratic republic

### The executive

The president of the republic is Head of State, and is elected by parliament for a five-year term, for a maximum of two terms. The president must be elected by a two-thirds majority, or on the third ballot by a three-fifths majority.

Since 1985 when presidential power was reduced, *de facto* executive power is wielded by the prime minister and cabinet. The cabinet is named by the prime minister.

### National legislature

Legislative power rests with the 300-member unicameral Vouli ton Ellinon (parliament), elected for four years by universal and compulsory adult suffrage.

### Legal system

Greek law is based on codified Roman law with the judiciary divided into civil, criminal, and administrative courts. Judicial independence is guaranteed under the constitution.

### Last elections

3 February 2010 (presidential); 17 June 2012 (parliamentary)

**Results:** Presidential: Karolos Papoulias was elected president (by parliament, receiving 266 votes out of 300).

Parliamentary: Néa Dimokratía (ND) (New Democracy) won 29.7 per cent of the vote (129 seats out of 300), Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Syriza) (Coalition of the Radical Left) 26.9 per cent (71), Panellino Sosialistiko Kinima (Pasok) (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) 12.3 per cent (33), Anexartitói Ellines (AE) (Independent Greeks) 7.5 per cent (20), Chrysi Avgi (CA) (Golden Dawn) 6.9 per cent (18), Dimokratiki Aristera (Dimar) (Democratic Left) 6.3 per cent (17), Kommounistiko Komma Ellados (KKE) (Communist Party of Greece) 4.5 per cent (12); 14 other political parties and independent candidates failed to win any seats. Turnout was 62.5 per cent.

## Next elections

2016 (parliamentary); 2015 (presidential)

## Political parties

### Ruling party

Coalition led by Néa Dimokratía (ND) (New Democracy), with Panellino Sosialistiko Kinima (Pasok) (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) and Dimokratiki Aristera (Dimar) (Democratic Left) (from 20 Jun 2012)

### Main opposition party

Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás (Syriza) (Coalition of the Radical Left)

## Population

10.79 million (2011; census figure)

**Last census:** 24 May 2011: 10,787,690

**Population density:** 81 inhabitants per square km. Urban population 61 per cent (2010 Unicef).

**Annual growth rate:** 0.6 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

### Ethnic make-up

Greece is a very homogenous state and the vast majority of its citizens regard themselves as ethnic Greek. However, there are also small numbers of Turks, Pomaks, Gypsies, Vlaks and an increasing numbers of illegal Albanian economic refugees (some 300,000 are believed to live in Athens).

### Religions

Over 95 per cent of the population are baptised in the Greek Orthodox Church. There are small Muslim, Catholic and Jewish communities.

## Education

Primary education lasts for six years. Secondary education generally lasts for six years and is divided into two equal periods. Approximately 47 per cent of the relevant age group participate in some form of tertiary education. Overcrowded classes at public high schools and a lack of facilities mean that students take private tuition or attend night school to improve their chances of going to university, for which entrance is fiercely competitive. Women comprise almost 60 per cent of Greek graduates.

Public education expenditure is equivalent to just over 3 per cent of GDP.

**Literacy rate:** 98 per cent, male; 96 per cent, female; adult rates (World Bank).

**Enrolment rate:** 93 per cent at primary level and 95 per cent at secondary level (of the relevant age groups).

**Pupils per teacher:** 14 in primary schools

## Health

Although basic healthcare is provided free of charge, many Greeks find standards unsatisfactory and prefer to go to private doctors and clinics, or even to pay the high cost of treatment abroad.

### HIV/Aids

**HIV prevalence:** 0.2 per aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

**Life expectancy:** 79 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

**Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate:** 1.5 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef)

**Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000):** 5 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

### Head of population per physician:

4.38 physicians per 1,000 people, 2001 (WHO 2006)

### Welfare

Social security is handled by more than 350 state-run or state-supervised social insurance funds, which together cover almost all the Greek population. The largest of these funds is the general social security scheme, run by the Idryma Koinonikis Asfalisis (IKA) (Social Security Institute). The scheme covers 1.8 million wage earners, pays pensions and operates a network of hospitals and out patient clinics.

Parliament approved the restructuring of the debt-burdened and complex state pension system in June. Greece has a growing aged population, which will become problematic.

At 9 per cent of the total labour force, the proportion of Greek employees living in conditions of poverty is one of the highest in the EU.

### Main cities

Athens (capital), estimated population 762,698 in 2012), Thessaloniki (363,987), Piraeus (179,479), Patras (168,906), Peristerion (suburb of Athens) (147,598), Iráklion (capital of Crete, 139,890), Lárisa (138,264), Kallithéa (111,714).

### Languages spoken

Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Aroumanian, Bulgarian and Pomak are spoken by their resident populations. Most people in the business community also speak English, French or German.

### Official language/s

Greek

### Media

#### Press

Although the media has considerable freedom, a public prosecutor may stop circulation of an edition of a newspaper on the grounds that it is blasphemous, offends public decency, reveals military or state secrets or offends the Greek president.

**Dailies:** There are 34 national daily newspapers and most publish Sunday editions. Most newspapers have political party affiliations.

In Greek, high circulation newspapers include *Ethnos* (*Nation*) ([www.ethnos.gr](http://www.ethnos.gr)),

*Kathimerini* (*Daily*) ([www.kathimerini.gr](http://www.kathimerini.gr)), *To Vima*, (*The Tribune*) ([www.tovima.gr](http://www.tovima.gr)), *Eleftheros Typos* (*Free Press*)

([www.e-tipos.com](http://www.e-tipos.com)) and two evening publications include *Eleftherotypia* (*Press Freedom*) ([www.enet.gr](http://www.enet.gr)) and *Ta Nea*, (*The News*) ([www.tanea.gr](http://www.tanea.gr)). Some offer online articles in English.

**Weeklies:** Many daily newspapers publish weekend editions. In Greek, *To Proto Thema* ([www.protothema.gr](http://www.protothema.gr)) is a tabloid newspaper and *Stochos* ([www.stoxos.gr](http://www.stoxos.gr)) is a nationalist publication. In English *Athens News* ([www.athensnews.gr](http://www.athensnews.gr)); *Big News Network* is an internet site ([www.bignewsnetwork.com](http://www.bignewsnetwork.com)).

**Business:** In Greek, there are several business newspapers, *Naftemporiki* ([www.naftemporiki.gr](http://www.naftemporiki.gr)) is a financial daily, *Kerdos* ([www.kerdos.gr](http://www.kerdos.gr)), *Reporter* ([www.reporter.gr](http://www.reporter.gr)) reports on financial markets, others include *Express* ([www.express.gr](http://www.express.gr)), *Imerissia* ([www.imerisia.gr](http://www.imerisia.gr)), *Isotimia* ([www.isotimia.gr](http://www.isotimia.gr)) and *Oikonomikos Tachydromos* (<http://oikonomikos.dolnet.gr>), a magazine for economic and policy analysis. Regional publications include *Thrakiki Agora* ([www.thrakikiagora.gr](http://www.thrakikiagora.gr)) and *Thrakiki Gi* ([www.thrakikigi.gr](http://www.thrakikigi.gr)) from Komotini in the north-east. Industry publications include *Naftika Chronika* ([www.naftikachronika.gr](http://www.naftikachronika.gr)) concerning Greek shipping. Some offer online articles in English.

**Periodicals:** In Greek, for women, monthly magazines include *Gynaika*, the oldest women's publication and *Praktiki* for articles on the home.

#### Broadcasting

Ellinikí Radiophonía Tileórássi (ERT) (Hellenic Radio and Television) ([www.ert.gr](http://www.ert.gr)) is the state-owned, public broadcaster. As part of its austerity measures, on 11 June 2013 the government shut ERT, calling it 'a haven of waste'. All 2,700 workers were made redundant, although they were told they could apply for work when the corporation relaunches as a smaller, independent public broadcaster. On 17 June the Council of State (Greece's top administrative court) ordered that the signal be restored so that ERT could start broadcasting again. However, the court also upheld Prime Minister Samaras's plan to replace ERT with a new broadcaster later in the year.

**Radio:** ERT (<http://tvradio.ert.gr>) operates five radio channels, ERA 1–5, with nationwide coverage. ERA5 is an overseas network called 'Voice of Greece', while Filia (Friendship) broadcasts to immigrants in 12 languages, mainly European but includes Arabic, providing news, information and entertainment. There are over 400 commercial radio stations, many unregulated by government, providing

programmes of music, sport and news and talk.

**Television:** ERT ([www.ert.gr](http://www.ert.gr)) operates three TV channels; two, ET1 and NET are broadcast from Athens and ET3 broadcasts from Thessaloniki with regional programmes for Northern Greece. New technologies include ERT Digital and ERT World (via satellite) with programmes broadcast around the world.

There are dozen commercial, private, digital and satellite channels based regionally, including Mega Channel ([www.megatv.com](http://www.megatv.com)), Skai TV ([www.skai.gr](http://www.skai.gr)), ANT1 Gold ([www.gold.antenna.gr](http://www.gold.antenna.gr)), Nova Cinema ([www.novacinema.gr](http://www.novacinema.gr)) and Nova Sport ([www.novasport.gr](http://www.novasport.gr)).

In 2008 there were no cable TV services, although two services are available via high-speed internet connections.

**Other news agencies:** ANA-MPA: [www.ana-mpa.gr](http://www.ana-mpa.gr)

### Economy

Greece's mixed economy is heavily dependent on tourism, agriculture and shipping. The service sector contributes over 75 per cent of GDP, industry around 20 per cent and agriculture less than 5 per cent. The tourist industry is based on Greece's ancient historic sites inland and its Mediterranean coastal resorts and islands. According to EU statistics, some 60 per cent of all employment in Greece is related to the tourist accommodation sector and provides around 15 per cent of GDP. In 2009, Greece's commercial shipping fleet was second (after Japan) in size in the world, with around 4,000 registered vessels, over 16 per cent of the world's carrying capacity; the sector contributes some 5–6 per cent to GDP and employs around 160,000 people or 4 per cent of the total working population. GDP growth in 2007 was 3 per cent, which quickly fell into recession of -0.1 per cent in 2008 as the global economic crisis struck; by 2009 Greece's recession had deepened with GDP growth of -3.3 per cent. The crisis resulted in a credit restriction, weakening world trade and a fall in domestic consumption and ultimately an uncompetitive economy. As a member of the euro-zone, the Greek economy is supposed to remain within a 3 per cent deficit margin as set by the European Central Bank (ECB), but as the crisis depressed the economy, government debt grew to 13.6 per cent of GDP and public debt burgeoned to 115.1 per cent of GDP. By the end of 2011 the debt ratio to GDP was 165.3 per cent. The government initiated a three-year reform programme, under pressure from the EU, that included spending cuts, higher taxes, reducing the size of the public sector while

freezing wages and introducing fiscal measures such as tackling tax evasion, reducing welfare payments in health, and pensions.

In 2010 the credit rating agency Standard and Poor's took the lead in downgrading Greece's credit rating to junk status so that not only is Greece required to forego expansion, it has to pay more for its daily borrowing to keep its economy afloat. As the economy was in danger of defaulting on its loans, the EU and IMF provided financial aid to support the government. The EU issued infringement notices against Greece for past official statistics detailing economic data on Greece's deficit and debt which were deemed 'false'. In June 2011, a year of political turmoil began with parliament voting approval of a five-year austerity plan, needed to qualify Greece for €110 billion (US\$80.3 billion) in external financial aid from the ECB and IMF, or risk defaulting on its debts. A 48-hour general strike protested the measures that included raised taxes and salary cuts for public employees, at a time when unemployment was over 16 per cent. The ruling government fell and in November parliament selected a technocrat (who had been vice president of the ECB); Lucas Papademos as prime minister. Papademos worked hard to secure bailout-funds and implement budget cuts to avert economic collapse. GDP growth in 2011 fell to an estimated -6.9 per cent and unemployment had grown to 20.5 per cent. Internal conflict within the Papademos government over the austerity measures caused a fracture and the government fell. New elections were held on 6 May, but no government could be formed, and another general election was held on 17 June. The outcome of this election was considered to hold the key to Greece's membership of the EMU. On 20 June a new government was sworn into office with Antonis Samaras as the new prime minister. He reiterated an undertaking to uphold the austerity commitments that Greece had previously accepted. On 11 October 2012 the unemployment figure for July was recorded at 25.1 per cent (1.26 million without work) and the level for young people (15–24 years) was 54.2 per cent. In 2012 as the EU dithered and could not find a financial mechanism to extricate Greece from its depression, there were calls for Greece to quit the EMU club. While some EU members, led by France, considered Greece's membership to be vital, many outsiders pondered the very survival of the euro if this crisis could not be resolved.

### External trade

As a member of the European Union, Greece operates within a community-wide free trade area, with tariffs sets as a whole. Internationally, the EU has free trade agreements with a number of nations and trading blocs worldwide. It is Europe's largest producer of tobacco and the fifth largest exporter of cotton worldwide. Exports account for almost 50 per cent of Greece's GDP.

#### Imports

Principal imports include raw materials, fuels and lubricants, chemicals, machinery and transport equipment, foodstuffs, basic manufactures and consumer goods.

**Main sources:** Russia (12.5 per cent of total in 2012), Germany (9.3 per cent), Italy (7.7 per cent).

#### Exports

Principal exports include tobacco, electrical and manufactured goods, petroleum products, chemicals, textiles and agricultural products, fruit and vegetables and live animals.

**Main destinations:** Turkey (10.7 per cent of total in 2012), Italy (7.5 per cent), Germany (6.3 per cent).

### Agriculture

Agriculture is an important but diminishing sector of the economy, typically contributing, around 8.3 per cent to GDP and employing around 12 per cent of the labour force.

The government's agricultural policy is, to a large extent, shaped by the EU's Fundamental reform to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was introduced in Greece in 2005. The subsidies paid on farm output, which tended to benefit large farms and encourage overproduction, were replaced by single farm payments not conditional on production.

Main crops include wheat, barley, maize, fruit (especially olives), vegetables, oil seeds, tobacco, cotton and sugar beet. Traditionally, farm co-operatives have played a large role in agriculture as a source of purchasing seeds, renting machinery and selling products. Larger co-operatives also handle basic processing and marketing. Attempts to restructure the co-operatives have largely failed, with weak management and widespread corruption preventing their modernisation and development.

The sector is also handicapped by weak infrastructure, low levels of technology and generally poor soil. However, with the exception of meat, dairy products and animal feeds, Greece is self-sufficient in foodstuffs.

During the summer of 2007 forest fires devastated large areas of southern Greece, with particular damage inflicted on the olive groves of Kalamata; an estimated 20

per cent of national production was lost. Production is not expected to recover fully until 2012.

Fish production is important for domestic consumption and export. The annual freshwater fish catch is around 25,000 tonnes, with a marine catch of approximately 270,000 tonnes. Coastal fish farms produce sea bass and gilthead bream.

Although Greece has an expanding aquaculture sector, its processing and marketing sector remains underdeveloped. Following the EU's common fisheries policy, the country benefits from the EU structural fund that covers the whole sector and also includes the development of the processing and marketing of products.

Forest and other wooded land accounts for half of the land area, with forest cover estimated at 3.5 million hectares (ha). Most of the forest is in the northern and western part of the mainland and about 90 per cent is available for wood supply. Significant quantities of roundwood production are used for fuel consumption. More than three-quarters of the forest and other wooded land is under public ownership, and only about 20 per cent is privately owned. The forest sector is rather small and all types of forest products are imported, mainly comprising sawnwood and paper products.

### Industry and manufacturing

Industry typically accounts for 25 per cent of GDP and employs 26 per cent of the labour force. Within the industrial sector, manufacturing accounts for 57 per cent of output and construction 32 per cent. The remaining 11 per cent of industrial output is accounted for by the minerals and utilities sectors.

Manufacturing, which contributes around 15 per cent to overall GDP, is dominated by small family-owned companies, most of which are situated around Athens or in export-oriented zones around the port of Thessaloniki.

The number of mergers and acquisitions of Greek firms by foreign investors has increased in recent years, with greater numbers of companies making initial public offerings (IPOs) on the Athens Stock Exchange. However, production has been sluggish and relatively few industries are competitive on a European level.

Greek industry is also less competitive compared to its EU neighbours because it has no land boundaries with the Union. The aluminium sector, which is facing a shortage of domestic raw material, represents more than 1.5 per cent of GDP and employs approximately 40,000 workers.

### Tourism

Greece attracts not only sea and sun-worshippers to its many islands, it also has many other attractions including classical ruins, Byzantine monuments, many of which are on the UN World Heritage list. Greece is one of Europe's top-ten destinations for foreign travellers.

Tourism is an important component of GDP, which up until 2007 had represented over 17 per cent. Since then the global economic crisis has cut visitor numbers and the contribution of travel and tourism to GDP fell to 16.5 per cent in 2008 and further to just over 15 per cent in 2009–11. Likewise employment in the sector was at an all-time high of 20 per cent of total employment (2005–07), which fell to just over 17 per cent in 2009–10, but with an improvement to 18.4 per cent in 2011. Visitor numbers in 2010 fell by 7 per cent

In 2009, the former state-owned Olympic Airlines was privatised following an agreement with the EU to write-off US\$3.87 billion (eur2.6 billion) in accumulated debt; it was re-launched as Olympic Air. It began operations as a competitive, full-service airline for southern Europe and the east Mediterranean.

In 2011 as Greece was experiencing political and economic turmoil, its tourist sector experienced mixed fortunes.

Greece signed a memorandum of tourism co-operation with the Province of Guangdong (China) aimed at boosting Chinese tourist numbers. Visitor numbers from Germany and Russia recorded significant increases of 11.8 per cent and 57.5 per cent year-on-year to August 2011 respectively. Tourist receipts for these were also higher than for others; Germans spent a total of eur1.2 billion (US\$1.68 billion) and Russians eur546 million (US\$766.5 million). However, the international airport of Athens experienced a drop in passenger numbers and arrivals from former markets, particularly the UK, fell.

The new government, installed in November 2011, will look to tourism as a source of foreign exchange – net inflows of foreign direct investment was eur1.4 billion (US\$1.96 billion) for the year up to August – and will treat the sector as an important part of its economic recovery programme.

### Mining

There is a relative wealth of natural resources including large deposits of bauxite (aluminium ore), marble, lignite, magnesite, ferro-chrome, ferro-nickel, lead, zinc, uranium and manganese. Mining activity is small-scale and the sector typically contributes only 3 per cent to

GDP and employs only 1 per cent of the workforce.

New gold resources have been found at Skouries (an ancient copper mine), estimated to contain five–seven million ounces of gold.

### Hydrocarbons

Greek oil reserves fell below commercial levels before 2007, however consumption continued to rise to 372,000 barrels per day (bpd) by 2010. Hellenic Petroleum (HP) dominates the oil industry, operating three refineries and over 1,400 petrol stations, as well as interests in petrochemicals, natural gas supplies and electricity production. The government has a 35.49 per cent stake in HP.

In 2007, Russia, Greece and Bulgaria signed a US\$1.2 billion pipeline deal. The pipeline will run inland, from the Bulgarian Black Sea port of Burgas to Alexandroupoulos, on the Aegean Sea. Russian oil will be transported via the 285km pipeline to the huge EU market, avoiding the busy Bosphorus. A Russian consortium will hold a 51 per cent stake in the deal to build and operate the pipeline and a joint Greek/Bulgarian consortium 24.5 per cent each. The project had been expected to be completed by 2010, but in June 2011 only an environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) had begun into the construction of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), providing a description of the preferred route and potential risks with their mitigation measures. HP operates a 214km oil pipeline, with a capacity to carry about 50,200bpd, from the port of Thessaloniki to Skopje in Macedonia.

Natural gas amounts for over 10 per cent of Greece's energy mix. The natural gas sector is led by DEPA (Greek Public Gas Company), which despite liberalisation in the market still dominates, selling gas to commercial users and commercial suppliers to domestic users. The state and HP each own 35 per cent of DEPA.

In February 2012, the multinational, South Stream Transport group, announced the expected construction of the South Stream pipeline, to transport Russian natural gas to Western and Central Europe (and bypassing Ukraine) would begin in December 2012.

Greece had coal reserves of 1.9 million tonnes in 2010. Reserves are comprised wholly of low quality lignite, with high extraction costs, high pollutants and used exclusively in thermal power stations.

### Energy

Greece generates approximately 50 million MW of electricity annually, producing over 55.4 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) in 2006; around 75 per cent is thermal, 21 per cent hydro and 4 per cent solar. The

majority of thermal power stations are fuelled by domestically produced lignite coal, with the remainder supplied by imported oil. Growth in electricity has increased by 50 per cent since 1995 and the energy authorities estimate that Greece will need an extra 6,000MW of additional capacity by 2015. Greece is the EU's second-largest solar collector (after Germany), with 20 per cent of households using solar powered water heaters. The national Public Power Corporation (PPC) is the country's largest energy company and sole power supplier, operating 34 electricity-generating stations in an interconnected power grid as well as 60 autonomous power plants on Greek islands. The government has sold its assets in PPC but retained statutory control of its operations. The national electricity grid is connected to the networks of Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo.

### Financial markets

#### Stock exchange

Athens Stock Exchange (ASE)

#### Commodity exchange

ADEX (Athens Derivatives Exchange)

### Banking and insurance

Liberalisation of the banking system was initiated in 1987. Interest rates are fully freed and commercial banks permitted to handle forward dealing in foreign exchange. Companies can borrow in foreign exchange without restriction.

On 29 August 2011 the planned merger of Greece's second and third largest banks, Eurobank EFG and Alpha Bank, was announced. The merger created the biggest bank in south-east Europe, with assets of US\$212 billion and around 1,300 branches.

#### Central bank

Bank of Greece; European Central Bank (ECB).

#### Time

GMT plus two hours (daylight saving, late-March to late-September, GMT plus three hours)

#### Geography

Greece lies in south-eastern Europe. The country consists mainly of a mountainous peninsula between the Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea. It is bounded by Albania, Macedonia (FYROM) and Bulgaria to the north, Turkey to the north-east, the Aegean Sea to the east, the Sea of Crete to the south and the Ionian Sea to the west. To the south, east and west of the mainland are many Greek islands, the largest being Crete.

#### Hemisphere

Northern

## Climate

Coastal regions and the islands have typical Mediterranean conditions, with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry, sunny summers. Rainfall comes almost entirely in the winter months, although amounts vary widely according to position and relief. Continental conditions affect the northern mountainous areas, with severe winters, deep snow cover and heavy precipitation, but summers are hot. Athens: 9 degrees Celsius (C) (January); 28 degrees C (July); annual rainfall 414mm.

## Dress codes

A suit and tie or formal clothing are necessary for business meetings, even during the hot summer months. Women tend to dress smartly in the evening and men wear either suits or smart, casual clothes.

## Entry requirements

### Passports

Required by all, except nationals of EU/EEA countries, Switzerland and Monaco holding valid national identity cards. Passports must be valid for at least three months beyond length of stay.

### Visa

Required by all, except nationals of Schengen agreement signatory countries and citizens of most of the Americas, Europe and many Asian countries. For confirmation of exceptions, contact the consular section of the nearest embassy. For those applying for a business visa, contact the consulate before travelling to determine requirements. A Schengen visa application (offered in several languages) can be downloaded from <http://europa.eu/abc/travel/> see 'documents you will need'.

### Currency advice/regulations

There are no restrictions on the import and export of local or foreign currency. Foreign currency over US\$1,000 or equivalent must be declared on arrival.

### Customs

Personal items are duty-free. There are no duties levied on alcohol and tobacco between EU member states, providing amounts imported are for personal consumption.

Strict regulations apply concerning the export of antiquities, including rocks from archaeological sites. Penalties range from large fines to prison terms.

## Health (for visitors)

Nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland can access reduced cost and sometimes free medical treatment using a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) while visiting the EEA. Exceptions include nationals of the 10 countries which joined the EU in

2004 whose EHICs are not valid in Switzerland. Application for the EHIC should be made before travelling.

### Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate is required if travelling from infected area.

### Advisable precautions

Long-term visitors should consider hepatitis A immunisation. Drinking water is not always purified.

Comprehensive travel insurance is advisable, in case of medical or other emergencies.

## Hotels

Numerous hotels in all main towns, classified as de luxe, A,B,C,D and E. There is a 15 per cent service charge. A small tip will be expected. It is advisable to make reservations well in advance, especially between May and September.

## Credit cards

All major credit cards are accepted.

## Public holidays (national)

### Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 6 Jan (Epiphany), 25 Mar (Independence Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 15 Aug (Assumption Day), 28 Oct (Ochi Day/National Day), 25 Dec (Christmas Day), 26 Dec (St Stephen's Day).

### Variable dates

Greek Orthodox Shrove Monday, Greek Orthodox Good Friday, Greek Orthodox Easter Monday, Greek Orthodox Whit Monday, Greek Orthodox Pentecost.

## Working hours

### Banking

Mon–Fri: 0800–1400.

### Business

Mon–Fri: generally 0800–1400 and 1700–2000; tend to close earlier during summer and on Mon and Wed afternoons.

### Government

Mon–Fri: usually 0800–1500.

### Shops

Mon, Wed and Sat: 0800–1400; Tue, Thu and Fri: 0800–1400 and 1800–2100.

## Telecommunications

### Mobile/cell phones

There are GSM roaming facilities available in 900/1800 band widths, with coverage throughout the country, including the island territories.

## Electricity supply

220V AC

## Social customs/useful tips

Personal contact is an important way of conducting business in Greece. Greek bureaucracy can be slow. Identification documents and various

authorisation letters or seals are necessary.

It is forbidden to photograph military installations and aircraft. Penalties for breaking the law can be severe.

## Security

Visitors should be alert to the presence of pickpockets and purse-snatchers in tourist sites, particularly in Athens. As with the rest of Europe, there is a threat from terrorist activity, but Greece has its own anarchists, who occasionally engage in violence.

## Getting there

### Air

Greece has a strong tourist industry that relies on 80 per cent of international visitors arriving by air. Airports are located on the mainland as well as the islands.

### National airline: Olympic Air

**International airport/s:** Eleftherios Venizelos Airport (ATH), sited in Sparta, 27km north-west of Athens. Facilities include: business centre, shops, duty-free shops, restaurants and car hire. Further information can be obtained at [www.aia.gr](http://www.aia.gr). Express bus routes carry passengers into Athens or the port of Piraeus. **Other airport/s:** Alexandroupolis (AXD), 7km from city; Corfu (CFU), 1.6km from city; Heraklion (HER), 5km from city; Ioannina (IOA), 5km from city; Kos (KGS), 27km from city; Mykonos (JMK); Paros (PAS); Rhodes (RHO), 1.6km south-west of Rhodes; Thessaloniki Makedonia (SKG), 1.6km from city; Skiathos (JSI); Thira (JTR). **Airport tax:** International €12.5; domestic €8.51

### Surface

**Road:** The Greek road network is accessible via Italy, Bulgaria and Macedonia (FYROM) (border crossing at Medzitlija, near Bitola).

**Rail:** The Greek rail network is connected to most European routes via Italy, Bulgaria and Macedonia (FYROM). There is a daily service between Athens and Istanbul.

**Water:** Frequent passenger ferry services operate from Italy to Piraeus. A car ferry service runs between Ancona and Brindisi (Italy) and Igoumenitsa and Patras. There is a ferry from Marmaris, Turkey, to the island of Rhodes.

**Main port/s:** Heraklion, Igoumenitsa, Patras, Piraeus, Rafina, Salonika and Volos.

## Getting about

### National transport

**Air:** As well as the international airports, there are a further 25 other airports all connected by regular services operated by Olympic Airways.

**Road:** There are 117,000km of roads in Greece, of which about 9,000km are unpaved. There are 470km of motorways,

including a route from Athens to Thessaloniki.

**Rail:** Over 2,500km of track is operated by Hellenic Railways Organisation Ltd, with services to most towns.

**Water:** About 80km of navigable inland waterways are used, as well as several regular ferry services along the coast and connecting the various islands.

### City transport

**Taxis:** Taxis are plentiful in Athens, but avoid rush hours. There is an extra charge for each piece of luggage, waiting time, journeys outside Athens/Piraeus and journeys after midnight. Yellow taxis run from the airport to downtown Athens.

**Buses, trams & metro:** There is a good, but often busy, bus network in Athens with a standard flat rate within city limits. Tickets are available at blue booths situated near the bus stops, or at many kiosks throughout the city. These tickets must be inserted into a machine inside the bus to be valid. Double-decker buses run between the airport and downtown Athens, operating every 20 minutes from 0600 until midnight.

The Attico Metro runs from 0530 to midnight daily, approximately every four minutes during rush hour and every 10 minutes at other times. Tickets must be purchased before entering the metro and must be cancelled upon entry.

An extension to the subway system was inaugurated in 2000 as part of the subway grid built for the 2004 Olympic Games.

### Car hire

All major car hire companies have offices in Athens and some other main towns. Rates vary depending on size of car, length of hire and season. International driving licences are recognised, but UK, Belgian, Austrian and German full licences are also accepted. International insurance Green Card is valid, provided Greece is mentioned. The wearing of seatbelts is compulsory. Traffic drives on the right.

Extreme care is necessary if riding a motorbike.

## BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

### Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Greece is +30, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Athens	210	Samos	273
Heraklion	81	Thessaloniki	31

### Useful telephone numbers

Police: 100

Fire: 199

Hospitals: 106

Emergency services (24-hours; information in English, French and Greek, to request ambulances, fire department, police and coastguard): 112

### Chambers of Commerce

American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, 109 Messoghion Avenue, 11526 Athens (tel: 699-3559; fax: 698-5686; e-mail: info@amcham.gr).

Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 7 Akademias Street, 10671 Athens (tel: 360-4815; fax: 361-6408; e-mail: info@acci.gr).

British-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, 25 Vassilissis Sophia Avenue, 10674 Athens (tel: 721-0361; fax: 722-2119; e-mail: info@bhcc.gr).

Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 9 Koronaiou Street, 71202 Heraclion, Crete (tel: 022-9013; fax: 022-2914; e-mail: info@ebch.gr).

Samos Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 19 Koundourioti Street, 83100 Samos (tel: 087-970; fax: 022-784; e-mail: samcci@otonet.gr).

Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 29 Tsimiski Street, 54624 Thessaloniki (tel: 037-0100; fax: 037-0166; e-mail: root@ebeth.gr).

Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 7 Akademias Street, 10671 Athens (tel: 363-2702; fax: 362-2320; e-mail: hellas@uhcci.gr).

### Banking

Agricultural Bank of Greece SA, Panepistimiou 23, 105-64 Athens (tel: 939-9911; fax: 323-9611).

Alpha Bank, 40 Stadiou Street, 102-52 Athens (tel: 326-0000; fax: 326-5438).

Commerical Bank of Greece, 11 Sophocleous Street, 102-35 Athens (tel: 328-4000; fax: 325-3746).

Egnatia Bank, Omirou 22, 106-72 Athens (tel: 360-6914; fax: 362-7945).

General Bank, Panepistimiou 9, 105-64 Athens (tel: 324-1289; fax: 322-2271).

National Bank of Greece, Aeolou 86, 150-51 Athens (tel: 334-1000; fax: 321-3119; internet site: <http://www.nbg.gr>).

Post-Office Savings Bank, Pasmazoglou 2-6, 105-59 Athens (tel: 323-0621; fax: 323-1055).

### Central bank

Bank of Greece, 21 E Venizelos Avenue, GR 102-50 Athens (tel: 320-1111; fax: 323-2239; e-mail: secretariat@bankofgreece.gr).

European Central Bank (ECB), Kaiserstrasse 29, D-60311 Frankfurt am Main, Germany (tel: (+49-69) 13-440; fax: (+49-69) 1344-6000; e-mail: info@ecb.int).

### Stock exchange

Athens Stock Exchange (ASE), [www.ase.gr](http://www.ase.gr)

### Commodity exchange

ADEX (Athens Derivatives Exchange), [www.adex.ase.gr](http://www.adex.ase.gr)

### Travel information

Athens Airport (East), Helliniko, 167-00 Athens (tel: 969-9111; fax: 966-6162).

Athens Airport (West), Helliniko, 167-00 Athens (tel: 936-9111; fax: 936-3328).

Athens International Airport (Eleftherios Venizelos), 5th km Spata, Loutsa Ave, 190 04 Spata (tel: 369-8300; fax: 369-8883; internet site: <http://www.aia.gr>).

Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 24 Stadiou Street, 10564 Athens (tel: 331-0022/33; fax: 323-6962, 322-5449).

Olympic Airways, Syngrou Ave 96-100, 117-41 Athens (tel: 926-9111; fax: 926-7154).

### Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Tourism, Amerikis 2B, 105-64 Athens (tel: 322-3111; fax: 322-4148).

### National tourist organisation offices

Ellinikos Organismos Tourismou (GNTO) (Greek National Tourist Organisation), Odos Amerikis 2, Athens 10564 (tel: 322-3111/9).

### Ministries

Ministry of Aegean, Syngrou Ave 49, 117-43 Athens (tel: 923-7970; fax: 923-8200).

Ministry of Agriculture, Acharnon 2, 101-76 Athens (tel: 529-1111; fax: 524-0475).

Ministry of Commerce, Caningos Square, 106-77 Athens (tel: 381-6242; fax: 384-2642).

Ministry of Culture, Bouboulinas 20, 106-82 Athens (tel: 820-1100; fax: 820-1337).

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Mitropoleos 15, 101-85 Athens (tel: 325-4221; fax: 324-8264).

Ministry of Environment, Town Planning and Public Works, Amaliados 17, 115-23 Athens (tel: 643-1461; fax: 644-7608).

Ministry of Finance, Karageorgi Servias 10, 101-84 Athens (tel: 331-3400; fax: 323-8657).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Akademias 1, 106-71 Athens (tel: 361-0584; fax: 645-0028).

Ministry of Health, Welfare and Social Security, Aristotelous 17, 101-87 Athens (tel: 524-9010; fax: 522-3246).

Ministry of Industry, Energy and Technology, Michalakopoulou 80, 101-92 Athens (tel: 748-2770; fax: 770-8003).

General Secretariat for Energy and Technology, Mesogeion Ave 14-18, 115-10 Athens (tel: 775-2221; fax: 771-4153).

Ministry of Interior, Dragatsaniou 2, 105-59 Athens (tel: 322-3521; fax: 324-1180).

Ministry of Justice, Mesogeion 96, 115-27 Athens (tel: 775-7619; fax: 779-6055).

Ministry of Labour, Pireos 40, 101-82 Athens (tel: 523-3110; fax: 524-9805).

Ministry of National Defence, Papagou Camp, Mesogeion 227-229, 154-51 Athens (tel: 646-5201; fax: 646-5584).

Ministry of National Economy: Division for Foreign Capital and Attracting Investments, Syntagma Square, 101-80 Athens (tel: 333-2000; fax: 333-2130; internet site: [http://www.dos.gr/welcome\\_en.htm](http://www.dos.gr/welcome_en.htm)).

Division for Private Investment Policy, Syntagma Square, 101-80 Athens (tel: 333-2252/3; fax: 333-2326).

Regional Development Divisions of Attica, Thiras 60, 112-52 Athens (tel: 862-9810; fax: 862-9742).

Ministry of Press and Mass Media, Zalokosta 10, 101-63 Athens (tel: 363-0911; fax: 360-6969).

Ministry of Prime Minister's Office, Vas Sofias, 106-74 Athens (tel: 339-3000; fax: 339-3020).

Ministry of Public Order, Pan Kanellopoulou 4, 101-77 Athens (tel: 692-8510; fax: 692-1675).

Ministry of Transport and Communications, Xenofontos 13, 105-57 Athens (tel: 325-1211; fax: 324-7400).

Prime Minister's Office, Maximos Mansion, Herod Atticus 19, 106-74 Athens (tel: 671-7071; fax: 671-5799).

#### Other useful addresses

Athenagence (ANA) (news agency), Odos Pindarou 5, Athens 10671 (tel: 363-9816).

Athens and Piraeus Electric Railways (ISAP), Athinas 67, 105-52 Athens (tel: 324-8311; fax: 322-3935).

Athens and Piraeus Trolleys (ILPAP), Admitou 17, 104-46 Athens (tel: 821-6305; fax: 883-7445).

Athens and Piraeus Water Company (EYDAP), Oropou 156, 111-46 Athens (tel: 253-3402; fax: 253-3124).

Athens Municipal Gas Corporation (DEFA), Orfeos 2, 118-54 Athens (tel: 346-1194; fax: 346-1400).

Athens Stock Exchange, Sofokleous 10, 105-59 Athens (tel: 321-1301; fax: 321-3938; internet site: <http://www.ase.gr/>).

British Embassy, I Ploutarchou Street, 106-75 Athens (tel: 727-2600).

Centre for Planning and Economic Research (KEPE), Hippokratous St 22, 106-80 Athens (tel: 362-7321; fax: 361-1136; e-mail: [kepe@kepe.gr](mailto:kepe@kepe.gr)).

Cotton Organisation (OBA), Syngrou Ave 150, 176-71 Athens (tel: 923-4314; fax: 924-3676).

'Democritus' Nuclear Research Centre, Ag Paraskevi, 153-10 Athens (tel: 651-8911; fax: 651-9180).

Department of Press and Information, Ministry to The Prime Minister's Office, Odos Zalokosta 10, Athens (tel: 363-0911).

Economic and Industrial Research Institute (IOBE), Tsami Karatasi 11, 117-42 Athens (tel: 924-1378; fax: 923-3977).

Export Promotion Organisation (OPE), Mar Antippa 86-88, 163-46 Athens (tel: 996-1900; fax: 991-5392).

Federation of Greek Industry (SEB), Xenofontos 5, 105-57 Athens (tel: 323-7325; fax: 322-2929).

Geological and Mineral Research Institute (IGME), Mesogion Ave 70, 115-27 Athens (tel: 779-8412; fax: 775-2211).

Greek Atomic Energy Commission, Ag Paraskevi, 153-10 Athens (tel: 651-8911; fax: 651-9180).

Greek Embassy (USA), 2221 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: (+1-202)-939-5800; fax: (+1-202)-939-5824; e-mail: [greece@greekembassy.org](mailto:greece@greekembassy.org)).

Greek Post Offices (ELTA), Apellou 1, 101-88 Athens (tel: 324-3311; fax: 324-1228).

Greek Radio and Television (ET 1), Mesogion Ave 432, 153-42 Athens (tel: 639-0772; fax: 639-0652).

Greek Radio and Television (ET 2), Mesogion Ave 136, 115-62 Athens (tel: 770-1911; fax: 777-6239).

Greek Railways Organisation (OSE), Sina 6, 106-72 Athens (tel: 362-4402; fax: 362-8933).

Hellenic Aerospace Industry (EAB), Mesogion Ave 2-4, 115-27 Athens (tel: 779-9679; fax: 779-7670).

Hellenic Centre for Investment (HCI), 3 Mitropoleos Str, GR-105 57 Athens (tel: 324-2070; fax: 324-2079).

Hellenic Organisation for Small- and Medium-Size Enterprises and Handicraft Undertakings (EOMMEX), Xenias 16, 115-28 Athens (tel: 771-5002; fax: 771-5025).

Hellenic Organisation for the Promotion of Exports (HOPE), 1 Mitropoleos Street, 10557 Athens (tel: 324-7011/16).

Hellenic Standardisation Organisation (ELOT), Acharnon 313, 111-45 Athens (tel: 201-5025; fax: 202-0776).

Hellenic Telecommunications Organisation (OTE), Kifissias 99, 151-24 Athens (tel: 611-7466; fax: 681-0899).

Hellenic Tobacco Organisation (EOK), Kapodistriou 36, 104-32 Athens (tel: 524-7311; fax: 524-7318).

National Statistical Service, Lykourgou 14-16, 101-66 Athens (tel: 324-85118; fax: 324-1098; internet site: <http://www.statistics.gr/>).

Panhellenic Confederation of Farmers' Co-operatives (PASEGES), Kifissias 16, 115-26 Athens (tel: 770-4737; fax: 777-9313).

Panhellenic Exporters' Association, Kratinou 11, 105-52 Athens (tel: 522-8925; fax: 522-9403).

Public Materials Administration Organisation (ODDY), Stadiou 60, 105-64 Athens (tel: 324-4231; fax: 324/2970).

Public Petroleum Corporation (DEP), Mesogion Ave 357-359, 152-31 Athens (tel: 650-1340; fax: 650-1383).

Public Power Corporation (PPC), Halkokondyli 30, 104-32 Athens (tel: 523-4301; fax: 523-5307).

Union of Commercial Agents, Voulis 15, Athens (tel: 322-3148).

Urban Transport Organisation (OAS), Metsovou 15, 106-82 Athens (tel: 883-6077; fax: 821-2219).

**Other news agencies:** ANA-MPA: [www.ana-mpa.gr](http://www.ana-mpa.gr)

#### Internet sites

Bridge to Greece and Cyprus: <http://greekvillage.com/bridge/bridge.htm>

EFG Eurobank Ergasias: <http://www.eurobank.gr>

Greek telephone directory: <http://www.hellasyellow.gr/>