

# GREECE

### *Key trends in 2023*

- Criminalisation of solidarity against those working with refugees and asylum seekers remains a concern.
- Strict registration rules and the existence of multiple registries for CSOs continues to hinder their work.
- Surveillance and arbitrary lawsuits against independent journalists a major concern as press freedom is ranked worst in the EU.

### *Targeted recommendation:*

- Refrain from criminalising humanitarian actors and human rights defenders solely for helping refugees and migrants in need and urgently adopt guidelines which clarify that assistance to people seeking international protection does not constitute a crime.

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### Summary

Civic space in Greece has further deteriorated resulting in a ratings downgrade from “narrowed” to “obstructed by the CIVICUS Monitor. In 2023 this trend continued with limited efforts by the government to reverse the development, despite international condemnations and recommendations from European and international institutions.

In its 2023 Rule of Law report on Greece, the European Commission recommended that the government takes forward the process of adopting non-legislative safeguards and starts the legislative process to protect journalists. No progress has been made in this regard as attacks, weak legal protection, surveillance, abusive strategic lawsuits against journalists and civic actors and government interference in the media landscape continued. While an investigation for the use of Pegasus spyware against journalists, activists and opposition politicians has been initiated by the National Intelligence Service (EYP), progress has been slow, and no charges have been brought. Instead, the government hindered investigations.

Migrants, refugees, Roma communities and LGBTIQ+ people continued to face discrimination and abuse by law enforcement authorities and push backs of asylum seekers and human rights violations on the Greek borders continued. CSOs working to support migrants and refugees faced intimidation, criminalisation and vilifying rhetoric from the government.

While the Commission recommended that the government adopts effective and timely public consultations on draft legislation, the government has failed to implement this recommendation. Instead, the lack of effective and timely consultation of stakeholders persisted.

It also recommended that the government takes steps to evaluate the current registration system for civil society organisations (CSOs). While there were some efforts to evaluate the current registration system, no progress has been made on this recommendation as neither the relevant legislation nor any registration procedures have changed. On the contrary, a new central registry was created, which does not replace the various pre-existing registries, adding one more layer of bureaucracy and burdensome procedures for CSOs. The lack of implementation of civil dialogue and the realisation of the right to participate remains a challenge.