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NEWS REPORT

Country:	Greece
Title:	Ombudsman 's special Annual Report on discrimination
Date:	8 April 2015
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Context	
Issue at stake:	Monitoring of discrimination cases concerning public sector on behalf of the competent Equality Body
Ground of discrimination:	All grounds
Source:	National equality body
Field:	Employment, social protection, social advantages, access to goods and services, education, housing
Applicable law:	Anti-discrimination Law 3304/2005

Content

Policy development: In its 2014 special Annual Report on discrimination, which was publicised on 3 April 2015, the Greek Ombudsman, as an Equality Body, presented a variety of cases regarding violation of the principle of equal treatment.

More extensively, the Ombudsman during the year 2014 investigated 216 cases of alleged discrimination against one or more persons. 38 of the total number of cases were dismissed because they were found either to fall outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, or to be unfounded or because their examination was discontinued as no evidence was brought forward by the interested parties. Out of the remaining 178 cases investigated, the Ombudsman closed 56 cases. In 25 of these cases, the Ombudsman found that discrimination had occurred and that the administration then complied with the recommendation of the Ombudsman. In 20 other cases discrimination was found but the administration declined to comply, and in 11 cases it was found that no discrimination had occurred. It is noteworthy to highlight that the Ombudsman's recommendations are non binding and that no sanctions can be issued by this Equality Body. In the remaining 122 cases the Ombudsman found that discrimination has occurred but the administration has not yet decided whether to comply or not. There are still 53 long-pending cases regarding mainly the issue of Roma's housing. This backlog is due to the structural – systemic character that appears in this type of discrimination and due to the decision of the Ombudsman to intervene actively in these cases during every development and until the final resolution of the issue.

As far as the Roma are concerned, the total number of complaints investigated by the Ombudsman in 2014 was 75, 35 of which were filed in 2014, while 40 were from previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, there were 9 incidents of discrimination in employment, 7 in education and 60 in supply of goods, services and housing.

Regarding discrimination based on race or origin (excluding cases brought by Roma), 25 complaints were investigated in 2014, 18 of those were filed in 2014, while 7 were from previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, there were two incidents of discrimination in employment, 8 in education and 15 in supply of goods, services and housing. Regarding discrimination based on disability, 50 complaints were investigated in 2014, of which 39 were filed in 2014, while 11 were from previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, there were 14 incidents of discrimination in employment, 29 in education and 7 in supply of goods, services and housing. Regarding discrimination based on age, the Ombudsman investigated 33 complaints in 2014, of which 16 were filed in 2014, while 17 were from previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, 31 were incidents of discrimination in employment and 2 in education. As far as discrimination based on sexual orientation is concerned, four complaints were investigated by the Ombudsman in 2014; 3 were filed in 2014 and 1 in previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, there was one incident of discrimination in employment and 3 in supply of goods, services and housing. Finally, regarding discrimination based on religious or other beliefs, 29 complaints were investigated in 2014, 28 were filed the same year and 1 in previous years. Among the cases where discrimination was found, 6 incidents concerned discrimination in employment and 23 in supply of goods, services and housing. In total, the Ombudsman examined 216 complaints in 2014, of which 139 were filed in 2014, while 77 were from previous years. 62 of the total concerned employment, 46 education and 108 supply of goods, services, and housing.

As for the basic trends of the year 2014, it is noteworthy that the Greek Ombudsman emphasised that education constitutes a field of vital importance regarding the elimination of the social exclusion of Roma. Education of Roma children does not seem to be given due consideration while planning solutions for the relocation of Roma settlements, nor does ensuring easy access to the education process seem to constitute a strategic goal.

Moreover, the Greek Ombudsman highlighted that in practice most of the relocation efforts concerning Roma seem to be connected with the intention of removing the current Roma settlements from urban areas and installing them in isolated places, which, hardly ensure, on one hand, decent living conditions and, on the other, planning and connection of the specific settlements with easy access to education, health services, and employment. As the 2014 Special Report points out, this discrepancy, apart from the legal issues it raises, seems to accommodate more the management of the actual or alleged local intolerance, rather than the achievement of the declared and binding -at least on political level- goals of the National Strategy.

Key points of analysis: The Greek Ombudsman's 2014 Special Annual Report on Discrimination depicts the actions taken by the Greek Ombudsman in 2014, the competent authority according to Law 3304/2005 for the promotion of the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation.

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