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# GREEK PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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# GREECE

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Greece is located in southeastern Europe, at the crossroads of the Middle East, Asia and Africa. It is a member of the European Union since 1981 and of the Eurozone since 2001. Greece's last EU Presidency in 2003 resulted in the Thessaloniki agenda for EU enlargement and a draft treaty for the European Constitution. Its economy is, despite the crisis, the largest of the Balkans. Around 10.8 million people live in Greece, of which 93 per cent are Greek nationals and 7 per cent foreigners. The unicameral parliament, composed of 300 seats, elects the President of the Republic for a five-year term. The legislative elections are held every four years. The current Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, is in office since 20 June 2012.

## ECONOMY

The Greek economy, having achieved high growth rates until 2008, showed signs of recession in 2009 as a result of the global financial crisis. From 2010 onwards the recession intensified considerably due to the country's fiscal imbalances. Greece was hit very hard as its main industries (shipping and tourism) were especially sensitive to changes in the business cycle. The government spent heavily to keep the economy functioning and the country's debt increased accordingly. In May 2010 Greece's credit rating was downgraded to junk status. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Eurozone governments provided Greece with emergency short- and medium-term loans worth €110 billion, so that the country could make debt repayments to creditors. In exchange for the bailout, the government announced combined spending cuts and tax increases, on top of the tough austerity measures already taken since 2009.

Despite these efforts, Greece failed to meet the 2010 targets and received in late 2011 a second bailout of €136 billion. It remains unclear whether Greece will have to negotiate during its Presidency a third bailout. The restrictive policies of the past four years have had a negative impact on GDP growth, leading to a decrease by 4 per cent in 2010, 7.1 per cent in 2011 and 6.4 per cent in 2012 (constant prices of year 2005). In 2012 the GDP amounted to €168.5 billion. For 2014 the Greek economy is expected to slightly grow. Unemployment has escalated from 7.6 per cent in 2008 (approximately the Eurozone average rate) to above 25 per cent in 2013. Youth unemployment exceeds 50 per cent.

# COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

## GROWTH – JOBS-COHESION

The Greek Presidency has established as first priority for its term the promotion of economic growth as only way to lead Europe out of the recession. This first priority is clearly linked to Greece's own needs. Economic growth and the creation of jobs go hand in hand. Therefore, the initiatives and actions to fight against unemployment and boost job creation are necessary in order to avoid a "jobless growth" in Europe. During the presentation of the Presidency's priorities, Foreign Minister Venizelos criticised the policy-making of the European Union and proposed an alternative notion regarding the future of Europe. However, it is unlikely that Greece will be able to change the way decisions are taken in the European Union. The Presidency's efforts will aim at balancing fiscal consolidation while implementing an improved Pact for Growth and Jobs. The aim is to transform this into a European investment programme, modeled after the cohesion policy and focused on employment creation. Within this framework, the European Investment Bank (EIB) can play an important role in relation to labour intensive projects (e.g. projects for SMEs, basic infrastructure, energy and climate) with the support and trust of the European Central Bank (ECB).

## MIGRATION- BORDERS-MOBILITY

The Greek Presidency will concentrate its efforts on advancing a comprehensive migration management that helps boost growth and reduce the burden of controlling migration flows on member states situated at Europe's external borders. The Presidency will promote all dimensions of migration and mobility policies within the framework of the EU's Global Approach to Migration. The problems arising from illegal immigration will be also addressed during the first half of 2014.

## MARITIME POLICIES

Due to its geographical position and the importance for the economy of the maritime sector, Greece will pay special attention to the EU maritime policy during its Council Presidency. According to the Greek Foreign Minister, Evangelos Venizelos, the EU needs "a comprehensive maritime policy that brings together the security of maritime borders, blue development, energy, fisheries, tourism, protection of undersea archaeological wealth, and maritime zones". The Presidency will introduce, therefore, a horizontal thematic, which will be running through all the other priorities. The target is to revamp the EU maritime policy and avoid reducing it to issues related to growth and development (Limassol Declaration).

## FURTHER INTEGRATION OF THE EU-ZONE

The Greek Presidency will strive to safeguard the stability of the euro by advancing the deepening of the European Monetary Union (EMU). The ex-ante coordination of national fiscal and economic policies will be a precondition to completing the EMU architecture. However, Greece's ambition to adjust the Eurozone's institutional architecture may be controversial. Greece also intends to introduce more transparency and accountability into the EU's economic governance. The Presidency's actions will focus on: (I) the promotion of the banking union; (II) agreement on the principles of the budgetary and economic integration, in order to ensure the implementation of the new economic governance mechanisms and increase synergies between member states and (III) the social dimension of the EMU.



# WHO IS WHO

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KAROLOS  
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*President*



ANTONIS  
**SAMARAS**  
*Prime Minister*



EVANGELOS  
**VENIZELOS**  
*Deputy Prime Minister  
Foreign Affairs*



KYRIAKOS  
**MISOTAKIS**  
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**TSAFTARIS**  
*Rural Development  
and Food*



MILTIADIS  
**VARVITSIOTIS**  
*Shipping*

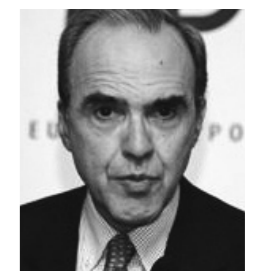


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**STAMATIS**  
*State*

REPRESENTATIVE



THEODOROS N.  
**SOTIROPOULOS**  
*Perm. Rep. EU*



# POLICY FIELDS

## ENERGY

The Greek Presidency will address issues related to three landmark dates, namely: the 2014 deadline set for completing the internal market, the 2015 deadline by which no member state should remain isolated from Europe's networks and the 2015 International Climate Change Agreement. Moreover, the Presidency will seek to move forward the EU's energy and climate policies post 2020 on the basis of the awaited Communication from the Commission on "Climate and Energy 2030 Framework". The drivers of energy prices and costs, the protection of vulnerable consumers, energy poverty as well as competitiveness of the overall energy sector will be also on the agenda of the Greek Presidency. A further focus will be international relations in the field of energy and especially the value of multilateral frameworks such as the Energy Community of South East Europe and the Union for the Mediterranean.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In the foreign policy field the Greek Presidency will focus on two regions: Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. First, it will continue the efforts of the Lithuanian Presidency within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, especially in regards to Ukraine. The second focal point will be the eastern Mediterranean. Concerning Syria, the Greek Presidency

will contribute to the preparation and the successful conduct of the Geneva II peace conference, unanimously recognised as the only way to achieve a political solution. Within the region, special attention will be paid to Egypt and Libya, playing the latter an important role in the control of migratory flows.

## HOME AFFAIRS

During the first half of 2014 the Greek Presidency will work in cooperation with the Member States and the European Commission towards the formulation of the strategic objectives and policy guidelines of the European Union in the post-Stockholm period. The aim is to offer an effective framework for strategy and action while respecting the differentiated level of responsibilities of both the EU and the member states. With migration being one of its top priorities, the Presidency will try to achieve a political agreement on the proposed directive for conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals in the framework of an intra-corporate transfer. Another objective will be to advance discussions on the entry and stay of third country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, pupil exchange, remunerated and unremunerated training, voluntary service and au pairing. The Greek Presidency will also seek to promote the European Agenda for Integration.

## ENVIRONMENT

How to bring investments to Europe while preserving the natural environment and ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources will be the key priority of the Greek Presidency in the environmental field. The protection of European biodiversity, the sustainable development of maritime spaces and planning that offer opportunities for investment and employment will be also on the agenda. A controversial issue that the Greek Presidency may need to address will be the Commission's proposal to cap the amount of "bad biofuel" that can be used. This dossier may lead to a conflict between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. In that case, the Greek Presidency will be in charge of finding a compromise.

## HEALTH

The Greek Presidency will prioritise the progress of important legislative proposals in the field of health, pharmaceutical and medical devices. The legislative work will focus on issues such as tobacco products, clinical trials, pharmacovigilance fees and the transparency directive. The main target of the Presidency will be, however, to make substantial progress on the proposals for medical devices. These proposals will provide a legislative framework for the manufacture and placing on the market

of medical devices, while ensuring a high level of health protection. Non-legislative priorities will include (a) the economic crisis and its impact on healthcare and health systems, (b) migration and public health, (c) nutrition and physical activity and (d) eHealth and health innovation.

## EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

The first priority of the Greek Presidency will be the promotion of employment, particularly for the young people. In this regard, the Presidency will speed up the implementation of actions under the "Initiative for the Youth" and monitor the implementation of national projects related to the "Youth Guarantee". The Presidency also aims at concluding the negotiations with the European Parliament in order to adopt the Directive on the posting of workers during the first half of 2014. Other priorities are the establishment of a Quality Framework for Internships and the fight against undeclared work. In the social field the Greek Presidency's agenda will include issues such as ensuring adequate and sustainable social protection systems and minimum safety nets to address unemployment, poverty and aging population. The promotion of equal opportunities and the strengthening of the European Tripartite Social Summit have also been listed as priorities.

## JUSTICE

In the field of justice the Greek Presidency has three main priorities: (a) to work on future developments in the area of freedom, security and justice (post-Stockholm period) and to define strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning; (b) to contribute to the progress of measures and initiatives within the context of data protection and (c) to reach possibly an agreement concerning the proposed Directive against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law. Particular attention will be also paid to the revision of the Insolvency Regulations and the Regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, along with the Regulation on the reform of Eurojust. Finally, the Presidency will also work towards the adoption of the Directive on the protection of the Euro and other currencies against counterfeiting.

## MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The Greek Presidency will focus its efforts on a European holistic approach and management of the migration policy, with parallel actions to mitigate the consequences in the economic, social and political reality of EU member states. It will promote the increase of EU funding in order to better address migration flows, especially in the area of returns/readmissions of

third country nationals. Particularly important for Greece is the reinforcement of the cooperation between the EU member states and the EU institutions, as well as with third countries across the whole range of the asylum and migration policy. To this end, the Presidency will work on the implementation of the Common European Asylum System, with particular emphasis on measures to strengthen solidarity and fair burden-sharing.

## SCIENCE

With regards to science, the main priority of the Greek Presidency will be the successful implementation of Horizon 2020, the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2014-2020. Other targets will be the promotion of the participation of third countries in Horizon 2020 (International S&T Agreements), advancing the European Research Area (ERA) and the completion of the Innovative Investment Package, particularly concerning public-private and public-public partnerships. Furthermore, the Greek Presidency will prioritise Copernicus, the successor programme of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security, with the aim to complete this file by the end of the first semester of 2014.



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