



Forthcoming Grand Chamber judgment in a case concerning civil unions in Greece

The European Court of Human Rights will be delivering a Grand Chamber judgment in the case of *Vallianatos and Others v. Greece* (applications nos. 29381/09 and 32684/09) at a **public hearing on 7 November 2013 at 11 a.m. – local time** – in the Human Rights Building, Strasbourg.

The case concerns “civil unions” introduced by Law no. 3719/2008, called “Reforms concerning the family, children and society”. This Law made provision for an official form of partnership, allowing the persons concerned to register their relationship within a more flexible legal framework than that provided by marriage.

The applicants complain that this Law provides for civil unions only for different-sex couples, thus automatically excluding same-sex couples from its scope of application. They complain that the Greek State introduced a discriminatory distinction in their regard.

Principal facts

The applicants are eight Greek nationals living in Athens and an association based in Athens. Some of the applicants live as a couple, while others are in a relationship but do not live together.

On 26 November 2008 Law no. 3719/2008, called “Reforms concerning the family, children and society”, came into force. It made provision for an official form of partnership called a “civil union”. Under section 1 of that Law, a civil union could only be entered into by two adults of opposite sex.

Complaints, procedure and composition

Relying on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) taken together with Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights, the applicants complain that the fact that civil unions are designed only for different-sex couples infringes their right to private and family life and amounts to unjustified discrimination between heterosexual couples and homosexual couples. Further relying on Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the Convention, the applicants also complain of the lack of an effective remedy in domestic law enabling them to assert their complaints concerning the discriminatory nature of civil unions.

The applications were lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 6 and 25 May 2009. On 3 February 2011 the Court decided [to give notice](#) of the applications to the Government. It also granted the request for anonymity made by the first six applicants in application no. 32684/09.

On 11 September 2012 the Chamber to which the case had been allocated relinquished jurisdiction in favour of the Grand Chamber. The applicants and the Government each filed written observations on the admissibility and merits of the applications. Observations were also submitted by the Centre for Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (the AIRE Centre), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the *Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme* (FIDH) and the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), which had been given leave by the President to intervene in the written procedure.

A [hearing](#) took place in public in the Human Rights Building in Strasbourg on 16 January 2013.

This press release is a document produced by the Registry. It does not bind the Court. Decisions, judgments and further information about the Court can be found on www.echr.coe.int. To receive the Court's press releases, please subscribe here: www.echr.coe.int/RSS/en or follow us on Twitter [@ECHRpress](https://twitter.com/ECHRpress).

Press contacts

echrpres@echr.coe.int | tel: +33 3 90 21 42 08

Denis Lambert (tel: + 33 3 90 21 41 09)

Tracey Turner-Tretz (tel: + 33 3 88 41 35 30)

Nina Salomon (tel: + 33 3 90 21 49 79)

Jean Conte (tel: + 33 3 90 21 58 77)

The European Court of Human Rights was set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe Member States in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.