

## GREECE - Country Profile<sup>1</sup>

**Year joined EU:** 1981

**Population:** 11.2 million

**Total area:** 131957 km<sup>2</sup>

**Political system:** Parliamentary republic

**Capital:** Athens

**Official languages:** Greek

**Schengen Area:** Yes

**Currency:** Euro (since 2001)

## Civic or ethnic approach to citizenship<sup>2</sup>

The Greek term for citizenship is *ithageneia*, which comes from the Homeric and ancient Greek words *itha* + *genos* (ιθά + γένος), *itha* meaning here and *genos* meaning birth or descent. Greek citizenship law is based on the principle of origin. *Jus sanguinis*, i.e. the automatic acquisition of the father's citizenship at birth, irrespective of where the child was born, was already enshrined in the first article of the Code of Greek Nationality in 1856.

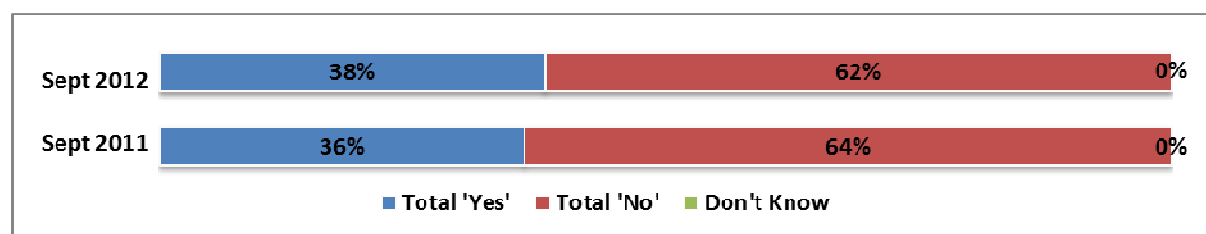
According to the law of 2004 ratifying the Code of Greek Citizenship, the child of a Greek citizen (man or woman) acquires Greek citizenship by birth. The law is currently under discussion, especially the terms under which someone of non-Greek origin will be able to acquire Greek citizenship (minimum years of legal residence in Greece, years in the Greek education system, etc.). The Muslim community is the only explicitly recognised minority in Greece following the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

## How involved are Greek citizens?

### A. Rights and awareness

- Awareness of EU citizenship rights

**Figure 1.** Greeks' response to the statement 'You know what your rights are as an EU citizen'<sup>3</sup>



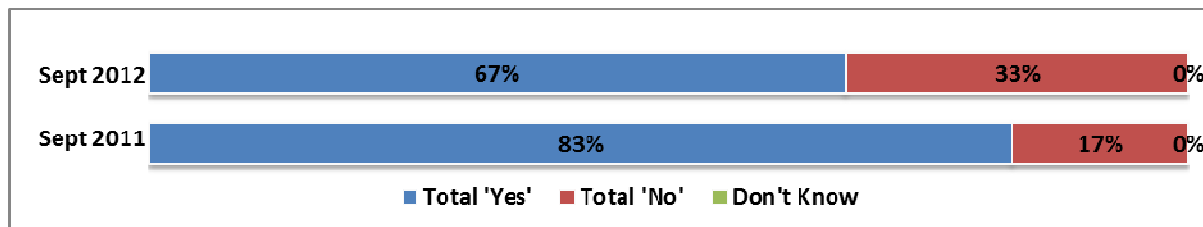
In 2012, a minority of Greeks (38%) felt that they knew their rights as European citizens, 2 percentage points (pps) more than in the 2011 survey. Also in 2012, the majority of respondents (67%) wanted to know more about their rights as EU citizens, although the percentage had shrunk by 16 pps since the autumn 2011 survey.

<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece/index_en.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Source: European Union Observatory on Democracy (EUDO). See <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/country-profiles/?country=Greece>.

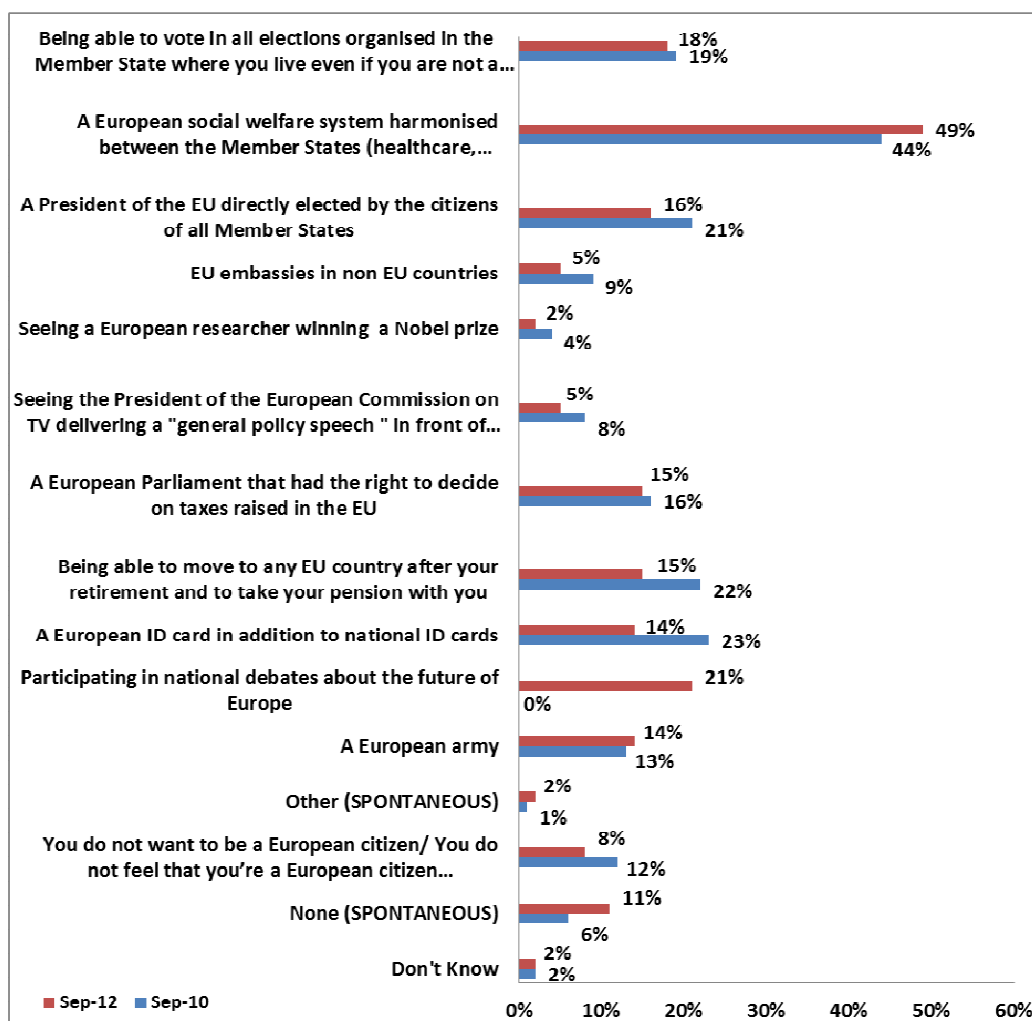
<sup>3</sup> Source: Standard Eurobarometer 77, 2012, *European Citizenship*.

**Figure 2.** Greeks' response to the statement 'You would like to know more about your rights as an EU citizen'<sup>4</sup>



Living in another EU country and working in another EU country (both with 47% scores) and receiving medical assistance in another EU country (36%) are the main areas in which Greeks would like to know more about their rights. However, only 6% chose voting in elections in another EU country.

**Figure 3.** Elements that would strengthen Greeks' sense of being European citizens<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Source: Standard Eurobarometer 77, 2012, *European Citizenship*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

The factors that matter most for Greeks in building a sense of European citizenship are a European social welfare system harmonised between the Member States (49%), participating in national debates about the future of Europe (21%), and being able to vote in elections organised by the Member State where they live (18%). Another important factor for Greeks is robust support for a European army, with 14%.

For more information on their rights, Greek citizens can contact the **Europe Direct Information Centre** by visiting <http://europa.eu/europedirect/>.

**Your Europe** is an EU website designed to **help citizens do things in other European countries** without unnecessary hindrance. This can mean moving, living, studying, working, shopping or simply travelling abroad. Or, as a company, doing business abroad. Greek citizens can call for free on **00 800 67 89 10 11** or visit [http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm).

- **Awareness of the European institutions**

Greeks are above the EU27 average in their awareness of almost all the European institutions. In particular, they score highly in their knowledge of the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the European Parliament. However, there are no data available on their awareness of the Committee of the Regions.

**Table 1.** Awareness of the European Union institutions in Greece

	<b>European Parliament</b>	<b>European Commission</b>	<b>Council of the European Union<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>European Council<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>European Central Bank</b>
<b>GR</b>	55%	28%	12%	15%	34%
<b>EU27</b>	53%	25%	10%	11%	27%
	<b>Court of Auditors</b>	<b>Court of Justice</b>	<b>European Economic and Social Committee</b>	<b>Committee of the Regions</b>	<b>Does not know any</b>
<b>GR</b>	1%	11%	1%	-	25%
<b>EU27</b>	3%	10%	1%	0%	33%

- **Awareness through citizenship education<sup>8</sup>**

Citizenship education exists as a compulsory separate subject in both primary and secondary schools in Greece, and has to be studied for four years.

<sup>6</sup> The Council of the EU is where national ministers from each EU country meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. For example, if there is an issue concerning energy, then all the Member States' Energy Ministers will gather at the Council of the EU.

<sup>7</sup> European Council meetings are essentially summits where EU leaders meet to set the agenda and discuss broad political priorities for the Union. Typically, there are around four meetings a year, chaired by a permanent President, currently Herman van Rompuy.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Eurydice, 2012, *Citizenship Education in Europe*.

The table below shows the objectives of citizenship education as recommended in the Greek curricula for 2010/2011. The first two objectives — developing political literacy and acquiring critical thinking and analytical skills — are covered from primary through to upper secondary school. The other three objectives — developing values, attitudes and behaviour, encouraging active participation, and encouraging active participation in the local community — are covered only in primary and upper secondary school.

**Table 2.** Objectives and themes of citizenship education as recommended in Greek curricula for 2010/11

Developing political literacy (basic facts, key concepts)	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3
Developing values, attitudes and behaviour (sense of respect, tolerance, solidarity, etc.)	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3
Encouraging active participation and involvement in the local community	ISCED 1	-	ISCED 3
<i>European dimension: main economic/political/social issues</i>	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3
<i>Functioning of institutions and perspectives of the European Union</i>	ISCED 1	ISCED 2	ISCED 3

Note: **ISCED 1** — Primary education, **ISCED 2** — Lower secondary education, **ISCED 3** — Upper secondary education.

The objectives of citizenship education are in normal font, while the themes are in *Italic*.

## B. Participation

- **Civil society in Greece<sup>9</sup>**

In Greece the term ‘civil society’ (Κοινωνία των πολιτών) is frequently used and covers a wide range of organised and public forms of participation, but does not really capture the values dimension of human rights and democracy. However, current research estimates that the number of voluntary organisations has been increasing in Greece in the past decade.

- **Volunteering in Greece<sup>10</sup>**

The tradition of volunteering in Greece dates back to the democracy of Athens in the 5th century BC, when citizens volunteered to hold key positions of public interest. In the early 19th century the Greek region of Epirus was the birthplace of many of the great Greek benefactors, who donated money for cultural and educational initiatives.

However, volunteering in Greece is not widely practised nowadays. Greeks tend to establish strong relationships and trust only within the confines of the family, rather than within the community as a whole. Greeks generally lack social trust, which is a prerequisite for the development of voluntary organisations. This is illustrated by the low percentage of Greek volunteers — 0.3% of the total population. Unfortunately, the lack of data about volunteers’ profiles (age groups,

<sup>9</sup> Source: European Commission-DG EAC, 2010. *Study on volunteering in the European Union. Country Report Greece* London: GHK.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

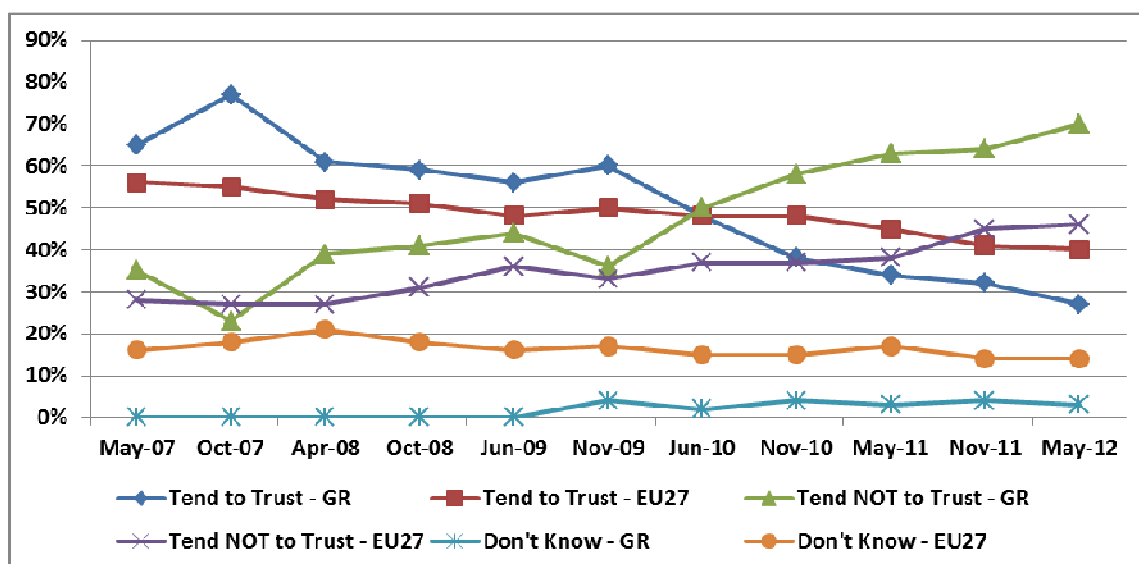
education/employment status, residence, time devoted to volunteering) makes it difficult to estimate the current trend in volunteering in Greece.

### C. Confidence in the European Parliament and voting in national and European elections

- **Confidence in the European Parliament**

The figure below tracks Greeks' tendency to trust the European Parliament, which has suffered a massive decline, from 65% to 27%, over the past five years. Such trust declined steadily from October 2007 to May 2012, while the greatest fall was observed from November 2009 to November 2010. The tendency to trust the EP fell by 38 pps in Greece, as against 16 pps in the EU27. On the other hand, the tendency not to trust the European Parliament increased sharply in Greece, exceeding the same tendency in the EU27, from 35% to 70%. The tendency not to trust the European Parliament increased sharply in Greece, exceeding the same tendency in the EU27, from 35% to 70%.

**Figure 4.** Tendency in the EU and Greece to trust the European Parliament (May 2007–May 2012)<sup>11</sup>

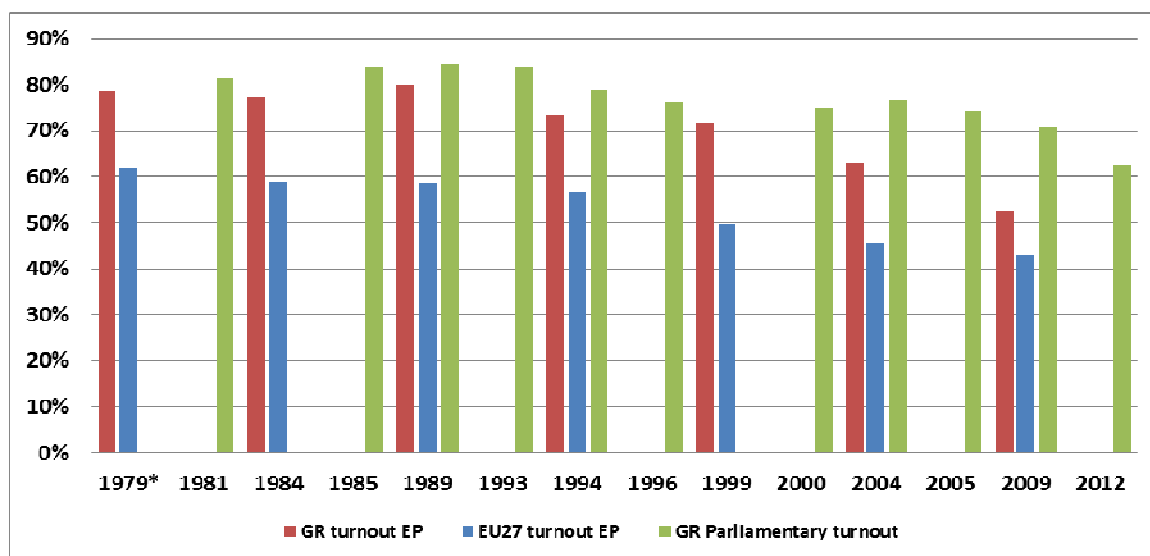


- **Voting in European and national elections**

The figure below shows the turnout in Greece, for both legislative and European elections, between 1979 and 2012. The turnout for European elections in Greece was fairly constant up to the 1994 elections, since when it has steadily declined.

The turnout for Greek legislative elections, compared to European elections, is rather higher. The average turnout for legislative elections during this period was 77.15%, while the average turnout for European elections in Greece was 70.89%. The legislative elections in Greece registered the highest turnout (85%) in 1989 and the lowest turnout in 2012 (62.49%).

<sup>11</sup> Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/cf/showtable.cfm?keyID=56&nationID=16,4,&startdate=2007.05&enddate=2012.05](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/showtable.cfm?keyID=56&nationID=16,4,&startdate=2007.05&enddate=2012.05).

Figure 5. Turnout for European and national elections in Greece (1979-2012)<sup>12</sup>

Note:

\* EP elections:

1979 — EU9 (9 Member States: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. *Greece in fact voted in 1981, after it joined the European Community that year*).

1984 — EU10 (9 Member States + Greece — joined in 1981).

1989 — EU12 (10 Member States + Portugal and Spain — joined in 1986).

1994 — EU12 (12 Member States).

1999 — EU15 (12 Member States + Austria, Finland and Sweden — joined in 1995).

2004 — EU25 (15 Member States + Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — joined in 2004).

2009 — EU27 (25 Member States + Bulgaria and Romania — joined in 2007).

\*\* Greece held Parliamentary elections in 1981, 1985, 1989, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2009 and 2012.

Although voting is compulsory in Greece (and has been since 1926), there being no clear penalties<sup>13</sup> the turnout for both national and European elections is rather lower than in Germany, for example, where voting is not compulsory.

If Greek citizens encounter obstacles in exercising their rights as citizens of the EU, they can contact **SOLVIT**. For more information, contact: Υπουργείο Οικονομίας και Οικονομικών — SOLVIT Centre, by telephone (+302 10 3332462) or e-mail ([A.Giannakopoulos@m nec.gr](mailto:A.Giannakopoulos@m nec.gr) or [Theodore.Koutsis@m nec.gr](mailto:Theodore.Koutsis@m nec.gr)).

<sup>12</sup> Source: *European Parliament*, [www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html) and *International IDEA*, [www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=89](http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=89)

<sup>13</sup> Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), 2012, *Compulsory voting*, [www.idea.int/vt/compulsory\\_voting.cfm](http://www.idea.int/vt/compulsory_voting.cfm).