

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Greece



Dispute Resolution

Consulting editors

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Quick reference guide enabling side-by-side comparison of local insights into litigation, arbitration and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) worldwide, including court systems; judges and juries; limitation issues; pre-action behaviour, starting proceedings and timetable for proceedings; case management; evidence; remedies; enforcement; public access; costs; funding arrangements; insurance; class action; appeals; foreign judgments and proceedings; the role of the UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration; choice of arbitrator; arbitration agreements and arbitral procedure; court interventions in arbitrations; awards; types of ADR; requirements for ADR; other interesting local features; and recent trends.

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LITIGATION

Court system

What is the structure of the civil court system?

In the first instance, Greek courts are subdivided into magistrate courts (justices of the peace), single-member first instance courts and multi-member first instance courts. Though there are a lot of exceptions, depending on the nature and subject matter of the dispute, the general rule is that in the ordinary procedure of the civil courts the magistrate courts are competent for monetary disputes up to €20,000; disputes arising out of lease agreements where the monthly rent does not exceed €600; and disputes between joint property owners up to €20,000. The single-member first instance courts are competent for monetary disputes up to €250,000. The multi-member first instance courts are competent for all disputes for which the magistrate courts and the single-member first instance courts are not competent.

Exceptionally, the magistrate courts are also competent for a number of disputes depending on their nature and subject matter and irrespective of the value of the dispute. Likewise, the single-member first instance courts are competent for a number of disputes depending on their nature and subject matter, even if the value of the dispute is above €250,000, in which case it would normally fall within the competence of multi-member first instance courts, and for some other disputes irrespective of whether the magistrate courts or the multi-member first instance courts would otherwise be competent.

As regards disputes that are heard in the special proceedings before the civil courts, such as family and matrimonial disputes, property disputes (arising out of lease agreements, labour disputes, disputes in connection to the payment of fees and credit instruments) and orders for payment or the surrender of the use of the leasehold, the general rule is that either the magistrate courts or the single-member first instance courts will have competence, depending on the value of the dispute in question. There are very few cases in the special proceedings where the multi-member first instance courts will have competence.

For interim measures proceedings and for cases that are heard in a voluntary procedure of a quasi-administrative nature, as a general rule, the single-member first instance courts will have competence.

In the second instance, the single-member first instance courts are competent for appeals against decisions of the magistrate courts within their territory; the single-member appeal courts are competent for appeals against the decisions of the single-member first instance courts; and the three member appeal courts are competent for the hearing of appeals against decisions of the multi-member first instance courts.

Finally, the Supreme Court (Areios Pagos) is competent for appeals in cassation (on points of law) against decisions of any civil court.

There are no specialist commercial or financial courts, but there are special commercial sections in the ordinary procedure of the first instance and appeal courts, while special naval sections (in charge of naval disputes) have been established in the First Instance and Appeal Courts of Piraeus. According to article 13 of Law 4529/2018, published on 23 March 2018, another special commercial section will be established in the future for hearing cases regarding actions for damages under national law for infringements of the competition law provisions of EU member states.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Judges and juries

What is the role of the judge and the jury in civil proceedings?

A Greek court, consisting of one or more judges, as the case may be, will act only at the request of a party and decide

on the basis of the factual allegations raised and proven by the parties and their motions, unless otherwise provided by law. The court will also order, even ex officio, the evidence process by any applicable means of evidence that the law permits, even if these were not invoked by the parties. Any procedural acts are done at the initiative of the parties, unless otherwise provided by law. The court is obliged to encourage at any point of the trial and in any procedure the settlement of the dispute and the selection of mediation as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) method, and to support any relevant initiatives of the parties and to formulate settlement proposals taking into account the factual and legal situation of each case. The judge will:

- conduct the hearing;
- give permission to the parties to speak;
- examine the parties, their legal representatives, witnesses and expert witnesses;
- seek clarifications by the parties on any allegations that are vague or incomplete;
- order at the request of any of the parties or ex officio anything that can contribute to the determination of the dispute, including ordering the parties themselves to be present and to answer questions or provide clarifications;
- declare if and when the hearing has been concluded; and
- issue the decision in due course.

In the voluntary procedure, the inquisitorial system applies and the court may order ex officio any measure suitable for ascertaining the facts, even if not raised by the parties, and especially facts that contribute to the protection of the interested parties, their relationship or the greater public interest.

There is no jury in Greek civil proceedings.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Limitation issues

What are the time limits for bringing civil claims?

Unless otherwise provided by Greek law, the standard limitation period for bringing civil claims is 20 years. However, a shorter limitation period of five years is provided for certain categories of claims, including:

- the claims of merchants and manufacturers for the sale of goods, the execution of works, taking care of the affairs of others and their expenses;
- the claims of farmers, fishermen and others for the sale of the products of their profession;
- the claims of transporters of people or goods for freight and their expenses;
- the claims of hotel, B&B and other owners for the provision of lodging, food and other services, as well as their expenses;
- the claims of those that do not belong in the above categories but take care of the affairs of others or provide services by profession for their fees and expenses;
- the claims of servants and workers for the payment of their wages and expenses;
- the claims of teachers for their fees and costs;
- the claims of institutions for the provision of teaching, fostering, hospitalisation and caretaking, for the provision of their services and their costs;
- the claims of those that take care, foster and raise people, for their services provided and their costs;
- the claims of doctors, nurses, lawyers, notaries, court bailiffs and persons appointed to conduct the affairs of others, for their fees and expenses;

- the claims of the litigants for any prepayments made to their lawyers;
- the claims of factual and expert witnesses for their fees and expenses;
- interest and dividends;
- any rents;
- all kinds of wages, late amount due, pensions, alimonies or payment made periodically; and
- the claims of persons to whom work is provided for their prepayments made against future claims.

Any limitation period is interrupted if the debtor recognises the claim in any way and if an action is filed before the Greek courts. The parties cannot agree to disapply the statute of limitation or to set a longer or shorter limitation period or to make the terms of the statute of limitation harsher or lighter. However, it is possible to waive the right to invoke the statute of limitations after that time has lapsed.

Owing to the covid-19 pandemic, by law, all limitation periods were suspended from 13 March 2020 to 31 May 2020 as well as from 7 November 2020 to 5 April 2021.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Pre-action behaviour

Are there any pre-action considerations the parties should take into account?

By means of articles 3, 6 and 7 of Law 4640/2019 published on 29 November 2019, as amended and in force at the time of writing, regarding the prior recourse to mediation, before making a submission to a court, authorised attorneys must notify their clients in writing of the possibility to resolve a dispute, in whole or in part, via mediation. This obligation applies to any civil and commercial disputes of a national or cross-border nature, existing or future, which are at the parties' disposal. In addition, for disputes falling under the mandatory scheme, authorised attorneys must notify their clients in writing of their obligation to attend the mandatory initial mediation session. Those attorneys' informative notes must be attached to the civil action and submitted to the court. If the attorneys' informative notes are not submitted to the court at the time of filing of the civil action, they must be produced by the time of submission of the claimant's written pleadings and no later than the hearing. The mediation minutes drafted by the mediator must also be produced by the time of submission of the pleadings. If the claimant does not meet either of the aforementioned obligations, the hearing of the case is declared by the court as inadmissible.

As regards the steps available to a party to assist in bringing an action, although pre-action exchange of documents is not provided in Greek law, it is possible for a party to request the production of documents either during the pending trial proceedings or even before, by means of a separate legal action or an application for interim measures in urgent cases, provided that the party making this request pre-action has a legal interest to be informed of the content of a document in the possession of another, that is, if the document was drafted in the interest of the party requesting it or certifies a legal relationship that relates to him or her or relates to negotiations for that legal relationship entered into by the applicant or a third party intervening for the latter.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Starting proceedings

How are civil proceedings commenced? How and when are the parties to the proceedings notified of their commencement? Do the courts have the capacity to handle their caseload?

Proceedings are commenced when the writ of action is deposited at the secretary of the court to which it is addressed

or is deposited electronically and a copy thereof is served on the defendant.

Greek courts have a long history of issues with handling the caseload in a timely manner and, in spite of a number of reforms and initiatives attempted, those issues remain to a great extent. The last major reform was through Law 4335/2015, effective as of 1 January 2016, which has undergone various amendments, the last of which were effective as of 1 January 2022, and which provided, inter alia, for the abolition of the examination of witnesses at the hearings, as this was thought to cause delays, and for new, shorter timetables.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Timetable

What is the typical procedure and timetable for a civil claim?

A claim that is heard in the ordinary procedure must be served to the defendant within 30 days or, if the defendant resides abroad or is of unknown address, within 60 days. Written pleadings, together with any supporting documentation, powers of attorney, affidavits, exhibits, etc, drafted in Greek or together with their (full or partial, as the case may be) legal translation in Greek, must be filed by the parties within 90 days, or, if the defendant resides abroad or is of unknown address, within 120 days of the above deadline of the claim's service to the defendant. Additional pleadings and rebuttals can be filed 15 days after the filing of the pleadings, together with any additional documentation. Both the filing of pleadings and rebuttals must take place no later than 12pm on the last day of the above-mentioned deadlines. Subsequent to the above deadlines, allegations or allegations evidenced via documents or judicial confession may be filed through additional pleadings 20 days prior to the hearing at the latest. The rebuttal to the above additional pleadings must be filed 10 days prior to the set hearing at the latest. Interventions (joinders), summonses to the trial, announcements of the trial or counteractions are filed and served on all parties within 60 days, or, if the defendant or any of his or her joinders reside abroad or are of unknown address, within 90 days from the filing of the claim. Interventions made after a summons to the trial, or an announcement of the trial, must be filed and served on all parties within 90 days, or, if the defendant or any of his or her joinders reside abroad or are of unknown address, within 120 days from the filing of the claim. Within 15 days from the closing of the case file, the judge (or in the case of a multi-member court, the panel of the court and its judge rapporteur) must be appointed and the hearing date must be set no later than 30 days after the end of the above deadline, or if this is not possible because of the caseload of the court, at a later date, as necessary. This 30-day deadline for setting the hearing date is in practice not met by most Greek courts because of their caseload, and delays, ranging from a couple of months to up to one year in some cases, have unfortunately become the norm. The courts' decisions are in writing and are issued after the hearings, usually between three to eight months thereafter.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Case management

Can the parties control the procedure and the timetable?

The parties can extend the timetable of the procedure, that is, the relevant deadlines set by law or by the court, if the parties agree to that and only if the court also agrees, or if the court so decides absent any agreement of the parties, taking into account the circumstances of each case. Extending deadlines for judicial remedies is not possible.

In addition, at the request of one of the parties, the judge or the court, as the case may be, may also decide to shorten the applicable deadlines if there are serious reasons and the deadline is not one for filing an appeal. The parties can also agree to shorten the legal or court deadlines.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Evidence – documents

Is there a duty to preserve documents and other evidence pending trial? Must parties share relevant documents (including those unhelpful to their case)?

There is no specific duty under Greek procedural rules to preserve documents and other evidence pending trial. There is a general duty on the parties and their attorneys to conduct the proceedings in good faith and to set out the facts as they know them, fully and truthfully. The parties and their attorneys are also expected to contribute, with their diligent conduct of the trial and the timely raising of argumentation and submission of means of evidence, to the expedition of the trial and the speedy resolution of the dispute.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Evidence – privilege

Are any documents privileged? Would advice from an in-house lawyer (whether local or foreign) also be privileged?

Although the notion of privilege exists in Greek law, there are no specific rules in Greek civil procedural law determining whether a document can be characterised as privileged or not. That said, it is specifically provided in the Greek Code of Civil Procedure that priests, lawyers, notaries, doctors, pharmacists, nurses, psychologists and their aides, as well as any advisers of the parties, cannot be examined, when summoned as witnesses, on the facts that were entrusted to them or they ascertained during the exercise of their profession, for which they have a confidentiality obligation, unless the party entrusting the same to them and to whom the secrecy relates allows it. Public officials and military personnel, in service or retired, cannot be examined as witnesses for facts for which they have a confidentiality obligation, unless the competent minister allows their examination. In any event, priests, lawyers, notaries, doctors, pharmacists, nurses and their aides, as well as any advisers of the parties, are entitled to refuse to be examined as witnesses on the facts that were entrusted to them. Relatives up to the third degree (unless they have the same relation to all parties), spouses (even after the dissolution of their marriage) and those engaged to be married may also refuse to testify. Lastly, any witness may refuse to testify facts that constitute professional or artistic privilege.

In view of the above, documents containing privileged information are not expected, as a matter of Greek law and practice, to be shown to the other party, and any request to the court either to examine as a witness a person covered by privilege or to force a party to produce documents that contain privileged information is not likely in the majority of cases to be accepted.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Evidence – pretrial

Do parties exchange written evidence from witnesses and experts prior to trial?

The parties have the right to examine under oath witnesses prior to trial before the competent magistrates (justices of the peace), notaries, lawyers or Greek consulates (if the testimony is given outside of Greece). They have a duty to summon the other party to attend, if they wish, the execution of such testimony under oath (affidavit), at least two business days before, and to include in such summons the exact date and place of execution of the affidavit to be given, the action or brief to which it refers, and the name, address and profession of the affiant. The party summoned may obtain a copy of the affidavit at any time after its execution or at the time of its submission to the court by the opponent, together with the latter's pleadings and supporting documentation.

Evidence – trial

How is evidence presented at trial? Do witnesses and experts give oral evidence?

Evidence is presented to the court by means of each party's pleadings and additional pleadings and rebuttals, which are filed together with each party's supporting documentation. In respect of claims that were filed after 1 January 2016 that are heard in the ordinary procedure, witnesses and experts no longer give oral evidence and their testimonies are in effect substituted by written testimonies under oath (affidavits) executed before the competent magistrates (justices of the peace), notaries, lawyers or Greek consulates (if the testimony is given outside of Greece). If, after the review of the case file, it is found by the court that the oral testimony of one affiant from each side or, in the absence thereof, of one person proposed by each side, is absolutely required, then an order to repeat the hearing for the purposes of such oral testimony will be given by the court. Witnesses and experts can still give oral evidence in cases heard under the special proceedings, the voluntary procedure or interim measures proceedings.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Interim remedies

What interim remedies are available?

Interim remedies are available and include:

- the ordering of security for a monetary claim;
- the registration of a prenotation of mortgage;
- the conservatory seizure of movables, immovables, rights in rem thereon, claims and all assets of the debtor either in his or her hands or in the hands of third parties;
- the placement in judicial escrow (custody) of movables, immovables, a group of objects or of a business in the event of a dispute pertaining thereto, such as for their legal ownership or possession;
- the temporary adjudication of certain categories of claims;
- the temporary regulation of a situation via the court's order to do, omit or tolerate a certain act by the party against which the application has been filed;
- the sealing, unsealing, signing or public deposit; and
- the issuance of a European Account Preservation Order pursuant to Regulation (EU) No. 655/2014.

The above remedies are available in support of foreign proceedings provided that the local Greek courts have jurisdiction to order the interim relief sought.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Remedies

What substantive remedies are available?

Substantive remedies include:

- compensatory damages to the injured party for any loss that he or she has suffered;
- restitution in the form of monetary recovery or recovery of property;

- specific performance obliging a party to perform its contractual obligations after a breach has been established; and
- a declaratory judgment declaring the rights or obligations of one party.

Punitive damages, however, are not available under Greek law. In the case of a monetary claim and when the debtor is late in payment, the creditor is entitled to claim the interest provided by contract or by law, without being obliged to prove any damage. In addition to interest, the creditor may also claim, unless otherwise provided by law, any other positive damage that he or she has suffered. In those cases, interest is payable on a money judgment provided that it is formally requested by the court.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Enforcement

What means of enforcement are available?

Enforcement under Greek law includes the following means:

- in the case of an obligation to surrender a movable, via the taking by the court bailiff of such movable from the person against which enforcement is made and the delivery thereof to the appropriate person;
- in the case of an obligation to provide replaceable items or anonymous securities, via the taking by the court bailiff of such items or securities from the person against which enforcement is made and the delivery thereof to the appropriate person;
- in the case of an obligation to provide or surrender an immovable property, ship or aircraft, via the court bailiff expelling the person against which enforcement is made from such immovable property, ship or aircraft and establishing thereon the appropriate person;
- in the case of an act that can be done by a third party, via the creditor doing such act and the relevant cost being incurred by the debtor;
- in the case of an act that can only be done by the debtor, via the court condemning the latter to do such act and in the event that it is not done condemning same to a monetary penalty of up to €50,000 in favour of the creditor and to personal detainment of up to one year;
- if the debtor has the obligation to omit or tolerate an act, via a court threatening, in the event that the debtor violates his or her obligation, a monetary penalty of up to €100,000 in favour of the creditor for each violation and to personal detainment of up to one year;
- if someone is condemned to a declaration of his or her will (intention), such declaration is considered to have been made when the court's decision became final and unappealable;
- in the case of an obligation to surrender a child, via the court condemning the parent in possession of such child to surrender same under penalty, and in case of such non-compliance, of a monetary penalty of up to €100,000 in favour of the party requesting the child's surrender and to personal detainment of up to one year;
- in the case of a monetary claim that must be satisfied, via the seizure of the property against which enforcement is made or via compulsory administration or personal detainment; and
- if the creditor's claim cannot be fully satisfied via any imposed seizure of the debtor's property, via obliging the debtor to submit under oath to the court a detailed list of all his or her assets, with their exact location.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Public access

Are court hearings held in public? Are court documents available to the public?

Civil court hearings in Greece are held in public and only the deliberation for the issuance of the court's decision is made in secret. The judge conducting the hearing may determine in his or her judgment the number of persons that can stay within the court and has the power to order the exclusion of minors, persons carrying arms, as well as those that do not behave well in court. The court can order a hearing, or part thereof, to be in closed session if it could be detrimental to good morals or public policy.

Pretrial proceedings and any proceedings outside court are not public, although the parties, their legal representatives and attorneys may attend. Any court documents filed with the court are not available to the public, but only to the parties, their legal representatives and attorneys.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Costs

Does the court have power to order costs?

The court has the power to order costs, and as a rule it is the losing party that is condemned by the court to pay the costs of the winning party. In the case of partial victory and partial defeat of each party, the court will assess the costs according to the extent of their respective victory and defeat. The court can also offset all costs or part thereof when the dispute is between relatives up to the second degree or if it finds that the interpretation of the rule of law that was applied was especially difficult or there is reasonable doubt regarding the outcome of the dispute. For the purposes of the court determining and clearing the amount of costs that should be awarded, each side must produce a table with his or her respective costs.

The claimant is not required by law to provide security for the defendant's costs, but the defendant can make such a request to the court and the court may order security for costs if there is an obvious danger of inability to enforce the court's decision, condemning a plaintiff to pay costs.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Funding arrangements

Are 'no win, no fee' agreements, or other types of contingency or conditional fee arrangements between lawyers and their clients, available to parties? May parties bring proceedings using third-party funding? If so, may the third party take a share of any proceeds of the claim? May a party to litigation share its risk with a third party?

'No win, no fee' agreements and other similar types of contingency or conditional fee arrangements between lawyers and their clients are available to parties in Greece. In the case of such an agreement, the agreed fee cannot exceed 20 per cent of the value of the dispute and, if more than one lawyer is involved, 30 per cent. The agreement must be made in writing and must be duly filed with the local bar association of the lawyer that has concluded the agreement. It will be valid only if the lawyer has undertaken the obligation to carry out the trial until the court's decision has become final and unappealable, without the lawyer being entitled to any fee in the case of defeat. Any agreement between the parties for expenses does not overturn the validity of that fee arrangement.

As regards third-party funding, to date it is not directly regulated in Greek law. In the absence of any legislative provision

to the contrary and in view of the general principle of contractual freedom, which is respected in Greek law, third-party funding is likely to be viewed as permissible if and to the extent that there are no provisions in the funding agreement that contravene the law.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Insurance

Is insurance available to cover all or part of a party's legal costs?

Yes, such insurance is available, subject to the risk profile in question and the amount of coverage.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Class action

May litigants with similar claims bring a form of collective redress? In what circumstances is this permitted?

Greek law provides for simple and forced collective redress.

In the case of simple collective redress, more than one person can lodge a claim (or face a claim) if they have the same common rights or obligation or if their rights and obligations are based on the same factual and legal cause, or if the subjects of the dispute are claims or obligations of the same kind or obligations based on materially the same historical and legal basis and the court has competence upon each defendant.

Collective redress will be forced when the dispute requires a uniform way of resolution or if the parties can only jointly bring or face a claim or when, because of the circumstances of the case, there cannot be contrary decisions towards the parties. The litigants that do not legally participate in the trial or have been summoned to attend the same will be deemed to be represented by those attending.

In addition to the above, it is also possible under Greek law for consumer unions to bring a class action against suppliers that violate the law. Effective from 25 June 2023, the Greek legislative framework on the protection of consumers' collective interests was aligned with the provisions of Directive 2020/1828, initiating the representative actions mechanism. Representative actions can be raised by Consumer Associations in relation to a list of infringements specified in Annex II of the Directive and may take the form of injunctive measures against suppliers to cease or prohibit a particular practice even before it occurs or redress measures, including compensation, repair, replacement, price reduction, contract termination or reimbursement of the price paid by the consumer. The court competent to hear a representative action is the Multi-Member First Instance Court of the place of residence or registered offices of the defendant supplier.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Appeal

On what grounds and in what circumstances can the parties appeal? Is there a right of further appeal?

The parties can appeal a decision if they were wholly or partially defeated in the first instance and if the decision was erroneous in fact or in law. The decisions that can be appealed are those of the magistrate courts, single-member first instance courts and multi-member first instance courts. Disputes heard before the magistrate courts with a value under

€5,000 cannot be appealed. Only decisions that are either final or refer the dispute to the competent court can be appealed. The deadline for the filing of an appeal is 30 days from the service of the first instance decision or, if the appellant resides outside Greece or is of unknown residence, 60 days. If the decision has not been served, then the appeal deadline is two years from the publication of the first instance decision. During the time period for the filing of the appeal, the first instance decision cannot be enforced, unless the decision was declared by the first instance court as temporarily enforceable against the losing party. An appeal that has been duly filed will suspend the enforcement of the first instance decision, except for any first instance decision that was declared temporarily enforceable against the losing party.

The court will first examine the admissibility of the appeal, then examine the admissibility and soundness of its grounds, and if any of the appeal grounds is found to be sound, the first instance decision will be quashed and the appeal court will keep the case and decide on its merits. The appeal court cannot render a decision that is more detrimental to the appellant if the opponent has not filed its own appeal or counter-appeal. However, the appeal court can render a decision that is more detrimental to the appellant if it quashes the first instance decision and goes ahead with ruling on the merits.

A further appeal in cassation is possible before the Supreme Court, but only on points of law, not fact. The deadline for the filing of such further appeal is 30 days from the service of the appealed decision or, if the appellant resides outside Greece or is of unknown residence, 60 days. If the decision has not been served, then the appeal in cassation deadline is two years from the publication of the decision.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Foreign judgments

What procedures exist for recognition and enforcement of foreign judgments?

Reciprocal agreements for the recognition and enforcement of judgments exist between Greece and the following countries:

- Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Georgia, the successor states of Yugoslavia, China, Cyprus, Lebanon, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, the successor states of the USSR, the successor states of Czechoslovakia, Syria, Tunisia, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland (for the Lugano Convention on jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters of 30 October 2007);
- all contracting states to the Convention of 2 October 1973 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Relating to Maintenance Obligations;
- all contracting states to the Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption;
- all contracting states to the Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children;
- all contracting states, including the UK post-Brexit, to the Hague Convention on Choice of Court Agreements 2005 (the Hague Convention 2005);
- all contracting states, including the UK post-Brexit, to the Hague Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance;
- all contracting states to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) (Geneva, 19 May 1956);
- all contracting states to the UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency of 30 May 1997;
- all contracting states to the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) of 9 May 1980, as amended by the Vilnius Protocol of 3 June 1999; and
- all contracting states to the European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning

Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children (9 May 1980).

If no international agreement (multilateral or bilateral) exists or if the Regulation of the European Union does not apply to the recognition or enforcement of a certain foreign judgment, that judgment will be recognised and enforced in Greece pursuant to the Greek Code of Civil Procedure (GCCP) (Presidential Decree No. 503/1985, as amended and in force today). However, if an international agreement is in place or if the Regulation of the European Union is applicable, the rules of such agreement or EU Regulation will supersede and disapply the GCCP.

If the GCCP applies, the following rules and process may come into play.

First, as regards recognition of a foreign judgment issued pursuant to a disputes procedure, pursuant to article 323 GCCP and subject to what international treaties (multilateral or bilateral) or EU regulations provide (if there is any international treaty (multilateral or bilateral) or regulation of the European Union that applies to the foreign judgment in question, the rules of such treaty or EU regulation will supersede and disapply the GCCP), that judgment is recognised to have force and constitute *res judicata* in Greece without any other procedure, provided that:

- it constitutes *res judicata* according to the law of the country of issuance;
- under the provisions of Greek law, the case was subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of the country to which the court that issued the judgment belongs;
- the party who lost was not deprived of the right to a defence and, in general, of the right to participate in the trial, unless that right was deprived according to a provision that applies equally to the subjects of the country to which the court that issued the judgment belongs;
- it is not contrary to a judgment of a Greek court that was issued in the same case and that constitutes *res judicata* for the parties between which the judgment of the foreign court was issued; and
- it is not contrary to good morals or to public policy.

Although recognition of a foreign judgment is *ipso jure*, that is, without any procedure, provided that the conditions set out in article 323 GCCP are met, there is also the possibility, if there is any legal interest in doing so, to file a civil action seeking a declaratory judgment on whether the *res judicata* of a foreign judgment has or does not have effect in Greece.

Second, as regards recognition of a foreign judgment issued pursuant to the voluntary (uncontested cases) procedure, pursuant to article 780 GCCP and subject to what international treaties (multilateral or bilateral) or EU regulations provide (again, if there is any international treaty (multilateral or bilateral) or regulation of the European Union that applies to the foreign judgment in question, the rules of such treaty or EU regulation will supersede and disapply the GCCP), it shall *ipso jure* have the same force and effect in Greece as that recognised to it under the law of the country of the court that issued it, provided that:

- the judgment applied the substantive law that should be applied under Greek law and was issued by a court that had jurisdiction pursuant to the law of the country whose substantive law it applied; and
- it is not contrary to good morals or to public policy.

Third, as regards recognition of a foreign judgment relating to the personal status of a party, pursuant to article 905, paragraph 4 GCCP and subject to what international treaties (multilateral or bilateral) or EU regulations provide (again, if there is any international treaty (multilateral or bilateral) or regulation of the European Union that applies to the foreign judgment in question, the rules of such treaty or EU regulation will supersede and disapply the GCCP), that judgment shall not *ipso jure* have *res judicata* effect in Greece, unlike what is provided under articles 323 and 780 GCCP. For this judgment to acquire that effect, it must be recognised by a judgment issued by the competent Greek

single-member first instance court. A foreign judgment will be recognised if:

- it is enforceable pursuant to the law of the country of issuance;
- it is not contrary to good morals or public policy; and
- it meets the conditions of article 323(ii)–(v) GCCP.

As regards enforcement of a foreign judgment, pursuant to article 905 GCCP and subject to what international treaties and EU regulations provide, a foreign judgment can be enforced in Greece after it has been declared enforceable by a judgment of the single-member first instance court of the district within which the domicile of the debtor is or, if there is no domicile, of the debtor's residence, or, if there is no residence, of the Single-Member First Instance Court of Athens. A foreign judgment will be declared enforceable by the competent Greek single-member first instance court pursuant to the above procedure if it is enforceable pursuant to the law of the country of issuance and if it is not contrary to good morals or the public policy of Greece. Finally, for a foreign judgment to be declared enforceable, the conditions of article 323(ii)–(v) GCCP must also be met.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Foreign proceedings

Are there any procedures for obtaining oral or documentary evidence for use in civil proceedings in other jurisdictions?

Yes, for civil and commercial matters, this is possible on the basis of Council Regulation (EC) No. 1206/2001 of 28 May 2001 on cooperation between the courts of the member states in the taking of evidence in civil or commercial matters.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

ARBITRATION

UNCITRAL Model Law

Is the arbitration law based on the UNCITRAL Model Law?

Law 5016/2023 on International Commercial Arbitration, applicable to international commercial arbitration proceedings seated in Greece, is the legal act incorporating in its entirety the UNCITRAL Model Law in Greek legislation. It abolishes the preceding legal framework (L. 2735/1999), that was not in harmony with the latest amendments of the Model Law adopted by UNCITRAL in July 2006.

The GCCP, and in particular articles 867–903, applies to domestic arbitration proceedings and has not been adopted in accordance with the UNCITRAL Model Law.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Arbitration agreements

What are the formal requirements for an enforceable arbitration agreement?

The arbitration agreement should be in compliance with article 10 of Law 5016/2023, with regard to international commercial arbitration, and article 869 GCCP, with regard to domestic arbitration. Both provisions require the agreement to be written, either in document or in electronic form of any kind. However, the lack of a written

agreement may be cured if both parties participate in the proceedings without expressing any objections or reservations.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Choice of arbitrator

If the arbitration agreement and any relevant rules are silent on the matter, how many arbitrators will be appointed and how will they be appointed? Are there restrictions on the right to challenge the appointment of an arbitrator?

In international commercial arbitration, in the absence of any relevant agreement of the parties, the arbitral tribunal shall consist of three arbitrators (article 14 of Law 5016/2023). Each party shall appoint one arbitrator and the two arbitrators shall appoint the third one. If a party does not appoint an arbitrator within 30 days from the receipt of such a request from the other party, or the two arbitrators, appointed by the parties, cannot agree to the appointment of the third one within 30 days from their appointment, any party may request the intervention of the competent single-member court of first instance to make such appointment (article 15, paragraph 4(a) of Law 5016/2023). The same procedure applies if the arbitral tribunal is composed of a single arbitrator and the parties do not agree on his/her selection.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Arbitrator options

What are the options when choosing an arbitrator or arbitrators?

Subject to the grounds for challenging an arbitrator (that is, for justifiable doubts as to his or her impartiality, independence or possession of the qualifications agreed to by the parties; or, in domestic arbitration, for reasons related to their prior involvement in the case, any interest they may have in the arbitration, their family relation to the parties or any relationship they may have to the parties that creates any suspicion of bias and their entire or partial incapacity to contract or deprivation of political rights), and any requirements set out by the parties in the arbitration agreement, the parties, any appointing authority or the court are not restricted when appointing the arbitrators. In domestic arbitration, article 871A GCCP provides for specific requirements when judges are selected as arbitrators. In addition, Greek legislation does not place any restrictions on appointing non-nationals as arbitrators in either international commercial or domestic arbitration.

However, article 49 of the Introductory Law of the GCCP, article 16(2) of Law 4110/2013, as amended by article 103 of Law 4139/2013 Government Gazette Vol. A 74/20.03.2013 (which replaced article 6(3A) of Law 3086/2002) and article 8(1) of Legislative Decree 736/1970 list certain requirements for the appointment of arbitrators over disputes arising from contracts concluded with the state or state entities in both international and domestic arbitration. In particular, the state's arbitrator should be only a senior magistrate, a senior member of the State Legal Council, a university professor or a Supreme Court lawyer.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Arbitral procedure

Does the domestic law contain substantive requirements for the procedure to be followed?

Pursuant to articles 27 of Law 5016/2023 and 886 GCCP, the arbitral tribunal is free to conduct the arbitration in

an appropriate manner, subject to any requirements agreed to by the parties. However, the aforementioned power of the arbitrators is restricted by articles 26 of Law 5016/2023 and 886(2) GCCP, which provide that the parties shall be treated with equality and be given a full opportunity of presenting their case (ie, attending the hearings, submitting and elaborating on their claims, and submitting their evidence). In addition, any other rules considered as public order rules are mandatory in all cases and cannot be excluded by means of the arbitration agreement (article 890(2) GCCP).

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Court intervention

On what grounds can the court intervene during an arbitration?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Interim relief

Do arbitrators have powers to grant interim relief?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Award

When and in what form must the award be delivered?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Appeal

On what grounds can an award be appealed to the court?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Enforcement

What procedures exist for enforcement of foreign and domestic awards?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Costs

Can a successful party recover its costs?

Law stated - 06 June 2023

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Types of ADR

What types of ADR process are commonly used? Is a particular ADR process popular?

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms have not been commonly used in Greece. Mediation, as well as judicial mediation, was introduced in the Greek legal order in 2010 by virtue of Law 3898/2010, which transposed into Greek law Directive 2008/52/EC on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters and provided for optional recourse to mediation.

In 2012, the institution of judicial mediation was amended via article 214B GCCP, allowing the parties, at their initiative or following a request by the court, to refer a dispute to judicial mediation at any stage of the proceedings. Effectively, the judge of the court before which the case is pending will act as a mediator and will have separate and joint meetings with each party and their legal representatives and make non-binding suggestions thereto regarding the resolution of the dispute. If the parties reach an agreement, minutes of judicial mediation will be drafted, signed and lodged at the secretariat of the first instance court, so as to become enforceable. The judicial mediation scheme is still in force, although, in practice, it has rarely been applied.

In 2018, Law 4512/2018, containing Regulations Relevant to Mediation, was adopted for the purpose of further harmonising Greek legislation to the provisions of the same directive and making recourse to mediation mandatory for specific types of disputes. However, the Supreme Court held via its Legal Opinion No. 34/2018 that the provision of Law 4512/2018 on mandatory recourse to mediation was unconstitutional, as it violated the right to judicial protection (articles 6, 20 of the Greek Constitution, article 13 of the European Convention of Human Rights and article 47 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union). Therefore, the effect of the said provision was suspended twice: first until 16 September 2019, and then until 30 November 2019. On the latter date, Law 4640/2019 introduced a new mandatory mediation scheme and abolished the aforementioned provision, which was never applied.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Requirements for ADR

Is there a requirement for the parties to litigation or arbitration to consider ADR before or during proceedings? Can the court or tribunal compel the parties to participate in an ADR process?

By virtue of Law 4640/2019, the prior recourse to mediation proceedings is rendered mandatory for the following certain types of disputes, which include:

- disputes in respect of which the parties have validly agreed in writing a mediation clause;
- family disputes, except for those concerning: divorce, cancellation of marriage, recognition of existence or non-existence of marriage, and the relationship between parents and children; and
- disputes resolved under the ordinary procedure, in the following cases: if the object of the dispute exceeds €30,000, if the dispute falls within the competence of the single-member first instance civil court, and, in every case, if the dispute falls within the competence of the multi-member first instance civil court.

The mediation scheme involves the following.

First, the mediator is appointed upon mutual agreement of the parties or by decision of a third party appointed by the parties. The mediation procedure commences upon submission of a relevant request to the appointed mediator by one of the parties.

Subsequently, the mediator determines the date and place of the mandatory initial mediation session, during which the parties are present, each accompanied by a lawyer. The initial mediation session must take place within 20 days of the day following the receipt of the request for recourse to mediation. The parties are free to withdraw at any time from the mediation session, without any justification or sanction. Upon conclusion of the mandatory initial session, the mediator drafts the relevant minutes, which are signed by all participants.

Upon the completion of the initial mediation session, the parties may agree to continue with the mediation procedure, which will have to be completed within 40 days.

If an enforceable agreement is concluded in the context of the mediation procedure, the mediator will draft the relevant mediation minutes, which will be signed by the mediator and the parties.

Pursuant to article 44 of Law 4640/2019 and article 74(14) of Law 4690/2020, this mandatory mediation scheme came into force:

- on 30 November 2019 for disputes in respect of which the parties have validly agreed in writing a mediation clause;
- on 15 January 2020 for family disputes, except for those concerning:
 - divorce;
 - annulment of marriage;
 - recognition of existence or non-existence of marriage; and
 - and the relationship between parents and children; and
- on 1 July 2020 for disputes resolved under the ordinary procedure, in the following cases:
 - if the object of the dispute exceeds €30,000, if the dispute falls within the competence of the single-member first instance civil court; and
 - if the dispute falls within the competence of the multi-member first instance civil court.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

MISCELLANEOUS

Interesting features

Are there any particularly interesting features of the dispute resolution system not addressed in any of the previous questions?

In relation to arbitration, it is noticeable that criminal cases cannot be referred to arbitration under Greek law. With regard to tax disputes, although in principle they are not arbitrable, they can be referred to arbitration where the state has control over the subject of the dispute. Labour disputes are also explicitly exempt from arbitration, except for collective bargaining disputes (article 16 of Law 1876/1990 as amended through Law 4635/2019). In relation to mediation, the mandatory mediation scheme does not apply indicatively to the following disputes:

- disputes falling within the competence of the magistrate court (justice of the peace), namely to disputes of a monetary value up to €20,000 or disputes within the exclusive competence of the said court regardless of their monetary value;
- disputes falling within the competence of the single-member first instance civil court with a monetary value under €30,000;
- disputes of the voluntary (non-contentious) procedure;
- interim measures proceedings;
- special proceedings, namely property disputes, payment order and order for the return of leased property (articles 614 to 645 of GCCP) and specific family disputes (592 of GCCP), that is, concerning:

- divorce;
- annulment of marriage;
- recognition of existence or non-existence of marriage; and
- the relationship between parents and children;
- appeal or opposition proceedings;
- enforcement proceedings; and
- disputes in which the Greek state, a municipal or regional authority, or a legal entity of public law is a litigant.

Another interesting element about the mandatory mediation scheme regards the suspension of the statute of limitations. As soon as the mediator has been appointed, he or she will send a written notification to the litigant parties regarding the time and place of the mandatory initial session. That written notification will suspend the limitation period for the exercise of relevant claims or rights, as well as the judicial deadlines for filing of pleadings, addendum-rebuttal or intervention. Any agreement of the parties regarding voluntary recourse to mediation will have the same effect. In the case of failure to reach an agreement in the context of the mediation, or termination of the mediation procedure in any other manner, the limitation period shall no longer be suspended and will continue to run from the day following the above events.

As far as the mediation costs are concerned, each party must pay, apart from the payment of its attorney, a note of prepayment of fees amounting to €100 for cases falling within the competence of the single-member first instance court, and €150 for cases ruled by the multi-member first instance court. In principle, the mediator's payment is freely determined by agreement of the parties. If no agreement has been concluded, the mediator's payment amounts to €50 for the mandatory initial session and €80 for every additional mediation hour. If a party does not attend the initial mandatory session, despite being summoned, the competent court before which the dispute is brought may impose on this party a fine ranging from €100 to €500.

No judicial duty is payable. The judicial duty corresponds to 0.8 per mille, plus surcharges, on the total amount claimed and it is currently payable for actions requesting not only the satisfaction of a claim (usually its payment) but also the mere recognition thereof (declaratory judgment).

Finally, the signed mediation minutes constitute an executory title, in accordance with article 904, paragraph 2 GCCP, as of the date of submission to the competent court. Those minutes can also be used as a title for registration or lifting of a mortgage. After the submission of the signed mediation minutes to the court, no civil action can be filed for the dispute in question and any pending trial is cancelled.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

UPDATE AND TRENDS

Recent developments and future reforms

What were the key cases, decisions, judgments and policy and legislative developments of the past year? Are there any proposals for dispute resolution reform? When will any reforms take effect?

The last series of legislative amendments, via Law 4842/2021 (Government Gazette Vol A/190/13.10.2021), effective as of 1 January 2022, as such law has been amended and is in force at the time of writing, has brought some changes to the Greek e-justice system. Though electronic trials and the remote examination of witnesses are still not possible in Greek civil litigation, a series of legislative efforts over the past years have somewhat facilitated and encouraged the use of technology for the completion of certain procedural acts, for example:

- the service of court documents by court bailiffs through electronic means;
- the exchange of electronic communication between the court secretariat and a litigant for the purposes of the litigant remedying a typical omission;
- the posting of the docket by the court electronically;
- the filing of court documents by parties electronically;
- the issuance of certificates electronically; and
- the release to the parties' attorneys of court decisions and transcripts electronically.

There has also been a change in the procedural rules applicable to disputes before the magistrate courts with a value under €5,000; such claims must be served to the counterparty through court bailiffs within 10 days, or if the defendant resides abroad or is of unknown address, within 30 days, of their filing at the latest. Any supporting documentation and evidence by both parties, as well as written pleadings by the defendant, must be filed within 20 days as of the above deadline of the claim's service to the defendant, while additional pleadings and rebuttals can be filed within five days of the filing of the pleadings.

In the field of case law, there has been an interesting development concerning the judicial duty that is often payable by the plaintiff.

The judicial duty is payable to the Greek state and certain state institutions and corresponds to 0.8 per mille, plus surcharges, on the total amount claimed by the plaintiff. By virtue of Law 4640/2019, the obligation to pay the judicial duty was extended to actions in the ordinary procedure requesting the mere recognition of a claim (by virtue of a declaratory judgment), except for the actions with a claimed amount under €250,000. The obligation to pay judicial duty also applied to actions in the ordinary procedure that had already been filed but had not been heard yet at the time of entry into force of the relevant provision.

A recent court judgment (68/2021 of the Athens Multi-Member First Instance Court) ruled that the extension of the obligation of judicial duty payment to actions that had already been filed before the entry into force of Law 4640/2019 is not in conformity with the Greek Constitution. According to the court, the grounds for the unconstitutionality are that the statutory provision in question does not comply with the principle of legal certainty, which derives directly from the Constitution; a particular aspect of this principle, which was held to have been infringed in this case, is the principle of protection of the individual's confidence in the state and its institutions.

This judgment has not been the only one to date to find constitutionality issues with the statutory provision in question; nor is it likely to be the last. Although the statute has not yet been amended by the legislature, it is highly likely that if the Greek courts, especially the higher courts (the appeal courts and Supreme Court) continue ruling in this direction, the legislative body is likely to decide to modify Law 4640/2019 accordingly and limit the obligation to pay judicial duty to actions filed after the entry into force of the said law.

Law stated - 06 June 2023

Jurisdictions

	Armenia	Concern Dialog Law Firm
	Australia	Kalus Kenny Intalex
	Austria	OBLIN Attorneys at Law
	Bahrain	Newton Legal Group
	Belgium	White & Case
	Bulgaria	Georgiev Todorov & Co
	Cayman Islands	Campbells
	China	BUREN NV
	Cyprus	AG Erotocritou LLC
	Denmark	Lund Elmer Sandager
	Egypt	Soliman, Hashish & Partners
	Germany	Martens Rechtsanwälte
	Greece	Bernitsas Law
	Hong Kong	Hill Dickinson
	India	Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas
	Indonesia	SSEK Law Firm
	Israel	Lipa Meir & Co
	Japan	Anderson Mōri & Tomotsune
	Liechtenstein	Niedermüller Rechtsanwälte Attorneys at Law
	Malaysia	Shearn Delamore & Co
	Monaco	Donald Manasse Law Offices
	Panama	Patton Moreno & Asvat
	Philippines	Ocampo, Manalo, Valdez & Lim Law Firm
	Romania	Zamfirescu Racoți Vasile & Partners
	Serbia	Stankovic & Partners NSTLaw

	South Korea	JIPYONG LLC
	Spain	Ontier
	Sweden	TIME DANOWSKY Advokatbyrå AB
	Thailand	Pisut & Partners
	United Arab Emirates	Kennedys Law LLP
	United Kingdom - England & Wales	Latham & Watkins LLP
	USA - California	Ervin Cohen & Jessup LLP
	USA - New York	Dewey Pegno & Kramarsky LLP