

**Universal Periodic Review (39th session)  
Contribution of UNESCO**

**Greece**

**I. Background and framework**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
<i>Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960</i>	Not a State Party	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education
<i>Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)</i>	17/07/1981 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
<i>Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)</i>	03/01/2007 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
<i>Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)</i>	03/01/2007 Ratification	Declaration of the European Community in application of Article 27(3) (c) of the Convention indicating the competences transferred to the Community by the		Right to take part in cultural life

		Member States under the Treaties, in the areas covered by the Convention.		
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## II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

### A. Education

1. The Constitution of Greece<sup>1</sup> states that all Greeks are entitled to free education on all levels (art.16) and that education is compulsory for at least nine years. It also provides that all Greeks are equal before the law (Art 4.1).

### B. Freedom of opinion and expression

#### Constitutional and Legislative Framework:

2. Freedom of expression and media are guaranteed by the Constitution within Art. 14 and the censorship and seizure of publications are explicitly prohibited.<sup>2</sup>
3. Defamation offences are established in both the Criminal and the Civil Code. Under the Greek Criminal Code, defamation is punishable with up to two years in prison or a fine, or both (Art. 362)<sup>3</sup>. Recent modifications to the Criminal Code have abolished the criminal offence of blasphemy in 2019.
4. The Constitution ensures the right of access to information to all people in Art. 54. This right can be restricted on the grounds of national security, combating crime, or protecting the rights and interests of third parties<sup>4</sup>. The transparency of the government with regard to access to information is guaranteed through a policy on access to governmental information<sup>5</sup>.

#### Implementation of the law

5. The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) supervises and regulates the broadcasting sector. Its independence is enshrined in the Constitution and its legal

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/c365a1fcf7753ce4c2f68296f7784a84f3f22f92.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20aggliko.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Defamation and Insult Laws in the OSCE Region: A Comparative Study, March 2017, p. 106

See: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/8/303181.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See the EC's 2020 Rule of Law report on Greece, p.12: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0307&from=EN>

framework set out in the Media Law (Law no. 1866, amended by Law no.2863/2000 and Law no. 3051/2002)<sup>6</sup>. The NCRTV's governing body is comprised of nine members, all nominated and appointed by the Conference of the Presidents, a special body of the Parliament, in which all political parties are represented. Concerns have been raised, however, about a lack of transparency in the appointment procedures, leaving space for political favouritism<sup>7</sup>.

6. There is no press council in Greece. The five major associations of journalists adopted a Code of Ethics for Journalism in 1988.
7. The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) has also adopted a Code of Journalist Ethics, mandatory for broadcast journalists.

#### Safety of journalists:

8. UNESCO recorded the killing of one Greek investigative journalist Socrates Giolias in 2010<sup>8</sup>. The case is considered ongoing/unresolved by UNESCO based upon information submitted by the Member State.

### **III. Review and specific recommendations**

#### **A. Education**

##### Compulsory education:

- Pre-primary education is mandatory for one year since 2018-2019 for children aged 4. It is foreseen to become mandatory for two years in 2020-2021.<sup>9</sup> Generally, compulsory education lasts 11 years, from 4 to 15 years old, which correspond to the end of secondary education.

##### People with disabilities:

- It is important to ensure that people with disabilities can access education, including through appropriate infrastructure and materials. In Greece, visually impaired people are not provided with appropriate material as many textbooks are either not translated into Braille or inaccurately translated.<sup>10</sup>

##### Gender equality:

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<sup>6</sup> The National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) website: <https://www.esr.gr/information/>

<sup>7</sup> See the EC's 2020 Rule of Law report on Greece, p.8: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0307&from=EN>

<sup>8</sup> See UNESCO Director-General's public statement: [https://webarchive.unesco.org/20170131094702/http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=30686&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](https://webarchive.unesco.org/20170131094702/http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30686&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>9</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/greece\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/greece_en)

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. P. 130.

- The Ministry of Interior adopted a National Action Plan on Gender Equality-Enhancement of rights of women and girls for the period 2016-2020.<sup>11</sup> Concerning education, the plan establishes the following objectives:
  - i) Promoting gender equality in formal education, science and research.
  - ii) Promoting Gender Equality in Lifelong Learning and Informal Education.
  - iii) Promoting Equality through Media.
  - iv) Promote gender equality in cultural creation.
  - v) Promoting gender equality in sports.
- The General Secretariat for family policy and gender equality is issuing an e-bulletin to monitor the implementation of the strategy and created an Observatory designed to include, analyze, process and diffuse statistical data and indicators on gender equality policies.<sup>12</sup> However, it seems that there is no recent data related to education.

#### Covid-19:

- According to UNESCO, Greece decided to close some schools on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, and all schools by the end of March. Online education was provided to the extent possible, with a particular focus on the last grade of secondary school. However, the provision of online courses was complicated by the impact of the great financial crisis, which has delayed necessary investment in ICT and deepened poverty. During school closure, asynchronous teaching (not in real time) was compulsory and real-time teaching was supported through Webex services and a school network platform: <http://lessons.sch.gr/>. TV was also used for educational purpose for primary education. However, among the diverse issues encountered, there was insufficient necessary IT equipment. The government adopted an emergency law, “related to the education system’s response, which will enable public procurement of goods (e.g. laptops, devices and software) and services (e.g. communication with teachers and students)” and allowed universities to spend up to 60 000€ for procuring equipment for distance learning.<sup>13</sup>

#### Migrants and Refugees:

- At the end of March 2020 the refugee and migrant population of Greece reached its highest level since 2016, with 118 000 people, including up to 44 300 children,<sup>14</sup> with many of them still in Reception and Identification Centers in poor conditions and limited access to essential services, including education.

#### **Specific recommendations:**

9. Greece should be encouraged to:

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/National-Action-Plan-for-Gender-Equality-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [http://paratiritirio.isotita.gr/genqua\\_portal/en/index](http://paratiritirio.isotita.gr/genqua_portal/en/index)

<sup>13</sup> GEM Report, Word Education Blog, “Covid-19: How is Greece coping with school closure?”, Posted on 14 April 2020: <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/covid-19-how-is-greece-coping-with-school-closure/> [consulted on the 30/07/2020]

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF. Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe. Situation Report #35.

- Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
- Accelerate its efforts to make education accessible to all, including people with disabilities, especially by providing accessible and appropriate materials.
- Continue its efforts towards gender equality in education, especially by collecting data related to gender in education in order to ensure a close follow up of the situation.
- Continue and strengthen its efforts to provide access to education for all, especially migrants and refugees.
- Continue its efforts to provide better access to IT materials for students and teachers as well as appropriate trainings.
- Submit regularly comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.
- Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's Observatory on the Right to Education.<sup>15</sup>

### **B. Freedom of opinion and expression**

10. It is recommended that the Government decriminalise defamation and place it solely in the civil code, according to international standards.
11. The Government should enable a media ecosystem that fosters self-regulatory approaches and media independence, including as it pertains to the transparency of appointment procedures for the media regulatory body.
12. It is recommended that the Government continue pursuing investigations of the killing of a journalist in 2010 to ensure that impunity does not prevail and to continue providing information to UNESCO in the interim regarding the progress made.

### **C. Cultural rights**

13. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)<sup>16</sup>, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)<sup>17</sup> and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)<sup>18</sup>, Greece is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Greece is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/index.php?action=countries&lng=en>

<sup>16</sup> Periodic Report available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/137745>

<sup>17</sup> Periodic Report available at: <http://ich.unesco.org/doc/download.php?versionID=40897>

<sup>18</sup> Periodic Report available at: <http://en.unesco.org/creativity/monitoring-reporting/periodic-reports/available-reports-44>

with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.

**D. Freedom of scientific research and  
the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications**

14. **Greece** did not submit its National Report on the implementation of the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers (1974) for the Second Consultation covering the period from 2013 to 2016 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002592/259256e.pdf>). Therefore Greece is encouraged to report to UNESCO on the implementation of the newly adopted Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017), which supersedes the 1974 Recommendation, on any legislative or other steps undertaken by it with the aim to ensure the application of this international standard-setting instrument paying a particular attention to the legal provisions and regulatory frameworks which ensure the implementation of human rights of scientific researchers, as well as human rights obligations related to science, the principle of non-discrimination, including urging active promotion of women and girls entering scientific careers, as well as the scientists' rights of autonomy, freedom of research, expression and publication.