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## **National Bank of Greece: €6 billion in Structured Financing Deal Flow Drives European Expansion**

### **How Greece's historical institution leveraged record transact**

*di Lawrence Freedman*

Since 2020, the Structured Financing team at National Bank of Greece has firmly established itself as a leader in complex, large-scale financing within the Greek market. During this period, it disbursed approximately €6 billion in structured financing – representing a threefold increase in disbursements and nearly doubling its outstanding balances.

Notably, NBG's Structured Financing unit expanded its portfolio in 2024 by 32% YoY, with disbursements increasing by almost 70%. These results reflect its strategic focus, operational excellence, and capacity to support transformative investments across key sectors of the Greek economy.

“We take great pride in having established four equally dynamic pillars within our Structured Financing – Energy, Infrastructure, Real Estate and Leveraged Acquisition Finance. These pillars have driven balanced growth in both credit origination and profitability, forming the backbone of our strategy” says Argyro Banila, assistant general manager, Structured Financing & Investment Banking at NBG.

Equally impressive is the surge in fee and commission income, which grew by +621% over the same five-year timeframe, an increase of almost 40% in 2024 versus the previous year. In a market where such sustained momentum in structured financing is rare, this trajectory not only underscores its pivotal role in advancing NBG's corporate banking strategy but also sets a benchmark for excellence across Southeastern Europe.

This performance has earned industry recognition, with NBG winning Euromoney's Best Investment Bank for Financing country award – alongside with Best Bank for Large Corporates country award — validation of the bank's successful transformation into a sophisticated financial partner for complex corporate requirements.

With a CET1 ratio of 18.3% – the highest among Greek peers – and stable credit ratings from S&P (BBB-), Moody's (Baa1), and Fitch (BBB), NBG has the balance sheet strength to grow in European Structured Financing space, focusing primarily on energy, infrastructure, technology, real- estate and leveraged corporate acquisitions.

### **A New Corporate Banking Offer**

NBG has also succeeded in transforming its Corporate Transaction Banking operations through the launch of a new Business Internet and Mobile Banking platform, designed to deliver a seamless, secure, and highly personalized digital experience for corporate clients.

Equally, the new Operative Account enables automated, interest-free repayment of loan obligations, enhancing transparency and control. Simultaneously, the bank centralised its support functions under the Corporate Service Unit (CSU), streamlining client onboarding, KYC/AML processes, and day-to-day servicing through specialised teams and new five service hubs dedicated for corporate clientele.

These initiatives, combined with digital signatures, workflow automation, and CRM integration, significantly improve operational efficiency and client satisfaction. This integrated model positions NBG at the forefront of digital corporate banking in Greece.

### **Structured Financing Sophistication**

The bank's Structured Financing portfolio includes energy interconnection projects, major motorways, energy production and storage facilities, and transnational digital networks – sectors critical to European competitiveness and energy security.

In renewable energy, NBG maintains a portfolio worth more than €3 billion. The bank has absorbed 80% of the €1 billion European Investment Bank funds allocated to Greece's Green Investments programme, demonstrating both execution capacity and regulatory confidence, whilst it preserves the largest market share in financing traditional RES investments in Greece. The bank has also standardised a Renewable Energy Project Portfolio Financing Framework — one of the largest at a pan-European

level — that functions as an umbrella agreement covering multiple compensation regimes, including Feed-in Premium, Feed-in Tariff, and Corporate PPAs.

Specific landmark transactions illustrate NBG's structured finance capabilities. The bank exclusively financed the Alexandroupolis Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) and Combined-Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) power plant – critical energy infrastructure projects ensuring European supply security during the transition to renewable sources. NBG also structured financing for Greece's first 50MW electricity battery storage project, creating the country's inaugural banking precedent for energy storage investments.

The bank's digital infrastructure expertise extends to transformative connectivity projects, such as the exclusive financing for a submarine cable connecting Europe and Saudi Arabia, applying for the first time ever in Greece Islamic Finance principles.

NBG's Banila highlights how deal completion isn't everything. "Our experience has shown us that successful execution, doesn't just close deals – it opens doors. It drives future deal origination, with satisfied clients becoming our most powerful advocates."

### **Boosting Capital Markets**

NBG is also expanding its capabilities in investment banking, across capital markets, innovative financial products and advisory services to businesses in order to increase their turnover and profitability. The bank leads domestic capital markets activity, having executed the largest number of bond transactions since 2016, with a 40% market share.

The bank has pioneered several market-first financial structures. NBG structured and fully subscribed Greece's inaugural corporate receivables securitisation transaction worth €220 million, designed to comply with European Securities & Markets Authority (ESMA) principles. This transaction creates a replicable template for large corporate clients seeking to optimise funding through asset monetisation – a significant development for Greek capital markets.

NBG's Energy Baseload Swap (EBS) product, launched in 2024, exemplifies the bank's innovation in addressing corporate energy challenges. It is an energy investment product (financial instrument) and more specifically, a bilateral contract for over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives on energy products. This enables energy intensive

businesses to lock energy consumption costs for up to 10 years, allowing renewable energy producers to secure fixed selling prices while financing their investment through the National Bank and to protect their cash flows from fluctuations in the market price of electricity without traditional power purchase agreements, whilst helping corporate consumers manage operating costs.

NBG successfully issued its second green senior preferred bond (€650m), in line with its Sustainable Financing Framework and sector-specific transition plans to meet net-zero financed emissions targets for 2030.

### **Cross-Border, Tech Strengths**

NBG's European expansion strategy is delivering results, with international loan origination exceeding €500 million across European markets. The bank has established a dedicated International Loan Capital Markets capability, serving as the hub for sponsor relationships and cross-border transaction execution. This platform has enabled NBG to participate as a key syndicate bank in European debt raises whilst developing recurring business relationships.

The bank's international expansion includes establishing a fully-fledged banking arm in Cyprus as the administrative hub for European operations. This facility operates according to international banking standards across governance, compliance, credit assessment, settlement, and post-closing monitoring — ensuring NBG can compete effectively with established European banks.

“We have developed a robust syndication network across Europe and are gradually extending our reach into the Middle East. In fact, we are preparing to establish a new regional hub in the area, signalling our intent to be present where capital meets opportunity,” adds Banila.

NBG's corporate banking capabilities are enhanced by significant technology investments, including artificial intelligence applications that optimise renewable energy operations, predict performance, and support more accurate financial projections in financing structures. These AI capabilities contribute to energy savings through smart networks and improved load management – factors increasingly important for corporate clients focused on ESG objectives.

The bank's broader technology platform includes advanced workflow systems and GenAI applications that streamline complex transaction processes whilst maintaining the relationship focus that sophisticated corporate clients require. This technology integration supports NBG's capacity to handle larger transaction volumes whilst improving execution speed and accuracy.

### **Strategic Positioning for Continued Growth**

Looking ahead to 2025-2027, NBG targets loan growth averaging 8% annually whilst projecting return on tangible equity exceeding 18% by 2027. The bank's international expansion represents a designated pillar within its transformation plan, monitored by specific KPIs at C-Suite level to ensure execution quality and sustainable growth.

It is doing so by assembling a team that "talks the talk". Banila says: "We've made a dual investment, nurturing home-grown talent, whilst repatriating international professionals to strengthen our depth. Long-term development remains central to our philosophy."

The bank's success in attracting more than 25 foreign investors, with 70% making their first-ever investment in Greece demonstrates its unique positioning as both market gateway and sophisticated financial partner – a dual role that creates competitive advantages in an increasingly connected European financial landscape. NBG's corporate and investment banking franchise is positioned to capture the multiple growth opportunities lying ahead: continued leadership in domestic structured finance, expanded participation in European syndicated structured credit market, growing advisory mandates from international sponsors, and increased fee generation from innovative financial products.

*Regarding the Energy Baseload Swap product, terms and conditions apply. The National Bank of Greece S.A. (Reg. No. G.E.M.I. 237901000) provides the investment services of receiving/transmitting and/or executing orders for the preparation of transactions in financial instruments/investment products. This is for advertising and informational purposes only. It does not constitute the investment services of receiving/transmitting and/or executing orders for the preparation of transactions in financial instruments/investment products. The product is intended for corporate*

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