



Greece

- Population: 11.1 million
- GDP per capita (in US dollars): 21,498
- Parliamentary regime
- Human development index (HDI): 0.865 (29th rank among 187 countries)
- Gender inequality index (GII): 0.146 (29th rank among 147 countries)
- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): Score of 46 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)
- Member of the European Union since 1981.

- No official national statistics on prostitution. There were between 17,000 and 20,000 persons prostituted in Greece of whom less than 1,000 were declared. There were 187 closures of illegal brothels in Athens in 2013. Of these brothels, 167 have already been closed multiple times by the authorities (*The Times of Change*, March 28th, 2014).
- Prostitution generates 704 million US\$ (650 million €) annually in this country.
- In the last four years, prostitution rates have risen by 150% (*The Telegraph*, November 13th, 2015).
- In the last four years, cases of HIV/AIDS have risen by 200%.
- Legislation: regulationist country. All brothels must have a valid license from the local authorities. Male prostitution is illegal. Prostituted women must be single, have a residence permit, have neither STDs nor an addiction to drugs, and have a clean criminal record. The activity of prostituted persons is not considered a profession and labor law does not grant them protection.
- Convictions: 11 convictions of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation in 2014 versus 24 in 2013.
- Country of transit and destination for sexual exploitation. Country of origin to a very limited extent. The victims of trafficking originate mainly from Eastern Europe (Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russian Federation) and West Africa.

Impoverishment and the Explosion of Prostitution

The economic crisis which began in 2009 is still raging in Greece. The unemployment rate is at 25%, double the average of the Euro Zone countries. For people under the age of 25 the unemployment is as high as 60%. 40% of Greek children are living below the poverty line. The female unemployment rate is higher than that of men at 29.3% versus 23% (*Trends/LeVif*, February, 12th, 2015). The average salary has dropped by 600 € (60 US\$) per month. As a direct result of this economic catastrophe, the prostitution rate has increased by 150% since the beginning of the crisis. Women who normally had a salary sufficient enough for a family to survive have had to turn to this activity in order to live. These women may be qualified and have a side job. The profile of the prostituted women has been shattered by the crisis. Now 35-40% of prostituted persons are of Greek nationality (*Efsyn*, May 4th, 2015). If these women are married, they must exercise their activity illegally with all the risks that this may entail, as brothels are not authorized to incorporate them because prostituted persons must be single by law.

There has also been a huge increase of prostitution among students. Greek law provides for up to two years of imprisonment and a fine for any prostituted person without a license or medical examination.

The average price of sexual services has fallen to just 15 € (16,25 US\$) as a consequence of the decrease in financial resources of clients as well as the increase in the number of women in prostitution. In some cases, women may only make 2 € (2,17 US\$).

The summer tourist season marks the culmination of prostitution activities, both because of the demand from Greeks on vacation as well as foreign tourists.

The places of prostitution are numerous. They number about 6,500 in Athens alone (*Efsyn*, May 4th, 2015). The number of brothels or “studios”, of which the vast majority operate illegally, has been multiplying rapidly in the city center of Athens. The authorities are completely powerless to regulate them because most of the brothels they close re-open on the same day. Many have been closed more than a dozen times. Even though it is illegal, a large number of these institutions are located in ‘historic’ neighborhoods, which degrades the quality of life for existing residents.

Many centers for “health” and “massage,” as well as bars, are fronts for prostitution activity. Prostitution is also prevalent in casinos, night clubs, and hotels. The activity of prostitution related to tourism is also widely practiced, involving niche markets such as minors and men.

Finally, a major form of prostitution takes place in the streets and squares, or “piazzas”. With each street, there are different concentrations of ethnicities and specialties (minors, transsexuals, men...) (*Greek Reporter*, May 5th, 2012). The internet is also playing a growing role in this market through specialized sites and social networks. For example, a Greek police officer was arrested in May 2014 for organizing a prostitution network which he ran from a website and Twitter account. He was able to use this technology to force his Russian wife and ten other Greek and foreign women into prostitution (*Greek Reporter*, May 9th, 2012).

This case is not unique. In 2013, two police officers were arrested for the same reason and for disclosing confidential police information to the accomplices of traffickers. As another example, 18 elected members belonging to the Neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn were

charged with plotting murder, organized assault militia training camps, arms trafficking, and running a prostitution ring. The wife of one of these members was an owner of a brothel in the center of Athens (*France 24*, October 4th, 2013). This trial is still ongoing today.

Among the Greek male population, about a quarter (1.2 million) are regular or occasional clients of prostitution (*To Vima*, July 27th, 2014). The trivialization of this subject remains deeply rooted in their mentality that the activity is a way of asserting masculinity. Efforts are being made to change these attitudes, particularly in schools, thanks to the joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture.

Economic, Social, and Health Crises

Another tragic consequence of the increase in prostitution has been the doubling of HIV/AIDS infections in Greece over the last four years. The desperation of prostituted persons encourages them to accept unprotected sex in exchange for a higher payment (*The Telegraph*, January 26th, 2015). This problem becomes worse as more than 40% of Greeks no longer have health insurance. 2014 saw the reemergence of syphilis for the same reasons, even though this disease had once been eradicated.

Drug addicts as prostituted persons form a group of their own. Since before the crisis, heroin consumption has been an important problem in Greece. Among prostituted persons, heroin addicts are the most vulnerable outside of migrant women who are victim to sexual exploitation.

According to a study by KETHEA, six out of ten women said they would resort to prostitution to finance their addiction (*The Guardian*, May 16th, 2013). These prostituted persons cannot demand high rates and are willing to accept high risks. The condemnation of HIV-positive prostituted persons in the media in 2012 had an opposite effect than expected. For fear of being displayed publicly, many clients and prostituted persons became reluctant to get tested. The law allowing forced testing has since been withdrawn by the Syriza government which came to power in 2015.

It is important to remember that the issues of prostitution and drugs form a vicious cycle. Those dependent on drugs turn to prostitution to finance their addiction, while sex workers turn to drugs to support their mental and physical state.

The Greek Organization against drugs, OKANA, suffered extreme budget cuts, rendering it virtually powerless to combat the drug problem in Greece. New, more affordable and destructive drugs have appeared on the market. “Sisa”, or the “cocaine of the poor”, is 2 € (2,17 US\$) per dosage. Made of electric battery acid, gasoline, and even shampoo, its severity leaves almost no hope of survival, but its consumers are willing to commit the most desperate acts to get their hands on it.

There appears to be more and more unwanted pregnancies of drug-addicted prostituted persons. In 2013, two women gave birth on the sidewalk (*The Guardian*, May 16th, 2013).

A Decrease in Cases of Trafficking for Purposes of Sexual Exploitation

Greece is a country of transit and destination for the trafficking of women and children for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. The traditional flow from Balkan and

Eastern European countries to Western Europe is now supplemented by that of Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries. Women are trafficked to Greece from Eastern Europe (Moldova, Ukraine, Russian Federation, Belarus, and Georgia), the Balkans (Romania and Bulgaria), the Middle East, China, Nigeria, and various other African countries. The main crossing points are the Aegean islands as well as the Greek-Turkish border across the Evros River. The victims, or migrants who subsequently become victims of sexual exploitation, are transported to Greek cities or across borders into Italy or other European countries.

The appearance of traffickers from Syria, following the war which has ravaged the country for the past three years, has resulted in an influx of refugees to Greece.

There are between 13,000 and 14,000 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Greece, of whom the vast majority are women. This trafficking generates around 80 billion € (86.64 billion US\$) per year in Europe (*To Vima*, July 27th, 2014).

The proportion of trafficking in human beings for purposes of sexual exploitation compared to forced labor (agricultural or domestic) is difficult to assess and greatly differs according to various sources. However, traffickers often mix these activities so it is not easy to distinguish between them. In 2013, among the 26 convicted traffickers, 23 mixed both activities (*U.S. Department of State*, 2014).

While it is easy to say that the economic crisis devastating the country caused the increase in prostitution in Greece, it is difficult to quantify the phenomenon and even more difficult to quantify the evolution of human trafficking.

Looking at the number of victims identified and the number of people prosecuted for this crime, the figures seem to be disproportionate to the scale of the phenomenon. This can be attributed to the effectiveness of law enforcement and the strategies of traffickers. Moreover, these data differ greatly among sources, especially because not all information from the Greek courts is available. Despite these discrepancies, it is evident that the number of victims and perpetrators identified by the police has been decreasing each year since 2010. According to the 2014 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons, police investigated 36 trafficking cases (compared to 37 in 2013 and 46 in 2012) and 31 out of 125 suspects prosecuted for crimes related to human trafficking were convicted (compared to 46 out of 142 in 2013). Of the 125 suspects in 2014, 108 were prosecuted for sexual exploitation and 17 for forced labor. NGOs reported that the sentences ranged from 15 to 32 years of imprisonment with fines.

This decrease in human trafficking shows that the law has been applied properly. It provides sentences of up to 10 years of imprisonment and fines from 14,000 to 17,000 US\$ (13 000 to 15 694 €). However, the penalty for procuring is less severe than that for trafficking. Many defendants are adopting the strategy of pleading guilty for procuring rather than facing charges for human trafficking.

Several trends can explain this decrease. First, the number of police specialized in the fight against human trafficking has continued to decline as a result of drastic budget cuts. It has also been suggested that traffickers are using different routes through Greece and have adopted new, more discreet means of exploitation which make their operations more difficult to counter and detect. Typically this would mean recruiting poor women with little education by promising them a job as a waitress or maid. The recruiter often poses as a “boyfriend” who is travelling with her to Greece. In most cases, procurers operate alone. In 2012, out of 37

cases of sexual exploitation, 10 were the work of organized crime units compared to only one in 2014.

The trend of involving victims or former victims of recruitment in the exploitation of other victims continues and complicates the work of the police. This is a way for the organization to gain a favor from them while guaranteeing their silence. To ensure that victims remain on Greek soil, traffickers use fake documents or marriages with Greek citizens.

Legislative developments and their Limited Range

In recent years, Greece has optimized its legislative arsenal, demonstrating a real political will to arm itself against the scourge of human trafficking. Since 2010, the country has ratified three fundamental legal instruments against the trafficking of human beings:

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and its protocols described in the “Palermo Protocol” by the Law 3875/2010 (158/A/2010)
- The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which was implemented with the Law 4216/2013 (266/A/2013)
- The implementation of the European Directive 2011/36/EU by the Law 4198/2013 (215/A/2013)

Under these Acts, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with eight other ministries, formally established the Office of the National Reporter (NR). This informal, but widely recognized term activated the Coordination Mechanism, which had already been in operation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2007. Iraklis Moskof is at the head of this institution charged with fighting against human trafficking and assuring a systematic cooperation with its European counterpart. The principal missions of the Office of the National Reporter are:

- The creation of a national mechanism to identify victims
- The creation of a national database which updates automatically
- The training of state actors concerned with this issue
- Closer cooperation with NGOs in this field as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Public awareness on the topic of human trafficking

The leading measure of this movement is the non-binding resolution by the European Parliament of February 26th, 2014 regarding sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality. This recommends the criminalization of the use of services of trafficked persons.

To further its mission, in November 2014 the Office of the National Rapporteur launched a systematic and permanent coordination as well as a regular consultation forum between NGOs, private sector organizations (both cultural and educational), the local government, and the Frontex agency (which coordinate operational cooperation between Member States on the border of the European Union in the fight against illegal immigration). Similarly, in 2013 the Office of the National Reporter, IOM Greece, and the United States Embassy in Greece organized training sessions for judges, prosecutors, and police officers to instill in them a

proper attitude for observing, investing, and proceeding on cases concerning human trafficking. In 2014, judges and prosecutors were trained to identify and adopt an approach more focused on the victim.

As for public awareness of human trafficking, an open symposium on the topic of sexual exploitation was organized in November 2014 by the NR in partnership with the French government.

Emphasis on two issues was added to new provisions included in law 4198/2013:

- The responsibility for acts related to human trafficking extends to corporations when one or more person has committed a crime or offense for profit. This allows the pursuing of front companies which hide the profits of criminal organizations involved in the trafficking of human beings.
- Tools to protect victims cooperating with the police such as audiovisual recording of evidence, the presence of a psychologist to support the victim during his or her testimony, the possibility to testify without the presence of the alleged perpetrators of human trafficking, and the right for victims to submit an application to the State for compensation.

Despite these efforts, with lack of technical means or information of professionals accompany victims, these devices are rarely implemented.

Even if Greece had a legislative arsenal perfectly suited to fight against human trafficking, the greatest obstacle to its operation is adequate financing. The various NGOs working in this field lack funds to carry out their mission in an optimal fashion. There are not nearly enough homes for accommodating the victims of human trafficking and they can usually only provide care in the short term. In addition, only victims with a residence permit or European citizenship are permitted to stay in these homes. In 2014, no victims received temporary residence permits. Only 32 victims identified in previous years were able to renew their residence permit (compared to 42 in 2013) (*U.S. Department of State*, 2014). Consequently, victims have not been able to stay in a residence for the duration of their trial which can last for years, complicating the work of the prosecution.

In its recommendations, the U.S. Department of State emphasizes the importance of identifying victims and ensuring their physical, medical, and legal assistance during the conviction of their traffickers. NGOs have reported cases in which the police have arrested victims of sexual exploitation for prostitution offenses without attempting to detect trafficking.

Although these initiatives have been hampered by budget cuts of the economic crisis, we must acknowledge the efforts for coordination of various actors fighting against sexual exploitation in Greece as well as the political will to address this issue. This action would have been unthinkable just ten years ago in a country with a conservative and patriarchal reputation.

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