



# GREECE

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

In year two of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Transgender Support Association (GTSA) received support from the mayor of Athens and the Bodossaki Foundation to support 25 trans people with disabilities, and provide food and sanitary materials for 65 trans and LGBTQI people.

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The FAROS study on LGBTQI+ people's access to services found great obstacles and a lack of awareness among civil servants. More than 300 professionals took part in capacity building seminars.

Following the new COVID-19 rules, introduced in November, several trans people were harassed and denied entry to stores, cafés and other spaces, because their appearance did not match their documents. Just in two months, GTSA documented 12 such cases. In another case, a lesbian was denied entry and harassed, after the guards thought she was a man.

## ASYLUM

On 7 June, a new Joint Ministerial Decision was issued categorising Turkey as a safe country. CSOs called on the government to repeal the decision.

TGSA published 'LGBTI refugees in Greece' based on interviews with refugees and case workers.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech by political and religious leaders continued. In February, Minister of Justice Konstantinos Tsiaras made false and homophobic statements about the well-being of children growing up in rainbow families. Civil society demanded his resignation and refuted the stigmatising statements. In July, MP Thanasis Pafilis (Communist Party) used transphobic statements in a parliamentary debate on education. In August, the Metropolitan of Piraeus made homophobic statements.

On 27 October, the publisher of *Free Time*, Giorgos Michalopoulos, was convicted of incitement to hatred or violence and received the maximum three years of prison sentence from the Athens Criminal Court. *Free Time* featured a homophobic and racist cover last year.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Racist Violence Case Record Network's annual report documented 30 anti-LGBT hate crimes in 2020.

Several anti-LGBT attacks, verbal and physical, were carried out on the day of the Athens and Thessaloniki Pride Parades, during and after the marches.

All year long, several attacks targeted trans people.

In December, the Prosecutor's Office of Thessaloniki ordered a preliminary investigation of homophobic harassment and threats against two students, from their peers.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

Orlando LGBT+ released a report on conversion therapies in Greece on the basis of 100 responses from survivors, highlighting that therapies were carried by mental health and health professionals, alternative healers and priests. They included corrective rape, physical abuse, psychological violence, and sexual harassment. Orlando LGBT+ called on the state to ban the harmful practice, reminding that a number of Greek MEPs had previously voted for a ban. Orlando held several events on the issue and launched a campaign.

## EDUCATION

Students and civil society reported a microbiology textbook taught in *Hygiene* class in vocational schools, which equates homosexuality with the spread of STIs. The homophobic content was part of a national exam. Deputy Minister of Education Zetta Makris failed to condemn the textbook and blamed the Central Examination Committee. In July, MP Kritonas Arsenis (MEPA25) demanded the Ministry immediately withdraw the book.

A specialised course on LGBTQI+ issues ran for the second year in the undergraduate programme of Psychology at Panteion University and Social Work of the University of West Attica, designed and instructed by Orlando LGBT+.

## EMPLOYMENT

From June onwards, unemployed trans people can apply for work assistance at the government employment agency (OAED), which now includes trans people as a vulnerable group. OAED's grant covers 90% of salaries and



social security, to motivate employers to hire more trans people. Trans people must register with the OAED to be eligible, and either show proof of having changed their gender marker, or sign a self-declaration that they are trans. CSOs had long advocated for this.

Civil society welcomed the inclusion of ‘gender expression’ as a protected ground in the new Labour Code (Law 4808/2021) in July, which marks the first time that the term appears in Greek legislation.

The first company signed a Diversity Charter to introduce a diversity policy and create a safe workplace.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On 29 June, the commission in charge published the National Strategy for Equality of LGBTIQ+ people (2021-2023). The commission was set up in March, and included two MPs, two academics and three civil society representatives. It was chaired by the former President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Linos Alexandros Sicilianos. The commission launched a public consultation in March, which several NGOs participated in (see here and here). Greece’s President Katerina Sakellariopoulou also met with the commission on 17 May and issued a statement on the occasion of IDAHOBIT.

In September, 160 prominent figures in education, academia, and other areas signed a joint letter criticising the Strategy and particularly the inclusion of sex education in schools. Several signatories however stated that they never actually signed on.

On May 17, on the occasion of IDAHOBIT, GTSA and the municipality of Athens launched the ‘Breaking The Silence’ campaign, to tackle anti-LGBTI discrimination and violence.

In August, the mayor of Athens announced that its Department of Equality & Discrimination will strengthen measures to combat anti-LGBT discrimination and called for an Inter-Parliamentary Committee on LGBTI issues.

## FAMILY

Several LGBTIQ parents shared their experiences of discrimination and bureaucratic hurdles. A new Family Law was adopted, continuing to exclude rainbow families, violating the Istanbul Convention and the National LGBTIQ+ Strategy.

In June, Syriza launched a consultation on a more progressive family law, which TGSA welcomed. TGSA recommended gender-neutral language on parenthood, marriage, partnership, and pregnancy and the inclusion of SOGIESC as protected grounds.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

GTSA continued documenting violence and discrimination against trans incarcerated people. In December, the Secretary General of Anti-Crime Policy ordered that four trans women, who had been placed in male prisons in Trikala and Corfu, be transferred to female wards.

## HEALTH

Due to GTSA’s intervention, the authorities ensured from November on that vaccination certificates will be automatically changed for trans people who had just changed their gender.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Renowned trans activist Marina Galanou of TGSA passed away this year, which came as a great loss for the trans and LGBTIQ rights movements.

The murder trial of Zak Kostopoulos began after three years of adjournments, with six defendants, including four police officers, facing fatal bodily harm charges. The police’s defence lawyer was initially MP Thanos Plevris, later appointed Minister of Health. The trial is monitored by civil society. The court has so far only allowed a limited number of journalists and CSO representatives to be present, which civil society fears could undermine the process.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In January, the Athens Magistrate Court denied a trans man’s request to have his family name changed. The man’s application to change his first name and gender marker was approved, but his male name will now appear next to a female family name, violating his right to private life.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Nikolas Giatromanolakis, was appointed as the Deputy Minister for Contemporary Culture, becoming the first openly gay politician in the rank.



## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Following the intervention of GTSA, the Naval Registry reversed its denial to amend the gender and name of a trans marine following her legal gender recognition process.

The police and security forces continued to reject trans people's applications to the police academy.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

CSOs received state and Council of Europe funding to support those most in need.



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