

India – Greece Relations

India and Greece established diplomatic relations in May 1950. India opened its resident Embassy in Athens in March 1978. Interaction between India and Greece goes back to antiquity. In modern times, the two countries have developed a warm relationship based on a common commitment to democracy, peace and development in the world and to a social system imbued with principles of justice and equality. India and Greece also share common approaches to many international issues, such as UN reforms and Cyprus. Greece has consistently supported India's core foreign policy objectives. India opened its resident Mission in Greece in 1978.

The relationship has progressed smoothly over the last 65 years. Bilateral VVIP visits have taken place regularly. President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited Greece in April 2007. Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis visited India in January 2008.

India and Greece share common approach on many initiatives including UN reform and the Cyprus issue. Greece participated with India in the Six-National Delhi Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament in 1985.

The two countries held Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi on 20 September 2016 and discussion focused on various issues of bilateral, regional and international importance.

Commercial Relations

India and Greece are keen to increase their commercial and investment contacts. Greece looks for Indian investments in their program of privatization of public assets. Indian infrastructure company, GMR Group has tendered a bid for upgradation and management of Heraklion airport at Crete Island.

The 7th Session of India-Greece Joint Economic Committee was held in New Delhi on 23 October 2016 where discussions were held on a number of MoUs/Agreements with a view to enhancing bilateral commercial engagement between the two countries. Areas discussed – Agriculture, Tourism, Shipping, Infrastructure, IT, etc.

Three Indian companies were having partners in Greece and 10 Greek companies are operating in India. But the investments in each other's country are not significant. Greek companies have shown interest in doing business in India including export of olive oil and olive, fruits and fruit juice, consumer goods, construction and aluminium products to India as well as small investments. Many Indian entrepreneurs assisted by ITPO and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Industries have regularly participated in the Thessaloniki International Fair held every year in northern Greece.

Bilateral trade

(All figures are in US\$ million)

Year	India's Exports	India's Imports	Total Trade
2009-10	452.80	154.13	606.93
2010-11	364.88	93.39	428.27
2011-12	790.06	110.95	901.01
2012-13	300.13	111.87	424.64
2013-14	335.14	109.44	444.58
2014-15	360.84	127.75	488.59
2015-16	335.70	109.53	445.23

(Source: *Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, Government of India*)

Bilateral trade will go up in 2016-17 due to projects, joint ventures and increasing trade. The main items of Greece's exports to India are cotton, scrap (mostly aluminium, ferrous, copper and lead), marble and granite, aluminium foils, calcium carbonate and greasywool. The main items of India's exports are petroleum products (jet fuel), automobile components and automobiles (cars & SUVs), flat rolled steel items, sesame seeds, electrical transformers, frozen prawns/shrimps and squid, cashew nuts, coffee, soyabean oilcake and nucleic acids.

An MoU in Air Services has been signed between India and Greece to establish direct air links between the two countries. Jet Airways has been designated as the Indian airline to fly to Greece.

Presently, three Indian companies have partnerships in Greece whereas ten Greek companies operating in India. Greek enterprises have shown interest in exporting olive oil, cheese, wine, fruit juice, construction and aluminum products to India. Indian entrepreneurs under the aegis of ITPO and Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Industries have regularly participated in annual Thessaloniki International Fair and other trade fairs held in Greece.

The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries for 2015-16 was US \$ 445.23 million. Main items of export from Greece to India are cotton, scrap (mostly aluminum, ferrous, copper and lead), marble and granite and calcium carbonate. Indian exports to Greece comprise petroleum products (jet fuel), automobile components and automobiles (cars and SUVs), flat rolled steel items, sesame seeds, electrical transformers, frozen prawns/shrimps and squid, cashew nuts, coffee and soyabean.

Cultural Relations

The last Cultural Exchange Program (CEP) signed between India and Greece has lapsed and a new draft CEP is under finalization by both sides.

There are unofficial Greek centers in Kolkata and Varanasi. Several organizations like Indo-Hellenic Society for Culture and Development (ELINEPA), Shantom Indian Dance Center, Art of Living Hellas, Brahma Kumari Center and many Yoga centers under the patronage of Hellenic Yoga Society are active in propagation and promotion of Indian culture in Greece.

Cultural groups sponsored by ICCR regularly participate in Greek dance and music festivals and cultural events. Kathak Dance group led by Ms. Swati Wangnoo Tiwari participated in the 3rd Bollywood and Multicultural Dance Festival held in Athens on 3-5 July 2015 which was well received by the Greek audience.

ICCR also offers one scholarship every year to the Greek students to study in India. A few students are studying in India under self-financing scheme also.

Indian Community

There are about 10,000 Indian nationals living in Greece. Most of them are farm, factory or construction workers or small entrepreneurs. A few Indian professionals work in multinational organizations in banking, insurance and software sectors. Indians are a law-abiding community and enjoy cordial relations and goodwill of the native Greek community.

Air links

There is no direct air link between India and Greece. Athens can be reached via Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Istanbul, Doha, Bahrain, Amman and several cities in Europe. An Air Services Agreement is under negotiation.

Useful Resources:

- i) Embassy of India, Athens website :
<http://www.indianembassy.gr>
- ii) Embassy of India, Athens facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Embassy-of-India-Athens>
- iii) Embassy of India, Athens Twitter account:
https://twitter.com/Indian_Embassy

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