

WOMEN GOING GREENER
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Mapping the current situation for enabling Greener and Resilient SMEs



Greece



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Introduction

The transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy is a growing priority for businesses, policymakers, and society as a whole. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in economic development, innovation, and job creation, yet they often face significant challenges when adopting greener and more resilient business models. Environmental sustainability is no longer an option but a necessity, with global and European policies increasingly pushing for climate neutrality, resource efficiency, and reduced environmental footprints.

This report, developed within the framework of the *Women Going Greener* project, aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current legal, policy, and practical landscape surrounding SME sustainability in Greece. It examines the key legislative frameworks at both the European Union (EU) and national level, identifying how existing policies impact businesses and what support measures are available. At the EU level, initiatives such as the European Green Deal, the Circular Economy Action Plan, and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) set the foundation for a greener economy, while Greece has aligned its strategies through national policies, incentives, and funding programs for SMEs.

However, despite these frameworks, Greek SMEs continue to struggle with structural, economic, and regulatory barriers that hinder their ability to adopt sustainable practices. Challenges such as limited financial resources, bureaucratic complexities, lack of awareness, and technological gaps remain significant obstacles. This report highlights these challenges while also identifying key opportunities for improvement. Government initiatives such as subsidy programs for energy efficiency, renewable energy incentives, and support for sustainable mobility are providing pathways for businesses to transition toward sustainability.

Furthermore, this report presents real-life examples of successful green business models in Greece, including companies like COCO-MAT, KORRES, and BioAgros, which have integrated sustainability, circular economy principles, and environmental responsibility into their core operations. By analyzing these cases, the report aims to offer valuable insights into best practices, scalable solutions, and strategic recommendations that can help SMEs overcome challenges and drive sustainability in their business models.

As the global economy moves towards greener and more resilient models, Greece must continue to strengthen its policies, enhance financial support mechanisms, and encourage collaboration between institutions, businesses, and civil society to ensure a smooth and inclusive green transition. This report serves as a roadmap, providing a detailed mapping of the current landscape, identifying gaps, and proposing solutions that can help SMEs play a more active role in achieving environmental sustainability and long-term economic resilience.

Current Legal Framework

EU Legislation

Sustainability legislation in the European Union began to develop in the 1990s, but the formal approach to sustainability intensified particularly after the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001. The European Union has implemented regulations and directives concerning waste management, biodiversity and the use of natural resources, thus contributing to the development of a sustainable economy. Some of the legislation and actions are as follows:

1. In 2008, the Commission proposed a series of actions on **sustainable consumption and production (SCP)** and sustainable industrial policy. The proposals aimed to improve the environmental performance of products throughout their life cycle, raise consumer awareness of sustainable goods, promote innovation in EU industry and address international aspects such as trade and standards. The SCP action plan led to initiatives such as the extension of the Ecodesign Directive, the revision of the Ecolabel Regulation, the revision of the Ecomanagement and Audit Scheme Regulation, the adoption of legislation on green public procurement, as well as the establishment of a Resource Efficiency Roadmap and an Eco-Innovation Action Plan.
2. In 2020, another legislative framework created by the EU for sustainable consumption and production is the **Circular Economy Action Plan** which aims to make sustainable products the norm in the EU and to empower consumers and public sector buyers to prioritise sustainable consumption. This framework includes, among others, the following proposals:
 - Regulation on ecodesign for sustainable products;
 - Directive on empowering consumers in the green transition;
 - Directive on ecological claims;
 - Directive on common rules to promote the repair of goods.



3. The **EU EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme)** is still in force. It is a voluntary tool designed to help organisations improve their environmental performance. EMAS allows businesses and organisations to assess and report their environmental performance, promoting transparency and accountability. In 2009, with the adoption of a new regulation, EMAS was revised to encourage more organisations to participate. This change improved the applicability and credibility of the scheme, as well as its visibility and outreach.

How it helps businesses:

- Environmental Performance Improvement: EMAS promotes the continuous improvement of organizations' environmental performance through the implementation of environmental policies and procedures.
 - Cost Reduction: Through more efficient resource management, businesses can reduce costs related to energy, materials and waste.
 - Reputation Enhancement: EMAS participation can improve a business's reputation and enhance the trust of customers, investors and other stakeholders.
 - Regulatory Compliance: EMAS helps businesses ensure that they comply with environmental laws and regulations.
 - Strategy Development: The EMAS process encourages businesses to develop strategies for their environmental management, which can lead to innovation and competitive advantage.
 - Training and Information: Organizations participating in EMAS often provide training and information to their employees on environmental practices, enhancing their participation.
4. The **EcoAP (Eco-innovation Action Plan)** is mainly linked to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative 'Innovation Union'. It aims to extend the scope of innovation policies to green technologies and eco-innovation and to highlight the role of environmental policy as a driver of economic growth. It also targets the specific barriers to eco-innovation – in particular those barriers and opportunities not covered by more general innovation policies. EcoAP promotes eco-innovation through environmental policy, financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises, international cooperation, new standards and skills development. Here are some ways EcoAP can support businesses:
 - **Environmental Impact Assessment**: EcoAP provides methods and tools such as **Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)** which analyzes the environmental impacts of a product or service throughout its life cycle, from raw material extraction to production, use and disposal. This helps businesses understand where they can reduce resource consumption and emissions..
 - **Performance Improvement**: Through the implementation of sustainable practices, businesses can improve their production efficiency and reduce their operating costs, thus leading to economic benefits.
 - **Education and Awareness**: The program provides educational materials and seminars, helping employees understand the importance of environmental management and adopt sustainable practices..

- **Certification:** Businesses participating in EcoAP have the opportunity to obtain certification for their environmental performance, which can enhance their image in the market and attract new customers.
- **Government Policy Support:** The program contributes to the implementation of government policies for environmental protection, offering businesses the opportunity to participate in national and international initiatives..
- **Networking and Collaboration:** EcoAP promotes collaboration between businesses, organizations and institutions, allowing the exchange of knowledge and best practices.

Although the programme has ended, the initiatives and actions promoted under the EcoAP continue to influence EU policies and strategies for green growth and the circular economy for businesses.

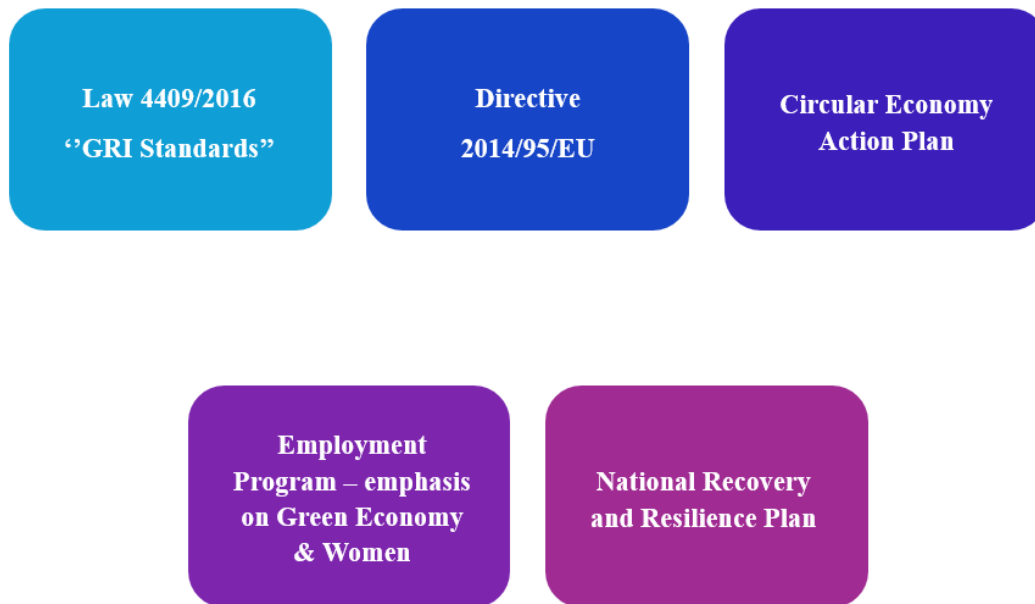
5. **The European Green Deal**, The European Green Deal is a strategic initiative of the European Union aimed at transitioning Europe to a sustainable and climate-neutral economy. It was announced in December 2019 and includes a set of policies and actions aimed at tackling climate change and protecting the environment. The main objectives of the European Green Deal include:

- ✓ **Climate neutrality:** The aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, with the ultimate goal of complete climate neutrality by 2050.
- ✓ **Sustainable development:** Supporting sustainable practices in all sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry and transport, in order to ensure sustainability.
- ✓ **Protecting biodiversity:** Implementing actions to protect ecosystems and biodiversity in Europe, recognizing their importance for the sustainability of the planet.
- ✓ **Clean energy:** Focusing on the transition to clean energy sources, with the aim of increasing energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy, thus reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- ✓ **Just transition:** Ensuring that the transition to a green economy is fair, supporting those most affected by these changes, including workers and regions dependent on traditional sectors.



National Legislation – GREECE

Greece has enacted Law 650/1986 (Government Gazette 160/1986) which is the basic legislation for the protection of the environment in Greece. This legislation has undergone many amendments and updates to keep in line with European legislation. However, there are even more specific laws that the Greek state has enacted in enterprises for the protection of the environment and the promotion of alternative energy sources. Some of these are:



Law 4409/2016 “GRI Standards”

Law 4409/2016 (Global Reporting Initiative Standards), passed in Greece, concerns sustainability and corporate social responsibility. It aims to improve the transparency and accountability of businesses, promoting the concept of sustainable development. It concerns the implementation of the International Accounting Standard for Sustainability Reporting (GRI Standards) and the obligation of large companies to publish information on their environmental, social and governance performance.

The main ways in which this law supports small businesses in Greece include:

- 1. Transparency and Communication:** Small businesses are encouraged to report on their sustainability practices, which can improve their image and attract customers interested in social responsibility.
- 2. Growth Strategy:** Through the implementation of the GRI Standards, small businesses can develop sustainability strategies, which can lead to better efficiency and savings.

3. Access to Finance: Businesses that demonstrate responsibility and transparency are more likely to attract investors and financiers, as the GRI Standards provide a reliable reference framework.

4. Education and Support: The law can be accompanied by education and support programs for small businesses to understand and apply the principles of the GRI Standards.

5. Networking: Small businesses have the opportunity to participate in networks that promote sustainability, exchanging best practices and experiences.

6. Transparency and Accountability: Businesses are encouraged to publish information about their economic, environmental and social performance, promoting transparency and accountability.

In addition, Law 4409/2016 promotes the development of sustainability strategies that will be integrated into business practices and contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Directive 2014/95/EU

Directive 2014/95/EU, also known as the Directive on the mandatory disclosure of non-financial information, was adopted by the European Union in 2014 and aims to enhance the transparency and accountability of companies regarding their social and environmental impact. Although the directive is mainly aimed at large companies, its implementation can also have positive effects for small businesses in Greece..

1. Increased Transparency: Small businesses can benefit from the increased transparency that comes from larger companies being required to disclose relevant information. This can boost consumer and business confidence.

2. Development of Best Practices: The Directive can act as an incentive for small businesses to adopt sustainable practices and improve their social responsibility in order to compete more effectively with larger companies.

3. Promotion and Marketing: Adopting and publicising sustainable practices can be a powerful marketing tool for small businesses, attracting customers interested in social and environmental responsibility.

4. Linkage with Large Businesses: Small businesses that do business with larger companies may need to comply with the requirements of the Directive, which encourages them to improve their transparency and responsibility.

5. Support Programs: Certain programs or subsidies offered by the Greek government or the EU may aim to support small businesses in adopting sustainable practices, thus enhancing the implementation of the directive..

Overall, although Directive 2014/95/EU is mainly aimed at large enterprises, small businesses in Greece can benefit from the promotion of transparency, accountability and sustainable practices it promotes.

Circular Economy Action Plan

The Greek government has indeed introduced various subsidy and funding programs aimed at promoting sustainable practices. Some of the main programs include:

1. **Home Savings:** A program that subsidizes the energy upgrading of homes, aiming to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency.
2. **Upgrading Public Buildings:** Investments in public infrastructure for their energy upgrading, including schools and public services.
3. **Promoting Renewable Energy Sources:** Financial tools for the installation of solar energy systems, wind farms and other forms of Renewable Energy Sources (RES).
4. **Green Loans:** The "Green Loan" program in Greece is an initiative that aims to promote sustainable development and enhance energy efficiency. The Green Loan **aims** to finance projects that contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions and the promotion of renewable energy sources. This includes building renovations, solar panel installations, and other "green" investments. The program is aimed at individuals, small and large businesses, and organizations that wish to invest in sustainable solutions and technologies. Borrowers can obtain **loans** with favorable terms, such as lower interest rates and longer repayment periods. Typically, the amount that can be borrowed depends on the type and cost of the project. **Interested parties** should apply through credit institutions participating in the program, providing the necessary documents and information about the project. **Support and guidance** are available, Support services are available to help interested parties prepare their applications and select suitable projects.
5. **“Save – Be Independent” Program:** Focuses on the energy upgrading of homes and autonomy from central energy through renewable sources.

Employment program with emphasis on the Green Economy and Women

The Employment Program with a focus on the Green Economy and Women was implemented in 2022. It focuses on the green economy and women and aims to create sustainable jobs and enhance female participation in the labor market. The green economy refers to activities that promote sustainability and reduce environmental impacts, while women often face challenges in accessing these opportunities.

Program Objectives

1. **Job Creation:** Development and creation of jobs that relate to renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable agriculture.
2. **Empowering Female Entrepreneurship:** Support of female entrepreneurs who are active in green economy through financing and mentoring.
3. **Education and Training:** Provide educational programs and seminars focusing on green technologies and sustainable practices.

Implementation Strategies

- **Partnerships with NGOs and the Public Sector:** Collaboration with organizations that promote gender equality and sustainability to promote the program.
- **Networking:** Establishing networks of women working in the green economy to exchange knowledge and experiences
- **Funding:** Creating support funds for women who wish to start businesses in the green economy sector.

Expected Results

- **Increasing the percentage of women in green economy:** The goal is to increase the participation of women in jobs related to the green economy.
- **Improving economic status:** Empowering women through jobs will contribute to improving their economic status and that of their families.
- **Promoting sustainable practices:** Raising awareness about the importance of the green economy and sustainable practices.

National Recovery and Resilience Plan

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0" was approved on 13 July 2021 by the Economic and Financial Affairs Council of the European Union (Ecofin) and its revision was approved on 8 December 2023. "Greece 2.0" includes 103 investments and 76 reforms and raises 35.95 billion euros (18.22 billion euros in grants and 17.73 billion euros in loans).

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) is a strategic plan aimed at the economic resilience and recovery of EU countries after the COVID-19 pandemic. Its purpose is to strengthen the economy, promote sustainability, strengthen digitalization and create new jobs. The NRRP includes specific measures and investments in areas such as:

1. **Digitalization:** Investments in digital infrastructure and services to promote the digital economy.
2. **Green Transition:** Support for programs aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions and promoting renewable energy sources.
3. **Healthcare:** Strengthening health systems to better manage future crises.
4. **Education and Training:** Training and education programs to support the labor market.
5. **Infrastructure:** Investments in public infrastructure, such as transport and energy.

Strategies and Investments

The key strategies of the plan include:

- **Grant Programs:** Actions to support businesses, such as grants for digital transformation and green investments.
- **Loans and Investments:** Providing financing to businesses for growth and innovation.
- **Education and Training:** Programs to educate the workforce in new technologies and green practices.

Business and Support

Business support is provided through various programs and initiatives, such as:

- **SME Grants:** Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises for their digital transformation.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Creating collaborations between the public and private sectors for the implementation of projects.
- **Business Plans:** Programs that promote innovative ideas and new business initiatives.

Comparative Analysis

The European Union's policy on business sustainability focuses on promoting a green and digital transition, with the aim of reducing CO₂ emissions, protecting the environment and sustainable development. However, this policy focuses primarily on 3 key pillars that define the correct implementation of policies that each state must implement for sustainable development and sustainability.

A. The European Green Deal

A strategic plan that aims to transform the EU into an economy with no net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It includes measures to reduce emissions, promote renewable energy and protect biodiversity.

The goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, with the ultimate goal of complete climate neutrality by 2050.

Supporting sustainable practices in all sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, industry and transport, in order to ensure sustainability.

Implementing actions to protect ecosystems and biodiversity in Europe, recognizing their importance for the sustainability of the planet.

Actions Greece Implemented

🏠 Emissions Reduction

National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP): Greece has adopted the NECP, which includes targets for reducing CO₂ emissions and transitioning to a low-emission economy.

EU Commitments: As a member of the European Union, Greece has made commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

🏠 Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources

Renewable Energy Sources (RES): Greece has invested significantly in the development of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind energy. The goal is for RES to reach 35% of total energy consumption by 2030.

Subsidies and Incentives: There are subsidies and tax incentives to support the installation of RES for individuals and businesses.

🏠 Biodiversity Protection

National Parks and Protected Areas: Greece has created many national parks and protected areas to preserve biodiversity, such as the Vikos-Aoos National Park and the Zakynthos National Marine Park.

Strategies and Action Plans: The country has developed strategies for the protection and sustainable management of ecosystems and endangered species.

B. The Biodiversity Strategy

The biodiversity strategy is a set of policies and actions aimed at conserving, protecting and restoring the planet's biological diversity. Biodiversity includes the variety of species, ecosystems and genetic resources and is fundamental to the sustainability of life.

1. Species and Ecosystem Protection:
2. Sustainable Resource Management:
3. Education and Awareness:
4. Research and Monitoring:
5. International Cooperation:
6. Policy and Legislation:
7. Integrating Biodiversity into Development Strategy:

C. Circular Economy Legislation

The **Circular Economy Action Plan** is a key component of the European Green Deal, aiming to promote sustainable economic growth while reducing pressure on natural resources. It emphasizes the need for a transition from traditional linear economic models, which follow a "take-make-dispose" pattern, to a circular model that prioritizes resource efficiency, waste reduction, and the sustainability of products throughout their life cycles.

The legislation encompasses various sectors, including electronics, plastics, textiles, and construction, with specific measures designed to improve product design, enhance recycling, and promote the use of secondary materials. It also aims to increase the durability and reparability of products, encouraging consumers to make sustainable choices.

Connecting Greece to 3 Main Pillars of the European Union

Greece has taken initiatives to implement the goals of the **Green Deal**:

- ✓ **Renewable Energy Sources:** Renewable energy sources (RES) in Greece have experienced significant growth in recent years, with the aim of reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting a more sustainable energy model. The main forms of renewable energy used in the country include:
 1. **Solar Energy:** Greece has some of the best solar radiation in Europe, which favors the use of solar panels and photovoltaic systems. Many areas have installed solar power plants and photovoltaic parks.
 2. **Wind Energy:** Wind energy is the most developed form of RES in Greece. There are several wind farms, mainly on islands and mountainous areas, that exploit strong winds.
 3. **Hydroelectric Power:** The country has several hydroelectric power plants, which utilize the water of rivers and lakes to produce electricity.



- ✓ **Reducing Dependence on Coal:** Greece has planned the gradual exclusion of lignite power plants, aiming at a complete transition to cleaner forms of energy. By 2028, lignite power plants will have ceased to operate in Greece. This commitment of our country, part of its strategy to achieve the pan-European goal of "climate neutrality" by 2050, will inevitably have significant consequences.
- ✓ **Environmental Protection:** Implementation of policies to protect natural resources and promote biodiversity

The biodiversity strategy in Greece includes many aspects aimed at preserving and protecting the country's natural heritage. Here are some key directions and strategies that are usually included in such initiatives::

Ecosystem Protection:

Creation and management of protected areas, such as national parks and nature reserves, to protect habitats and threatened species.

Species Conservation:

Implementation of conservation programs for endangered or rare species, with the aim of restoring their populations and ensuring their sustainability.

Sustainable Development:

Promoting sustainable development practices that respect biodiversity, such as sustainable agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

Education and Awareness:

Public education and awareness programs on the importance of biodiversity and citizen participation in its conservation

Research and Monitoring:

Support for research programs to record biodiversity and monitor changes occurring in ecosystems.

International

Cooperation: Participation in international agreements and initiatives for the conservation of biodiversity, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In addition to the above actions that the Greek state has taken for the circular economy of the country, it has also implemented the strategy for the Circular Economy which is being developed by the Ministry of Environment and Energy. As stated in the official document of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, “The purpose of the National Strategy is to accelerate circular economy actions and release development potential. Noting the benefits of the circular economy, the cross-sectoral nature of many actions that concern it and the institutional entanglements observed in its promotion, inter-ministerial coordination and the formulation of public policy on the issue were chosen. The main contents of the public policy for the circular economy are:

1. Financial tools.
2. Design and adoption of a regulatory framework and regulations, as well as removal of bureaucratic obstacles.
3. Linking small and medium-sized entrepreneurship and the social economy with technological innovation and developing and supporting pilot/demonstration actions of the circular economy. SMEs are often more agile and can quickly adopt innovative technologies that improve productivity and efficiency. Integrating digital tools and platforms can help SMEs expand their market and improve their services. Recycling and reuse Small businesses can adopt circular economy practices, such as recycling materials and reusing products, thereby reducing waste and production costs..

Pilot projects: Supporting pilot actions that promote the circular economy can encourage SMEs to experiment with new business models and adapt to market challenges.

Policy Measures

EU Policies and Initiatives

The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is a European Union initiative created in 2015 as part of the EU's plan to boost investment in Europe, including in women-owned businesses. The purpose of the EFSI is to facilitate access to finance for strategic investments that can contribute to economic growth and jobs.

The main objectives of **EFSI**:

- 1. Job Creation:** Supporting investments that will boost employment and economic growth.
- 2. Strategic Sector Support:** Investments in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, technology and innovation.
- 3. Financing Facilitation:** Providing guarantees and other financial tools to attract private investment.
- 4. Supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs):** Introducing programs that facilitate access to capital for SMEs, including women-owned businesses.

EFSI operates in the form of a guarantee from the EU budget, which mobilizes additional resources from the private sector and the European Investment Bank (EIB). This means that for every euro invested through EFSI, multiple amounts of private investment can be leveraged. Since its inception, EFSI has helped finance a multitude of projects across Europe, supporting the economic recovery after the financial crisis and promoting sustainable and innovative investments. It is important to note that EFSI is part of the EU's broader strategic framework to support growth and sustainability in the European economy.

Horizon Europe is the European Union's main funding programme for research and innovation, covering the period 2021-2027. Its aim is to strengthen research, support innovation and promote sustainable development in the EU.

One of the important aspects of Horizon Europe is the promotion of gender equality and support for female entrepreneurs and researchers. The programme incorporates strategies aimed at reducing inequalities and enhancing women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

Key aspects of the program for women entrepreneurs:

- 1. Funding and Grants:** Horizon Europe offers a variety of funding opportunities that can benefit women entrepreneurs, especially in the areas of research and innovation.
- 2. Networking and Collaboration:** The programme promotes collaboration between researchers and entrepreneurs, offering networking opportunities that can strengthen the position of women in entrepreneurship.
- 3. Education and Skills Development:** There are initiatives and training programmes aimed at developing women's skills in areas such as technology, science and entrepreneurship.

4. Equality Policies: The programme integrates policies that promote gender equality at all levels, encouraging member countries to support the participation of women in research and entrepreneurial projects.

5. Support and Entrepreneurship: Horizon Europe collaborates with various bodies to provide advisory services and support to women entrepreneurs, in order to strengthen their business ideas and initiatives.

Women's participation in research and entrepreneurship is crucial for innovation and growth in the EU, and Horizon Europe aims to ensure that women have the same opportunities for success and growth.

National Policies Supporting SMEs - Greece

CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)

Refers to the responsibility of businesses to comply with ethical standards and contribute to society and the environment, beyond the simple pursuit of profit. Businesses that implement CSR policies seek to have a positive impact on their employees, customers, communities and the environment.



CSR can include various actions, such as:

- 1. Environmental sustainability:** Reducing waste, saving energy and using renewable energy sources.
- 2. Social participation:** Supporting local communities through sponsorship, volunteering and other initiatives.
- 3. Labor rights:** Ensuring fair working conditions and promoting diversity and inclusion.
- 4. Transparency and ethics:** Applying ethical practices in business processes and being transparent in relations with stakeholders.

This legislation is an initiative to strengthen businesses involving women entrepreneurs with the aim of reducing gender discrimination. It also aims to strengthen and empower women from vulnerable backgrounds such as Roma women, abused women, and refugees.

Furthermore, through events and campaigns, CSR can highlight the successes and stories of women entrepreneurs, enhancing their visibility and recognition. Finally, CSR promotes the creation of networks and communities that facilitate interaction and collaboration among women entrepreneurs, expanding opportunities for collaboration and growth.

Collaboration between Institutions and SMEs

Cooperation between institutions and businesses in Greece has gained increasing importance in recent years, mainly due to the need to strengthen innovation and competitiveness. This cooperation can include various forms, such as:

- 1. Research Programs:** Many universities and research centers collaborate with companies to develop new products and technologies. Companies can fund research or participate in joint ventures.

- 2. Training and Education:** Institutions offer training programs for company employees, helping them to acquire new skills and knowledge. There are also workshops for women in collaboration with the Public Employment Service of Greece (DYPA) and companies with the aim of training and information on entrepreneurial, innovative programs.
- 3. Connection with the Labor Market:** Universities collaborate with companies to offer internships and jobs to students, better preparing them for the labor market.
- 4. Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** There are programs that encourage the creation of startups and entrepreneurship, where institutions provide support and guidance to young and young entrepreneurs.
- 5. Public Policies and Financial Tools:** The Greek government and the European Union offer financial programs that encourage cooperation between institutions and businesses, such as the NSRF.

NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework)

The NSRF (Operational Program National Strategic Reference Framework) is a funding program that aims to develop and strengthen the economy in various sectors, such as entrepreneurship, innovation, education, employment and infrastructure.



The NSRF is mainly funded by the European Union and managed by national or regional authorities. The NSRF resources are used to implement projects and actions aimed at improving living and working conditions, strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises and supporting sustainable development.

In Greece, the NSRF is implemented in programming periods, with the current one covering the period 2021-2027. The projects and actions financed through the NSRF include investments in infrastructure, training programs and subsidies for businesses.

The **NSRF supports SMEs** in various ways:

- **Funding:** Offers grants and provides for investments, such as equipment purchases, infrastructure upgrades and the development of new products or services.
- **Subsidies:** Provides subsidies to cover departmental expenses, such as training costs, consulting services and marketing.
- **Advisory support:** Small businesses have access to advisory services to improve their management, strategy and operation.
- **Networking and partnerships:** Encourages cooperation between businesses and institutions, promoting networking and synergies.
- **Development and innovation:** Supports projects that promote innovation, research and the development of new technologies.

- **Education and training:** Supports training programs to develop skills and improve productivity.

Public Employment Service of Greece

The Public Employment Service (PES) in Greece is the body responsible for supporting the unemployed and facilitating employment. PES provides a range of services, such as:

- 1. Job Search:** The Ministry of Labor and Employment offers tools and programs for job search, including training and counseling programs.
- 2. Subsidies:** Provides unemployment benefits and employment subsidy programs to encourage businesses to hire unemployed people.
- 3. Training Programs:** Organizes education and training programs to enhance the skills of the unemployed and make them more competitive in the labor market.
- 4. Support for Vulnerable Groups:** Specializes in supporting vulnerable groups, such as young people, women, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- 5. Counseling:** Provides advice and information on employment issues, rights and obligations of employees and the unemployed.



The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs collaborates with other bodies, such as educational institutions and businesses, to promote employment and skills development in the labor market. You can visit its official website for more information and services.

Current Situation Analysis

Overview of SME Environmental Footprint in Greece

In some fields Greece had huge footprint who did not can be invisible. Specifically:

1. Industry and Production

Air Pollution: Many industries emit gaseous pollutants that contribute to air pollution. Chemical plants and energy industries are typically the largest polluters.

Liquid Waste: Industries produce significant amounts of liquid waste that often end up in rivers and seas, causing pollution and harm to ecosystems.

2. Agriculture and Livestock

Chemical Use: Excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides leads to soil and water pollution, affecting biodiversity.

Deforestation: Some agricultural practices require deforestation, leading to habitat loss and increased CO₂ emissions.

3. Tourism

Ecosystem Destruction: The development of tourist infrastructure can have severe impacts on natural landscapes, such as the destruction of coastlines and forests.

Increased Resource Consumption: Tourism raises the demand for water and energy, putting pressure on local resources.

4. Construction

Waste: The construction of buildings and infrastructure generates large amounts of waste, much of which is difficult to recycle.

Energy Consumption: Construction requires energy and can contribute to increased CO₂ emissions, especially if conventional materials are used.

<p>Only 18% of Greek firms have implemented measures to combat climate change, significantly lower than the EU average of 45%. This issue is more pronounced among Greek SMEs, where only 11% have invested in climate initiatives, and energy-efficient investments account for just 3% of total investments.</p>	<p>European Investment Bank (EIB), (2021), “European firms and climate change 2020/2021. Evidence from the EIB investment survey”. EIB, p.14: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/publication/2e7f76df-11de-11ec-b4fe01aa75ed71a1/language-en</p>
<p>As of 2021, Greece ranks 39th in the World Energy Trilemma index, improving by 8 places since 2019. This advancement is primarily attributed to a rise in electricity production from low carbon sources, including natural gas and renewables.</p>	<p>World Energy Council, (2021), “World Energy Trilemma Index 2021 Report”. World Energy Council in partnership with Oliver Wyman. p.13: https://www.worldenergy.org/publications/entry/world-energy-trilemma-index-2021</p>
<p>A new program called "Energy and Entrepreneurship," associated with the National Resilience Plan, has been announced. It aims to enhance the energy efficiency of SMEs through various interventions, including improvements in buildings, smart systems, logistics, and electromobility, with a total budget of €450 million.</p>	<p>Prime Minister GR, (2021), “Greece 2.0 Plan”. 18/5/2021. https://twitter.c</p>
<p>In 2020, Greece was ranked 42nd in the Global Sustainable Competitiveness Index (GSCI) with an average score of 49.6. The country particularly struggled in two areas: Natural Capital, which measures the depletion of natural resources, and resource efficiency.</p>	<p>SolAbility Sustainable Intelligence, (2021), “Global Sustainable Competitiveness Index (GSCI) 2021”. SolAbility. https://solability.com/the-global-sustainable-competitiveness-index/the-index</p>
<p>Between 2012 and 2021, Greece saw significant improvements in eco-innovation performance, ranking among the top countries for positive change. However, it remains in the "Average Eco-Innovation performers" category, with a 2021 score of 102,</p>	<p>European Commission (EC), (2021), “EU Eco Innovation Index 2021”. EC. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoap/indicators/index_en</p>

<p>compared to the EU average of 121. Notably, 37% of Greek SMEs provide green products or services, with over 50% of their turnover coming from these offerings, surpassing the EU averages of 32% for SMEs offering green products/services and 23% for turnover from them.</p>	<p>Ecobarometer survey for SMEs and the environment, 2021: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/performance-review/index_en.html</p>
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Barriers to Reducing Environmental Footprint

It is the total impact of human activities on land, water and the atmosphere. Our environmental footprint results from both the natural resources required to produce the products and services we consume, and the disposal of the waste that results from our consumption.

It is characteristic that Greece consumes natural resources 2.5 times faster than the time it takes ecosystems to replenish them.

Economic Factors

- **Limited Funding:** Insufficient funding for green initiatives and technologies can hinder progress. Many businesses may lack the capital to invest in sustainable practices.
- **Economic Dependence on Tourism:** Greece's economy is heavily dependent on tourism, which can lead to short-term economic gains being prioritized over long-term sustainability.
- **Cost of Transition:** Transitioning to greener technologies and practices can be perceived as costly and deter businesses from making the necessary changes.

Political and Regulatory Challenges

- **Inconsistent Policies:** Fluctuations in government policies and priorities can create uncertainty, discouraging investment in sustainable practices.
- **Bureaucratic Obstacles:** Complex regulations and bureaucratic procedures can slow down the implementation of environmental initiatives.
- **Corruption and Lack of Enforcement:** Corruption and inadequate enforcement of existing environmental laws can undermine efforts to reduce environmental footprint..

Social and Cultural Factors

- **Public Awareness:** Lack of knowledge about environmental issues and the importance of sustainability can limit public participation and support for green initiatives.

- **Cultural Attitudes:** Traditional practices and resistance to change can hinder the adoption of sustainable practices in communities.

Infrastructure Constraints Insufficient

- **Waste Management:** Inefficient waste management systems can lead to increased pollution and waste of resources, hindering efforts to reduce the environmental footprint.
- **Fossil Fuel Dependence:** Heavy reliance on fossil fuels for energy production limits the potential for a transition to renewable energy sources.
- **Transport Infrastructure:** Limited public transport options can lead to increased reliance on private vehicles, contributing to higher CO₂ emissions.

Geographical and Environmental Factors

- **Climate Change Vulnerability:** Greece is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as droughts and wildfires, which can complicate efforts to implement sustainable practices.
- **Biodiversity Loss:** Pressure on natural resources and biodiversity can hinder efforts to conserve and sustainably manage land.

Technological Barriers

- **Access to Green Technologies:** Limited access to affordable green technologies can prevent businesses and individuals from adopting sustainable practices.
- **Research and Development Gaps:** Lack of investment in research and development of sustainable technologies can slow innovation.

Opportunities for Improvement

Energy Saving Programs

The "Exiconomo" (save) program, which for the last 13 years has been offering subsidies to homeowners who wish to upgrade their energy efficiency. This is the biggest and most substantial step we can take in order to become more environmentally friendly. From insulating external walls and changing window frames, to replacing the heating system with heat pumps or even installing a photovoltaic power station for self-generation of electricity, there are many tasks that can make our home less energy-intensive. Among them is the installation of water heating systems using renewable energy sources (e.g. solar water heaters) and smart home systems. These subsidies can cover expenses for:

1. Thermal insulation of walls, roof and basement.

2. Replacement of frames with energy-efficient ones.
3. Installation of high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, such as heat pumps.
4. Installation of solar water heaters.
5. Upgrading of electrical appliances with energy class A+ and above.

These programs not only contribute to energy savings and reduced energy bills, but also to environmental protection through the reduction of CO₂ emissions..



Sustainable mobility

Sustainable mobility in Greece refers to practices and strategies that promote more ecological, economically efficient and socially just mobility. This concept includes the use of public transport, bicycles, walking, but also the promotion of alternative fuels and electric mobility..

Main Elements of Sustainable Mobility in Greece

1. **Public Transport:** Improving and expanding the public transport network (buses, trains, metro) is crucial to reducing car dependency. Cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki have public transport upgrade programs.
2. **Cycling and Walking:** Developing infrastructure for bicycles (such as bike lanes) and pedestrians contributes to promoting sustainable modes of transport. Many cities are trying to encourage citizens to choose the bicycle as a means of transport.
3. **Electromobility:** Promoting electric vehicles through subsidies and developing a charging network are important steps towards sustainable mobility. Greece has set targets to increase the use of electric vehicles.
4. **Awareness Programs:** Public information and awareness campaigns on the benefits of sustainable mobility are important for changing behaviors.
5. **Policy Strategies:** The Greek government and local authorities are working to develop mobility strategies that will integrate environmental criteria into infrastructure and transport.

Challenges

- **Infrastructure:** In many areas, public transport and cycling infrastructure is limited.
- **Habits:** Car dependency is deeply rooted in the daily lives of many citizens.
- **Economic Factors:** The economic situation can limit investment in sustainable infrastructure.



Solar Energy

Greece has excellent climatic conditions for solar energy production, with many hours of sunshine throughout the year. This has led to a significant increase in the installed capacity of solar photovoltaic systems. The government has taken various initiatives and subsidies to promote solar energy, such as:

- **Investments in photovoltaic parks:** The development of large solar parks in suitable areas, such as central and southern Greece.
- **Residential systems:** Subsidies for the installation of photovoltaic systems in homes, providing incentives for citizens to invest in solar energy.

Investments in Photovoltaic Parks

1. **Renewable Energy:** Photovoltaic systems generate electricity from the sun, helping to reduce CO2 emissions and dependence on fossil fuels.
2. **Stable Returns:** Investments in photovoltaic parks can offer stable and predictable returns, mainly through the sale of electricity to the grid or participation in feed-in tariff programs.
3. **Long-term Durability:** Photovoltaic systems have a long lifespan, typically 25 to 30 years, and require minimal maintenance.
4. **Subsidies and Incentives:** Many governments offer subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives to promote investments in renewable energy sources.
5. **Meeting Environmental Goals:** These investments contribute to meeting international and national goals to reduce emissions and promote sustainable development.

The country has invested significantly in the development of renewable energy sources, and photovoltaic systems are one of the main areas of development. Photovoltaic parks are located in various regions of Greece, mainly in sunny areas, such as Crete, the Peloponnese, and the Cyclades..

The Greek government has set targets for increasing energy production from renewable sources, which has led to increased interest and investment in the photovoltaic sector. In addition, there are subsidy programs for the installation of photovoltaic systems at the residential and commercial level. Businesses that offer training and guidance for ISO 14001 as well as Environmentally Friendly products and Services



Good Practices examples in Greece

COCO-MAT

COCO-MAT is a company that creates handmade products that reflect the authenticity of Mediterranean culture, that strives to raise environmental awareness and is very proud of the fact that people all over the world experience the benefits of Sleeping in Nature. The 25,000 m² factory has a virtually carbon neutral footprint.

Activity

Bike COCO-MAT

The company is promoting sustainable mobility in Greece as it has created eco-friendly bicycles that aim to reduce emissions by encouraging customers to use and commute with them.



COCO-MAT is a proud and active member of the SFC and supports the triple bottom line of PEOPLE, PLANET and PROFIT. SFC leads the industry and raises awareness of environmentally friendly best practices throughout its supply chains. The Council also promotes sustainable practices among furniture manufacturers, retailers and consumers.

FSC protects forests for future generations and promotes the environmentally sound, socially beneficial and economically prosperous management of the world's forests. COCO-MAT's wooden frames and furniture come from responsibly managed forests that meet the 10 principles and 57 criteria of the FSC standard, which apply to certified forests worldwide.

KORRES

KORRES is a Greek company specializing in the production of natural cosmetics and skin care products. Founded in 1996 by George Korres and his team, it has become known for the use of natural ingredients, herbs and traditional recipes in the development of its products.



KORRES offers a wide range of products, such as face creams, body products, shampoos, hair treatments and fragrances, with the aim of effectiveness and safety for the user. The company's philosophy is based on sustainability and environmental protection, which makes it particularly popular with consumers looking for sustainable options.

The company, in addition to using natural ingredients and certified raw materials from nature, promotes sustainability and the protection of ecosystems. The company works to reduce waste and use recyclable materials in the packaging of its products. It invests in innovative packaging solutions that are environmentally friendly.

Finally, it has established a 6-module workshop to educate and guide customers and employees on the circular economy, reducing the environmental footprint, green development and sustainability.

BioAgros

Since 1990, we have been one of the largest and most pioneering Greek organic food companies. They have significant expertise in organic food products and are constantly evolving through research and development of new products. They study modern trends while being particularly strict in the selection of raw materials and quality control. Their goal is for the products to meet the needs of the modern lifestyle and to offer natural and beneficial benefits to the human body as well as to improve the quality of life of consumers more broadly..

The Goals

- **Protecting** the environment.
- **Minimizing** the use of single-use cardboard boxes.
- **Recycling** all the paper, plastic and glass we use.
- **Using all organic waste** as food for our animals, but also for the production of electricity.

Apart from being a social supermarket located in Thessaloniki, the company also collaborates with and aims to relieve vulnerable social groups and eliminate the phenomena of marginalization. The company's expertise in producing natural products in a unique way and protecting the environment, makes it the number 1 company in sustainable food and green ecology.

Mills of Thrace (ΜΥΛΟΙ ΘΡΑΚΗΣ)

Thrace Mills I. Ouzounopoulos S.A. is one of the leading flour mills in Greece with over 100 years of experience. The company specializes in the production of luxury and high value-added flours and produces its products based on quality wheat from the rich land of Thrace.

The goals of the company include:

A) the production of high-quality soft wheat (flour) with satisfactory grain yields, **avoiding practices that threaten the natural environment** (air, water, soil pollution), **human health and rural communities** by optimizing fertilization and plant protection adapted to the climatic and soil conditions of the region and by preserving the many small family farms and

B) the production of organic einkorn (triticum spelta) without the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

From the Thrace Mills' perspective, 6 people work in the chemical department, 4 people in the geotechnical department, as well as production personnel who are responsible for receiving the wheat and its processing. From the University, 5 students and 2 professors work. In 2018, the company collaborated with more than 600 local producers and 18 grain traders and agronomic centers that operate as intermediaries between Thrace Mills and farmers. It should be noted that in 2011, when the program began, Thrace Mills collaborated with 19 producers and cultivated 1,500 under contract, while this year, with the cooperation of 600 producers, 12 different varieties were cultivated on 35,000 acres.

Today, an agricultural product is produced that has greater added value for industry and the local economy since it can be used to produce flour for baking and confectionery. In the past, the wheat produced only had feed value.

The benefits for farmers were multiple, as they include:

They ensured the absorption of their production (wheat) with a fixed and guaranteed purchase price for said production.

There was an improvement in plant protection of the soft wheat crop and therefore an improvement in the quality and quantity of production.

The yields (kilograms per hectare) were higher than the yields previously achieved in wheat cultivation.

MEGA PERSONAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS S.A.

MEGA, a 100% Greek company, is today one of the largest personal hygiene product production units in Europe. Starting from scratch, 40 years ago and with purely organic growth, it has managed over the years to acquire a leading position in the field of personal hygiene products (panty liners, sanitary napkins, baby diapers and wet wipes, incontinence products and cotton products) in the Greek market. Today, it is ranked among the 10 largest suppliers to the domestic retail trade..



Within the framework of its environmental approach, the company developed its own Green Strategic Sustainability Program called “Act Green” that integrates 3 important pillars for the promotion of Sustainable Development: Redesign - Reduce - Recycle.

The goal of the Act Green Program is the continuous and systematic improvement of the environmental performance of MEGA's products and activities, through specific and defined actions, such as the gradual replacement of synthetic fibers and plastic with natural materials, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the increase in the use of recycled and recyclable materials, etc.

The Act Green program is fully aligned with the UN's 2030 sustainable development goals and MEGA's overall long-term sustainability strategy, while it is expected to create significant positive environmental and social impacts while contributing substantially to further raising the awareness of stakeholders.



Through its Act Green Sustainability Program, MEGA is committed to:

REDESIGN

MEGA has been using cotton, instead of plastic or synthetic material, in its core products for decades, as skin friendliness and respect for the environment are non-negotiable values for the company. It is committed to continuing the redesign of its products in order to maximize the

use of plant fibers by 2050, based on product safety, skin compatibility and the environment. It uses exclusively (100%) FSC certified pulp by 2030.

Redesigning products with the aim of improving the environmental footprint, using the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) as a tool for each product category.

REDUCE

MEGA is committed to completely eliminate fossil fuels with 100% renewable electricity for its production activities. Also, to reduce water footprint. In the last two years, they have managed to reduce water consumption in their production facilities by 13%. They are committed to scaling up these efforts over the next decade. The company is also working on a 10% reduction in packaging materials in all their products by 2030 and a 50% reduction in indirect and direct carbon dioxide emissions (scope 1 & scope 2) by 2030 and net-zero in 2050 (compared to 2020).

The Act Green Program and the goals set for each pillar concern all of MEGA's facilities in Acharnes, Attica (production unit and offices), its collaborations with a wide range of suppliers and recycling companies, as well as the entire supply chain, from its suppliers in Greece and abroad to the final consumer on the 4 continents where it operates.

VIVECHROM

Vivechrom, a member of the multinational AkzoNobel group, holds a leading position in the paint industry in Greece, producing high-quality products that meet the needs of the market for building paints.



Vivechrom, faithful to its commitment to "Protect the environment by preventing or minimizing the environmental impacts of its activities and products", takes numerous actions and implements investments related to the management of its solid, liquid and gaseous waste. More specifically:

- It has a Wastewater Treatment Unit & Solvent Cleaning Recovery Unit (SRP).
- It reuses the biological water for washing the equipment.
- It separates recyclable waste (paper, wood, metal, plastic, batteries, electronic devices, used mineral oils), and disposes of them for recycling.
- It collaborates with a foreign company for the collection of waste products (unsuitable paints, SRP mud, etc.) for the manufacture of paints in developing countries.

- It invests in robotic closed production systems to reduce gas emissions.
- It collaborates with the "Hellenic Recycling and Recovery Company" for the collection and recycling of used packaging of its products.

The company is experiencing multiple benefits, including a 10% reduction in water consumption, a 5% decrease in energy consumption per ton of production over the last three years, the reuse of approximately 50 tons of solvent annually, and an 8.5% reduction in pollutants from fossil fuel use.

BIOAROMA CRETE

Bioaroma Crete, founded in 2007 in Agios Nikolaos, Crete, is a pioneering, environmentally friendly organic cosmetics and fragrances company with sustainable development. Our mission is to harness the natural wealth of the Greek land by creating high quality organic cosmetics and fragrances, integrating vertically integrated lines of action, starting from the field and ending on the shelf.

All our raw materials come from a private 100-acre plot where 150 different types of aromatic plants and herbs are cultivated organically, while there is also organic beekeeping. The processing of herbs and plants takes place at the central facilities of our company. These areas are open to visitors and include an essential oil distillery, a herb extractor, a seed mill, a perfumery and soap making facility, laboratories where organic cosmetics are created and packaged, a botanical garden and a unique interactive Experience Store..

Activity

Development of innovative, organically certified, cosmetic products & services with sustainability as a model, inspired by the Minoan era.

Bioaroma Crete is committed to following the model of sustainable development, producing natural products in such a way that the productive capacity of plants is not reduced but improved and biodiversity is enhanced.

The company chooses for its new image innovative biodegradable materials derived from renewable raw materials (wood chips, natural resins, sugar cane) for the packaging of its products, thus fully protecting the environment and enhancing plant growth.

In addition, it uses natural energy sources to promote the future quality and balance of the environment. More specifically, for the distillation process it uses pellets that the company itself produces after the cold pressing of the organic grape seeds, while the plant residues of the distillation are turned into compost that is used as a soil conditioner on the company's farm.

Our company employs 30 people around the development of this initiative who participate both in the stages of production & packaging of the products as well as in the development of the design, the website and promotional activities with zero impact on the environment. At the same time, the creation of the company's unique Experience Store was carried out by an architectural firm that works exclusively with sustainability as a model.

The results of our actions so far are summarized as follows:

- Protecting the natural environment
- Reducing our environmental footprint
- Providing employment to local residents, strengthening the local community
- Developing green natural products that enhance the health and well-being of consumers
- Educating young people, the citizens of tomorrow, about our cultural heritage and environmental protection.

CHITOS ABEE SA

CHITOS S.A. is a pioneering Greek industry, with a leading presence in the bottled water sector. Based in the Ioannina region and with experience in the field of soft drink bottling since 1955, it began with the bottling of the Natural Mineral Water “ZAGORI” in 1988. With steady steps, it has evolved into a dynamically developing Company, which constantly and substantially contributes to the national economy..



CHITOS S.A., faithful to the Environmental Policy that it implements as one of its primary values, strategically chose in 2020 the collaboration with an alternative electricity provider (Protergia) for the use in its facilities of electricity that would have 100% origin from Renewable Energy Sources (RES).

The Provider, with whom CHITOS S.A. collaborated, has the relevant certificate based on the certificates of the RES & Guarantees of Origin Administrator (DAPEEP S.A.), which is the competent Energy Certification Issuing Body and in accordance with the Ministerial No. D6/F1/oik.8786 Decision of the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Government Gazette B' 646 / 14.05.2010).

CHITOS S.A. in 2020 implemented hybrid fuel technology in 50% of its transport fleet (11 trucks), reducing their operating costs compared to 2019 by approximately 10% and the carbon footprint of the transport activity by approximately 12%.

Finally, through a strategic plan, CHITOS SA puts its environmental responsibility into practice through the following actions:

1. It fully complies on an annual basis, for each bottle it produces, by paying environmental fees
2. It is registered in the National Registry of Producers (waste) by paying the relevant fees
3. It is at the forefront of information and study of the implementation of the requirements of European Legislation 904/2019/EU, on single-use plastics
4. It constantly monitors water consumption indicators and applies the relevant Legislation for the Protection of Sources
5. It is committed to the continuous reduction of environmental impacts, the sustainable use of resources and the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems
6. It has replaced all of its lighting with economical LED lamps
7. It applies hybrid fuel technology for its transport fleet with a simultaneous study of reducing its carbon footprint.

The result of CHITOS SA's actions is the guarantee of origin (Green Certificate) from Protergia, which recorded for 2020 that 100% of the electricity used comes from Renewable Energy Sources with a zero carbon footprint. Specifically, Protergia and the Energy Sector of MYTILINEOS certified the guaranteed origin of energy by recording that for the 12,051 MWh of electricity consumed at the company's facilities during the period 01.01.2020 - 30.06.2020, an equal amount of energy has been produced from RES and CHP according to the relevant revocation certificates of the RES & Guarantees of Origin Administrator (DAPEEP SA) as the competent OP Issuing Body and in accordance with sub. No. D6/Φ1/Οικ.8786 Decision of the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (Government Gazette B' 646/14.05.2010).

Coca-Cola 3E Greece A.B.E.E.

Coca-Cola Hellenic was founded in 1969 and is the leading Greek non-alcoholic beverage company. Through a network of 25 production lines and facilities across Greece, it produces and distributes a unique portfolio of quality products, contributing to the development of the Greek economy and society..

In 2014, Coca-Cola Hellenic's AVRA Natural Mineral Water innovated by launching a new lighter bottle with 24% less plastic in the 500ml and 1.5lt packages, which constitute 85% of the total AVRA production volume. The innovation of this initiative, in addition to the reduction of plastic in the packaging, is found in the special design of the new lighter "Twist" bottle, which:



- It allows the volume of the empty package to be minimized with a single hand movement, provided that when compressing it, we follow the direction of the embossed arcs.
- It allows the package to be maintained in its rigidity and minimizes deformations, despite the reduction of plastic.

The innovation of the "Twist" bottle that AVRA Natural Mineral Water adopts and differentiates it in the Greek market, in addition to the reduction of plastic in packaging and, consequently, the reduction of gas pollutant emissions, is found in the design of the bottle. This unique design allows the volume of the empty package to be minimized with a single hand movement when, when squeezing it, we follow the direction of the embossed arcs it bears, thus encouraging recycling and significantly reducing the total volume of waste. In addition, it allows the packaging to be maintained in its robustness with only minimal deformations.

OLIVE GREEN HOTEL



In the heart of Heraklion city, the Olive Green Hotel is a technologically smart hotel, that embraces sustainability, and implements eco-friendly practices. A role model for citizens and travelers of the world. With its modern infrastructure, it combines high technology with the brilliance of Cretan tradition.

Modern architecture prevails in Olive Green. The discreet atmosphere of nature lends elegance, tranquility and understated luxury. The hotel brings nature indoors, with earthy colors and plants, in harmony with the unique landscapes of Crete. The modern interiors and furniture save space providing efficiency and comfort.

Smart technology in bedrooms bring immediacy to room operations and hotel services. Use your personal tablet to adjust lighting, TV, air conditioning, order room service.

The special character of each room is highlighted through the wall- images that decorate it.

Mountain or sea? Psiloritis mountain or Matala beach? Kapetaniana village or Spinalonga island? Navigate with the QR codes of the thematic panel on the headboard and organize your trip through the exploration and adventure articles that make it easy to get to know the island's sights, trails, gorges and events.

Images in wardrobes, are brought to life through lighting, allowing you to discover the Cretan culture, the wedding, the knife, the dances, the lyre, the traditional Cretan woven.

The design of Olive Green has been based on respect for the environment, which lead us to create a "smart" building, 100% eco-friendly, built in complete harmony with the surrounding area. Structurally, the outer shell of the building is covered with advanced insulation allowing both stable temperature and seasonal adjustments. Solar panels generate part of the energy needed for electricity and hot water heating in the hotel.



An advanced BMS (Building Management System), monitors and controls electromechanical equipment adjusting every all aspect of building operations in order to minimize energy consumption. Inside, you will find a modern lobby, with natural light and energy-efficient glazing for increased thermal insulation and energy savings. In the rooms you enjoy hi tech features synchronized with the room tablet, - control of A/C, lights, TV – thanks to the implementation of the KNX communication protocol. At the same time, Green Key's recycling policy is implemented by staff, customers, and partners.

Conclusion

The shift towards a sustainable, low-carbon, and circular economy is a crucial step for Greece and its SMEs. As this report has outlined, both European and national policy frameworks provide a solid foundation for guiding businesses toward greener operations. However, the transition remains complex and multifaceted, requiring not only legislative action but also strong financial support, institutional collaboration, and cultural shifts towards sustainability.

Greek SMEs have the potential to become key drivers of the green transition, yet they continue to face several barriers. Economic limitations, regulatory burdens, lack of knowledge, and infrastructure constraints prevent many businesses from fully embracing sustainable practices. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated approach involving:

- **Enhanced financial mechanisms** such as grants, tax incentives, and green financing options to support SMEs in adopting energy-efficient technologies and sustainable production methods.
- **Stronger institutional support and collaboration**, including knowledge-sharing networks, partnerships between research institutions and businesses, and simplified regulatory processes.
- **Education and capacity-building initiatives** to raise awareness among entrepreneurs, employees, and consumers about the benefits of sustainability and the available resources for green transitions.
- **Public-private partnerships** to leverage innovation, technological advancements, and investments in **renewable energy, circular economy initiatives, and sustainable business models**.

Despite these challenges, there are clear opportunities for SMEs to lead the way in sustainability, as demonstrated by the good practices of Greek companies featured in this report. Businesses in Greece provide valuable case studies that illustrate how integrating sustainability, eco-friendly innovation, and responsible resource management can be both environmentally beneficial and economically viable. These companies showcase that green entrepreneurship is not just a compliance requirement but a competitive advantage, increasing brand value, customer loyalty, and long-term business resilience.

As Greece continues to align with EU sustainability objectives, the role of SMEs in reducing environmental footprints must be further strengthened. Moving forward, a more comprehensive and supportive ecosystem is needed—one that simplifies access to funding, provides clearer regulatory guidance, and fosters a business culture that prioritizes sustainability. Through targeted policy improvements, increased investment in green technologies, and a commitment to long-term environmental goals, Greece can enable its SMEs

to become leaders in sustainable business practices, contributing to a greener, more resilient economy for future generations.

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