



Public & Administrative

An overview of the core provisions of the new legislative framework governing settlements

Implications for Urban Planning and Spatial Development

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PD 129/2025: New criteria and restrictions in the demarcation of Greek settlements

As part of the effort to simplify the process of adopting a uniform framework for the delimitation of urban land use planning for all settlements created up to 1983, the new Presidential Decree for the determination of the criteria for the delimitation of settlements in the country with a population of less than 2,000 inhabitants, including settlements dating back to 1923, the determination of land use, general conditions and building restrictions (Government Gazette D' 194/15.04.2025) was published.

This new legislation brings about the merger of two previous settlement decrees, a) that of 13-3-81 for pre-1923 settlements in off-plan areas, which defines the boundaries of the settlements existing before 16-8-1923 that lack an approved urban plan and the conditions and restrictions for building on these plots, and b) the Decree of 24-04-1985, which sets the boundaries of the settlements of the country up to 2,000 inhabitants, which were recorded as independent in a census before 1983, and at the same time the conditions and restrictions on their construction.

Firstly, provisions are included regarding the criteria and the way of delimitation of settlements, the approval of which is made by a Decree, either independently, i.e. simple delimitation by the Municipality concerned, or within the framework of the approval of the Local Urban Plan, which is the first stage of

urban planning and is initiated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

It should be noted that in the case of re-approval or rezoning, the new boundary must be identified and related to the earlier approved boundary, while it is prohibited to extend the settlement boundary based on a factual situation after its determination. Pending the adoption of the PD on the delimitation of each settlement, the relevant provisions of the Basic Planning Code and the specific PD on the definition of building limits and restrictions continue to apply.

In fact, three zones were established within the settlements:

- Zone A: The historical core of the settlements, pre-1923, documented with aerial photographs of 1939 or 1945,
- Zone B: The coherent part of the settlement created between 1923 and 1983.
- Zone B1: The scattered, non-cohesive part, also based on aerial photographs from 1983.

Therefore, distinct conditions and building restrictions were established per zone, based on the time of creation and the specific characteristics of each zone or the urban planning structure of each settlement. Basically, integrity is given to plots of land whose area exceeds two acres facing a common area.

In fact, owners of plots of less than two acres, located in areas that were included in settlements by decisions of prefects or other

bodies after 1983, without sufficient documentation, are affected. They face the risk that their properties will be declared off-plan and unbuildable. The Ministry is considering the possibility of classifying these areas as Use Control Areas, with the possibility of building with a building density of between two and four acres, provided that there is frontage on a road.

The said PD does not apply to settlements with more than 2,000 inhabitants, to settlements created after 14.3.1983 and to settlements falling within holiday coastal areas within the ZOE of the prefectures: Attica, Evia, Corinth, Corinth, Thessaloniki, Pieria and Halkidiki.

The legislator has laid down certain transitional provisions in order to regulate pending zoning procedures in application of the Decree of 24.04.1985 and 02.03.1981. Accordingly, these procedures — which have already commenced and for which the competent Planning Councils have issued their opinions—will be finalized under the pre-existing legal framework. Legally established uses within the settlement zones shall remain in effect unless expressly modified or revoked by the zoning decree, which may also prescribe a timeline for their discontinuation. In addition, it is provided that building permits issued for plots within the settlement boundary are valid and enforceable until the publication of a zoning ordinance for the respective settlement.

Finally, given that legislative and jurisprudential progress in urban planning issues is "running", while at the same time property rights and interests are at stake, but also possibly investment and/or tourism projects, coordinated action by the Municipalities and the competent Ministry is required. For the correct and proper implementation of the new PD, the competent authorities must identify the settlements that lack demarcation or have weak institutional safeguards, assign or prepare studies on Local Urban Plans and demarcation and, above all, inform the residents about the process, who, from their side, must exert the appropriate pressure for the resolution of the above issues.

This legislative initiative seeks to close existing gaps in the legal framework for small settlements, reflecting their current status — though its success will soon be put to the test.

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