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**Consideration of reports: reports submitted by States parties
in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant**

List of issues in relation to the second periodic report of Greece

Addendum

Replies of Greece to the list of issues* **

[Date received: 20 July 2015]

I. General information

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues (E/C.12/GRC/Q/2)

1. According to Article 28 (1) of the Constitution, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as an international treaty ratified by Greece, constitutes an integral part of Greek domestic law and prevails over any contrary provision of law. Alleged violations of the Covenant may be brought before the competent domestic courts. All courts routinely apply the constitutional provisions guaranteeing economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the relevant implementation laws. In addition, they have the power not to apply, in a specific case pending before them, a law contrary to the Constitution or an international treaty, including the Covenant. Thus, the courts may prevent the violation of constitutional or international treaty provisions enshrining economic, social and cultural rights by the legislator or the administration. During the last years, the Council of State (Supreme Administrative Court), in particular, has refused to apply as unconstitutional legislative provisions cutting main and supplementary pensions, reducing the remuneration of university staff, introducing pension and wage reductions affecting members of the armed military and law enforcement personnel, privatizing the state-owned water company, providing that non-payment of a property tax levied through electricity bills may result in electricity cut-off (however, other measures have been found in conformity with the

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes can be consulted at the offices of the secretariat.



Constitution). It is to be noted that litigants and the courts tend to invoke and apply the constitutional provisions on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to equality and non-discrimination, rather than the Covenant's provisions. Last but not least, national human rights institutions, such as the National Commission for Human Rights systematically refer to the Covenant in their reports and recommendations.

II. Issues relating to general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1-5)

Article 2, paragraph 1: Maximum available resources

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

2. Greece has been experiencing a severe economic crisis, which is not only a national one, but an aspect of the broader crisis affecting many European countries. In 2010, a financial assistance mechanism was set up with the participation of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Within that framework, a programme of fiscal and structural measures has been agreed between the Greek Government and the abovementioned institutions, the implementation of which constituted a prerequisite for the disbursement of loan instalments to Greece. Thus, the response to the crisis has also had an international dimension, as the relevant national policy frameworks, consisting to a large extent in the adoption of austerity measures, had been negotiated and agreed with the institutions involved.

3. The impact of the last 6 years of economic recession has been significant, causing social changes and the deterioration of the social structure of the country. GDP fell by 25%. Unemployment rate reached 26,5%, youth unemployment 52,4%, child poverty 28,8%. 73% of unemployed persons are long-term unemployed, whereas there are 350.000 households without any working person. According to recent research, while the poverty rate among employed persons reached 16,5%, poverty rate among unemployed reached 46,5%. The number of homeless persons has increased. Moreover, gender gaps in the labour market have intensified, supply or access to infrastructure and services supporting the reconciliation of family and professional life (kindergartens, day schools, child and elderly people carers, etc.) has been restricted. The economic crisis has had a negative impact on marriages and the birth rate due to the unsustainable economic burden. The crisis and the ensuing social pressure may be partly responsible for the psychological or physical abuse of women which feel unable to escape from the abusive relationship mainly due to the vulnerability of their economic situation. It is to be noted that the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010–2013 has been extended until the end of 2015 with the aim to improve the everyday life of women and men. It was largely conceived and designed before the escalation of economic crisis and as such it can only partly address its consequences on gender equality. The new government will proceed to the evaluation and policy planning for the next programming period 2014-2020 through consultation with relevant stakeholders. The reduction in the public expenditure for health and the cutting of funding to public hospitals has had a negative impact on the quality and the quantity of health services, as the number of persons using the public health system has increased. The economic crisis has also had an impact on the educational system, among others, in terms of educational reforms, cuts in government spending, wages, allowances, holiday bonuses and teacher pensions, school merging and/or abolishing, increase in the number of retiring teachers and decrease in the number of appointed teachers. In the field of culture, subsidies to cultural organizations, as well as cultural activities, have significantly been reduced.

4. The National Commission of Human Rights has consistently drawn the attention of national authorities and international stakeholders to the adverse impact of the austerity measures. Since 2010, the NCHR has repeatedly stressed the need for constant respect of human rights during the implementation of the fiscal and social exit strategy from the debt crisis. The Commission has also issued a Recommendation “on the imperative need to reverse the sharp decline in civil liberties and social rights” and noted with grave concern the rapid and dramatic decline in living standards of the population.
5. In addition, the NCHR has issued a document on the recommendations and decisions of international bodies on the conformity of austerity measures to international human rights standards. In fact, the European Committee of Social Rights (monitoring body of the European Social Charter) has examined a number of collective complaints against Greece and concluded that the disputed austerity measures had violated the provisions of the European Social Charter protecting labour and social security rights. Since 2011, International Labour Organization (ILO) bodies have also pointed to violations of relevant ILO treaties. The European Court of Human Rights, however, dismissed as manifestly ill-founded two individual complaints against reductions in wages and pensions of public sector employees.
6. A thorough analysis on “the impact of crisis on fundamental rights across member states of the European Union (EU) (country report on Greece)” has been conducted for LIBE Committee (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) of the European Parliament (PE 510.014, February 2015).
7. United Nations treaty bodies (in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child) have underlined certain negative effects of the measures taken on women and children.
8. Furthermore, the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, Mr. Cephass Lumina, in his report following his visit to Greece (April 2013), considered that the measures which had been adopted had undermined the enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, in Greece. More recently, in June 2015, the new mandate-holder, Mr. Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, in a public statement, stressed the need to find better solutions to prevent economic reform policies undermining the enjoyment of human rights; he also pointed out that human rights should not stop at the doors of international organizations and international financial institutions.
9. The Hellenic Parliament’s Debt Truth Committee stressed, in its preliminary findings published in June 2015, that the drastic adjustments, imposed on the Greek economy and society as a whole, have brought about a rapid deterioration of living standards, and remain incompatible with social justice, social cohesion, democracy and human rights.
10. It is clear that the international community and its institutions have not been able to design and implement a human rights-based response to debt crises. It has widely been acknowledged that economic, social and cultural rights have not been systematically integrated into the relevant policies and programs, while no comprehensive assessment of the impact of austerity measures on the promotion, protection and respect of economic, social and cultural rights has been conducted.
11. It is to be noted that the Council of State has identified in its case-law a number of fundamental principles that must be respected in the design and implementation of austerity measures. Initially, the Council of State affirmed the constitutionality of austerity measures, placing great emphasis on the legislator’s margin of appreciation in adopting measures to confront, as part of a broader financial adjustment program, a grave and exceptional fiscal

situation, and to avert the risk of default and the collapse of the national economy. Progressively, the case-law has evolved. More specifically, according to the Supreme Administrative Court, in times of a protracted economic crisis, the legislative branch may, within its margin of appreciation, enact laws that affect certain social groups, especially those who receive public sector salaries and pensions, in view of the immediate effectiveness of such measures. However, the legislator is bound to uphold the constitutional principles of proportionality, equality before public burdens (by allocating evenly on all citizens the burdens of fiscal adjustment) and respect for human dignity, which encompasses decent living conditions. The legislator may not rely exclusively upon purely numerical criteria or targets, such as the average reduction of public spending on wages. Furthermore, an important criterion to assess the proportionality of wage or pension cuts is their cumulative effect on the standards of living of those concerned. Another important parameter is the possibility for the legislator to adopt less restrictive measures, having equivalent effect to the disputed spending cuts. Instead of resorting to such cuts, the authorities should rather pursue structural reforms and improve tax collection. Cuts in pensions were declared contrary to the Constitution, to the extent that it had not been properly assessed whether the impact of such reductions, in conjunction with the measures that had already been adopted to confront the crisis as well as the wider socio-economic conditions prevailing in the current exceptional circumstances, has led to an unacceptable lowering of the standard of living of pensioners, below the limit which forms the core of their right to social security. It is to be noted that the Council of State systematically rules that the declaration of a legislative provision as unconstitutional will take effect after the publication of the judgment, in view of the acute financial crisis and the severe cash-flow difficulty of the State. It is significant that the abovementioned case-law is fully consistent with the criteria contained in the Committee's open letter of 16.5.2012 on economic, social and cultural rights in the context of the economic and financial crisis.

12. Since January 2015, the Government has set as one of its most urgent priorities the tackling of the "humanitarian crisis" affecting the most disadvantaged groups of the population. Law no. 4320 adopted in March 2015 aims at ensuring basic goods and services to persons and families living under extreme poverty conditions, without discrimination, through the provision of free electricity, rent allowance and food stamps. As of June 2015, more than 300,000 applications have been submitted by potential beneficiaries.

Article 2, paragraph 2: Non-discrimination

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

13. Law 3304/2005 transposed into the national legal order the two EU anti-discrimination Directives, namely Directives No. 2000/43/EC and No. 2000/78/EC.

14. The Law prohibits direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, both in the public and the private sectors, in employment and occupation, vocational guidance, employment and working conditions, social protection, education, access to goods and services, etc., as well as on the grounds of religion or other belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, exclusively in employment and occupation.

15. The scope of the Law is identical to the scope of the EU directives transposed. The same applies to the grounds of discrimination explicitly prohibited by the Law. The principle of non-discrimination is, however, constitutionally enshrined and applies horizontally to all sectors of the State party's legal order. Claims of violation of the abovementioned principle on any ground may be brought before the courts (all of which have the power not to apply a law contrary to the Constitution), as well as independent authorities, such as the Ombudsman. Moreover, there are specific legislative texts on gender equality, also covering economic, social and cultural rights.

16. Law 3304/2005 has not developed its full potential yet, with regard to the monitoring of its implementation. The number of complaints submitted is small and confined mainly to the public sector, falling under the competence of the Office of the Ombudsman. Among others, in order to monitor the implementation of the principle of equal treatment, the Observatory on Combating Discrimination has been established. The Office of the Ombudsman, with the support of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, has engaged in activities aimed at addressing the lack of awareness on the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues

17. Chapter II of Law 3304/2005 devoted to equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin has a very wide scope of application (see above, reply to Question 3).

18. It is to be noted that, in the Greek legal order, one group of persons is qualified as a “minority”, namely the Muslim minority in Thrace, which consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that establishes the status of the minority in Thrace refers to it as being a religious minority, the Muslim faith being the common denominator of the aforementioned components.

19. Greece is among those countries which do not collect statistical data based on criteria such as the origin of persons living in the country, for reasons pertaining mainly to the protection of personal data. There are, however, data about the number and the country of origin of third country nationals residing legally in Greece, asylum seekers, etc.

20. As far as Law 4310/2014 is concerned, it does not impose any additional requirements to the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace who wish to become teachers in public schools. The law only applies to members of the Muslim minority who wish to become teachers of the minority programme in minority schools in Thrace. The law ensures that the teaching positions of the minority programme of minority schools in Thrace will be occupied exclusively by members of the Muslim minority. Those who wish to be appointed to these special places should have the necessary expertise in the methodology of teaching the language of the minority programme and the Muslim religion. For this reason, they have to attend the respective courses of the Graduate School for Minority Program teachers of Minority Education Schools in Alexandroupolis lasting one year.

21. Additionally, it is to be highlighted that Law 4310/2014 has been adopted after prior consultation with the Minority Teachers’ Associations.

22. Thus, the Greek State reserves to the teachers, who belong to the Muslim minority in Thrace, a beneficial status; pursuant to the legislation as amended, teachers, members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, are entitled to appointment in any public schools across the country, while they reserve their exclusive right to teach within the minority programme of the minority schools in Thrace. Pedagogically and scientifically-wise, an additional year of studies is sufficient for the above Muslim teachers to acquire the necessary skills to instruct Muslim students.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

(a) Migrants

23. In April 2014 Law 4251/2014, “Code of Immigration and Social Integration”, entered into force, which codifies the relevant legislative provisions, limits the categories of residence permits, simplifies the conditions for access to the labor market, creates favorable

investment conditions, promotes the long-term resident status and introduces favourable terms and conditions of stay for the “second migrant generation” under specific integration criteria for third country nationals who have developed strong links with Greece and the Greek society.

24. All persons legally residing in Greece enjoy the same social security rights as Greek nationals, the right to social protection, equal access to services provided by public agencies or entities, local government organizations and public utilities and the right to be admitted in public hospitals and clinics. At the same time, access to healthcare institutions for emergency treatment or childbirth, as well as to social care structures operated by local authorities is available to third-country nationals regardless of their residence status (see also below, reply to Question 25). Foreign minors have access to health care institutions, regardless of their residence status or that of their parents. Enrolment to public schools of children of refugees, asylum seekers and foreign citizens whose legal residence status is still pending is possible even in the absence of complete documentation.

25. A residence permit for humanitarian reasons is granted, inter alia, to victims of trafficking in human beings who do not cooperate with the competent authorities, victims and witnesses of racist crimes, minors or third country nationals in vulnerable situations. Third country nationals granted with the residence permit for humanitarian reasons subject to the provisions and the criteria of the Joint Ministerial Decisions for uninsured persons, are entitled to free of charge medical services and health care, as well as to access to the labour market.

26. Moreover, the Social Integration Unit of the Hellenic Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction as Responsible Authority for the European Integration Fund 2007-2013 in Greece (EIF), within the frameworks of Annual Programmes, drafts, finances and monitors projects aiming at the protection of migrants’ economic, social and cultural rights.

(b) Protection of the Roma

27. Within the EU framework, Greece launched the National Roma Integration Strategy in 2011, aiming at combating discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma by adopting or further developing a comprehensive approach to Roma integration in the areas of access to education, employment, health care and housing. The strategy includes integration policies at the national, regional and local level as well as targeted actions and sufficient funding to deliver the EU Roma integration goals. Twelve out of thirteen Regions of Greece have developed Regional Strategies for Roma Integration (the final state of approval is varied among the 12 Regions) focusing on the specific needs of the Roma in their territories.

28. Concerning the measures taken with regard to access to housing, employment and health care, the following should be briefly mentioned:

29. Housing: see below reply to question 23.

30. Employment: Projects such as “Local Employment Pacts” and “Local Integrated Interventions for vulnerable groups” (the so called TOPSA/TOP-EKO at regional level) have been running during the period 2013-2015 and involve either actions addressed exclusively to Roma persons or integrated actions between Roma and other vulnerable groups, including training activities, counselling for admission to jobs and growth in entrepreneurship, either individually or in the form of Social Cooperative. Moreover, the Social Support Centers for Roma and other vulnerable social groups (see below) focus on helping Roma and other unemployed people to find a job.

31. Health care: Social Support Centers for Roma and other vulnerable social groups (former Socio-Medical Centres) provide first degree health services, family planning and counselling services, make referrals and organize vaccinations, especially for Roma children, with the co-operation of public health services or NGOs. The said Centres are staffed by professionals such as doctors, health visitors, psychologists, social workers and Roma mediators. Furthermore, The Project “Health for the Greek Roma” ran from 2005 to 2013 and provided medical examinations, inoculations and psycho-social support services through visiting camps or mobile units of the Disease Prevention Centre (KEELPNO).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

32. Asylum seekers enjoy the right to move freely within the Greek territory (subject, potentially, to some restrictions) and to have access to free healthcare, to housing, to work and to social security, while asylum seekers’ children have access to education. In case of serious health reasons, they also have the right to travel abroad. Applicants for international protection are provided with an asylum applicant’s card; those who have been granted international protection are provided with a residence permit, valid for three years, which may be renewed. They also have the right to a disability allowance, while some 1000 accommodation places are currently available to the abovementioned applicants.

33. Refugees enjoy the right to move freely within the country and to travel abroad for a period of up to three months, to have access to free healthcare, to work and to self-employed activities, to social security, to education and to family reunification.

34. The Legal Council of the State, considers that, in the case of an asylum seeker wishing to enter into a civil marriage in Greece, the requirement to produce a certificate by the relevant consular or other competent authority that there is no impediment to the marriage, in order to obtain a marriage license, cannot be replaced with the submission by the person concerned of a formal declaration to that effect. This is due to the fact that the document certifying the status of a person as asylum seeker, does not certify his or her identity.

35. In this respect, it is to be noted that, since the creation of the Asylum Service, asylum requests are processed expeditiously and the average time required for the completion of the first instance review of the above requests does not exceed four (4) months (according to statistical data for the year 2014). Any difficulties arising from the legal situation described above with regard to the certificate of celibacy have to be seen against the background of the rapid processing of asylum requests, which is a matter of months instead of years, as it was the case before the overhaul of the asylum system in Greece.

Article 3: Equal rights of men and women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

36. There is no differentiation in remuneration based on the gender of workers, resulting from the texts of Collective Agreements or Arbitral Awards submitted to the Ministry of Labour. More specifically, sub para. IA.11 of Law 4093/12 stipulates that national general labour collective agreements (NGLCAs) set the minimum non-wage working terms, applicable to workers throughout the country. Basic salaries and wages, all kinds of increments on them and, in general, any other wage terms, apply only to workers employed by employers of the contracting employers’ organizations and may not be less than the statutory minimum wage and salary.

37. Improving the implementation of the provisions of national legislation on equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in work and employment (Law 3896/2010), constitutes a priority for the Greek Government.

38. In order to inform and raise awareness among Labour Relations Inspectors on issues related to gender equality, it was deemed necessary to enhance their inspection, reconciliation and information work through specific training activities designed and implemented to this end by the Institute of Training (INEP) of the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, the Ombudsman and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality.

39. Such activities include a special training program entitled «Education of Instructors for the training of Labour Relations Inspectors on issues related to equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in employment», as well as nine seminars entitled “Training of Labour Relations Inspectors, SEPE employees, on issues of gender equality”.

40. The Greek Government has taken the following actions to increase women’s participation in decision making positions:

41. The Project “Encouraging and supporting the participation of women in positions of political responsibility and representation at regional and local levels”, was designed within the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE). It aims to empower women involved in politics at the level of Municipalities and Regions. Under this Project, among others, 17 training seminars (1,000 women elected) have been held in all 13 Regions of Greece. Four (4) additional seminars were implemented in 2013 in four cities.

42. A Project regarding the development of activities encouraging and supporting the participation of women in positions of political responsibility and representation at national and European levels was designed, financed by the NSRF and assigned to the Research Center on Gender Equality, an organization supervised by the Ministry of Interior. Specifically, the Project targets women elected at the national or European level, women candidates in electoral processes (national elections, European elections), who until now have not been elected, and political parties, institutions and decision-making bodies involved in the electoral process. The project includes, among other things, training seminars/training women candidates in elections. This work is on-going (see the relevant website www.gynaikes-politiki.gr).

43. Women’s empowerment for their participation in economic decision-making centers: The EU Program PROGRESS 2013-2014, entitled “Positive actions for women for their promotion in economic decision-making centers”, has included among others, actions such as local, sectoral workshops for women and men corporate executives, HR Managers, etc. and coaching-leadership workshops, workshops for women (middle and senior managers). The Program is under implementation and is expected to be completed in December 2015.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

44. Women are more exposed to low quality employment and poor working conditions compared to their male colleagues, even if they tend to have higher average educational levels than men. Female workers present a higher incidence in temporary, part-time, unpaid, forced voluntary jobs or uninsured labour in low pay sectors and occupations. Women entrepreneurs face increasing difficulties in accessing funds, training, networking, and in reconciling business and family.

45. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality is implementing the Project “Supporting NGOs (Women Organizations)”. Since one of the inclusion criteria of different

target-groups is unemployment, unemployed women, as vulnerable group, are beneficiaries of the said program.

III. Issues relating to the specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6-15)

Article 6: The right to work

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

46. The high unemployment rate, which is due to the serious economic crisis, consists one of the major challenges that Greece has to confront. Greece has taken the following measures, in its effort to tackle long term unemployment, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and young people:

47. In order to strengthen protection of the most vulnerable social groups and to achieve greater dispersion of social benefits, the age range of beneficiaries of the special benefit for long term unemployed was expanded as from 01-01-2014 -in addition to the unemployment benefit already received. The long-term unemployment allowance is now paid to all age categories of unemployed people (beneficiaries aged 20-66 years instead of 45-65 years previously provided for). As regards the design of the new employment programmes, the total unemployment duration, the variations by age group and the income distribution of applicants will be taken into consideration.

48. In addition, the program “Reconciling work and family life 2014 to 2015” is implemented in order to increase employment and equal participation of beneficiaries in work, by providing care and accommodation places for children. In the current year cycle 2014-2015, 74.900 children have been placed in care facilities and a total of 62.200 people have benefited.

49. Moreover, in the end of 2013, the Ministry of Labour, as the competent public authority, drew up and submitted the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) to the European Commission, following the relevant Council Recommendation to Member States. The Plan was updated in May 2014.

50. In addition, under the abovementioned Plan, a number of sectoral actions has been drawn up and will immediately be implemented to provide unemployed youth from 18 to 24 years of age advisory services, vocational guidance, continuing vocational training and certification, as well as internships in private sector enterprises in the following areas affecting the dynamics of development: supply chain (logistics), retail trade, openness and international trade, information and communication technologies.

51. Furthermore, in 2014 began to be implemented as a front-loaded action for the Programming Period 2014-2020 a work experience programme through voucher. The program with a budget of 43,2 mil.€ and 12.000 beneficiaries aims at achieving a structured course of entry of unemployed youth in the labour market, which potentially leads through theoretical training and internship placement in jobs in the private sector.

52. Moreover, given the prolonged recession of the Greek economy, which has negatively affected the employment and unemployment rates, employment programmes were drawn up and implemented for broader population groups outside the labour market. The beneficiaries are employed full-time for a period of five (5) months in Municipalities, Regions and other public bodies in social services, pursuant to Law 4152/2013. During 2015 a new round of the programme (C cycle) with a total of 52.000 beneficiaries will be implemented.

Article 7: The right to just and favorable conditions of work

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

53. According to Law 4093/2012 until the end of the economic adjustment period provided for by the Memoranda that are annexed to Law 4046/2012 and their subsequent amendments, the statutory minimum wage and salary for blue and white collar workers is set as follows:

54. For white collar workers over 25, the minimum salary is set at 586.08 euros while for blue collar workers over 25, the minimum wage is set at 26.18 euros. For white collar workers under 25 the minimum salary is set at 510.95 euros while for blue collar workers the minimum wage is set at 22.83 euros. The above mentioned minimum salary for white collar workers increases by 10% every three years of service and up to three three-yearly periods and by 30% in total for 9 or more years of service, while the minimum wage of blue collar workers increases by 5% every three years of service and up to six three-yearly periods and by 30% in total for 18 or more years of service

55. In addition, Law 4254/2014 stipulated a smaller increment depending on the years of service for the long-term unemployed, as an emergency support measure in order to facilitate their entry into the labour market.

56. Further to the abovementioned legislative framework in force, it is the expressed intention of the new Greek Government to promote an integrated proposal for a regulatory intervention on the key policy area of collective bargaining, including the determination of minimum wage. As referred to in the National Reform Programme 2015, submitted by our country to the European Commission in early May 2015 [see official European Commission website: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/country-specific-recommendations/index_en.htm]: “Re-determination of the minimum wage in the private sector is promoted, following a dialogue with the social partners. The national general collective labour agreement will be the instrument for setting the minimum wage at national level. The said agreement will have for all its terms universal application. The gradual reintroduction of the legal framework concerning collective bargaining will favour the increase of the minimum wage, while, at the same time, will prevent and absorb shocks to the labour market”. The International Labour Office, as stated by the ILO Director General, Mr. Guy Ryder, recognized that the said Bill is moving towards the direction of restoring conformity in the area/framework of collective bargaining.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

(a) Weekly working time

57. By virtue of article 6 of the NGLCA dated 14/02/84, the duration of the weekly working time for workers employed by any employer and bound by a dependent relationship under private law throughout the country, was set at 40 hours. Moreover, by virtue of Law 4093/2012, for every period of twenty four (24) hours, starting from 00.01 hours and ending at 24.00 hours, a minimum daily rest period of eleven (11) consecutive hours was established. Moreover, P.D. 88/1999 explicitly stipulates that, for every period of maximum four (4) months, the weekly working time of salaried employees may not exceed forty eight (48) hours on average, including overtime.

(b) Remuneration for overtime and statutory overtime

58. By virtue of Law 3385/2005, as amended by Law 3863/2010, in undertakings where contractual hours of work up to 40 hours per week on a five days working week basis are applied, work provided by a worker during five (5) additional hours per week is established

as overtime work which is carried out at the discretion of the employer. In cases where the system of six working days per week is applied, the hours of overtime work amount to 8 hours per week. The remuneration is equal to the paid hourly wage increased by 20%. These hours are not included in the permitted limits of overtime hours provided for by the relevant provisions. Work beyond 45 hours per week or beyond 48 hours is considered as statutory overtime work and is subject to all the legal consequences, formalities and procedures of approval. Employees who provide statutory overtime work are entitled to remuneration equal to the paid hourly wage increased by 40% for every hour of legal overtime work provided and up to the completion of 120 hours annually and to the paid hourly wage increased by 60% for statutory overtime work provided in excess of 120 hours. In case of non-legal overtime work employees are compensated at a rate of 80% of the paid hourly wage for each hour worked as non-legal overtime starting from the first hour.

(c) Working time arrangement

59. By virtue of Act No. 3986/2011 the system of working time arrangements has been re-established. In particular, according to the new provision, undertakings applying the contractual working hours of up to 40 per week, are given the possibility to apply a system of increased employment (two hours per day in addition to the contractual eight hours) over a certain period of time, provided that the weekly working hours in excess of the 40-hour weekly working time, or in excess of any reduced contractual weekly working time, are deducted from the working hours of another period, a period of decreased employment. Within a period of twelve months (reference period), the periods of increased and decreased employment cannot exceed six months in total. Moreover, in the above undertakings, instead of the arrangement presented in the above paragraph, up to 256 working hours out of the total working hours within one calendar year may be allocated by increasing the number of working hours over certain periods of time. These periods may not exceed 32 weeks per year and must be followed by decreased working hours over the rest of the calendar year respectively.

60. Working-time arrangements are introduced through firm-level labour collective agreements or agreements between the employer and the trade union of the enterprise or between the employer and the work councils or between the employer and associations of persons. Finally, it has to be noted that a different system of working-time arrangements may be laid down through firm-level and sector-level labour collective agreements.

61. As concerns the inspections carried out in the area of safety at work, available statistical data during the reporting period, are presented in annex 1.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

62. The remuneration of live-in domestic workers does not fall within the above mentioned thresholds. Pay and working terms are laid down through an individual agreement between the employer and the worker, and in the absence of such agreement, the salary amount due is the customary salary.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

(a) Part-time employment

63. According to the legislation in force, workers bound by a contract or a part-time working relationship may not be treated unfavorably in relation to the comparable full-time workers unless there are objective reasons that justify such a treatment, such as differentiation of working time.

64. Part-time workers are remunerated in proportion to the hours worked in relation to the comparable full-time worker's remuneration. Moreover, it is now provided that the termination of the contract on the grounds that the employee who is already bound by a full-time employment contract does not accept the employer's proposal to convert to part-time employment contract is null and void.

65. Part-time employees are entitled to annual paid leave and holiday allowance, based on the salary they would have received if they had provided work during their leave. If the need arises for additional work beyond what has been agreed upon, the part-time employee has the obligation to provide it, if he/she is in a position to do so while his/her refusal would be contrary to good faith. A part-time employee may refuse to provide work beyond what has been agreed upon, when the additional work occurs on a regular basis». Moreover when there are job offers, part-time workers have a right of priority over employees of the same category to be hired under equal terms at full-time posts in the same enterprise. Finally, it has to be noted that for the remaining issues, all provisions of the labour law apply to part-time workers».

(b) Rotation work

66. In case of reduced business activities, employers, instead of terminating employment contracts, may impose a system of employment in rotation in their enterprises, the duration of which may not exceed nine (9) months in the same calendar year, only after having informed and consulted with the workers' legal representatives. The agreements concluded or decisions made in accordance with this paragraph are communicated to the competent Labour Inspection Office within eight (8) days from the date of conclusion or decision-making». The purpose of the relevant provisions is to address temporary financial difficulties with a view to ensuring sustainability of enterprises and avoiding dismissals, and, consequently, to prevent a rise in unemployment by opting for solutions that are more favourable to the employees. In such a case, the law considers that a unilateral alteration in working conditions is more favourable to the employees than the loss of their jobs, based on the principle that the termination of an employment contract is the ultimate solution.

67. No provision is made for the "minimum" number of days, weeks or months of work that may be included in the employment in rotation system that the employer may impose unilaterally in case of reduced business activities. In any case, the employer should exercise the right in question as determined by its social and economic purpose and the principal of good faith in accordance with article 281 of the Civil Code.

68. Furthermore, the consultation process provided for as prerequisite for implementation of the law, offers the employees the opportunity and the right to be informed clearly and adequately about the reasons that necessitate such a measure. In case it is unilaterally imposed, without being justified or if the employer's allegation of reduced business activities is proven to be incorrect at a later stage, the employees may ask to have a judicial review of whether there is abuse of rights with respect to the unilateral imposition of this employment in rotation system and declare it void. They can also claim compensation equal to the remuneration they would receive if this particular system had not been imposed.

Article 8: Trade union rights

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

69. Labour Collective Agreements and Arbitration Awards that have the same force as the agreements (article 16 of Law 1876/90) are binding upon employees and workers who are members of the contracting trade union organisations, or the conflicting parties

respectively (article 8). If they are declared compulsory by decision of the Minister of Labour Social Security and Social Solidarity, under the conditions set by the same Law, they are binding upon employers and workers of the sector or occupation from the date on which the relevant ministerial decision is published in the Official Gazette (article 37, Law 4024/2011). The extension of their scope has been suspended.

70. Law 1876/1990, as amended by Law 4024/2011 and Law 4303/2014 provides that recourse to Arbitration can be sought at any stage of the bargaining process following agreement of the parties. Recourse to arbitration may be sought unilaterally in the following cases: (a) by any party, as long as the other party has refused the mediation, (b) by any party after the submission of the mediation proposal. Arbitration is conducted by one arbitrator or by a three-member Arbitral Committee, if one of the parties so requests.

71. In addition, as far as civil servants are concerned, article 46 (4) of Law 3528/2007 (“Code of Civil Servants”) provides that “Trade union organizations are entitled to negotiate with the competent authorities with regard to the terms, emoluments and employment conditions of their members”.

Article 9: The right to social security

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

72. As regards the determination of the social impact of cuts in social security benefits, the National Actuarial Authority has already expressed the ability to determine the social outcome of cuts, with regard solely to pension benefits, under the condition that all the necessary data per insured and per pensioner will be handed. The Authority conducted a study on the Greek main and supplementary pension insurance system in 2014 (2013 being the year of base). In terms of wider reforms of the social security system, the final decision of ECOFIN is expected (within 2015) concerning the actuarial study of 2014, in order to request from National Actuarial Authority to proceed with the specification of the social impact of pensions cuts, as well as to identify and take measures to deal with these cuts.

73. As far as the integration of social security organizations into the tax administration is concerned, the groundwork has already been completed and there is an ongoing process of recording the necessary procedures for the implementation of the relevant conclusions.

74. Concerning the integration of all different pension funds into one, the Government will conduct a social dialogue with social partners during 2015, taking into account the proposals of the National Actuarial Authority about the sustainability of the system, the international ILO standards and the existing best practices.

75. Regarding the basic principles of the organization, the Government will restore the public and redistributive nature of social security, by readjusting the existing legislative framework. It is to be noted that, from January first 2015, the social security system was to be transformed into a strictly funded scheme, where the state would guarantee only a basic pension and the remaining part of it would convert into an individual-contributory.

76. Concerning the financing of the system, the revenues of social security will be strengthened through a national, development production recovery plan, reducing unemployment through employment programs. For this reason, the Government plans the creation of the National Wealth and Social Security Fund, which will be financed by revenues from the natural and mineral wealth of the country, as well as the use of public property.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

77. Concerning the disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, the Government considers prevention of poverty as an issue of the utmost importance, and therefore raises it systematically in the discussions with the institutions, considering that, through a targeted policy, it should take no further measures causing recession, but that it should promote instead economic growth. For this reason, the first legislative act of the new government that was recently passed was a law to address the humanitarian crisis (Law 4320/201).

78. The abovementioned Law 4320/2015 (GG 29 A) provides for the implementation of a package of immediate measures to tackle the humanitarian crisis through: ensuring commodity housing (rent subsidy), nutrition (food subsidy) and energy (free power supply for primary residence) for households in extreme poverty based on income and asset criteria. This legislative intervention is part of the National Strategy for Social Integration for the development of a universal and effective social protection system aiming not only at ensuring decent living conditions, but also at contributing to the country's economic development.

79. Moreover, Regulation 223/2014 established the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, under which the funding of material assistance activities is provided to the most deprived, amounting to 330 million euros for Greece for the period 2014-2020.

80. In accordance with article 1 (A. 2) of Law 4254/2014 the amount of 20 million euros was allocated, for the year 2014, to fund schemes providing housing, food and social support for homeless people.

81. Regarding the minimum guaranteed income, the program remains applicable as far as dealing with extreme poverty conditions is concerned and has expanded from 2 municipalities last year to 13 municipalities of the country, since 15/11/2014. It is estimated that 20,000 people will benefit from the measure, the duration of which is determined to six months. After the end of that period the results of the program will be assessed. We would like to note, however, that in order to better tackle poverty, the overall functioning of the country's social protection system is currently being reviewed.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

82. The Pension for uninsured persons of very old age is a non-contributory benefit, granted or paid to vulnerable groups and, in association with their annual income, amounts to 360 euros (345 net). This is a purely non-contributory benefit, granted by OGA to the persons who do not receive any other pension, and is financed by the state budget. Starting from 1.1.2013, this pension is redesigned and based on more stringent terms and conditions.

83. For the granting of the above-mentioned benefit, the following conditions need to be met, cumulatively:

- (a) The completion of 67 years of age (instead of 65 required until 31.12.2012).
- (b) Not being entitled to any other pension in Greece or from abroad.
- (c) Permanent and legal residence in the country for 20 years (before the latest changes in legislation, 15 years were needed from 2015 onwards).
- (d) Specific income criteria (individual taxable income up to 4,320 euros and total annual family taxable income up to 8,640 euros).

Article 10: Protection of the family, mothers and children

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

84. In the private sector, a basic and a special leave are granted. More specifically, the length of basic leave (before and after birth) amounts to 17 weeks: eight weeks must be taken before birth and nine weeks after birth. If birth takes place before the time envisaged, the rest of the leave can be granted after birth so long as the total time taken remains 17 weeks. (Art. 1 of Law 2874/2000- General Collective Labour Agreement-EGSEE).

85. Additionally, a Special leave of six months is granted after the Basic Maternity leave and before the beginning of the use of flexible working (reduced hours of daily work). The beneficiaries of such special leave are mothers who are insured with IKA-ETAM and work in private-sector enterprises or undertakings, as specified in Article 36 of Law 3996/2011, under a fixed-term or indefinite-duration employment contract, either on a full- or part-time basis. The leave is granted by the employer after the end of the pregnancy or confinement leave, or the leave equivalent to part-time work, as provided for in Article 9 of the General Collective Labour Agreement (EGSEE) for the years 2004-2005. The insured mother, following an irrevocable application, can make use of the leave either in part or in its entirety. Moreover, she can stop the special leave after she has obtained her employer's written agreement. In any event, the remaining part of the leave is not transferable to another period. During the special maternity protection leave, the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) grants mothers a special maternity protection allowance, in accordance with Chapter II of Ministerial Decision No. 33891/606/08, issued under the aforementioned law.

86. As far as paternity leave is concerned the father is entitled to two (2) days paid leave, at the time of the child's birth.

87. As far as the public sector is concerned, a fully paid maternity leave is granted for two (2) months prior and three (3) months after giving birth (5 months totally). For every child after the third one, the leave is increased by two (2) months (article 52 of law 3528/2007, "Code of Civil Servants").

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

88. 87. Greece is a transit and destination country for victims, trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour. As Greece is one of the main entry points for migration flows into Europe, potential victims of trafficking may be identified amongst the undocumented migrants entering the country.

89. According to official statistics, the predominant trafficking route originates from eastern European countries, towards western European countries. Over the last years however, two additional routes are often used by traffickers: a) from south-eastern Asia to Europe, and b) from Western Africa to Europe.

90. Identification and Protection of victims remains a major priority for the Greek Government. The existing tools are being revised with the view to identifying more victims of THB, as well as to increasing their effectiveness in identifying minors victims of THB, as most of the identification tools have been constructed for adults. Statistics of identified victims and perpetrators are important for planning future actions and awareness raising campaigns. However, the main challenge is that the numbers of identified victims and the numbers of convictions for traffickers, are still not proportionate to the existing problem.

91. At the national level there have been intensive efforts to fight THB, following a comprehensive approach that includes legislative reforms, inter-agency coordination, a more inclusive protection status for victims, public awareness campaigns and partnership

with stakeholders from major international organizations, as well as from countries of origin, transit and destination. Towards this end, the new legal framework (transposition of the 2011/36/EU Directive with Law 4198/2013), establishes the Office of the National Rapporteur (at the MFA) and gives an official mandate of accountability to the previously informal Coordination Mechanism of competent Ministries, International Organizations and accredited NGOs. This is promoting a better cooperation between the competent authorities and stakeholders, and facilitates the national ownership of internationally acknowledged best practices against THB.

92. For updated information on the number of cases brought before the courts, see annex 2. In addition, additionally, in Annex 3(a, b) statistics are provided on the cases of THB, during the reporting period.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

93. Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence amends provisions of the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Civil Code. Therefore, it is not possible to maintain case law files, since it is not known in every relevant case, if the court's decision refers to law 3500/2006 or the corresponding provision of the relevant Greek Code.

94. However, the enforcement of the above mentioned law falls within the competence of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) of the Ministry of Interior & Administrative Reconstruction. The GSGE has elaborated and implemented the "National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women", which includes preventive and legislative interventions and refers to all forms of gender based violence (e.g. domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, trafficking in women). The actions, inter alia, consist in: a) the elaboration of training modules as well as protocols of operation and counselling, to be used by the relevant structures (Counselling Centres, Shelters, Helpline), b) the establishment and operation of the bilingual SOS telephone helpline 15900 and the e-mail address sos15900@isotita.gr (both in Greek and English), c) the Implementation of an awareness raising campaign, d) the operation of fourteen new Counselling Centers of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality in the corresponding Regions of the country. The abovementioned provided services are free of charge and include psychosocial support, legal counselling, as well as counselling in labour issues, emergency shelter and, where necessary, legal aid in cooperation with local Bar Associations.

95. For data on the offence of domestic violence, provided by the Directorate of Public Security of the Hellenic Police Headquarters, see Annex 4.

Article 11: The right to an adequate standard of living

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

96. The main source for comparable statistics on income distribution and social exclusion at European level is the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) Survey on Income and Living Conditions. The reference income period of the latest survey is the year 2013. The results of the 2015 survey, with reference income period the year 2014, will be announced in June 2016. The main findings of the abovementioned survey are as follows:

- According to the 2014 survey, 22,1% of the total population was at risk of poverty (23,1% in 2013, 23,1% in 2012, 21,4% in 2011, 20,1% in 2010).
- Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion amounts to 36% of the total population (35,7% in 2013, 34,6% in 2012, 31% in 2011, 27,7% in 2010).

- The share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion aged 18-64 years amounts to 37.6% for Greek nationals and to 68.3% for foreign nationals resident in Greece; the share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion, aged 18-64 years, as regards foreign nationals residing in Greece but not born in Greece amounts to 63.8%
- The at risk-of-poverty rate for children aged 0-17 years (child poverty) amounts to 25.5%, while the at risk-of-poverty rate for people aged 65 years and over is 14.9%,
- Population at-risk-of-poverty, as percentage of the total population, increased in 2014 in the case of: employed men, by 2.0 % (15.4%), unemployed men, by 1.2 % (51.9%), households with two adults aged less than 65 years, by 3.5 % (18.4%), households without dependent children, by 0.8% (18.7%). Population at-risk-of-poverty declined in the case of: employed women, by 2.2 % (10.4%), other economically inactive women – other than pensioners – by 2.5% (28.3%), households with dependent children, by 3.2 % (25.7%).
- The inclusion of social benefits contributes to a decrease of 3.9 percentage points in the at-risk-of-poverty rate, while the inclusion of pensions contributes to a decrease of 30.1 percentage points.
- While in 2013, the at risk-of-poverty rate was higher for females compared with that of males, in 2014 it was about the same for both sexes, and specifically 22.0% and 22.2%, respectively.
- From 2009 onwards, there has been an increase in severe material deprivation (i.e., an increase of the population that lacks at least 4 out of 9 material deprivation items¹, due to financial difficulties). In 2014, 21.5% of the total population faced financial burden with an enforced lack of, at least 4, out of potentially 9 material deprivation items in the “economic strain and durables” dimension, while the corresponding percentage was 20.3% in 2013, 19.5% in 2012, 15.2% in 2011 and 11.0% in 2009. The increase was bigger for persons aged over 65 years old. Material deprivation of children aged up to 17 years old amounts to 23.8% (9.9% in 2005). For all age groups, the corresponding percentage is higher in the case of females.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 of the list of issues

97. See here above, reply to Question 16.

98. According to the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS), there has been an increase in housing requests and a particular increase in precarious housing (individuals and families who cannot afford to pay the rent or public utility bills).

99. Since 2012 the Manpower Employment Organization (O.A.E.D.) has undertaken the tasks, funds, property and obligations of the Workers' Housing Organization, adding to its purposes «the housing protection of workers and employees that contribute into its funds». OAED has taken a number of initiatives with regard, inter alia, to housing loans programmes.

¹ Enforced inability to pay unexpected expenses, afford a one-week annual holiday away from home, a meal involving meat, chicken or fish every second day, the adequate heating of a dwelling, durable goods like a washing machine, colour television, telephone or car, being confronted with payment arrears -mortgage or rent, utility bills, hire purchase installments or other loan payments.

100. With regard to housing, and in the context of the National Roma Integration Strategy adopted in 2011, the development of basic infrastructures in Roma settlements forms the main measure promoted so far, focused on environmental upgrading and recovery of urban landscape, road network constructions, creation of playground and recreation areas, construction of sewage system and waste-water collection system etc. Furthermore, based on Law 3463/2006, municipalities are allowed to allocate free of charge, full ownership of municipal property to the Roma, in order to cover their housing needs on condition that they are under state programs for housing rehabilitation.

101. It is also to be noted that the competent authorities have already implemented the principle, according to which a relocation can take place only after adequate alternative accommodation solutions have been identified, so as not to render homeless the persons concerned.

Article 12: The right to physical and mental health

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

102. Greece is experiencing the consequences of the prolonged and severe economic crisis and at the same time of a health crisis, with approximately 2.200.000 uninsured citizens and a large part of the population below the poverty line, according to ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistical Authority), EUROSTAT and OECD data. More precisely, recent studies published in distinguished and highly authoritative international scientific reviews have demonstrated that the citizens' health and the state of the health system have worsened in Greece as a consequence of this unforeseen economic crisis. In summary, during the last years there has been a dramatic increase in mental illnesses, the number of Greeks stating that their health condition is poor or very poor, HIV cases, suicides, accidents and acts of violence, and also in hospital admissions. Another notable fact is that the number and rate of persons with unmet healthcare needs have increased sharply. Such figures are disheartening and unsuitable for a developed and modern society. According to Eurostat, the percentage of Greeks with unmet medical needs is more than triple of the EU average. All these factors create, widen and sharpen immense social inequalities and challenges. It is worth mentioning that in the Euro barometer survey, Greeks prove to be the most pessimistic of Europeans regarding their quality of health and its perspectives.

103. In parallel, due to the decrease of the households' available income, a spectacular and sharp shift of the demand has been manifested from the private sector into the public healthcare system. For example, only in 2011 admissions to public hospitals have increased by 24%, in comparison to the previous year. This is largely due to poverty, which renders private healthcare cost forbidding for increasing parts of the population and at the same time to aggravation of health indicators of the population as a consequence of the economic crisis. In total, during the past 5 years the use of private sector healthcare services was reduced by more than 25% and the demand was either transferred to the public health system or remained uncovered, as shown by relevant 5 studies, due to the increase of the waiting time caused by the excessive demand as compared with the offer

104. Furthermore, the health system of Greece is under-financed, as the public health expenditure, as GDP percentage, is approximately 6%, much lower in comparison with the EU average of 7.5%. Austerity measures and draconian cuts in the health sector, along with the policy of linking health expenditure to the GDP, that was drastically reduced, led to severe decrease of health expenditure, and thus to the under-financing and the explosive understaffing of the system, especially in the health professionals (doctors - nurses), and also in the scientific and auxiliary personnel. The number of vacancies, due to the aforementioned departures, is over 22,000 nowadays. Finally, we need to stress the apparent budget reduction of 500 million euros in the provision for 2015 in comparison to

2014, as far as the Hospital revenues which are attributed to the suppliers of the Hospitals are concerned.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 25 of the list of issues

105. By virtue of a 2006 Joint Ministerial Decision, the conditions, criteria and access procedures to the medical, pharmaceutical and nursing healthcare system of our country for the uninsured and financially weak citizens, both Greek nationals and foreign citizens, have been established. The categories of such foreigners are the following: recognized refugees, asylum-seekers, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, persons enjoying the status, persons who fall under the status of protection for humanitarian reasons.

106. In addition to the aforementioned categories, and in accordance with a 2012 Circular of the Hellenic Ministry of Health, the provision of healthcare services applies not only to lawfully residing foreigners, who are classified as emergency cases and relate to potentially life-threatening and extremely urgent situations, admitted to the Emergency Departments of a hospital, but also to those infected with HIV or other infectious diseases, if their situation requires treatment and until their health has been stabilized. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 84 of Law 3386/2005, children and minors who are citizens of foreign countries may be urgently admitted for hospitalization in a Greek hospital.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

107. Recognizing, the necessity to further improve the perinatal care services, Greece adopted Law 4316/2014, which provides, inter alia, for the “Establishment of an Observatory for dementia, improvement of perinatal care, regulations for matters falling under the competency of the Ministry of Health and other provisions”.

108. More specifically, the above law provides, among others, for the institutionalization of: Perinatal Centers, Neonatal Simple, Intermediate and Intensive Care Units, drawing up of a five-year National Action Plan, the setting up of a mechanism for monitoring perinatal care and the establishment of a Permanent Committee for Perinatal Care within the Central Health Council, Breastfeeding Areas for the public and in the Workplace.

109. All the above measures aim at the provision of effective and quality perinatal care services to all pregnant women, women who have recently given birth and neonates, according to their health condition and regardless of their place of residence, their economic situation or other socio-economic barriers.

110. Sex education in the Greek educational system does not constitute a separate subject as such. Issues related to sex education are taught in an either cross-curricular approach, by diffusion in various subjects, or included in Health Education Programmes, so that they are part of school curricula or activities, as will be delineated further below.

111. In particular, sex education and gender relations constitute a core theme in the curricula of compulsory education. With respect to distinct disciplines, sex education issues are included mainly in science subjects in the last grades of primary school (5th and 6th), in Biology (1st and 2nd grades of Junior High School and 1st grade of Senior High School) and in Home Economics (1st and 2nd grades of Junior High School). In Junior High School Biology, sex education includes the study of the human reproductive system and the development of attitudes and behaviours related to health maintenance and prevention of infectious diseases. In the subject of Home Economics, in the context of the respective thematic unit, emphasis is placed on understanding the causes and modes of transmission, as well as on the prevention of diseases, contraception, gender relations, sexual behaviour, and raising awareness of violence and harassment. In senior high school, Biology focuses on anatomy and physiology of the reproductive system with references to prevention of

infectious diseases and contraception. In both education levels, students are given the possibility of developing projects for better processing the respective subjects.

112. Additionally, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs has been implementing health education programmes in schools, aiming at contributing through active and experiential learning to the development of attitudes and behaviours of students, to strengthening accountability, communication skills, confidence, as well as the capacity of students to adopt positive ways of life and attitudes. The number of Health Education programmes undertaken each academic year may come up to 6,000 of which 30% are related to “Interpersonal Relations - Mental Health” issues.

113. For the successful implementation of the health education programmes on “Gender relations and sex education” as well as on “Sexually transmitted diseases”, the Ministry collaborates with specialised scientific bodies such as the Ministry of Health, the National School of Public Health, the 2nd Obstetrics & Gynaecology Clinic of the University of Athens, the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, and others.

114. In addition, the Ministry continues its cooperation with the Greek Family Planning Association, the Hellenic Society of Paediatric-Adolescent Gynaecology and Second Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Family Planning Center of the University of Athens, to raise awareness of secondary school students and their parents about issues of gender relations.

115. In addition, since the academic year 2014-2015, the Ministry has implemented the programme “Social School” in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, the General Secretariat for Sports, the Ministry of Citizen Protection, and other stakeholders. The goals of the “Social School” programme include the promotion of health and quality of life of students, through the design and development of actions and events as part of the entire school curriculum. One of the distinct thematic intervention axes of the Social School is Sex Education as well as Information on and Prevention of Infectious Diseases. In this framework, certain actions are implemented in collaboration with professionals among the stakeholders.

116. Finally, the General Secretariat for Gender equality (GSGE), has started cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the General-Maternity District Hospital “Helena Venizelou” to provide counselling and information on issues of contraception and sex education to students of secondary education. During the school year 2013-2014 (March-April), the GSGE has completed a project, which included seven (7) information awareness meetings with students/pupils in seven (7) schools/High Schools. Moreover, during the current school year, the GSGE has completed lectures in 11 high schools in Athens, in total 845 male and female students.

Articles 13 and 14: The right to education

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

117. The field of Special Education holds a prominent place amongst the educational reforms in the last years in the framework of providing quality of education to all students. The new policies for Special Education aim at ensuring access to digital educational material and to infrastructure regardless of motion, vision, hearing or other disability, and/or learning difficulty; in addition, such policies intend to establish the appropriate supporting structures and services, thus facilitating engagement of students with disability and/or special educational needs in mainstream schools.

118. The overall education policy legislation has been adjusted to the provisions of the CRPD (ratified by Law 4074/2012) and to the international policy discourse and suggested

frameworks for actions. In particular, the institutional framework for Special Education of individuals with disability and/or special educational needs, stipulated in Law 3699/2008 and the subsequent complementary Laws 4115/2013 and 4186/2013, foresees, inter alia, the following:

119. Special Education is offered in mainstream education schools with programmes of joint education, in autonomous Special Education Schools with suitable building infrastructure, and under special circumstances with teaching programmes at home.

120. The recent Law 4115/2013 has introduced a new way of organising the interdisciplinary support to Special Education. The dominant support structures to further facilitate integration and joint education in mainstream schools of students with special education needs are: (a) the Diagnostic Educational Evaluation and Support Committee operating at mainstream school level, (b) the Special Education School being converted into a Support Center of a mainstream education schools' network, as well as (c) the local Differential Diagnosis, Diagnosis and Special Educational Needs Support Centers.

121. A number of actions and relevant measures could be regarded as successfully contributing to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. More specifically:

122. In accordance with Law 2817/2000, Greek sign language is recognized as the official language for the Deaf, while according to Law 3699/2008 bilingual education is recognized as the official method of language teaching for Deaf pupils.

123. The adaptation of general education textbooks into accessible forms for pupils with disabilities is currently underway by the Institute of Educational Policy. In the same initiative, a survey concerning the utilization of the available software especially designed for pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs is being conducted, as well as the adaptation of general education official textbooks for the needs of partially sighted pupils. Moreover, the text of the CRPD has been made available in accessible formats and specifically in: Greek Sign Language, Braille, ready to print Braille, large print, audio with natural voice adaptable text and Easy to Read, the Easy to Read format was also made available in all the above accessible formats.

124. A considerable number of programmes are presently being implemented, within the National Strategic Reference Framework of 2007-2013, regarding:

- Action scheme of individualized support to students with disabilities and / or special educational needs to maximize their academic and social development by using new technologies and digital educational material;
- Development of support structures for integration and inclusion in education of students with disabilities or special educational needs - Conversion of Special School into Special Education Support Center;
- Programme for specialized educational support for inclusion of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs;
- Design and development of an electronic database for all students with disabilities and/or special educational needs aged 4-25 years and its exploitation in educational process;
- Design and development of accessible educational and teaching/support material for students with disabilities;
- Equipment for Special Schools via Regional Operational Programmes;
- Evaluation of the Special Education structures - Development of an electronic application for constant monitoring and evaluation of structures as well as critical parameters of Special Education.

125. The abovementioned programmes address all cases of disabilities and/or special educational needs. Additionally, the reformed curricula aim at:

- The full integration of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs in education;
- The operation of inclusive classes;
- The operation of parallel support;
- The increase in the number of persons with disabilities and/or special educational needs entering higher education.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues

126. The elimination of educational disparities has been at the core of the education policy. As a result, several measures combined with special programmes have been taken for the inclusion in the educational process of, inter alia, migrant students, Roma children and the children of Muslim minority in Thrace.

127. The education of migrant and repatriate students: Intercultural schools operate, as independent schools, under the provisions of Law 2413/1996 on “Greek education abroad and intercultural education”. Furthermore, the main aim of the Programme “Education of Immigrant and Repatriate Students”, implemented since 1997, is to combat school dropouts, so that equal access to education and social inclusion are ensured, with interventions starting from preschool education.

128. Education of Roma pupils: Roma children are entitled by law to the same schooling as all other Greek citizens. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education has continued to apply additional proactive measures and special programmes considering the particular needs of the Romani population and the prejudice or exclusion that Roma children might face during their schooling.

129. The main axes of the Greek Ministry of Education policy for Roma education are reflected in the project “Education of Roma children”, which is implemented throughout the country and, specifically in areas where there is a large concentration of Roma population, by the University of Thessalonica and the University of Athens, under the supervision of the Ministry. In general, the project aims on the one hand to enhance access and participation of Roma children in education, with particular emphasis on preschool education and early enrollment in the 1st grade of primary school. On the other hand, emphasis is placed on in-school interventions for the improvement of the education provided to Roma children in order to achieve regular attendance and reduce students’ dropping out of school, in some cases by means of employing Roma school mediators.

130. What is more, since 2008, at the beginning of every school year, a Circular is issued by the Ministry according to which all Heads of School Units are reminded of their obligation to enroll Roma pupils in Primary Schools and cooperate with the Regional Directors of Primary and Secondary Education as well as with School Advisors in order to overcome any problems that may arise during enrolment.

131. Additionally, Roma families with low income can benefit from an annual allowance for every child enrolled in public school of compulsory education which can be granted to them only at the end of each school year, upon submission of a certificate of regular school attendance.

132. Further to the abovementioned, an important development took place recently by which, in full compliance with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, a Circular was issued by the Ministry of Education in May 2014 by which the closure of the

Primary School in Aspropyrgos was decided. Roma children who attended the said school may now attend other schools in the area of Aspropyrgos.

133. The education of the children of the Muslim minority in Thrace: the Greek State is firmly committed to continue its policy to uphold the right to education for members of the Muslim minority in Thrace. The “Education of the Children of the Muslim Minority in Thrace” programme is a policy of the Greek State which started already in the 1990’s and has yielded positive results.

134. In accordance with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Greece guarantees the proper functioning of the existing minority schools, supported and funded by the State. The majority of children of primary school age attend minority education that offers a bilingual programme, by which both Greek and Turkish are used as languages of instruction, but also constitute separate language subjects in the curriculum.

135. An increasing number of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace are showing a preference for the state mainstream educational system. The competent authorities have successfully accommodated this preference, while offering courses aimed at preserving the cultural and linguistic characteristics of persons belonging to the minority who attend mainstream schools. Almost all students complete the elementary education programme while the number of minority students attending secondary school has significantly increased in the last 10 years. About one quarter attend a school exclusively for the minority (minority high school or seminary), while three quarters of students are in public mainstream schools.

136. Since academic year 2006-2007a 0.5% quota for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes of students who are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace has been introduced. The obvious advantage of this measure is the promotion of the acquisition of higher academic and professional qualifications of the persons belonging to the Muslim minority in an effective and inclusive way, as well as their improved access to the job market.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

137. The Educational Priority Zones (ZEP) have contributed positively to combating school segregation and its consequent effects in certain schools. Differentiated teaching has been applied to all ZEP classes with the aim of providing equal learning opportunities for all pupils regardless of school performance, socio-economic and cultural background and has yielded positive results in terms of pupils’ performance and prevention of dropouts.

138. The implementation of the programmes has not only contributed to the improvement of the reading comprehension and spelling of students, but has also strengthened their linguistic, cognitive and socio-emotional behaviour and increased students’ performance on text cohesion and coherence.

139. All the above mentioned contributed to the positive attitude of students towards schooling, to the cooperation of teachers, pupils and parents, and generally to the school and local community connection.

Article 15: Cultural rights

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 30 of the list of issues

140. Greece has implemented, through the European Integration Fund for Third Country Nationals, projects related to foreign citizens’ integration. Among them, several projects aimed at safeguarding the enjoyment of third country nationals’ cultural rights, with the active involvement of both citizens and residents. The main projects were the following:

Video- life stories of Migrants (20 short films which presented the everyday reality in Greece in a way that combined the actually lived experience and the perceptions of both migrants and Greeks) and Festival of civilizations (events promoting the harmonious coexistence of third country nationals with the host society through culture).

141. The action “With the Roma at the Museum” was coordinated and implemented by the Byzantine and Christian Museum in collaboration with the Greek Film Center, in the period 2013-2014 and was supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013). Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs has prepared a draft operational programme for the period 2015-2020 with the key aim of facilitating the participation of Roma population in cultural life and enhancing knowledge of their history, cultural heritage and contemporary cultural expressions. The Council of Europe’s Intercultural Cities programme, in which Greece participates through the Municipality of Patras, has proven to be a very effective tool for encouraging local city authorities to develop and implement an intercultural strategy.

142. The Municipal Regional Theatre of Patras in response to a request of STEGI (house) PLUS (+) of Patras, a Hospitality Center for Unaccompanied Minors and Vulnerable Groups of Asylum Seekers, has set up a Intercultural Theatrical Workshop for Teenagers.

143. Moreover, the Athens International Radio, an initiative of the Athens City Council, broadcasts general audience daily programmes in several languages, spoken by foreign citizens living in Greece.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 31 of the list of issues

144. Over the last two years and despite the strict fiscal measures, the General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) has managed to sustain relatively modest cuts (20-30%) to the regular budget of the public Research Centers (RC). However, the cuts since 2009 have reached a cumulative 65% with very important consequences on their mission: no RCs or Universities have been forced to close down, but the serious reduction of their employment potential, has contributed to the pronounced increase of brain drain during the last three years. Nevertheless, the GSRT has launched various programs and initiatives aiming to promote R&D activities in the public and private sectors and to support human resources, research infrastructure, national and international networking. The above initiatives have relatively mitigated negative outcomes. With a view to the future, the new RD&I Program (2015-2020), funded mostly through the EU Structural Funds, is currently being designed and the first calls are expected to be launched in autumn 2015.

145. As already stressed, the economic crisis and the subsequent austerity measures resulted in a severe reduction of State subsidies for cultural organizations or various cultural activities and projects. However, there are significant cases of private cultural funding which contribute to reducing the adverse effects of the financial crisis in the cultural sector and are making a significant impact through the co-sponsoring of major capital projects and support for artistic creativity and participation (such as the Onassis Cultural Center, funded by the Onassis Foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center, co-sponsorship of cultural events by Greek banks, etc.). According to a study conducted by the Bank of Greece and published in 2014, the country’s cultural and creative industry proved resilient during this period of debt crisis and recession. The Greek National Opera and the Greek film industry have promoted new cultural products, thus promoting the enjoyment of cultural rights by all.

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146. All schools in the Greek territory are equipped with computers and have access to the internet and therefore, all students, even in the most remote areas, can have access to the Internet during school hours.

147. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs has undertaken the implementation of a project funded by the National Strategic Reference Framework of Development which ensured the provision of special digital equipment (software and hardware) for Integration classes for students with disabilities or special educational needs in mainstream education schools and in Special Education Schools. This program is realized in cooperation with the regional authorities in Attica, Peloponnese, Central Greece, Western Greece and Ionian.
