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## Environmental and Energy Policies and Laws for Tackling the Ecological and Climate Crisis in Greece

Evangelos N. Manolis <sup>1,\*</sup>, Aris Stilianou <sup>1</sup>, Eleftheria N. Manoli <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Political Sciences, Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 54124 Thessaloniki, Greece; stilianu@polsci.auth.gr (AS)

<sup>2</sup> School of Philosophy and Education, Faculty of Philosophy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 54124 Thessaloniki, Greece; emanolib@edlit.auth.gr (EINM)

\* Correspondence: Evangelos N. Manolis, Email: emanolis@polsci.auth.gr.

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### ABSTRACT

The ecological and climate crisis has intensified the need for environmental and energy governance capable of promoting sustainable transitions. Within this context, the present research investigates environmental and energy policies and laws intended to tackle the ecological and climate crisis in Greece. The novelty of the study lies in its integrated analytical mapping of the national regulatory and policy framework, combining environmental policy, energy policy, environmental law, energy law and institutional arrangements within a single cross-sectoral approach. In particular, official national and European Union institutional texts are examined. Methodologically, this study applies a qualitative, document-based investigation of official national and European Union policy and legislative sources. The results indicate that Greece has developed a dense and diversified environmental and energy policy and legal framework for tackling the ecological and climate crisis, aligned with European and international climate objectives. However, this framework remains fragmented, leading to coordination gaps, overlaps and implementation challenges. According to the findings, climate policy should be enhanced. Achieving climate neutrality and ecological resilience in Greece is a governance challenge. The study also focuses on recommendations to enhance the roadmap of this framework for tackling the ecological and climate crisis. Finally, the theoretical scheme for a sustainable State with enhanced ecological features is examined.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Policy and Institutional Context

Policies, namely the laws and regulations that a government implements as well as the programs it funds, largely determine the government's role. Politics is a process through which groups and individuals attempt to control or influence the actions and policies of governments at local, regional, national, and international levels. One application of this process that is important is the shaping of environmental policy—namely, laws, regulations, as well as programs related to environmental protection, which are designed and implemented by one or more agencies of a government [1] (pp. 544–546).

A series of studies, reports and agreements prepared at national, European and international levels highlight the necessity and wish of the community to lead to more sustainable solutions for the environment and to address the ecological and climate crisis.

In particular, the crucial Paris Agreement aims to strengthen efforts to address climate change for the sustainable development and the poverty eradication by continuing the efforts to limit temperature rise to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels [2]. Human actions now threaten more species with global extinction than ever before, suggesting that around a million species are already threatened with extinction [3] (pp. 11–12).

The *European Green Deal* [4] brings a series of policy initiatives for the green transition and climate neutrality in various areas, such as the 55% adaptation package “*Fit for 55*” [5], the *European Climate Law* [6], the new *EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change* [7], the *EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030* [8], the *Farm to Fork Strategy* [9], etc.

The above, combined with the sequence of crises, place in the spotlight issues that concern the daily lives of citizens, who need an action plan with realistic characteristics and strategic direction, such as energy issues, the issue of nutrition, the design of the national production model and the sustainable way of food production.

Although Greece has developed a wide range of environmental and energy-related policies, its climate and environmental governance remain characterised by persistent bottlenecks, including policy and institutional fragmentation, limited cross-sectoral coordination, administrative inconsistencies, and regulatory overlaps. Existing studies on climate policy, renewable energy and environmental regulation frequently point to implementation gaps, uncertainties and, broader challenges regarding policy effectiveness. However, despite this growing body of literature, comprehensive and integrative analyses that systematically map and interrelate environmental policy, energy policy, environmental law, and institutional arrangements within a single analytical framework remain limited. As a result, the overall structure, coherence, and convergence of these regulatory and policy instruments in addressing the ecological and climate crisis are insufficiently explored.

The present study addresses that gap in the Greek case. The absence of an integrated, country-level analytical mapping of environmental and energy policies and regulatory frameworks for tackling the ecological and climate crisis constitutes the central problem of this study, as it constrains both scholarly understanding and the development of holistic, effective and strategically grounded proposals for strengthening environmental and climate governance. This focus is significant not only for understanding the Greek case, but additionally for contributing to broader discussions regarding the way in which environmental protection, climate policy and energy transition can be synchronized within a coherent governance framework.

As an EU Member State and a country of the Mediterranean region experiencing increasing ecological and climate challenges, Greece provides a relevant case for studying how domestic legal and institutional structures translate broader climate objectives into implementation.

### **Literature Review**

According to the literature [10], case studies provide evidence that well-planned and tailored policy measures are essential in shaping pathways toward a more sustainable future. Recent literature [10] presents a comparative assessment across multiple regions, providing insights into the complex relationship between energy security and climate change. The literature [10] concludes that energy policies play a central role in directing a country's environmental trajectory. Shaped by distinct geopolitical and socio-economic conditions, policy approaches span a wide spectrum, from incentives for renewable energy to carbon pricing instruments. According to the literature [10], social and economic considerations remain pivotal in achieving a balance between climate change mitigation and energy security.

The literature [11] indicates that examining each country on an individual basis makes it possible to derive several key conclusions adapted to their particular contexts. This methodology enables the identification of distinct research gaps that must be addressed at the national level. The study [11] examines the environmental policies of seven major emitting countries over the period from 1990 to the present. It evaluates their commitments and actions by comparing pledges with actual emission trends, with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of their policies. The literature [11] relies on scientific papers in order to access and analyze policy-related information across countries.

The literature [12] shows that environmental taxation and stricter regulatory frameworks are linked to increased renewable energy consumption. At the same time, greater policy stringency and higher ecological taxes may adversely influence businesses' production activities by increasing operational costs, which can weaken their competitiveness at both domestic and international levels. Consequently, the literature [12] points to the need for careful policy implementation and for maintaining

a balance to ensure that total national output is not negatively affected. Moreover, the literature [12] emphasizes for policymakers the role of green investment in supporting environmentally friendly technologies and promoting the development of renewable energy sources. The literature [12] also indicates that improvements in literacy rates should form an integral part of environmental policy, as higher literacy levels enhance environmental awareness among the population.

In parallel, recent literature [13] provides evidence from the mid-2010s indicating that consumers, in a country-specific context, had awareness of and were attentive to environmental concerns and the necessity to conserve environmental values for future generations in their energy-related choices.

The literature suggests that the absence of adequate climate policies or the presence of climate policy uncertainty is likely to discourage innovative activity in clean technologies [14]. Also, a recent study highlights the importance of adopting an integrated approach to policy design, investment strategies, and governance structures in order to promote sustainable energy transitions [15]. Furthermore, another study emphasizes the need for targeted policies and coordinated strategies so that circular economy and energy transition can operate in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way [16]. A recent study underscores the need for integrated policies, greater investment in clean energy sources, and international cooperation in order to achieve a balanced transition in the energy sector [17]. In addition, recent research indicates the importance of a policy framework that integrates climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to accomplish the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [18].

The European Union is broadly recognized as a key reference point in environmental policy, with its frameworks widely seen as among the most effective worldwide, reflecting its dedication to action on climate change and sustainability [11]. Inside the European Union, significant disparities persist, which may affect the coherence and performance of its environmental policies [11].

A novel contribution of the current study is the integrated analytical mapping of Greece's legal, institutional, and governmental framework for addressing the ecological and climate crisis from an integrated perspective. Such a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary mapping reveals institutional and legal gaps, overlaps, and discontinuities that are frequently overlooked when environmental policy, energy policy, environmental law, and institutional arrangements are examined separately. By examining and understanding the structure of the regulatory framework as a whole, the study contributes to comprehensive policy design and to a clearer understanding of the governance structure. A fragmented institutional framework as regards environmental and energy governance may lead to overlapping policies, regulatory discontinuities, inequalities, and inconsistent policy signals, which could discourage long-term investments

and weaken the effectiveness of climate and environmental action. As the EU is a leading force in environmental policy, each country constitutes a point of reference for the rest of the world in terms of integrating European objectives, functioning cohesively and inclusively, and understanding climate governance with its own national specificities and institutional realities. The present article goes beyond descriptive policy analysis by proposing policy-oriented recommendations to strengthen the existing roadmap and by contributing to the theoretical discussion on the concept of a sustainable and ecologically enhanced state.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present research is structured around three interrelated objectives. The first objective is to investigate the national framework of environmental and energy policies and laws for addressing the eco-climatic crisis in Greece. This investigation includes the systematic examination of legislative and regulatory texts that explicitly set objectives related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection, and the energy transition. The second objective is to elaborate proposals for strengthening the roadmap of environmental and energy policies for addressing the ecological and climate crisis, taking into account the need to shape a productive background adapted both to climate change and to the particular conditions of the Mediterranean region. The third objective is to contribute to the investigation of the theoretical framework for the development of a sustainable and equitable State with enhanced ecological features.

To address these objectives, the study adopts a qualitative, document-based methodological approach. The methodology includes a structured review of the bibliography at both national and international level, including scientific studies, academic writings, essays related to the subject, and other relevant scholarly sources.

In parallel, official policy and institutional material was examined, such as environmental and energy laws, regulatory acts, national strategies, action plans, and European Union policy and legislative documents relevant to climate policy, environmental governance and sustainable energy, retrieved from official national institutional sources, including the Government Gazette and the EUR-Lex database of European Union law. The collected material was examined qualitatively in order to organize and map the environmental and energy policy and legal framework into thematic fields, enabling a systematic overview of its structural characteristics.

Schematically, the procedure of the research consisted of the following stages: (i) the collection of official regulations, laws and policies, (ii) the filtering in accordance with more recent amendments, (iii) the qualitative organization and mapping of them into thematic fields, (iv) the review of relevant bibliography, (v) the interpretive examination in order to identify

structural characteristics, challenges and implications for further proposals and theoretical framework investigation.

This qualitative approach allows the study to identify policy implications, internal patterns, structural characteristics and governance challenges, which subsequently shape the policy-oriented proposals and the theoretical discussion developed in the subsequent sections. The analysis focuses on the recent evolution of the Greek environmental and energy policy and legal framework, with emphasis on developments of the last two decades and the most recent national and EU-level institutional texts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Investigation of the National Framework of Environmental and Energy Policies and Laws to Address the Eco-Climatic Crisis

#### *Basic institutional framework for addressing the eco-climatic crisis*

Official texts formulate specific action ways to address the ecological and climate crisis. The *Paris Agreement* ratified by the Law 4426/2016 [19], The *European Green Deal* [4], the package *Fit for 55* [5], the *new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change* [7], the Regulation for *establishing the Just Transition Fund* [20], the *European Climate Law* [6], the *National Climate Law* 4936/2022 [21], the *National Adaptation Strategy to Climate Change* [22], the *National Energy and Climate Plan* (NECP) [23], the revised *National Energy and Climate Plan* (revised NECP) [24], the *National Forest Strategy* [25], the *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* [26], the *National Strategy for the Circular Economy* [27], and the *National Action Plan for the Circular Economy* [28] contributed initially in a pivotal way towards this direction.

The Law 4426/2016 ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change. Each country regularly provides information on anthropogenic emissions and absorptions as well as information on adaptation and the impacts of climate change [19] (article 13).

The Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 establishes the Just Transition Fund. The activities which it supports include investments related to clean energy infrastructure and systems. It also supports activities related to the regeneration and decontamination of abandoned areas as well as the soil restoration [20] (article 8).

The *European Climate Law* [6] as an EU Regulation is a binding legislative act for the countries of the Union. The article 1 of the Regulation [6] sets a binding target for the Union of climate neutrality by 2050. The article 5 of the Regulation [6] on adaptation to climate change mentions that the states of the Union ensure that adaptation policies are coherent and that they focus on the affected and most vulnerable populations.

The *new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change* [7] emphasizes the key role of climate-related knowledge platforms and their contribution to adaptation action. The Climate-ADAPT strategy is emerging as a valid platform at European level for adaptation [7].

The *National Climate Law* 4936/2022, includes important articles for addressing the eco-climatic crisis. For the adaptation, in accordance with the article 4 of the Law 4936/2022, the *National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS)* as well as the *Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plans (RCCAPs)* are being prepared.

The Climate Change Impacts Study Committee (CCISC) of the Bank of Greece has prepared [29] the *National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS)*. Following extensive cooperation (CCISC, Ministry of Environment and Energy, etc.) [22] (p. 4), the *National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS)* was prepared. Its primary purpose is to strengthen the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change [22] (p. 6). The directions of the NCCAS are specified by the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plans (RCCAPs), shaping the priorities at the local level [22] (p. 6). Based on the specific characteristics that exist in the Regional Units, it is planned to be prepared vulnerability assessments concerning ecosystems, sectors of the economy and population groups with a perspective until at least 2050 [22] (p. 13).

With the Decision of the Government Council for Economic Policy 4/2019, the *National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)* was ratified. This specific NECP set for the year 2030 with regard to Renewable Energy Sources (RES) as a goal to increase their share of participation in gross final energy consumption to 35% [23] (pp. 55459–55511). The revised National Energy and Climate Plan (revised NECP) [24] set a target for renewable energy sources (RES) to account for 43% of total gross final energy use by 2030 [24] (p. 74389).

With the Ministerial Decision 170195/758/2018, the National Forest Strategy is ratified, which defines the directions and principles of the forest policy for the period 2018–2038 [25] (Article 1). It also analyses the axis related to climate change. By analysing the impacts of climate change on the country's forest ecosystems (e.g., tree mortality, especially at the forest edges, reduction in increment due to drought, genetic changes in forest ecosystems, etc.), the contribution of forest ecosystems to mitigating the impacts of climate change is described too. Their contribution to this mitigation is mainly related to services that regulate the climate, the soil protection, the water management, the air decontamination, the food provision and biodiversity conservation. In addition, the ability of forests to bind significant amounts of carbon and store it contributes to the mitigation of climate change [25] (Article 6).

With the Ministerial Decision 40332/2014, the National Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity for the years 2014–2029 is approved. It describes the “7th General Objective” of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Biodiversity, which concerns

the “Prevention and Reduction of Impacts on Biodiversity due to Climate Change”, where the specific objectives and actions for the implementation of the specific objectives are defined [26] (p. 29726).

The Ministerial Decision YΠEN/ΓΔΔΔΠ/61420/447/2019 concerns the *Public Policy for the Prevention of Forest Fires*. It aims at the management of forest ecosystems with emphasis on prevention, the limitation of fuel, the utilization of forest biomass as well as the creation of a framework for the prevention of forest fires in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas [30] (Article 1).

The Law 4662/2020 establishes a “National Mechanism for Crisis Management and Risk Response” which constitutes all the structures and functions of Civil Protection and its basic principles are fulfilled through the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery of risks [31] (Article 2). Also, the *National Policy for the Reduction of Disasters’ Risk* is planned every six years, for the preparation of which the analysis of disasters’ risk is taken into account in relation to policies concerning the environmental protection and the climate change, as well as the *National Planning of Civil Protection* is established, which is of three years’ duration [31] (Article 9).

The above findings indicate that Greece has made considerable efforts to develop an institutional framework aligned with EU climate objectives, covering mitigation, adaptation, energy transition, and environmental protection. However, the systematic analysis reveals that this framework is largely composed of parallel, sector-specific instruments rather than an integrated governance system. This suggests that, despite regulatory development, institutional fragmentation remains a defining feature, with important implications for policy coherence, coordination, and effective implementation across interconnected policy fields.

#### *Environmental Policies and Environmental Laws to address the eco-climatic crisis*

The response to the eco-climatic crisis, due to its cross-sectoral nature, is complex and is linked at its core to the institutional protection of the Natural Environment. Thus, individual laws, strategies, plans and in general regulations have been developed through institutional texts that are summarized below and which are equally important as those mentioned above, which have to some extent paved the way for the multi-level response to this complex issue of the climate crisis.

Environmental Law extends to several areas, such as the natural environment, the atmospheric air, inland waters, forests, waste, etc. [32] (p. 112).

The crucial article 24 of the Constitution [33], which refers to the protection of the environment, defines the obligations of the State for its protection, the obligation to take preventive or repressive measures in the form of the principle of sustainability, as well as the obligation to compile a forest register and a national cadastre.

### Environmental Authorising and Environmental Protection

The environmental consequences of the implementation of investment and development activities and projects are addressed through the *Environmental Impact Assessment* [34] (p. 2). The main objective of the *Environmental Impact Assessment* (EIA) as well as the *Decision Approving Environmental Conditions* (DAEC) is to ensure, through compliance with environmental conditions, the optimal management and protection of the human-made and natural environment from a project-activity [35] (p. 1).

Initially, the Law 1650/1986 lays the foundations for environmental protection by establishing rules, criteria and mechanisms for its protection and the sustainable development with objectives the pollution prevention and degradation, ensuring human health, the renewal of natural resources, the maintenance of ecological balance and the environmental restoration. The Law 4014/2011 concerns the environmental authorisation of projects and activities, in summary. In addition to the classification of projects and activities into categories A and B according to their environmental impacts, it defines the competent environmental authority for projects and activities in category A1 [36] (Article 3, as amended and in force) and category A2 [36] (Article 4, as amended and in force) and establishes the procedure for the adoption of the Decision Approving Environmental Conditions (DAEC) for this category [36] (Article 3, as amended and in force) as well as for category A2 [36] (Article 4, as amended and in force). It also refers to the *Standard Environmental Commitments* (SECs) to which the projects or activities of category B are subjected, which do not follow the development of the *Environmental Impact Assessment* (EIA) [36] (Article 8, as amended and in force).

The Ministerial Decision 170225/2014 includes in its annexes the general contents of the Preliminary Determination of Environmental Requirements (PDER) of the projects and activities of Category A' [37] (Annex I), the basic standards of the *Environmental Impact Assessments* (EIAs) of projects and activities, the standards of the *Special Ecological Assessment* (SEA), differentiated standards requirements of *Environmental Impact Assessments* (EIAs) per group and subcategory, such as for example for projects and activities concerning the "Renewable Energy Sources" group [37] (Annex 4.10).

The Ministerial Decision 1958/2012 [38], as amended and in force, classifies projects and activities into categories and subcategories depending on their impact on the environment, as well as shaping thematic groups for their further grouping.

The Law 4685/2020 introduces provisions regarding the simplification of environmental licensing [39] (Articles 1–9) as well as provisions regarding the RES licensing process [39] (Articles 10–25), also setting restrictions on the siting of RES stations [39] (Article 13), with regard to onshore wind farms [39] (Para. 1, Article 13), photovoltaic plants [39] (Para.

2, Article 13) and Small Hydroelectric Power Plants (SHPs) [39] (Para. 3, Article 13).

The Ministerial Decision 107017/2006 [40] aims to include the environmental dimension before the adoption of programs and plans, establishing the necessary measures, conditions and procedures concerning the evaluation and assessment of the impacts that they may have on the environment [40] (Article 1). Thus, the *Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA)* contains information that may be required to assess the potential significant impacts that the implementation of the program or plan will have on the environment [40] (Para. 2, Article 6).

With Law 2947/2001 [41] (Article 9), the Special Service of Environmental Inspectors was established and, in summary, the responsibilities of the *General Directorate of the Body of Inspectors and Auditors*, according to paragraph 2, article 9, Law 2947/2001, as amended and in force, are the monitoring of the implementation and control of environmental conditions for projects and activities, as well as the recommendation on issues concerning the imposition of sanctions in case they are violated [41] (Para. 2, Article 9).

The Regulation (EC) 1221/2009 on the *Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS)* aims to promote the continuous improvement of organizations in terms of their environmental performances, by establishing and implementing systems related to environmental management by organizations, with the systematic, periodic and objective evaluation of the performance of these systems, etc. [42] (Article 1).

#### Air Pollution

As regards the Air Pollution, the following basic legislation is summarized.

The Common Ministerial Decision 22306/1075/E103 aims [43] (Article 1), among other things, to the avoidance, the prevention or reduction of the harmful effects on human health and the environment as a whole from concentrations in the atmospheric air of elements such as arsenic, cadmium, nickel, etc., the establishment of target values relating to their concentration as well as the determination of criteria and methods for their assessment.

The Common Ministerial Decision 14122/549/E.103 aims to [44] (Article 1) transpose Directive 2008/50/EC [45] into national law, to set objectives for ambient air quality to reduce harmful effects on health and humans, to assess ambient air quality based on common criteria and methods, and to collect information regarding ambient air quality to combat pollution.

Presidential Decree 1180/1981 [46] is the main legislation regarding the protection of the atmosphere from air emissions originating from industrial facilities [47].

The Law 3017/2002 [48] as well as the Law 4345/2015 [49] ratify the international texts on climate change.

The Law 3447/2006 [50] ratified the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), which refers in general to the necessity to take measures for persistent organic pollutants.

The Common Ministerial Decision 11294/1993 [51] contributes to the framework for setting emission limits for specific combustion installations.

The Common Ministerial Decision 10245/713/1997 [52], aims to the harmonization of national legislation with the European Directive 94/63/EC [53] “on the control of emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC) originating from the storage of gasoline and its disposal from terminal facilities to fuel distribution stations.” so that measures are taken to limit air pollution from emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC) in order to achieve environmental and health protection.

The Common Ministerial Decision 36028/1604/2006 [54] aims to contribute to the direction of protecting the climate system.

With the Ministerial Decision 437/2005/2006 [55] the legislator generally intends to prevent or limit the pollution caused in the air by the contribution of volatile organic compounds to the creation of tropospheric ozone.

The Ministerial Decision 37411/1829/E103/2007 [56] as amended in force, had the objective, in essence, of contributing to the protection of the ozone layer through specific provisions.

The Common Ministerial Decision 38030/2127/E103/2008 [57] aimed at the annual reduction of emissions into the atmosphere of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, etc.

The Common Ministerial Decision 189533/2011 [58] has as its scope of application (article 1) the performance of maintenance work in specific central heating installations, etc., regulates relevant issues such as permitted fuels (article 2), operational requirements (article 4) concerning exhaust gas limit values, pollutant emission limit values, as well as issues of maintenance and regulation of installations (article 5).

#### Protection of the Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Regarding the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity, the following basic legislative acts are summarized.

The Legislative Decree 191/1974 [59] ratifies the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The purpose of the Ramsar Convention is to protect wetlands of international importance for waterfowl. The purpose of the Ramsar Convention is to protect wetlands of international importance for waterfowl [60] (p. 788).

The Law 998/1979 aims to establish measures for the protection of forest ecosystems in a sustainable way [61] (Article 1, as amended and in force). Precaution is taken during their management so that they are qualitatively upgraded, such as through regenerative logging, reforestation etc. [61] (Article 17, as amended and in force). It includes

articles on the protection of flora and fauna [61] (Article 19, as amended and in force), forest fires [61] (Articles 23–36, as amended and in force), afforestations and reforestations etc. [61] (Articles 37–44, as amended and in force).

The Law 1650/1986 refers to the protection and conservation of biodiversity, nature and landscape, native flora and wild fauna [62] (Article 18, as amended and in force).

The Law 3937/2011 aims to manage biodiversity from the perspective of sustainability as well as to conserve biodiversity in an effective manner [63] (Article 1).

The Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 establishes rules relating to the prevention, minimisation as well as mitigation of the adverse effects of the spread and introduction of invasive alien species on EU biodiversity [64] (Article 1).

The Law 4280/2014 [65] is among those legislative acts that are fundamental to the current Forest Law and at the same time to a certain extent to the Cadastral Forest Law [32] (pp. 53–54).

The Common Ministerial Decision 33318/3028 [66] aims to establish provisions concerning the protection of biodiversity by taking measures to ensure the conservation, the restoration to a significant extent of habitats, of wild species and the integration of provisions of relevant European legal texts.

The Common Ministerial Decision 37338/1807/E.103/2010 [67] aims to comply with the European Directives and formulate measures for the protection and conservation of wild bird fauna. Additionally, it was supplemented by another Common Ministerial Decision 8353/276/E103/2012 [68]. In the same spirit, the Common Ministerial Decision 44105/1398/E.103 [69] incorporates European Directive's provisions.

The Law 4685/2020 establishes the framework for the management of protected areas [39] (Articles 26–43). It establishes N.E.C.C.A. (*Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency*), which is supervised by the *Ministry of Environment and Energy* and aims to implement the policy of this Ministry regarding the management of protected areas in the country, addressing climate change, preserving biodiversity, as well as implementing and promoting sustainable development actions [39] (Paras. 1–4, Article 27, as amended and in force).

In the Ministerial Decision 170195/758/2018, which defined the National Forest Strategy, the directions and principles of the forest policy for the period 2018-2038 were established. According to this, the Mediterranean Forestry model is henceforth adopted in the management of the forest ecosystems of Greece [25] (Para. 1, Article 3).

The Regulation (EU) 2018/841 sets out the commitments of Member States with regard to the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF). It also establishes rules for the accounting of emissions and removals from this sector and the monitoring that is related with the compliance of the Member States with those commitments [70] (Article 1).

The Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 establishes rules regarding the availability as well as the placing on the EU market and the export of derived products, such as timber, with the aim of reducing the Union's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and global biodiversity loss [71] (Article 1 & Annex I).

The Law 5037/2023 establishes provisions concerning the protection of the natural environment. More specifically, it sets objectives for the protection of nature [72] (Article 174). By 2030, at least 30% of the areas of habitats listed in the annexes (I and II) of this law that are not in good condition shall be subject to measures for their restoration, improvement and restoration to good condition. This percentage shall increase to 60% by 2040 and to 100% by 2050 [72] (Article 175).

The Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 on nature restoration establishes rules that contribute to the recovery of the resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity in all marine and terrestrial areas of the Member States through the restoration of degraded ecosystems as well as to the achievement of the Union's overarching objectives in relation to climate change mitigation [73] (Article 1).

### Waste management

For the political and strategic planning of the country as regards the waste management, there is the *National Waste Management Plan* (NWMP) [74] (p. 9809). After the NWMP for the period 2015–2020 [75,76], the NWMP for the period 2020–2030 followed [74], which was amended [77]. One of the main objectives is to reduce the landfill of Municipal Solid Waste to a percentage of less than 10% by 2030 [74] (p. 9809). Also, significant emphasis is given to source separation. Furthermore, it focuses on the holistic management of waste from the agricultural and livestock sector, which constitutes the largest category (approximately 40%) of waste [74] (p. 9810).

Furthermore, the *National Waste Prevention Program* [78] establishes the roadmap for the implementation of measures and actions to prevent waste generation.

One of the most important documents at the policy and strategy level regarding waste management is the National Strategy for the Circular Economy [27].

With the Ministerial Cabinet Act no. 12/29.4.2022 [28], the National Action Plan for the Circular Economy was approved. The circular economy and its upgrading are expected to contribute decisively to achieving climate neutrality by 2050 as well as to decoupling the use of resources

from economic growth and at the same time ensuring the competitiveness of the EU without leaving anyone behind [28] (p. 3102).

#### Liquid waste

As regards the liquid waste and more specifically its reuse after treatment. The Common Ministerial Decision 5673/400/1997 [79] aims to develop and take the necessary measures so as to ensure environmental protection from the negative consequences resulting from the disposal of wastewater. Essentially, in the same approach, the Common Ministerial Decision 19661/1982/1999 [80] as well as the Common Ministerial Decision 48392/939/2002 [81] are moving in the same direction.

The Common Ministerial Decision 145116/2011 [82] aims to utilize treated wastewater to save water resources. This will contribute to addressing the consequences of Mediterranean drought and water scarcity and the worsening of this issue due to the climate crisis [82] (Article 1, as amended and in force).

#### Solid waste

Regarding solid waste policy, it is also implemented through basic legislation. An essential law is the Law 4042/2012 [83], which was amended by the Law 4819/2021 [84]. Also, the Law 4071/2012 [85], which was amended by the Law 4555/2018 [86], in which an attempt is being made to regulate the institutional framework for regional solid waste management agencies.

The Common Ministerial Decision 104826/2004 [87] aims to formulate a contribution fee provided for in the specific provisions based on the geographical coverage of the activity of the alternative packaging management system.

The Common Ministerial Decision 56366/4351/2014 [88] establishes requirements for the production of type A compost (which is defined as the sanitized and stabilized compost resulting from the processing of mixed municipal waste, according to the Para.10, Art.1, Common Ministerial Decision 56366/4351/2014) and type A digestate (which is defined as sanitized and stabilized digestate resulting from the anaerobic digestion of mixed municipal waste in the form of solid pellet, according to the Para.11, Art.1, Common Ministerial Decision 56366/4351/2014), measures and conditions for their use, licensing conditions and quality characteristics of specific recovered materials.

The Common Ministerial Decision 43942/4026/2016 [89] develops the organizational and operational part of the Electronic Waste Registry [89] (Article 1).

#### Hazardous waste

The primary legislation for the hazardous waste policy is outlined below. The Common Ministerial Decision 13588/725/2006 [90] aims to

formulate guidelines, conditions and measures for the management of hazardous waste so as to ensure a level of environmental protection and health protection [90] (Article 1).

The Common Ministerial Decision 24944/1159/2006 [91] aims to approve technical specifications regarding the management of hazardous waste. Finally, the Common Ministerial Decision 62952/5384/2016 [92] aims at the holistic and sustainable management of hazardous waste so as to promote the prioritization of waste in order to reduce the impacts on public health and the environment, while at the same time waste management contributes positively to sustainable development.

### Sustainable Water Management

The following basic legislation is used to Sustainable Water Management.

The Presidential Decree 51/2007 [93] refers to the adoption of measures to achieve environmental goals for surface waters, groundwater and protected areas [93] (Para. 1, Article 4).

The legislation focuses on maintaining the ecological balance of rivers and lakes, with Law 1739/1987 [94] providing for the State's care in determining the minimum flow that must be maintained in rivers as well as the minimum level height with regard to the lakes of the territory, so as to maintain their ecological balance [94] (Para. 7, Article 11).

The Law 3199/2003 [95] stipulates in article 7, as amended and in force [72] (Article 32), that a Management Plan for the River Basin District (Water District) is prepared by each Decentralized Administration for its area of competence.

The Common Ministerial Decision 145026/2014 [96] establishes a register for the registration of water abstraction points in total as well as the extractable quantities of water from underground and surface systems of the territory [96] (Para. 1, Article 1).

Furthermore, the Common Ministerial Decision 146896/2014 [97] determines the uses of water and projects for the development of water resources (e.g., agricultural use, water supply, energy use, etc.) for which a permit is required.

The Common Ministerial Decision 16190/1335/1997 [98] aims to take measures to reduce water pollution as well as to provide for the prevention of further pollution thereof, which is caused either directly or indirectly by nitrate ions, which originate from agricultural activity.

The Common Ministerial Decision 39626/2208/E130/2009 [99] establishes criteria relating to the assessment of the chemical status of groundwater. It also refers to measures to prevent the introduction of pollutants into groundwater.

The Common Ministerial Decision 51354/2641/E103/2010 [100] aims to reduce the risks associated with pollution of surface waters as well as to achieve their good ecological and chemical status.

According to the Common Ministerial Decision 1811/2011 [101], the upper acceptable values concerning the concentration of pollutants or pollution indicators in groundwater are established.

The National Water Strategy, which has a duration of 6 years, aims to set guidelines to promote the use of water in a sustainable manner and protect available water resources [72] (Article 31).

Overall, the above systematic mapping and qualitative examination of environmental policies and environmental law in Greece indicates the existence of a dense and differentiated regulatory architecture, covering core dimensions of environmental protection, including environmental licensing, air quality, biodiversity and nature conservation, waste management, and sustainable water governance. The qualitative analysis shows that Greece has developed an extensive and multifaceted framework of preventive and regulatory instruments, particularly through Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment, and sector-specific regimes for air, water, waste, forests, and biodiversity.

At the same time, the analysis indicates that, while this organizational structure of environmental governance ensures specialized regulatory coverage, it also points to a fragmented governance and implementation landscape, rather than an integrated ecological governance framework. The coexistence of multiple authorisation procedures, inspection mechanisms, and sector-specific strategies reveals a system rich in regulatory tools but vulnerable to coordination gaps, regulatory overlaps, and uneven enforcement. This structural characteristic is especially important for addressing the eco-climatic crisis, which requires strong cross-sectoral coherence between environmental protection, climate adaptation, and energy transition policies.

#### *Energy policies and Energy Law to address the eco-climatic crisis*

##### The 2030 Agenda and the transition to climate neutrality

In the global Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development and specifically in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 7 refers to *affordable and clean energy* and more specifically to ensuring accessibility to sustainable, affordable, reliable and modern energy for all. In particular, in the sub-goals the strategic orientation is towards increasing the share of RES in the energy mix at the global level [102] (p. 19).

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), held in Dubai in 2023, it was decided to triple global renewable energy capacity and double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvement by 2030 [103] (pp. 5–6).

According to the REPowerEU Plan, the green transformation of Europe's energy system will boost economic growth, industrial excellence and put Europe on a path to climate neutrality by 2050 [104].

### Renewable Energy Sources

According to Law 1650/1986 and in particular the article related to "Measures for the protection of the climate and the atmosphere", the *Renewable Energy Sources* are promoted as a priority as a means to address climate change, protect the atmosphere, make Greece's energy supply sustainable, and achieve sustainable development and utilization of resources [62] (Article 8, as amended and in force).

### Wind Energy

With regard to wind energy, a review of the basic national legislation also reflects the gradual formation of policy on this energy source. The Law 3468/2006 [105], as amended and in force, is a piece of legislation that generally concerns RES. Also, the legislation concerning the environmental licensing of renewable energy sources is applied [106] (p. 197).

The Law 2244/1994 [107] regulates issues related to the installation of wind turbines. The Common Ministerial Decision 49828/2008 [108], sets criteria and rules for the siting of wind turbines in the territory. More specifically, it distinguishes the area based on wind potential, environmental characteristics, etc. into categories such as priority areas and suitability areas. It also refers to areas where the siting of wind turbines is excluded. Furthermore, it sets special criteria for the siting of wind turbines in the mainland, in the island country, in Attica and on uninhabited islets.

In Law 4964/2022, the framework for the development of offshore wind farms is developed [109] (Articles 65–80). Also, Law 4951/2022 [110] aims to modernize the framework associated with the licensing of RES, as well as with the production and then storage of electricity. It also refers to the installation permit in the case of a wind farm, the safety distances of wind turbines, offshore wind farms, wind farms producing energy on islands that are not interconnected, etc. Finally, Law 4203/2013 [111], as amended and in force by the Law 4546/2018 [112], refers to the terms and conditions required for the installation of small wind turbines.

### Hydroelectric Energy

Regarding hydroelectric energy, Law 4203/2013 [111], as amended and in force, regulates issues related to large hydroelectric power stations. Law 3468/2006 [105] refers to issues related to the permit for the installation of large hydroelectric power stations. Law 3199/2003 [95], as amended and in force by the Law 5037/2023 [72], provides for the preparation of a Management Plan for the river basin area by the competent Decentralized

Administration in accordance with the guidelines of the National Water Strategy [95] (Article 6A). Also, Law 3734/2009 [113] refers to issues related to the cases of small hydroelectric power stations. Furthermore, the Ministerial Decision Δ6/Φ1/οικ.13310/10-7-2007 [114] also aims to regulate individual issues related to the terms of the permit for the installation of hydroelectric power stations. Finally, the special framework for spatial planning and sustainable development for RES [108] includes rules, special criteria and exclusion areas for the siting of small hydroelectric projects [108] (Articles 12–16).

### Geothermal Energy

With regard to geothermal energy, key legislative acts shaping the policy framework in this field include Law 4602/2019 [115], which aims to establish the conditions for the sustainable utilization of the country's geothermal potential. The Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΑΠ/42138/552/2021 [116] establishes the regulation of geothermal operations, setting out the methods and conditions under which research, management, or exploitation activities of geothermal potential are carried out, as well as all matters related to rational activity, safety, health, and environmental protection. The Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΑΠ/93462/979/2023 [117] aims to define the characteristics of geothermal fields and areas of geothermal interest. Finally, the Special Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development for Renewable Energy Sources [108] includes criteria for the siting of facilities for the exploitation of geothermal energy [108] (Article 19).

### Biomass

Article 15 of Law 4062/2012 defines biomass [118]. The Presidential Decree 126/1986 [119] refers to the framework for granting forest exploitation rights to forestry cooperatives based on their exploitation plan, which is drawn up under the responsibility of the competent forestry service.

In Ministerial Decision 170195/758/2018 [25], which defines the National Forest Strategy, the sustainable use of biomass from forests for energy production is included in the vertical axes of this strategy. The Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/ΓΔΔΔΠ/61420/447/2019 [30], concerning the Public Policy for the Prevention of Forest Fires, is structured into two pillars. The first pillar includes the areas protected by forest legislation and the second pillar the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) [30] (Article 1).

A significant development in the utilization of forest biomass is the Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/Δ ΠΔ/21828/1642/2024 [120], which attempts to establish an institutional framework for the extraction of forest biomass. Incidentally, forest biomass is the biomass produced from silviculture [72] (Para. 7β, Article 40).

The Law 5106/2024 [121] allows for the process of forest management to establish associations of persons with legal personality under the name “Hybrid Cooperative Schemes” [121] (Article 20), in which forestry cooperatives (50%) as well as the private sector (50%) participate.

The Law 5037/2023 [72] transposes, among other provisions, Article 29 of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 [122] and incorporates sustainability and gas emission reduction criteria regarding biofuels, bioliquids and fuels produced from biomass [72] (Article 79). Biofuels derived from forest biomass should meet specific sustainability criteria to minimize the risk of using forest biomass produced in an unsustainable manner [72] (Para. 7, Article 79).

### Solar energy

Regarding the utilization of solar energy, the Law 3851/2010 [123] regulates licensing issues for energy production and photovoltaic plants, as well as the issue of establishing a rational pricing framework for energy produced by photovoltaic plants.

The Law 3468/2006 [105], as amended and in force [72] (Article 60), establishes a strategic framework for the announcement of programs related to the installation of photovoltaic plants.

The Law 4414/2016 [124] includes regulations for solar energy too.

Finally, in the special framework of spatial planning and sustainable development for RES [108], criteria are set for the location of installations related to the exploitation of solar energy [108] (Article 17).

Overall, the above systematic examination of energy policies and energy legislation in Greece for tackling the eco-climatic crisis reveals the progressive construction of a comprehensive and increasingly diversified regulatory framework for the promotion of renewable energy sources, aligned with global and European policy orientations. The mapping shows that Greece has developed a multi-layered legal architecture covering the full spectrum of renewable energy technologies, including wind (onshore and offshore), hydroelectric, geothermal, biomass, and solar energy, accompanied by specialized licensing, as well as spatial planning provisions which, based on an existing institutional framework dating back to 2008, require systematic updating and further refinement, together with sustainability provisions.

This multiplicity of legal acts reflects both the dynamic expansion of renewable energy deployment and the effort to integrate environmental protection, sustainability criteria, and land-use considerations. However, it also reveals the emergence of coordination challenges between energy policy, environmental governance, and spatial planning, which are crucial for the effectiveness and social legitimacy of the energy transition. In this context, ensuring that the expansion of renewable energy sources is translated into tangible economic benefits for final consumers, including reduced energy costs and improved energy affordability, constitutes an

important condition for public acceptance and long-term policy effectiveness.

The ongoing restructuring of the legal framework of forest management for biomass extraction also brings to the fore an important social and governance dimension of the energy transition, including the issue of acceptance by local communities. Thus, the recent institutional developments have been accompanied by the emergence of social concerns and public debate, particularly regarding the role of forestry cooperatives within the new governance arrangements. Forestry cooperatives and local actors have historically constituted a key component of forest management and sustainable silvicultural practices in Greece, contributing to the maintenance of forest ecosystems, local employment, and rural livelihoods. In this context, the evolving regulatory framework for biomass utilization should more effectively integrate forestry cooperatives and local communities, while safeguarding the profession and acknowledging their historical role. Sustainable forest biomass utilization can contribute simultaneously to climate adaptation, with mitigation co-benefits, and to local socio-economic development, thereby constituting a critical condition for a socially just and ecologically grounded energy transition.

### **Proposals to Strengthen the Roadmap for Environmental and Energy Policies to Address the Ecological and Climate Crisis**

Greece's climate mitigation performance is evaluated and compared with other countries using data from the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) [125], an independent monitoring tool that assesses the climate mitigation performance for 63 countries and the European Union. Performance is measured across four categories, namely Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, Renewable Energy, Energy Use, and Climate Policy [125] (p. 3).

According to the overall performance results of the Climate Change Performance Index 2026, Greece ranks 30th (score: 57.62), receiving an overall “*medium*” rating [125] (p. 7). This represents a decline of eight positions compared with its 22nd position (score: 59.41), which it had previously held in the Climate Change Performance Index 2025 [126] (p. 7). According to the overall performance results of the Climate Change Performance Index 2026, the European Union (EU-27) as a separate entity, alongside its individual countries, ranks at 20th position (score: 62.69) receiving an overall “*medium*” rating, Denmark is the top-ranked country at 4th position (score: 80.52) receiving an overall “*high*” rating, while Saudi Arabia is the lowest-ranked country, ranked at 67th position (score: 11.90) receiving an overall “*very low*” rating [125] (p. 7). No country performs strongly enough across all categories to receive a total “*very high*” rating. As a result, the top three positions remain unfilled [125] (p. 6).

Except for the overall performance, focusing on each one of the four categories separately, and starting in particular with the rating table of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions [125] (p. 9), Greece ranks 36th (score: 25.13), receiving a “medium” rating. The European Union (EU-27) ranks 31st (score: 26.72) receiving a “medium” rating. In this specific category, Pakistan is the top-ranked country, in 3rd position (score: 34.32), receiving a “very high” rating, while Saudi Arabia is the lowest-ranked country, in 66th position (score: 3.42), receiving a “very low” rating [125] (p. 9).

Next, focusing on the rating table of the Renewable Energy category [125] (p. 11), Greece ranks 14th (score: 10.25), receiving a “medium” rating. The European Union (EU-27) ranks 20th (score: 8.58), receiving a “medium” rating. In this particular category, Norway is the top-ranked country, in 1st position (score: 18.62), receiving a “very high” rating, while Algeria is the lowest-ranked country, in 64th position (score: 0.36), receiving a “very low” rating [125] (p. 11).

After that, focusing on the rating table of the Energy Use category [125] (p. 13), Greece ranks 22nd (score: 14.12), receiving a “medium” rating. The European Union (EU-27) ranks 28th (score: 13.69), receiving a “medium” rating. In this category, Pakistan is the top-ranked country, in 3rd position (score: 17.60), receiving a “very high” rating, while the United Arab Emirates is the lowest-ranked country, in 66th position (score: 1.73), receiving “very low” rating [125] (p. 13).

Finally, regarding the Climate Policy category [125] (p. 15), Greece ranks 45th (score: 8.12), receiving a “low” rating. The European Union (EU-27) ranks 15th (score: 13.70), receiving a “medium” rating. In this particular category, Denmark is the top-ranked country, in 4th position (score: 20.00), receiving a “high” rating, while the Islamic Republic of Iran is the lowest-ranked country, in 67th position (score: 0.67), receiving “very low” rating [125] (p. 15).

Thus, Greece should primarily focus on the Climate Policy category, at least to move from a “low” rating to a higher rating level, as the Climate Policy category is Greece’s lowest-rated one, in contrast to the other categories, where it receives at least a “medium” rating, according to CCPI results 2026 [125] (pp. 6–15). Also, Greece should do more in the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions category, as it ranks below the European Union (EU-27), according to CCPI results 2026 [125] (p. 9). Finally, Greece should further improve its overall performance in the Climate Change Performance Index 2026, as it ranks below the European Union (EU-27), according to CCPI results 2026 [125] (p. 7).

The revised *National Energy and Climate Plan* (revised *NECP*) [24] target a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (excluding CO<sub>2</sub> absorption of *Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)*), which could reach up to 58% when the *LULUCF* sector is included, thus aligning with European Union’s goal of a 55% reduction [24] (p. 74209). The established target for the share of Renewable Energy

Sources in gross final energy consumption by 2030 is set at 43% [24] (p. 74243).

The installed capacity of photovoltaic parks and onshore wind parks is expected to grow from 12.5 GW in May 2024 to 22.4 in 2030 [24] (p. 74246). This goal will be achieved, among other means, through the update of the special framework for spatial planning for Renewable Energy Sources and defining of priority areas for these RES plants. This process will take into account both the need for RES development and the particular spatial features of each area, as well as the need to preserve regions of special ecological, cultural and other values. This framework aims to ensure the most rational spatial distribution of RES projects across the country [24] (p. 74247).

Regarding municipal waste, the sludge produced after treatment, and falling within the limits set by legislation, may be utilized on soil in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and the restoration of degraded landscapes [74] (p. 9955). Furthermore, according to the *National Waste Management Plan* (NWMP) [74] (p. 9955), the sludge produced can also be used for energy purposes. As regards industrial waste, it is essential to strengthen and install units that will manage hazardous waste, with priority given to strengthening recycling instead of landfilling. Indicative measures also include the establishment of hazardous waste landfills. Furthermore, the provision for holistic waste management, which is generated by energy production parks (e.g., wind farms) [74] (p. 9974). For agricultural and livestock waste, its reuse is proposed, such as soil cover using residues, its shredding and incorporation into composting, its recycling as organic matter and as a soil conditioner, as well as its use for heat and energy recovery [74] (pp. 9978–9981).

Nevertheless, the reuse of processed municipal sludge cannot be considered risk-free. The accumulation of heavy metals, organic pollutants, pathogens and further contaminants in soils could create environmental and public health risks, particularly in the cases of long-term or repeated implementation. For this reason, sludge reuse should be allowed only under strict quality standards, treatment requirements, and concentration limits. The use of municipal sludge requires systematic monitoring, site assessment and compliance with protective regulatory guidelines, in order to prevent land pollution, contamination of water resources and potential impacts on food chains. From an ecological perspective, the reuse of processed sludge should not be regarded solely as a technical waste-management solution, but as a practice with potentially long-term consequences for soil ecosystems and environmental sustainability.

The actions related to the implementation of the specific objectives of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Biodiversity related to the “7th General Objective” referred to “*Prevention and reduction of impacts on biodiversity due to climate change*” are clear and are listed in Ministerial Decision 40332/2014 [26]. Specific actions are

included for habitats and species assessed as being particularly sensitive to climate change. Impacts on biodiversity from actions to address climate change should also be limited or avoided during the process of assessing the environmental impacts of projects, programmes and plans. Increasing carbon sequestration through sustainable forest management and restoration aims to enhance the role of forests in mitigating the effects of climate change [26] (p. 29726).

The National Waste Prevention Program establishes measures and actions regarding the prevention of waste generation [78] (pp. 3022–3032).

The EU Soil Strategy for 2030 (COM(2021) 699) [127] sets a vision for all soil ecosystems in the Union to be in a healthy state by 2050. By then, soil protection, sustainable use of it and soil restoration will have become the norm. Healthy soils will help address the major challenges of achieving climate neutrality and resilience to climate change [127] (p. 3).

Institutional actions, including the codification of forest legislation and the updating of technical standards for forest management plans, and their implementation, aim to improve the current forest management framework, with the goal of enhancing the productive capacity of forests through the restoration of degraded forest ecosystems and the increase of carbon storage, among other goals [24] (p. 74333). A strategic plan is being developed to encourage the collection and utilization of forest biomass, guided by forest management plans, which will define the technical standards for biomass harvesting. Once properly processed, the forest biomass will be supplied to certified organizations for utilization in energy production or other energy products [24] (p. 74406).

The use of biomass from forest ecosystems for the production of energy from renewable sources is a reliable alternative with many prospects, as long as it can be produced in a way that is sustainable and respectful of local communities and the natural environment. It is part of the vertical strategic axes of the National Forest Strategy, and specifically the axis concerning the forest economy [25]. The utilization of forest biomass for the co-production of energy and heat can contribute to forest fire prevention, particularly in Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas, as well as to the decentralization of energy production in the region, while at the same time further democratizing the energy sector by strengthening energy communities. The utilization of forest biomass contributes to the local economy by strengthening a series of supply chain professions during its transport from the field to the area of its conversion into energy products. Finally, it contributes to the creation of new jobs, especially at a decentralized level, as well as to addressing climate change by producing clean energy, preventing forest fires in Mediterranean ecosystems and, by extension, avoiding the release of many harmful gases into the atmosphere.

According to the Public Policy for the Prevention of Forest Fires [30] and specifically the axis referring to Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas, the actions include the identification of areas that require immediate priority for the prevention of forest fires in such areas, the development of special prevention plans for such areas as well as the information, the awareness-raising of citizens and the formulation of special educational programs in this direction [30] (Article 4).

### **Contribution to the Investigation of the Theoretical Framework for the Creation of a Sustainable and Equitable State with Enhanced Ecological Characteristics**

We need a new ethic and a new narrative for the current century, as there is a risk of experiencing another “death of nature” with implications that may include humans as well as the majority of the biological and natural world that exists today [128] (p. 144). We also need a future grounded in sustainable energy that can replace the Age of Anthropocene as the guiding paradigm for the 21st century [128] (p. 150).

The issue of inequalities is one of the most fundamental axes of any effort to resolve the ecological crisis [129] (p. 65).

To avoid the disruption of the natural environment we must examine the issue of humanity’s domination over nature. It has been argued that the main focus of any effort should be the moral improvement and awareness of people. The role of education in such a process on environmental issues is crucial [130] (p. 31).

The Circular Economy Roadmap also includes a series of actions, such as actions for less waste with more value. Indicatively, these actions include the timely and continuous harmonization of Greek legislation with the regulatory framework of the Union [28] (p. 3125). The horizontal actions also include the development of a specific action plan concerning the bioeconomy, in line with the strategy of Europe for the bioeconomy. Part of the plan may relate to the utilization of biomass, the development of a strategy for nature-based solutions, as well as the mapping of the quantities of biomass available [28] (p. 3131).

Environmental justice is one of the key issues that emerge in terms of the environmental policy agenda. Environmental justice covers a wide range of issues. International politics, environmental cost management at national level, domestic politics, national legislation, etc. [131] (p. 91).

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The present article aimed to systematically research and qualitatively investigate the environmental and energy policy and legal agenda for addressing the ecological and climate crisis in Greece and, as a consequence, to identify structural features and governance challenges, to elaborate suggestions for enhancing the roadmap of environmental and energy policies addressing the eco-climatic crisis, and to enrich the discussion on a sustainable and ecologically enhanced State.

Greece has developed a dense, wide-ranging, and diversified regulatory framework aligned with European and international climate commitments, addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection, and the green transition. This framework covers a wide spectrum of field-specific mechanisms in the areas of environmental licensing, air quality, biodiversity conservation, waste management, water management, and renewable energy development.

At the same time, the coexistence of multiple authorization and supervisory mechanisms and strategic instruments reveal a structurally fragmented governance landscape, which, despite its regulatory richness, remains vulnerable to coordination gaps, regulatory overlaps, and uneven implementation. This institutional fragmentation emerges as a central governance constraint on policy coherence and on the effective convergence of environmental protection, climate adaptation, and energy transition policies.

To achieve climate neutrality, Renewable Energy Sources constitute an important pathway. However, they also constitute a key field for the implementation of environmental policies, capable of substantially shaping the path of Sustainable Development. The careful integration of RES with respect for land use, landscape and ecosystems can create a development model that is Mediterranean and adapted to climate change. Thus, the integration and continuous updating in legislation of criteria that concern, for example, the monitoring of the proper siting of photovoltaic and wind energy installations as well as the sustainable management of biomass from forest ecosystems—both for bioenergy production and for reducing the risk of fire, especially in the wildland-urban interface—is of pivotal importance.

Furthermore, Greece has gradually constructed a multi-level legal framework supporting renewable energy deployment across almost all renewable technologies. Renewable energy development therefore emerges as a fundamental pillar of national climate strategy and as a central policy field where environmental regulations, climate commitments, land-use planning, and socio-economic factors intersect. However, this study also highlights that the rapid expansion of renewable energy should be accompanied by coherent sustainable land-use planning and tangible benefits for local communities, which are crucial for the social acceptance of the energy transition.

Achieving climate neutrality and ecological resilience in Greece is not solely a technological or legal task, but above all a governance challenge. According to the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2026, Greece's overall climate performance remains at a "medium" level, while climate policy receives a low rating and emerges as the country's weakest-performing dimension compared with the other categories measured. Thus, Greece should place greater emphasis on strengthening its climate policy. In addition, Greece could strengthen horizontal coordination, cooperation, and governance capacity in order to translate its regulatory

expansion into measurable climate and environmental outcomes and thereby improve its overall climate performance.

As a result of the recent prolonged economic crisis, Greece concentrated heavily on addressing it. However, the inclusion and reinforcement of additional values are essential for a Western democratic society. Of particular importance is the interpretation of the social changes that occur with the shift of the axis from a dogmatic anthropocentrism to a society that includes non-human beings in its system of values. Thus, a shift in environmental ethics is vital.

The State, through the provision of financial incentives, should direct development towards a production model that will differ from the one that led to successive crises. For this reason, it is important to utilize highly specialized scientific personnel by investing in the knowledge economy with productive relationships based on cooperation and in production processes with a smaller ecological footprint.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Future research could incorporate empirical and quantitative approaches in order to explore the socio-economic dimensions associated with specific policy measures. In addition, future studies could focus on the awareness and engagement of citizens and secondary education communities with the institutional framework and key environmental and climate laws through interviews, questionnaires, or other social research methods, with particular attention to public awareness and environmental education. Future research could also place greater emphasis on selected policy sub-fields of particular relevance for the Mediterranean region, where climate pressures are especially acute. Indicative areas include forest fire and flood risk prevention and management, as well as the development and growth of data centers, for which clear environmental and energy regulatory frameworks are increasingly necessary in order to ensure responsible use of energy and natural resources and support a sustainable future. Finally, future studies could further explore the role of financial incentives, sustainable investment, and broader financing mechanisms in supporting a coherent and socially just ecological and energy transition in Greece.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY**

No data were generated from the study.

### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Conceptualization, EvNM, AS, EINM; Methodology, EvNM, AS, EINM; Investigation, EvNM, EINM; Writing-original draft preparation, EvNM, EINM, AS; Writing-review and editing, EvNM, AS, EINM; Supervision, AS. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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