



**THE CONTEMPORARY
MANAGEMENT OF CLIMATE
CRISIS IN GREECE**

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Executive Summary

The rapid evolution of climate change is affecting all citizens, from the poorest to the most developed countries, on a global scale. The European Union, recognising the seriousness of the phenomenon, has set stringent targets and guidelines to reduce it. However, given the energy crisis that is unfolding today, there is a need to rebuild this plan as energy independence will have to be given the highest priority. Recently, Greece announced its National Plan for Energy and Climate with new policies and initiatives to tackle the climate crisis. However, the results should be recorded and updated annually in light of recent developments in both the economic and geopolitical scenes.

Introduction

In the era of rapid escalation of climate change, the green transition is considered an essential step to manage its effects. Since 2009, the EU has introduced Directive 2009/28/EC, which was revised in 2018 and 2021 to increase the deployment of renewable energy sources by encouraging investments and establishing rules to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels. As a result, the Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2021/EU currently aims for the EU member states to reach the goal of 40% of energy consumption by renewable energy by 2030 to implement EU Green Deal. Therefore, developing appropriate and efficient national energy and climate policies to mitigate GHG emissions and increase resilience has become necessary. Following these provisions, Greece has to move forward by aligning with the goals of EU energy and climate policy. Hence, we present some perspectives on energy policy and climate adaptation in Greece from government officials and academic scholars.

1. Statements by Greek officers and government officials

regarding the management of climate change in Greece

The political leadership has announced the revision of the National Plan for Energy and Climate, foreseeing by 2030 50% participation of RES in final consumption and up to 70% in electricity generation. However, as far as RES are concerned, the revision of the Special Spatial Plan should be completed immediately based on the comprehensive impact assessment and appropriate practices for the selection of suitable sites.

During his speech at COP 26, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis referred to the importance of protecting mountain ecosystems and the establishment of no-fishing zones in 10% of the country's marine territory to achieve the European Biodiversity Strategy's target of protecting 30% of the EU's land and sea area by 2030. (Ibrahim D., 2021)

The Prime Minister referred to the six initiatives to tackle the climate crisis that has been put on the agenda for the coming period:

1. Greece, which owns 20% of the world's merchant fleet, is moving

forward with proposals to carbonise maritime transport.

2. Given that the climate crisis may significantly impact the tourism sector, a new GR-eco strategy aims to reduce CO2 emissions by 10 million times more by turning the Greek islands into 100% green autonomous destinations.
3. Pioneering offshore wind energy with an installed capacity of 2 GW by 2030 and the use of pumping stations and reservoirs for hydroelectricity.
4. Gradual closure of lignite plants by 2023 and lignite-free by 2028.
5. Ban on fishing in 10% of the country's marine territory by 2030.
6. Transformation of Greece into a regional green energy hub, as it is the fastest route for transporting energy, electricity, and hydrogen, from the Middle East and Africa to the European market. (Mitsotakis 2021), (Kokkinidis, 2021)

Following the devastating fires that hit the country last summer, the government created the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection to deal with natural disasters. Finance Minister Christos Staikouras, in the context of COP26,

presented the Ministry of Finance's plan to issue the first Green Public Bond and to promote the Climate Economy by designing a coherent, sustainable economy strategy to finance eligible projects based on the needs of the Greek capital market. (Staikouras, 2021)

In addition, the Mayor of Astypalaia, Nikos Komnineas, presented as a good practice at COP 26, the project "Astypalaia Smart and Sustainable Island" implemented in cooperation with the Volkswagen Group. The project aims to meet local energy needs through a hybrid RES station and to combine tourism with the local agricultural economy. (Komnineas, 2021)

Regarding the way in which the high energy prices should be addressed and whether the crisis in Ukraine highlights the difficulties of the green transition, Yannis Maniatis, former Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, reported that the European Union is 40% dependent on Russian gas while the rest is made up by Norway 24%, Algeria 13% and the US Qatar 12%. At the same time, since 2015, the European Union has reduced its own gas production by 35% and, combined with the projected increase in gas demand by

10% by 2035, the path it is following does not seem to meet its needs. On the other hand, the global drive for a green energy transition has led to a rapid increase in the prices of mineral raw materials such as lithium (up 750%), cobalt (up 150%), nickel and aluminium (up 80%) and raw materials for solar panel manufacturing (up 400%). With China holding 45% of the international market for Critical Raw Materials, its dominance extends to the renewable sector and battery manufacturing creating another dependency for Europe. The European Union must take these risks into account in order to make the green transition as smooth as possible. In this context, at the 2014 Energy Council of Ministers, on the occasion of the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Greece proposed, for the first time, the creation of a Price Smoothing and Solidarity Fund to deal with rapid price increases in natural gas. Europe must ensure the production of critical technologies in order to avoid even more severe crises in the future. (Filis, 2022)

2. Interviews

For this research, we contacted professors, politicians and government

representatives who, through interviews, gave us an insight into the management of the issue on the part of the state.

In response to the question, do you think that the policy of adaptation to Climate Change should be a priority in Greece, Grigoris Tsaltas, Emeritus Professor of International Law at Panteion University, former Dean, former Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change, answered: “The international strategy of adaptation policy was essentially adopted in 1992 with the end of the session of the historic Conference of the United Nations on the Environment and Development in Rio and the adoption of the United Nations Convention Framework on Climate Change as one of the two international strategies along with gas emissions reduction strategy which contribute to the greenhouse effect, which is responsible to what we call today climate crisis. The adaptation policy on climate change effects has three parameters, economic, social and environmental which match perfectly to the three pillars of the sustainable development phenomenon. It is also commonly accepted that the policy of the adaptation policy is completely based on two fundamental principles of

international law, of cooperation and of solidarity. At the national level, the policies of direct participation of everyone play a significant role in dealing with the problem, in combination with that of accepting cooperation and to secure the necessary consensus to deal with the “successful” combat of climate change effects. Something like that could be achieved via the acceptance and adoption of a relevant national strategy with individual regional policies and sub-regional character of cooperation of all. Apart from any operational measures to combat the climate change effects, the supplementary policies of communication and information in combination with that of appropriate development education also play a significant role. The aim is to understand the severity of the problem and the appropriate awareness of the citizens concerned. Providing the above, the adaptation policy on climate change phenomenon (crisis) effects is a main priority for Greece with a strong character of its emergence as a national political necessity”.

In addition, Mr. Farantouris Nicholas, Professor of EU Law and Director of the MSc in Energy Strategy, Law &

Economic at the International & European Studies Department at University of Piraeus, commented on the recent EU Summit decision on energy, saying that “the main orientations given by the Council of EU leaders to the European Commission to address the energy crisis after the Summit can be summarised as follows: establish a new gas price benchmark, explore the adoption of a temporary price cap for the Dutch gas exchange TTF, explore the imposition of a cap on gas prices for electricity generation. These are measures which, in different formulations, are already included in the European Commission's proposal, which was presented in the previous days by Ursula von der Leyen, with the President's reservations about the imposition of a price cap on gas for electricity generation (a proposal which France is vigorously promoting). All this time the groupings of Member States and the different approaches and proposals have created confusion in the European family. The different positions reflect different needs and different degrees of dependence on (Russian) gas. Germany, for example, has mainly an energy

sufficiency problem, while Greece today has an energy cost problem.

All in all, the EU remains entirely dependent but at the same time, is committed to the goal of climate transition and neutrality. However, in my opinion, the above proposals of the European Commission focus almost exclusively on the gas problem: the issues of supply and demand imbalance, distortions and speculative financial games around gas as a critical fuel for electricity generation. The draft conclusions finally include a call for further progress towards a complete Energy Union serving the objective of climate neutrality, which was not included in the proposals presented initially by the Commission. Is it possible, then, to combine these and bring the different priorities together? In my opinion, it is possible, if the EU institutions and especially the Member

States claim, demand and ultimately achieve solidarity in to not only 'blue' (gas sufficiency, Germany, etc.), but also 'green' (climate neutrality and decentralisation of energy production with renewables) and 'red' (solidarity for energy costs, energy Eurobond). In this direction it is prudent and nationally beneficial for the EU to move in this direction”.

Regarding how Greece responds to climate change in post covid-19 era, George Kremlis, Principal Advisor to the Greek Prime Minister on energy, climate, environment and circular economy issues, declared that “with the National Climate Law which is optimistic and the predicted measures with funds from Recovery and Resilience Facility as well as from Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework (PA) 2014-2020 to support energy transition and reaching climate neutrality”.

3. Conclusions

- In general, Greece has set high targets in the national plan for energy and climate to achieve by 2030 but the revision of the Special Spatial Plan should be completed immediately based on the impact assessment and appropriate practices for selecting suitable sites for RES.
- According to interviews with key scientists, energy advisors and former government officials, although climate change policies were launched on a global scale in 1992, no

one had foreseen the rapid evolution of the data, including the war crisis, so that an annual reconfiguration of the action plan is needed according to the needs and capabilities of each country along with the participation of stakeholders as well as cooperation and solidarity among EU Member States.

- Greece must implement policies to limit the energy cost based on the decisions of the EU Summit to address the current energy crisis

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