

Ageing in digital societies: enablers and barriers to older persons exercising their social rights

GREECE

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1 Legal and policy framework

1.1 National legislation on digital public administration

In Greece, Law 4727/2020¹ on Digital Governance forms the legislative basis of the digital transformation of the public administration in Greece. The key stakeholder implementing the strategy is the Ministry of Digital Governance (Υπουργείο Ψηφιακής Διακυβέρνησης).

The Digital Governance Law of 2020, transposed the relevant EU Directive 2019/1024 and lays down the following key measures:²

- the creation of a personal number for citizens to allow their formal identification in the provision of public services;
- the creation of an electronic registered delivery service for the private and public sector;
- the creation of a Register of Public Administrative Procedures and a Citizen Communication Register;
- the strengthening of the Single Digital Portal, gov.gr;
- the obligation to provide digital public services through the Single Digital Portal of Public Administration (gov.gr – EIP);
- the establishment of the permanence of new digital services that were introduced as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health crisis;
- the provision of the necessary institutional framework for the digital transformation of the Greek public sector and society; and
- the development of measures pertaining to the Transparency Programme, public sector information, open data and other issues related to transparency and open government.

The general principles of digital governance set out in Law 4727/2020, include the principle of equality and accessibility, placing special emphasis on the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.³ The only specific reference to

¹ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Greek Parliament, 2020, [Digital Governance \(Integration in Greek Legislation of Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102 and Directive \(EU\) 2019/1024\) – Electronic Communications \(Integration in Greek Law of Directive \(EU\) 2018/1972\) and other provisions.](#), Law No 4727/2020, Government Gazette A'184/23.09.2020 23 September 2020

² European Commission, 2021, [Digital Public Administration Factsheet 2021: Greece](#), June 2021

³ Greece, Hellenic Republic, [Greek Parliament, 2020, Digital Governance \(Integration in Greek Legislation of Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102 and Directive \(EU\) 2019/1024\) – Electronic Communications \(Integration in Greek Law of Directive \(EU\) 2018/1972\) and other provisions.](#), Law No 4727/2020, Government Gazette A'184/23.09.2020 Article 3

older people is made in the section regarding the general objectives of the relevant law on Digital Governance⁴, where it is stipulated that: “[t]he state must promote the interests of the citizens by ensuring connectivity and the widespread availability and take-up of very high capacity networks, [...] by ensuring a high and common level of protection [...] and by addressing the needs, [...], of specific social groups, in particular end-users with disabilities, elderly end-users and end-users with special social needs, [...]”.

No specific measures or safeguards are provided in the relevant Greek Law in relation to older people and their access to digitalised public administration services.

1.2 National policy, strategy or action plan on the digitalisation of public services or digital inclusion

In **Greece**, the Digital Transformation Bible, published in June 2021, constitutes the overall, current strategic framework around Greece’s digitalisation of public administration and digital transformation policy for the years 2020-2025.⁵ The Digital Transformation Bible builds upon the Digital Economy and Society Index of 2021⁶ and outlines the operational implementation of the strategy from a governance and procurement angle.

Equal access to public services undergoing digitalisation is recognised in the Greek Digital Transformation Bible; the policy explains how the need for supporting vulnerable population groups in acquiring digital skills and becoming familiar with new technologies is at the heart of the government’s strategy. ⁷ The policy framework explicitly refers to persons with disabilities and older people as well as women and unemployed people when acknowledging the necessity of measures to tackle issues regarding accessibility and inequality vis-à-vis new technologies and the digitalisation of the public services as a whole. The relevant policy framework as described in the Greek Transformation Bible, acknowledges that the creation of various new tools is necessary for the coordination and harmonisation of the Greek operational plan with European policies and standards. These tools include:⁸

- The creation of the "National Framework of Digital Capacities";

⁴ Greece, Hellenic Republic, [Greek Parliament, 2020, Digital Governance \(Integration in Greek Legislation of Directive \(EU\) 2016/2102 and Directive \(EU\) 2019/1024\) – Electronic Communications \(Integration in Greek Law of Directive \(EU\) 2018/1972\) and other provisions., Law No 4727/2020](#), Government Gazette A'184/23.09.2020, Article 111

⁵ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Greek Ministry of Digital Governance, 2021, [Digital Transformation Bible](#), June 2021

⁶ European Commission, 2021, [Digital Economy and Society Index \(DESI\) 2021](#)

⁷ Greece, Greek Ministry of Digital Governance, 2021, [Digital Transformation Bible](#), June 2021

⁸ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Greek Ministry of Digital Governance, 2021, [Digital Transformation Bible](#), June 2021, p. 108

- the creation of the "National Register of Educational Providers";
- the development of a Certification mechanism of Digital Capacities and ;
- the creation of a Digital Capacities Observatory for the monitoring of efficiency indicators and for supplying the DESI indicators with reliable data.

Specific provisions on the digital inclusion through the prism of gender equality are set out in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020⁹ which serves as a reference for a special category of electronic services to be provided for the mitigation of digital inequalities facing primarily women.

The Greek National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020 introduces an array of interventions across public policies following the strategy established in 1995 at the UN Beijing Platform¹⁰. The priority pillars of this action plan draw from the guidelines of the European Commission to Member States, adapting to the particular circumstances of Greece and covering the following policy areas:¹¹

- social inclusion and equal treatment of women who suffer multiple discrimination;
- gender-based violence;
- labour market, family and work-life balance; and
- education, training, culture, sports and media.

1.3 National recovery and resilience plans covering the digitalisation of public services

Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan was endorsed by the European Commission in June 2021.¹² A substantive portion of the budget attached to the plan was allocated to the digital transition of the public sector. According to the Commission's assessment, the plan aims at addressing the key structural challenges Greece faces and pursues the objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Regulation to promote the Union's economic, social and territorial cohesion.¹³

⁹ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Greek Ministry of Interior, General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 2020, [National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2016-2020](#) Athens, February 2018,

¹⁰ UN Women, 1995, [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), September 1995,

¹¹ European Commission, 2021, [Digital Public Administration Factsheet 2021: Greece](#) 13 December 2021

¹² European Commission, 2021, Press release: "NextGenerationEU: European Commission endorses Greece's €30.5 billion recovery and resilience plan, 17 June 2021, Available in English at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3022

¹³ European Commission, 2021, [COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Analysis of the recovery and resilience plan of Greece Accompanying the document Proposal for a Council Implementing Decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Greece](#), No SWD/2021/155 final, Brussels, 17 June 2021,

Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan revolves around four key pillars: (i) green transition; (ii) digital transition; (iii) employment, skills and social cohesion; and (iv) private investment and economic and institutional transformation. The plan includes pivotal investments in the digitalisation of the public, social services, and health care. The digital transition is supported through measures included in the second pillar, aiming at enhancing connectivity, improving the digitalisation of public administration and contributing to the digital transformation of public services. The plan promotes important investments in the digitalisation of archives, including the upgrading of the digital infrastructure of the Greek public administration, alongside reforms to simplify and improve administrative state processes. The measures supporting the digital transition objectives of Greece's plan account for 23.3% of the Greek plan's total allocation.

Although the Greek Recovery and Resilience Plan expressly puts forward the improvement of gender equality and investment in equality for all, across its commitments, particularly in the employment pillar, there is no explicit reference to older people and their inclusion when considering the digitalisation of public services. Greece's National Resilience and Recovery Plan distinguishes the digital transformation and the social inclusion in two distinct pillars. In setting out the digital transformation vision, the Greek National Resilience and Recovery plan announces the need for national strategies for the empowerment and equal participation of women, older people and vulnerable groups in the digital age, without any explicit references to the digitalisation of the public service sector.¹⁴

Further, Greece's plan indeed refers to the need to improve older people's digital skills through programmes targeted to address the digital divide and enable older people to become acquainted with digital tools needed to access government e-services and online banking.¹⁵

Greece's plan also focuses on other disadvantaged population groups such as refugees, Roma, unemployed people, low-income families through the lens of employability and upskilling, but fails to address the intersection of these characteristics with old age and digital exclusion. Through researching the various operational frameworks of the Greece Recovery and Resilience Plan¹⁶ pertaining to the enhancement and subsidisation of vocational training for adults, investment on the digital upskilling of adults from marginalised groups was proclaimed by the Greek government in its proposed Recovery Resilience Plan, under which, the Minister of Labour announced that digital training of older people would be organised and offered by the Greek government for free¹⁷. However,

¹⁴ Greece, Hellenic Republic, 2021, [Greece 2.0, National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#), March 2021, p. 30

¹⁵ Greece, Hellenic Republic, 2021, [Greece 2.0, National Recovery and Resilience Plan](#), March 2021, p. 60

¹⁶ Greece, Hellenic Republic, [Addendum to Greece Recovery and Resilience Plan, Component 3.2, Reform Fiche: Labor force skilling, reskilling and upskilling through a reformed training model \(Vocational Education & Training Reform\)](#), Unique ID: 16792, 13 July 2021

¹⁷ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Labour, [The Policies of the Ministry of Labour for the old age](#), Press announcement, 1 October 2021

this investment is allocated in the 3d pillar which aims to address unemployment and does not clearly feature in the budget allocated to the digital transformation (pillar 2).

2 Programmes and practices aimed at ensuring equal access to public services in the digital age

In October 2021, the Greek Minister of Labour, Mr Hatzidakis, announced the launch of a programme enabling people of older age to access training on the use of digital tools.¹⁸ Though there has not been a specific state funded programme targeting older people to date, the National Digital Academy (*Ψηφιακή Ακαδημία Ψηφιακών Ικανοτήτων*) was developed by the Greek Ministry of Digital Governance and offers online workshops on various digital tools, in an accessible format.¹⁹

With funding from the European Union, Erasmus+ and other external sources, private initiatives have been developed to target the digital inclusion of vulnerable communities often excluded from the digital transformation of the public administration. The European Knowledge Community on Digital Inclusion, a project funded by the European Parliament to map the evolving digital inclusion landscape to support cohesion and integration in the EU, has recorded 2 initiatives directly targeting the elderly in Greece, and both have ended, I Care and Seniors Go Digital.²⁰

Non-exclusive list of initiatives targeting people over 65 years old:

Programme	I CARE	SENIORS DIGITAL GO	Digital Senior Citizen	65+ Digital Inclusion
Website	http://www.i-care-project.eu/	http://seniorsgodigital.eu/	https://dsc.erasmus.site/	https://yaslihaklaridernegi.org/en/about-65-digital-inclusion-project/#
Duration	24 months 31 August 2015 – 30 August 2017	31 months 31 August 2017 – 28 February 2020	n/a	15 months (ongoing) 1 April 2021 – 30 June 2022

¹⁸ Greece, Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Labour, [The Policies of the Ministry of Labour for the old age](#), Press announcement, 1 October 2021

¹⁹ National Digital Academy, see website here: <https://nationaldigitalacademy.gov.gr/about>

²⁰ MEDICI, Digital Inclusion Community, see website here: <https://digitalinclusion.eu/about/>

Target group	Elderly people (indirect) Migrants	Seniors, unemployed, retired, marginalised, low-income (direct) Adult educators, NGOs etc (indirect)	Elderly	Elderly
Aims & Outputs	Provision of ICT skills training to formal and informal caregivers	Provision of training on digital tools for seniors	Provision of training on digital tools for seniors	To enhance the digital information literacy in older people both in Turkey and Greece through the development of a training program and a digital application in cooperation.
Funding from	Erasmus+	Erasmus+	Erasmus+	European Union
Implementing partners	Private & public sector entities from France, Italy, Cyprus	Private sector entities from Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Sweden, Italy	Private sector partners from Greece, Estonia, Italy, Spain, France	Civil society organisations from Greece and Turkey

According to a report published in November 2020, no good practices focusing on people with disabilities had been reported in Greece aiming to enhance their digital inclusion, even though persons with disabilities represent around 10% of

the population in Greece.²¹ The European Knowledge Community on Digital Inclusion does not list any such current initiatives either.

3 Research and data focused on equal access to public services in the digital age

In Greece, the findings on the complaints submitted to the Greek Ombudsman are summarised, compiled and published in four-monthly bulletins, on the website of the institution.²² From data collected in the bulletins from May 2020 to the most recent of December 2021, no complaints were registered with the Greek Ombudsman in relation to discrimination on the ground of old age in the context of access to public services.

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights, the independent advisory body to the Greek State in human rights issues, has not reported any relevant concerns on complaints with regards to the digital inclusion of the elderly either.²³ More specifically, the Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the List of Issues Prior to Reporting for the Third periodic examination of Greece under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in the relevant section about discrimination, does not take issue with discrimination in the form of digital exclusion or lack of sufficient access to the public administration in general.²⁴

While the Greek National Commission for Human Rights in its Recommendations to the State regarding the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to address it on human rights,²⁵ urges the Greek state to be proactive in securing access to health information, it does not explicitly mention the elderly and their digital capabilities. The Commission refers to persons with disabilities, illiterate people and those without internet access, focusing on the need for the state to take measures to disseminate accurate and valid information to prevent the spread of misleading and pseudoscientific information with regards to the vaccines but does not refer to any data or findings in relation to breaches or complaints made by or on behalf of older people.

²¹ Greece, Working Group of Experts of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Institute, 2020, FES Education & Employment, Eds Chrysa Paidousi Angelos Efstratoglou, [Digital Inclusion and Human Capital in Greece](#), November 2020, p. 14

²² Greece, The Greek Ombudsman, 2020-2021, Four-monthly bulletins, available in Greek at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=stp.el.tetraminiaia-deltia>

²³ Greece, Greek National Commission for Human Rights, see website here: <https://nchr.gr/en/decisions-positions.html>

²⁴ Greece, Greek National Commission for Human Rights, 2021, [Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the List of Issues Prior to Reporting for the Third periodic examination of Greece under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), September 2021,

²⁵ Greece, Greek National Commission for Human Rights, [Summary of Recommendations to the State regarding the impact of the pandemic and the measures taken to address it on human rights](#), May 2021,

4 State of digitalisation of selected public services

		Selected public services relevant for older persons			
		Access to health records	Public statutory pensions	Social benefits	Issuance of personal status certificates
Stage of digitalisation	Not digitalised (Y/N) N – digitalised Y – not digitalised)	NO [digitalised to an extent on https://eopyy.gov.gr/ – The health record include information on medications previously prescribed, doctor visits, hospitalization and any treatment the patients have received in Greece. The digitalized health records do not provide access to medical test results and do not include COVID-19 testing records or vaccination records – COVID-19 test records and vaccination history can be sourced on the dedicated webpage for coronavirus: https://www.gov.gr/ipiresies/ugeia-kai-pronoia/koronoios-covid-19]	NO https://www.efka.gov.gr/el	NO https://www.efka.gov.gr/el	NO [birth, death, family, wedding, nationality certificates can be issued online through a government webpage: https://reg.services.gov.gr/start/?step=certificate_s]
	Information is available online (Y/N)	YES	YES	YES	YES
	Transactions are possible online (Y/N)	YES	YES	YES	YES

Recognition of groups at risk of digital exclusion	Service specific regulation recognizes barriers to digital inclusion / vulnerable and disadvantaged groups (Y/N).	NO [no reference to accessibility is made on the EOPYY ²⁶ website, however, some of the functions offered online remain accessible off-line, through not in a centralised manner. The COVID-19 government webpage has accessibility options for neurodiverse, vision-impaired, deaf persons]	NO [no reference to accessibility is made on the e-EFKA website ²⁷]	NO [no reference to accessibility is made on the e-EFKA website ²⁸]	NO
	If yes , please list the barriers and groups that are mentioned.				
Multichannel access options	Telephone service (Y/N) If yes , please describe what kind of personalised services it provides.	YES [the use of telephone lines is intended for the booking of appointments with the local branches of the public health provider or administration office]	YES [24/7 service, individualised information and guidance is provided ²⁹]	YES [24/7 service, individualised information and guidance is provided ³⁰]	NO
	Physical administrative access points (Y/N). If yes , please specify the level of availability (local, regional, national), the opening days and hours.	YES [regional, no reference to times and days of availability prior appointment booking is required. The administrative officers at the access points can assist the public with printing the requested records but not	YES [regional and local, prior booking is required]	YES [regional and local, prior booking is required]	YES [regional and local, through the Registry Offices]

²⁶ Greek National Organisation for the Provision of Health Services (ΕΟΠΥΥ), official website here: <https://copyy.gov.gr/>

²⁷ E-Single Social Security Entity (Ε-ΕΦΚΑ), official website here: <https://www.efka.gov.gr/el>

²⁸ E-Single Social Security Entity (Ε-ΕΦΚΑ), official website here: <https://www.efka.gov.gr/el>

²⁹ Details on the centralised telephone line for matters relating to insurance, work, social matters: <https://www.efka.gov.gr/el/gramme-exypereteses-1555>

³⁰ Details on the centralised telephone line for matters relating to insurance, work, social matters: <https://www.efka.gov.gr/el/gramme-exypereteses-1555>

		navigating the system or training.]			
	Specific locations that facilitate offline access to the service (Y/N) If yes , indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.	YES [across Greece, see details in Greek here: https://www.eopyy.gov.gr/units/1 and in local Citizens' Service Centres ³¹]	YES [Administrative access points across Greece, see details here: https://www.efka.gov.gr/el/prosbase/stoicheia-epikoinonias-ephka and in local Citizens' Service Centres where the staff provides assistance to the public to retrieve information and fill out forms]	YES [Administrative access points across Greece, see details here: https://www.efka.gov.gr/el/prosbase/stoicheia-epikoinonias-ephka and in local Citizens' Service Centres where the staff provides assistance to the public to retrieve information and fill out forms]	YES
	Specific locations that facilitate online access to the service (Y/N). If yes , indicate the location(s). Please describe what kind of support is provided.	NO [local Citizens' Service Centres however service most of the functions offered online]	NO	NO	NO
	Other – please indicate any other access channels to the service.				
Other forms of support for online use	Please indicate any other form of support to facilitate the use of the online service for older persons such as easy-to-read versions, different language versions, etc.	The COVID-19 dedicated webpage on https://www.gov.gr/ipiresies/ugeia-kai-pronoia/koronoios-covid-19 has an accessibility	N/A	N/A	N/A

³¹ Full list available here: gsis.gr/sites/default/files/myKEPlive/Kep-Dhmoi-StoixeiaEpikoinwnias.pdf , Citizens' Service Centres (Κέντρο Εξυπηρέτησης Πολιτών) are local offices where the public are offered a wide range of services with regards to their interactions with the public administration, health services, military service, education and others.

		menu catered to hearing, vision and neurological impairments			
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