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Press release

Proposals of the Greek Ombudsman for first-time voters who turn 18 in the course of 2015 to exercise their voting rights in the forthcoming general elections

Approximately 100.000 Greek citizens born in 1997 are entitled to vote for the first time in the forthcoming general elections taking place on January 25th 2015. The Greek Ombudsman points out that legal and administrative procedures are available to overcome existing obstacles. In a letter addressed to the Minister of the Interior the Ombudsman proposes two solutions.

The voting challenge rests in a discrepancy of the existing legal framework. The specific provision stipulates that Greeks obtain the right to vote on the 1st of January of the year in which they turn 18. However, updating the voting register occurs only once a year, specifically during the period of the 1st and 28th of February.

This procedure implies that in the event of the elections taking place in January (or February) there is not enough time to register this group of new voters. Consequently, all Greek first-time voters born during 1997 will not be able to vote in the forthcoming elections because they are not yet registered in the national voting register.

The Greek Ombudsman proposes two alternatives in order to overcome this impasse. Firstly, to promptly modify the existing legislation through an expedited legal procedure. However, even if the legislation is modified, it appears unlikely that the Greek municipalities would have the necessary time to update existing registers.

Therefore, the second proposal argues as follows: First-time voters can vote without being legally registered. Instead, they could be provided with a certificate from their municipal authorities that proves their age and status as Greek citizens

This type of exceptional procedure already exists in the Greek administration. It is being applied as an extraordinary procedure for voters who have been omitted from the voting register, e.g. by mistake. The suggested procedure could therefore be extended to include first-time voters in the forthcoming elections.

These recommendations are meant to safeguard citizens' rights in accordance with the Ombudsman's mandate.