



Greece

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The cooperation of local trans organisation Transgender Support Association (GTSA) with the mayor of Athens, Costas Bakogiannis ensured that those most hardly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in its initial period had access to food and basic necessities. Starting from April, the municipality of Athens provided support for 46 LGBT people on a weekly basis, through the city's Reception and Solidarity Centre. The mayor also agreed to provide training for the staff of the centre and ensure that no-one is discriminated against on grounds of their SOGIESC. The mayor failed to fulfil this promise later and also discontinued his support from October onwards, despite repeated pleas from trans activists.

ASYLUM

Two amendments to the immigration law were passed this year, both severely restricting the rights of LGBTI asylum seekers. Firstly, times for reviewing an application and appeal procedures have both been reduced. Both are worrisome, as LGBTI asylum seekers often need additional attention in the application phase and appeals have been a successful path for many. Second, asylum detention will remain the default form of reception - known to be dangerous and harmful for LGBTI asylum seekers. Third, legal aid will only be accessible if the case is likely to have a positive outcome - an ad hoc requirement. Fourth, the list of safe countries includes several where LGBTI people are criminalised. Fifth, the appeal committees will no longer include a UNHCR representative, only judges.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, a booklet was distributed by the Church in the Athens Holargos high school, saying that being "homosexual" is a "hateful act" and that LGBTI people were "traitors" and "murderers". LGBTI organisations published a joint statement of concern.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In October, the Misdemeanor Court of Chalkida gave a 16-month suspended prison sentence to the perpetrator of a 2015 transphobic and racist hate crime. This was the first time that a court applied Article 82 of the Criminal Code, applying the hate motif on grounds of gender identity as an aggravating factor.

EDUCATION

In collaboration with GLSEN, Color Youth launched the results of the first School Climate Survey conducted in Greece. The study found that one-in-three LGBTQ students had been verbally harassed in school, one-in-seven physically harassed or assaulted, and one-in-three sexually harassed. 65% never

heard anything positive about LGBTQ people in class, and 54% heard negative things. 60% said that none of their school books included information about LGBTQ people.

The University of Aegean launched a 600-hour course on LGBTI Affirmative Counseling and Gestalt therapy, led by trainers Parvy Palmou and Anna Apergi, both members of GTSA.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On May 17, on the occasion of IDAHOBIT, GTSA and the municipality of Athens launched the "Breaking The Silence" campaign, to raise awareness of the discrimination and violence LGBTI people face, and demand equal treatment and the fight against all forms discrimination.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

EuroPride 2020 had been planned to take place in Thessaloniki in June, for the first time in a Balkans country. Thessaloniki's mayor fought to bring the event to the town and received backlash from political and religious leaders.

The Ministry of Citizen Protection refused to give green light for the Greek LGBT Police Association to host the European LGBT Police Association Conference as part of EuroPride. The event had been supported by the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the Council of Europe. 20 MPs from Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left - Progressive Alliance party, demanded an explanation from the Ministry. On 2 March, the European Parliament expressed concern over the Ministry's move and posed a number of questions to Greece on its work on ensuring non-discrimination within the police and the public.

EuroPride was later cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

HEALTH

Local civil society organisations provided free COVID-19 tests for trans and LGBTI+ people.

No developments took place in access to healthcare this year, despite the working group of the Ministry of Health having presented its conclusions in 2019 on how to ensure equality and non-discrimination in healthcare and improve access to services.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Civil society organisations had to increase a number of their activities due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic



on the LGBTI community, for instance in providing financial assistance to trans women and trans sex workers; ensuring safe and respectful identity checks by police during lockdown; and supporting older LGBTI people.



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POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March and November, in collaboration with Secretary General of Solidarity and Poverty, George Stamatidis, GTSA urged the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to ensure that the privacy and dignity of trans persons is upheld during identity verifications as part of lockdown measures. The Ministry responded [positively](#).

A group of psychologists [suggested](#) that to prevent police harassment, trans people should carry around medical certificates and old photographs to prove they are trans. GTSA expressed deep concern about the recommendation, which places blame on trans people instead of the police, and violates trans people's right to privacy. [Psychiatrists](#) and [legal experts](#) spoke out against the recommendation as well.

PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDES

Alexis Patelis, the Prime Minister's Chief Economic Adviser, [came out](#) in an interview, saying:

"The Prime Minister has met my husband, I have met his wife."

This was the first time that a high-ranking official came out publicly in Greece. Patelis received hateful comments on social media. Nonetheless, some [said](#) Patelis's statement was a bigger breakthrough for the LGBTQ movement "than ten Pride marches".

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Anti-abortion posters were [put up](#) across Athens metro lines in January. The public strongly criticised the campaign and the Ministry of Transport called on the metro authority to immediately remove them.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Local civil society groups received a number of funding packages from the state and the Council of Europe to provide direct support to the most marginalised of the LGBTI community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including older LGBTI people, sex workers, and others. The funds were used to cover rent, utilities, and healthcare costs.

