

Greek-German Bilateral Action Plan:

4th meeting at State Secretary level, 8-10 December 2020

In the context of the Greek-German Action Plan on Bilateral Cooperation signed on December 4, 2016 the 4th Round of the Greek-German Consultations was held in Athens, by VTC, on December 8-10, 2020.

The two sides reaffirmed their strong commitment to continue working together in order to further enhance their outstanding bilateral relations and practical cooperation at all fields, to their mutual benefit.

In this regard, at the plenary on 10th December, they took stock of progress achieved in the fields of political cooperation, security, migration, economy, technology, energy, tourism, agriculture, labour, social affairs, science, education, culture, as well as at the societal level.

They also stressed their firm commitment to actively contributing to the common goal of building a united, stronger Europe.

The respective delegations included representatives of the Greek and German competent Ministries for Foreign Affairs, Economy, Energy, Interior, Labour and Social Affairs, Education and Research, Youth and Cultural Affairs.

I. Political Cooperation

Consultations between Ministries of Foreign Affairs

Greece and Germany held consultations and exchanged views on bilateral relations (political, economic and cultural), as well as on a wide range of regional and international topics, with emphasis on the current situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. Both sides confirmed the important role the European Union has to play within the framework of international relations, especially with respect to its contribution to regional and global peace and security.

Bilateral cooperation

On the bilateral level, both sides confirmed the importance they attach to further developing and fostering their cooperation in all fields including trade, investments, technology, culture, education, and art.

Regional issues

Eastern Mediterranean

Both sides underlined the significance of respect of the international law for the peace, stability and development in the Eastern Mediterranean to the benefit of all the peoples of the region. They called upon Turkey to abstain from unilateral actions

which run counter to the EU interests and violate international law and the sovereign rights of EU Member States. Both sides stressed that respect of international law and a sustainable de-escalation by Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean would pave the way for the development of a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between the EU and Turkey, as it was underlined by the European Council of October 1-2.

Cyprus Issue

Both sides expressed their steadfast support to the efforts of the UN/SG for the resumption of result – oriented negotiations, aiming at reaching a comprehensive, just and viable solution to the Cyprus issue on the basis of the relevant UN/ SC Resolutions and the European acquis. Both sides also condemned Turkey’s latest provocation in Varosha.

Libya

As to Libya, the two sides agreed on the importance to reach a Libyan-owned political solution to the crisis, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions and the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. They acknowledged the ongoing efforts, notably, in the framework of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF).

Both sides expressed their full support to EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, the EU’s substantial contribution to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya, to which they are actively participating with assets and personnel. They called on all states to cooperate with the Operation for the unimpeded implementation of the relevant UN SC Resolutions. Both sides expressed concern for Turkey’s recent refusal to allow the inspection of a ship under its flag by the Operation.

Western Balkans

Since the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003, both sides have been actively engaged in the European integration of the Western Balkans, fully acknowledging that the future of the whole region lies within the EU. Greece and Germany believe that a firm, merit-based prospect of full EU membership for the Western Balkans is in the Union’s very own political, security and economic interest. In times of increasing global challenges, it remains more than ever a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe.

Against this background both sides recall the EU’s solidarity with and support for the region as reflected in the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans put forward by the European Commission in October 2020 aiming at fostering the socio-economic convergence between the Western Balkans and the EU.

European issues

Both sides expressed hope for both the next MFF (2021-2027) and the Recovery Instrument “Next Generation EU” to become operational, as soon as possible. These fi-

nancial instruments are of vital importance for the recovery, as well as for underpinning the strategic goals of the EU. The envisaged financial support for the hard-hit European economies should become accessible without undue delay. Last July's political decisions of the European Council on MFF and Next Generation EU have been of historic importance for the EU and are a significant expression of European solidarity. Both sides welcome the political agreement reached on this basis on the overall package between representatives of the Council and the European Parliament in November.

Both sides have confirmed their support to a binding EU target of a net reduction of at least 55% in domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990. This climate target will be a key milestone to ensure the transition of the EU to a climate-neutral economy by 2050 in accordance with the European Green Deal. In this context, Germany and Greece support the submission of an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) by the EU and member-states, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), by the end of this year.

Migration and Security issues

Cooperation on migration and asylum issues

Greece and Germany are in close cooperation with regards to questions related to migration and asylum policy. Germany recognized the dedicated efforts of Greece, as a frontline EU Member State, to effectively manage in a sustainable way the continuous challenge arising by the migratory and refugee flows. In addition to the set of measures undertaken for safeguarding public health, including among the migrant and refugee population, Greece faced two major challenges related to migration in the course of this year: the attempt of illegal and massive crossing of the Greek-Turkish borders in March instigated by Turkey and the arson of the Moria Camp on the island of Lesbos in September.

Greece thanked Germany for its concrete and substantial support in its effort to better manage the migration and refugee situation and tackle these crises. Especially, by providing aid supplies for emergency care and through its active participation in the European voluntary relocation program regarding unaccompanied minors, children with severe medical diseases and their core families, vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, coordinated by the European Commission, Germany set the example to all EU Member States of effective solidarity. Out of a total of approximately 2,750 persons, the largest pledge among all EU Member States, 1.291 persons have so far been transferred from Greece to Germany. Germany and Greece agree that adequate accommodation and care of refugees in the Aegean islands must be ensured with the support of the European Commission and the EU Member States.

Germany and Greece are also cooperating to improve the general living conditions for persons who have been granted international protection, making best use of all existing tools such as in the case of Greece the "HELIOS" integration programme, funded by the EU and implemented by the IOM. An improvement of the general living condi-

tions for persons granted international protection combined with effective solidarity by Member States can contribute to confine secondary migration movements.

Both countries agreed that ad hoc measures, taken each time as response to a challenge, are not sustainable in the long-term. Only a comprehensive approach at European level can provide a structural solution. Greece and Germany are determined to work hand in hand to find effective responses at European level, including by strengthening the external dimension of migration policy through comprehensive migration partnerships with key third countries of origin and transit.

They expressed the hope that the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, currently under negotiation, will strengthen the European Union and will enhance its resilience to possible future crises, striking the right balance between responsibility and solidarity. They called upon all Member States to contribute their share in the common EU efforts on Asylum and Migration and act with ambition and commitment towards reaching a final agreement.

The German-Greek Dialogue on Migration is an important forum to discuss common challenges and develop common approaches. Germany will extend an invitation for the sixth round of the Migration Dialogue in early 2021.

Cooperation on security issues

Both Greece and Germany stressed the importance of the need to step up cooperation to prevent and counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization, recognizing the importance of information sharing and best practices exchange.

Greece and Germany recognized the necessity to employ all appropriate tools and measures to ensure the protection of EU external borders, as well as safeguarding EU internal security.

Both realized the new challenges in the field of organized crime, given the new realities in the COVID-19 era and agreed to extent an enhance collaboration and joint actions, especially focusing on tackling migrant smuggling and human trafficking so at the bilateral basis, as within the EU Policy Cycle and EMPACT priority.

Greece and Germany agreed to strengthen cooperation also in the field of returns. An effective and well-managed EU migration management prerequisites a strong and coordinated return mechanism. Cooperation with third countries should be an integral part in this approach utilizing fully the EU readmission agreements.

II. Economic and technological cooperation

With the aim of contributing to growth following Greece's successful completion of the support program, both sides will continue to promote investment and business cooperation. The German Greek Economic Forum in Berlin in March 2020 with Chancellor Dr. Merkel and Prime Minister Mitsotakis, Ministers for Economic Affairs Geor-

giadis and Altmaier as well as high level representatives of businesses and governments provided the opportunity to enhance investment and growth by innovation in both countries.

The synergy on "Smart and Sustainable Island" of Astypalaia is welcomed as a pilot investment project, based on Green Economy principals with the use of cutting edge technologies.

Pan-European industrial and digital cooperation, IPCEIs

In the context of Hellenic-German bilateral cooperation, Greece and Germany agree to develop partnerships and synergies between Greek and German companies and promote their integration into important European value chains, through their participation in Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs).

Greece has succeeded, with the significant support and guidance of German authorities, in participating as a Direct Participant in the IPCEI EuBatIn European Battery Innovation supporting a Circular Economy from Material to Recycling which is currently under notification to the European Commission.

Both sides welcomed Greece's entry into the European Battery Innovation Project and hope to thereby enhance the participation of SMEs with more value creation along the battery value chain from raw materials to recycling including all different forms of applications. Both parties intend to cooperate on further IPCEIs, especially in the area of hydrogen, microelectronics and connectivity and to further explore the potential of cooperation within other European industrial value chains, indicating the Medical and the broader Smart Health value chain as areas of common interest.

An important step towards enhancing digital sovereignty is the establishment of a secure and trustworthy European data infrastructure. The GAIA-X project with broad involvement of European companies and organizations therefore aims to establish efficient and competitive, secure and trustworthy data infrastructure based on European values. The project presentation in the context of the Thessaloniki Helexpo Forum marked a positive introduction point of the project in Greece.

Commercial and trade cooperation

Greece and Germany held consultations and exchanged views on various aspects of bilateral commercial and trade relations. The two sides agreed to explore possibilities of cooperation of Greek and German industry with a view to strengthen strategic autonomy e.g. in the medical sector in the EU.

Export promotion

Greece and Germany agreed that the results of the successful bilateral export promotion projects should now be fully implemented in the appropriate way in order to promote Greek exports and thereby growth, taking into account the strategic planning of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs as regards economic diplomacy.

Energy, renewables, climate protection

Within the framework of the TARES4 (Technical support for Clean Energy Investments in Greece) and TARES5 (Technical Support for Clean Electricity in Greece) projects, supported by DG REFORM, cooperation in the field of renewables and energy efficiency in Greece has been intensified. Steps have been made to develop initiatives in the above mentioned fields as well as in the area of electricity systems. Both sides agreed to enable attempts in order to mobilize additional carbon-neutral investments in order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, in particular in the context of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans. Both sides are committed to further collaboration on innovative technologies and knowledge exchange in the field of Renewable Energy Systems (RES) (i.e. electro-mobility, variable renewables combined with storage and demand response energy systems aiming to stable operation of the power system, (floating) offshore wind energy, production and use of green hydrogen and other renewable gases in transport and power generation sector, enhancement of specialized programs that promote the utilization of RES and individual and local electricity generation from RES), Energy Efficiency (i.e. concepts for smart and sustainable buildings and cities, incentives for energy audits from SME's, support for a smart and efficient electricity system) and smart sustainable forms of increasingly green energy production. Cooperation also shall be expanded in research and development (R&D) in the abovementioned fields to promote ideas for innovative projects. With a view to EU framework, both countries agreed to exchange views and, where possible, work towards a joint understanding. We reaffirmed our joint commitment to continue, with the aim to further expand, the fruitful cooperation.

Energy production in Agriculture/Agri-Photovoltaics:

The increased production of renewable energies with the aim of climate protection is directly linked to the consumption of land. The new technology called agrivoltaics contains the potential to mitigate the competition in agricultural areas by simultaneously producing energy and agricultural crops. The exploitation of synergy effects makes it possible to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

As this new technology is not yet ready for the market, both sides emphasized that research is still needed especially on the crops and cultivation methods that could be implemented under agri-photovoltaics. Both sides agreed on an exchange of information and knowledge on the experience already gained.

Risk management in agriculture

The two sides expressed their wish to enhance cooperation in the area of risk identification, analysis and management during cultivation process, in particular due to extreme natural and weather events (i.e. dealing with 2018 drought in Germany).

Therefore, both sides emphasized the necessity to advance climate change mitigation and adaptation in agriculture. They agreed on further exchange of knowledge concerning the management of the risks of extreme natural and weather events in the sector including research cooperation in areas such as plant resistance and forest management. Both sides emphasized on the importance of water management and the Greek side presented relevant research topics and policies to be implemented.

Agri-Food Sector

Agricultural products of high quality (Organic Farming and GIs products)

The two sides agreed to exchange experiences with the implementation of their respective organic farming strategies - also in view to the European Action Plan which will be presented by the European Commission in 2021.

"20 percent organic farming in Germany by 2030" is the Federal Government's target, as set out in the Sustainable Development Strategy. Organic farming is a particularly resource-efficient, environmentally sound and sustainable form of agriculture. Germany's "Organic Farming - Looking Forwards strategy", a strategy which was published in 2017, is aiming to boost the growth of the organic farming and food sector.

The two sides considered the importance of consumer's awareness on the high values of organic farming products as well as their environmental friendly production methods. Emphasis was given to the development of local markets.

The two sides also stressed the importance of high value added agricultural products with Geographical Indications and Protected Designation of Origin. They expressed their interest in the protection of certified products of high quality and safety.

In order to improve competitiveness of rural areas, the two sides discussed the need for cooperation in agricultural education issues. To this end, the German ministry for food and agriculture will facilitate establishing the contacts between the competent authorities with their Greek counterparts.

Both sides emphasized on the importance of research cooperation at bilateral and European level. They expressed their willingness to enhance research cooperation in the agri-food sector, inprecision agriculture and innovation by promoting cooperation of their respective scientific institutes in fields of mutual interests such as plant protection and environmental friendly agriculture.

Tourism

Acknowledging that the cooperation in the field of tourism is considered as a priority for both countries Greece and Germany reiterated their willingness to strengthen and

further enhance their support to cooperation at the level of the tourism industry through:

- exchange of know-how, regarding the attraction of investments towards the development of health tourism and the utilization of thermal springs,
- exchange of know-how in the field of accessible tourism.

Both sides expressed their readiness to exchange know-how and best practices concerning the reopening of the borders and the priorities for the recovery of the tourism sector.

III. Scientific, social, cultural and educational cooperation

Cooperation in Research and Innovation

The successful research and innovation bilateral cooperation program is on-going, covering a wide range of key sectors including among others, health, energy and bio economy. In the framework of the current bilateral cooperation programme 24 “2+2”- projects with partners from academia and industry from both sides are jointly funded with up to 18 million euros for three years until 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a mid-term meeting planned for 2020 in Germany could not take place. In order to still be able to assess the success of the programme, a mid-term evaluation is currently being carried out on the basis of a broad-based survey of the project partners. This survey also includes the field of knowledge and technology transfer, which has been especially addressed during a workshop in Athens in 2019.

Both sides expressed their willingness to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation in research and innovation. Based on the results of the mid-term-evaluation, discussions will be initiated on the next steps of the cooperation.

In view of the preparation of the future bilateral cooperation in research and innovation, both sides expressed their wish to enhance their cooperation in state of the art technologies and priority areas supporting the Green Deal objectives and the SDGs. In this context, the German side stressed the importance of the Initiative of the German EU Council Presidency 2020 to establish a common, member-state driven R&I Agenda on the European level regarding Green Hydrogen in which the Greek side expressed its interest to participate.

The plans for the mid-term meeting and the final conference for the presentation of the results of the joint projects will be re-assessed according to the developments regarding the pandemic and the timeframe of the relevant restrictions in the two countries.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Cooperation in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET) will be reinforced. Therefore, both sides agreed to extend the Joint Declaration of Intend on cooperation in VET in early 2021. Among the central fields of action will be the development of VET standards that are relevant to the needs of the labour market and the participation of the social partners in the further development and implementation of VET. Both countries will consider the possibility of hosting study tours on VET for their representatives from national authorities and social partners. Among others, best practices will be shared on Vocational counselling and career guidance so that students gain a broad understanding of the modern world of work.

Labour and Social affairs

Labour

Continue to fight unemployment, ensuring the least possible job separations amidst the pandemic and beyond, while at the same time support businesses, workers, the unemployed and other persons in need has proven a difficult yet successful exercise, and a political priority. Both sides share the joint understanding that labour market policies need to play a key role in making Europe more resilient to structural, economic and financial crises. Both sides share the view that Green and Digital transitions are about to play a critical role in shaping our economies, societies and the labour market from now onwards.

Over the last years, bilateral exchange of knowledge and experience has taken place on issues of common interest and concern.

This year, the two sides exchanged views and discussed good practices on how to improve the monitoring, and matching of labour market needs via respective identification mechanisms, the integration of long-term unemployed into the labour market, and the better exploitation of the reinforced European Youth Guarantee and the European initiatives on minimum wage and minimum income. Both sides expressed their interest on cooperation in the field of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs), indicatively but not exclusively, between the Greek Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) and the German Federal Employment Agency.

Social inclusion – Policies related to de-institutionalization of children as well as policies related to early child intervention

Germany and Greece will exchange experiences and views regarding the implementation of their respective foster care systems, since the best place for a child should be his/her family. Only when staying with the biological parents is against the best interest of the child an alternative support system shall be considered. Children's exposure to different attachment figures should be limited as much as possible and the identified placement shall be according to their needs.

The two sides will also work on the topic of the early childhood intervention and the support of parents in view of principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights which stipulates that children have the right to affordable early childhood education and the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities.

Cultural and Educational Cooperation

Meeting of Experts 2021 (on the basis of the Bilateral Cultural Agreement of 1956)

Both sides remain strongly committed to updating their bilateral Cultural Agreement concluded in 1956 in particular as regards the inclusion of educational topics. They agreed to reinitiate negotiations and fix a new date for the launch of cultural and educational consultations in 2021.

In the light of the above, they fully acknowledge the importance of convening a meeting of experts in the first half of 2021. This expert group will evaluate the areas where the agreement needs to be updated and/or extended, in particular in the field of education, and make proposals thereto. Points of contact within the competent ministries will be designated. Both sides will agree on the agenda of the meeting.

Cultural Cooperation

Both sides welcomed their digital collaboration between Frankfurter Buchmesse and Goethe-Institut and the Thessaloniki Book Fair in 2020.

Both sides reconfirmed their cooperation in the field of of Protection Cultural Heritage, also in the framework of international organizations such as UNESCO, and stressed the link between the protection of cultural heritage and climate change.

Both sides agreed to encourage cooperation in the fields of sharing knowledge and experience, exchange of experts and know-how on issues concerning research, study, preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

Both sides reiterated the importance of promoting bilateral exchanges of museum professionals (archaeologists, museologists, conservators, curators) in order to encourage the mutual exchange of good practices. They also agreed to explore the possibility of co-organized seminars and workshops for professionals on issues concerning the management of archaeological collections and museums. They also agreed to encourage the exchange of information concerning crisis management methods in museum organizations (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic).

Both sides stressed the importance of the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural goods and their return to the countries of origin as well as the protection of cultural property within the context of European and international law.

Both sides agreed to promote bilateral exchanges of archaeological, photography and digital exhibitions and highlighted the excellent cooperation through the German Archaeological Institute (DAI). Both sides welcomed the aim of creating more possibilities for the employment of interns in archaeological excavation sites.

Both sides agreed to encourage the dialogue on the contribution of the cultural sector to economic development, as vast economic potential and many job opportunities lie within the creative industries. To this end, a bilateral meeting of experts could be convened.

Both sides exchanged views on the merits of presenting the Greek and German contemporary culture. They also agreed to continue supporting the exchange of know-

how and best practices between professionals in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and develop further cooperation, partnerships and synergies in these fields. Both sides agreed to promote bilateral cooperation and exchange of exhibitions and educational programs between the arm's-length museums. The German Agency for Cooperation with International Museums, which is currently being set up, might add to this endeavor.

They also agreed to promote the aims of the 2005 UNESCO Convention.

Taking into account the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides agreed to jointly move also towards a web-based cooperation.

Educational cooperation

The two sides have confirmed that the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Alexander von Humboldt (AvH) Foundation, the German Schools in Athens and Thessaloniki, the Goethe-Institutes in Athens and Thessaloniki, the Coordinator for German as a Foreign Language of the Central Office for School Abroad, and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) will continue their strong engagement in bilateral educational, academic and scientific exchange to help strengthen existing ties and explore opportunities for developing new partnerships.

Primary and Secondary Education

Both countries expressed their willingness to work closer in the field of primary and secondary education.

Open questions concerning the substantive recognition of bilingual schools in Bavaria and the selection of Modern Greek as third foreign language in the theoretical pathway from the 9th grade of German schools (“Sprachliches Gymnasium”) as well as the introduction of vocational counselling and career guidance throughout primary and secondary schooling will be brought to the attention of the competent bodies in Germany.

Both sides reiterated the importance of strengthening cooperation with the Goethe-Institute, in particular as regards its activities for promotion of German as a foreign language in Greece. They took note of the 125th anniversary of the German School Athens to be celebrated in 2021. Possibilities for the comprehensive recognition of training programmes for German teachers performed by Goethe-Institute and the Coordinator for German as a Foreign Language through the competent Greek institutions will be assessed.

Both sides reaffirmed the importance of including events that took place in Greece during the German Occupation (1941-1944) in the secondary school curricula of both countries, as foreseen in the Action Plan (Pillar IV.3.).

Tertiary Education and Academic Cooperation

Both sides have welcomed the promotion of foreign language programmes, including German, of Greek universities and the cooperation on the establishment of joint university programmes.

The two sides have confirmed that the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Alexander von Humboldt (AvH) Foundation and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) will continue their strong engagement in bilateral academic and scientific exchange to help strengthen existing ties and explore opportunities for developing new partnerships.

Culture of Remembrance, educational programs on WW II and initiatives against Racism and Antisemitism

Both sides underlined the importance of giving future generations the opportunity of learning from the past, especially as far as WWII is concerned. Both sides have agreed to organize a first joint educational visit for students of both countries to places of remembrance of World War II and the Holocaust (eg. Dachau, Berlin, Kalandanos, Kalavrita, Distomo etc) which are to be funded appropriately. Both sides will implement educational programs for the fight against racism and antisemitism and for the events that took place during WWII. Moreover, both sides stressed the importance of combining education on the events of the past with the use of new technology.

Both Germany and Greece will work closely together during the current German and upcoming Greek (2021) Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Delegations of the two countries at the IHRA will continue their fruitful and productive cooperation in supporting IHRA's leading role in combating the scourge of Antisemitism, which is once again on the rise worldwide. Furthermore, both sides welcomed the strengthening of cooperation between IHRA and the General Secretariat of Religious Affairs of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs as well as the General Secretariat's educational programs about Antisemitism and World War II.

IV. Cooperation at societal level

Both sides encouraged projects to promote mutual understanding between the two societies.

The Agreement on the Greek German Youth Office was signed on the 4th July 2019. Both sides, after the soon expected entry into force of the Agreement, look forward to the Youth Office formally taking up its activities on 1st April 2021 and will work on the implementation of the Greek German Youth Office's aims through organizing future activities, bearing in mind pandemic restrictions.

The framework of the Greek-German Assembly offers a good platform for Greek-German exchanges at the municipal level. The nomination of Panagiotis Theodorikakos, Minister of the Interior, as the Representative for the Greek-German Assembly alongside Germany's Parliamentary State Secretary Norbert Barthle, Member of the German Bundestag is regarded as a positive step from both sides. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tenth annual meeting, scheduled for 2020, had to be postponed. It is now scheduled to take place in the second quarter of 2021 at the invitation of the city of Athens.

Cooperation between the two sides is particularly important in critical and vital areas such as reforms and the strengthening of institutions at municipal level. We expect

that in the next steps we play, we will develop suggestions and solutions for a number of issues, capitalizing on the experience and knowledge provided by both parties.

V. Follow-up

The two sides remain committed to reviewing the implementation of the Action Plan in the framework of follow-up meetings/video conferences to be held in the coming months. The next round of consultations at State Secretary level will take place in Berlin in the second half of 2021.

Athens, 10th December 2020