



# Greece



2015 proved to be an eventful twelve months for LGBTI activists in Greece. The election of a government led by Syriza, a long-time supporter of equality for LGBTI people, in January started the year on a hopeful note. Promises to introduce civil unions for same-sex couples were quickly reaffirmed but access to adoption was omitted and legislation was slow to progress. In December, civil partnership was finally introduced for same-sex couples by a large majority of parliamentarians. Intersex people were recognised in legislation for the very first time. In an unprecedented show of political support for the rights of LGBTI people, representatives from all the main parliamentary parties signed an equality pledge at the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference in Athens.

## Bias-motivated speech

- In June, a meeting of the Synod of Priests and Monks called for the mayor of Thessaloniki to be barred from entering Mount Athos, a spiritual centre for the Orthodox Church. The religious leaders wrote a letter to the Athos community, stating that Yiannis Boutaris' support of annual Thessaloniki Pride events and the "shameful sin of homosexuality" meant that he was failing in his institutional role as overseer of Mount Athos.
- As the civil partnership law progressed through parliament (see **Family**), Bishop Seraphim of Piraeus called the bill "a shameful piece of legislation". Bishop Amvrosios of Kalavryta also said that church bells should be rung "in mourning" if the law was successfully passed.

## Bias-motivated violence

- In Athens, a trans woman was verbally attacked and repeatedly shot on 21 May. When the woman responded to a man who was shouting insults at her, she was shot several times. The woman received assistance at a nearby police station and was treated in hospital for her injuries. The victim lodged a formal complaint with the police.
- In 2015, LGBTQ NGO Colour Youth received 73 reports of cases of homo/transphobic violence or discrimination through their 'Tell It to Us' reporting project.
- Under the legal changes introduced in Law 4356/2015 on 24 December, trans people are now protected against hate crimes on the ground of gender identity (see **Bodily integrity**).

## Bodily integrity

- On 22 December, intersex people's rights were included in Greek legislation for the first time under Law 4356/2015. Two articles were approved by 191 of the 241 MPs who voted; the first article will protect intersex people against hate crime on the ground of sex characteristics and the second article relates to protection from discrimination when accessing goods and services. These changes came into force on 24 December.

## Equality and non-discrimination

- At the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference in Athens, political representatives from all the main parliamentary parties signed a pledge promoting LGBTI equality in Greece. Members from the Coalition for the Radical Left (Syriza), the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), New Democracy (ND, Christian-democratic), Democratic Left (DIMAR), The River (To Potami, centre) and The Union of Centrists (Enosi Kentroon) stated their commitment to registered partnership, family law reform, legal gender recognition and combatting discrimination. Minister for Justice Nikolaos Paraskevopoulos also committed to opening the civil unions bill to public consultation within days.
- On the same day as the passage of the civil partnership law (see **Family**), section 347 of the Greek Penal Code was abolished. The section had previously criminalised sodomy for financial gain.
- Under the legal changes introduced in Law 4356/2015 on 24 December, trans people are now protected against discrimination when accessing goods and services (see **Bodily integrity**).

## Family

- The left wing Syriza party became the largest party in parliament after elections in January, winning 36% of the vote. Syriza was the only parliamentary party that had publicly supported greater equality for LGBTI people in Greece. The party had previously unsuccessfully tabled cohabitation proposals in 2013. On 15 January, days before the election, party leader Alexis Tsipras said that adoption by same-sex couples was a "difficult subject" and that it would not be included in their policy programme if elected.

- In February, justice minister Nikolaos Paraskevopoulos confirmed the Syriza-led government's intention to extend civil partnership legislation to include same-sex couples. A draft civil union pact was published by the justice minister in June. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour announced it would release a list of the rights to be conferred on same-sex couples in a presidential decree within six months. On 9 November, following promises

made by the minister of justice days earlier (see **Equality and non-discrimination**), an updated draft of the civil partnership bill was published online for public debate. Issues such as inheritance and taxation were included, but adoption for same-sex couples was not. The public debate concluded on 20 November and a parliamentary vote on the bill was scheduled for 22 December. On 23 December, 193 of 300 MPs voted to introduce civil partnership. PASOK, The River, the Union of Centrists and several conservative MPs joined with Syriza to vote in favour. Some members of Syriza's junior coalition partner, the Independent Greeks (ANEL; right-wing) voted against the measure, as did Golden Dawn members (XA, far-right) and the Communist Party (KKE).

asked to grade how comfortable they would be with certain scenarios on a scale of 1 (not comfortable at all) - 10 (totally comfortable), 63% said they would be comfortable or moderately comfortable with an LGB work colleague (EU28 average was 72%). When asked about a potential trans work colleague, 56% said they would be comfortable or moderately comfortable (EU28 average was 67%).

## Health

- Decree 39a was officially repealed by then health minister Panagiotis Kouroumplis (Syriza) in April. The health decree had been in operation since 2013. It allowed the police to detain individuals they thought were HIV positive, and also introduced mandatory blood testing.

## Legal gender recognition

- A Ministry of Justice intergroup, with the aim of developing regulations concerning legal gender recognition, was set up in April. In a report on gender recognition published in September, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights recommended that a legal gender recognition process based on self-determination be introduced, along with full access to healthcare services for trans people and public education/awareness raising efforts.

## Public opinion

- According to Eurobarometer 2015, 71% of people surveyed in Greece believe that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is widespread (EU28 average was 58%). When asked about gender identity, 73% felt discrimination on this ground was widespread (EU 28 average was 56%). 62% totally agreed with the statement that LGB people should have the same rights as heterosexual people (EU 28 average was 71%). When