

Honorable:

Giorgos Souflias,
Minister of Environment, Planning
and Public Works

Giorgos Alogoskoufis,
Minister of National Economy

Fani Pali Petralias,
Minister of Tourism Development

Giorgos Voulgarakis,
Minister of Culture

Dear Madam and Sirs,

The undersigned organizations and individuals wish to express our deep concern regarding the procedures, the policy direction and the content of the proposed Tourism Planning Scheme currently open for public consultation.

We request the withdrawal of the Tourism Planning Scheme as currently proposed

Our reasons are as follows:

1. We fear that its aim is not to further the proper planning of tourism activities in Greece, but to encourage real estate and construction developments without taking into account potential irreversible damage to the country's economy, to its social development, to the tourism industry and to the environment, as has already occurred, following the adoption of similar policies, in Spain.
2. We are concerned that the national budget will be placed under serious strain if it must subsidize the construction of second homes from state funds. We are especially concerned as to the consequences for other investment projects, particularly those partially financed by the European Union but requiring a contribution from the Greek state. Finally, we are concerned that the target of a reduction in the country's debt will be unfavourably affected.
3. We estimate, on the basis of the Spanish experience that the proposed Planning Scheme will lead to overheating of the economy of many regions in Greece as also the country as a whole.
4. We consider that the failure to ensure simultaneous publication of the study on which the Planning Scheme is based and the absence of public discussion on the strategic environmental assessment study raises serious doubts about the procedure adopted with negative consequences for the environment and sustainable development.
5. We have identified serious threats for areas protected under the NATURA 2000 network, to archaeological sites and to uninhabited islands.
6. We judge that common sense and the existing legal framework (law 2742/1999) alike necessitate that Sectoral Planning Schemes should follow and not precede the overall National Plan, that has not yet been published, so that the guiding principles for the National Plan will also govern the specific arrangements for each sector.

We request the preparation of a New Planning Scheme for Tourism which would meet the specific needs of Greece and respect the carrying capacity of each locality.