



Plenary sitting

B9-0099/2024

2.2.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission
pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure
on the rule of law and media freedom in Greece
(2024/2502(RSP))

**Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Tomáš Zdechovský, Juan Ignacio Zoido
Álvarez, Ioan-Rareș Bogdan, Lukas Mandl, Nadine Morano, Jeroen
Lenaers, Michaela Šojdrová, Loucas Furlas, Eleni Stavrou,
Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Stelios
Kypouropoulos, Vangelis Meimarakis, Maria Spyraiki, Theodoros
Zagorakis, Paulo Rangel**
on behalf of the PPE Group

B9-0099/2024

**European Parliament resolution on the rule of law and media freedom in Greece
(2024/2502(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Articles 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 thereof,
 - having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular the articles thereof relating to respect for, and the protection and promotion of, democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in the Union,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Greek Constitution of 9 June 1975,
 - having regard to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union,
 - having regard to the updated report of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights of 24 May 2023 entitled ‘Surveillance by intelligence services: Fundamental rights safeguards and remedies in the EU – 2023 update’,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to its recommendation of 15 June 2023 to the Council and the Commission following the investigation of alleged contraventions and maladministration in the application of Union law in relation to the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware¹,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 July 2023 entitled ‘2023 Rule of Law Report – The rule of law situation in the European Union’ (COM(2023)0800), and to the accompanying staff working document of 5 July 2023 entitled ‘2023 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Greece’ (SWD(2023)0808),
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Greece is a stable constitutional democracy with a modern and robust welfare system that is fully committed to the rights and values enshrined in Article 2 TEU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights²;
- B. whereas press freedom and freedom of expression in Greece are fully guaranteed in

¹ OJ C, C/2024/494, 23.01.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/494/oj>.

² Greece rose nine places in the *Economist's* 2022 Democracy Index (position 25) compared to 2021, making the country one of the best performers. Greece registered the fifth biggest increase in score of all the countries covered by the index.

Article 14 of the Greek Constitution and the protection of journalists is further ensured by the Code of Ethics governing the journalistic profession, both of which highlight the country's dedication to upholding democratic principles; whereas this is reflected in a pluralistic media landscape in Greece;

- C. whereas Greece has made progress on four out of five recommendations included in the Commission's 2022 Rule of Law Report, and continues to strengthen the rule of law and media freedom through the digitalisation of justice, anti-corruption reforms, measures strengthening the transparency of media ownership and allocation of state advertising, the strengthening of the media regulating authority as well as improving the working environment for journalists;
 - D. whereas measures have been put in place to address threats and attacks against journalists, including the creation of a task force for the protection and empowerment of journalists;
 - E. whereas the Council of Europe³ and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe⁴ welcomed the inter-ministerial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 23 May 2022 on the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals and the creation of a task force as measures benefiting media freedom and the safety of journalists;
 - F. whereas Greece has undertaken a series of initiatives to implement Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the EU⁵, as well as Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors;
 - G. whereas Greece has introduced extensive changes to the Greek Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, in line with the recommendations from the Group of States against Corruption, to harmonise them with modern conditions for particularly serious crimes and to deal with the distortions created by the 2019 Penal Code;
1. Notes that constitutional and legislative safeguards on media freedom and pluralism in Greece have been further strengthened in recent months through a series of legislative reforms and administrative measures;
 2. Welcomes the progress that Greece has made on the recommendations from the 2022 Rule of Law Report; welcomes its significant progress with respect to asset disclosures by public officials; underlines its progress on prosecutions and final judgments in corruption cases; highlights the introduction of additional safeguards to improve the working conditions and physical safety of journalists; notes some progress on ensuring that registration requirements for civil society organisations are proportionate, in view

³ Council of Europe, '[How to protect journalists and other media actors? – Extended Implementation Guide to selected topics under Prevention and Promotion Pillars of the Guidelines of Recommendation CM/Rec \(2016\)4 on the Protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors](#)', July 2023.

⁴ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, '[Greece, Early Parliamentary Elections, 21 May 2023 – ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report](#)', 21 November 2023, p.17.

⁵ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534 of 16 September 2021 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union (OJ L 331, 20.9.2021, p. 8).

of maintaining an open framework for them to operate⁶;

3. Welcomes the successful transposition of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive⁷, which strengthens, among other things, transparency of media ownership and ensures the independence of media regulators; acknowledges further that Law 4779/2021 strengthened the independence of the National Council for Radio and Television from the government and other state bodies, and improved the transparency of media ownership; welcomes the new safeguards against market concentration included in Laws 5005/2022 and 4915/2022, which further strengthen the transparency of media ownership and state advertising and should contribute to reducing the risks identified in the indices tracking media freedom, such as the 2023 Media Pluralism Monitor;
4. Welcomes Greece's declaration of commitment to fully implement the European media freedom act and the directive on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs);
5. Welcomes the adoption of an inter-ministerial MoU on the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals; notes that this MoU sets out a common framework for the protection and safety of journalists, including legislative and non-legislative initiatives, as well as an institutional framework to plan, monitor and evaluate the national implementation of EU recommendations and resolutions, with a view to identifying the needs of journalists and empowering and training them, while raising awareness among journalists regarding equality in the media, personal protection and digital literacy;
6. Highlights the creation of a task force under the MoU, with the aim of strengthening the safety and independence of journalists and other media professionals⁸; welcomes the task force's awareness raising activities and its monitoring of the safety of journalists, initiated in line with Commission Recommendation (EU) 2021/1534;
7. Welcomes the establishment in January 2023 of the International Training Centre for the Safety of Journalists and Media Professionals and its varied activities;
8. Acknowledges the new steps that Greece has taken to safeguard the independence of public service media, in particular through the adoption of Law 5062/2023 (A 183), which sets out conditions and procedures for the appointment of directors and other senior management of public administration bodies;
9. Underlines that the Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions established a SLAPPs observatory to monitor and prevent SLAPPs, as well as to provide support to journalists targeted by them, as part of activities undertaken by the task force;

⁶ Commission staff working document entitled '2023 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Greece' (SWD(2023)0808), p. 3.

⁷ Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) (OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1).

⁸ The chapter on Greece in the 2023 EU Rule of Law Report states that, '[t]he creation of the Task Force for the protection and the strengthening of the journalists' position is an important step', and also notes that the journalists' association also regarded the task force as an important step (SWD(2023)0808).

10. Considers that Greece's recent efforts, encompassing both legislative and non-legislative measures, have improved the country's performance in ensuring the safety of journalists; expects Greece's efforts to continue in this direction;
11. Welcomes the conclusion of the collective labour agreement reached between the Greek State and the journalists' unions in August 2022, which lays out the working conditions of journalists employed by public institutions and entities and ensures the provision of safety equipment, insurance and financial benefits other than salary;
12. Welcomes actions to support working journalists that ensure access to formal and effective social protection, as well as other practical support measures, such as the funding programme by the United Organisation of Supplementary Pension and Healthcare Insurance for Journalists;
13. Takes note of the ongoing investigation into the murder of journalist George Karaivaz on 9 April 2021, and of the arrests of the alleged assassins; calls on the Greek authorities to continue their efforts to bring all those responsible for the death of George Karaivaz to justice; strongly condemns the criminalisation of, attacks on and killings of journalists for doing their job in the EU and beyond, including the killings of Daphne Caruana Galizia on 16 October 2017, of Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová on 21 February 2018, of Viktoria Marinova on 6 October 2018, and of Peter R. de Vries on 15 July 2021; stresses the crucial role they play in unveiling the truth, protecting democracy and ending the culture of impunity; pays further tribute to all the journalists killed in Europe in recent years;
14. Notes that Greece ensures high standards of protection for persons who report breaches of Union law, as provided for in Law 4990/2022, which fully implements the Whistleblower Directive⁹;
15. Underlines that Greece has amended controversial legal provisions, such as Article 191 of its Criminal Code, to address concerns about the spread of disinformation, which demonstrates its commitment to the protection of journalists' rights¹⁰;
16. Acknowledges that, following the adoption of Law 5002/2022, Greece became the first EU Member State to prohibit and penalise any transaction, sale, possession, trade or use of spyware on its territory;
17. Underlines that, in recent years, Greece has adopted a policy that aims to protect the EU's external borders, including by preventing the abuse of the European asylum system by smugglers; welcomes the fact that, in parallel, Greece has developed an advanced fundamental rights monitoring mechanism, far exceeding the minimum standards set out by EU legislation;
18. Stresses that Frontex's largest operations take place in Greece and that the operational environment there is extremely challenging; highlights that, nevertheless, Frontex

⁹ Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law (OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, p. 17).

¹⁰ Commission staff working document entitled '2023 Rule of Law Report – Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Greece' (SWD(2023)0808), p. 22.

manages to protect Europe's external borders, while simultaneously saving thousands of lives;

19. Reiterates that civil society organisations are Greece's closest partners in its efforts to manage migration and run asylum procedures in a dignified and efficient way;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Greek Government and Parliament.