

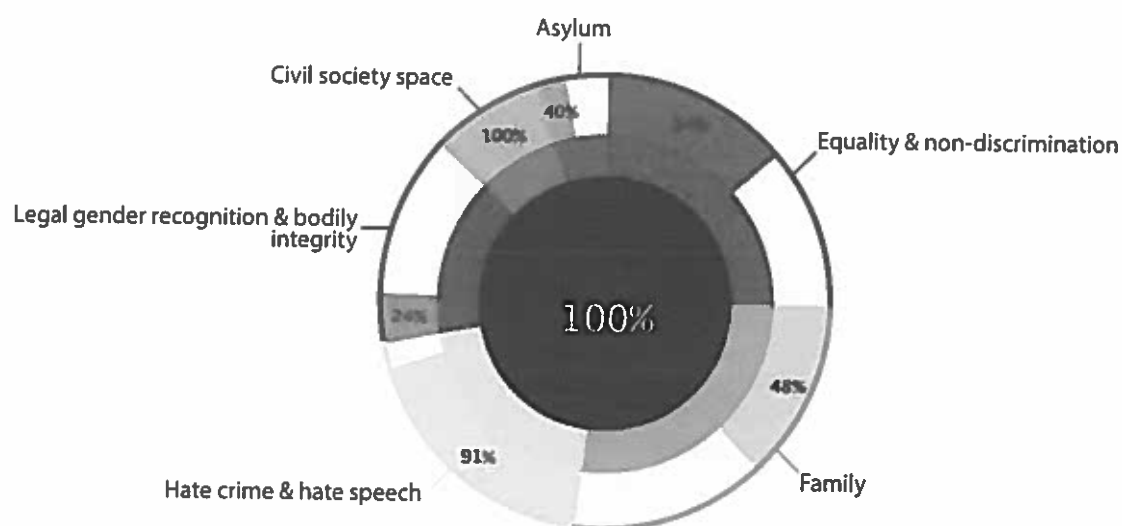
Greece



As the first civil unions were registered between same-sex couples, discussions on further legislative changes took place in Greece. New anti-discrimination provisions were introduced in labour law, adding to the body of equality law designed to protect people in the workplace. Sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are now included as protected grounds in a range of employment scenarios. One underdeveloped area of law on the Greek statute books relates to legal gender recognition and bodily integrity. The need to rectify this was clear. In response to this gap, a draft bill (based on the standard-setting Maltese law from 2015) was being composed by a parliamentary legal committee. The Greek secretary general for human rights also acknowledged the need for any new law to also include provisions relating to intersex people.

For more information on developments in 2016, visit www.rainbow-europe.org where you can read the full country chapter.

Legal and policy situation in **Greece** as of 31 December 2016



In order to improve the legal and policy situation of LGBTI people, ILGA-Europe recommend:

➡ **Drafting and adopting legislation that expressly protects against discrimination on all SOGISC grounds (sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics) in education.**

➡ **Updating the existing legal framework for legal gender recognition, to ensure the process is based on self-determination, and is free from abusive requirements (such as sterilisation, GID/medical diagnosis, or surgical/medical intervention).**

Bias-motivated speech

- In June, before Thessaloniki's Pride festival, Bishop Amvrosios of Kalavryta reacted to a Pride poster that featured a Crucifixion image, saying: "Unfortunately, shamelessness is today 'in fashion'! In a few years, the way things are headed, normal, physiological people, will run and hide whereas the abnormal will double and control with their heinous pride."
- During parliamentary discussions on 1 December on changes to anti-discrimination laws (see **Equality and non-discrimination**), Constantinos Katsikis MP (Independent Greeks, ANEL; conservative) asked whether gay people could babysit children or if trans people should be school teachers.

Bias-motivated violence

- LGBTQ NGO Colour Youth published figures from their Tell Us! Project on 11 January. The project records incidents of homophobic/transphobic violence and discrimination; between 1 April 2014 and 30 November 2015, they received 101 reports of violence against 140 people, 52 of which took place in a public place. 96 of the incidents were reported by the victims themselves; 10 individuals requested legal advice and filed a complaint.
- On 19 April, the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) published its report for 2015. According to the report, the majority of the violent incidents recorded by RVRN were based on sexual orientation and gender identity (185 out of 273 recorded incidents).
- Two 17-year-old teenagers were verbally abused on a metro train in Athens on 22 October. A group of 30-40 people wearing emblems of the AEK Athens football team were reported to have entered the train carriage and started making derogatory comments. One of the group became more verbally abusive before physically attacking one of the 17-year-olds. According to LGBTI NGOs, the victims did not go to the police to report the attack as they had concerns about how the complaint would be dealt with.

Bodily integrity

- At an event to mark Trans Day of Remembrance on 26 November, the Greek Secretary General of Human Rights

announced that the proposed new law on legal gender recognition (see **Legal gender recognition**) would follow the Maltese model. Speaking at the event, organised by NGO Greek Transgender Support Association, the secretary general said the law would include provisions relating to intersex people and that 'normalising' surgery would have to be approved by a committee before being carried out on intersex babies. The composition of the committee was not discussed.

Equality and non-discrimination

- In 2016, the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) announced the establishment of the "Prevention and Fight against sexism and discrimination on gender identity issues" project. The project's first phase will train journalists on how to sensitively cover trans issues. KETHI is directly supervised by the Ministry of Interior. This is the first project run by a government body which focuses solely on LGBTI issues.
- On 2 December, a law extending anti-discrimination protections for LGBTI people was approved by parliament in roll call vote. 201 MPs supported the proposal, 21 opposed and a further five declined to express an opinion. The bill, submitted by the Ministry of Justice, replaced the existing labour law, dating from 2005, that protected employees against discrimination based on sexual orientation. The new law (4443/2016) protects against discrimination in the labour sector based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. The concept of discrimination by association was also added to the law, as well as the concept of discrimination based on inferred features. The law also clarifies that its provisions apply to a range of employment scenarios, including work, all types and levels of career guidance, apprenticeship, vocational training, advanced vocational training and retraining, and practical work experience. Violations of the law, which came into force on 9 December, can result in fines or prison terms.
- A final report under the UN's Universal Periodic Review process was adopted for Greece in 2016 (see **United Nations**).

Family

- The first civil partnership agreement for a same-sex couple was signed by the Mayor of Athens Giorgos Kaminis on 25 January at a ceremony at the capital's city hall.

"...Today is very important for civil rights in Greece and the country's compliance to international reality."

Mayor of Athens Giorgos Kaminis during first civil union signing ceremony, 25 January 2016

- Three senior religious leaders initiated an appeal in March against the recently introduced civil union legislation. The metropolitan bishops (Seraphim of Piraeus, Seraphim of Kythira and Ieremias of Gortynia) argued that extending civil partnerships to same-sex couples was unconstitutional. The appeal was lodged with the Council of State, the country's highest administrative court.
- The 2015 civil union law stated that the full list of rights granted to couples who enter a civil union would be specified in a presidential decree within six months. Instead of a decree, the Ministry of Labour includes a reference to registered partners in Law 4387/2016 (this was passed in May to amend the social security system). The provision stated: "The couples that have signed a civil union (as described by Law 4356/2015) are equal to married couples with regards to any social security rights, benefit, obligation or restriction, in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the general legislation".
- According to figures released by the Ministry of Interior in November, 216 same-sex couples had entered civil partnerships since the union's introduction in late 2015.

Foreign policy

- On 13 July, during the Montevideo Global LGBTI Human Rights Conference, Greece, together with 30 other states, joined the Equal Rights Coalition, a coalition committed to work towards equal rights and the eradication of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people.

Freedom of assembly

- Members of the Orthodox Church in Thessaloniki held a prayer vigil on 23 June, the day before the Pride festival

started. A church spokesman commented that the vigil was "...a clear response to an event and class of people whom we cannot accept, not because they are evil but because their actions go against the teachings of the Bible and New Testament."

- The organisers of the second Crete Pride applied to use Rethymnon's Public Garden during the event but their request was turned down by Rethymnon city council. It was reported that, during council meetings, several council members said that children must be 'protected from the LGBTQ community'. The Crete Pride organising committee complained; the council subsequently changed their position and the Pride event took place on 9 July.

Legal gender recognition

- Greek officials visited Malta from 21 to 22 April as part of a study visit organised by the Council of Europe. The Greek authorities requested the visit in order to learn more about the implementation of the 2015 Maltese Gender Expression, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics Law. The Greek government was drafting legal gender recognition legislation throughout the year; the committee responsible for drafting it also consulted with Marina Galanou, president of NGO GTSA, during the process as an independent expert. On 2 December, during a parliamentary debate, Minister for Justice Stavros Kontonis (Syriza) said that the legal committee had completed its work on the proposed gender recognition bill. The bill had not been opened for public consultation by the end of 2016.
- In June, the Civil Court set a new precedent when it ruled that a trans man did not have to undergo genital reconstruction surgery or sterilisation in order to change his name or gender markers on documents. Psychiatric evaluation, hormone therapy and top surgery were still required. In November, the District Court in Athens ruled that requiring trans people to undergo general medical interventions (such as hormone therapy) was unfair. Requests for name change and correcting assigned gender in the national registry have to go through a court process, and trans activists hoped that this will set a useful precedent.