

FACT SHEET

Heritage conservation in Athens

1. Introduction

1.1 The Panel on Home Affairs is considering an overseas duty visit to study heritage conservation in Athens and Rome. As such, the Research and Library Services Division has prepared two separate fact sheets providing some basic information on heritage conservation in Athens and Rome. This fact sheet presents facts relating to heritage conservation in Athens.

2. Background of the city

Physical geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athens is the capital and the largest city of Greece with an area of 412 sq km. • Located in the Attica Periphery⁽¹⁾, Athens is the most populated city in the country. It has a population of over 3 million, representing approximately one-third of the total population in Greece.
Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Named after Athena (the patron goddess of the city), Athens is one of the oldest cities in the world with a recorded history of at least 3 000 years. It has a vast variety of Roman and Byzantine monuments, as well as a small remaining number of Ottoman monuments. • Famous archaeological sites and monuments include the Acropolis, the Agora, the Arch of Hadrian, the Monument of Lysicrates, the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, the Stoa of Attalos, the Temple of Hephaestus, the Temple of Olympian Zeus and the Theatre of Dionysus. • Modern landmarks can also be found in Athens, dating back to as far as 1830 when Greece won her independence from the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The Greek Parliament, the National Gardens and the Athens Trilogy (the University of Athens, the National Library and the Athens Academy) built in the 19th century are some notable examples of the architectural landmarks.
World Heritage Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Acropolis of Athens was registered as a World Heritage Site in 1987. It is a flat-topped hill capped with the ruins of ancient temples, monuments, and works of art. The ruins include temples such as the Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the Temple of Athena Nike, as well as the Propylaea (a monumental marble gateway that provides the main entrance to the Acropolis).

Note: (1) Greece consists of 13 administrative regions or peripheries, of which Attica is a periphery in central Greece.

3. Institutional arrangement

The Ministry of Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greece has a centralized system for heritage conservation, which is administered centrally by the Ministry of Culture through its regional departments (Ephorates) established throughout the country. • The Ministry of Culture was founded in 1971 as the main governmental body responsible for formulating and administering the heritage conservation policies in Greece. It also sets out the guidelines and general policies for the management of the monuments and historical sites to be implemented by the competent Ephorates.
The Cultural Organization of the City of Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cultural Organization of the City of Athens serves as the executive body for heritage conservation in Athens, including repair and restoration of historic buildings for cultural or social purposes. • The Greek government does not delegate any major decision-making power to local authorities. Nevertheless, the Cultural Organization of the City of Athens can enter into "programme contracts" with the Ministry of Culture so that they jointly undertake promotion, enhancement and restoration projects on heritage conservation.
The Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry is responsible for formulating the overall planning policies and administering the legislative framework for physical planning, urban development, housing and building regulations. • The Ministry protects monuments, archaeological sites and buildings of historical or architectural interest through the integration of heritage conservation with the urban planning policies.
The Archaeological Receipts Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Archaeological Receipts Fund is established as a statutory body to collect and manage the revenues from the admission fees to the archaeological sites and museums. • The income collected by the Fund is used to finance works carried out to improve public access to monuments, museums and archaeological sites.
The Hellenic Cultural Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hellenic Cultural Organization was established in 1997 for promoting cultural heritage in Greece.

4. Legal framework

The Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article 24 of the Greek Constitution establishes the country's obligation to protect monuments and the overall cultural environment in perpetuity and within the context of sustainable development.
Law No. 3028/2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Law No. 3028/2002, <i>On the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in General</i>, is the principal legislation governing heritage conservation in Greece. The law stipulates the statutory protection of antiquities and cultural heritage in Greece, which include monuments, archaeological sites and historical buildings. It also provides for the introduction of fiscal incentives to encourage heritage conservation, as well as setting out the penalties for damage and unauthorized works to historic assets.
Planning Ordinances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Law No. 2742/1999, <i>Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development</i>, provides for the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural environment through strategic planning at both the national and regional levels. Law No. 2508/1997, <i>On Sustainable Development of Towns and Settlements</i>, sets out the general principles and the means for sustainable development. It also stipulates the formulation of the Master Plan in the metropolitan cities (including Athens) to protect their historical and architectural heritage.
The General Building Construction Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regulation focuses specifically on the protection of listed architectural heritage. The protection is not limited to individual buildings, but also extended to groups of buildings and architectural ensembles, as well as to their surroundings and the overall landscape.

5. Heritage protection system

Scope of protection	
Ancient monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monuments and archaeological sites dating back from the Prehistoric Age to 1830 are protected by law, without any need for any administrative measures (such as listing).
Modern monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monuments and archaeological sites founded after 1830 are protected if they are listed by the Ministry of Culture due to their historical, scientific, artistic or cultural value.
Historical sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is statutory protection for (a) areas that were the domain of important mythical or historical events, even where no monuments are visible or evident, and (b) sites that contain monuments or groups of monuments constructed after 1830.
Conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In archaeological sites founded before 1453, the Ministry of Culture can delimit protection zones where no building activities are allowed. In archaeological sites founded after 1453, consent of the Ministry of Culture and special work authorization are required for new constructions or alternations to the existing buildings.
Protection of historic assets	
Protection measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major protection measures applicable to historic assets include (a) listing, (b) compulsory acquisitions, (c) maintenance of listed buildings, and (d) control of works to monuments.
Listing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection status is accorded to buildings constructed after 1830 if they are included on the statutory list of special interest compiled by the Ministry of Culture.
Compulsory acquisitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities can resort to compulsory acquisitions of buildings and land for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage and the preservation of properties of historical value.
Maintenance of listed buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owners of listed buildings are required to reconstruct those structures that may have decayed, or even collapsed, through neglect or as a consequence of major natural hazard (such as earthquake).
Control of works to monuments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The execution of any kind of technical works as well as building activities in the vicinity of a monument is permitted only upon the approval of the Ministry of Culture. Approval is granted if the monument is not threatened with direct or indirect damage due to the nature of the works.

6. Approach adopted for heritage conservation

Unification of archaeological sites of Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Large parts of the city centre have been redeveloped under the Master Plan entitled <i>Unification of Archaeological Sites of Athens</i>. ● The purpose of the unification plan aims at improving access to Athen's archaeological attractions through: (a) linking the six largest archaeological sites of the city centre with a traffic-free pedestrian promenade, (b) restoring monuments, and (c) establishing more visitor facilities.
Integration of heritage conservation with urban planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Article 3 of Law No. 3028/2002 stipulates that the protection of monuments and archaeological and historical sites is taken into account within all levels of planning policies (spatial, regional and urban), as well as in the various stages of development schemes.
Adaptive re-use of historic buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Athens, change of use of a historic building is accepted if the use attributed to the building is determined to be appropriate. ● For example, an old liquefied petroleum gas bottling factory built in 1857 has been converted to a top cultural centre of Athens. In addition, the Museum of Modern Art is housed in a former old brewery constructed in 1853.
Integration of monuments into contemporary life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is an increasing use of monuments (such as ancient theatres) as venues for diverse cultural events, provided that the special character and values embodied by the monuments are respected.
Public participation in heritage conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government encourages public participation in conservation work through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) heritage promotion through websites, exhibitions, open days, special events, and free admission to monuments for children and school groups; (b) free educational programmes organized by the Ministry of Culture and the state museums to foster public awareness in heritage conservation; and (c) non-profit-making bodies, such as associations and foundations, which play an important role in safeguarding and promoting heritage conservation in Athens.

7. Funding mechanism

Government funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Greek government, through the Ministry of Culture, finances the protection, restoration and maintenance of historic assets in Athens.
The Archaeological Receipts Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A funding source for heritage conservation comes from the revenue collected by the Archaeological Receipts Fund: entrance fees and sale receipts of archaeological guides and various items (such as replicas of museum exhibits) in archaeological sites and museum shops.
Lottery fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural activities and archaeological work are also funded by the various lottery schemes administered by the Ministry of Culture.
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial assistance from the European Union's Community Support Fund serves as another funding source.

8. Economic incentives available for heritage conservation

Tax incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax incentives include tax deductions for individuals who donate cultural properties or money to museums and cultural foundations.
Transfer of development rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Greek government allows private owners to transfer the unused development rights of a conserved building to a new site. The private owners can thus sell the development rights related to the new site to a third party, while preserving the conserved buildings.
Interest subsidy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government subsidizes interest on loans taken out by private owners for developing or restoring their historic properties.
Government's financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Greek government may contribute directly to the funding of conservation and/or restoration of historic buildings if private owners lack the financial means to do so.

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