



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
MINISTER

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities,

Thank you for the opportunity and the privilege to address you today. I would also like to thank all members of the Monitoring Committee — and especially the two rapporteurs, Mrs. Tanya Joonas and Mrs. Katrien Partyka — for their valuable work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I firmly believe in strong and independent local and regional administration — with clear roles, specific responsibilities, and proper funding. Therefore, we are strongly committed to building a solid framework that gives every mayor and every governor the tools they need to serve effectively.

To this end, the Ministry of the Interior is about to complete a major project — the new **Unified Charter for Local and Regional Self-Administration in Greece**.

Until today, more than a thousand different laws have governed local administration. Fifteen years after the “Kallikratis” reform, the second level of local government still operates under rules from 1994 — rules designed for the prefectures abolished in 2010.

Obviously, this makes life harder — for elected officials, civil servants, as well as for citizens. Operational procedures tend to be slower than expected and include unnecessary formalities.

Our new Charter is focused on removing these exact obstacles. It is not just about codifying existing legislation. It's about forming – reforming to be more accurate - a transparent and functional legal framework. One that introduces a fair and modern way to distribute powers across all levels of the Greek state.

At this point, please allow me to briefly introduce the new Charter's main reforms:

Book One — Elections

We are replacing the old two-round electoral system with a supplementary base voting system. Why? During the last local elections, turnout in the second round dropped dramatically — only 1 out of 4 registered voters voted in Athens. Regarding regional elections, the turnout percentage did not exceed 35%, that is 17 points lower than the previous ones. Our goal is simple: give voters more power and flexibility. Moreover, for the first time in Greek political history, we are also introducing **e-voting**.

These changes aim to facilitate participation — for younger people, for those working on election day, for citizens voting away from home, for people with disabilities or limited mobility.

Book Two — Governance and Participation

We are improving the way councils and committees work, enhancing efficiency and transparency. We also update the framework for sub-municipal and sub-regional entities. We believe in active citizenship, which is why we are introducing **e-referendums** and **public e-consultations**. We are giving entities more power to adopt local regulations to strengthen their capacity to regulate local affairs.

Book Three — Competencies

We have recorded 1,200 competencies: 737 for the regions, 400 for the municipalities, and 63 for mountainous and insular areas. Two rules guide us: every citizen in Greece should receive the same quality of public service, wherever they live. Each municipality can choose from four different models how to deliver each service.

Book Four — Finances

We are rebuilding the whole financial framework. Municipalities will be encouraged to better **collect** their own local taxes, supported by a brand new integrated digital tool. We simplify the budgeting process and create a **Central Point of Municipal Revenues** — a transparent digital platform where every citizen can check what they owe. This will enable the recovery of the majority of the €3.6 billion in arrears.

Municipalities and regions are key players in social policy. They will be able to give one-off grants for newborns,

support the national health system, and assist doctors and teachers serving in their areas.

Book Five — Compliance and Supervision

We are establishing an **independent authority** to oversee the legality of local and regional actions. This transparent framework includes strict deadlines and leadership by highly qualified professionals selected through open competition by the Supreme Personnel Selection Council.

This is a major reform — one I could speak about for hours, but time is limited.

Allow me now to comment briefly on the reports' recommendations.

1. The Greek Government will consider ratifying the remaining articles of the Charter, as well as the Additional Protocol.
2. As an EU and Eurozone member, Greece must respect the fiscal framework. Through this lens, we have increased transfers to municipalities from €1.8 billion in 2019 to €2.6 billion in 2024, and, in addition, we provided €7 billion over six years for schools, urban projects, water, sewage, sports, and cultural infrastructure. Please note that the state budget covers all recovery expenses resulting from natural disasters, with total fund allocations exceeding €1 billion.
3. However, as we say, it takes two to tango. Despite the aforementioned increases, local tax revenues do not

yet cover the cost of self-funded services. Although no one favors new taxes, it is unfair for all Greek taxpayers to subsidize municipal services that ought to be self-financed.

4. Regarding human resources: although the public-sector wage bill must remain stable, based on the rule “1 hire for each retirement”, the Ministry of the Interior has approved more than 19.000 hirings in local authorities since 2020. Moreover, all staffing requests for self-funded services such as public lighting, waste collection, waste management, water and sewage have also been authorized.
5. Finally, a brief comment on Athens and Thessaloniki as Metropolitan Areas: The government could consider a significant change in the status of the Athens Greater Area and Thessaloniki Greater Area, leading to two consolidated, single municipalities. However, such a proposal has never been put forward by the parties concerned.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I view this new era as an opportunity — for central government, and for local and regional authorities — to build mutual trust and advance together. To provide better services. To create a more efficient public sector. And, above all, to empower the people.

Thank you

