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The US Economic Presence in Greece

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Summary

- The excellent status of Greek-American relations is reflected in the economic sphere. The stock of American Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Greece has increased in the recent years.
- The technology sector has captured the attention of American digital giants, which have displayed a tendency to choose to build some of their innovation hubs in Greece. Although this is not a new phenomenon, the last few years have seen several new investments, as well as an increasing number of tech-labs in which Greece's digital ecosystem flourishes.
- Over and beyond Greece's digital transformation, the country's shift toward green energy has sparked the interest of American companies, keen to explore opportunities. In tandem, the US is a critical supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Greece, which is, in addition, slowly acquiring the infrastructure capacity to function as an artery through which American LNG can be transported to other markets in the Balkans. Greek ship-owners are playing a significant role in the new energy market.
- The investment of ONEX in Syros is crucial for Greek-American co-operation in the maritime sector and could possibly be replicated in the Elefsis shipyards.
- The real estate sector appears attractive for American companies. Focused principally on the acquisition and/or renovation of hotels, this is expected to boost the tendency of American tourists to return to Greece after the two-years hiatus imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The positive momentum could also encourage more American students to study in Greece.
- The volume of Greek-American trade has steadily increased since 2016, with Greece maintaining a diminishing surplus.

Introduction

Greece's exit from the bailouts in August 2018 inaugurated a new chapter for the national economy. Different conditions grounded in stability and the Eurozone's arrangement for the future payment of Greece's public and private debt have motivated companies from other countries to explore the potential for investing or doing business in the country. American investors constitute a characteristic example: Bank of Greece statistics reveal an increase in the stock of American foreign direct investments from €838 million in 2018 to €1.107 billion in 2019 to €1.289 billion in 2021 (falling to €971 million in 2020, the year the COVID-19 pandemic started).¹ Greece's delisting from the US Trade Representatives Special 301 Watch List in 2020 has been crucial. The delisting came as a result of steps taken by Greek authorities to address the widespread use of unlicensed software in the public sector through the allocation of significant funds to purchase software licenses, progress in online enforcement, and the introduction of legislation to impose fines on those possessing counterfeit products.² Washington had been urging Athens to implement the EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market and deal with online piracy for years.³

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The Technological Sphere

In recent years, Greek-American relations have entered what could perhaps be described as their best period in recent memory. Their multifaceted scope allows for economic synergies in different sectors, including technological affairs. Progress has been gradual. In 2012, Hewlett Packard (HP) decided to transport its goods destined for Europe, the Middle East and Africa through the port of Piraeus.⁴ Further to this, in 2016, Oracle opened a software office in Greece along with similar hubs in the US, the UK, the Netherlands and India.⁵ In addition, in 2018, the US-based electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla set up 'Tesla Greece', a local research and development subsidiary focused on developing electric motor technology.⁶ The company considered the 'Demokritos' technological park of the National Center for Scientific Research to be convenient for the implementation of its research program.

In September 2020, Greece and the US enhanced the institutional character of their cooperation and sealed a science and technology agreement that replaced a previous, more generalized agreement from 1980. This has added further impetus to the existing drive in search of opportunities in Greece by the American private sector. Already, by June of that year, CISCO had established an international center for digital transformation and digital skills in Thessaloniki.⁷ Reportedly, the American company intends to invest up to €10 million in the long-term. CISCO's Senior Account Manager, Nikos Lambrogeorgos, concentrates not only on finding digital solutions in a range of fields such as energy, smart cities, agriculture, teleconferencing and telemedicine,

¹ Data are available in Excel documents on the website of the Bank of Greece, <https://www.bankofgreece.gr/statistika/ekswterikos-tomeas/ameses-ependyseis/roes>, accessed April 2022.

² Office of the United States Trade Representative website, *2020 Special 301 Report*, available at: https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2020_Special_301_Report.pdf, April 2020.

³ Office of the United States Trade Representative website, *2019 Special 301 Report*, available at: https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2019_Special_301_Report.pdf, April 2019.

⁴ Reuters website, 'HP Picks COSCO's Greek Pier as Regional Transport Hub,' available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hewlett-packard-greece-port-idUSBRE8AD1MG20121114>, 14 November 2022.

⁵ *I Kathimerini* English edition website, 'Oracle Opens New Hub in Greece,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/205186/oracle-opens-new-hub-in-greece/>, 18 January 2016

⁶ Greek News Agenda website, 'Tesla Opens R&D Office in Greece to Tap into Local Engineering Talent,' available at: <https://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/topics/business-r-d/6655-tesla-opens-research-department-in-greece>, 27 February 2018.

⁷ CISCO website, 'International Center for Digital Transformation and Digital Skills,' available at: https://www.cisco.com/c/m/en_emeas/digital-transformation-center-thessaloniki-en.html, April 2022.

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but also on Thessaloniki's regional role as an innovation hub in South-Eastern Europe.⁸ Beyond Greece's second largest city, CISCO has partnered with ONEX to create an international marine technology center in Syros, where the latter is investing, as we will see below.⁹

Pfizer, for its part, is technologically anchoring to Thessaloniki. In 2020, it launched an operations center and innovation hub in the Greek city to strengthen the company's digital foundation and build an ecosystem of partnerships with local players, including start-ups, academic and research institutes, and the healthcare system. In the words of its CEO, Albert Bourla, the investments would benefit the city directly and indirectly to the tune of circa €650 million over the decade ahead.¹⁰ Pfizer has already started to hold hiring events: in May 2022, more than 500 people attended one such event, while 350 recruitments have been made in less than two years, according to the company.¹¹ Hailing new employment prospects, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis stressed that the core of Pfizer's employees in Thessaloniki are graduates of Greek state universities.¹²

In 2020, Microsoft announced its *GR for GR* initiative to support the government, businesses of all sizes, and ordinary citizens with technology and resources to create new opportunities for growth. Among other things, the company plans to build new datacenters that will establish a Microsoft Cloud region in Greece, adding the country to the world's largest cloud infrastructure footprint and providing access to low-latency, enterprise-grade cloud services.¹³ Microsoft has also contributed to the digital revival of ancient Olympia, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to digitally restore the ancient site. Speaking at the project's inauguration ceremony, Premier Mitsotakis focused on the importance of enabling visitors to encounter ancient civilizations in the online sphere.¹⁴ In tandem with Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS) also made its debut in Greece, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Greece's Ministers of Development and Digital Governance, Adonis Georgiadis and Kyriakos Pierrakakis respectively, in February 2020.¹⁵ A few months later, AWS opened its first office in Greece to support organizations of all sizes, including startups, enterprises, and public sector agencies, in making the transition to its cloud.¹⁶

⁸ *GR Times* website, 'N. Lambrogeorgos: CISCO and the Task Forces of Digital Transformation,' available at: <https://www.grtimes.gr/diafora/tecnologia/n-lamprogeorgos-cisco-kai-oi-task-forces-toy>, 13 July 2020 (in Greek).

⁹ Navinvestgreece website, 'ONEX and Cisco Open Centre for Marine Innovation in Syros,' available at: <https://www.navinvestgreece.com/post/onex-and-cisco-open-centre-for-marine-innovation-in-syros>, 18 December 2020.

¹⁰ *Kathimerini* website, 'Bourla: Results about Pfizer Pill to be Known in 2021,' available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561535990/mpoyrla-entos-toy-2021-ta-apotelesmata-ton-meleton-gia-to-chapi-tis-pfizer/>, 12 October 2021 (in Greek).

¹¹ Pfizer's Centre for Digital Innovation, 'The Very First Hiring Event by Pfizer Center for Digital Innovation Was Successfully Completed,' available at: <https://centerfordigitalinnovation.pfizer.com/press>, 12 May 2022.

¹² Prime Minister of Greece website, 'Briefing Note on the Presence of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Inauguration of Pfizer's New Center in Thessaloniki,' available at: <https://primeminister.gr/2021/10/12/27687>, 12 October 2021.

¹³ Microsoft website, 'Microsoft Announces Plans for First Datacenter Region in Greece as Part of "GR for GR" Digital Transformation Initiative,' available at: <https://news.microsoft.com/europe/2020/10/05/microsoft-announces-plans-for-first-datacenter-region-in-greece-as-part-of-gr-for-growth-digital-transformation-initiative/>, 5 October 2020.

¹⁴ Prime Minister of Greece website, Speech of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the Inauguration of the Project for the Digital Revival of Ancient Olympia, with the Cooperation of the Ministry of Culture and Microsoft, available at: <https://primeminister.gr/en/2021/11/10/28492>, 10 November 2021.

¹⁵ Greece's Ministry of Development website, Press Release: 'Minister of Development and Growth, Adonis Georgiadis, and Minister of Digital Governance, Kyriakos Pierrakakis, Sign MoU with Amazon,' available at: <https://www.mindev.gov.gr/%CE%BC%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CF%8C%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-amazon-%CF%85%CF%80%CE%AD%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%88/>, 2 August 2021 (in Greek).

¹⁶ Amazon website, 'Expansion Follows Launch of Amazon CloudFront Location in Athens and Signed MoU with Ministry of Digital Governance in 2020 to Build a Modern and Digital Greece Powered by Cloud Computing,' available at: <https://www.aboutamazon.eu/news/press-lounge/amazon-web-services-opens-office-in-greece>, 15 January 2021.

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Greek-American co-operation has also led to the establishment of technological laboratories in various Greek cities.

In another case, Digital Realty acquired Lamda Hellix in order to enter the Greek data center industry. As Lamda Hellix is a leading carrier-neutral colocation and interconnection provider in Greece, and its state-of-the-art data center campus in Athens is the largest in Southeastern Europe, the acquisition gave the American company access to one of the region's fastest-growing markets and a gateway to an increasingly important connectivity hub.¹⁷ Commenting on the acquisition, former Ambassador of the US to Greece Geoffrey Pyatt tweeted that this had been 'another sign of US investor confidence in Greece's digital transformation, and builds momentum for [the] new Science and Tech Agreement.'¹⁸ Furthermore, the National Bank of Greece strengthened its collaboration with SAS in 2021 to create an analytics center of excellence.¹⁹

Beyond investments or business deals by companies in the digital realm, Greek-American co-operation has also led to the establishment of technological laboratories in various Greek cities. Run by the U.S. Mission to Greece, the American Spaces are: the Utech-lab at the Eugenides Foundation in Athens, the Sparti tech-lab in that city's central public library, the Veria tech-lab in that city's central public library, the Corfu tech-lab in Corfu's central public library, the Athens American Center at the American Embassy, the Xanthi tech-lab at the municipal cultural center of Xanthi, and most recently the Thessaloniki tech-lab. These laboratories function as platforms for engaging with local communities and offer English language training, information sessions on studying in the US, skills building sessions in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as innovation and media literacy seminars. These American spaces serve as the public voice and face of the US in foreign countries, and Greece is the location for six of nearly 600 venues associated with 168 embassies and consulates in 140 countries.²⁰

Green Energy and Natural Gas

Greek-American synergies are also expanding in green energy. To start with, wind resources in Greece are among the most attractive for energy production in Europe. Against this backdrop, US firms can either provide equipment in new wind parks or compete for their development. The renewable energy platform of Quantum Energy, 547 Energy, has partnered with ENORA and been awarded power purchase agreements by Greece's Regulatory Authority for Energy (RAE) for several wind energy projects totaling 390 MW.²¹ Moreover, in 2019, the Mytilineos company ordered a General Electric 9HA.02 gas turbine to be the heart of one of the largest natural gas-fired combined cycle power plants in Europe, at the Agios Nikolaos power plant.²² The cooperation between the two enterprises extends beyond Greece, as Mytilineos is supplying and installing four General Electric GT13E2 gas turbines in a simple cycle power generation plant

¹⁷ Digital Realty website, 'Interxion: A Digital Realty Company Establishes Presence In Greece with Acquisition Of Lamda Hellix,' available at: <https://investor.digitalrealty.com/news-and-events/news/press-release-details/2020/Interxion-A-Digital-Realty-Company-Establishes-Presence-In-Greece-With-Acquisition-Of-Lamda-Hellix/default.aspx>, 3 November 2020.

¹⁸ See the relevant tweet by Ambassador Pyatt on <https://twitter.com/USAmbassadorGR/status/1323959696739491840>, 4 November 2020.

¹⁹ *Economic Post* website, 'National Bank and SAS – Cooperation for the Creation of Analytics Center of Excellence,' available at: <https://www.ot.gr/2021/09/28/english-edition/national-bank-and-sas-cooperation-for-the-creation-of-analytics-center-of-excellence/>, 28 September 2021.

²⁰ US Department of State website, 'American Spaces Display Innovation and Resilience in the Face of COVID,' available at: <https://www.state.gov/american-spaces-display-innovation-and-resilience-in-the-face-of-covid/>, 1 April 2022.

²¹ 547 Energy website, '547 Energy and Enora Prove Successful in Third Straight Auction,' available at: <https://www.547energy.com/press-releases/547-energy-and-enora-prove-successful-in-third-straight-auction/>, 29 July 2020.

²² General Electric website, 'GE Secures 100th Unit Ordered for its HA Gas Turbine for MYTILINEOS' Agios Nikolaos Power Plant in Greece,' available at: <https://www.ge.com/news/press-releases/ge-secures-100th-unit-ordered-its-ha-gas-turbine-mytilineos%E2%80%99-agios-nikolaos-power>, 30 September 2019.

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under construction in Tobruk, Libya.²³ Also, in 2021, Motor Oil (Hellas) bought wind parks with a capacity of 240 MW from Fortress.²⁴

National Energy, for its part, has engaged in solar energy works. At the end of 2021, it signed a bond program of circa €60 million with Piraeus Bank to build seven photovoltaic projects including one 51.5 MWp in Viotia in Central Greece and one 8.8 MWp in the Peloponnese.²⁵ In addition, in 2020, Blink Charging Hellas, a joint venture between Blink Charging and the Eunice Energy Group, announced the purchase of 45 dual-port Blink charging stations by the Public Power Company (PPC) for deployment across Greece. This tender was the first following the utility's announcement that it would be entering the Greek EV charging market with 10,000 charging stations.²⁶

Greece is also a buyer of US natural gas. With a storage capacity of 225,000 cubic meters of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and a regasification capacity of 1250 cubic meters/h, the islet of Revythousa is a critical terminal, especially in times of geopolitical crisis. According to Greece's Natural Gas System (DESFA), the US was the largest exporter of LNG to Greece in 2021, when it supplied 12.29 TWh (50.14 percent). Algeria came second with 5.40 TWh (22.04 percent), followed by Qatar and Egypt with 4.74 (19.37 percent) and 1.12 TWh (4.59 percent) respectively. Angola was the final supplier, providing 0.94 TWh (3.84 percent) in 2021.²⁷ The creation of the Alexandroupolis Independent Natural Gas System (INGS) project, which will comprise an offshore floating unit for reception, storage and re-gasification, will not only strengthen Greece's imports of American LNG but also boost the country's role as a transition point for supplies toward the Balkan Peninsula. The partners in the project's construction phase are Gastrade, Gaslog, the Public Gas Corporation of Greece (DEPA), Bulgartransgaz, and DESFA. The construction of the Gas Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria pipeline (IGB) will also enhance Greece's Balkan role. As LNG demand grows, Greek shipowners are taking the lead in its transporting to Greece and other global markets. A small number of Greek shippers now have 22.3 percent of the global LNG carrier fleet under their control in deadweight tonnage terms.²⁸

The Paradigm of Syros

Shipbuilding is part of Greece's heritage and a currently factor in its economic growth. This makes the investment made by ONEX in the Neorion shipyard on the island of Syros, which fosters Greek-American ties in the maritime sector, special. The process started under the SYRIZA government: specifically, in November 2018, a Syros court ratified ONEX's plan for the Neorion Shipyard, which had been under financial strain for some time.²⁹ Reportedly, the plan provided for the writing off of all interest, penalties and fines due to the Single Social Security Entity (EFKA) and the state, and

²³ Mytilineos website, 'The Arrival of the Equipment of the First Power Generation Plant Marks the Recovery of Libya,' available at: <https://www.mytilineos.gr/news/company-news/the-arrival-of-the-equipment-of-the-first-power-generation-plant-marks-the-recovery-of-libya/>, 5 July 2021.

²⁴ Euro2day website, 'Motor Oil Buys Wind Parks of 40 MW,' available at: <https://www.euro2day.gr/news/enterprises/article/2072067/motor-oil-agorazei-aiolika-parka-kai-adeies-ishyos.html>, 31 March 2021 (in Greek).

²⁵ Renewablesnow website, 'National Energy Secures Finance for 60 MWp of Greek Solar Projects' available at: <https://renewablesnow.com/news/national-energy-secures-finance-for-60-mwp-of-greek-solar-projects-766354/>, 20 December 2021.

²⁶ Blink website, 'Blink Charging Hellas Awarded Purchase Agreement to Deploy EV Charging Stations by the Public Power Company, Greece's Largest Electricity Provider,' available at: <https://blinkcharging.com/news/blink-charging-hellas-awarded-purchase-agreement-to-deploy-ev-charging-stations-by-the-public-power-company-greeces-largest-electricity-provider/?locale=en>, 2020.

²⁷ DESFA website, 'DESFA Data for the Consumption of Natural Gas in 2021,' available at: <https://www.desfa.gr/en/press-center/press-releases/stoixeia-desfa-gia-thn-katanalwsh-fysikoy-aerioy-to-2021>, 19 January 2022.

²⁸ Elias Bellos, 'Greeks Rule Global LNG Carrier Market,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1179741/greeks-rule-global-lng-carrier-market/>, 16 March 2022.

²⁹ Naftemporiki website, 'Neorion, Debts, the Interested Parties and the Bailout Decision,' available at: <https://m.naftemporiki.gr/story/1274956/to-neorion-ta-xrei-oi-duo-mnistires-kai-i-apofasi-diasosis>, 11 September 2017 (in Greek).

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the payment of the original debts in 280 installments. It also included a reduction in the entity's obligations to banks and their payment in 30 biannual installments.³⁰ Having reached an agreement with Neorion's previous owner, Nikos Tavoularis, and undertaking its debts, the American company embarked on the implementation of its rehabilitation strategy, leading to investments of approximately \$20 million and the creation of 600 jobs.³¹

By providing integrated solutions covering ship design as well as construction and maintenance support to vessels, ONEX has succeeded in reviving Neorion. Occupancy rates have climbed and, in the words of Premier Mitsotakis, the Syros shipyard 'contributes 15 percent of the island's GDP'.³² Among other things, ONEX and Israeli Shipyards Ltd have agreed on a cooperation framework for the joint production of the Themistocles-class corvette.³³ The success of its Neorion operation spurred the American company on to replicate the model in the Eleusina shipyards. In 2019, ONEX announced that it intended to invest up to \$400 million USD over a period of 15 years to rescue the shipyards, in partnership with the US firm Chatsworth Securities.³⁴ The US International Development Corporation (DFC) is expected to be involved in the commercial development,³⁵ while Italian shipbuilding group Fincantieri has also expressed an interest in participating in the restructuring effort as a partner.³⁶ As was the case with Neorion, the shake-out process is time-consuming, due to previous debts that need to be settled with Greek authorities. However, Minister of Development Georgiadis has ruled out the closure of the Eleusina shipyards,³⁷ and the final accord between the Greek state and ONEX was signed in November 2022.

Real Estate, Tourism and Beyond

In parallel with the fields analyzed above, American companies also have their eye on Greece's real estate sector, with usages and/or economic objectives varying according to the type of property. A plethora of examples can be identified in recent years: In 2017, Värde Partners came to an agreement with Lamda Development for a minority share (31.7 percent) in the Golden Hall and Mediterranean Cosmos Shopping Centers.³⁸ In 2019, Oaktree Capital Management made a successful offer for IASO, a Greek-listed hospital.³⁹ In 2020, HIG Capital announced that one of its affiliates had provided debt and equity financing to Dimand, an Athens-based company for office

³⁰ Ilias Bellos, 'Court Accepts ONEX Plan for Neorion Shipyard,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/234733/court-accepts-onex-s-plan-for-neorion-shipyard/>, 15 November 2018.

³¹ Relevant historical information is available on the website of ONEX, available at: <https://www.onexcompany.com/history/>, April 2022.

³² *The National Herald* website, 'Greek Prime Minister Visits ONEX Neorion Shipyards,' available at: <https://www.thenationalherald.com/greek-prime-minister-visits-onex-neorion-shipyards/>, 4 March 2022.

³³ Naval-Technology website, 'Themistocles-Class Corvette, Greece,' available at: <https://www.naval-technology.com/projects/themistocles-class-corvette-greece/>, 13 August 2021.

³⁴ *Athens-Macedonian News Agency* website, 'Onex to Invest up to 400 Million Dollars on Historic Rescue of Elefsina Shipyards,' available at: <https://www.amna.gr/en/business/article/379764/Onex-to-invest-up-to-400-million-dollars-on-historic-rescue-of-Elefsina-shipyards>, 23 July 2019.

³⁵ US Embassy in Greece website, Ambassador Pyatt's Remarks at ONEX Industry Day, available at: <https://gr.usembassy.gov/ambassador-pyatts-remarks-onex-industry-day/>, 3 February 2022.

³⁶ *I Kathimerini* English edition website, 'Fincantieri to Join ONEX at Elefsis,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1170331/fincantieri-to-join-onex-at-elefsis/>, 21 October 2021.

³⁷ *To Vima* website, 'Adonis Georgiadis: The Syros Shipyard will not Close Down,' available at: <https://www.tovima.gr/2022/03/31/finance/adonis-georgiadis-den-kleinei-to-naypigeio-elefsinas/>, 31 March 2022 (in Greek).

³⁸ Värde website, 'Värde Partners and Lamda Development Reach Agreement On Greek Shopping Center Deal,' available at: <https://varde.com/news/varde-partners-and-lamda-development-reach-agreement-on-greek-shopping-center-deal/>, 3 April 2017.

³⁹ *Athens and Macedonian News Agency* website, 'IASO Board Accepts Oaktree Capital's Buyout Offer,' available at: <https://www.amna.gr/en/business/article/348216/IASO-board-accepts-Oaktree-Capitals-buyout-offer>, 1 April 2019.

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and hotel developments.⁴⁰ Then, Hard Rock has been in talks with the Greek company TERNA about the construction of a casino in Athens' old airport at Ellinikon.⁴¹

On the same wavelength, Greece's hotel market appears to be attractive for American companies. In 2019, for example, Blackstone reached an agreement to acquire from the Louis Group five Greek hotel businesses located on the islands of Corfu, Crete and Zante. The deal amounted to €178.6 million.⁴² Additionally, AMResorts a subsidiary company of Apple Leisure Group, decided to expand its Mediterranean footprint beyond Spain and took over the brand management of three resorts in Greece on the same three islands: namely Corfu, Crete, and Zante. As a result, Greece is now the second-largest European market for the American company.⁴³ In the same year, Hines, a Houston-based firm, and Henderson Park, a European real estate investment platform, acquired a portfolio of five hotels on Crete.⁴⁴ The investment boom in resorts and hotels is continuing at the time of writing. According to the Greek Secretary General for International Economic Affairs, Ioannis Smyrliis, foreign investments in the real estate sector rose to €1.17 billion in 2021.⁴⁵

Arrivals from the US reached 1.097 million in 2018 and 1.179 million in 2019 before falling in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of tourists arriving in Greece from abroad, including the US, will certainly be boosted by quality investments in the hotel sector. Data from the Institute of SETE-INSETE, the Greek tourism confederation, shows that arrivals from the US reached 1.097 million in 2018 and 1.179 million in 2019 before falling in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the first eight months of 2022 saw 647,200 recorded arrivals. American citizens spent €1.04 million in Greece in 2018 and €1.189 million in 2019. The only countries whose citizens spent more in Greece were the UK and Germany.⁴⁶ The operation of numerous direct flights by Delta, United and American airlines in parallel with Emirates facilitates travel, despite new challenges caused by international instability and the war in Ukraine.⁴⁷ The number of direct flights from the US to Greece between January and September 2022 was up 43 percent compared to the figures for the same period in 2019.⁴⁸ Against this backdrop, more US students may consider studying in Greece, as long as the strengthening of educational ties between the two countries continues. Before the pandemic, Greece welcomed a total of 5,834 US students during the 2018/2019 academic year, marking an 11.7 percent year-on-year increase.⁴⁹ In October 2021, online visitors from the US to the 'Study in Greece' website created by the Hellenic Ministry of Education (9.36 percent) far outnumbered netizens from other countries.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ HIG Capital website, 'HIG Capital Invests in Greek Property Company,' available at: <https://higcapital.com/news/release/h.i.g.-capital-invests-in-greek-property-company>, 21 January 2020.

⁴¹ I Kathimerini website, 'The Agreement on the Ellinikon Casino to Be Signed in the Next Days,' available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/561726664/tis-epomenes-imeres-oi-ypografes-gia-to-kazino-ellinikoy/>, 20 February 2022 (in Greek).

⁴² Blackstone website, 'Blackstone Announces the Acquisition of Five Hotel Businesses in Greece,' available at: <https://www.blackstone.com/news/press/blackstone-announces-the-acquisition-of-five-hotel-businesses-in-greece/>, 20 September 2019.

⁴³ Apple Leisure Group website, 'AMResorts to Manage 3 Resorts In Greece Owned By Hotel Investment Partners,' available at: <https://www.appleleisuregroup.com/news-articles/AMResorts-3-Resorts-Greece-Owned-By-Hotel-Investment-Partners/>, 11 November 2020.

⁴⁴ Hines website, 'Henderson Park and Hines Acquire 1,094-Room Hotel Portfolio on Greek Island of Crete,' available at: <https://www.hines.com/news/henderson-park-and-hines-acquire-1-094-room-hotel-portfolio-on-greek-island-of-crete>, 23 June 2020.

⁴⁵ Economic Post website, 'Smyrliis: Over €1 Billion Foreign Direct Investments in the Real Estate Sector,' available at: <https://www.ot.gr/2022/05/14/oikonomia/akinita/smyrliis-pano-apo-1-dis-eyro-oi-ameses-ksenes-ependyseis-stin-agera-akiniton/>, 14 May 2022 (in Greek).

⁴⁶ Statistics are available on the website of the Institute of SETE-INSETE (the Greek tourism confederation) at: <https://insete.gr/statistika-eiserxomenou-tourismou/>, 2022 (in Greek).

⁴⁷ Elias Bellos, 'Tourism: A Record of Daily Flights from Seven American Airports,' available at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/561753622/toyrismos-rekor-imerision-ptiseon-epo-epita-amerikanika-aerodromia/>, 9 March 2022.

⁴⁸ Lambros Karageorgos, 'Tourism: Dollar Welcome – How Americans Are Altering the Trends' available at: <https://www.ot.gr/2022/11/13/tourismos/tourismos-kalos-irthe-to-dolario-pinakas>, 13 November 2022.

⁴⁹ US Embassy in Greece website, 'Open Doors 2020: More American Students are Choosing to Study in Greece,' available at: <https://gr.usembassy.gov/open-doors-2020-more-american-students-are-choosing-to-study-in-greece/#:~:text=Greece%20welcomed%20a%20total%20of,the%202019%2F20%20academic%20year>, 16 November 2020.

⁵⁰ See relevant data at: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/561553315/aei-gefyres-synergasias-kai-me-india-rosia/>, 28 October 2021 (in Greek).

Trade

Last but not least, trade has traditionally been an engine for growth in Greek-American economic relations. Greece mainly exports food and agricultural products, tobacco, razors, petroleum products/by-products, cement, clothing and apparel, fur articles, marble, steel products and pipes, whereas it imports telecommunications, electrical, IT and electronic equipment, medical and pharmaceutical items, machinery and parts, timber and wood-pulp as well as agricultural products.⁵¹ In a remarkable case of bilateral trade collaboration, Aegean Airlines has chosen Pratt & Whitney geared turbofan (GTF) engines to power up to 62 of its Airbus A320neo aircraft. Pratt & Whitney also provide the airline with engine maintenance through a long-term service agreement.⁵²

On the whole, the bilateral trade volume between Greece and the US has increased in recent years, from \$1.9 billion in 2016 to \$2.2 billion in 2017, \$2.6 billion in 2018, \$2.9 billion in 2019, \$2.6 billion in 2020 and a whopping \$3.2 billion in 2021.⁵³ With the exception of 2020, Greece has enjoyed a trade surplus, although the amount of this surplus has fallen from \$481 million in 2016 to \$91 million in 2021. Data for the first nine months of 2022 are encouraging, as the trade volume was already equal to that of the whole of 2021.

And more

A diaNEOsis survey conducted in April 2022 shows that most Greeks (49.3 percent) held favorable views vis-à-vis Americans.

Signs of stabilization in Greece's economy, in spite of the new challenges caused by COVID-19, are creating conditions conducive to new investments. In 2021, Greece welcomed a 72.3 percent increase in total FDI, which amounted to €4.8 billion compared with €2.8 billion in 2020. This constitutes the highest net inflow since 2002.⁵⁴ Against this backdrop, the first months of 2022 saw a continuation of the positive trend in Greek-American economic relations. Thus, three mergers and acquisitions have already taken place: in January, JP Morgan acquired an ownership stake of approximately 49 percent in Viva Wallet, a leading European cloud-based payments fintech company.⁵⁵ A few days later, Meta negotiated the details of a deal to buy Greek audio software startup Accusonus.⁵⁶ Additionally, the market research and consumer insights giant Prodege acquired Pollfish, a mobile-first survey platform which provides authentic responses in real-time.⁵⁷

In addition, Goldman Sachs plans to invest more than €100 million in Greece for the acquisition and upgrading of three hotel units from the GHotels group,⁵⁸ while Marriott International has

⁵¹ Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 'Economic and Trade Relations,' available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/usa/en/greece/greece-and-the-usa/economic-and-trade-relations.html>, 2022.

⁵² Aerospace Manufacturing and Design website, 'Pratt & Whitney GTF engines to power Aegean Airlines Airbus A320neos', available at: <https://www.aerospacemanufacturinganddesign.com/article/pratt-whitney-gtf-aegean-airlines-a320neo-102318/>, 23 October 2018.

⁵³ See relevant data at: www.census.gov, 2022. Calculations are made by the author.

⁵⁴ Enterprise Greece website, 'Foreign Direct Investments,' available at: <https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/en/greece-today/why-greece/foreign-direct-investment>, February 2022.

⁵⁵ J.P. Morgan website, 'J.P. Morgan to Acquire a Stake in Viva Wallet,' available at: <https://www.jpmorgan.com/news/jpmorgan-to-acquire-stake-in-viva-wallet>, 25 January 2022.

⁵⁶ Reuters website, 'Facebook Owner Meta Close to Deal for Greek startup Accusonus,' available at: <https://www.reuters.com/technology/facebook-owner-meta-close-deal-greek-startup-accusonus-source-2022-02-01/>, 1 February 2022.

⁵⁷ Globenewswire website, 'Prodege Accelerates Innovation & Growth Plan With Acquisition of Pollfish,' available at: <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2022/02/01/2376509/0/en/Prodege-Accelerates-Innovation-Growth-Plan-With-Acquisition-of-Pollfish.html>, 1 February 2022.

⁵⁸ Elias Bellos, 'Goldman's Further Investment in Greek Tourism,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1183492/goldmans-further-investment-in-greek-tourism/>, 6 May 2022.

announced an agreement with high-end tourism developer Temes to introduce the W Hotels Worldwide brand in Greece with the opening of W Costa Navarino.⁵⁹ In April 2022, Greece and the US signed an MoU on tourism that is expected to broaden horizons in the sector.⁶⁰ Further to this, Google has made its debut in Greece: in September 2022, the American digital colossus announced plans to expand its cloud services infrastructure, promising to create nearly 20,000 jobs through direct investment and partnerships by the end of the decade.⁶¹

Thriving US companies have tendered for the privatization of the ports of Alexandroupolis and Kavala. Young Greek entrepreneurs and start-uppers are also ever-hungry for synergies with American partners that could be cemented with the establishment of a Greek hub in Silicon Valley. Greece's core team already includes 17 professionals and the full list of their names is included on the website of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶² The positive momentum is reflected in public perceptions, as the image of the US continues to steadily improve in Greece. A diaNEOsis survey conducted in April 2022 shows that most Greeks (49.3 percent) held favorable views vis-à-vis Americans.⁶³ Above all, this state of affairs culminated in the visit of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to Washington DC, his meeting with President Joe Biden and his speech to the US Congress in May 2022.

⁵⁹ Alexandra Kirman, 'This Hot Luxury Hotel Brand Is Coming To Greece In Summer 2022,' available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandrakirkman/2022/01/31/this-hot-luxury-hotel-brand-is-coming-to-greece-in-summer-2022/?sh=b2969eb3690c>, 31 January 2022.

⁶⁰ CNN Greece website, 'Kikilias: A MoU with the USA on Tourism Has Been Signed,' available at: <https://www.cnn.gr/politiki/story/307457/kikilias-ypegرافي-mnimonio-synergiasias-elladas-hpa-gia-ton-toyrismo>, 4 April 2022.

⁶¹ Derek Gatopoulos, 'Google Promises Greece 20K Jobs with Cloud Expansion,' available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/economy/1194469/google-promises-greece-20k-jobs-with-cloud-expansion/>, 29 September 2022.

⁶² Greece's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, 'SVGH: Silicon Valley Greek Hub,' available at: <https://www.mfa.gr/usa/en/svgh-silicon-valley-greek-hub.html>, 22 September.

⁶³ DiaNEOsis website, 'What do Greeks of 2022 Believe?' Available at: <https://www.dianeosis.org/2022/04/ti-pistevoyn-oi-ellines-a-meros/>, April 2022.