Conditional Sentences in Greek

Greek has various types of conditional sentences ('conditionals'). Different combinations of moods lead to different presentations of a conditional relationship in time and likelihood.

The first important distinction is that between once-off conditionals ('if X happens, then Y'), and conditionals that suggest general, repeatable/repeated circumstances ('if anytime X, then always Y'). The latter are called General Conditionals.

Within the group of once-off conditionals, Greek distinguishes many shades of plausibility of the condition.

- **Simple/Neutral Conditional**: the narrator/speaker does not commit to likelihood or unlikelihood of fulfillment of the condition (rare!). 'If X is indeed true, then Y.'
- **Contrary-to-Fact or Unreal Conditional**: the narrator/speaker knows that the condition is/was not true. 'If pigs had wings, they could fly.'
- **(so-called) Future More Vivid**: the narrator/speaker considers fulfilment of the condition quite plausible (frequent). 'If I find out, I'll let you know.'
- **(so-called) Future Less Vivid**: the narrator/speaker considers fulfilment of the condition possible but not more than that. 'Should X happen, then Y would.'

Within the group of general conditionals, Greek distinguishes two types:

- **Present General**: General conditional with reference to the present. 'If it rains, the streets get wet.'
- **Past General**: General conditional with reference to the past. English main clause translation will often use 'would' to stress the habitual, repetitive nature. 'If the oracle responded, they would always follow/they always followed its advice.'

[jargon alert]
- The subordinate conditional clause (the if-clause) is called protasis.
- The main clause of a conditional sentence (the then-clause) is called apodosis.

### Overview of tenses and moods in conditionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conditional</th>
<th>Protasis (if-clause)</th>
<th>Apodosis (then-clause)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>ëí + any indicative</td>
<td>any indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrary-to-fact</td>
<td>ëí + indicative II</td>
<td>indicative II + áv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future More Vivid ⇒ plausible</td>
<td>ëáv + subj. (= áv/řv + subj.)</td>
<td>future indicative /imperative/ other fut. reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Less Vivid ⇒ just possible</td>
<td>ëí + opt.</td>
<td>optative + áv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present general</td>
<td>ëáv + subj. (= áv/řv + subj.)</td>
<td>present indicative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past general</td>
<td>ëí + opt.</td>
<td>imperfect indicative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(sometimes with ãv)

**NOTE:**
- Only the combination of moods in protasis and apodosis can identify the type of conditional !
- The conditional protasis is always negated with µí --only neutral conditions sometimes have Œú.
- These same constructions can also be used for temporal clauses (esp. the present and past general: whenever X happens, Y happens), and relative clauses. See 'uses of subj and opt' sheet.
- Circumstantial participles sometimes function as 'protasis' of a conditional: E.g. Having done your best, you will not fail ⇒ If you do your best, ..