



Greek-German Relations in the Field of Green Energy

In recent years the EU has intensified its effort to address the challenge of climate change and environmental degradation. Greece's policies are aligned with European priorities as outlined in the 2019 National Energy and Climate Plan. Its ambitious strategy to extensively use renewable energy sources (RES) and proceed to decarbonization paves the way for synergies with Germany, a country with an excellent record in green energy and technological know-how. There are solutions that are in the interest of Athens and Berlin and are part of their common desire to radically and substantially reduce greenhouse gases and contribute to the transition to a low-emission economy as well as to an economic environment that will be resource-efficient and competitive in the post-COVID-19 era.

This essay examines Greek-German cooperation in the field of green energy. But it does not consider this cooperation as a new tendency. On the contrary, it journeys back to developments of the previous decade and shows that Greece and Germany have systematically elaborated on joint plans, either bilaterally or under the EU umbrella. In so doing, the analysis uses practical examples at the political and business level that have already yielded results and can multiply in the era of energy transition. **It demonstrates that Greek-German green energy synergies are of spill-over nature creating a multifaceted momentum of collaboration in Greece and beyond, from RES to waste management, the agri-food sector and innovation projects.** The essay concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic has not affected the relevant Greek-German strategies but has accelerated the process of coordination on a spirit of common European purposes towards sustainable development and economic recovery.

The EU has committed itself to a clean energy transition in order to contribute to fulfilling the goals of the Paris Agreement. It has thus set binding climate and energy targets for 2030, namely the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent, the increase of energy efficiency by at least 32.5 percent as well as of the share of renewable energy to at least 32 percent of EU energy use and the guaranteeing of at least 15 percent electricity inter-connection levels between neighboring member states.¹ It also envisages to become carbon free by 2050.² Greece's National Energy and Climate Plan, which was submitted to the European Commission in December 2019, is aligned with European priorities. Among other things, the plan sets goals for 2030 and stipulates for Greece to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent compared to 1990, shut down lignite power plants (by 2028), increase the share of renewable energy sources (RES) in energy consumption for it to reach at least 35 percent and achieve an improvement in energy efficiency by 38 percent.³

The wide scope of Greek-German economic relations cannot but encompass the possibility of synergies in the field of green energy. Greece's exit from the bailout in August 2018 and the international certainty about a four year long political stability period generated by the clear victory of New Democracy in the national election of July 2019 created new perspectives indeed.

In 2019, Greek-German trade volume exceeded €8 billion for the first time after 2009.⁴

In particular, German exports to Greece amounted at €6.076 billion and its imports from Greece reached €2.125 billion.⁵ The main German exports are chemical products, machinery and food, while the main imports from Greece are crude oil and food. For Greece, Germany (6,8 percent) was the second biggest destination market for its export after Italy (10.8 percent) and the first source of imports (11,1 percent) in 2019.⁶ Additionally, German companies are among the principal foreign investors in Greece as the two countries work closely together on infrastructure and renewable energies. Approximately 29,000 people are employed by the over 120 German companies operating.⁷

The Background

The momentum for Greek-German synergies in green energy is promising. Relevant bilateral collaboration is far from new, however. In July 2007, for example, Chancellor Angela Merkel met Premier Kostas Karamanlis in Athens and said that Greece was a reliable partner in discussions about the protection of the environment and RES under the then German EU Presidency.⁸ In her April 2014

¹ EU website, Summary of the Commission assessment of the draft National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/necp_factsheet_el_final.pdf, 2019.

² See more information on the European Green Deal at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en, December 2020.

³ EU website, National Energy and Climate Plan for Greece, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/el_final_necp_main_en.pdf, December 2019.

⁴ Die Welt website, 'DIHK Sieht Aufwind bei Handel mit Griechenland', available at: https://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/brennpunkte_nt/article206429775/DIHK-sieht-Aufwind-bei-Handel-mit-Griechenland.html, 9 March 2020.

⁵ Statistisches Bundesamt website, Foreign Trade: Ranking of Germany's Trading Partners in Foreign Trade (Final Results for 2019), available at: https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Economy/Foreign-Trade/Tables/order-rank-germany-trading-partners.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, 5 November 2020.

⁶ Enterprise Greece website, Greece's Trade (2019), available at: <https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/en/greece-today/why-greece/trade>, 2020.

⁷ Auswaertiges Amt website, Germany and Greece: Bilateral Relations, available at: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/greece/227936>, 29 October 2020.

⁸ Die Bundeskanzlerin website, 'Lösung für den Kosovo Finden', available at: <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/aktuelles/loesung-fuer-den-kosovo-finden-601790>, 20 July 2007.

visit to the Greek capital she also talked about RES with Prime Minister Antonis Samaras,⁹ whereas, on the same year, the Greek and German Ministries of Education inaugurated their partnership on research and developments, also on energy projects.¹⁰ On the whole, the Greek-German Assembly has fostered cooperation on new forms of energy by engaging the local sector.¹¹ For its part, the Greek-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry has facilitated business meetings, in particular the arrival to Greece of German companies with appetite to invest in solar and wind energy as well as environmental protection. In 2015, the Chamber called for Greece's RES policy plan to be reworked through public consultation procedures involving the participation of the state and all interested parties as a means of reinvigorating investor mobility and drawing new capital.¹²

In July 2016, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy, Sigmar Gabriel visited Greece hoping to intensify cooperation in renewable energy that was a 'key focus'.¹³ Five months later, in December, Greece and Germany signed the so-called Action Plan on Bilateral Cooperation that was a milestone in their relationship. In so doing, they reaffirmed

their cooperation on renewable energies aiming at developing pilot projects through which a future-oriented energy supply with high shares of renewable energies could be demonstrated. Greek islands not connected to the mainland power grid as well as public buildings were identified as initial pilot projects in the joint statement. Furthermore, the two countries agreed then to join hands on innovation by financing collaborative projects of applied research and development, inter alia in the energy sector.¹⁴

Among intensifying cooperation in the field of Green Energy, 24 new projects alone started in the first half of 2018.

As a result of the 2017 call for proposals on bilateral research and innovation, 24 projects started in the first half of 2018.¹⁵

Greece and Germany are making steps in the context of the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) of the EU Commission and the Technical Assistance Project for Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency (TARES+).¹⁶ They enjoy a fruitful technical assistance cooperation scheme in which the role of Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and

⁹ Bundesregierung website, Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Griechischen Ministerpräsidenten Antonis Samaras am 11. April 2014, available at: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenzen/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-dem-griechischen-ministerpraesidenten-antonis-samaras-am-11-april-2014-844872>, 11 April 2014.

¹⁰ Bundesministerium fuer Bildung und Forschung, 'Deutschland und Griechenland Forschen gemeinsam für die Zukunft', available at: <https://www.bmbf.de/de/deutschland-und-griechenland-forschen-gemeinsam-fuer-die-zukunft-321.html>, 30 December 2013.

¹¹ Deutsch-Griechische Versammlung website, 'Gemeinsam Gestalten' (Bericht der Deutsch-Griechischen Versammlung), available at: http://www.grde.eu/de/dgv/ueber_uns/Gemeinsam_Gestalten.pdf, Juli 2014.

¹² Energypress website, 'Greek-German Chamber Calls for Revised RES Plan to Boost Investment', available at: <https://energypress.eu/greek-german-chamber-calls-new-res-plan-boost-investment/>, 23 January 2015.

¹³ Bundesministerium fuer Wirtschaft und Energie website, 'Bundeswirtschaftsminister Gabriel Reist nach Athen', available at: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Pressemitteilungen/2016/20160630-gabriel-reist-nach-athen.html>, 30 June 2016.

¹⁴ Auswaertiges Amt website, Joint Statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, available at: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/161204-deu-grc-action-plan/285870>, 4 December 2016.

¹⁵ Bundesministerium fuer Bildung und Forschung website, Fields of Activity: Greece, available at: <https://www.internationales-buero.de/en/greece.php>, 2020.

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece website, Joint Communiqué - Greek-German Bilateral Action Plan: 3rd Meeting at State Secretary Level, Berlin, 12th December 2019, available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/news-announcements/joint-communique-greek-german-bilateral-action-plan-3rd-meeting-at-state-secretary-level-berlin-12th-december-2019.html>, 13 December 2019.

Energy remains critical because it acts as a strategic partner to the Greek Ministry of Environment and Energy. Both sides encourage further collaboration on transport, local added-value from enhanced cooperation in the circular economy as well as in energy production in local communities and energy efficiency, including the smart cities concept. The Hellenic Electricity Distribution Network Operator, the Greek Centre for Renewable Energy and Savings, the National Technical University Athens and the German Society for International Cooperation have been actively involved as stakeholders.¹⁷ Additionally, DIHK Service GmbH has acted as a company for the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry as well as for the German Chambers of Commerce Abroad in implementing 'Young Energy Europe' that designs tailor-made projects and provides vocational training.

Amidst its deep economic crisis, Greece passed important laws to promote renewables.

It is funded by the European Climate Initiative, a financial instrument of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), that seeks to promote climate cooperation within the EU in order to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and jointly promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement.¹⁸ The local

partner of DIHK Service GmbH in realizing 'Young Energy Europe' are Greece, Bulgaria, Czechia and Hungary.¹⁹ The kick-off meeting was organized in Athens in March 2018.²⁰

During the economic crisis that lasted for almost one decade Greece's endeavored to keep the European rhythm on RES. Law 3851/2010,²¹ for instance, accelerated the development of RES to deal with climate change and Law 4001/2011 incorporated into national legislation EU Directives on energy issues.²² Additionally, Law 4414/2016 revised the legal framework which governs the RES sector by introducing a new support scheme for power generation from RES and High Efficiency Co-Generation Heat and Power plants, through a market-based feed-in premium program. The objective was to foster the integration and participation of power stations in the electricity market in a more cost-benefit basis, relying less on high state feed-in-tariffs, to enhance the benefit of the society. Further to this, Law 4414/2016 articulated that new RES power plants would be remunerated and installed through tendering procedures.²³ It is also noted that the Central Economic Policy Council of Greece adopted the *National Circular Economy Strategy* in April 2018. This strategy was in line with the EU framework and prompted a more efficient management of resources and waste.²⁴

¹⁷ Bundesministerium fuer Wirtschaft und Energie website, Joint Declaration of Intent an Renewable Energy Cooperation between the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Environment and Energy of the Hellenic Republic, available at: https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/J-L/joint-declaration-renewable-energy-cooperation-germany-greek.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4, 1 July 2016.

¹⁸ More information on the European Climate Initiative is available on the website of Bundesministerium fuer Umwelt, Naturschutz und nukleare Sicherheit: <https://www.euki.de/>, 2020.

¹⁹ More information on the Young Energy Europe is available on its website: <https://young-energy-europe.eu/en/about-us/>, 2020.

²⁰ Young Energy Europe website, 'Kick-off in Athens – Young Energy Europe Starts with a Workshop for Companies in Greece', available at: <https://young-energy-europe.eu/en/kick-off-in-athens-young-energy-europe-starts-with-a-workshop-for-companies-in-greece/>, 21 March 2018.

²¹ See Law 3851/2010 in the Government Gazette, available at: http://www.rae.gr/site/file/categories_new/global_regulation/global_national/global_national_laws/N_3851_2010?p=file&i=0, 4 June 2010 (in Greek).

²² See Law 4001/2001 in the Government Gazette, available at: http://www.rae.gr/site/file/categories_new/global_regulation/global_national/global_national_laws/N_4001_2011?p=file&i=0, 22 August 2011 (in Greek).

²³ See information about Law 4414/2016 on the website of the Hellenic Association of Photovoltaic Companies, available at: https://helapco.gr/pdf/New_Greek_support_scheme_Aug2016.pdf, August 2016.

²⁴ The Greek Open Government Initiative website, Circular Economy, available at: http://www.opengov.gr/minenv/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/kykliki_oikonomia.pdf, February 2018 (in Greek).

In July 2018, Greece, under Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, went further and presented its *Growth Strategy for the Future* that made several references to energy. According to the document, the country would expand domestic energy market development and lower energy costs, while respecting climate change mitigation commitments, air quality targets and national and EU legislation. In order to achieve a RES penetration target of around 30 percent in the final gross energy consumption by 2030, the Greek government considered necessary to construct new power plants of that type to amount at around €3 billion until 2020 and more than €5.5 billion until 2030 and was determined to launch tenders. It expressed subsequently its decisiveness to simplify RES licensing processes, promote the development of autonomous island systems, explore the deployment of technologies beyond mainly solar and wind such as geothermal and biomass and revise the national special spatial plan.²⁵ The gradual energy transformation bore fruits.

The Renewables 2019 Global Status Report shows that Greece was among the top nine countries worldwide generating more than 20 percent (22 percent) of their electricity using solar photovoltaics and wind turbines in 2018.

Of this, solar photovoltaics accounted for 8.2 percent of total electricity generation in the country and the rest came from wind turbines.²⁶

A practical example of Greek-German cooperation in the new era was the 2017 decision of ABO Wind to become active in Greece. The year after, the German company founded the subsidiary ABO Wind Hellas that successfully participated in auctions organized by Regulatory Authority for Energy and won tariffs for five ready-to-build photovoltaic projects in Thessaly and Thrace.²⁷ Additionally, Juwi Hellas, already present in Greece since 2008 as a subsidiary of the Juwi Group based in Rhineland-Palatinate, benefit by reforms and new energy priorities in Greece and won at a 2019 auction that enabled it to construct the Kozani photovoltaic project with a size of 204 megawatt peak.²⁸ Also, Selecta Hellas, the subsidiary of German company Selecta One, started to build a production site for plants in Kavala, in the end of 2016. The facilities are heated by exploiting the geothermal resources of the area and young plants are exported to Italy.²⁹ Greek-German cooperation between companies was not limited in Greece but acquired an international character. In 2016, for instance, Hellenic Cables Group was awarded by the German electricity transmission system operator TenneT contracts for two turnkey projects in the North Sea for the design, manufacture, installation and protection of the offshore wind farm export cable systems under the seabed.³⁰

²⁵ Ministry of Development and Investments website, Greece: A Growth Strategy for the Future, available at: <http://www.mindev.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Growth-Strategy.pdf>, July 2018.

²⁶ Greek News Agenda website, 'REN21 GSR – Greece Among Top Renewable Energy Countries', available at: <https://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/topics/business-r-d/7010-ren21gsr-19>, 19 June 2019.

²⁷ ABO-Wind website, 'ABO Wind Builds Greek Solar Parks and Sells Project Rights in Spain and Argentina', available at: <https://www.abo-wind.com/en/media-center/press/2018-12-05.html>, 5 December 2018.

²⁸ Juwi website, 'Juwi's 204MW Solar Park Wins at Auction in Greece', available at: <https://www.juwi.com/news/artikel/artikelansicht/juwis-204mw-solar-park-wins-at-auction-in-greece>, 23 April 2019.

²⁹ Selecta One website, Selecta Hellas – Production Site, available at: https://www.selecta-one.com/en/company/production_sites/details/Selecta_Hellas/09974297276/, 2020.

³⁰ Hellenic Cables website, 'Hellenic Cables Group: Two Contracts with German Electricity Transmission System Operator TenneT for Offshore Wind', available at: <https://www.cablel.com/Article/108/el/omilos-ellinika-kalodia-sunapsi-duo-sumvaseon-me-ti-germaniki-etairia-diaxeirisis-sustimaton-metaforas-ilektrikis-energeias-tennet-gia-upovruxies-diasundeseis-metaforas-ilektrikis-energeias-gia-uperaktia-aiolika-parka>, 14 April 2016 (in Greek).

Boosting the Greek-German Partnership

As Greece's Prime Minister since July 2019 Kyriakos Mitsotakis decided to speed-up the country's green development. In so doing, he considers Germany a key partner. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy offers technical support to the Greek Ministry for Environment and Energy.

Germany provides crucial technical support to Hellas in realizing "smart cities"- goals and also in transposing relevant EU directives into Greek law.

It is also promoting the usage of renewable energy in the Greek transport sector, facilitates the integration of clean and intelligent energy technologies into building and urban planning and transposes relevant requirements of EU directives into Greek law.³¹

Greece interest in further strengthening economic ties with Germany in the field of green energy was publicly expressed during Mitsotakis' visit in Berlin in August 2019. In the press conference with Chancellor Merkel the Premier said after a decade of crisis, Greece was looking to the future with confidence and was 'preparing, together with Germany, a large investment program [placing] emphasis on green economy and the protection of the environment'.³² Specifically, he envisaged to elaborate on an investment plan on productive activities that are environmentally friendly such as renewable energy, waste management and

electricity. In her remarks, the Chancellor saw new opportunities for German companies prompted by the privatization and green agenda of the Greek government. She also said that the German know-how on the legal framework the transition to new types of energy should be achieved, might also be useful.³³

Greece's commitment to green energy under the new government soon yielded results. Mitsotakis set the tone of action while speaking at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019 where he announced the closure of all lignite power plants by the end of 2028³⁴ as well as at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2020, where he supported the ambitious European Green Deal.³⁵ The National Energy and Climate Plan, as already mentioned, epitomized the political will. In the interim, Greece and Germany started preparations for the bilateral economic forum that would take place in Berlin in March 2020 – in line with what Mitsotakis and Merkel had agreed in their first meeting in the German capital in August 2019. Against this backdrop, Economy Minister Peter Altmeier welcomed his Greek counterpart Adonis Georgiadis in December 2019. The two ministers also talked about the 2020 Thessaloniki International Fair, where Germany would be the honorary country.³⁶

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 seriously impacted on governmental agendas. The September Thessaloniki International Fair could not be organized – with the exception of some virtual meetings. But Premier Mitsotakis travelled to Berlin on 9 March as scheduled, only a few days

³¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit website, Project Description: Renewable Energies and Energy Efficiency, available at: <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/38890.html>, 2020.

³² Prime Minister of Greece website, Statement by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis Following his Meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2019/08/29/23047>, 29 August 2019.

³³ Die Bundeskanzlerin website, Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Ministerpräsidenten der Hellenischen Republik, Mitsotakis, available at: <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/aktuelles/pressekonferenz-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-und-dem-ministerpraesidenten-der-hellenischen-republik-mitsotakis-1665540>, 29 August 2019.

³⁴ Prime Minister of Greece website, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' Address at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2019/09/27/23040>, 27 September 2019.

³⁵ Prime Minister of Greece website, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis Participates at a Panel Discussion about Striking a Green New Deal at the World Economic Forum in Davos, available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2020/01/23/23079>, 23 January 2020.

³⁶ Bundesministerium fuer Wirtschaft und Energie website, 'Bundeswirtschaftsminister Altmaier Trifft griechischen Wirtschaftsminister Georgiadis', available at: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Pressemitteilungen/2019/20191212-altmaier-trifft-griechischen-wirtschaftsminister-georgiadis.html>, 12 December 2019.

before lockdowns were imposed in Europe. In his speech at the German-Hellenic Economic Forum he encouraged German companies to further expand their presence in Greece. He also presented the new National Energy and Climate Plan and gave details about the delignitization process.³⁷ For her part, Chancellor Merkel described the multifaceted nature of Greek-German relations and congratulated Greece's Public Power Corporation and the German RWE for signing a memorandum of understanding.³⁸

Decarbonisation is another important element in bilateral collaboration and coordination.

The Forum, which included panel sessions about RES and energy efficiency, gave the opportunity to representatives from companies of both countries to exchange views,³⁹ while Minister Altmeier illustrated Greece as an 'interesting place for investments'.⁴⁰

The memorandum of understanding signed by Greece's Public Power Corporation and RWE that was referred to by the Chancellor demonstrates the interest of the two companies in exchanging knowhow in decarbonization as well as in the

development and implementation of renewable energy projects in Greece. The two parties agreed to concentrate on wind and solar projects and to consider a cooperation in the phase-out of coal in Greece by 2028.⁴¹ RWE's CEO Rolf Martin Schmitz had already met Premier Mitsotakis in Athens in October 2019,⁴² and the Greek daily *Hi Kathimerini* reported that the focus of the German company would be the plan of Greece's Public Power Corporation for the installation of a photovoltaic park in Ptolemaida and the transformation of some lignite-fired electricity plants in the region of western Macedonia into units burning biomass.⁴³ RWE representatives visited Greece in September 2020 to examine practical details and visit sites.⁴⁴

³⁷ Prime Minister of Greece website, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' Speech at the German – Hellenic Economic Forum 'Vision & Investment Opportunities', available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2020/03/09/23519>, 9 March 2020.

³⁸ Die Bundeskanzlerin website, Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel im Rahmen der deutsch-griechischen Wirtschaftskonferenz am 9. März 2020 in Berlin, available at: <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/suche/rede-von-bundeskanzlerin-merkel-im-rahmen-der-deutsch-griechischen-wirtschaftskonferenz-am-9-maerz-2020-in-berlin-1729382>, 9 March 2020.

³⁹ The agenda of the German-Hellenic Economic Forum is available at: https://www.exportinitiative-gesundheitswirtschaft.de/EIG/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Anlagen/agenda-griechenlandforum.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2, 9 March 2020.

⁴⁰ Bundesministerium fuer Wirtschaft und Energie, 'Bundesminister Altmaier Eröffnet Deutsch-griechisches Wirtschaftsforum', 'available at: <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Pressemitteilungen/2020/20200309-bundesminister-altmaier-eroeffnet-deutsch-griechisches-wirtschaftsforum.html>, 9 March 2020.

⁴¹ Greece's Public Power Corporation, Memorandum of understanding between PPC and RWE, available at: <https://www.dei.gr/en/anakoinwseis/xrimatistiriaka-etairikes-prakseis-katavoli-merismatos-ka-xrimatistiriakes-anakoinwseis-2020/mnimonio-sunergasias-metaksu-dei-kai-rwe/param/t/ECPrint.aspx>, 9 March 2020.

⁴² Gerd Hoehler, 'So Will Griechenland Investoren Gewinnen', available at: <https://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/gesetzspaket-so-will-griechenland-investoren-gewinnen/25148052.html?ticket=ST-18282911-jl7fcV0wsWEVGLpvbN9C-ap1>, 24 October 2019.

⁴³ Chrysa Liaggou, 'PPC Signs MoU with RWE on Green Energy', available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/250423/article/ekathimerini/business/ppc-signs-mou-with-rwe-on-green-energy>, 10 March 2020.

⁴⁴ Chrysa Liaggou, 'RWE Goes to Western Macedonia for a Big Green Investment', available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/business/1094129/sti-d-makedonia-i-germaniki-rwe-gia-ti-megali-prasini-ependysi/>, 1 September 2020 (in Greek).

Beyond synergies between Greece's Public Power Corporation and RWE, Juwi Hellas and the Hellenic Petroleum Groups signed a purchase agreement for the portfolio of photovoltaic plants in Kozani, in February 2020.⁴⁵ The acquisition was completed a few months later, in October.⁴⁶ Furthermore, a consortium composed of Siemens and Terna won a tender to design, supply and install two converters and a substation for the electrical interconnection between Crete and Attica. The result was announced by Greece's Independent Transmission Operator in March 2020.⁴⁷ In addition, the German plant manufacturer Weltec Biopower started building a biogas plant in Veria in the summer of 2020.⁴⁸ It is also worth-mentioning that BMW sales of battery electric vehicles represented 55 percent of total sales in Greece from 2014 until 2019, whereas the relevant percentage of its sales of its Plug-in Hybrid cars was 50 percent of the total in the same period.⁴⁹

The island of Astypaleia will become a cutting-edge showcase for innovation, energy autarchy and in this particular cooptation with Volkswagen, autonomous driving.

Volkswagen Group will provide the cars for the project, whereas the Greek government will install wind and solar power systems to cover a large part of the electricity demand for households, companies and traffic.⁵⁰ Premier Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Volkswagen CEO Herbert Diess took part in the virtual ceremony. While the latter focused on the nature of the project, the former laid emphasis on the concept of smart mobility and the usage of RES and hailed the Greek-German partnership logic that will benefit Astypalaia and its citizens.⁵¹

Perspectives for the Future

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated uncertainty on several fronts. But it has not affected the decisiveness of the Greek government to carry out its national energy and climate change plan. In May 2020, the Greek parliament voted for a new environmental law (4685/2020) that simplifies, inter alia, the process of granting licenses to generate electricity from RES. Prerequisites for permits for that type of projects have been removed or eased according to their capacity and incentives to build solar and wind farms are provided.⁵² Greece counts on its potential green development to secure funds

⁴⁵ Juwi website, 'Juwi and the Hellenic Petroleum Group Sign Purchase Agreement for 204-Megawatt Photovoltaic Park in Greece', available at: <https://www.juwi.com/news/artikel/artikelansicht/juwi-and-the-hellenic-petroleum-group-sign-purchase-agreement-for-204-megawatt-photovoltaic-park-in-greece>, 14 February 2020.

⁴⁶ Hellenic Petroleum website, 'Completion of PV Power Acquisition in Kozani', available at: <https://m.helpe.gr/en/media-center/press-releases/news-oloklhrwsh-ejagoras-fwtooltakoy-parkoy-sthn-kozanh-diasfalish-xrhmatodoshs-mesw-neas-omologiakhs-ekdoshs>, 6 October 2020.

⁴⁷ Greece's Independent Power Transmission Operator website, 'Selection of Contractor for the Converter Stations of the Crete – Attica Interconnection', available at: <https://www.admie.gr/en/nea/deltia-typoy/selection-contractor-converter-stations-crete-attica-interconnection>, 30 March 2020.

⁴⁸ Weltec Biopower website, 'Weltec Biopower Builds Biogas Plant for Greek Abattoir', available at: https://www.weltec-biopower.com/fileadmin/user_upload/weltec/News/2020/pdf_englisch/Press_Release-WELTEC-BIOWATER-No_3-20.pdf, May 2020.

⁴⁹ Dimitris Mezartasoglou, Costis Stampolis, Alexandros Koutroumpousis and Alexandros Perellis, The Greek Energy Sector: Annual Report 2020, available at: https://www.iene.gr/articlefiles/iene_meleti_2020_final.pdf, October 2020 (in Greek).

⁵⁰ Volkswagen website, 'Astypalea: Smart, Sustainable Island', available at: <https://www.volkswagenag.com/de/news/stories/2020/11/astypalea-smart-sustainable-island.html>, 4 November 2020.

⁵¹ Prime Minister of Greece website, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' Speech at the Presentation of the MoU for the 'Smart & Sustainable Island' Investment Project, Undertaken by Volkswagen in Astypalaia', available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2020/11/04/25177>, 4 November 2020.

⁵² Kathimerini website, 'The Process to Issues Licenses for RES Parks is Being Simplified', available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/local/1091616/aplopoieitai-i-ekdosi-perivallontikon-adeion-gia-stathmoys-ape/>, 11 August 2020.

from the Next Generation EU recovery instrument and the Just Transition mechanism.⁵³

More than half of the €32 billion it would receive from the EU recovery fund, Greece aims to spend on green and digital transformation projects.⁵⁴

The autumn 2020 *Growth Plan for the Greek Economy* prepared by Professors Christophoros Pissarides, Dimitri Vayanos and Nikos Vettas reiterates the importance of green energy and the circular economy, while it also makes proposals about aligning the improvement of the agri-food sector with climate change.⁵⁵ Against this backdrop, Greece and Germany are expected to further advance their economic relationship by exploring new partnership opportunities. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kostas Fragogiannis has said that KfW and the European Investment Bank have expressed an interest in financing energy projects in Greece.⁵⁶ He has also referred to a new RES investment RES worth of €268 million that has been included in the strategic investments law of the country and will lead to the construction of a 70 MW solar thermal power plant in Crete to cover energy needs

of 50,000 households.⁵⁷ Within the scope of the important projects of common European interest (IPCEIs) both sides are facilitating networking between their companies and envisage to be part of European value chains. Connected, clean and autonomous vehicles, hydrogen technologies and systems and the low-carbon industry are among those projects.⁵⁸

Ongoing Greek-German discussions on energy storage, recycling and waste management are indicative of the good bilateral climate as well as of perspectives for the future. The adaptation of Greece's new *Waste Management National Plan* offers new opportunities.⁵⁹ It has already attracted the attention of German companies.⁶⁰ In the interim, the Bilateral Action Plan is progressing. The fourth meeting at Secretary State level took place from 8 until 10 December 2020.⁶¹ Greece succeeded, with the significant support and guidance of German authorities, to participate as a direct participant in the IPCEI EuBatIn European Battery Innovation promoting a circular economy from material to recycling, which is currently under notification to the European Commission.

⁵³ See, for example, Giannis Maniatis, *Green Development: An Answer to the Environmental Crisis*, available at: https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Maniatis_final.pdf, November 2020 (in Greek).

⁵⁴ Reuters website, 'Greece to Spend Big Part of EU Recovery Funds on Green, Digital Projects', available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-greece-economy/greece-to-spend-big-part-of-eu-recovery-funds-on-green-digital-projects-idUKKBN2851UX>, 25 November 2020.

⁵⁵ Christophoros Pissarides, Dimitri Vayanos and Nikos Vettas (eds.), *Growth Plan for the Greek Economy*, available at: <https://government.gov.gr/schedio-anaptixis-gia-tin-elliniki-ikonomia/>, November 2020 (in Greek).

⁵⁶ Capital.gr website, 'KfW and the European Investment Bank Show an Interest in Greece', available at: <https://www.capital.gr/oikonomia/3436599/endiateron-apo-kfw-kai-europaiki-ependutiki-trapeza-gia-tin-ellada>, 11 March 2020 (in Greek).

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece website, *Speech of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Kostas Fragogiannis at an Online Event of the Hellenic-German Chamber of Commerce*, available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/news-announcements/speech-of-deputy-minister-of-foreign-affairs-kostas-fragogiannis-at-an-online-event-of-the-hellenic-german-chamber-of-commerce-13-october-2020.html>, 13 October 2020.

⁵⁸ EU website, 'Industrial Policy: Recommendations to Support Europe's Leadership in Six Strategic Business Areas', available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6204, 5 November 2019.

⁵⁹ The Greek Open Government Initiative website, *Waste Management National Plan*, available at: <http://www.opengov.gr/minenv/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2020/08/%CE%95%CE%A3%CE%94%CE%91-%CE%94%CE%99%CE%91%CE%92%CE%9F%CE%A5%CE%9B%CE%95%CE%A5%CE%A3%CE%97-6-8-2020.pdf>, August 2020.

⁶⁰ Hi Kathimerini website, 'German Companies Show Interest in Greece's Waste', available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/pages/dromoi-anaptixis-ellada-kai-germania/561143659/endiateron-apo-germanikes-etaireies-gia-ta-ellinika-aporrimmata/>, 1 November 2020.

⁶¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece website, *Greek-German Bilateral Action Plan*, available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/anakoinoseis/2020/Greek-German%20Action%20Plan%20-%204th%20Round%20-%20Joint%20Communiqu%C3%A9%202020.pdf>, 10 December 2020.



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