

**HELLENIC REPUBLIC
HELLENIC COURT OF AUDIT**



**ANNUAL AUDIT PROGRAMME 2022
THEMATIC AUDITS**

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1. Direct outsourcing: when does direct public procurement or outsourcing ensure the objective integrity of the process?

Award procedures in these cases have not reached the necessary level of transparency, so as not to constitute a source of controversy in public debate and a potential source of corruption. The Hellenic Court of Audit will investigate as many cases as deemed necessary, in order to reach positive conclusions for the treatment of the pathogenesis, by taking preventive or suppressive measures.

2. Outsourced experts of the administrative services: why are such experts hired either on a fixed-term employment relationship or a service contract basis, despite the explicit law provision stating that the public services' permanent staff should cover the respective administrative needs?

The fact that the public services' organic posts remain vacant, the lack of specialised personnel despite filling of vacancies and emergency service needs arising, lead the public services to look for outsourced experts. However, such a procedure may constitute just a pretext, due to the fact that such experts may not be hired for political reasons or to ease the service's hierarchy. By examining numerous cases of appeal to outsourced experts, the Hellenic Court of Audit, will try to make a clear distinction between pretext and justified need for such experts.

3. Grants to non-governmental organisations and associations: sufficient justification or not in cases of granting private entities in favour of public interest, so that they may assist the administration in achieving its public interest objectives by means of their own statutory purposes

Whenever public authorities are called upon to select among a large number of existing non-governmental organisations and unions those that should

receive a grant, there is always an issue of equal treatment. However, public money should not be spared, but it should be granted for a public purpose, for which adequate proof is provided. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate criteria used while disposing public money in a number of grant cases, as well as the way of ensuring that public money was disposed for purposes of public interest, by accountability or other appropriate means.

4. Inspections carried out by Tax Authorities: how is the integrity and effectiveness of tax inspections ensured, especially when these are carried out on the spot?

The Tax Authorities' inspections on taxpayers should be carried out in such a way that no transaction between auditor and auditee is allowed and, at the same time, by means of a method ensuring a high probability detection of irregularities and violations. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate whether all the necessary precautions are taken, so that these inspections are not susceptible to corruption and are risk analysis based with the aim of economising audit resources.

5. Protecting forests from wildfires: is public money available to prevent and extinguish forest wildfires really aimed at addressing real needs?

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfires in August 2021, scientists, intellectuals and experienced public officials have offered various explanations for the inadequate protection of forests from wildfires. Examples include the excessive protection of pine trees, the relaxation of forest conservation measures, the transfer of competences from the forestry departments to the fire department, the central administration of forest protection, the failure to assign adequate competences to local authorities, the lack of appropriate means or their misuse. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate how the wildfires are linked with possible causes put forward by the explanations mentioned. It shall examine all relevant data made available by the public administration and find out whether these causes have been adequately studied, in terms of their relevance to the disastrous effect, so that public money available has a tangible effect.

6. Climate crisis: how is the Greek state and decentralized administration organized for the compliance of Greece with the requirements of the relevant program of the United Nations and the European Union, with a horizon of 2030 and 2050?

Although the horizons for 2030 and 2050 seem very distant, the timelines set for all parties concerned are imperative; progressive and interrelated action should be taken; no time should be left unexploited. At present, the public administration should have the appropriate management structures for all programmes installed; compliance plans should be prepared gradually with the required specialisation in order to find the necessary resources. The Recovery and Resilience Fund will provide resources to tackle the climate crisis by

financing specific projects. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate how the whole effort has progressed, focusing on whether action taken actually yields results.

7. Assets audit: can the enforcement of the legislation pertaining to auditing the origin of the assets of government officials and employees be described as effective, in the framework of a cost-benefit analysis?

The audit of the assets origin, as carried out in accordance with current legislation, is based on the electronic submission of a statement by the auditee and the examination of its accuracy by an audit body. The completeness of the statement is the main issue, in addition to the accuracy of the statements, which can easily be verified in principle. In terms of completeness, besides comparing each annual statement with a previous one, a cross-reference of the declared data with data available in databases subject to investigation by the audit authorities is also possible. In any case, an auditee who has been bribed or has committed embezzlement or theft to the detriment of the State is not expected to declare the illegal possession of his benefits; on the contrary, knowing the way he is being audited, he will try to conceal them in the way he thinks to be most ingenious.

The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate whether, in reality, the whole control system consists in a useless and excessive bureaucratic procedure leading to no tangible results, as it does not focus on the real essence of the issue, the actual completeness of the statements submitted, in view of the benefits criminal origin, but settles with formal verifications, without proceeding to a risk analysis; subsequently, the control results only in detecting formal breaches, which are of no importance, in view of the operating costs of the whole system.

8. Pre-school education: Are the appropriations allocated to their operation being used efficiently?

Pre-school education is proved to be most beneficial for children's development; it also contributes in creating strong bonds within the family, both parents' equal access to the labour market, smoothing social inequalities and financial well-being. Pre-school education is provided by kindergarten schools, included in the compulsory education and being part of the primary education, as well as nurseries and day-care centres, placed under the responsibility of local authorities. Recent educational reforms regarding the full – time compulsory education in kindergarten schools, created a growing concern in regard to the need of reviewing and revising the nurseries' and day-care centres' operating framework as well. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall examine the way nurseries and day-care centres –function, in order to ascertain that all expenditure made available by the Local Authorities ensure sufficient and quality education and care services for children and to identify issues which are common, to a certain degree and have to be solved.

9. All-day school: Are the needs met by its operation effectively covered?

The all-day school is an educational institution with multiple objectives which contribute to the upgrading of the educational work, the efficiency of the educational system and the family bonds reinforcement. The establishment of the Unified Form of All-Day Primary School is already (co-)financed by the EU, in terms of teaching staff recruitment, according to the constitutional commitment for providing equal opportunities in education to all students of the same grade. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall make an assessment of the progress of the institution in question to date. In this context, it shall investigate the existence (or not) of a strategy aiming at the establishment of the all-day school throughout the primary education. It shall also examine the way of estimating and allocating the relevant operational appropriations, the main relevant occurring issues and the level to which desired results have been achieved.

10. "Help at Home" programme: Are the program resources rationally used at the level of user choice and services provided?

The "Help at Home" programme aims at providing the elderly and people with special needs the possibility to stay in their own natural and social environment, to maintain their family's cohesion, to avoid resorting to a care unit or being exposed to situations of social distancing, to lead a decent and healthy life and to improve their quality of living. These aims are achieved by means of an organised and systematic elementary social care, provided by specialised scientists, qualified staff, volunteers and social solidarity institutions, to citizens who are not self-sufficient, elderly, people with disabilities, giving priority to those who live alone and their income does not allow them to ensure the required services. At the same time, providing the specific care service enhances employability and equal access to the labour market, as well as labour participation for the specific persons' relatives. The Local Authorities and their legal entities are the implementing bodies for this programme. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate whether the selection of those who will benefit from the programme is correct and whether the services provided are appropriate according to the relevant legal criteria.

11. State policy for culture: how effectively does the Radio Programme 3 GREEK RADIO – TELEVISION SA operate, in view of the cultural purposes that it should serve?

Radio Programme 3 is the only radio programme throughout Greece with cultural content, broadcasting mainly symphonic music and other programmes of cultural interest (intellect, theatre, briefing upon cultural events). It often broadcasts live concerts or opera performances of global interest, 24 hours a day, with no commercials. Similar State radio stations operate in other European countries (such as *France- Musique* and *France- Culture* in France, *BBC3* in the United Kingdom, *RAI Radio3 Classiko* in Italy, *Deutschland Kultur* and *BR Bayerischer Rundfunk KLASSIK* in Germany, *Radio Swiss Classic* in Switzerland). The Hellenic Court of Audit will investigate (a) whether sufficient funds and radio frequencies are made available to *Radio*

Programme 3, in view of the total resources and public radio frequencies, so that it may meet, not only the Constitution requirements pertaining to the mission of the State radio (cultural development of the country), but also the well-known demand for cultural goods by a very wide community of interested citizens and (b) whether *Radio Programme 3* operates on the basis of objectives and how they are set, and whether the means it disposes of or mobilises serve its objectives in a reasonable way. The audit will also examine the criteria used by the station to measure the success or failure of a broadcast. A generally underlying audit question would concern the objectives and criteria of success or failure under which the State – or public bodies, such as GREEK RADIO – TELEVISION SA – act, when it comes to appropriating State resources for cultural purposes.

12. Generation Solidarity Insurance Fund: Does the statutory resources transfer occur smoothly? Are these resources allocated by implementing the relevant restrictions provided by law, so that their proper use is achieved?

The Generation Solidarity Insurance Fund was established by Law 3655/2008 as a response to the demographic crisis at the pension system. According to Law, State resources (namely a percentage of the annual total revenues from the VAT and privatisations) and social resources are saved and invested, in order to prevent the reversal of the ratio between actually insured people and retirees affecting pensions of future generations, due the aging of population. In view of accumulating a sufficient reserve in the Fund, the legislator provided for the possibility of its financing from pensions only after January 1st, 2019, i.e. following a decade from its establishment. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate the unimpeded transfer of the adequate resources to the Fund, their proper allocation, implementing the relevant legal restrictions and whether these resources are adequately used, i.e., whether prerequisites of great importance to the public interest, for the sake of which this Fund was established.

13. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on mental Health: Are there integrated policies to support mental health?

The population's mental health deteriorated significantly during the pandemic. The highest rates of mental disorder were recorded during periods where a significant number of deaths from COVID-19 occurred and severe restraint measures were taken. The mental health of the unemployed and those facing financial uncertainty was worse than the one of the general population. The significant level of mental disorder cases since the onset of the pandemic requires high levels of mental health support. As the pandemic persists, it is important to manage its impact on mental health in order to identify whether higher rates of poor mental state result in a new permanent normality.

The Hellenic Court of Audit shall explore the existing mental health support institutions; it shall examine whether mental health constitutes a part of social security, labour and youth policies, whether mental health support was provided during the pandemic either in person, or remotely, or in both ways

and whether adequate mental health promotion programs are implemented in school and working environment. It will also examine how the access to mental health institutions is ensured for people who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and whether there are policies combining both mental health and employment support.

14. Respect for internationally recognised animal rights: how much the proclaimed animal rights are respected (protection from hunger, thirst, unnecessary suffering and strain due to pain, injury and disease, from fear and anxiety, freedom of expression of normal behavior) in case of homeless animals, found scattered in herds, in the countryside?

Despite the allocation of credits to local authorities and the introduction of specific positive energy obligations to be met by public services, the lack of sufficient appropriations, organisational deficiencies or even insufficient information do not contribute to the elimination of the problem. The Hellenic Court of Audit shall investigate whether the factors of inactivity still remain after the relevant legislation (Law 4830/2021, 18.9.2021) has been enacted and whether measures both provided by law and visibly responding to reality should be adopted to ensure the effectiveness of the relevant policy.