

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, PHYSICAL PLANNING AND PUBLIC WORKS

**NATIONAL STRATEGY  
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
*GREECE***

**- Executive Summary -**

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*Edited by:*

*Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works  
Department of International Relations and European Union Affairs*

*Editorial Team:*

*M. Peppas, M. Papaioannou, I. Mavroidis, A. Economopoulou, K. Kyriazi, C. Kotsani*

*Supported by:*

*University of Thessaly, Department of Planning and Regional Development*

## PREFACE

The accession of our country to the European Economic and Monetary Union constitutes one of the greatest successes of the contemporary Greek State. Our next goal is the real economic and social convergence with the average level of the member-states of the European Union. To achieve the real convergence, our country needs to maintain and accelerate its growth rates.

The term development does not refer only to the economic growth rates. Particularly in our present development level, high economic growth rates cannot be maintained without ensuring simultaneous social cohesion and prudent environmental management.

The economic acceleration will be hindered, unless it will keep pace with the social integration and diffuse its benefits to the social mass. The derangement of the social tissue is likely to cause tensions that might have impacts on the economic and investing climate. More importantly, the maintenance of high development rates and the course to true convergence demand the commitment of the entire society.

The economic enlargement that pays no respect to the environment is condemned to short duration. It constitutes a shortsighted policy. Sooner or later, it will be deprived of its resources and will demise more problems than solutions to the next generations.

Sustainable development combines the economic, social and natural assets, aiming at improving the quality of life of the citizens. Our country, which is characterized by rich biodiversity, environmental resources wealth, and an abundance of social, historic and cultural singularities, sustainable development constitutes not only a contemporary alternative suggestion, but also a substantial comparative advantage.



Vasso Papandreou

*Minister for the Environment,  
Physical Planning and Public Works*

# **THE GREEK NATIONAL STRATEGY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

## **Table of contents**

page

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<b>1. <i>The International Context</i></b>	2
<b>2. <i>The National Context</i></b>	2
2.1 Geographic and demographic data	2
2.2 Economic features	2
2.3 Employment and social cohesion	3
2.4 Environmental pressures	3
<b>3. <i>Towards a National Strategy for Sustainable Development</i></b>	6
3.1 General aspects	6
3.2 Main principles and rules of environmental policies	7
3.3 National strategy's objectives towards social solidarity	7
3.4 Environmental objectives and sectoral priorities	7
<b>4. <i>Sectors of Action and Measures for the Reduction of Environmental Pressures</i></b>	8
4.1 Climate Change abatement	8
4.2 Reduction of air pollutants	9
4.3 Reduction and rational management of solid waste	9
4.4 Water resources management	10
4.5 Desertification abatement	10
4.6 Protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems	11
4.7 Sustainable management of forests	11
<b>5. <i>Actions and Measures for Further Promoting Social Solidarity Policies</i></b>	12
5.1 Exclusion from employment opportunities	12
5.2 Enhancement of equal opportunities between men and women	12
5.3 Exclusion from other public goods	12
5.4 Prevention of exclusion risk	13
5.5 Actions to protect vulnerable population groups	13
<b>6. <i>The Sustainable Development Dimension in Sectoral Policies</i></b>	13
6.1 Spatial policies (regional development, physical planning, urban planning)	14
6.1.1 Policy for regional development and strategic physical planning	14
6.1.2 Policy for urban development and land policy	14
6.2 Main objectives of the General Framework for Physical Planning and Sustainable Development (GFPPSD)	14
6.2.1 Administrative reform	14
6.2.2 Multi-centered urban structure and metropolitan centres	15
6.2.3 Land use planning and urban development	15
6.2.4 Urban centres' governance	15
6.3 Citizens' society	15
6.4 Energy sector	15
6.5 Transport sector	16
6.6 Agriculture – Fisheries	16
6.7 Industrial sector	17

	<i>page</i>
6.8 Tourism sector	18
6.9 Employment	18
<b>7. <i>Horizontal Actions</i></b>	<b>19</b>
7.1 Economic instruments	19
7.2 Information collection and management	19
7.3 Institutional, administrative and other measures	20

## Introduction

This publication intends to briefly convey the Greek national strategy on sustainable development which has been formulated in view of the preparations for the Johannesburg WSSD 2002.

With regard to the European Council's recommendations in Göthenburg 2001 and based on the adopted Community's sustainable development strategy, Greece has prepared its own *National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD)* to respond to the European Council.

The strategy is a contribution to the world-wide sustainable development initiative, and reflects the special responsibility in the follow-up to the Rio Principles and to Agenda 21 agreed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 will serve as a unique opportunity for EU countries to demonstrate leadership in implementing already agreed as well as new policies that will be used to achieve progress towards sustainable development. The prerequisite in this will be the integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

The purpose of the strategy is to provide clear directions for achieving environmental sustainable policies in the country, and to guide the future work in the field of environment for the next decade. It reflects an interesting mosaic of the interrelations among the three pillars of sustainable development at national level. It deals with the challenge of realising national prosperity, social cohesion and solidarity, rational use of natural resources, high quality of the environment and economic growth as well as expansion within the context of environmental and social sustainability.

The success of implementing this Strategy will also depend on strengthened co-operation with developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Greece has an important role to play by providing aid for their capacity building and collaborating with them so that they can develop effective and equitable burden sharing arrangements for addressing individual-national and global environmental problems.

In implementing the Strategy, the Greek Government will seek and promote active collaborations with all the stakeholders, that is the private sector, civil society, NGOs.

The strategy will be implemented before 2010 and will be reviewed at the end of the decade through environmental performance reviews and appropriate indicators based on the EU's sustainable development indicators programme, which will be used for monitoring the progress.

The Strategy was prepared by the Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works in collaboration with the following Ministries: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Merchant Marine. To this end it was of invaluable assistance the contribution of the members of the established Inter-ministerial Co-ordinating Committee, composed of representatives of the aforementioned Ministries, which acts as the National Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The contribution of the National Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development was also invaluable, which as a member of the Inter-ministerial Committee has organised a series of Workshops involving major groups, such as entrepreneurs, academia, local government and NGOs during the course of national preparations.

The strategy has been approved by the Council of Ministers in Athens in June 2002.

## **1. THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

In 1987, the World Committee for Sustainable Development (WCSD) published the Report "Our Common Future" stating, in an explicit way, the inefficiency of the limited and fragmented approaches towards the confrontation of environmental problems. The direct result of this Report was the World Summit for Environment and Development in Rio De Janeiro, in 1992, which adopted Agenda 21, a global Action Programme for the mobilisation of society towards Sustainable Development. Ten years after Rio, the forthcoming World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg will provide an impetus for governments and the civil society to promote the necessary structures and policies for attaining a decisive shift of the international community's course towards sustainability.

At European level, the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 points out Sustainable Development as a central item of European policy, while the following Summits led to a gradual development of the three pillars of sustainable development (social equity, economic efficiency and environmental conservation) with a final adoption of the European Strategy for Sustainable Development in 2001 (at Göthenburg).

Greece, as a full member of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD (DAC), sets the environmental dimension of sustainable development as a major axis of international cooperation with developing countries and is committed to provide financial assistance in order to contribute to the global environmental protection.

## **2. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT**

Given the broader framework, as set by the international community and the activities of the European Union, Greece is seeking to determine its own course towards sustainable development. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development is based on an analysis of the broader context (the geopolitical and economic development framework) of Greece as well as on the assessment of the key pressures on the Greek environment.

### **2.1 Geographic and demographic data**

The surface area of Greece is 130,100 km<sup>2</sup> of which 20% is distributed to its 3,000 islands, whereas, two thirds of the Greek territory is mountainous. Greece has the longest coastline in Europe with a total length exceeding 15.000 km of which 5% belongs to areas of unique ecological value. The national population reaches 11 million with a density of 84 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (one of the lowest densities in Europe). About one third of Greek population concentrates along the coastline. During the last 15 years the average annual population increase is approximately 0.5% and decreases steadily reaching the EU average. As a result, the national population is aging as 16% is over 65 years (1999 data). This trend, in parallel with the fact that the life expectancy is approximately 80 years old, creates significant pressures on the national social security and health systems. It is worth mentioning that over one million of foreign immigrants entered Greece during the 1990s consisting today 15 % of the total working force. Approximately 370,000 foreign immigrants were legitimised in 1998 and 2001.

### **2.2 Economic features**

For 2001, the GDP was \$ 117 billion dollars while the per capita GDP reached \$16,000 dollars. However, the distance between Greece and the other EU member states is considerable as the per capita GDP consists 70% of the EU average. The structure of the Greek economy shows significant increase in the service sector, contributing with 68.5% to the Gross Production Value (GPV). Furthermore, tourism plays an important role as Greece is

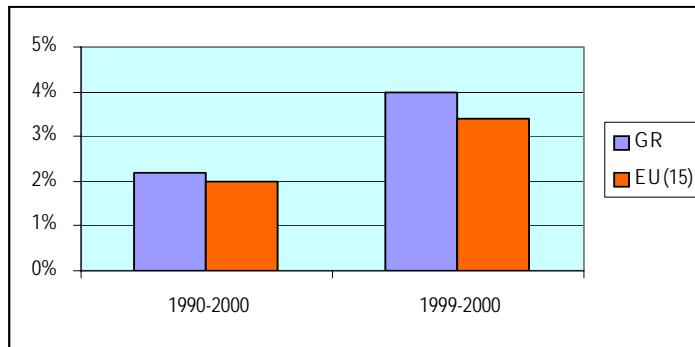


Diagram 1: Mean annual GDP growth in Greece and EU

ranked among the 20 important tourism destinations globally. The contribution of the manufacturing sector is limited (23.5%), while industrial activity concentrates in traditional sectors dominated by a large number of small and medium sized enterprises making the sector vulnerable to external pressures from international competition. Recently, rigid monetary policy has led to the reduction of the public deficit and inflation which fell to 3% of the GDP and 2% respectively. Public investments have increased significantly during the last decade mostly financed by 2<sup>nd</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework for the periods 1994 - 1999 and 2000 – 2006, respectively. In parallel, Greece, promotes Development Assistance Programmes supported by national funds.

### 2.3 Employment and social cohesion

The total active population reached 4.46 million people, showing an increase of 12.5% in relation to last year figures. Approximately 17% is employed in the primary sector, 23% in the secondary sector, and the remaining 60% in the tertiary sector. Unemployment remains over 10% consisting mainly of long term unemployed and women.

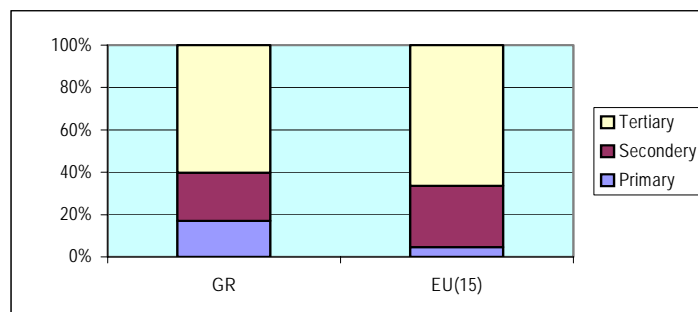


Diagram 2: Employment distribution in the main economic sectors, 2000

*OECD 2001*

### 2.4 Environmental pressures

Greece has a rich environmental reserve. The relatively non – degraded natural environment is characterised by rich biodiversity and great variety of habitats, high quality of bathing waters and coastal areas and relatively good air quality. It is noted that these are generally in better condition than in the majority of European countries, despite various local problems. The systematic restoration of monuments and the renovation of buildings of unique architectural importance coupled with the construction of pedestrian networks in the larger cities have revitalised historic centers. At the same time, Natura 2000 network gradually develops a management regime for the preservation and management of natural heritage. However, progress was slower in integrating the environmental dimension in specific sectors of economic policy. In addition, recent restructuring and broader socio – economic changes have started to negatively affect the environment.

The most important pressures on the natural environment and some of the main future trends are:

- *Land use and quality of soil*; In the last two decades a decrease in the urbanisation rate has been noticed due to regional development initiatives. Agricultural land in mountainous areas has been abandoned while in more productive areas agricultural production has been intensified. Forest areas are diminishing in size due to forest fires.

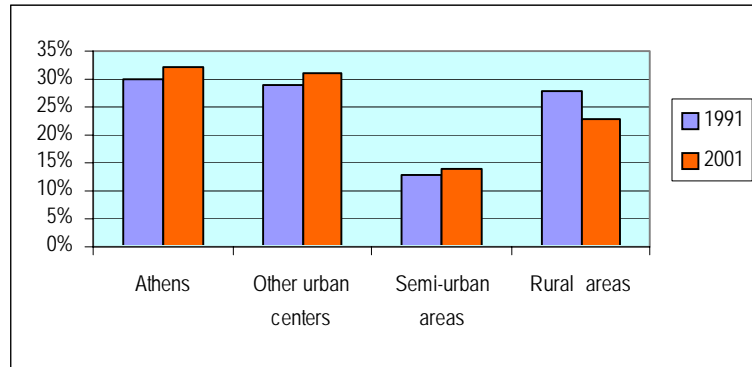


Diagram 3: Urban concentration  
National Statistical Service (estimations for 2001)

- *Use and quality of water resources*; The problems of water management are mainly focused on quantity issues and not on the quality ones. The uneven distribution of water resources and rainfall in space and time creates water availability problems. Agriculture is the most significant water consumer while demand for irrigation has been doubled in the last twenty years. Significant progress has been made in wastewater management as 50% of the national population is serviced by wastewater treatment plants. In addition, 98% of the Greek coasts meet the standards set by the bathing waters Directive.

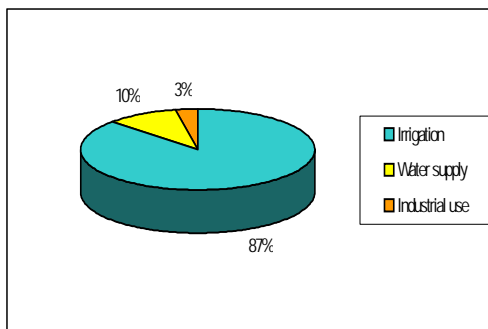


Diagram 4: Water consumption by sector, 1997, OECD 2001

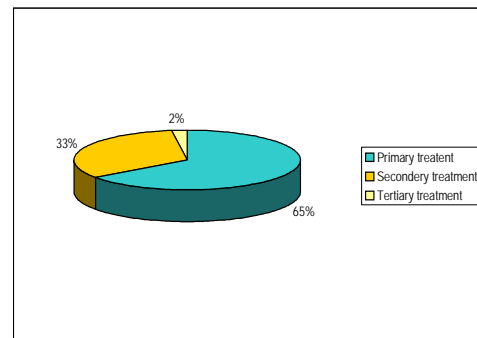


Diagram 5: Population connected to wastewater treatment plants, 2001  
Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works (YPEHODE)

- *Production and use of energy sources*; In Greece the per capita demand for primary energy is 30% lower than the EU average indicating a lower living standard but also more environmental – friendly consumption patterns. However, economic growth and energy consumption are not yet decoupled. Energy consumption in buildings and transport increases at much faster rates than the total energy demand. Renewable energy sources contribute 6% to the total energy demand, similar to the EU average, while the penetration of solar energy is high.

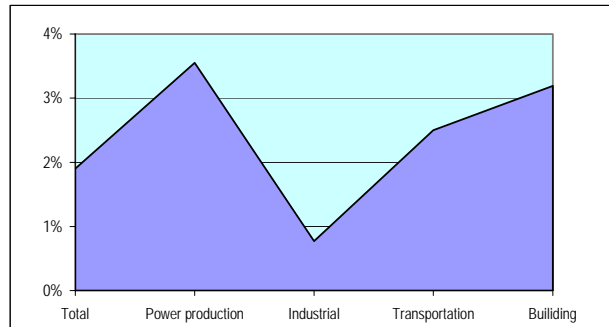


Diagram 6: Mean annual growth rate of energy demand per sector  
Hellenic Ministry of Development

- *Greenhouse gas emissions*; Greenhouse gas emissions show steady increase during the last decade, of which the most important ones are CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub>. Production and use of energy as well as waste disposal and agriculture are the primary sources.
- *Air pollutants*; At national level, emissions of air pollutants show an increase following GDP growth with the exception of NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>. Trends in the Athens greater area are more optimistic with values of CO, Pb and SO<sub>2</sub> being below the EU average.
- *Solid waste*; Economic development, intense urbanisation and changes in consumption patterns have resulted in the increase of solid waste quantities. Inappropriate waste disposal and management practices still persist leading to the degradation of surface and ground waters, air pollution and forest fires. However, significant progress has been made in the management of hazardous wastes and sludge. During the last years, waste management infrastructure projects have been financed using national and EU funds.

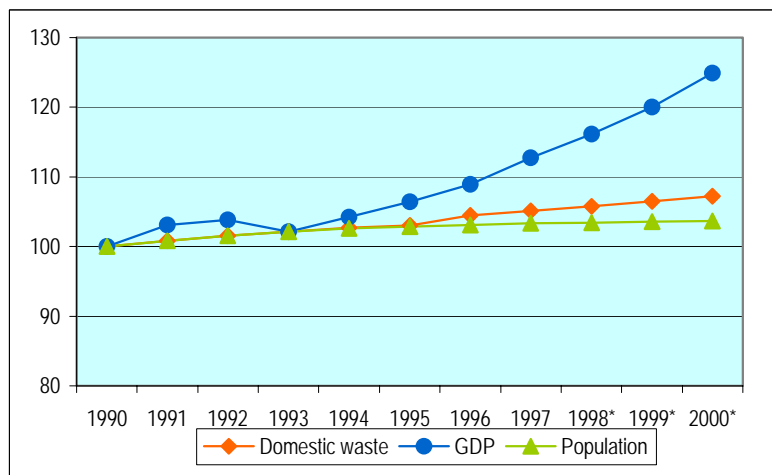


Diagram 7: Relative development of waste production, GDP and population  
Estimations of YPEHODE

- *Nature and biodiversity*; In Greece biodiversity is one of the richest in Europe and the Mediterranean, as a result of the country's geographical location, geological history and diversity of the landscape. Furthermore, the "soft" human interventions have contributed to the adequate preservation of biodiversity. Biodiversity in the context of habitats and ecosystems is also high ranging from European, Mediterranean and sub tropical ecosystems.

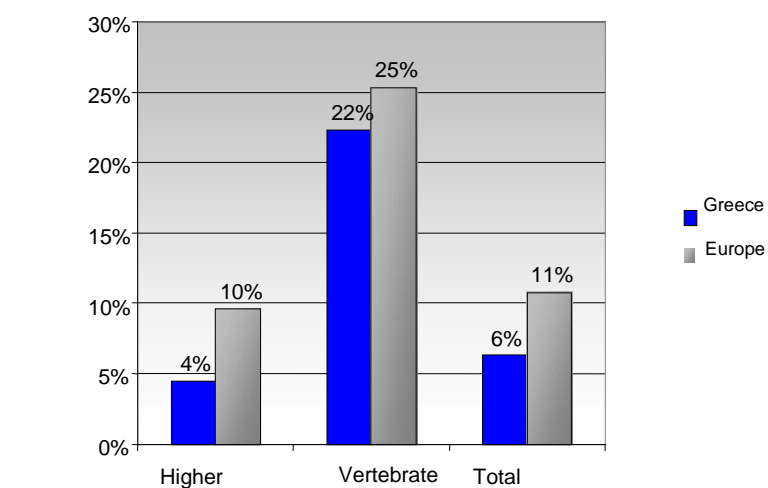


Diagram 8: Percentage of endangered species from the total of the above mentioned plants and vertebrates (except fishes) in Greece and Europe  
*National Centre for Habitats and Wetlands, 2002*

### 3. TOWARDS A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 General aspects

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development establishes a framework for the development of an Action Programme capable to meet the global challenges, compatible to EU guiding principles and adaptable to national particularities.

Greece follows up closely and contributes regularly to the development of international and EU environmental policy as it participates to all relevant processes and submits annually national reports to the Committee for Sustainable Development of the UN (CSD) in relation to the implementation of Agenda 21. Sustainable Development is promoted at global, EU, regional (Mediterranean and Black Sea) and national level supporting the initiatives of the international community for the success of the World Summit for the Environment in Johannesburg.

Recently, the Council of Ministers adopted a National Strategy for Sustainable Development aiming at a balanced approach of all parameters which define social prosperity in harmony with natural environment:

- The economic parameter is focused on the support of entrepreneurship and competitiveness and the rational use of natural and man made resources.
- The social parameter is focused on poverty alleviation and the support of social cohesion and solidarity.
- The environmental parameter is focused on the natural resources of Greece and on the confrontation of pressures from human activities.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development aims at the coordination and integration of policies in a long term and effective framework.

#### 3.2 Main principles and rules of environmental policy

Considering the equal importance of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in relation to those of economic and societal, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development sets the basic principles for environmental policy:

- The *precautionary principle*; necessitates the timely and effective confrontation of environmental impacts, and especially the non – reversible impacts on ecosystems and human health.

- The “*Polluter pays*” principle; integrates the cost of environmental impacts in market mechanisms and prices.
- The *equity and shared responsibility principle*; distributes the burden responsibility among parties and takes into account their potential to contribute towards the confrontation of environmental problems.

These principles have been specified and complemented by a number of rules, which briefly are:

- *Decoupling* economic growth from environmental degradation.
- *Sectoral integration* providing for environmental considerations to be included in the objectives and priorities of sectoral policies.
- *Prioritise avoidance and not management of environmental pressures* aiming at minimising the risks and reducing the cost of end – of – pipe solutions.
- *Problem solving at the source* recognising that local solutions are more efficient and have relatively lower cost.
- *Identification and management of carrying capacity* as sustainable management prerequisites the identification of exploitation limits of natural resources and ecosystems

### **3.3 National strategy’s objectives towards social solidarity**

The general strategic approach for addressing social imparities, poverty and social exclusion encompass a wide range of policies, such as: macro-economic policies, financial policies for providing incentives, exemptions and other benefits, employment policies, education and training policies, regional development policies as well as salary and pension policies.

In this respect, the objectives of the NSSD towards social solidarity are: access to labour market for all groups, access to common public goods (eg. health, education, housing, information), poverty alleviation, protection of vulnerable social groups and groups with special particularities (repatriates, gypsies, immigrants, refugees etc), prevention of labour market distorting phenomena, focus on geographically disadvantaged areas and areas affected by natural disasters, prevention of illiteracy and support to families with children.

### **3.4 Environmental objectives and sectoral priorities**

Paying the necessary priority to the environmental dimension of Greece’s Sustainable Development, the main targets are the following:

- Confrontation of climate change
- Reduction of air pollutants
- Reduction and rational management of solid waste
- Rational water resources management
- Confrontation of desertification
- Protection of biodiversity and ecosystems

## **4. SECTORS OF ACTION AND MEASURES FOR THE REDUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES**

*The fourth step for setting up a National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) is to define the environmental targets and to pinpoint the actions that are expected to be more effectively implemented.*

### **4.1 Climate Change abatement**

Greece considers climate change as one of the major environmental hazards, since the pressures of desertification, water scarcity and temperature rise are already clear in Greece. Furthermore, the abatement of climate change is one of the priority targets of the European

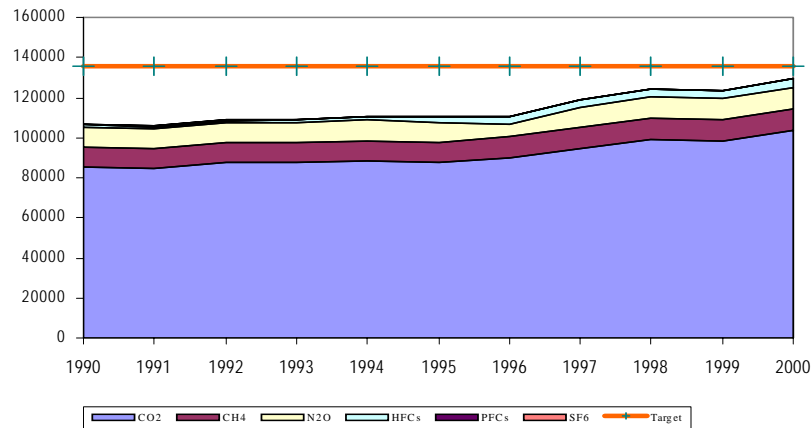


Diagram 9: Trends of greenhouse gas emissions and Kyoto target for Greece  
National Observatory of Athens

Strategy for Sustainable Development. The Kyoto Protocol was ratified by Greece in May 2002.

The target of the National Strategy for the abatement of climate change coincides with the targets of the implementation of Kyoto Protocol, with a time period of reference the years 2008-2012. In the framework of common policy of the EU, Greece is committed not to increase the releases of the 6 greenhouse gases more than 25% (mean of years 2008-2012) as compared to the emissions of 1990.

Based on the above, the Council of Ministers has discussed and approved the main points of the new National Programme for the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. This Programme is based on the analysis of the contribution of different sectors in the total greenhouse gas emissions, taking into account the specific features and the perspectives of the country.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Climate Change are:*

- *Reform and diversification of energy offer*
- *Rational use and conservation of energy*
- *Measures for the reduction of other greenhouse gases*
- *Institutional measures*

In this framework, it is considered important to prioritise the selected measures based on the economic efficiency, as defined by the relation between cost and reduction potential, taking into account all other possible constraints.

It should be noted that many of the measures of the NSSD are already integrated in the respective sectoral policies (e.g. energy sector, transport) and are promoted through the implementation of the Operational Programmes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework. The greenhouse gas policy offers simultaneously to the economy, society and the environment, while assisting to abate typical atmospheric pollution.

#### **4.2 Reduction of air pollutants**

The NSSD gives emphasis to the reduction of air pollutants, since their increased concentrations are responsible for the phenomena of acid rain and eutrophication, that threaten the equilibrium of ecosystems, while air pollutants are also proven to be related with problems on human health. In order to ensure a continuous reduction of air pollutants and to achieve the targets that have been set by EU, much more progress is needed to be done. More

specifically, in 2001 EU has adopted a multi-pollutant, multi-effective strategy for the effective abatement of atmospheric pollution. Although the pollutant concentration levels for Greece are lower than the respective levels for the whole of the EU, which reflects the level of development and the structure of the energy system of Greece, the compliance with these measures requires the implementation of an Action Programme with specific measures per sector. Special attention will be paid to the releases on NMVOCs, that show the greatest divergence from the target that is set for 2010.

The target of the National Strategy for the abatement of air pollution coincides with the targets resulting from the implementation of directive NECD for the period ending at 2010. On the long term, the Strategy will be readjusted within the frame of a common strategy and the decisions of the EU competent authorities.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Air Pollution are:*

- *Reform and diversification of energy offer*
- *Rational use and conservation of energy in the building sector*
- *Measures for the transport sector*
- *Measures for industry*
- *Institutional and organisational measures*

The above measures will radically change the existing trends, achieving a substantial decoupling of improved energy quality and other relative services from the increase of the negative effects on air quality.

### **4.3 Reduction and rational management of solid waste**

The production of solid wastes is a result – to a great extent unavoidable - of the production process and the consumption. Therefore, the reduction of solid wastes quantity is the long term goal at which the efforts of the state should aim at, through the gradual change of producers' and consumers' behavioural patterns and practices.

The EU, with the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme, sets as target the reduction of the total quantity of wastes directed for disposal by 20% and 50% until 2010 and 2050 respectively, compared to the levels of 2000. Furthermore, with the Directive 1994/62/EC, EU gives priority to the production and management of packaging materials, aiming at maximising recycling, while with the Directive 1999/31/EC, strict specifications for the large landfill sites are set.

In this frame Greece has promoted measures for the expansion and organisation of related infrastructure, while conveyed the responsibility of planning and management of wastes to the Regions. Finally, the National Plan for the Integrated and Alternative Management of Solid Waste has been completed and its implementation is under way.

The targets of the National Strategy for the management of solid wastes, as presented in the National Plan of Integrated Management, aim at the safe disposal and maximisation of recycling. In parallel, long-term actions are mainly promoted for the reduction of the total quantity of produced solid wastes.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Solid Wastes are:*

- *Safe disposal and recycling*
- *Exploitation of domestic wastes*
- *Management of industrial and hazardous solid wastes*
- *Reduction of the solid wastes quantity*
- *Institutional measures*

The above directions will be accompanied by other actions, such as, training the staff of local authorities and raising the awareness of the responsible for decision making and the citizens in general.

#### **4.4 Water resources management**

The existing situation of water management in Greece is in general terms satisfactory, since the quality of surface waters is within the limits set by EU Directives. Furthermore, there is a considerable progress in constructing wastewater treatment plants and is anticipated that 90% of the population will be served by such plants. In addition, actions for joint measures to confront transboundary water problems are promoted, since 30% of surface waters come from or pass through neighbouring countries (Albania, FYROM, Bulgaria and Turkey). Also, the lakes Doirani and Prespes have recently been the subject of a trilateral agreement for their joint management, in the frame of establishing a Balkan Natural Park, which is a pioneering attempt at European level.

The development of a management plan is closely linked with the efforts of Greece to comply with the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC. The Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works has already proceeded to the necessary actions for the implementation of the Directive and the related institutional framework is at the final stage of preparation.

The targets of the National Strategy for the management of water resources are set in the National Action Plan for Water Resources, and concerns the sustainable use of existing water reserves, the efficient protection of water ecosystems and the attainment of high quality standards for all surface and ground water bodies by the year 2015.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Water Resources are:*

- *Integrated approach for water management*
- *Decentralisation of water management authorities-bodies*
- *Upgrading and expansion of infrastructure*
- *Socio-economical consideration of water resources management*
- *Protection from hazardous substances*

#### **4.5 Desertification abatement**

Desertification threatens, at international level, geographical systems in which the soil is at a final stage of degradation and cannot provide the necessary vital space, water and nutrients. In Greece, anti-erosion measures and works on mountainous water systems have started during the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the desalination of soils and irrigation works have been intensified after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Recently Greece has ratified the UN Convention on Desertification and has adopted the respective National Action Plan, which contains general measures and specific actions in the following sectors: Agriculture, Forestry, Husbandry, Wild Fauna and Water Resources.

The targets of the National Strategy for the abatement of desertification, as presented in the National Action Plan, concern the effective abatement of the desertification trend at 35% of the Greek territory that is directly affected from the results of desertification, and the prevention of desertification process at 60% of the Greek territory.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Desertification are:*

- *Forest protection*
- *Protection of water resources*
- *Protection of agricultural land and grassland from intensive use*
- *Reinforcement of research, exchange of information and training, and organisation of monitoring mechanisms using appropriate indicators.*

The Ministry of Agriculture has already started implementing the National Action Plan by constructing small reservoirs for rain water in threatened areas and by controlling and reducing irrational use of irrigation waters. The Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works and the Ministry of Development have also taken measures in the same direction. The total estimated funds for the abatement of desertification are approximately 450.000.000 EURO.

#### **4.6 Protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems**

Greece is characterised by a rich biodiversity of species and ecosystems, while many of the species are endemic. Today, 4% of flora and 22% of fauna in Greece are considered endangered. Approximately 2.5% of Greece is covered by protected areas, while there are about 270 NATURA 2000 sites, covering approximately 16.6% of Greece. In the last decade, several measures have been taken including the ratification of international conventions, the incorporation of EU Directives in the National Legal Order, the constitution of a National Inventory of NATURA 2000 sites, the publication of Law 2742/99 “on physical planning and sustainable development” and the establishment of a new body for the management of the National Marine Park of Zakynthos.

The targets of the National Strategy for the abatement of biodiversity coincide with the targets of the UN Convention for Biodiversity and concern the reversal of the existing trend of reduction of the biodiversity and the effective protection and restoration of natural ecosystems.

Based on the above targets, in 1999 the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works has prepared a Strategy for Wetland Resources and a National Plan for the Natural Environment.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Biodiversity are:*

- *Conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems and species of wild fauna and flora*
- *Management of water and soil resources*
- *Promotion of horizontal environmental policies*
- *Integration of biodiversity in sectoral policies*

The above sectors concern also the in-between unprotected zones so these can connect and not separate the protected areas. Especially in areas where primary sector activities are developed, the role of agriculture, husbandry and forestry on the management of landscapes and ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity should be defined.

#### **4.7 Sustainable management of forests**

The forests of Greece are mainly natural, with a high biodiversity, which is considered as the richest in Europe, including thousands of species of fauna and flora. The most important functions of forests are the protection of soil from erosion and the enrichment of groundwater resources.

During the last decades the forest ecosystems degrade due to large development plans, urban development, and the lack of a binding physical planning framework. Furthermore, forest fires have increased during the last decade. Greek forests present a low production capacity but a high ecological value. Forestry, as an economic activity is not sustainable in its present form. In addition, the management quality and the protection of forests diminishes because of over-exploitation of woodcutting being the most characteristic example.

The targets of the National Strategy for the protection of forests are based on the sustainable management and protection of forests, which will balance the need for multiple and combined production of goods and utilities with the requirements for the protection of wildlife and the protective-environmental function of forest ecosystems.

*The basic sectors of action of the NSSD for Forests are:*

- *The integration of forest legislation*
- *The development of a new national strategy for forests*
- *The development of a national map for land use*
- *The settlement of land-ownership problems in Greece*
- *The development of a forest certification scheme*

## **5. ACTIONS AND MEASURES FOR FURTHER PROMOTING SOCIAL SOLIDARITY POLICIES**

*In today's transitional period, the social solidarity constitutes a substantial developmental priority, especially in our country, where the non-formal networks of social support are attenuating. The fifth step for setting up a NSSD is the determination of actions and measures that will be assembled in an integrated intervention programme and will promote the social solidarity policies.*

### **5.1 Exclusion from employment opportunities**

The access to labour market plays an important role to the equal participation issue, particularly due to the declining trend of the family-sized enterprises in the urban and agricultural sector. Recent developments in informatics might limit employment opportunities in sectors formerly considered secured, unless their action field is adequately and timely adapted. The employment strategy is analysed in the 2002 National Action Plan for the Employment, where incentives are given for raising the participation in the labour market, exploiting non-formal or flexible employment forms, limiting dual occupation and discouraging early retirements.

### **5.2 Enhancement of equal opportunities between men and women**

Women encounter serious problems in equal access to employment, due to their conflicting family and professional roles. This conflict can potentially lead to family crises, financial dependence from other family members, decreased incomes, and limited employment opportunities for the older groups. The equity policy, which among others embodies favourable provisions for the women retirement, is comprised of the following actions:

- Integration of sexes dimension in all policies
- Attenuation of the margin between sexes
- Reconciliation of family and professional life

### **5.3 Exclusion from other public goods**

The family, or more generally non-formal solidarity, still holds a strong position in today's Greek society, supporting individuals in facing serious social and family crises, and providing additional social services' support, where necessary. Financial allowances and monetary relieves complement the incomes of less advantaged groups, such as the unemployed, aged and disabled citizens.

The housing problem affects mainly repatriated people, immigrants and gypsies, since house ownership in Greece is very high, particularly among the impoverished. The expecting fall in the interest rates will improve the housing access, however, the geographic seclusion and the subsequent inaccessibility to critical services and goods, remain problems to be addressed.

The National Health System was institutionalised in 1983, to ensure equal accessibility to medical care, establishing the operation of National Health Centers and Community Clinics in the country and the upgrading of the national hospital care system. Despite the equal and free access to pharmaceutical and hospital care, the diachronic improvement of the health indicators remains unevenly distributed among the various population groups.

The free access at all levels of Education, from the kindergarten to university, constitutes a basic strategic goal, providing equal opportunities to all citizens.

#### **5.4 Prevention of exclusion risk**

The prevailing of the informatics and the new reformed economy, sets at risk certain skills that might be rendered obsolete. To prevent this profession crisis, the young work force should be trained and occupied in positions that require familiarisation with the speeding learning society.

#### **5.5 Actions to protect vulnerable population groups**

In certain population groups, an original disadvantage may lead to vicious circle of exclusion and the stabilisation of a disfavoured position in multiple sectors simultaneously. In these cases, a more specific action plan is required to diminish or aggravate the original exclusion source.

For example, in the case of *geographical remote areas*, the modern technology and the infrastructure works coupled with concerted actions could effectively address the impacts and mitigate the original problematic source. Instant intervention mechanisms, after *serious natural disaster events* could extenuate the risk of disrupting the social tissue, thus causing permanent sources of social problems. People with *cultural particularities*, such as the gypsies, should be given the right to be different without baring social and financial deprivations.

Special attention should also be given to *immigrants*, three groups of which have been arriving at continuously growing numbers during the last decade:

- Greeks from Pontus, coming from the former Soviet Union; They were given Greek nationality, providing them a permanent settlement and avoiding any legal problems in their adjustment procedure.
- Immigrants from the Balkans; A legitimisation campaign has been initiated, in an effort to control the illegal, transient nature of their employment.
- Political refugees; They usually come from Asia and are destined to other western countries, with limited therefore wish to be incorporated into our society.

## **6. THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION IN SECTORAL POLICIES**

*The promotion of actions for the integration of the environmental dimension in sectoral policies can be also beneficial for the economic and social pillar of sustainable development, through the increase of investments and the creation of additional job positions. Therefore, the sixth step for setting up a NSSD is the elaboration of integrated sectoral policies based on a balanced bridging of all three pillars of sustainable development that ensures maximum social benefits.*

### **6.1 Spatial policies (regional development, physical planning, urban planning)**

#### ***6.1.1 Policy for regional development and strategic physical planning***

Regional development policy in Greece aims mainly at providing development incentives and creating basic infrastructure, as one of the main tools for reducing inter-regional inequalities. Nevertheless these tools need to be directly linked to physical planning policies. The concept of strategic physical planning was absent in all policies after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Therefore, spatial development has been the result of various non-coordinated market forces and spatial policies. The recently adopted law on physical planning offers the opportunity for the promotion of a new strategic physical planning concept, covering various spatial scales and providing for the necessary institutional and regulatory framework.

### ***6.1.2 Policy for urban development and land policy***

Rural development - planning as well as urban development policies have been the weakest link among spatial policies in Greece, due to the weak planning and regulatory frameworks in place so far, that have resulted, in many cases, in land use conflicts, uncontrolled urban sprawl, landscape and environmental degradation. Land policy is also characterised by a low degree of utilisation of existing tools (eg transposition of building factor) as well as lack of use of emerging new tools (eg use of compensation offset mechanisms of economic and spatial character) and lack of coordination between competent authorities. These weaknesses had also several negative results in many other spatial policies.

## **6.2 Main objectives of the General Framework for Physical Planning and Sustainable Development (GFPPSD)**

The main objectives of the recent law for Physical Planning and Sustainable Development coincide with the 3 key goals of the Plan for the Development of Community Land of the NSSD (PDCL), that is promotion of economic and social cohesion, rational management and protection of natural resources and cultural heritage and promotion of an integrated and competitive regional development. In this framework, the newly introduced GFPPSD sets out 5 main objectives: spatial organisation of key national urban centres, spatial organisation of infrastructure networks of strategic importance, spatial organisation, specialisation and complementarity of productive sectors, spatial organisation of metropolitan areas, urban networks and mountainous, rural, coastal and island areas as well as other critical areas, conservation of rural areas and the rational use of natural resources and cultural heritage, and finally, geographic restructuring of the country, for the creation of viable administrative and development units at inter-regional level. These objectives aim not only at addressing challenges but also at utilising and benefiting from new opportunities linked to the further integration and enlargement of the European Union.

### ***6.2.1 Administrative reform***

The NSSD also provides for a spatial and administrative reform of the 13 Regions of the country to 8-10 new reinforced Regions, and aims at: spatial enlargement of small (population or spatially wise) and economically disadvantaged regions so that gradually face out inter-regional inequalities along the guiding principles of the European regional policy for social cohesion, adjustment to new challenges and opportunities for linkages and networking with the European, Balkan and Mediterranean space, reinforcement of the role of important regional centres that could acquire an international character and importance, through adequate linkages and networking and increased complementarity and inter-regional cooperation.

### ***6.2.2 Multi-centred urban structure and metropolitan centres***

The new proposed urban network combines increased competitiveness and development momentum of certain cities by diffusing development in a decentralised approach. The intended enhancement of infrastructures and the creation of new job positions will lead to the sustainable development of large regional urban centres, the enhancement of small and medium size centres as well as the addressing of problems encountered in industrialised urban centres (eg Lavrion, Patra, Syros, Halkida, Volos, Kozani). This scheme will be based on the promotion of cooperation networks, and the complementarity and spatial specialisation between urban centres. The intended new multi-centred structure will be further reinforced by the enlargement of regional and inter-regional role of certain dynamic urban centres which play the role of links, in a sustainable development perspectives, with other neighbouring regions, eg. the Mediterranean, Balkans and Black Sea, as well as by the diffusion of the momentum

of the metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki, as centres in a reformed services' approach.

This scheme for the sustainable development of urban centres by 2015 and the enhancement of quality of life, requires interventions for upgrading transport systems, increasing green zones in the urban grid, protecting the remaining urban ecosystems, reducing pollution, rehabilitating degraded sites and strictly controlling illegal buildings and urban sprawl through enhanced regulatory mechanisms. In this scheme, the basic objective is the qualitative upgrade and modernisation of the 2 metropolitan areas of Athens and Thessaloniki aiming at setting off their international role and promoting them to powerful and dynamic technological, business and transit centres within the European, Balkans, SE Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

### ***6.2.3 Land use planning and urban development***

Regarding urban development, the key objectives of the NSSD are: adoption of a "solid city" approach adapted to Greek particularities, reduction of urban sprawl with peri-urban settlements of low density and low integration potential and promotion of a new urban development model. Regarding the non-urban and rural areas, the key objectives are: regulation and abatement of illegal and uncontrolled urban sprawl outside the existing town Master plans as well as planning and clear definition of land use zoning. To this end, the establishment of organised sites for receiving and supporting trade, manufacturing and husbandry activities as well as the reduction of diffused tourism activity will play a decisive role.

### ***6.2.4 Urban centres' governance***

The radical restructuring of governance system in metropolitan centres through the promotion of institutions for an increased metropolitan liability, democratic and participatory urban governance is also a key prerequisite, aiming at addressing the problems of social exclusion, unemployment, urban poverty, criminality and violence.

## **6.3 Citizens' society**

The key objectives set out in the NSSD, are: promotion of transparent and participatory processes including all social stakeholders, implementation of the Aarhus Convention principles, promotion of education, dissemination of information, awareness raising and mobilisation of all social partners.

## **6.4 Energy sector**

Energy intensity rates have been very high in Greece, especially over the last decade, and are expected to further increase following the increase of quality of life, even though energy consumption in Greece is still among the lowest in EU. Additionally, the energy production system in Greece has been characterised by the use of traditional fuels, mainly domestic lignite used for power production.

In this respect, the key objectives of the NSSD are: to decrease energy intensity and to decouple it from economic growth and to introduce RES and cleaner traditional fuels in the energy and fuel mix. The actions promoted to that end, are, inter alia: rational use and conservation of energy focusing mainly on the industrial and building sectors, promotion of cogeneration, further promotion of the use of natural gas in the secondary and tertiary sectors, dynamic increase of RES's share so as to reach 20% of power production by 2010, upgrading and extension of electricity networks focusing mainly on island areas. The economic instruments that will be used, on the basis of the "polluter pays" principle, will aim at internalising external costs and facing out market distorting phenomena. Moreover, new effective mechanisms for the increase of private investments and the regulation of the energy consumption of producers and consumers coupled with information and technical support actions are also promoted.

## **6.5 Transport sector**

The increase in demand in the transport sector in Greece today accounts for 40% of total energy consumption and a continuously increasing share in greenhouse gas emissions and noise levels, like in most other EU countries. Even though transportation demand in Greece is below the 40% of EU average, the need for decoupling transportation from economic growth is still a major challenge. To this end, a series of interventions aiming mainly at reducing air pollution (e.g. the renewal of passenger cars' fleet, the introduction of bus lanes, the extension of the lines etc), have been introduced over recent decades in the metropolitan area of Athens with great success.

The NSSD aims at extending these measures and incorporating them in a long term planning scheme that will effectively manage the transportation system, along the directions of EU's Common Transport Policy. In this scheme, the intended actions, provide for, inter alia: development and extension of public transport infrastructure with special focus on the promotion of other transportation modules (train, metro and tram), upgrade and extend road networks for decreased traffic congestion and increased on-road safety, promotion of more environmentally friendly fuels and technologies (eg electric cars, use of fuel cells), promotion of rail and sea transports (eg short sea shipping), enhancement of traffic flows management with the introduction of more bus lanes, one-way streets and use of telematics, as well as introduction of measures for regulating the use of private passenger cars and the long-term change of behavioural and consumption patterns of drivers. These measures, coupled with awareness raising campaigns, public dialogues and information dissemination will additionally lead to an increased spatial and social cohesion, since special focus is given on the integration of all areas including disadvantaged ones (eg. mountainous and island regions) in a new viable transport system. The means for implementing this scheme will be provided mainly from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework.

## **6.6 Agriculture – Fisheries**

Agricultural sector represents a high share of GDP, employing more than 20% of the active population, with the majority of agricultural land situated at mountainous and disadvantaged regions. This has resulted, over recent decades, in the abandonment of mountainous areas, the intensification of cultivation of the fertile plains and consequently, an increase of pressures on the environment and an overshooting of soil's and ecosystems' carrying capacity. Greek agricultural policy has been significantly influenced by the European Common Agricultural Policy that had not been adequately integrated with environmental concerns and had as its main priority the increase of production. Even though agricultural activity in Greece has been less intensified than in other EU countries, the enhancement of productivity has been pursued through an increase in consumption of agrochemicals and fertilisers and a high degree of 'industrialisation' and automation of agricultural production. Since 1992 with the introduction of the amended Common Agricultural Policy and its complementary measures, there has been a slight shift in agricultural production in Greece which has been hampered by the lack of adequate funding. To address these issues, a Scheme for the Agricultural Development, along the directions of the amended EU Common Fisheries' Policy and the imminent Common Agricultural Policy will be promoted during the Greek Presidency of the EU in 2003.

The key objectives of the NSSD regarding the agricultural sector focus, inter alia, on streamlining economic, ecological, social and alimentary needs, increasing the 'multi-functionality' of the sector as well as promoting an integrated and sustainable development of rural areas. In this respect, the planned actions and measures include: promotion of best agricultural practices and more sustainable production patterns,

rational use of water resources aiming at ecosystems', water and soil conservation and desertification abatement, promotion of an integrated approach for the development of agricultural land complementing its multi-functionality, gradual reform of agricultural support and market distorting mechanisms, promotion of adequate economic instruments for internalising external costs, promotion of programmes of biological agriculture, fallow and biodiversity protection in hot spot areas of increased ecological value, promotion of information and awareness raising campaigns among farmers, upgrade farmers' social status and development of an integrated fisheries policy. Funds for implementing these measures will also be provided from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework.

### **6.7 Industrial sector**

The contribution of the industrial sector to environmental pressures is decreasing due to the lower degree of manufacturing expansion and the institutional changes that have been recently introduced aiming at a more effective use of natural resources. Nevertheless, specific measures have been envisaged for further enhancing the industrial sector's environmental performances aiming at increasing its competitiveness, income and employment prospects, as well as its access to markets with high purchasing power and environmental awareness, within the globalised economy and the European markets.

To this end, the key priorities for action of the NSSD, that aim mainly at a shift from an end-of-pipe approach to an increase of the proactive-preventive measures, include: organisational and operational actions aiming at enhancing the production patterns and the products' supply chains, actions for energy conservation and increase of energy efficiency in the industrial sector (eg promotion of cogeneration and streamlining of industrial technologies), diversification of the fuels' mix towards a more extensive use of RES, diversification of the products' and energy mix, promotion of an integrated product policy with innovative changes in the design, production, recycling and use of products.

Additionally, the Operational Programme "Competitiveness" of the Hellenic Ministry of Development, incorporated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework, also provides for: creation of new and extension of existing units for recycling, reuse and dismantling of solid material and waste, further promotion of environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS), promotion of pilot studies in key sectors for the identification of environmental costs and their internalisation in products' market prices, regular monitoring and assessment of the environmental performance of businesses with regard to their competitiveness and employment capacities and, finally, pilot introduction of new economic instruments (e.g. green taxation, voluntary agreements, systems for pollution cost accounting and emission trading etc). These measures will be complemented with communication awareness raising campaigns and adaptation of the industrial sector to the new legal and institutional framework.

### **6.8 Tourism sector**

The Greek tourism sector is built on the nation's rich natural and cultural heritage. After approximately 20 years of rapid growth, today the tourism business presents 6 % of GDP contributing significantly to employment and regional development. Even though tourist arrivals present an increasing trend on the long-run, income from the tourism business presents a decreasing trend. This is mainly attributed to the prevailing form of mass tourism that, inter alia, results in significant pressures on the environment. On the other hand, the most vulnerable regions to tourism pressures are the coastal and island areas that also present a high degree of environmental fragility and a high population density. This environmental degradation, due to the high

seasonal tourist activity in Greece, is mainly identified in the excessive number of roads leading to coastal zones, irrational energy and water consumption during the dry periods, high production of solid waste, lack of adequate wastewater treatment capacity etc.

A Programme for the Sustainable Development of Greek Coastal Zones and Islands providing for the guiding principles as well as the general and sectoral directions and approaches to zoning and integrate management, is already under implementation. In this context, a special Directive for the Sustainable Development of Coastal areas has also been developed. In this respect, the NSSD aims at the balanced integration of tourism activity in the natural environment according to its carrying capacity. More specifically, the NSSD provides for: effective management of mass tourism and reduction of pressures to local natural resources, diversification of tourism services and promotion of alternative forms of tourism (eg eco-tourism, agro-tourism, conference tourism) as well as development of adequate infrastructure integrated into the natural and human environment, through participatory processes. To this end, the implementation of a series of specific projects and interventions is already underway, in the framework of the Operational Programme “Competitiveness” of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework.

## **6.9 Employment**

In 2001, employment in the secondary and tertiary sector increased by a factor of 0.6% and 0.95% accordingly, with the percentages of waged workers and freelance workers increasing. Nevertheless total employment rates are stagnant with a slight decreasing trend due an overall decrease in employment in the primary sector, especially for women over 45, without accounting for the employment of immigrants in this sector. Other trends indicate a decrease in employment for the ages of 15-24 due to longer education periods and a general increase in the rate of entry of women into the labour force. Even though the gap between male and female participation in employment still remains wide, there has been a substantial reduction of the gap during 1995-2002. Moreover, in Greece, economic growth has been coupled with employment rates' growth and therefore phenomena such as “jobless growth” have not yet been identified in the national economy. Similarly, the increase of employment has not been followed by a decrease of wages and pensions and the majority of new job positions have been full-time and specialised.

Aiming at increasing employment rates, the NSSD provides for: setting the necessary institutional framework for addressing the problems encountered by the most vulnerable groups, increasing diversity in terms, types and duration of labour, supporting mainly women, for combining employment with family obligations, providing continuous training and education of workers aiming at equal opportunities, promoting business dexterity and subsidisation of employment (eg. reduction of contributions to social security funds for the low wage workers, reduction of employers' levies, reduction of VAT at labour-intensity activities, increase of tax-exemption ceilings), developing modern mechanisms for the support and identification of needs in the labour market and for the equal access to basic public goods, bridging local development with occupational needs for socially vulnerable groups and the active involvement of all social stakeholders in the stages of policy planning and implementation.

## 7. HORIZONTAL ACTIONS

*The achievement of environmental goals and the effective implementation of sectoral policies require the promotion of horizontal actions which encompass all financial sectors and facilitate the participation of social stakeholders.*

*Among the horizontal actions, the most significant are the actions for the promotion of “**economic instruments**” as well as the collection, management and dissemination of information. Information related to environmental issues, environmental impacts and the progress achieved in policy implementation are of paramount importance in formulating indicators, policy making and awareness raising.*

### 7.1 Economic instruments

One of the main reasons for environmental degradation is the unsuccessful pricing, which, in many cases, sends wrong signals to the market and does not incorporate the environmental cost. The NSSD aims at “getting the prices right” and at achieving a long-term change in consumption and production patterns, by introducing adequate economic instruments.

Greek government has already launched an “incentives’ policy” (subsidisation of businesses, taxation exemptions etc) in order to strengthen the introduction of environmental products and technologies in the market.

Moreover, Greece, supported by the EU, has launched the process for setting up a system for emissions’ trading in the context of Kyoto Protocol’s implementation. This system will provide for an effective emissions’ control mechanism and will facilitate the minimisation of implementation costs for the Greek economy.

### 7.2 Information collection and management

Information dissemination is one of the key objectives of the NSSD, which is analysed on three levels: information collection, information processing and information dissemination. The most significant parameters in these three levels are the environmental parameters, due to higher complexity of environmental data and the difficulties in environmental monitoring and measurements.

Information diffusion aims at supporting policy making, at national and international level, and increasing public awareness.

### 7.3 Institutional, administrative and other measurements

The successful implementation of the NSSD is ensured by the promotion of the necessary institutional and administrative reforms. In this direction, special attention is given to the following actions:

- *Transposition of the EU *acquis communautaire* into the national legal order; full and adequate incorporation and implementation of the EU legislation avoiding unnecessary delays in the process.*
- *Ratification of international Conventions; the majority of international conventions for the environment has already been signed and ratified by Greece (55%).*
- *Promotion of consenting institutions and mechanisms for enhancing the dialogue among stakeholders and achieving consensus on commonly accepted action programmes.*
- *Enforcement of environmental education and public dialogue with the long-term objective to achieve a radical change in production and consumption patterns.*

- *Development of modern Infrastructure of High Added Value* such as electronic commerce and energy networks that will promote the rational use of natural resources and improve the competitiveness among enterprises.
- *Elaboration of integrated programmes for the Sustainable Development of local authorities*; this challenge is effectively addressed through the increase of investments in infrastructure and staff training in local administration.
- *Provision of incentives and administrative support* for encouraging the investments in Technological Mainstreaming, upgrading human potential skills and reforming the internal organisation structures of businesses.

The successful implementation of the NSSD will also be based on the following key instruments:

- *Environmental Impact Assessment* for projects and activities, which is in place since 1990. Additional momentum to this effort will be given through the full implementation of the recently introduced “Inspectorate” system.
- *Strategic Environmental Assessment* for plans and programmes that aims at incorporating environmental concerns in planning.
- *International and bilateral cooperation* on environmental issues, through the enhanced participation of Greece in International Organisations (eg UN, OECD) and the further successful continuation of the Hellenic Bilateral Programme of Development Assistance and Cooperation, that aims at the promotion of sustainable development in partner countries, since 1997.