**Greece - Legal framework on environmental protection**

The principles of environmental protection are embedded in Article 24 of the Greek Constitution[[1]](#footnote-0). The legal scheme for the protection of the environment from pollution and degradation of any kind extends to public or private, personal or corporate activity.

Greece has been one of the first countries worldwide to endorse a framework law on the protection of the environment in 1986 (Law 1650/1986).

Key environmental legislation adopted over the last decade in Greece includes, inter alia, Law 3937/2011 on biodiversity protection, Law 3983/2011 on the protection and management of the marine environment, Law 4014/2011 on environmental permitting, Law 4042/2012 on environmental protection through criminal law and Law 4269/2014 (amended in 2016 and 2020) on regional and urban planning.

In 2020, a new Law on the modernization of the environmental legislation was adopted (Law 4685/2020), allowing for the practical implementation of green growth objectives and aiming at simplifying environmental licensing procedures, ensuring enhanced natural protection, incorporating EU standards for Natura areas, promoting environmentally friendly waste management, protecting Greek forests etc.

A new entity, the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA) of Greece, has been established by the above Law. It is supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of Environment and Energy and is responsible inter alia for coordinating and supervising the management bodies of the several protected areas of the country for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems through a multi-stakeholder consultative approach, ensuring a high and effective conservation.

The ratification of the Aarhus Convention in 2005 (Law 3422/2005)[[2]](#footnote-1) facilitated access of citizens to environmental information and disclosure of environmental information to interested parties upon request, citizen participation in decision-making, as well as access to justice in environmental matters. A 2006 Joint Ministerial Decree[[3]](#footnote-2) provided access to environmental information for all.

Public consultation on all draft legislation (including environmental legislation) is compulsory by Law 4622/2019 (consolidating the relevant provisions of Law 4048/2012 on Better Regulation) and is taking place, among other ways and means, through the open government portal (http://opengov.gr). Any person, organisation, association etc. can participate in the

public consultation process. Moreover, according to the Standing Orders of the Parliament, all draft laws must be accompanied by a report on public consultation.

Stakeholder and public participation in the decision making is also ensured by national legislation for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and environmental permitting, Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), as well as other planning, such as the River Basin Management Plans, the Waste Management Plans, the National Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, as well as for the Regional Adaptation Plans, in line with the Aarhus Convention provisions for participatory governance.

1. "The protection of the natural and cultural environment constitutes a duty of the State and a right of every person". [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, adopted on 25 June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. JMD 11764/653/2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)