

# The Future of Transport and Communications in Greece



Greece has entered an important stage in its history. Today, more than ever, we have to speed up, grab the opportunities and bring ourselves to the core of the European Union. We all share a common goal: We want a strong, confident Greece. One that will be in the centre of all developments and will achieve sustainable development based on an extroverted economy, on entrepreneurship and innovation.

*By Costas Hatzidakis,  
Minister of Transport & Communications*

Greece has already achieved a great deal in terms of boosting the business sector. Almost 4,000 Greek businesses operate in the wider region of South-eastern Europe and Eastern Mediterranean. Foreign Direct Investment has seen a significant raise in the past year. According to a report published by OECD in 2006, FDI in Greece was €4.3 billion, which is nine times more than that of 2005.

This progress is important. However, Greece can do much more. In particular, in the field of transport and communications we have the support, not only of the EU, but also of experts that can assist the government through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). That said, in order for any initiative to work, we need to focus on the infrastructure. And that is what we are aiming to do in the Ministry of Transport and Communications.





In transport, we aim to support the rail transport both for people and for goods. Rail transport is one of the most comfortable and environmentally friendly ways to travel. We need to follow the example of the majority of EU Member States and place the further development of railways on top of our agenda. Soon the railway-line connecting Patras-Thessaloniki-Idomeni will be ready. In addition, Athens' suburban railway will expand to Xylokastro. Also, we are planning the railway connection of Athens with Lavrio and Rafina. At the same time we are restructuring the line between Athens and Halkida and we are planning the development of the suburban railway of Thessalonica.

Our aim is also to enhance the area of logistics and the supply chain. Logistics has increasingly become a dominant activity in the development of the modern world. Therefore effective development of the supply chain is an essential ingredient for business success as the global market place becomes a reality. In logistics, Greece has significant potential of evolving into a key player in the wider region. Therefore we are trying to overcome the difficulties and to conclude the building of a modern and high-standard station in Thriasio Pedio, using EU funds. We are also planning on building a similar station in Thessalonica.

In addition, we are focusing in upgrading Greece's airports and in building new ones. We are planning the construction of a new international airport in Kasteli, Crete. This is a venture where a public private partnership, similar to the one used for the Greek national airport in Spata, can be very useful. The estimated budget for this venture is €1.2 billion.

In the field of telecommunications, we are focusing again on infrastructure. Soon we will announce the National Strategy for Communications, which aims at facilitating the implementation of the government's Strategy for a Digital Greece. Telecommunications is a significant sector in the global economy, which, if we as a nation can create our niche in, has the potential to create many quality jobs for the people of Greece. Therefore, it is to our own benefit to make full use of the opportunities lying ahead. More specifically, we have set the following targets: In the near future all citizens, the state and businesses, should have quick and reliable Internet services. All customer services have to be improved. Remote areas need to have full access to new technologies. This last point is of particular importance, since with new technologies everyone, regardless of where he or she lives, can partake in a number of activities ranging from tele-commerce to tele-medicine and tele-education. At the same time, new technologies can significantly enhance traditional occupations and can contribute to a better quality of life for everyone.

I know that these goals for the future of transport and communications in Greece are very ambitious. At the same time I am convinced that we can make it, provided that we work together, with commitment and enthusiasm. Greeks have proved in the past that, when they set specific targets and share a common vision, they can achieve a lot. Back in 2001, Greece managed to enter the Euro zone. In 2004, we managed to organize spectacular Olympic Games. Now we can manage to speed up, to become the centre rather than staying in the periphery of Europe. 🌐