



CULTURAL PROFILE

Greece

Figures, facts and a cultural pattern approach





Intercultural Competences in Vocational
Training. Transnational Strategic Partnership
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Greece

Capital:

Athens

Geographical size:

131 957 km²

Population:

10 858 018 (2015)

Population as % of total EU:

2.1 % (2015)

Gross domestic product (GDP): €

176.023 billion (2015)

Official EU language(s): Greek

Political system: parliamentary republic

EU member country since: 1 January 1981

Seats in the European Parliament: 21

Currency: Euro. Member of the eurozone since 1 January 2001

Schengen area member?: Yes, Schengen Area member since 1 January 2000.

Presidency of the Council: Greece has held the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU 5 times between 1983 and 2014¹.

Cultural Profile

Culture Name: Greek

Alternative Names: Hellenic, Romaic

Language: Greek

Socio-economic Identity: South Europe, Mediterranean

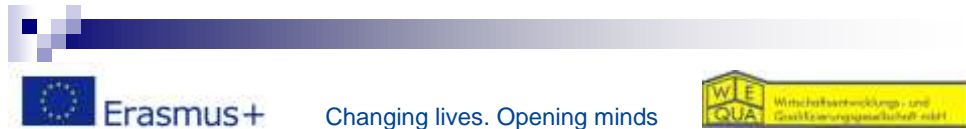


¹ https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece_en, 15.03.2017



1. CULTURAL PROFILE

1.1 THE CULTURAL DIMENSION THEORY OF HOFSTEDE



Culture

- Culture is composed by visible and invisible elements – Hofstedes cultural onion



In the past the term culture and its' meaning were explored from different points of view. A well-known, widely taught approach origins from Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist. In the 1970 s little research about cultural differences had been done. At the same time there was a strong need to understand and cope with those differences due to the worldwide expansion of companies and organizations. In this time Hofstede conducted large scale studies on IBM employees and subsidiaries to understand differences on "work related values" depending on the national context. From his observations he developed his concept of 4, later 6, different cultural dimensions

representing "preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish countries (rather than individuals) from each other". In this sense he defines "national culture as the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another". According to his theory national culture is represented in values, rituals, heroes and symbols of a nation while values are deemed to be the deepest level, thus changing only slowly. Cultural differences in organizations are visible as practices. See further down below to check, how Hofstede's 6 cultural dimensions can be characterized.



According to Hofstede each nation scores with a certain number on a scale from 1 to 120 (or recalculate on Hofstede's website from 1 to 100). Hofstede puts a strong emphasize on the fact that cultural differences only become visible when comparing different national cultures ("culture can be only used meaningfully by comparison"). His systematic framework for assessing and differentiating national cultures kept being tested and elaborated until nowadays. Although sometimes being perceived critically and old-fashioned Hofstede's cultural dimensions can be a useful instrument in the VET framework to understand cultural differences. In practice when applying it to work related contexts they can be used to explain relations among colleagues, hierarchies in organizations, how rules are set and followed or how organizations are led strategically. Especially for young people entering the world of work in another country those insights can be of great value to understand and adapt to "new" working habits.

The information you will find in the following paragraphs are taken of publications of Geert Hofstede². You will find all relevant sources at the end.

Now go and discover the specifics of your own country and compare to your country of destination:

www.geert-hofstede.com

Now that you know where you stand, the following tips³ might be useful once you immerse in the culture of your destination country:

² <https://geert-hofstede.com/>

³ Quoted from:
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm



Acknowledge a leader's status. As an outsider, you may try to circumvent his or her power, but don't push back explicitly.

Be aware that you may need to go to the top for answers.

High PDI

Delegate as much as possible.

Ideally, involve all those in decision making who will be directly affected by the decision.

Low PDI

PDI = Power distance index: to what extent do people accept that power is distributed unequally among them.

Acknowledge individual accomplishments.

Don't mix work life with social life too much.

Encourage debate and expression of people's own ideas.

High IDV

Wisdom is important.

Suppress feelings and emotions that may endanger harmony.

Avoid giving negative feedback in public.

Saying "No" can cause loss of face, unless it's intended to be polite.

Low IDV

IDV = Individualism vs. collectivism: to what extent social bonds are characterized by the focus on collectives ("we") or individuals ("I")



<p>Be aware of the possibility of differentiated gender roles.</p> <p>A long-hours culture may be the norm, so recognize its opportunities and risks.</p> <p>People are motivated by precise targets, and by being able to show that they achieved them either as a group or as individuals.</p>	High MAS	<p>Success is more likely to be achieved through negotiation and collaboration.</p> <p>Avoid an "old boys' club" mentality, although this may still exist.</p> <p>Workplace flexibility and work-life balance may be important.</p>	Low MAS
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MAS = Masculinity vs. femininity: represents the preferences in society for "toughness" (achievement, heroism etc.) or "tenderness" (caring, cooperation etc.)

<p>Be clear and concise about expectations and goals, and set clearly defined parameters.</p> <p>Recognize that there may be unspoken "rules" or cultural expectations you need to learn.</p> <p>Recognize that emotion, anger and vigorous hand gestures may simply be part of the conversation.</p>	High UAI	<p>Ensure that people remain focused, but don't create too much structure.</p> <p>Titles are less important, so avoid "showing off" your knowledge or experience.</p> <p>Respect is given to those who can cope under all circumstances.</p>	Low UAI
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UAI = Uncertainty avoidance index: to what extent are people able to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity

Behave in a modest way.
Avoid talking too much about yourself.
People are more willing to compromise, yet this may not always be clear to outsiders; this is certainly so in a culture that also scores high on PDI.

High LTO

Sell yourself to be taken seriously.
People are less willing to compromise as this would be seen as weakness.
Flattery empowers.

Low LTO

LTO = Long term orientation versus short term orientation: to what extend societies give priority to preserving what has been established in the past (traditions, norms) or facing the challenges of the future and prepare for those

Don't take life too seriously.
Encourage debate and dialogue in meetings or decision making.
Prioritize feedback, coaching and mentoring.
Emphasize flexible working and work-life balance.

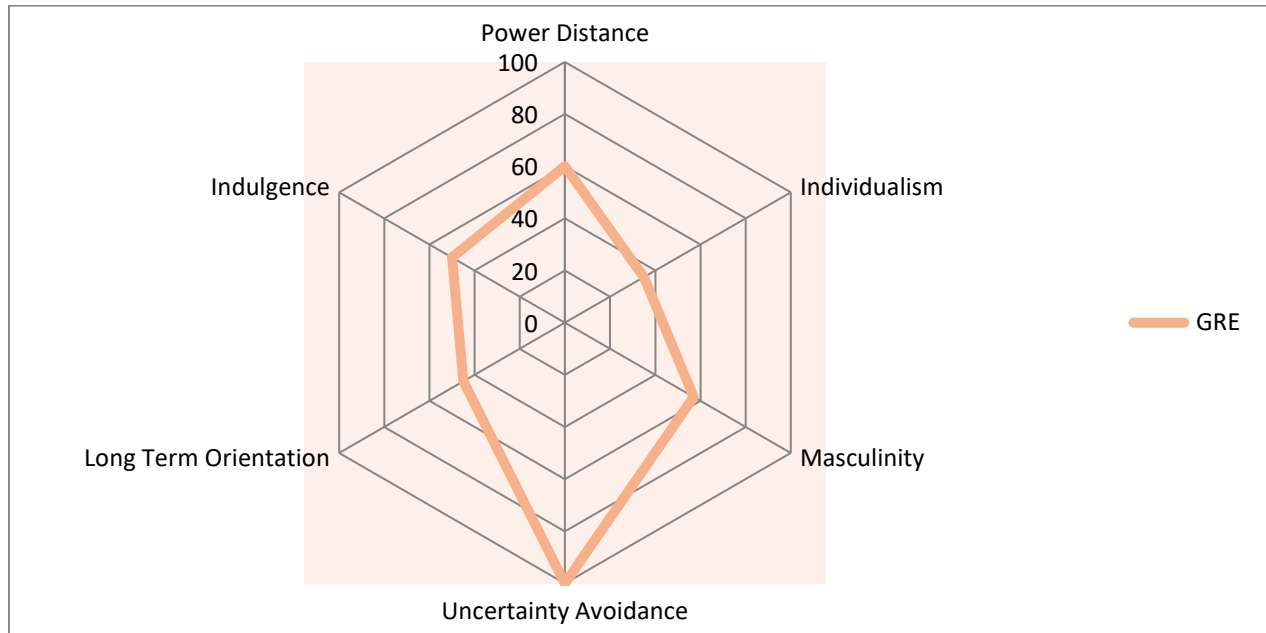
High IND

Avoid making jokes when engaged in formal sessions. Instead, be professional.
Only express negativity about the world during informal meetings.

Low IND

IND = Indulgence vs. restraint: to what extend a society allows for or restricts opportunities for people to enjoy life.

1.2 GREECE IN THE HOFSTEDE WORLD



“At 60 Greece has an intermediate score, but it indicates a slight tendency to the higher side of PDI – i.e. a society that believes hierarchy should be respected and inequalities amongst people are acceptable. The different distribution of power justifies the fact that power holders have more benefits than the less powerful in society. In Greece it is important to show respect to the elderly (and children take care for their elderly parents). In companies there is one boss who takes complete responsibility. One should never forget that in the mind of a Greek all other cultures in the Western world inherited something from the ancient Greek culture. Status symbols of power are very important in order to indicate social position and “communicate” the respect that could be shown.” (Hofstede – source below)

Greece has the highest UAI score (100). In such societies strict ethical norms and rules are respected. The degree of intolerance towards non-traditional is very high. In these cultures there is a strong emotional need for rules, even if the rules don't work. There is also high suicide rate, more alcoholics and road accidents, strong emotion, even aggressiveness and anxiety. In these countries, companies focus on tactics and formal rules, rather than strategic objectives. In the workplace employees are experiencing more stress, their initiative is weak and they avoid risks. They work harder in a team and have a negative attitude towards change.

According to Hofstede “At 57 Greece is a medium ranking Masculine society – success oriented and driven. Men consider it a personal honour to take care for their family. In collectivistic and masculine



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cultures, such as Greece, the success of a member of a family gives social value to the whole in-group; when meeting a new person a foreigner should not be surprised by Greeks speaking of the important and successful people they know in town.” Greece is closer to the masculine type for which the challenges, competition and recognition in the workplace are essential.

Technology, as the sum of human artefacts that can help face nature’s uncertainties, and the enforcement of the law, as the official means of reducing social uncertainties, are not very well developed in Greece. Religion remains a powerful means of coping with the inherent uncertainty of life in the face of which individuals seek advice from a spiritual advisor.⁴

⁴ Source:
http://users.uoa.gr/~aprotopapas/CV/pdf/Panagiopotoulou_a%20culture-specific%20dimension_final.pdf



1.3 UNDERSTAND GREECE FROM EXAMPLES

Example 1 – Useful to know when doing business

Taking the scores for Greece into account there are a few things a person should do before trying to do business. 1) Status symbols of power are very important in order to indicate social position and “communicate” the respect that could be shown. This means you should treat the ones who hold more power with more respect. 2) Show respect to elderly people. 3) Follow all rules that are laid out. 4) Greet everyone formally. 5) Manage your time in an appropriate manner.⁵

Example 2 – UAI

Related to their high UAI Greek people are said to be uncomfortable with change and uncertainty. If something is not broke, you do not have to fix it yet. They hold on to the same things, until it is necessary to change it.

⁵ Source:

<https://lauraglisson.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/greece-in-hofstedes-value-dimensions/>



2. Greek Society & Culture

Photo by Anny Kalfa

Cultural Orientation

Greek culture and identity reflect the shared History with the Balkan people and the successive occupation by the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Frankish, Venetian and Ottoman empires. Greeks maintain many cultural traits and habits from the East and -due to the sunny weather-the South. Many traditional activities take place outside and some say that the Greek tendency to “skip” work whenever is possible must be attributed to the good weather and mood. However, the last decades and because of the growing effects of globalization and the economic crisis Greeks -especially young people-become more and more “Western” since they tend to adapt to foreign habits concerning food, entertainment, work, technology etc., so that they distance themselves from their tradition.

The Greek population historically has been mobile. Over the last century, internal migration has been from rural to urban settlements. In this process, hundreds of old villages were abandoned while new ones were founded. However, almost half of Greece’s population along with immigrants and refugees live in or around the capital of Athens. This strongly centralized settlement can be explained by the concentration of economic opportunities, governmental functions and educational and health facilities in Athens. It is worth mentioning though that in these last years of the economic crisis many young people try to find their place in rural area and start producing biological products (eg. Soaps out of olive oil, plants without pesticides etc.).





Photo from <https://pixabay.com/el/>

Greece is known for the sunny weather- almost throughout the year-, the blue sea and the friendly beaches, the beautiful islands which have a unique and distinctive landscape and architecture, especially the ones in Cyclades with their low, white roofed houses and churches. Apart from that, Greece has a long history and magnificent samples of the ancient styles of architecture (eg. The Parthenon, the Erechteion), sculpture and painting. Many Art students come every summer from all around the world to visit ancient monuments, like the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounio and make sketches of the temples or the statues. Others are interested in knowing the place where Philosophy, Science, Astronomy and of course Democracy were born and developed. We could not leave out food, which is mostly cooked in olive oil and offers a unique taste. Traditional music and drinking Ouzo is also a Greek characteristic



Heroes of the past are considered mostly warriors who had fought for their country's freedom. These personalities are usually rebels against the Ottoman Turks (like Kolokotronis, Karaiskakis, Bouboulina etc.), who were sacrificed so that Greece could become an independent state after 400 hundred year of Ottoman occupation. Alexander the Great is considered to be a hero since he managed to conquer all the known world in the 4th century BC. His strategy and competences are still studied at Universities around the world. In addition, ancient politicians (like Pericles the Athenian) or philosophers (like Plato) and tragic poets (like Sophocles) are still admired for their achievements. In the present, heroes are considered more simple people, like the ones who manage to survive a natural disaster, or scientists who make a big discovery. It is not so common to use the word "hero" for a person and certainly not for contemporary political figures.

Economic orientation

Photo by Gurpet Parmzit



The Greek economy is mainly based on the tertiary sector (service sector) which comes up to 83% of the whole economic activity. The secondary sector is about 13%. As the manufacturing diminishes during the last three decades, the industrial sector loses its dynamism. The primary sector contributes 4% of the Gross Domestic Product.

"Attractive" economic activities in Greece are:

- Tourism



- Merchant Shipping
- Transport
- Telecommunication
- Food industry
- Agricultural production
- Fishing and Fish farming.

There is a permanent lack of heavy industry in the country. Construction was among the most important activities in Greece. Over last 10 years this sector has confronted a deep crisis. The public sector faces important problems such as bureaucracy and low competitiveness.

However, working in the public sector remains an attractive occupation for the majority of Greek people as it offers a more or less stable salary and the security of having a job. At the same time, Greece has the higher rate of self-employment. Being independent and autonomous is an attractive component of a job.

If a family business exists, it is probable that the descendants will inherit it. Especially if it is a successful and gainful business. In any case, parents wish for their children to accomplish a high educational route even if, themselves, have not experienced something like that. A university degree is the key for social ascension. The young generation, realize that finding a job is a very difficult perspective to fulfill. The general unemployment rate in Greece comes up to 25% and for young people it is more than 60%. That's why, many young men and women, especially those who are highly educated, decide to search for a job abroad and immigrate.

Professional life in Greece is not different from the other European countries. Main things to follow are: find your passion, set goals, focus on them, remain motivated, be creative and innovative, be organized, communicate effectively, have the team spirit.

Attitudes to avoid are: be unpunctual, disrespectful, negative, fearful of the future, anxious for not being perfect, having low self-esteem.

Although the unemployment rate is high and persistent in Greece, refugees and immigrants who reside in the country, mainly from Balkans and the Third World, are trying to find a job. The great majority of them are willing to work in fields which are rejected by the Greek people: jobs of high risk, and of low reward, jobs without insurance. Usually, foreigners are house cleaners, construction workers, agricultural and unskilled workers. These last years, some of them have achieved to set up their own business.

Social orientation

Photo by Maroula Syrigou

The family is the basis of the social structure in Greece. Families are fundamental units of support and identity, since they offer financial as well as emotional support to their members throughout their lives. The extended family is expected to help relatives in times of need by offering money, their help to find employment or even their presence when a





relative is ill. Greeks have a tendency to focus more on collectivism than on individual. Therefore, building personal relationships are very important, although this is not an easy process and takes time. The ancient Greek world was a blend of wisdom, science and achievements. The great thinkers of this time have many to teach us about life, virtue and happiness. We often feel amazed by the simplicity and the importance of some phrases we read, written by men 2.000 years ago, that remain, even today, significant lessons about our own life. Mottos like “Ever to excel” (Homer, *Iliad*), which means that someone has to struggle and put all his efforts to achieve his dreams and goals in life, or “Know thyself” (= know your competences, your fears, your strengths and weaknesses) have had an impact on the values of Greek society for centuries. Greeks are also warm and hospitable. It is very common to open their houses and offer their hospitality or food even to people that they meet for the first time. In addition, Greeks are proud and think that they should repay a favour and offer their help to the person that helped them when they were in need. There is a Greek word to describe this value which cannot be translated to another language: “φιλότιμο” (= *filotimo*). It means to have pride, dignity and the sense of duty at the same time.

Schooling is compulsory and free for the first nine years and optional and free for the next three. Over 90% of students attend public schools. Greeks think that education is very important, and they want their children to succeed and enter Universities. When this happens, all the family feels proud of the child’s achievement and they make sure that everyone they know finds out about it. This is due to the fact that the parents have to spend a lot of money to ensure the best preparation for their children, since the exams are very demanding, and the students need extra help from private teachers or institutes to make it to the University. In the last decades the majority of students in universities are women, which indicates the dramatic decline of gender differentiation in Greek society.

Most young people tend to spend their leisure time on their mobile phones or their computers, playing games, “surfing” on the Internet or communicating with others through Facebook, Twitter etc. However, there are plenty young people who choose athletic activities or Arts- especially music and ballet- for their free time. The truth is that they don’t have so much time to do other activities since homework for school and the extra lessons at home occupy all their time in the afternoon, even at elementary school. Parents urge their children to learn and conquer at least two foreign languages by the age of 15. After that period of time this is impossible, because their preparation for the University starts. Moreover, it is very common for young people to go out for a coffee, a drink, to grab a bite (the most famous of which is *Greek Souvlaki*) or to clubs with loud music and stay there until the early hours of the morning or even to the theatre and the movies.

The values of young people don’t differ much from the values of their parents’. Most of them think about being well educated, getting married by the age of 30, having one or two children of their own and finding a good job. All this, however, has been changing rapidly the last decade of the economic crisis. Family is going through a big crisis and the divorce rate has increased to a very high percentage. This has affected the position of young people towards marriage and less every year decide to take that step in their lives. Consequently, the birth rates are negatively affected, because



less young people want to have children. Friendship plays a significant role in young people's lives because a good friend can sometimes be more supportive than their own families. All in all, young people are ambitious, hopeful, optimistic, but also feel that they have to carry a great burden: to help their country overcome the crisis it is going through.

People in Greece are expected to be well educated (more preferably to receive Higher Education and go further with their studies), in order to get a good job. Getting married and creating a family is another goal for many young people and of course an expectation of their parents. Buying a house or an apartment is considered the next step in life. However, this step is not easy to take during the crisis and it can be done only if parents help their children financially. If someone can cope with his obligations (eg. bills, taxes, rent/mortgage, family expenses etc.) and he is able to go to vacation in the summer or pay for a hobby and his entertainment (eg. theatre, cinema, concerts etc.) then he is considered to have achieved a certain quality of life.

However, a successful person must have more. First, someone has to have Higher Education and Master's Degree or, even better, a PHD. Scientists, Doctors, Lawyers, who are well known and have made a breakthrough in their field are considered successful. Moreover, businessmen who own their own companies and earn a lot of money are also successful. It is worth mentioning that the criteria of success are based more on what a person earns or owns- a big house, an expensive car, a big company- than on his personality, morality, education. This of course is a worldwide phenomenon, but still not so "friendly" to the values of the Greek society.

Everyday life

Photo by Anny Kalfa

Unlike common belief, Greek people have one of the highest work rates. The majority of Greek people try to reconcile work with private life and tend not to have much available time in the course of the week, since they have to work long hours and sometimes hold a second job to cover their needs. Every nation has norms and rules of conduct, appropriateness as well as rules of professionalism, most of which Greeks more often than not seem to meet. As a result, everyday life in Greece is quite mundane and strictly restricted to commuting to one's workplace, or school when younger ages are concerned. Older research on the effectiveness of Greeks modulated social stimuli shedding light on whether their problems are actually solvable! In the years since, uncontrollable entertainment has long been blamed for the nation's profound economic problems. Greeks, nowadays are working a lot, and seem to want to generate experiences gained by their personal time and energy spent in their effort and personal sacrifice. At the weekends, though, most young and elderly people choose to visit





a close friend, go out for a drink, dance in a club, watch a film or attend a play. Young couples are also looking forward to the weekends for a quiet, romantic night out whereas older people's habits revolve around meeting their grand-children, taking long walks and bringing together the whole family. However, the importance of entertainment is so ingrained in the Greek culture that even in the midst of economic crisis, the Greeks seem unable to rely sufficiently on sheer work to rebuilt purpose in their future. After all, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy".

After the first obvious blow to Greek tourism five years ago, it seems that the latest crisis has been averted. Lately, there has been a surge of bookings for travel mostly during school and summer holidays. Most Greeks choose to visit their countryhouses in various Greek villages while the minority tends to opt for "all inclusive" places. The latter don't get out much into local communities and would rather enjoy the facilities provided within the hotel's boundaries. To that end, the spirit of the proprietors is relaxed and extremely affable whereas the Greek islands are quietly going about their business albeit with many empty tables. During the boom years the oversupply of hotels has ensured that the price of a package holiday is low and affordable. Greece is directly dependent on tourism and the hoteliers weigh up the best ways to avoid difficulties given the continuing economic turmoil, to downplay any negativity. This opens prospects for most of the holidaymakers to come to the coast from the hinterland, where there is an interesting goldmine of ancient monuments, unspoilt landscapes, and enchanting villages. Greek islands as well as villages can boast a rich tradition in food, wine and crystal-clear turquoise seas and this makes them the perfect destination for most Greeks, since these options feature many tempting options for everyone who wishes to relax and get away. Recent surveys on how the Greeks choose to invest their money and free time have tempered enthusiasm over the authorities, who seem determined to attend to the matter, demanding resilient and flexible tax-collecting laws.



3. Read more about Greek Culture, History and Work and Business Life

3.1 Greek Political System, Culture and History

Greek political country profile by the BBC (regularly updated):

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17372520>

Greece in the EU

https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece_en

A comprehensive and deep cultural analysis and description of Greece is offered here:

<http://www.everyculture.com/Ge-It/Greece.html>

3.2 Guide to Greece– Etiquette, Customs, Culture & Business

Etiquette and Business Culture in Greece

<http://businessculture.org/southern-europe/business-culture-in-greece/business-etiquette-in-greece/>

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/guides/guide-to-greece-etiquette-customs-culture-business/>

<https://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/greece-guide>

3.3 Going for work and vocational training to Greece

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/working-abroad/328221-working-in-greece>

Sources:

- 1) <https://geert-hofstede.com/>
- 2) Geert Hofstede, Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations. Second Edition, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2001



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- 3) Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov, Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. Revised and Expanded 3rd Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill USA, 2010)
- 4) https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm
- 5) Map of Greece: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21327>



The Greek Language

98% of the 10.6m population of Greece speak Greek, which is the country's official language. The largest minority language is Macedonian, spoken by 1.8% of the population. Others include Albanian, spoken in the centre and the south, Turkish, spoken by Muslim communities around the Aegean, and Arumanian and Bulgarian. None of these minority languages has official status.

Greek Society & Culture

An Ancient Heritage

- Greeks are proud of their cultural heritage and their contribution to world civilization.
- A recent study found that Greeks' pride in being Greek surpassed the ethnic satisfaction of every other European nation.
- Plays continue to be staged in the theatres where they were originally performed.
- Greek literature includes poetry, drama, philosophy, history, as well as travelogues.

Religion in Greece

- The Greek Orthodox Church is the national religion and is practiced by the majority of the population.
- Religion is integral to life in Greece and is evidenced in the respect for hierarchy and view of the family as a single unit of strength.
- Most holidays and festivals are religious in nature.
- Younger people are not as devout church-goers as their parents and grandparents, yet most will still turn to the church to observe such important rituals such as weddings and funerals.
- Easter is the major religious holiday and the celebration is more important to most Greeks than Christmas.
- The Church plays a greater role in political, civic, and governmental affairs than in more secular countries.

Greek Family Values

- The family is the basis of the social structure.
- The family offers both financial and emotional support to its members.
- The extended family is expected to help relatives in times of need, even to the point of assisting them to find employment.



- Family relationships carry over into business. Nepotism is accepted
- The wrongdoing of one family member brings dishonour to the entire family.

General Etiquette & Customs in Greece

Meeting Etiquette

- Greeks are warm and hospitable.
- When meeting someone for the first time, they shake hands firmly, smile, and maintain direct eye contact.
- Good friends often embrace; they may also kiss each other on each cheek. Male friends often slap each other's arm at the shoulder.

Gift Giving Etiquette

- In general, Greeks exchange gifts with family and friends for 'namedays' (birth date of the saint after whom they are named) and Christmas.
- Some Greeks celebrate birthdays, but in general, celebrating namedays is more likely
- Gifts need not be expensive. Since gifts are generally reciprocated, giving something of great value could put a burden on the recipient since they would feel obligated to give you something of equivalent value.
- When invited to dinner at a Greek home, bring something small.
- A floral arrangement may be sent in advance of the actual event.
- Gifts should be wrapped.
- Gifts are usually opened when received.

Dining Etiquette

If you are invited to a Greek home:

- Arriving 30 minutes late is considered punctual!
- Dress well. This demonstrates respect for your hosts.
- Offer to help the hostess with the preparation or clearing up after a meal is served. Your offer may not be accepted, but it will be appreciated.
- Expect to be treated like royalty!
- Compliment the house.

Table manners



- Remain standing until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat.
- Table manners are Continental -- the fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating.
- The oldest person is generally served first.
- Do not begin eating until the hostess starts.
- Keep your elbows off the table and your hands above the table when eating.
- Accepting a second helping compliments the host.
- Expect a great deal of discussion. Meals are a time for socializing.
- It is considered polite to soak up gravy or sauce with a piece of bread.
- People often share food from their plate.
- Finish everything on your plate.
- Put your napkin next to your plate when you have finished eating.
- Indicate you have finished eating by laying your knife and fork parallel on your plate with the handles facing to the right.
- The host gives the first toast.
- An honoured guest should return the toast later in the meal.
- The most common toast is "to your health", which is "stinygiasou" in informal situations and "eis igían sas" at formal functions.

Business Etiquette and Protocol in Greece

Relationships & Communication

- Relationships are the linchpin of business dealings since Greeks prefer to do business with those they know and trust.
- They maintain an intricate web of family and friends to call upon for business assistance since they can be confident of their trustworthiness.
- Nepotism is not viewed negatively and it is very common for relatives to work for the same company.
- Greeks prefer face-to-face meetings rather than doing business by telephone or in writing, which are seen as too impersonal.
- It takes time to develop relationships: this can be done in the office, over extended lunches, dinners, and social outings.



- Never say or do anything that can be construed as challenging the honour or integrity of a business colleague.
- Under no circumstances should you publicly question someone's statements.
- Greeks do not like people who are pretentious or standoffish.
- Although business is relaxed, it is also serious. Acting informal before a relationship has developed is considered discourteous.
- If your Greek business colleagues become quiet and withdrawn, you may have said or done something to upset them.

Business Meeting Etiquette

- Appointments are necessary and should be made 1 to 2 weeks in advance, although it is often possible to schedule them on short notice.
- Confirm meetings one day in advance by telephone.
- Many businesspeople eat lunch between 1 and 3 p.m., so this is not the optimal time for a meeting.
- Quite often it is not until the third meeting that business is actually conducted. During the first meeting your Greek business colleagues will want to get to know something about you as a person. The second meeting is used to develop trust and mutual respect. By the third meeting, business may begin.
- Have printed material available in both English and Greek.
- Meetings are often interrupted. Several people may speak at the same time.
- Greeks will deviate from agendas. They view agendas as starting points for discussions and will then follow the discussion to the next logical place.
- Although some business people speak English, it is a good idea to hire an interpreter.

Business Negotiation

- Forming a personal relationship is critical to developing a successful business relationship.
- Companies are hierarchical. Greeks respect age and position.
- Business is conducted slowly. You will have to be patient and not appear ruffled.
- Demonstrate how your product or service enhances your colleague's reputation.
- Do not lose your temper or appear irritated during business discussions.



- Greeks are skilled negotiators. They quite enjoy haggling.
- Decision making is held at the top of the company.
- Imposing a deadline on reaching a decision may end the negotiations.
- Contracts are often quite simple since the personal relationship dictates that accommodations will be made on either side should the need arise.

Business Dress

- Business dress is as in most of Europe.
- Men should wear dark coloured, conservative business suits.
- Women should wear either business suits or tasteful dresses, preferably in dark or subtle colours.

Business Cards

- Business cards are exchanged without formal ritual.
- Have one side of your business card translated into Greek.
- Present your card so the Greek side faces the recipient.

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