

Landmark moment as Greek Parliament votes to ban IGM and protect the human rights of intersex minors

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On July 19th, 2022, in a watershed moment, The Greek Parliament voted in favour of the “*Medically Assisted Reproduction Reforms Act*”, which includes Articles 17 to 20, PART C on “*Change of Sex Characteristics of Intersex Minors*”. The law bans medical interventions (including hormonal treatments and surgeries) that aim to partially or totally change the sex characteristics of intersex minors under the age of 15, without their free and informed consent.

This vote marks a historic moment for ensuring that the human rights of intersex minors are recognized and legally protected in Greece, including their right to health, physical integrity, self-determination and the free development of their personality as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Convention on Human Rights and a number of international treaties.

"We are thrilled about this landmark achievement", says Dan Christian Ghattas, Executive Director of OII Europe. "The tremendous work and continued dedication of our member organisation, Intersex Greece, throughout the years has today finally borne fruit."

Up until now, these so-called “sex normalising” interventions, which are irreversible and deeply invasive and which often have life-long negative impacts on the intersex person’s physical and mental health, were still being performed in Greece. The new law now only permits such surgeries and interventions on minors for cases where it cannot be postponed until the age of 15 and which will not cause other future, irreversible or significant complications to the minor’s health. In such circumstances, the latter is only permitted per approval of the Magistrates’ Court (Article 17.2), following the issuance of an opinion by an interdisciplinary committee, and only after the representative of the committee and the minor themselves have been heard by the judge.

"We highly applaud the Greek government and Parliament for taking this clear stance on banning intersex genital mutilation and for being one of the first countries, not only in Europe, but internationally, to do so", adds Kristian Randelović, Co-Chair of OII Europe.

"We are also very happy to see that the law provides for sanctions for medical doctors who perform such operations and treatments in breach of the new law, as well as making provisions to ensure that doctors performing such acts will lose their license to practice", says Magda Rakita, Co-Chair of OII Europe. "This is one of its real strengths and makes clear that such interventions are punishable by law."

While OII Europe is overjoyed to see the law pass, we also recognise that further legislative protection is needed to fully ensure that no intersex minors are subjected to such harmful practices without their fully informed consent. We recommend that the Greek government complete the process toward full protection by taking steps to address other crucial aspects, including but not limited to:

- Adopting measures to guarantee that the mature person has access to all needed comprehensive medical and non-medical human rights affirming information to allow for fully informed consent

- Establishing the right to expert-sensitive and individually tailored, life-long psychological and psychosocial support
- Acknowledging past harm and providing for low-threshold means of reparation.

Last but not least, we would like to congratulate the entire intersex community and its allies for relentlessly raising awareness on the need to protect intersex people from harm. Thank you for your work.

See the *Intersex Greece* Press release: <https://intersexgreece.org.gr/en/2022/07/19/a-historic-day-for-the-protection-of-the-human-rights-of-intersex-children-in-greece/>

Intersex Greece explanatory analyses of the new law:
<https://intersexgreece.org.gr/en/2022/07/25/3449/>

Link to the legal text: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ygeia/tekhnete-gonimopoiese/nomos-4958-2022-phek-142a-21-7-2022.html>

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