

FEBRUARY 2026

# THIS IS ~~NOT~~ THE TIME TO COMMENT ON LEGALITY

THE STATE OF THE RULE OF LAW IN GREECE

JOINT REPORT  
**ADDENDUM**



HIAS GREECE · REFUGEE SUPPORT AEGEAN (RSA) · VOULIWATCH ·

GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (GCR) · HELLENIC LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS · HOMO DIGITALIS · REPORTERS UNITED · SOLOMON

## Cross-cutting rule of law issues in Greece

1. **Deadly Hellenic Coast Guard operation near Chios:** Late on 3 February 2026, 15 people lost their lives and 24 were severely injured after a Coast Guard vessel collided with a boat carrying refugees off the coast of Chios. The aftermath of the incident is a stark demonstration and reminder of the pervasive, multifaceted threats to the rule of law stemming from government conduct in Greece. Since the night of the tragic incident:
  - ❖ The criminal preliminary interrogation (*προανάκριση*) into the incident and collection of initial evidence from survivors were conducted by Hellenic Coast Guard officials,<sup>1</sup> in persistent dereliction of the independence and impartiality principles forming part of the requisite effectiveness standards and analysed in our report under **Independence & Effectiveness of the Prosecution Service**. The need for an investigation compliant with transparency and effectiveness standards set by the Charter – as elaborated in European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case law – was promptly highlighted by domestic and international institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), the Ombudsman and the Bar Association of Athens.<sup>2</sup>
  - ❖ The initial account of the circumstances of the incident provided by the Hellenic Coast Guard in public announcements<sup>3</sup> have been dispelled by survivors' testimonies and called into question by available forensic evidence.<sup>4</sup>
  - ❖ Ministers have made public statements amounting to impermissible interference with a pending criminal investigation and contrary to the fundamental right to a fair trial. Among others, the Minister of Migration and Asylum stated during the plenary debate of the latest migration bill on 4 February 2026: "You may believe the smugglers, I believe the Hellenic Coast Guard. Since a debate is taking place which you will not avoid, the bill includes two

---

<sup>1</sup> Hellenic Coast Guard, 'Συνέχεια ενημέρωσης σχετικά με την επιχείρηση έρευνας και διάσωσης και τον θάνατο 15 αλλοδαπών στη Χίο', 5 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, 'News comment: UNHCR deeply saddened by latest tragedy in the Aegean', 4 February 2026, [URL](#); GNCHR, 'Δήλωση της ΕΕΔΑ: Απόλυτη ανάγκη για άμεση, πλήρη και αποτελεσματική διερεύνηση του πολύνεκρου ναυαγίου πλησίον της Χίου', 4 February 2026, [URL](#); Ombudsman, 'Ο Συνήγορος για τη διερεύνηση του περιστατικού με νεκρούς στη Χίο', 5 February 2026, [URL](#); Bar Association of Athens, 'Ο Δικηγορικός Σύλλογος Αθηνών για το πολύνεκρο ναυάγιο της Χίου', 11 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>3</sup> Hellenic Coast Guard, 'Επιχείρηση έρευνας και διάσωσης και θάνατος 15 αλλοδαπών στη Χίο', 4 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>4</sup> Politis Chios, '«Ήταν σαν να βλέπεις τροχαία το ένα μετά το άλλο»: Συγκλονίζουν οι νοσηλευτές', 5 February 2026, [URL](#); The Press Project, 'Υγειονομικοί της Χίου στο TPP: «Επιζώντες μας είπαν ότι το λιμενικό τους εμβόλισε – Έτσι δικαιολογείται η βαρύτητα των τραυμάτων»', 5 February 2026, [URL](#); News 24/7, 'Πιστοποιητικά θανάτου για Χίο: Πέθαναν από "βαριές κακώσεις"', 11 February 2026, [URL](#); 'Χίος: "Πλήρης σύνθλιψη κεφαλής" και δύο νέες καταθέσεις', 13 February 2026, [URL](#); Kathimerini, 'Χίος: Δύο νέες καταθέσεις από τραυματίες του ναυαγίου', 13 February 2026, [URL](#); in.gr, 'Οι άγνωστες καταθέσεις για την τραγωδία στη Χίο', 14 February 2026, [URL](#).

articles that tighten the framework for smugglers, for those who drowned and killed 15 people, that was the smugglers, and 24 people were rescued by the Coast Guard."<sup>5</sup>

- ❖ Ministers have targeted lawyers and civil society organisations through public statements and threats amounting to confirmation and further deterioration of the **Hostile Environment & Criminalisation** detailed in our report.
  - The Minister of Migration and Asylum publicly targeted two lawyers for the sole reason of undertaking the legal representation and defence of the individual charged and detained pre-trial following the shipwreck, and equated representation of said person by an organisation defending the rights of refugees to a women's rights organisation defending a rapist over their victims.<sup>6</sup> These statements have been directly raised with the Commission<sup>7</sup> and have attracted sharp criticism from several bar associations.<sup>8</sup>
  - The Minister of Health publicly targeted a medical organisation that entered the Chios hospital to provide assistance, publicly claimed that staff of the organisation in question sought "to lead a family of migrants, possibly with a view to developing a narrative for asylum applications and/or complaints against the Coast Guard (push backs etc.)", and reported the matter to the National Intelligence Service (Εθνική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών, ΕΥΠ).<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ The Government Spokesperson has publicly threatened a journalist who made a follow up question to clarify whether the Spokesperson had in fact confirmed that the Coast Guard was carrying out a "prevention" operation on the night of the deadly incident (see **Journalists' Independence & Safety** in our report).<sup>10</sup>
- ❖ Public authorities have obstructed access of survivors to their relatives and even their lawyers, who were requested by authorities to provide certified written authorisations in order to meet their clients. Restrictions on lawyers' access were imposed by hospitals on Chios and in Athens and by the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) of Chios managed by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

---

<sup>5</sup> News 24/7, 'Πλεύρης για Χίο: "Εγώ πιστεύω το Λιμενικό"', 4 February 2025, [URL](#).

<sup>6</sup> Action24, 'Πίσω από τις γραμμές', 9 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>7</sup> RSA et al., Letter no. β/200/16.02.2026, 16 February 2026.

<sup>8</sup> Bar Association of Athens, 'Ο Δικηγορικός Σύλλογος Αθηνών για το πολύνεκρο ναυάγιο της Χίου', 11 February 2026, [URL](#); ERT News, 'Δικηγορικός Σύλλογος Χίου: "Απαράδεκτο να δέχονται επιθέσεις οι δικηγόροι επειδή ασκούν το υπερασπιστικό τους καθήκον"', 12 February 2026, [URL](#); Tomi stin Enimerosi, 'Ο Δικηγορικός Σύλλογος Πρέβεζας καταδικάζει ανεπιφύλακτα την στοχοποίηση του συναδέλφου, από Υπουργό της Κυβέρνησης', 13 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>9</sup> Kathimerini, 'Γεωργιάδης: Καταγγελία για δράση μελών ΜΚΟ σε νοσοκομείο της Χίου – «Ενημερώθηκε η ΕΥΠ»', 5 February 2026, [URL](#); Proto Thema, 'Γεωργιάδης: Οι διερμηνείς των Γιατρών Χωρίς Σύνορα έλεγαν στους μετανάστες στη Χίο να πουν «μας χτύπησε το λιμενικό», το μίσος στο κράτος έχει ξεπεράσει κάθε όριο παραλογισμού', 9 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>10</sup> Avgi, 'Μαρινάκης σε δημοσιογράφο / «Είστε θρασύδειλος - Δεν έχετε το λόγο, δεν έχετε ασυλία»', 10 February 2026, [URL](#).

2. **“Greek Watergate” surveillance scandal:** On 26 February 2026, the Single-Judge Misdemeanour Court of Athens (*Μονομελές Πλημμελειοδικείο Αθηνών*) convicted the four private individuals accused in the Predatorgate case. Each defendant was sentenced to a total imprisonment sentence of 126 years based on the finding that the offences committed correspond to 87 victims. Appeals carry granted suspensive effect. The Court also transmitted the case file to the Public Prosecutor of Athens for eight other individuals.<sup>11</sup>
3. **Breaches of data protection obligations:** The Council of State ordered another *proprio motu* postponement of the hearing of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum appeal against the fine imposed by the Data Protection Authority regarding the Centaur and Hyperion surveillance programmes in reception facilities for asylum seekers. The new hearing is set for 2 June 2026.

## Justice

### Independence & effectiveness of the prosecution service

4. **Ineffective Naval Court Prosecutor investigation into 2023 push back on Samos:**<sup>12</sup> In January 2026, the Naval Court Prosecutor dismissed a criminal complaint brought by two refugees regarding two push backs from the island of Samos in January 2023, both involving abduction on the island, violence and theft of belongings, placement back at sea and abandonment on life rafts. The victims were shown photographs and were able to identify a specific Hellenic Coast Guard official who according to the case file was on duty on the day of the alleged incident. The decision of the Naval Court Prosecutor that found no “sufficient indications” of wrongdoing and shelved the investigation corroborates our longstanding concerns about the **Independence & Effectiveness of the Prosecution Service**:
  - ❖ The Naval Court Prosecutor instructed the Port Authority of Chios at the Hellenic Coast Guard to carry out the preliminary examination (*προκαταρκτική εξέταση*) in late 2023 and ordered the same authority to conduct a supplementary preliminary examination in early 2025.
  - ❖ One of the complainants gave a testimony at a Greek consulate and testified that her lawyers showed her photographs, based on which she was able to identify a specific official as the perpetrator. When shown again photographs at the consulate, she identified the same official. Yet, the Naval Court Prosecutor’s dismissal of the criminal complaint makes several references to the fact that the complainants did not request “legal counselling” before the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) camp on Samos or the mainland camps or the Asylum Service on Samos, and expresses doubts as to the procedure by which the complainants were shown photographs.

---

<sup>11</sup> Reporters United, Instagram post, 26 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>12</sup> Information provided by Human Rights Legal Project, February 2026.

- ❖ The dismissal of the complaint disregards Turkish Coast Guard photographs of an adrift life raft, a document of the Turkish authorities referring to rescue of people placed on board an adrift life raft, as well as digital evidence of the geolocation of the complainants on Greek territory.
- ❖ The Naval Court Prosecutor concludes that it “was not possible to prove” that the official was the perpetrator. The threshold employed in the case corroborates our consistent concerns regarding the erroneous incorrect standard of proof applied to launch of criminal proceedings in push back cases, whereby prosecution services demand full proof of the incident instead of “sufficient indications” of wrongdoing.

5. **Ineffective Naval Court Prosecutor investigation into 2023 fatal incident in Chios:** On 20 October 2023, a Hellenic Coast Guard vessel rammed into a boat carrying asylum seekers off the coast of Chios, causing the death of a Syrian asylum seeker and serious injury of at least five others. Following a June 2024 criminal complaint lodged with the Piraeus Naval Court Prosecutor against the Hellenic Coast Guard regarding the fatal incident, joined with an already pending *ex officio* preliminary investigation, the Naval Court Prosecutor dismissed the criminal complaint for lack of sufficient evidence in November 2025. The investigation conducted into the incident was marred by substantial procedural and evidentiary deficiencies:

- ❖ There were significant delays in initiating investigative acts. Namely, the request for identification and contact details of key witnesses – survivors – was submitted more than four months after the incident, resulting in loss of access to testimonies.
- ❖ Crucial operational recordings from the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (*Ενιαίο Κέντρο Συντονισμού Έρευνας και Διάσωσης*, EKSED) were neither secured nor incorporated into the case file. Instead, they were deleted by the Coast Guard service responsible for record-keeping, citing a one-year data retention limit. This was despite prior prosecutorial requests to provide the records.
- ❖ The Coast Guard vessel involved in the incident lacked a fixed VDR system and the portable recording device (“Μοhoc”) was not in operation during its patrol. As a result, there was no audiovisual evidence of the incident.
- ❖ Selective and improper evaluation of testimonies taken in other procedures, rather than within the framework of the preliminary investigation itself.
- ❖ There were deficiencies in expert reports (*πραγματογνωμοσύνη*) which *inter alia* addressed questions unrelated to the critical incident and reached unfounded and arbitrary conclusions, for example that the migrant boat was not operating lights even though the incident occurred during the day and the visibility of the boat was not disputed. Expert reports did not contain an inspection of the Coast Guard vessel involved, nor did they consider its technical characteristics or in any way assess the Coast Guard’s potential and alleged responsibility.

6. In January 2026, an appeal was lodged in due time before the Reviewing Court Prosecutor (*Εισαγγελέα Αναθεωρητικού Δικαστηρίου*) against the dismissal of the criminal complaint by the sixteen complainants, including the widow and minor children of the deceased. The case is currently pending before the Reviewing Court Prosecutor.

## Independence of the Bar and of lawyers

7. **Proceedings before the ECtHR after the Council of State ruling on standing of bar associations:**<sup>13</sup> The Bar Association of Athens has brought an application before the ECtHR after the Council of State held<sup>14</sup> that it lacked standing to request judicial review of the appointment of members of **Independent Authorities** without the constitutionally required <sup>3/5</sup> majority vote in the Conference of Presidents of the Parliament.<sup>15</sup> The case concerned the 2023 appointment of members of the National Council for Radio and Television (*Εθνικό Συμβούλιο Ραδιοτηλεόρασης*, NCRTV) and of the Hellenic Authority for Communication Privacy and Security (*Αρχή Διασφάλισης του Απορρήτου των Επικοινωνιών*, ADAE).
8. The case alleges violations of Articles 6(1), 8 and 10 ECHR and stresses issues of fundamental importance for the democratic functioning of the state and for the protection of the rule of law, given that independent authorities constitute essential pillars of democracy and the protection of citizens' rights. The case has passed the ECtHR's initial admissibility filter and has been designated an "impact case" to be decided as a matter of priority. The Bar Association of Athens continues its efforts before the ECtHR, with a view to securing acknowledgment of *locus standi* of bar associations to challenge acts affecting democracy, justice, and the rule of law, to protect the constitutional framework governing the composition of independent authorities and to safeguard the substantive independence of rule-of-law institutions that serve as checks and balances to political power.

## Digitalisation & accessibility

9. **Accessibility of court judgments:** The Plenary of the Court of Appeal of Athens agreed on 19 February 2026 with the Bar Association of Athens proposal to reinstate transcription of full minutes of criminal acquittal judgments (*καθαρογραφή*). This would require adoption of an amending Joint Ministerial Decision.<sup>16</sup> We therefore reiterate our request for explicit consideration of the issue in the Rule of Law Report and targeted recommendations to the Greek government, with a view to ensuring swift reform of the rules in question.

## Judicial map

10. 90.14% of Athens lawyers voted to reject the "New Judicial Map" of the Ministry of Justice in a formal referendum held by the Bar Association of Athens in 2024. This overwhelming opposition

---

<sup>13</sup> Information provided by the Bar Association of Athens, February 2026.

<sup>14</sup> Council of State, Decisions 1639/2024 and 1641/2024, 1 November 2024.

<sup>15</sup> ECtHR, *Athens Bar Association v. Greece*, App No 6312/25, Communicated on 27 June 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Bar Association of Athens, 'Αποδοχή πρότασης Δ.Σ.Α. για καθαρογραφή αθωωτικών αποφάσεων από την Ολομέλεια Εφετών Αθηνών', 20 February 2026, [URL](#).

highlights a significant breakdown in the process of consultation of practitioners essential to the rule of law. The implementation of the new chart has faced multiple challenges and destabilised daily legal practice.<sup>17</sup>

## Court statistics and their transparency

11. Our concerns as to the quality and accuracy of court statistics seem to be corroborated in recent examples of data supplied *ad hoc* by the Office for the Collection and Processing of Judicial Statistics (JustStat) in response to parliamentary questions. In a February 2026 reply to parliamentary questions on criminal proceedings for “illegal entry” and “illegal stay” under Article 27 L 5226/2025 (see [Independence & Effectiveness of the Prosecution Service](#) in our report),<sup>18</sup> the Ministry of Justice has supplied insufficient and at times contradictory data on the number of cases processed across different prosecution services. Notably, the total number of prosecutions and convictions does not correspond to the aggregate of figures disaggregated by prosecution office. Zero figures were reported for the Public Prosecutor of Athens, the largest office in Greece, while two separate tables with diverging figures have been reported for the Public Prosecutor of Tripoli.<sup>19</sup>
12. The same goes for contradictory court statistics provided by different ministries on the same topic. In their February 2026 replies to parliamentary questions on administrative court rulings on judicial review of asylum decisions in 2025, for instance, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum have supplied contradictory figures.<sup>20</sup>

## Length of proceedings

13. **Delays and initiatives for acceleration of justice:**<sup>21</sup> The persistent reality of delays in case management timelines and in delivery of judgments amounting in certain cases to *de facto* denial of justice continues to be reflected in ECtHR rulings and up-to-date justice statistics of the 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard.<sup>22</sup>
  - ❖ 545 out of 969 ECtHR judgments finding violation of at least one Convention right from 1959 to 2022 concern excessive length of proceedings and breach of Article 6(1) ECHR. Greece has more violations on account of the length of court proceedings than for all other violations combined.

---

<sup>17</sup> Information provided by the Bar Association of Athens, February 2026.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Justice, Reply to parliamentary question, 7/2026, 3 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>19</sup> RSA, ‘Criminalisation of illegal stay in Greece puts almost 300 people behind bars’, 25 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Justice, Reply to parliamentary question, 6/2026, 9 February 2026, [URL](#); Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Reply to parliamentary question, 24207/2026, 6 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>21</sup> Information provided by the Bar Association of Athens, February 2026.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, *The 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard*, COM(2025) 375, 1 July 2025.

- ❖ The Strasbourg Court has delivered pilot judgments on delays of proceedings for civil,<sup>23</sup> criminal<sup>24</sup> and administrative justice.<sup>25</sup> These rulings not only establish violations of the right to a fair trial and the right to an effective remedy but reveal the existence of a serious, systemic problem. The problem remains intact a decade after these rulings (see [Implementation of ECtHR Judgments](#) in our report).
- ❖ The recent *Vervele v. Greece* ruling is an emphatic reminder of this reality.<sup>26</sup> The Court not only condemned Greece for slow administration of justice but also found the compensatory remedy set out in L 4239/2014 to be ineffective. We discuss the implications of the ruling further below.
- ❖ 2025 EU Justice Scoreboard data show that the estimated time required for judicial resolution of civil, commercial, administrative and other cases at first instance stands at 642 days – the slowest EU-wide. The estimated time required for judicial resolution of civil and commercial disputes is 771 days at first instance and 673 days at second instance. No data were provided for the Supreme Court. Though data for administrative justice at first and second instance are marginally better at an average of 439 and 703 days respectively, the Council of State remains the slowest administrative court in the EU, with a required average of 1,232 days to deliver a judgment.

14. In criminal matters, data from the Court of Athens, the largest first-instance court of Greece, documented in a World Bank study on the effectiveness of recently introduced reforms conclude that three-member court panels have been reduced by half. Nevertheless, the increase in single-judge compositions has not been sufficient to lead to a higher total number of hearings scheduled at the Court of Athens. The study attributes this inability to schedule additional hearings to a shortage of available courtrooms, insufficient human resources, and, most critically, a lack of prosecutors available to attend additional hearings.<sup>27</sup>

15. In court registries, despite efforts undertaken, the time required for the delivery of certificates – essential for commercial transactions – remains unsatisfactory.<sup>28</sup>

16. We emphasise, however, the positive impact brought by reforms transferring certain judicial functions to attorneys, including matters relating to recognition of associations, pre-notation of mortgages and certificates of inheritance. This transfer has borne out the position long held by the legal profession and has yielded positive results. These matters are now handled and processed expeditiously and efficiently by attorneys, whilst simultaneously freeing up resources within the judicial system. The success of this initiative demonstrates that the legal profession is not only willing to assume additional responsibilities to improve the administration of justice but also possesses the expertise and organisational capacity to fulfil them effectively, in the public interest.

---

<sup>23</sup> ECtHR, *Glykantzi v. Greece*, App No 40150/09, 30 October 2012.

<sup>24</sup> ECtHR, *Michelioudakis v. Greece*, App No 54447/10, 3 April 2012.

<sup>25</sup> ECtHR, *Athanasiou v. Greece*, App No 50973/08, 21 December 2010.

<sup>26</sup> ECtHR, *Vervele v. Greece*, App No 34012/20, 26 August 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Note also Kathimerini, 'Stourmaras highlights low efficiency of judicial system', 8 October 2025, [URL](#).

<sup>28</sup> Information provided by the Bar Association of Athens, February 2026.

17. The extension of this transfer of functions to include payment orders for recovery of possession of leased premises (*διαταγές πληρωμής και απόδοσης μισθίου*) pursuant to recent amendments to the Civil Procedure Code<sup>29</sup> is a positive step. In the current circumstances, it ought to be complemented by the introduction of mandatory legal representation in transactions involving real estate and certain categories of other significant contracts, with a view to enhancing legal certainty in commercial dealings and preventing litigation and reducing the burden on the courts.
18. **Ineffectiveness of compensatory remedy for length of civil and criminal proceedings:**<sup>30</sup> The *Vervele v. Greece* judgment of the ECtHR concerned a public hospital employee who had to wait almost 19 years for resolution of her dispute in Greek courts over wage claims. In addition to finding a breach of the right to a fair trial within reasonable time, the Court made a substantive assessment of the remedy set out in L 4239/2014 to compensate litigants in protracted proceedings.<sup>31</sup> It found that the remedy, as applied by the Greek courts, did not afford citizens adequate reparation for the harm suffered. This finding has crucial procedural consequences, as it means that individuals facing excessively long court proceedings need not exhaust the remedy laid down in L 4239/2014 before applying to the ECtHR. *Vervele* clarifies that the mere formal establishment of a mechanism in domestic legislation is insufficient so long as substantive ECHR requirements are not met. Greece must therefore address the shortcomings of L 4239/2014 and ensure that individuals have real and effective means of redress against delays in the administration of justice.<sup>32</sup>
19. We recall related findings of recent Strasbourg Court rulings on the ineffectiveness of the remedy set out in L 3900/2010 for failure of the administration to comply with domestic judgments (see [Implementation of Judgments](#) in our report).

## Anti-corruption framework

### Prevention

20. **Gifts to Members of Cabinet and Deputy Ministers:** For the first time at the end of January 2026, the Presidency of the Government published the list of gifts<sup>33</sup> without necessitating the protracted process of reminders, formal applications, and legal recourse that Vouliwatch had previously pursued. While welcoming such publication, we note that reaching this point – namely, compliance with a straightforward statutory requirement regarding the timing of publication –

---

<sup>29</sup> Article 625 Civil Procedure Code, as amended by Article 63 L 5221/2025, Gov. Gazette A' 133/28.07.2025.

<sup>30</sup> Information provided by the Bar Association of Athens, February 2026.

<sup>31</sup> Gov. Gazette A' 43/20.02.2014.

<sup>32</sup> Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights, 'MFHR Press Release on the *Vervele v. Greece* Judgment by the European Court of Human Rights', 5 September 2025, [URL](#).

<sup>33</sup> Presidency of the Government, *Ηλεκτρονικός κατάλογος δώρων*. [URL](#).

required three and a half years from the adoption of the law and was preceded by repeated administrative recourse.<sup>34</sup>

21. The procedure that had to be followed and the effort that had to be exerted in order to ensure the implementation even of the formal aspects of the law inevitably raise serious concerns and create reasonable doubts as to whether the law is being substantively complied with and whether the issue of gifts – along with other matters of transparency and accountability – is being effectively monitored. For this reason, we consider it imperative that the Commission address this issue, notwithstanding the timely publication of the 2025 list.
22. It should be noted, incidentally, that the 2025 list still retains a somewhat informal character for a public document – it consists of a file without indication of author, signature, national emblem, etc. – and includes a very limited number of gifts; 22 in total. This likewise gives rise to reasonable concerns.
23. **Asset declarations:** As already mentioned in our report under [Asset Declarations](#), following the adoption of Article 116 L 5243/2025, the deadline for the submission of 2025 annual asset declarations and financial interests' declarations (financial year 2024) was set for 15 November 2025. According to the information note dated 9 October 2025, the Audit Committee "at its meeting of 28.05.2025 decided that if the last day of the deadlines set by Law 5026/2023 falls on a non-working day for public services, those deadlines shall expire at the end of the next working day...".<sup>35</sup> According to press reports<sup>36</sup> and an announcement on the website [pothen.gr](http://pothen.gr), "The submission...is extended until 17 November 2025, pursuant to Law 5243/2025 (Government Gazette A' 187) and the Information Note of the Parliamentary Audit Committee No. 1642/09.10.2025."
24. Quite apart from the uncertainty surrounding the actual final submission deadline, and questions of legality regarding the latest "extension", we note that the asset declarations had still not been published as of the end of February 2026. This is notwithstanding the explicit requirement under Article 32(1) L 5026/2023 that asset declarations be published following the audit and no later than three months from the submission deadline.
25. We also note that, that pursuant to Article 32(3) L 5026/2023, "For the purposes of serving the audit objectives of the Audit Committee, an electronic database of Asset Declarations and of the dates of their publication shall be maintained and updated within the special service referred to in Article 25(9), as well as their correlation with the audits and decisions of the Audit Committee," which, if properly maintained and updated, should allow for verification of the delays in publications observed in recent years.

---

<sup>34</sup> Vouliwatch, 'Δώρα πολιτικών- Για πρώτη φορά δημοσιεύονται, χωρίς να προσφύγουμε', 4 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>35</sup> Hellenic Parliament Special Service of the Audit Committee, *Ενημερωτικό Σημείωμα*, 9 October 2025, [URL](#).

<sup>36</sup> Taxheaven, 'Πόθεν έσχες - Ανακοίνωση για την παράταση: Μέχρι 17 Νοεμβρίου η υποβολή', 31 October 2025, [URL](#); Technical Chamber of Greece - Peloponnese Regional Department, 'Παράταση έως την 17η Νοεμβρίου 2025 για την υποβολή των ετήσιων δηλώσεων περιουσιακής κατάστασης και Δ.Ο.Σ. 2025 (χρήση 2024)', 5 November 2025, [URL](#).

## Checks & Balances

### Legislative process

26. **Public consultations:** As mentioned in our contribution, we have observed that **Public Consultations** on certain bills were launched without an accompanying regulatory impact analysis (*ανάλυση συνεπειών ρύθμισης*) and/or remained without such an analysis for almost the entire duration of the consultation period. This practice appears to be continuing and can no longer be considered an isolated phenomenon.
27. Specifically, from the end of 2025 until 19 February 2026, ten bills –not included in the research results presented in our January 2026 report – were submitted to public consultation. The consultations for six of these bills were launched without a regulatory impact analysis and/or remained without such an assessment posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr) for part of or the entire consultation period.<sup>37</sup>
28. We once again reiterate the need for clear and explicit identification of the shortcomings and deficiencies of the legislative process, as it appears that these issues are addressed by the Greek authorities only when explicitly identified in the Rule of Law Report.

### Enabling framework for civil society

29. **Registration requirements:** On 5 February 2026, the Parliament adopted L 5275/2026 amending registration requirements for the NGO Registry and introducing disproportionate criminal penalties for immigration offences on the sole ground of membership of a registered NGO. These have been analysed in detail in our report under **Registration Requirements**. Severe concerns expressed *inter alia* by UNHCR, the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, the Ombudsman, the Economic

---

<sup>37</sup> Specifically, we refer to the following bills: (i) *Χάρτης Μετάβασης των Ενόπλων Δυνάμεων στη Νέα Εποχή... και άλλες διατάξεις*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation from 20 November 2025 to 5 December 2025 and was ultimately adopted as L 5265/2026. As of 19 February 2026, no regulatory impact assessment has been posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr); (ii) *Ρυθμίσεις για το ανθρώπινο δυναμικό του δημοσίου τομέα... και λοιπές διατάξεις*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation from 24 December 2025 to 8 January 2026 and was ultimately adopted as L 5270/2026. At least until 29 December 2025, no regulatory impact assessment had been posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr). The absence of an explanatory memorandum and a regulatory impact assessment, as well as the implications thereof, is among the issues raised by ΟΚΕ, 4, [URL](#); (iii) *Ενεργή μάχη... Τροποποιήσεις ν. 4662/2020, ν. 4555/2018, ν. 4797/2021 και ν. 5116/2024*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation from 10 January 2026 to 26 January 2026. At least until 16 January 2026, no regulatory impact assessment had been posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr); (iv) *Σύσταση και λειτουργία Ενιαίου Ψηφιακού Μητρώου παρακολούθησης υποθέσεων διαφθοράς, παρεμβάσεις στον Κώδικα Πολιτικής Δικονομίας και λοιπές διατάξεις*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation from 23 January 2026 to 6 February 2026. As of 27 February 2026, no regulatory impact assessment has been posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr). The non-publication of the regulatory impact assessment is likewise raised by ΟΚΕ, 12, [URL](#); (v) *Εκσυγχρονισμός και αναβάθμιση μεταφορών ... και άλλες διατάξεις*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation from 5 February 2026 to 19 February 2026. As of 27 February 2026, no regulatory impact assessment has been posted on [opengov.gr](https://opengov.gr); (vi) *Ίδρυση Ανώτατης Σχολής Παραστατικών Τεχνών... και άλλες ρυθμίσεις*, [URL](#). The bill was submitted to public consultation on 18 February 2026. As of 27 February 2026, no accompanying regulatory impact assessment was published.

and Social Council of Greece (Οικονομική και Κοινωνική Επιτροπή της Ελλάδος, ΟΚΕ) and bar associations were not taken into account.<sup>38</sup>

30. Severe concerns have been reiterated by United Nations Special Procedures, noting in particular that:<sup>39</sup>

- ❖ The reform “would impose unfair restrictions on the work of NGOs working in the field of migration in Greece, while criminalising their activity of defence of human rights”.
- ❖ Criminalisation of certain forms of conduct regardless of whether the perpetrator sought profit breaches the Palermo Protocol.
- ❖ Heavier sanctions for workers of registered NGOs would “constitute a de jure discrimination against them, to which we lack any justification”.
- ❖ “the newly adopted provisions create a substantial risk that individuals and organizations providing essential assistance in good faith may be exposed to criminal prosecution”.

31. More than three years after its 2 December 2022 hearing of the judicial review applications lodged on 1 February 2021 against the NGO Registry, the Council of State scheduled the case to be heard anew in Plenary with a different judge rapporteur (εισηγητής) and assistant rapporteurs (βοηθοί εισηγητές). The only factor cited on 20 February 2026 by the President of the Court as grounds for ordering a new hearing in this case is “the workload of the rapporteur”.<sup>40</sup> The hearing has been scheduled for on 3 April 2026, subject to potential postponement *proprio motu*.

32. We maintain the view that the ongoing deterioration of the treatment of civil society demonstrates inevitable limits to the efficacy of the Commission’s approach and engagement with the Greek authorities thus far. After five years of constant interventions from EU, Council of Europe and United Nations bodies and consistent recommendations in the Rule of Law Report:

- ❖ The Member State has proceeded with further deterioration of the legal framework governing registration and sanctions for civil society organisations, in contempt of its assurances to the Commission that Commission services would be consulted prior to the bill and of concerns expressed by all relevant institutions prior to adoption.
- ❖ Litigation efforts at domestic level have proven ineffective once again. Judicial review proceedings before the Council of State, the only available remedy, have been pending for over five years and are now cast into further uncertainty and delays after a new hearing was ordered without specific reasoning (see **Justice: Efficiency: Length of Proceedings** in our report). The order of a new hearing on the case inevitably affects the treatment of

---

<sup>38</sup> ΟΚΕ, Γνώμη για το Σχέδιο Νόμου «Προώθηση πολιτικών νόμιμης μετανάστευσης...», 23 January 2026, [URL](#); GNCHR, ‘Δήλωση για τις διατάξεις του σχεδίου νόμου που στοχοποιούν οργάνώσεις της κοινωνίας των πολιτών’, 26 January 2026, [URL](#); Ombudsman, Σχόλια | Σχέδιο Νόμου «Προώθηση πολιτικών νόμιμης μετανάστευσης, ενσωμάτωση της Οδηγίας (ΕΕ) 2024/1233», 28 January 2026, [URL](#); UNHCR, ‘Παρέμβαση της Ύπατης Αρμοστεία στην ακρόαση φορέων για το σχέδιο νόμου για την προώθηση πολιτικών νόμιμης μετανάστευσης’, 2 February 2026, [URL](#); Bar Association of Athens, ‘Αποφάσεις ΔΣ ΔΣΑ της 10/2/2026’, 11 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>39</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders et al., OL GRC 1/2026, 19 February 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>40</sup> The order cites Articles 20, 21 and 40 PD 18/1989 and Article 307 Civil Procedure Code.

individual remedies already pending before the Council of State, for which proceedings have been suspended until the adjudication of proceedings on the legality of JMD 10616/2020.

33. These circumstances warrant immediate enforcement action to protect the integrity of EU law and to prevent further exacerbation of violations. We recall that the Commission has promptly pursued such action vis-à-vis other Member States such as Hungary, leading to authoritative Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) rulings.
34. Meanwhile, targeting of legal practitioners, human rights defenders and civil society organisations from senior government officials has continued since our report. (see **Hostile Environment & Criminalisation** in our report). Beyond the multiple instances of targeting and intimidation occurring in the aftermath of the Chios incident of 3 February 2026, these include public statements<sup>41</sup> made on 27 January 2026 by the Minister of Migration and Asylum in Parliament against the civil organisation (HIAS Greece) which applied to the Council of State for judicial review of secondary legislation on age assessment of asylum seekers,<sup>42</sup> notably for breach of the Asylum Procedures Regulation.<sup>43</sup> We stress that the Commission itself has “noted that the Joint Ministerial Decision of 8 August 2025 is not compatible with the Pact”.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Hellenic Parliament, *Επεξεργασία και εξέταση του σχεδίου νόμου του Υπουργείου Μετανάστευσης και Ασύλου «Προώθηση πολιτικών νόμιμης μετανάστευσης*, 27 January 2026, [URL](#).

<sup>42</sup> JMD 147627/2025, Gov. Gazette B' 4581/22.08.2025.

<sup>43</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1348 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union [2024] OJ L 22.5.2024.

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, 'Minister with Deputy Minister Voloudaki 24/11/2025', Ares(2026)358424, 26 November 2025.

---

# CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT

## RULE OF LAW

FEB 2026

---

