

Greece

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The country

After the revolution against the Ottomans in 1821 the Greek state was established in 1830. For almost a century Greece was a constitutional monarchy. After the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 the political system changed, and a republic was established in 1924. This was followed by a period of political agitation which led to the return of the monarchy, and the imposition of a military dictatorship in 1936. The German occupation and the 1944-1949 civil war were a particularly harsh period for the country and sowed the seeds for more political unrest in the 1950s and 1960s. This led to the military coup of 1967 and the abolishment of the monarchy in 1969. Democracy was restored in 1974, and in 1981 Greece became member of the European Communities (EC). Nowadays Greece is a presidential republic governed by a prime minister, a cabinet, and a parliament of 300 deputies. The parliament is elected by direct elections for four years. The head of state is the president, elected by the parliament for a five-year term.

Greece is situated in south-east Europe occupying the southernmost part of the Balkan Peninsula, projecting into the Mediterranean Sea. It is surrounded by many islands both in the Aegean, the Mediterranean Sea and the Ionian Sea. Most of these islands belong to Greece, Crete and Rhodes amongst them. On the north, Greece is bordered by Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Bulgaria, on the east by Turkey and the Aegean Sea, on the south by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the west by the Ionian Sea. The country is divided into thirteen geographical regions, which are subdivided into 51 administrative departments. Mount Athos, in northern Greece, is an autonomous district with a monastic administration.

The total area of Greece is 131,957 km². Nearly 11 million people live in this area, and the average population density is 80 inhabitants per km². Athens is the capital and the largest city of Greece with 3.5 million people. Other major cities are Thessaloniki, Patra, Heraklion, Larissa, Ionnina and Volos. Altogether about 65 per cent of the Greek population lives nowadays in urban areas. The official language of the country is Modern Greek. English and French are also widely spoken. More than 95 per cent of the inhabitants of the country are followers of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Up to the 1950s, the economy of Greece was mainly based on agriculture. Nowadays, services, including tourism, account for the largest sector of the Greek economy. In 1998, services contributed 72 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). In 1998, 11.1 million tourists visited Greece and tourism represented about 20 per cent of service sector revenues. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing contributed 11 per cent of the GDP in 1998. Industry, primarily manufacturing and construction covered 18 per cent of the GDP in 1998. In the mid-1990s about 23 per cent of the population worked in the

industrial sector, approximately 20 per cent in the agriculture and about 56 per cent in the service sector.

Alcohol production and trade

The production of beer and distilled spirits has increased substantially since the beginning of the 1950s, while the production of wine, the dominant beverage, has been more or less stable. The beer production has risen from 0.2 million hectolitres in the early 1950s to 0.5 million hectolitres in the mid-1960s (International statistics, 1977). It further increased to 2.8 million hectolitres by 1983, and reached the amount of 4.1 million hectolitres in 1995. The production of distilled spirits increased rapidly from 0.1 million to 0.4 million hectolitres between 1970 and 1983, and further to over 0.5 million hectolitres in 1993 (Liakos, Madianos & Stefanis, 1980; Madianos, Gefou-Madianou & Stefanis, 1995; Gefou-Madianou, 1999).

In the early 1950s about 4 million hectolitres of wine was produced annually (International statistics, 1977). Since then there have been quite big yearly fluctuations, with a downward trend until 1963 when the production dropped to 2.8 million hectolitres. In the second half of the 1960s and in the 1970s wine production was on the increase, reaching the amount of 5.6 million hectolitres in 1984. Since then, the amount of wine produced has decreased to 3.8 million hectolitres in 1995. Industrial companies and cooperatives produce about two thirds of Greek wine. One third is produced in small farms and households (Liakos, Madianos & Stefanis, 1980; Moser, 1992; Madianos, Gefou-Madianou & Stefanis, 1995; Gefou-Madianou, 1999). In the early 1970s, about one million hectolitres of wine was exported annually. The corresponding figure at the beginning of the 1950s was about 0.2 million hectolitres (International statistics, 1977).

Alcohol consumption

The data on alcohol consumption collected by Productschap voor Gedistilleerde Dranken includes figures for Greece only from 1961 on, and in the first years only for beer and wine. The consumption of distilled spirits is recorded only from 1976 on. Because of the lack of data, table 9.1 does not give any figures for the mid-1950s. Furthermore, for the mid-1960s only the figures for beer and wine consumption are included. To get all figures for the mid-1970s, it has been assumed that the average consumption of distilled spirits in the years 1973-1975 was the same as it was in 1976. Since the production of distilled spirits was on the increase in the 1970-1983 period this may be an overestimate. In converting beer and wine consumption to pure alcohol consumption, the alcohol content of beer has been assumed to be 5 per cent by volume and that of wine 12 per cent by volume.

Table 9.1. Consumption of alcoholic beverages by beverage categories in Greece in litres of pure alcohol per capita and as percentages of total recorded alcohol consumption in the years 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995, five year's averages

	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Total alcohol consumption	8.21	8.68	8.88
Consumption of distilled spirits	2.84	2.72	2.74
Consumption of wines	..	4.37	4.58	4.36	4.12
Consumption of beer	..	0.34	0.79	1.64	2.02
Percentage of distilled spirits	34	31	31
Percentage of wines	56	50	46
Percentage of beer	10	19	23

Source: World Drink Trends, 2002.

Total alcohol consumption was on the same level in the mid-1990s as in the mid-1980s, and only a little higher than in the mid-1970s (Table 9.1). According to the production data, the consumption of distilled spirits was lower in the mid-1960s than in the mid-1970s. Therefore it can be claimed that the total alcohol consumption was on the increase in Greece both in the 1960s and in the 1970s, and has been stable since then.

The consumption of distilled spirits seems not to have changed during the last decades. The consumption of wine has also been quite stable especially in the 1960s and 1970s. In the mid-1980s wine consumption decreased quite heavily, but has again increased in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Nowadays wine consumption per capita, in litres of the product, is about 35 litres a year. At its highest it was 45 litres per capita at the beginning of the 1980s (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Beer consumption has clearly increased from 5.3 litres per capita in 1961 to 40 litres in 2000 counted in litres of the product. Despite the growth in the beer consumption, wine still accounts for the greatest proportion of the total alcohol consumption. In the mid-1990s, nearly 50 per cent of all alcohol consumed in Greece was in the form of wine. The corresponding figure for distilled spirits was one third and for beer about one fourth (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Greece has a very long history of production and consumption of wines, and drinking alcohol is a traditional and socially accepted way of socialisation among men, and more recently also among women and youth. With regard to youth, drinking is considered a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood.

Especially in rural areas, alcoholic beverages are consumed at meals every day and identified with a traditional way of life. Not only is alcohol legally available, but people are also more or less culturally forced to drink on certain social occasions. However, this does not necessarily mean that alcohol consumption, and especially wine consumption, reinforces or is related to social problems. On the contrary, wine may be associated with spiritual qualities, since drinking in the Greek society is often still integrated into social and religious structures, and under certain circumstances drinking alcohol functions as a sign of social integration and socialisation (Gefou-Madianou, 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; Iossifides, 1992).

These social and religious structures provide controls against excessive drinking, as do close family and neighbourhood ties in rural areas. Family and community control, in the form of negative and non-permissive attitudes towards excessive drinking behaviour, might play a preventive part in the case of individuals susceptible to alcohol abuse and dependence (Ritson, 1985; Allen, 1989; Gefou-Madianou, 1991; 1996; Hannibal et al., 1995). Socio-economic transformations as well as economic upheavals in recent decades have also influenced the patterns of alcohol consumption (Gefou-Madianou, 1992a; 1999; Moser, 1992).

In some rural areas it is thought that red wine is good for the blood and can cure anaemia, and it is therefore given to young children as a medicament. Hot red wine with sugar and bread used to be provided to young children for breakfast in some areas until the sixties. A statistical survey in 1984 estimated that about 1.6 per cent of households' monthly expenditure was spent on alcohol. The percentage was higher in rural areas, where much more drinking took place outside the home than in urban areas (Gefou-Madianou, 1991; 1996; Moser, 1992). However, traditional drinking patterns, like the association of drinking with meals, family rituals, community or religious ceremonies and recreational activities, are still practised, and rural lifestyles have merged with the urban ones during the transitional post-war modern Greek society (Gefou-Madianou, 1996; 1999). In a recent household survey, conducted in 1998-1999, the percentage of monthly expenditure on alcoholic beverages reached 3.2 per cent of the total expenditure on food. The households in greater Athens seem to spend slightly more, 3.6 per cent, on alcoholic beverages than households in other urban areas or in rural areas, where the corresponding percentage was 2.5 (Statistics of Household Surveys 1998-99).

Before the Second World War wine was the main alcoholic beverage in Greece. Beer consumption has risen rapidly in the post-war years, while wine consumption has remained fairly stable or even decreased at certain periods (Gefou-Madianou, 1999). Traditional distilled aromatic beverages, like ouzo, raki, tsikoudia and tsipouro, are still very popular in Greece. However, an increase in the consumption of imported distilled alcoholic beverages, like whisky, vodka, gin, tequila and rum, can be noticed especially among younger generations. Despite all these developments, wine is still the most prominent drink in Greece and wine also constitutes a significant element in the agricultural sector of the Greek domestic economy (Gefou-Madianou, 1999). Greeks also seem to prefer their own wine, as the market share of imported wine was only 4 per cent at the beginning of the 1980s. At the same time the share of domestic table wine was 73 per cent and the share of domestic quality wine 23 per cent (Yfantopoulos, 1985).

There are several reasons to doubt the official consumption figures. About one third of all wine is produced by domestic means, and the excise duty rate for wine is set at zero. These two facts mean that the quantity of wine produced and consumed may be an underestimate. Secondly, home distillation is illegal, but it cannot be controlled in certain rural areas (Gefou-Madianou, 1996). Therefore, recorded figures for the consumption of distilled spirits may also underestimate the true consumption. And thirdly, tourists visiting Greece consume a part of the alcoholic beverages sold in Greece and recorded as the consumption of Greeks. Nowadays about 11 million tourists spend about 41 million nights in Greece annually. This means that if the tourists are

drinking like local people or like EU inhabitants on the average they would consume about one per cent of all alcohol sold in Greece (Trolldal, 2001).

In 2000 the consumption of alcoholic beverages per capita was 79 litres counted in litres of the product. The consumption of commercial non-alcoholic beverages was 233 litres per capita, consisting of 60 litres of coffee, 64 litres of soft drinks, 38 litres of milk, 20 litres of juices and 8 litres of tea. All these beverages have gained in importance since the mid-1980s (World Drink Trends, 2002).

Administrative structure of preventive alcohol policies

It has already been mentioned that the general public in Greece has a strong belief that there are no serious alcohol-related problems in the country. The officials in the state administration also seem to share this view (Fahrenkrug, 1990). The incidence of alcoholism has also been considered to be low in Greece (Liakos, Madianos & Stefanis, 1980; Gefou-Madianou, 1999). This, together with the fact that the wine industry has contributed significantly to the GDP, has led to the absence of a coordinated programme concerned with alcohol-related problems. Therefore, the implementation of the existing official alcohol control measures is not strictly enforced.

Despite the absence of a comprehensive state preventive alcohol policy, the individual ministries and organisations have developed a number of policy measures also affecting the alcohol field since the 1950s. These measures mainly deal with the production, distillation and selling of alcoholic beverages and with taxation controls, and more recently with drinking and driving. For instance, all alcohol producers, including wine producers, need a licence for selling and bottling their products. This licence has to be issued by the State Chemical Laboratory. Nevertheless, it has been shown that home production, distillation and selling have not been effectively controlled.

Awareness of the issue of preventing alcohol problems has, however, grown during the 1990s. The current administrative structure of preventive alcohol policies in Greece involves the following ministries and organisations:

- Ministry of Health, Department of Mental Health, Section of Alcohol and Drug Prevention was established in 1990. It is responsible mainly for secondary and tertiary preventive activities.
- Ministry of Education, Department of Health Education was established in 1992. This department is responsible for organising and implementing health education programmes and campaigns in selected schools in primary and secondary education.
- Ministry of Culture, General Secretariat of Youth organises programmes for young people outside school. It also approaches special youth groups, such as migrants, refugees, ethnic and multicultural groups.
- Ministry of Public Security, Traffic Police is responsible for the implementation of drunk driving testing.
- Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA) was established in 1994. It is mainly offering its services to illicit drug addicts. However, in its plan of activities for the years 2000-2004 a range of activities has also included alcohol and tobacco. In recent years, OKANA has organised and financially supported preventive programmes in local

communities, and lately in working places in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Health Promotion Agency in Working Places (Gefou-Madianou, 1993).

A policy measure that was introduced in the late 1990s is the implementation of breathalyser tests by the traffic police on the main roads. The introduction of breathalyser tests was partly a result of the Alcohol Action Plan initiated by the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe (WHO-EURO) and the European Charter on Alcohol, which Greece signed during the Paris Conference in December 12-14, 1995.

Licensing policy

Alcohol producers in Greece need a licence to operate. The licence is not, however, perceived as a preventive alcohol policy measure but is required to ensure a good standard of quality of the alcoholic beverages produced. The licence to produce alcoholic beverages is granted by the Ministry of Commerce and the State General Chemical Laboratory. The licence includes specific rules and regulations that have been in force since the mid-1940s concerning pure alcohol production, in terms of the year of production, labelling of the contents, and sales and restrictions of use by persons other than alcohol producers and pharmacists. The licence is permanent.

Also the importers and wholesalers of alcoholic beverages need a licence to operate. The licence, which has to be renewed periodically, is granted to the licensee by the Ministry of Economics, Department of Trade, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Also off-premise retailers of alcoholic beverages need a licence to operate. The licence is permanent and it is granted by the local municipalities and the prefecture authorities at the Department of Health. The licence is, however, not alcohol-specific. Also some on-premise establishments are required to have a licence. This concerns mostly bars that are restricted to certain rules by the police and the prefecture authorities. Other restaurants are not required to have a licence.

Law-2969/2001-Liscence for producers and operators of alcohol products. Alcohol title must not exceed 60% Vol. Specific rules and regulations concerning production, labelling, packaging and sales and restrictions of use by other persons. Ministry of Commerce, State Chemical Laboratory, Ministry of Economics.

Restrictions of availability

According to the Act 992/71 the legal age limit on off-premise purchases of distilled spirits has been 18 years since 1971 (Yfantopoulos, 1985). Nowadays off-premise sales by stores specialising in retailing alcoholic beverages is restricted by a Ministerial Decree (180/79), and the age limit is still 18 years for distilled spirits. For beer and wine there are no legal age limits, since these beverages can also be purchased in a variety of places other than special liquor stores, like food markets, kiosks, petrol stations, open-air canteens, bus or train stations and airports.

For on-premise sale of alcoholic beverages there is an age limit of 18 years on all alcoholic beverages, wine and beer included. There is also an age limit of 18 years for consumption of alcoholic beverages in all cafeterias, bars and discotheques. This age limit was introduced in 1989, but was not strictly enforced until recent years.

Alcoholic beverages are available in food markets or in specialised liquor stores. The business hours for off- and on-premise sale of alcoholic beverages depend on the type of premise. The restrictions on business hours are, however, not alcohol-specific but apply to sale of all kinds of merchandise. Off-premise business hours are

- 8.00 a.m. - 8.30 p.m. for supermarkets,
- 8.00 a.m. - 11 p.m. for specialised liquor stores, and
- 24 hours for kiosks selling beer, on trains or long-distance bus stations, and airports.

For on-premise sale the business hours are until midnight or 1 a.m. for restaurants, and for bars and discotheques they used to be until 3 a.m. or all night long. At the beginning of the 1990s the business hours of bars, discotheques, dancing clubs, taverns, etc. became a big issue. Closing-time limits were strictly enforced, but only for less than two years. Presently, the business hours for bars and discotheques should officially be until 2.30 a.m. The law is, however, not at all strictly enforced and in practice this time limit is frequently violated. Especially in summertime on the islands, bars and discotheques are open all night.

Ministerial decision 1709/1993-Measures for No Alcohol in sport centres.

Decree-law 180/1979-Liscence for sale restricted in a distance at least 50 metres away from schools, libraries, etc. State Chemical Laboratory, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Culture.

Decree-law 36/1994-Age limit of 17 years for consumption of alcoholic beverages in all cafeterias, bars and discotheques. The owners of such places are given a prison penalty for 2 years if not behave according to the law.

Alcohol taxation

The current method of alcohol taxation varies depending on the beverage category (Table 9.2). For beer, excise duties are levied on the basis of hectolitre per degree of Plato in the finished product, and they are applicable to beer with an alcohol content over 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume. For wine and fermented beverages other than wine and beer, the excise duties are applied on the basis of hectolitre of the product, but the actual excise rate has been set at zero drachmas. The same is true for intermediate products with an alcohol content of less than 15 per cent by volume. Like wine and other fermented beverages, the excise duty on intermediate products is also applied on the basis of hectolitre of the product. The excise duty on distilled spirits is levied per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product. With regard to distilled spirits and intermediate products over 15 per cent alcohol by volume, Greece uses the possibility to apply reduced rates. For distilled spirits this concerns ouzo. For intermediate products over 15 per cent alcohol by volume the reduced rate concerns natural sweet wines. Besides the excise duty, a value added tax (VAT) of 18 per cent is nowadays included in the price of all alcoholic beverages.

Table 9.2. Excise duty rates for alcoholic beverages in Greece in 2000 in Greek drachmas and in euro

Alcoholic beverage category*	DRA	EUR
Beer, per hectolitre per degree of Plato in the finished product	384.00	1.17
Wine and fermented beverages other than wine and beer, per hectolitre of the product	0.00	0.00
Intermediate products, per hectolitre of the product		
Not exceeding 15% alcohol by volume		
Over 15% alcohol by volume	0.00	0,00
Reduced rate for natural sweet wines	14,789.00	45.00
Distilled beverages, per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product	7,395.00	22.50
Standard rate	298,414.00	908.00
Reduced rate for ouzo	149,207.00	454.00

* For details of the lower limits of alcoholic beverages and other EU rules concerning alcohol taxation, see Chapter 2.

Source: European Commission, DG XXI, Excise duty tables, November 2000.

With regard to the history of alcohol taxation we have very scattered data. According to Yfantopoulos (1985), in the early 1980s, regardless of the place of production, a tax of 6.76 drachmas per kilogram was levied on all wine products. In addition, the following taxes were levied on wine: "40 per cent of the value (since wine is considered a luxury item), 3-4 per cent of the value as stamp duties, and 15 drachmas per kilogram as a consumption tax" (Yfantopoulos, 1985, 94). According to the same source, beer was only subject to a consumption tax which was 55 drachmas per kilogram. On pure alcohol the tax was 55.2 drachmas per kilogram while on all other distilled spirits the following alcohol taxes were levied: a consumption tax of 15 drachmas per kilogram, a duty of 40 per cent of the value and a stamp duty of 5.2 per cent of the value (Yfantopoulos, 1985, 95). Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1980s the wholesale price of alcohol was under government control. In April 1981, the Ministry of Finance specified a wholesale price of 125 drachmas per litre for spirits and 115.5 drachmas per litre for pure alcohol (Yfantopoulos, 1985, 95).

Using Gordon (1989) as the source, Hibell (1990) gives the following excise duty rates for September 1988 for Greece: For beer 1.64 euro per hectolitre per degree of alcohol in the finished product, for wine 0 euro per hectolitre of the product, and for distilled spirits 38.5 euro per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product (Hibell, 1990). According to Gefou-Madianou (1996), the excise duty on distilled spirits in 1996 was 48 euro per hectolitre pure alcohol in the finished product. According to the same source the excise duty on beer was 2.22 euro per hectolitre per degree of alcohol in the finished product (Gefou-Madianou, 1996).

On the basis of the excise duty tables published by the European Commission, it can be concluded that at the beginning of 1993 Greece began to practice the minimum excise tax rates agreed on in Directive 92/84/EEC, i.e. 0.748 euro per hectolitre per degree Plato in the finished product for beer, 0 euro per hectolitre of the product for wine, 45 euro per hectolitre of the product for intermediate products and 550 euro per hectolitre of pure alcohol in the finished product for distilled spirits (European Commission, DG XXI, Excise duty tables, January 1994). In comparison with the excise duty rates applied in the early 1990s, this meant a slight increase in the excise duty rate for beer, no change in the rates for still and sparkling wine, a decrease of about 70 per cent in the excise duty rate for intermediate products and an increase of about 200 per cent in the excise duty rate for distilled spirits. Compared with the excise duty rates in September 1988, the excise duty rate for distilled spirits in 1993 was nearly fifteen times the rate in 1988.

By 1996, the excise duty rate for beer had reached the current level counted in drachmas. Because of inflation, the highest rate counted in euro, 1.27, was reached in 1997. For intermediate products there have been small changes since 1993, usually upwards in terms of drachmas in order to keep the prevailing tax rate at 46 euro per hectolitre of the product. By 1996 the excise duty rate for distilled spirits had reached 770 euro per hectolitre of pure alcohol, and the current rate was reached in 1997.

Since 1999 the VAT is 18 per cent on all alcoholic beverages. Earlier in the 1990s the VAT was 8 per cent on wine and 18 per cent on all other alcoholic beverages.

The changes in excise duty rates referred to above are given in nominal values. During the 1950-2000 period the value of the Greek currency has decreased because of inflation. The increase in the general price level in Greece in the 1960-2000 as described by the consumer price index (CPI) is given in table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Consumer price index in Greece, 1960-2000, 1995 is 100

Year	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
CPI	2.0	2.1	2.4	4.3	9.2	23.5	52.4	100.0	126.6

Source: OECD, Main Economic Indicators, March 2000 CD-ROM.

When relating changes in alcohol excise duties to developments in consumer price index, it can be concluded that the real burden of excise duty on distilled spirits has clearly increased in the 1990s, and that also the real value of the excise duty on beer has increased slightly. Also the tax burden on wine has increased in the 1990s as the VAT rose from 8 to 18 per cent in the late 1990s.

According to the data collected in the ECAS study, the real price of all alcoholic beverages was on the increase in Greece in the first half of the 1960s. Then it decreased by a third from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. The decrease was particularly heavy in the second half of the 1970s. Since then the real price of alcoholic beverages has increased somewhat (Leppänen, 1999).

Increase of taxes, from 18% to 19% for alcohol- Ministry of Economics, 30 March 2005.

Alcohol advertising

There are currently no restrictions concerning alcohol advertising, sales promotion and sponsorship. At the beginning of the 1990s there was, however, an effort made towards decreasing the number of alcohol advertisements on television, and some regulations were introduced by the Ministry of Social Security, including information against drunk driving. Recently, the three public television channels have initiated a policy of decreasing alcohol advertisements.

Law-2328/1995 and Decree-law 100/2000 to follow EU(97/36, 89/552) guidelines of restrictions concerning alcohol advertising, Ministry of Social Security, Ministry of Health. Campaign-OKANA 2003 including advertising and information against drunk driving.

Education and information

There are very few activities on alcohol education and information compared to those which concern illicit drugs. The situation seems to be slowly changing. However, education and information activities are not coordinated or evaluated in any systematic way (Gefou-Madianou, 1999). The following programmes and campaigns are or have been under way in Greece:

- A number of health education programmes have been introduced in a selected number of schools, mainly in the greater Athens area since the mid-1980s. These programmes have been supported by the Ministry of Education and the General Secretariat for Youth.
- In recent years a campaign on alcohol risks in relation to driving has been introduced by the Ministry of Health, thus increasing the public's awareness on drunk driving. Television and radio spots on drunk driving have been introduced by the Ministry of Health, National Committee on Alcohol.

Drunk driving

According to the regulations of the Ministries of Transport and Justice, a driver's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level were not to exceed a level of 0.08 per cent. These regulations have not been, however, effectively enforced until recently. Currently, the driver is considered to be driving under the influence of alcohol if the BAC level is over 0.05 per cent.

The punishment for drunk driving is usually a fine. Punishments in general are not severe unless the driver in question has been involved in a car accident. If the BAC level is higher than 0.1 per cent, then the driver's driving licence may be suspended temporarily. From 1999 onwards, there has been more systematic traffic safety law enforcement, with the implementation of breathalyser tests.

Introduction of breathalyser tests by the traffic police on the main roads (Alcohol Action Plan(WHO-EURO) and European Charter on Alcohol, which Greece signed during Paris Conference, December 12-14, 1995). Ministerial decision describes the procedure of tracing alcohol level,13382/25-26.11.1997-Ministry of Public Security, Traffic Police. Law-2696/1999. According to the regulation a driver's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) must not exceed 0.50 gr/l. If BAC- 0.50gr/l to 0.80gr/l the penalty is a fine, if BAC is 0.80 to 1.10 also a fine and driving license suspended temporarily(for 3 months). If BAC >1.10gr/l given prison penalty for 2 months at least, fine and driving license suspended temporarily (for 6 months). -Ministry of Transport and Justice.

Administrative structure of treatment for alcoholism

A number of specialised health services and agencies have been developed in Greece, mainly in the greater Athens area (see Gefou-Madianou, 1996). Two therapeutic communities for people mainly dependent on drugs have been operating since 1982 in Athens and Thessaloniki, one of them (Diavasis) accepting also people dependent on alcohol. There is an inpatient unit in Athens, the State Mental Hospital. A number of outpatient psychiatric departments can also treat minor alcohol-related problems. There are about 30 psychiatric units in general hospitals all over the country and 21 community mental hospitals, which also offer their services to people suffering from minor alcohol-related problems, but they do not have specialised treatment programmes for people dependent on alcohol (Moser, 1992; Gefou-Madianou, 1996; 1999).

The following authorities and organisations are currently taking care of the treatment for alcoholism and alcohol abuse in Greece:

- the Ministry of Health, Department of Mental Health,
- mental hospitals (specialised units and extramural services) including two specialised programmes in the Attica Mental Hospital and Eginition Hospital,
- a non governmental network of therapeutic communities,
- private mental hospitals, and
- voluntary organisations, such as Alcoholic Anonymous.

With some exceptions, all services for treatment of alcohol dependence have been established in 1985 or later.

Summary

Alcohol production and consumption have been interwoven with the Greek economy and social life for a very long period. Especially wine has been tightly associated with the basic Mediterranean diet for centuries, and even nowadays it is considered a food in certain wine-producing rural areas of the country (Gefou-Madianou, 1995). Alcohol use is generally perceived as a positive feature of social life. It has to be noted that Greece has not had any history of temperance movements or alcohol prohibition like many countries in North Europe. Instead, a long history of alcohol production and use has enabled the Greek society to develop effective ways of dealing with the issue of regulation and control of alcohol. These are often hidden regulations, constituting a part

of everyday life and being thus linked with unofficial socio-cultural structures rather than with official legal regulations and written laws. This is partly reflected in the stable or decreasing total alcohol consumption during the last decades (see Gefou-Madianou, 1992a; 1992b).

Presently, one might say that an absence of alcohol controls characterises the modern Greek society, but a more careful and deeper analysis of what is called the culture of alcohol would reveal that certain very strict measures and regulations do exist. They are embodied into familial, social and religious everyday life and rituals (Allen, 1989; Gefou-Madianou, 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; Iossifides, 1992). However, in recent epidemiological studies on nation-wide general population and school population surveys, it has been shown that alcohol consumption patterns change, and alcohol-related problems are increasing, especially in the younger age groups (Kokkevi, Gefou-Madianou & Stefanis, 1992; Gefou-Madianou et al., 1992; Kokkevi & Stefanis, 1994). It seems that with the rapid social and economical changes in the modern Greek society, more strict and systematic measures as well as preventive programmes have to be developed.

Greece is still lacking a central coordinating administrative body responsible for alcohol. There have, however, been some developments towards a preventive alcohol policy in recent years. Greece's participation in the WHO-EURO Collaborative Study on Community Response to Alcohol-Related Problems and the acceptance of the European Alcohol Charter initiated by the WHO-EURO in December 1995 have resulted in the Greek Ministry of Health taking some action on preventive alcohol policy issues. The National Council on Alcohol, consisting of alcohol experts and representatives from several ministries, has worked towards this end. During the last couple of years some progress has been made, including the implementation of health education programmes in schools. Measures have been taken to put a ban on alcohol sale in places like school canteens and sport games, as well as a more systematic law enforcement of traffic safety regulations, like implementation of breath tests. Some television spots and radio messages against drunk driving have also been introduced. Public television channels have recently initiated a policy to reduce alcohol advertisements. A very positive development has been the inclusion of alcohol in the range of activities of OKANA. All the above-mentioned activities seem to have an influence on the general public's awareness and attitudes towards drinking, which is reflected in public debates and in the mass media.

Despite these undoubtedly positive developments, Greece does not have something that could be called comprehensive alcohol control policies or systems, and neither did it have anything like that in the early 1950s (see e.g. Fahrenkrug, 1990; Madianos et al., 1994a; 1994b). Therefore, it is quite safe to conclude that changes in alcohol consumption or drinking habits in Greece during the 1950-2000 period are not reflections of conscious changes in official alcohol control measures. This does not, however, mean that there have not been any changes in alcohol control measures during the 1950-2000 period. The most important change here was the increase in excise duty on distilled spirits, first in 1993, but then also later in the 1990s.

When looking ahead in the future it is, firstly, good to remember that all EU decisions will affect Greece. Secondly, it is also important to note that the recommendations of

the WHO-EURO, which are not binding in the same way as the EU directives, have already thus far had an effect on discussions concerning alcohol control in Greece. And thirdly, it can be observed that in Greece public awareness and attitudes towards drinking are beginning to change.

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